

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 MURDER OF HIS MOST INNOCENT

From the staff of "Orthodox Heritage."

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying, "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

[Mt 2:17-18]

On December 29th, our Church commemorated the Massacre of the 14,000 Holy Innocent Infants, in Bethlehem and its borders. The Holy Rachel wept unceasingly when King Herod had ordered his soldiers to have all children two years old and younger to be massacred.

It seems that the loving Holy Rachel has not stopped weeping to this very hour, as we continue to see massacres of the infants, through abortions, being condoned and "legally" supported all around the world, often with the financial backing of governments, especially in the "progressive" West.

For us in America, on January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court "legalized" the atrocious act of abortion and thus brought within our lives the continuation of the murder of His most innocent and their daily sacrifice in the altar of

Satan and his dark angels.

The Orthodox Church cries out against this act of abortion. But is it not true that our ears often remain closed as we are afraid of the truth? We are allowing death to happen, murder, before our eyes! Death of innocent children!

On the eve of the 40th Anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized the brutal murder of pre-born children in the wombs of their mothers, we wish to provide our readers with the Church's position on this murderous act.

May 2012 be the year that our Lord enlightens the reversal of this horrible 1973 Supreme Court decision.

† † †

Thou shalt not commit murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not commit *pederasty*, [Ed., the sexual abuse of an adolescent boy by an adult male outside his immediate family] thou shalt not commit fornication, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not practice magic, thou shalt not practise witchcraft, **thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten.** [*Ante-Nicene Fathers: Vol. VII, Apostolic Teachings & Constitutions: The 2nd Commandment*].

And near that place I saw another a strait place into which the gore and the filth of those who were being punished ran down and became there as it were a lake: and there sat women having the gore up to their necks, and over against them sat many children who were born to them out of due time, crying; and there came forth from them sparks of fire and smote the women in the eyes: and these were the accursed

The staff of "Orthodox Heritage" and the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN wish our readers a blessed and prosperous New Year. As we start our tenth year of publication, we wish to thank our supporters for their prayers, ideas, feedback and monetary support throughout the last eight years. We remind our readers that this periodical is made possible through your donations and thus ask that you not forget your 2012 subscription contributions. Please refer to the top of the next page for contribution and payment information.

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

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. 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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who conceived and caused abortion. [*Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume X, The Apocalypse of Peter*]

Among surgeons' tools there is a certain instrument, which is formed with a nicely-adjusted flexible frame for opening the uterus first of all and keeping it open; it is further furnished with an annular blade, by means of which the limbs [of the child] within the womb are dissected with anxious but unflinching care; its last appendage being a blunted or covered hook, wherewith the entire fetus is extracted by a violent delivery. There is also [another instrument in the shape of] a copper needle or spike, by which the actual death is managed in this furtive robbery of life: They give it, from its infanticide function, the name of *embryosphaktes*, [meaning] "the slayer of the infant," which of course was alive..." [The doctors who performed abortions] all knew well enough that a living being had been conceived, and [they] pitied this most luckless infant state, which had first to be put to death, to escape being tortured alive. [210 AD, Tertullian, *The Soul*]

And now I should wish to meet him who says or believes that we are initiated by the slaughter and blood of an infant. Think you that it can be possible for so tender, so little a body to receive those fatal wounds; for any one to shed, pour forth, and drain that new blood of a youngling, and of a man scarcely come into existence? No one can believe this, except one who can dare to do it. And I see that you at one time expose your begotten children to wild beasts and to birds; at another, that you crush them when strangled with a miserable kind of death. There are some women who, by drinking medical preparations, extinguish the source of the future man in their very bowels, and thus commit a parricide before they bring forth. [*Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume IV, The Octavius of Minucius Felix*]

Christians marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast out their offspring, for it is of grave consequences. [250 AD, *Letter of Diognetus ch.5, vs. 6*]

Concerning women who commit fornication, and destroy that which they have conceived, or who are employed in making drugs for abortion, a former decree excluded them until the hour of death, and to this some have assented. Nevertheless, being desirous to use somewhat greater lenity, we have ordained that they fulfill ten years [of penance], according to the prescribed degrees. [314 AD, *Council of Ancyra, Canon 21*]

He that kills another with a sword, or hurls an axe at his own wife and kills her, is guilty of willful murder; not he who throws a stone at a dog, and unintentionally kills a man, or who corrects one with a rod, or scourge, in order to reform him, or who kills a man in his own defense, when he only designed to hurt him. But the man, or woman, is a murderer that gives a *philtrum* (love potion), if the man that takes it die upon it; so are they who take medicines to procure abortion; and so are they who kill on the highway, and the *rapparees* (bandits). [374 AD, *Basil the Great, 1st Canonical Letter, canon 8*]

I cannot bring myself to speak of the many virgins who daily fall and are lost to the bosom of the Church, their mother... Some go so far as to take potions, that they may insure barrenness, and thus murder human beings almost before their conception. Some, when they find themselves with child through their sin, use drugs to procure abortion, and when, as often happens, they die with their offspring, they enter the lower world laden with the guilt not only of adultery against Christ but also of suicide and child murder. [396 AD, *Jerome, Letters 22:13*]

Thou shalt not use magic. Thou shalt not use witchcraft; for He says, *Ye shall not suffer a witch to live*. **Thou shall not slay thy child by causing abortion, nor kill that which is begotten**; for everything that is shaped, and has received a soul from God, if it be slain, shall be avenged, as being unjustly destroyed. [*Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume VII, Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Book VII, Moral Exhortations*]

If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then **you shall give life for life**. [*Exodus 21:22-23*]

In our case, a murder being once for all forbidden, we may **not destroy even the fetus in the womb**, while as yet the human being derives blood from the other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in its seed. [*210 AD, Tertullian, Apology*]

Let her that **procures abortion** undergo ten years' penance, whether the embryo were perfectly formed, or not. [*374 AD, Basil the Great, First Canonical Letter, Canon 2*]

Now we allow that life begins with conception because we contend that **the soul also begins from conception**; life taking its commencement at the same moment and place that the soul does. [*210 AD, Tertullian, Apology*]

The embryo therefore becomes a **human being in the womb from the moment that its form is completed**. The law of Moses, indeed, punishes with due penalties the man who shall cause abortion, inasmuch as there exists already the rudiment of a human being, which has imputed to it even now the condition of life and death, since it is already liable to the issues of both, although, by living still in the mother, it for the most part shares its own state with the mother. [*Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume III, Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, Chapter VII, On the Formation and State of the Embryo*]

The law, moreover enjoins us to bring up all our offspring, and **forbids women to cause abortion of what is begotten**, or to destroy it afterward; and if any woman appears to have so done, she will be a murderer of her child, by destroying a living creature, and diminishing humankind. [*Josephus, Flavius, The Works of Josephus, Against Apion, Book II*]

The second commandment of the teaching: You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not seduce boys. You shall not commit fornication. You shall not steal. You shall not practice magic. You shall not use potions.

You shall **not procure [an] abortion, nor destroy a newborn child**. [*150 AD, Didache 2:1*]

There are some [pagan] women who, by drinking medical preparations, extinguish the source of the future man in their very bowels and thus **commit a parricide** before they bring forth. And these things assuredly come down from the teaching of your [false] gods... To us [Christians] it is not lawful either to see or hear of homicide. [*226 AD, Minucius Felix Octavius 30*]

There are some women among you who by drinking special potions **extinguish the life of the future human** in their very bowels, thus committing murder before they even give birth. [*170 AD, Mark Felix, Christian Lawyer, Octavius ch. 30*]

Thou shalt **not slay the child by procuring abortion**; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born. [*Ante-Nicene Fathers: Vol. I, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Way of Light*]

Thou shalt not use magic. Thou shalt not use witchcraft; for He says, '*Ye shall not suffer a witch to live*' [Ex 22:18]. **Thou shall not slay thy child by causing abortion, nor kill that which is begotten**; for everything that is shaped, and has received a soul from God, if it be slain, shall be avenged, as being unjustly destroyed. [*400 AD, The Apostolic Constitutions, Apostolic Constitutions 7:3*]

What man of sound mind, therefore, will affirm, while such is our character, that we are murderers?... [W]hen we say that **those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder**, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? For it does not belong to the same person to

regard the very fetus in the womb as a created being, and therefore an object of God's care, and when it has passed into life, to kill it; and not to expose an infant, because those who expose them are chargeable with child-murder, and on the other hand, when it has been reared to destroy it. [*177 AD, Athenagoras, A Plea for the Christians 35, Embassy ch. 5*]

What reason would we have to commit murder when we say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God? For the same person would not regard the fetus in the womb as a living thing and therefore an object of God's care, and at the same time slay it, once it had come to life. [*177 AD, Athenagoras, Plea, ch. 35*]

The law of Moses, indeed, punishes with due penalties **the man who shall cause abortion** [*210 AD, Tertullian*]

When God forbids us to kill, he not only prohibits us from open violence, which is not even allowed by the public laws, but he warns us against the commission of those things which are esteemed lawful among men.. Therefore, let no one imagine that even this is allowed, to strangle newborn children, which is the greatest impiety; for **God breathes**



into their souls for life, and not for death. But men, that there may be no crime with which they may not pollute their hands, deprive [unborn] souls as yet innocent and simple of the light which they themselves have not given. Can anyone, indeed, expect that they would abstain from the blood of others who do not abstain even from their own? But these are, without any controversy, wicked and unjust. [307 AD, *Lactantius, Divine Institutes 6:20*]

Wherefore I beseech you, flee fornication... Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? Where there are **many efforts at abortion**? Where there is murder before the birth? For even the harlot you do not let continue a mere harlot, but make her a murderess also. You see how drunkenness leads to prostitution, prostitution to adultery, adultery to murder; or rather to a something even worse than murder. For I have no name to give it, since it does not take off the thing born, but prevents its being born. Why then do thou abuse the gift of God, and fight with His laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter? For with a view to drawing more money by being agreeable and an object of longing to her lovers, even this she is not backward to do, so heaping upon thy head a great pile of fire. For even if the daring deed be hers, yet the causing of it is thine. [391 AD, *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans 24*]

Who does not reckon among the things of greatest interest the contests of gladiators and wild beasts, especially those which are given by you? But we, deeming that to see a man put to death is much the same as killing him, have abjured such spectacles. How, then, when we do not even look on, lest we should contract guilt and pollution, can we put people to death? And when we say that **those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder**, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? [*Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume II, The Epistle of Barnabas, Chapter V: The Christians Condemn and Detest All Cruelty*]

Women who were reputed to be believers began to take drugs to render themselves sterile, and to bind themselves tightly so as to expel what was being conceived, since they would not, on account of relatives and excess wealth, want to have a child by a slave or by any insignificant person. See, then, into what great impiety that lawless one has proceeded, by **teaching adultery and murder at the same time!** [228 AD, *Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies*]



Abortion, is skillfully marketed and sold to the woman at the crisis time in her life. She buys the product, finds it defective and wants to return it for a refund. But, it's too late...

Author unknown

ORTHODOX HUMANITARIAN VISIT TO KOSOVO

DENVER COLORADO, 15 December 2011.

Even as national borders in the Balkans become unstable, the Decani Monastery Relief Fund remains committed to sending its President and Executive Director to Kosovo in February 2012 for a humanitarian relief visit.

Headquartered in Boise, Idaho, the Decani Monastery Relief Fund, a non-profit organization, is committed to rebuilding Kosovo by soliciting financial contributions to support its work there. Once contributions are collected, the monks of the Orthodox Christian Decani Monastery distribute donated funds directly for the benefit of Serbian individuals and families living in the war-ravaged communities of the region. The fund supports six soup kitchens, one bakery, assists in providing daily lunches to four schools as well as shoes and clothing for youth. Additionally, the fund provides sixty-one scholarships to the University of Northern Kosovo as well as scholarship assistance for Serbian youth attending Boise State University, and Hellenic College/Holy Cross Orthodox Theological Seminary.

On December 12th, in an attempt to enter the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), at the Medzitlija border-crossing, on the border with Greece, the Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, Jovan, was arrested again and taken to the Idrizovo prison, near Skopje. Additionally, on December 13th, *The Voice of Russia* reported that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo prevented a convoy of Russian humanitarian supplies from entering northern Kosovo via the Jarinje checkpoint on the Serbian border. The convoy consisted of 25 trucks, carrying food, blankets, cutlery, and portable electric generators ; its passage was interrupted, without any explanation provided.

Archimandrite Nekatarios Serfes, President, and J. Basil Dannebohm, Executive Director, of the Decani Monastery Relief Fund are aware of the potentially dangerous situation in the region and the instability of the Balkan borders but remain optimistic they will cross the border and visit the region safely during the February 2012 trip. "I've been visiting the region for more than ten years and have been faced with danger several times," Serfes said.

On behalf of the fund, Serfes and Dannebohm hope to raise \$25,000 before their trip which will provide humanitarian aid to refugee centers, provide for the special needs of the elderly, pay electric bills, provide firewood, finance necessary medical and surgical procedures, help to purchase farm equipment and livestock and assist in the rebuilding of the seminary, monasteries and churches of the region.

Donations to the Decani Monastery Relief Fund can be made by mail to: 2618 West Bannock Street, Boise, ID 83702 or online at www.decanifund.org/donate.

DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE

Source: *Orthodox America*, issue #73; Vol. VIII, #3 (edited for length).

Fair is foul and foul is fair; hover through the fog and
filthy air.

[The three witches in opening scene of Macbeth]

† † †

It used to be that the subject of the occult was regarded by most people in this modern age as “hocus pocus.” It conjured up images of gypsies gazing into crystal balls at summer carnivals, of shamans beating out dances in distant pagan lands, of fairy tale sorcerers and witches muttering incantations over steaming cauldrons. Today, however, one has only to browse through the local bookstore to be awakened to the chilling fact of occultism’s rising popularity.

Some books are descriptive: *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, *Ancient Egyptian Magic*, *A History of Secret Societies*, *The Serpent and the Rainbow: The Secret World of Haitian Voodoo and Zombies*. There are also reference books such as *Zolar’s Encyclopedia of Ancient and Forbidden Knowledge* and *The Book of Sacred Magic*.

What is more shocking is the number of “how-to” books which indicate that the interest goes beyond intellectual curiosity, as in *Invisibility*—mastering the art of vanishing; *The Modern Witch’s Spell Book*—everything you need to know to cast spells, work charms and love magic, and achieve what you want in life through occult powers; *Levitiation*—what it is, how it works, how to do it. In the introduction to *The Way of a Shaman*, author Michael Harmon offers the reader “an opportunity to acquire the experience of shamanist power and to help yourself and others.” The first exercise is “a simple journey of exploration down through the Tunnel into the Lower world.”

The Games People Play

Fantasy role-playing games (RPGs), especially popular among adolescents, invite participants into this same occult world, stimulating a thirst for power and fostering a morally neutral orientation. A company which specializes in RPG (appropriately called *Chaosium, Inc.*) offers a variety of scenarios in games with titles such as “White Wolf—temples, demons and ships of war,” “Stealer of Souls—a quest for vengeance,” “Demon Magic,” “Superworld,” “Hawkmoon—whose hero is an incarnation of the Eternal Champion, one who lives on all planes of existence, in all ages and trees.”

Because these RPGs are masked as creative entertainment, parents whose children are involved in them are rarely aware of the harmful—even fatal—effects they can have. In fact, the model for these games, “Dungeons and Dragons (D&Ds),” has been linked to 62 murders and 26 suicides, as documented by the National Coalition on Television Violence (May 12, 1987). Described by one parent of a D&D adherent as an opiate “destroying the barrier between life and fantasy,” the game comes with a Player’s Handbook which lists a demonic

cast of characters whom the players may either impersonate or employ. According to the NCTV report, “Much of the material comes from demonology including witchcraft, the occult, and evil monsters.”

D&D manuals contain detailed descriptions of killing, including satanic human sacrifice and curses of insanity including suicidal and homicidal mania. Deaths linked with D&D provide grim evidence of its kinship with satanism outside the realm of fantasy. Among those cases recorded by the NCTV:

—James Egbert, 17, was “a gifted student at Michigan State University where he played D&D. Before committing suicide he wrote: ‘I will give Satan my mind and power.’ ”

—Louis Solomon, 15, “tried to commit suicide when his stepfather took away his D&D materials. He later developed a fascination with devil worship.’ On March 12, 1986 he shot himself.

—Sellers, 17, killed his mother, stepfather and a convenience store clerk. He “was heavily into D&D and satanism which followed. He wrote a note in blood stating, ‘I renounce God. I renounce Christ. I will serve only satan.’ ”

The secretive—or even illegal—nature of satanist activity makes it very difficult to gather reliable data on the subject, but there is every indication that we are witnessing a terrifying resurgence of outright satanism. It is no longer hiding behind ancient paganism, Far Eastern religions or psychic experimentation, but demonic beliefs and practices that are just that. Public awareness of this phenomenon was finally roused when, two years ago, ABC News aired a documentary on the subject before a stunned television audience. To quote from the transcript:

Across the country and Canada, satanic graffiti is turning up on public buildings and abandoned buildings, where police suspect secret meetings are being held by people calling themselves satanists, people who worship the devil. Most often found: the inverted five pointed satanic pentagram, the upside-down cross, the evil eye, references to Babylon and the devil’s number, 666. Vandals often target churches ...

“[Voice of commentator:] America is being affected. Nationwide we found that minor cases of satanic activity light up the map. Not a single state is unaffected. But even more frightening is the number of reported murders and suicides with satanic clues ...

“We found that satanism falls into three categories. One, self-styled satanists: a growing number of young people who dabble in devil worship. Two, religious satanists: people who publicly worship the devil, a right that’s protected by law. And three, satanic cults: what appear to be highly secretive groups committing criminal acts, including murder ...

“[Psychiatrist:] Children are involved in graveyards, in crematories, in funeral parlors, because one of the

primary focuses of these people is death. Everything is attempted to be destroyed and killed in that child and in society, everything of goodness.

[Commentator:] Cannibalism. It's difficult to believe, but in every case we examined children described it ...

[Grandmother:] The hearts were cut out, and the children were made to chew pieces of these children's hearts, pieces of their flesh ... The children have spoken about this in almost every instance. Also human feces, or drinking the urine or drinking human blood ..."

(20/20 TV show 11521, May 16, 1985)

Two elements in particular should be clear from the above quotations: the perversion of innocence and the emphasis on death—both of which are unmistakable hallmarks of Luciferian activity and should not be mistaken for anything else.

It's no wonder that more than one writer and researcher has spoken out: "It is necessary to warn decisively anyone of any participation in black magic, real and faked. Don't touch these things, and avoid like the plague all those who are engaged in it. Even if it were all trickery—as it often is—these are still dirty and savage things. They are so even if they are childish. They lead only to distortion and degradation of the soul. And when real powers appear, the results for the participants are indescribably terrible." (Douglas Hunt, *Researches in the Sphere of the Occult*)

"Real" Powers of Darkness

What is behind this resurgence of satanism? How can one explain an 'enlightened' society's growing fascination with the world of darkness? How can one explain such spiritual recklessness? The impact of the well known German legend *Faust*—in which a man surrenders his soul to the devil in exchange for youth, knowledge and magical powers—once rested on the horrifying realization of the hero's self-inflicted damnation. Today, many people are reenacting the same scenario in real life. Have they no understanding of the eternal consequences? Dare they identify with the shocking truth expressed by a 19th century satanist in the following poem:

Thus heaven I've forfeited,
I know it full well.
My soul, once true to God,
is chosen for hell.

(The author? Karl Marx, as cited in Richard Wurmbrand's, *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?*, p. 2).

To answer these questions we must begin with a correct understanding of satan's realm and its "principalities and powers," the rulers of darkness, their nature and activity.

We know from Scripture that evil had no part in God's

creation. All the inhabitants of the heavenly realm, the world of angels, were created as pure, fleshless beings ordained by God to be the most perfect reflections of His grandeur and glory, with inseparable participation in His blessedness. They were created individual, personal and rational.

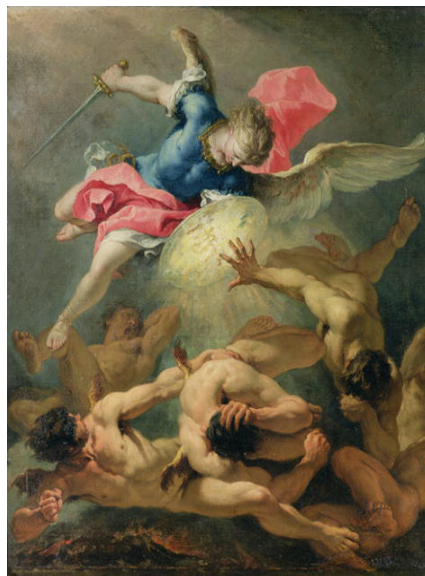
Of their life before Adam and Eve we know one extremely important thing: there was a great rebellion in their ranks. One-third began to believe that they were somehow "self-existent" and "self-created." They were encouraged in this delusion by one of the greatest of all the angels, a cherub whose name has come down to us as Lucifer, also called Satan or Belial. In a revelation to the Prophet Ezekiel, the Lord God Himself addresses Lucifer and describes his former glory: *Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty... Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering... Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God... Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee... and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.* (Ezek 28:12-16)

And Isaiah: *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation... I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.* (Isa 14:12-14)

In the words of the poet, Milton, this wicked cherub shouted out: *Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven!*

Under the leadership of Archangel Michael the good angels defeated the rebellious angels in a war. Satan "*was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him... neither was their place found anymore in heaven.*" (Rev 12:7-8). Where did they go? According to the testimony of Scripture, they dwell in *high places* (Eph. 6:12). This is also translated as *under the heaven*. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov defines this more clearly when he writes: *The spirits who refused obedience to God... creep over the earth and fill the space between earth and heaven; whence they are called the spirits of the air, since the air is their habitat.* (Arena, ch. 43). Indeed, St. Paul refers to Satan as the *prince of the power of the air.* (Eph 2:2).

The Holy Fathers describe the demons as immaterial and sleepless beings which *differ much among themselves* (St. Anthony the Great), i.e., *there are ruling demons and demons that are subordinate* (St. Macarius the Great). All these demons are united in one common purpose: *to destroy men's souls through*



word, act and thought. (St. Hilarion). What provoked such undying hatred? In place of the fallen angels, Bishop Ignatius explains, “*God created new intelligent creatures—men. He put them in Paradise, which was placed in the lowest heaven and had originally been governed by the fallen cherub [Lucifer] himself. But Paradise was now under the surveillance of the new creature, man. It is quite understandable that the new creature thereupon became the object of envy and hatred on the part of the fallen angel and his fallen companions. Led by their leader, the rejected spirits made the attempt to subvert the newly created human creatures and make them their partners in the fall... They succeeded in their purpose...*”

The Father of Lies

By persuading Adam and Eve that by disobeying God and eating of the *forbidden fruit* they could *be as God* (Gen 3:5), the Serpent (Satan) convinced them to share in his own prideful sin: that they are self-existent; not creatures, but gods.

At this, a terrible change took place in man: his “*soul became like that of the fallen spirits, while his body became like that of an unreasoning animal. The crime committed by the fallen angels toward men ultimately decided the fate of the fallen angels. God’s grace completely left them and they became confirmed in their fall. They, being spirits, were now destined to persist in thoughts and feelings exclusively bodily and material.*” (Bishop Ignatius, quoted in *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave*, by Archimendrite Panteleimon, ch. 6)

Because man fell *unconsciously, unintentionally*, being *deceived and seduced*, God took pity on man and, in His unspeakable goodness *gave fallen man a Redeemer and redemption. However, redeemed man has also been given freedom either to avail himself of the redemption granted him and return to Paradise. OR, to refuse redemption and remain in the company of the fallen angels. The time assigned to man to express his mind and choice is the whole of our life on earth.*” (*The Arena*, ch. 43)

Evil Knowledge

The sin of the fallen angels, to which Adam and Eve had also succumbed, pride (*I am self-existent, self-sufficient, a ‘God’*), then became the fountainhead of all sin, all error, in the race of man. It became the great “secret” of the Evil One, the “forbidden knowledge” or gnosis, carefully preserved in the Kingdom of Hell and given to any man wanting this “wisdom.”

This became the great rival to God’s own revelation to man and was, according to Scripture and the Holy Fathers, transmitted in the following way: After the death of righteous Abel, in order that the whole human race might not spring from a wicked fratricide, Seth was born in the place of his brother. For many generations his descendents avoided all contact with the descendents of Cain so as not to be polluted by the wickedness of an evil offspring. Eventually, however, the sons of Seth, who were the *sons of God* (Gen 6:2) (or, in some translations, the *angels of God*) became inflamed with desire

for the daughters of Cain’s descendents. Taking them as wives, they were led astray from their innate holiness, being taught by these women the wickedness of their fathers.

After the line of Seth “*had been mingled with the evil generation [of Cain], it drew aside at the suggestion of devils to profane and harmful uses... taught by the curious arts of wizards and enchantments and magical superstitions, teaching its posterity to forsake the holy worship of the Divinity and to honor and worship either the elements of fire or the demons of the air.*” (St. John Cassian, *Conferences*) The demonic origin of magical arts is also indicated by St. Macarius: Once Adam “*had been deceived, he surrendered his lordship [over the material creation] to his deceiver. For this reason, sorcerers and magicians, through the use of diabolic energy become—with God’s allowance—‘miracle-workers’: they have power over poisonous snakes and they challenge fire and water, as was exemplified by the followers of Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses, and by Simon who resisted the chief Apostle Peter.*”

The Origin of Paganism and Heresy

All of the above is but a foundation for what follows, for it was precisely this sinful concourse between men and demons that gave birth to all of the old pagan religions: that of the ancient Egyptians, Hinduism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, the “Mystery Schools” of Greece and Rome, and so forth (which were but forerunners for today’s “secular humanism” on the one hand, and outright demonism on the other). For this reason the Holy Fathers testified with one voice: *The gods of the pagans are demons.* (Pss 95:5)

Thus began what we rightly call today satanism, the worship of self, of ego, the denial of God’s almighty and sovereign lordship, the “itching” after forbidden knowledge and god-like power over both animate and inanimate creation. Hence, the early gnostic heretics and those others who composed their own “mysteries” and scriptures, were separated from the only channel of all grace, wisdom and truth as established by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and clearly revealed by Him to be in His Church. It is in this manner that the secret fraternal organizations came into existence through the centuries: the Knights Templars, Freemasons, Rosicrucians, Illuminati, Theosophists, and numerous others. They are all predicated on an anti-Christian secret knowledge not given to the uninitiated masses, a “wisdom of the ages,” which, they claim, “the Church” had suppressed out of fear, ignorance, or bigotry. In fact, these fraternal sects have indeed preserved something ancient—but it is not the wisdom of Almighty God; rather, it is the gnosis of old, devised by the ancient enemy, the lord of evil and Prince of Darkness himself, who knows well how to flatter the pride of mortals with a whisper: “You shall be as God!” Truly, the Church knows this adversary very well.

Outside the Orthodox tradition, however, this correct understanding of the spiritual world was lost or corrupted. Already in the Renaissance there had developed a very sentiment-

tal and carnal idea of the angelic kingdom, embodied in the fat baby cupids—*putti*—carved all over European churches and cathedrals. As Western civilization passed through the Age of Enlightenment, its perception of spiritual reality grew even darker: the devil and his minions were consigned to the realm of allegory, while their benevolent counterparts invisibly shepherded little children through dangerous forests in the manner of a fairy tale. These rather vague and distorted conceptions remain popular, while many people today do not accept the objective reality of angels or demons at all.

The Pleasure of Demons

Here, then, is the grand delusion of the Father of Lies, for what better way to overcome one's victim than to convince him that his adversary is but a figment of his imagination, the superstition of a less *enlightened* era. Indeed, it is all part of the Evil One's artful staging of the Apostasy. Astral travel, witchcraft, ouiji (Weegee) boards, tarot cards, voodoo magic—most people become involved “just for kicks,” or to provide their spiritually impoverished lives with a new *dimension*, or to acquire extraordinary powers (which the demons readily supply). They lust after this “forbidden fruit,” this “secret knowledge,” unaware of its poisonous effect. Believing themselves to be masters of their own lives, they unwittingly cooperate with the forces of darkness and fall into the invisible snare of the devil, *taken captive by him at his will*. (II Tim 2:6)

It is hard to understand how anyone can read the Scriptures and fail to grasp the existent reality of the powers of darkness. In the Gospels there is Christ's temptation in the wilderness, there are many examples of demon possession and the casting out of demons, a power Christ conferred on his disciples (Lk 9:1). The Epistles contain further teaching on the nature of demons and how the unseen warfare is to be waged against them. *Resist the devil*, writes St. James, *and he will flee from you. Put on the whole armor of God*, exhorts St. Paul, “...above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (Eph 6:11, 17). And St. Peter warns: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*. (I Pet 5:8).

The Orthodox tradition has preserved this very real sense of the aerial realm of spirits, their artful devices and their influence among men. There is, for example, the life of St. Cyprian (+258) the former sorcerer who was, as he himself later related, *a faithful slave of the prince of hell with whom he conversed face to face*. The Lives of the Desert Fathers contain many descriptions of demons who appeared to the saints in visible forms, whether as hideous wild beasts, as in the Life of St. Anthony, or in the guise of angels, as in the Life of his disciple St. Macarius the Great (+390). A vivid picture of the spiritual warfare waged over men's souls is presented in the Life of St. Andrew, Fool-for-Christ (10th century), who saw this warfare in a vision.

According to Orthodox tradition, man is assisted in this warfare by a holy guardian angel, given by God to each soul at Baptism. *So too*, writes Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, the Prince of Darkness *assigns to each person one of the evil spirits, who follows that person everywhere and tries to draw him into every form of sin*. (Arena, ch. 43)

The Orthodox Christian, through daily prayers, can develop a strong consciousness of the unseen warfare and of the very present reality both of the demons and of the guardian angels: *Deliver me from...every attack of the devil ... Drive away my foes who defeat me...expose me not to the pleasure of demons ... May Satan not seize me, O Word, and boast that he has torn me from Thy hand and fold ... O Holy Angel, interceding for my wretched soul...give no place for the subtle demon to master me*. (Orthodox Prayer Book)

Because the demons seldom appear visibly it takes great effort to develop the spiritual sensitivity necessary to discern their specific influence on one's soul. Sometimes, however, they reveal themselves quite dramatically, and there are numerous accounts of exorcisms performed even today which testify to this. Often the possessed will emit bloodcurdling screams and manifest a supernatural physical strength, just like the Gadarene described in the Gospel. It is very sobering to witness, or even to read about such cases of possession and deliverance, which so powerfully attest to the reality of demonic activity. During these exorcism services, the demons frequently express their anger at being forced to abandon their victim. They are possessive of those whom they regard as “theirs,” as illustrated by the following incident which occurred in this country some fifteen years ago.

A young man arrived at seminary to begin his first year of studies. He went to bed, tired after his long journey, but could not fall asleep. A sulfuric odor in the room made him vomit. He then became aware of a dark blob with multiple green eyes at the foot of his bed. “Go away,” came a voice. “Leave this place!” The young man began to pray but the blob persisted until finally the young man fell asleep.

When he reported this demonic visitation to the dean the next morning, he was asked if he had ever engaged in any occult activity. In fact, both sides of his family had for several generations been seriously involved in black magic. The young man's grandfather could “fly,” and he himself had been taught to cast spells and to read the past and future from cards, although he had abandoned the practice some years ago. The dean explained that the demon had, in all likelihood, been sent to lay claim to his soul, as part of “the family,” and to prevent him from pursuing a life dedicated to Christ.

Guarding Against Evil

Today's growing popularity of the occult and the evident resurgence of satanism is a renewed confirmation of the need for “unseen warfare” that we must constantly and vigilantly wage on a day to day basis. Demons do not need to wait upon

the invocation of a witch or a wizard in order to attack us and try to find some slight foothold in our lives. We see the results of their activity everywhere, every day.

It is wrong to assume that an Orthodox baptism is a sufficient safeguard against demonic influence. (It is a fact, for example, that several members of the rock group KISS—Kids in Satan's Service—belonged to Russian Orthodox families.) It is important, therefore, to consciously and prayerfully make use of those weapons provided by the Church since ancient times: to receive regularly the Holy Mysteries, to be diligent in prayer and fasting, to renew the priestly blessing of one's home each year on Theophany, to partake each morning of some proshphora and Holy Water, to make the Sign of the Cross whenever the occasion calls for it. And it is vitally important to teach these pious habits to our children: to encourage them to invoke the protection of their Guardian Angel, to pray with them at bedtime and bless them—and the corners of their room—with the sign of the Cross as they go to sleep, and also when they leave the house for school.

Where Is It All Going?

The great event for which Satan and his angels have been waiting throughout human history is drawing near: the coming of Antichrist. To quote from the late Hieromonk Seraphim Rose's important book, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*: "In our age of apostasy preceding the manifestation of Antichrist, the devil has been loosed for a time (Rev 20:7), to gather in his hellish harvest of those souls who *received not the love of the truth*. (II Thes 2:10). How much, then, must Orthodox Christians walk in the fear of God, trembling lest they lose His grace, which by no means is given to everyone, but only to those who hold the true Faith, lead a life of Christian struggle, and treasure the grace of God which leads them heavenward Surely the last times are near, when there will come spiritual deception so persuasive as to deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect..."

Little children, it is the last hour! (I John 2:18)



Prayer is one of the foremost and strongest powers that causes him who prays to be born again, and it grants him bodily and spiritual well-being. Prayer is the eyes and wings of the soul; it gives us the boldness and strength to behold God.

My brother, keep praying with your mouth until divine grace enlightens you to pray also with your heart. Then a celebration and festival will take place within you in a wondrous way, and you will no longer pray with your mouth, but with the attention which works in the heart.

Elder Ephraim

From Counsels from the Holy Mountain

RELIGIOUS FANATICS IN TAJIKISTAN KILLED MAN DRESSED AS SANTA CLAUS

Source: Interfax – Religion, Dushanbe, January 4, 2012.

A young man dressed as Santa Claus has been killed in a religious attack in Dushanbe, a high-placed source in Tajikistan's Interior Ministry told Interfax. The killing of Parviz Davlatbekov, 24, has been officially recognized, but religious motives have not been acknowledged.

"The young man wanted to congratulate his relatives and dressed up as Santa Claus. He was attacked by a crowd of about 30 young men when he approached his apartment building, and they stabbed him, shouting out: "Tu Kofiri!" (Infidel!) The man died in the hospital of the sustained stab wounds," the source said.

Later the Tajik police have detained three suspected murderers—third-years students of Tajik National University Sharif Davlatov, Farrukh Samiyev and Firus Nazrulloev. Tajik social networks link the murder with the fact that several days before New Year head of the Council of Ulamas of Tajikistan Saidmukarram Abdukodirzoda told journalists that decorating the Christmas tree, dancing and playing around was alien to Tajik culture and contradicted the laws of Islam.

But New Year's holidays are observed officially in Tajikistan. New Year's trees are decorated on squares and New Year's parties are held at schools and child-care centers with Santa Claus participating. President Emomali Rahmon traditionally conveys New Year's greetings to the nation several hours before midnight.

Meanwhile, experts note that there is a growing religious influence in Tajikistan. Disputes flare up in the press each December, whether Tajiks should see the New Year in as Christians do.



Never condemn anyone. Greet everyone with a good disposition, whoever he may be, with the hope of finding only good in him—seeing before you the image of God."

St. Nikon (+1931)

In the presence of God, a repentant sinner is more beloved than a conceited righteous person. Therefore, beware of judging!

St. Anatoly (+1894)

Do not judge others, for this alone will intercede for us during any judgment before God.

St. Macarius (+1860)

SPIRITUAL LIFE IS THE BASIC PREREQUISITE FOR A GOOD FUTURE

By Elder Paisios the Athonite, from the book "Family Life," published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece (2002), translated by Fr. Luke Hartung.



- Geronta, the girl who said to you that she is considering monasticism told me that a boy from class asked why she won't go out to the movies or out on dates with boys. What should she have answered?

- She should have said: "Not even my brother has ever asked me such questions, and now you are?"

- A few days later the boy found her outside of school—she hadn't seen him—and he went to take her arm.

She only said "hello" and immediately went inside.

- No, that's not good! In such a position she should have reacted, because as things went, she may have given him the impression that she is fine with this show of affection and now he'll do it again. The age she's at now is a little difficult and it's not good for her to keep company with boys. It is not even necessary for her to speak with them, unless perhaps they need help. If she decides to get married, when she meets a nice guy, she should tell her parents about it. They will evaluate whether the right prerequisites for starting a good family are there. For now, as she still hasn't decided which life she will follow, speaking with boys won't help; she'll just get dizzy for nothing and lose her peace. Those kids who do such things are extremely miserable souls, flighty and constantly troubled; they have no peace. Their face and eyes are wild.

The attraction of the female gender to the male—and vice versa—exists in the nature of man. But, you should tell her that it's not the time for that now; she instead needs to attend to her studies. Kids who nurture this attraction from a young age, spin like tops before the right time. Later, when the appropriate hour does come, the top is already spinning and they aren't able to be happy because they've already lived that happiness. On the other hand, those kids who are careful, rejoice all the more when the proper time comes, and until that time they have great serenity. You know those mothers who have lived purely, how peaceful they are, even though they've got heaps of worries?

I always stress that a young person before marriage should strive to live as spiritually as possible and to keep their purity intact. This ensures double health. Spiritual life is the basic prerequisite for whichever life one may follow. The world

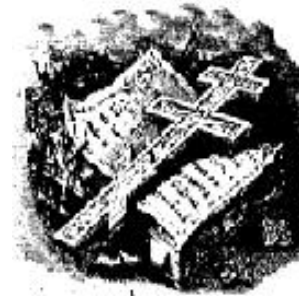
has become a field of wheat which, once the ears of grain sprouted forth, has entirely been trampled by pigs. Now all we see are weeds, mud and wheat thrown upside-down and, every once in awhile, off to the side, a lone, upright stalk.

The more spiritual work one puts into his or her adolescence the easier it will be later on, whichever life is chosen. The better one loads and prepares before the battle, the easier it will be in the midst of the war, when bullets are flying and bombs are landing all around. Until the time comes to decide, for example, if a girl will become a nun or a good mother, a pure life is essential. That's why, she must strive as much as she is able, to progress in her studies. When she guards her eyes and ears and rejects bad thoughts, she won't have far to go later.

When he meets a good girl, a young man should strive to have good thoughts; to see her as the living image of a saint. However, if he meets a girl who is a bit off track, to see her as a sister and be sorry for her, just as he'd be sorry to see his own sister fall, for we are all children of Adam.

- But today, Geronta, in the colleges, etc. there are many temptations for a young person.

- You must get connected with other spiritual people, so as to be helped and move about in a spiritual atmosphere. Let's not make things more difficult than they already are. I know a lot of kids who are in college and live in purity, by their own small effort and the great help of God.



We humans both grieve and rejoice. But grief should not overpower us, because great sorrow brings despair; which is the greatest sin—it's a lack of trust in the power of God. You have many thoughts, and they tire your mind. Say the Creed, and the Supplicatory Canon to our Panagia. Learn [this Canon] by heart ... so that your mind adheres to it and our Panagia will help you. Our Panagia, and our Lord's Cross, guard man from the many snares of the devil.

Without fail, kneel half an hour a day and pray to God. When you have great affliction, pray without ceasing—do not stop until you're aware of some relief in your soul. God beholds our persistence and faith, and sends His help. If you do not receive it, do not depart from prayer. He is compassionate, and will give it; but He also wants us to seek it from Him.

Elder Ieronymos of Aegina (+1966)

THE PAPIST HERESY & ITS DEEDS

By Vladimir Moss, from *"The Mystery of the Church: The Orthodox Church from Adam to the Second Coming of Christ."*

Papism amounted to a completely new view of the relationship between truth and authority in the Church. Instead of the Eastern view that authority is based on truth, which is the expression of apostolic tradition, the popes began to teach that truth is guaranteed by the authority of the pope alone. And this new teaching had a political dimension: the authority of the pope extended to the State as well as to the Church.

As pope Gregory VII, the real founder of the heretical papacy, put it in 1076: "The pope can be judged by no one; the Roman Church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman Church was founded by Christ alone; the pope alone can depose and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoprics, and divide old ones; he alone can translate bishops; he alone can call general councils and authorize canon law; he alone can revise his judgements; he alone can use the imperial insignia; he can depose emperors; he can absolve subjects from their allegiance; all princes should kiss his feet; his legates, even though in inferior orders, have precedence over all bishops; an appeal to the papal court inhibits judgement by all inferior courts; a duly ordained pope is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter."

It was the Crusades of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries that opened the eyes of the faithful to the true nature of the monster that had been born in their midst. And it then became imperative to cast out this teacher of what was in effect a blatant form of idolatrous man-worship, lest the warning of the Lord to the Thyateira Church be realized: *I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.* (Rev 2:20-23).

Already before the First Crusade, the previously unheard-of spectacle of wars between nations calling themselves Christian had become common. Thus, for much of the period 886-1018, the Greeks were fighting the Bulgarians; in 1043 the Russians attacked Constantinople; and between 1066 and 1081, the Normans conquered England and southern Italy and invaded Greece. Fortunately, in the East a shared religion and a com-

mon respect for the ideal of the Christian Empire ensured that the scars did not go deep. Thus, when the Bulgarians or Serbs waged war against the Empire, they did not seek to destroy it, but rather to replace the Greek Emperor with a Bulgarian or Serbian one. For Tsarigrad—"the city of the King"—remained unchallenged as the spiritual and political centre of Eastern Christendom.

In the West, however, the Norman Conquest of England, motivated as it was by religious as well as political considerations, and blessed by the pope, left deep scars which changed the religious, political, social and even linguistic character of England, and underlay the hostility between England and France for centuries to come.

And when the West as a whole marched to the Christian East during the Crusades, idealistic plans to free the Holy Places from the Mohammedan yoke soon degenerated, on the part of the knights—into lust for land and spoils, and on the part of the pope—into dreams of subduing "schismatic Romania" to himself. Thus, the only Orthodox nation really to benefit from the Crusades was Georgia, whose people under the leadership of King David the Restorer profited from the preoccupation of the Saracens with the Crusaders to liberate their land from the Mohammedan yoke.

But the ancient autocephalous Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch and Cyprus merely exchanged one heavy yoke for another, much more of a rapacious and religiously intolerant one. This process reached its bloody climax in 1204, when the Crusaders ravaged Constantinople, defiling

the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia and installing a Latin king and patriarch.

The honour of being the first Westerner decisively to condemn the Jezebel of the Roman papacy belongs to Bishop Ethelwine of the North English see of Durham, who solemnly anathematized the pope in 1070, after witnessing the terrible fruits of Papism in his own land. Shortly after, a flood of English refugees began arriving in Constantinople and Kiev (the daughter of the last English Orthodox king Harold married Grand-Prince Vladimir Monomakh), and English soldiers played a notable part in the Byzantine Emperor's wars against the West.

Sadly, however, England and the rest of the West gradually succumbed to the papist machine, and only occasionally did the Orthodox consciousness of the first thousand years of Western Christianity flicker into life, as when the English Proto-Protestant John Wiclif declared in 1383: "The pride of the pope is the cause why the Greeks are divided from the so-called faithful... It is we Westerners, too fanatical by far, who have been divided from the faithful Greeks and the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ..."



A reminder of what true Catholicism is was provided by the foundation, not long before the Western schism, of the multinational monastic community of Mount Athos, whose first coenobitic community had been founded by St. Athanasius of the Holy Mountain in the tenth century. “Following the lead of St. Athanasius,” writes Vasiliev, “many new monasteries, Greek and others were founded. In the time of Basil II, there was already one Iberian or Georgian monastery; emigrants from Italy founded two, a Roman and an Amalfitan. Bishop Porphyrius Uspensky, a profound Russian student of the Christian East, asserted that when the aged Athanasius died (about 1000 A.D.) there were three thousand ‘various monks’ on Mount Athos. As early as the eleventh century there was a Russian Lavra on this mountain...”

After the schism, however, the Latin monasteries ceased to exist; and early in the thirteenth century, when the uniate John Beccus was patriarch in Constantinople, Catalan soldiers ravaged the Holy Mountain, putting to death many monks who refused to accept the pope. From that time until now, the Holy Mountain—which today has Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian, as well as Greek, Georgian and Russian communities—has been at the heart of the Orthodox Church’s struggle against the false unia with Rome.

“On October 7, 1207,” writes Boyeikov, “pope Innocent addressed ‘all the Russian bishops, clergy and the whole Russian people’, demanding that they renounce Orthodoxy, since ‘the land of the Greeks and their Church has almost completely returned to the recognition of the Apostolic see.’ The Russian Church rejected the pretensions of the papacy, and the centre of Russian-Byzantine relations moved to Nicaea. The metropolitan of Kiev, who was himself a Nicaean Greek, in inspired manner led the struggle of the Russian Church in the name of the defense of Ecumenical Orthodoxy. The metropolitans of Kiev and all Russia cared for the unity and reconciliation of the warring princely groupings (of Kiev, Suzdal, Chernigov and Volhynia).

“Historians have paid a lot of attention to the Latin expansion in the Baltic. But they often forget that the other flank of the struggle in this period remained Southern Russia, while the field of battle was the Balkans. In 1205, the Bulgarians destroyed the crusading army of Baldwin II at Adrianople. The Second Bulgarian kingdom, which came into being in 1187, was historically drawn towards Orthodox Russia’. Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) was allied to Kiev and Nicaea, for which pope Gregory IX expelled him from the Catholic Church in 1236. This was on the eve of the Mongol-Tatar invasion.

“Then came 1238: Ryazan was burned to the ground, Vladimir was defeated, and the holy right-believing Princes Yury Vsevolodovich and his sons, and Vasilko of Rostov fell in battle. It was in these circumstances that on August 9, 1238, the pope blessed the Hungarian king to undertake a crusade against Bulgaria.

“The Russian Church and the whole of the Russian land was overwhelmed by the flame of the Mongol-Tatar invasion. The prophecies of St. Avraam of Smolensk became clear. Many churches, monasteries, books and church utensils were captured and destroyed; in the taking of the Russian cities, many bishops, priests and monks were killed; the administration of the Church fell into disarray: Metropolitan Iosif disappeared without a trace, while Bishops Mitrophan of Vladimir and Simeon of Peryaslavl were killed. Kiev, the adornment and ‘mother of Russian cities’ was turned into ruins (1240) and lost its significance as a political and ecclesiastical centre. Russian state life became concentrated on the North-Eastern counties.”

The thirteenth century represents a deep nadir in the history of the Orthodox Church. Beginning with the (temporary) fall of Constantinople to the Latins, and continuing with the (again temporary) apostasy of King John Asen of Bulgaria, the devastation of most of Russia and the second city of Christendom, Kiev, by the Mongols in 1240, and the signing of the unia with Rome by the Emperor Michael Paleologus at the council of Lyons in 1274, it shows Orthodoxy struggling to survive against enemies from East and West who were at the height of their power. Even the better rulers of the time, such as the Nicaean Emperor John Vatatzes, were forced into making alliances with heretics and infidels which would have horrified earlier generations.

Only the twentieth century can compare with the thirteenth in the depth and extent of its spiritual and physical destruction.

However, there were bright spots in the prevailing gloom. One was the gradual rise of Serbia under the inspired leadership of the holy King Stephen Nemanja and his son St. Sava. Another was the struggle of Novgorod, the last independent province of Russia, under St. Alexander Nevsky. This great prince decided, in spite of much opposition from his people, to pay tribute to the Mongols in order to concentrate all his forces in a successful war against what he considered to be his—from the spiritual point of view—more dangerous enemies, the papist Swedes and Teutonic Knights. It would have been good if other Orthodox—especially Greek—rulers of the time had imitated the priority St. Alexander placed on religious and spiritual over political freedom, and had taken heed to his saying: **Not in might, but in truth, is God.**



Let us strive to enter by the narrow gate. Just as the trees, if they have not stood before the winter’s storms, cannot bear good fruit, so it is with us. This present age is a storm, and it is only through many trials and temptations that we can obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.

St. Theodora

Ὁ Ἡγούμενος Ἐφραίμ Εἶναι Μόνο ἡ Ἀρχή. Ἀκολουθεῖ ὁ Διωγμός!

Τοῦ Νίκου Χειλαδάκη, Δημοσιογράφου.

Παλιὰ ἂν ἓνας εὐλαβῆς ἀσχολεῖτο μὲ τὴν κατάσταση στὸν κόσμον δὲν πρέπει νὰ ἦταν καλὰ, ἦταν γιὰ κλείσιμο στὸν Πύργο. Σήμερα ἀντίθετα ἂν ἓνας εὐλαβῆς δὲν ἐνδιαφέρεται καὶ δὲν πονεῖ γιὰ τὴν κατάσταση ποὺ ἐπικρατεῖ στὸν κόσμον, εἶναι γιὰ κλείσιμο στὸν Πύργο.

[Πατὴρ Παΐσιος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης]
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Τὸ σοκαριστικὸ θέαμα ἓνας ἡγούμενος ἀπὸ τὴν μεγαλύτερη μονὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους νὰ σέρνεται στὶς φυλακὲς σὰν κοινὸς κατάδικος, προκαλώντας τὶς ἀνάλογες ἀλγεινὲς ἐντυπώσεις σὲ τοπικὸ, ἀλλὰ καὶ σὲ διεθνὲς ἐπίπεδο, δὲν εἶναι παρὰ ἡ ἀρχὴ μίας σειρᾶς ἐπιθέσεων κατὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους, τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας στὴν χώρα μας. Ἴσως δὲν θὰ ἀργήσει ὁ καιρὸς ποὺ ἀκόμα καὶ ἡ ὁμολογία πίστεως θὰ θεωρεῖται ἀναχρονιστικὴ καὶ ἀξιόποινη πράξη· ἔτσι, καὶ ἡ ἀνάρτηση δημόσια τῶν ... εἰκόνων τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς Παναγίας, θὰ θεωρεῖται παραβίαση τῶν «δημοκρατικῶν» καὶ «ἀνθρωπίνων» δικαιωμάτων τῶν «ἐλεύθερα σκεπτόμενων» Ἑλλήνων πολιτῶν. Εἶναι φανερὸ πὼς τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ κράτος καὶ τὸ διεφθαρμένο πολιτικὸ σύστημα ποὺ τὸ κυβερνάει, σκοπεύει νὰ βάλει «χέρι» στὸ Ἅγιο Ὁρος.

Ἡ πρώτη κίνηση θὰ εἶναι ἡ ἀποστολὴ ἐλεγκτικοῦ σώματος γιὰ νὰ ἐλέγξει ποὺ πῆγαν τὰ κονδύλια ποὺ διέθεσε ἡ Εὐρωπαϊκὴ Ἐνωση στὶς διάφορες μονὲς τοῦ Ἄθω γιὰ ἔργα ἀνακαίνισης πολλῶν ἐτοιμόροπων κτιρίων. Ἡ ἀφορμὴ θὰ εἶναι ὁ ἔλεγχος, ἀλλὰ ὁ ἀπώτερος σκοπὸς θὰ εἶναι νὰ «βάλουν χέρι» στὰ ἔσοδα τῶν μονῶν, νὰ ἐλέγξουν ὅλες τὶς πηγὲς χρηματοδότησης τῶν εἴκοσι μοναστηριῶν τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους, τὶς δωρεὲς καὶ ὅποιες ἄλλες ἐπιχορηγήσεις, εἴτε ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλλάδα εἴτε ἀπὸ τὸ ἔξωτερικόν. Ὁ σκοπὸς τους θὰ εἶναι ἡ οἰκονομικὴ ἐξόντωση τῶν μοναστηριῶν.

Δεύτερο βῆμα θὰ εἶναι ἡ κατάργηση κάθε χαρακτηρισμὸς αὐτοδιοίκησης καὶ αὐτονομίας τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους, ὅπως αὐτὴ καθιερώθηκε ἐδῶ καὶ χίλια περίπου χρόνια καὶ ἔγινε σεβαστὴ καὶ ἀπὸ ὅλους τοὺς σουλτάνους τῆς Ὀθωμανικῆς αὐτοκρατορίας.

Σὰν πρώτη κίνηση πρὸς αὐτὴ τὴν κατεύθυνση ἦταν καὶ ἡ ἀποστολὴ εἰσαγγελέα στὸ Βατοπέδι, χωρὶς νὰ

ἐρωτηθεῖ κανὴν ἡ ἱερὰ ἐπιστοασία, κατὰ παράβαση ὅλων τῶν μέχρι τώρα ἰσχυόντων.

Ἡ ἐπόμενη κίνηση θὰ εἶναι ἡ ἀνακήρυξη τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους σὰν παγκόσμιον τουριστικὸ ἀξιοθέατο καὶ ἡ καθιέρωση «εἰδικῶν ἐπιστημονικῶν – τουριστικῶν ἀποστολῶν», στὴν ἀρχὴ μὲ τὴν συμβολικὴ συμμετοχὴ καὶ τοῦ γυναικείου φύλου, σὲ «εἰδικὲς» ἐργασίες, ποὺ δῆθεν θὰ ἀνυψώνουν καὶ θὰ προβάλλουν τὴν πολιτιστικὴ κληρονομιά τοῦ ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ στύλου τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας. Μὲ τὸν διπλωματικὸ αὐτὸ τρόπο θὰ καταργηθεῖ σταδιακὰ τὸ ἄβατο καὶ πλέον γυναικὲς κρατικοὶ ἀξιωματοῦχοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ διεθνῶς ἐπισκέπτες τοῦ γυναικείου φύλου, θὰ μποροῦν νὰ ἔρχονται στὸ Ἅγιο Ὁρος μὲ «εἰδικὴ ἀποστολή», καταρρίπτοντας μὲ φανερὸ πλέον τρόπο κάθε ἱερὴ παρακαταθήκη τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους.

Κάτοπιν οἱ μονὲς θὰ ἀνακηρυχτοῦν σὰν οἰκήματα ποὺ ἀνήκουν στὴν διεθνή πολιτιστικὴ κληρονομιά καὶ δὲν ἀποκλείετε νὰ ἐπιβληθοῦν νόμοι γιὰ τὴν ξενοδοχειακὴ ἀξιοποίηση τῶν ἱερῶν μονῶν πρὸς ὄφελος ὑποτίθεται τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς οἰκονομίας, μίας οἰκονομίας ποὺ τὴν ἔχει ἤδη λεηλατήσει ἡ προδοτικὴ πολιτικὴ κλίκα ποὺ κυβέρνησε τὶς τελευταῖες δεκαετίες τὴν χώρα. Καὶ στὸ τέλος θὰ ἐπιβληθεῖ ἡ ἄποψη ὅτι τὸ Ἅγιο Ὁρος «ἔχει πολὺ χρῆμα» καὶ πολλὲς προοπτικὲς οἰκονομικῆς ἀξιοποίησης γιὰ τὸ «καλὸ τῆς πατρίδας».

Ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι μόνο τὸ Ἅγιο Ὁρος ποὺ εἶναι ὁ στόχος ὅλου αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἄθεου ἐκσυγχρονιστικοῦ καὶ ἀντιχριστιανικοῦ κατεστημένου ποὺ ἔχει ὀδηγήσει τὴν χώρα στὴν πλήρη ἐθνικὴ καὶ διεθνή ἀπαξίωση. Ἡ ἐκπαίδευση εἶναι ἤδη στὸ στόχαστρο. Ἔτσι πῦ πᾶμε, σὲ λίγα χρόνια μόνο γιὰ ἱστορικοὺς λόγους θὰ ὑπάρχει ἀναφορὰ στὰ σχολικὰ βιβλία γιὰ τὴν Ὀρθοδοξία.

Τὰ παιδιά μας σὲ λίγα χρόνια θὰ ἀγνοοῦν ἀκόμα καὶ τὸ «Πάτερ Ἡμῶν» γιατί, ὅπως θὰ ἰσχυρίζονται οἱ ταγοὶ τῆς ἀπαξίωσης τῆς θρησκείας μας, ἡ δημόσια ἀπαγγελία του θὰ προσβάλλει τὴν «ἐλευθερία» καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα δικαιώματα τῶν μὴ χριστιανῶν. Οἱ εἰκόνες θὰ κατέβουν ἀπὸ τὰ δικαστήρια γιατί θὰ προσβάλλουν κάθε ἔνδικο ποὺ δὲν πιστεύει καὶ δὲν θὰ θέλει νὰ ἔχει πάνω ἀπὸ τὸ κεφάλι του στὴν διάρκεια μίας δίκης τὸν Χριστό, ἢ τὴν Παναγία μὲ τὸν Χριστό.

Οἱ καμπάνες θὰ θεωρηθοῦν σὰν ἐνοχλητικὰ κατάλοιπα μιᾶς ὀπισθοδρομικῆς ἐποχῆς καὶ θὰ καταργηθοῦν. Ἦδη γνωστὸς μητροπολίτης μητροπόλης



της κεντρικής Ελλάδας, που είχε και έκπομπή στην κρατική τηλεόραση, έκανε συστάσεις στους ιερείς της μητροπόλης του να μην ένοχλούν με τις καμπάνες της ένορίας τους, τους... φιλήσυχους πολίτες που θέλουν να ξεκουράζονται τις Κυριακές...

Το ιερό ράσα θα πρέπει να μην εμφανίζοντας δημόσια, όπως γίνετε και στις άλλες κοσμικές και «σύγχρονες» χώρες, αλλά μόνο μέσα στην εκκλησία και μόνο κατά την διάρκεια της λειτουργίας. Οί ιερείς δεν θα πρέπει να ξεχωρίζουν έξωθεν από τους άλλους πολίτες προκαλώντας το δημόσιο αίσθημα, δηλαδή τα γένια τους θα πρέπει να είναι προσεγμένα, μόλις που θα φαίνονται για να είναι καί... της μόδας.

Φυσικά οί ένορίες θα εξοντωθούν οικονομικά καθώς κάθε οικονομική επιχορήγηση θα ελέγχετε και θα φορολογείται για να πηγαίνει το μεγαλύτερο μέρος στην κρατική κλίμα. Η εφαρμογή του Καλλικράτη στην εκκλησία θα καταργήσει πολλές μητροπόλεις που έχουν ιστορία πολλών αιώνων και τις οποίες ούτε η Όθωμανική αυτοκρατορία δεν τόλμησε να τις πειράξει.

Ούτε λόγος φυσικά για άναμετάδοση της Θείας Λειτουργίας τις Κυριακές από τα κρατικά ΜΜΕ, ενώ θα απαγορεύεται κάθε παρουσία ιερέων στις δημόσιες τελετές και φυσικά δεν θα υπάρχουν άγιασμοί και δημόσια ιερά μνημόσυνα. Άλλωστε ο πολιτικός γάμος θα έχει και συνέχεια με την πολιτική κηδεία.

Να μην μιλήσουμε τέλος για τις κάρτες και την ολοκληρωτική φακέλωση της προσωπικότητάς μας με σκοπό την κατάργηση του ατεξουσίου μας, δηλαδή του πιδ ιεροῦ δώρου του Παντοδύναμου πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπο. Όλα αυτά που ίσως για πολλούς φαντάζουν άπίθανα, δυστυχώς είναι μέρος του σχεδίου καταρράκωσης κάθε αξίας της Όρθοδοξίας στην πατρίδα μας όπου η Όρθοδοξία υπήρξε για αιώνες ο φάρος της ύπαρξής της.

Φαινόμενα σαν αυτό του καθηγούμενου Έφραϊμ είναι μόνο η αρχή. Τὸ ζήτημα είναι ἂν ἡμεῖς οἱ ἴδιοι θα αφήσουμε άπροκάλυπτα όλα αυτά να περάσουν έτσι πάνω από τις κεφαλές μας.



Όταν ἡ ψυχή είναι ταραγμένη, θολώνει τὸ λογικὸ καὶ δὲ βλέπει καθαρά. Μόνο, ὅταν ἡ ψυχή είναι ἤρεμη, φωτίζει τὸ λογικὸ, γιὰ νὰ βλέπει καθαρά τὴν αἰτία κάθε πράγματος.

Όσοποιός μας δὲν είναι νὰ καταδικάζουμε τὸ κακό, ἀλλὰ νὰ τὸ διορθώνουμε. Μὲ τὴν καταδίκη ὁ ἄνθρωπος μπορεῖ νὰ χαθεῖ, μὲ τὴν κατανόηση καὶ βοήθεια θὰ σωθεῖ.

Γέρον Πορφύριος Κανσοκαλυβίτης (+1991)

Οί Δυνάμεις τοῦ Σκότους

Γέροντος Παΐσιου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου.

Οί Δαιμονισμένοι Ἀντιδρῶν σὲ Ὅτιδήποτε Ἱερό

Γέροντα, πὼς μπορεῖ κανεὶς νὰ καταλάβῃ ἂν κάποιος εἶναι δαιμονισμένος καὶ ὄχι ψυχοπαθής; - Ἀυτό καὶ ἕνας ἄπλος γιατρός, εὐλαβής, μπορεῖ νὰ τὸ καταλάβῃ. Ὅσοι πάσχουν ἀπὸ δαιμόνιο, ὅταν πλησιάσουν σὲ κάτι Ἱερό, τινάζονται. Ἐτσι φαίνεται ξεκάθαρα ὅτι ἔχουν δαιμόνιο.

Λίγο ἁγιασμὸ ἂν τοὺς δώσης ἢ μὲ ἅγιο Λεῖψανο ἂν τοὺς σταύρωσης, ἀντιδρῶν, ἐπειδὴ στρυμώχονται μέσα τους τὰ δαιμόνια, ἐνῶ, ἂν ἔχουν ψυχοπάθεια, δὲν ἀντιδρῶν καθόλου. Ἀκόμη καὶ ἐπάνω σου ἂν ἔχῃς ἕναν σταυρὸ καὶ τοὺς πλησίασης, ἀνησυχοῦν, ταραζονται.

Κάποτε σὲ μιὰ ἀγρυπνία στὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος μοῦ εἶπαν οἱ πατέρες ὅτι ἔχουν τὸν λογισμὸ πὼς κάποιος λαϊκὸς ποῦ ἦταν ἐκεῖ εἶχε δαιμόνιο. Κάθησα στὸ διπλανὸ στασίδι καὶ ἀκούμπησα ἐπάνω του τὸν σταυρὸ μου ποῦ ἔχει Τίμιο Ξύλο. Τινάχθηκε ἐπάνω σηκώθηκε καὶ πῆγε στὴν ἄλλη μεριά. Ὅταν ἔφυγε λίγο ὁ κόσμος, πῆγα μὲ τρόπο δίπλα του. Πάλι τὰ ἴδια. Κατάλαβα ὅτι πράγματι εἶχε δαιμόνιο.

Ὅταν μοῦ φέρνουν στὸ Καλύβι παιδάκια καὶ μοῦ λένε ὅτι ἔχουν δαιμόνιο, γιὰ νὰ διαπιστώσω ἂν εἶναι δαιμονισμένα, μερικὲς φορὲς παίρνω ἕνα τεμάχιο ἁγίου Λειψάνου τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἀρσενίου καὶ τὸ κρύβω στὴν χούφτα μου. Καὶ νὰ δῆτε, ἐνῶ ἔχω κλειστὰ καὶ τὰ δυὸ χέρια μου, τὸ παιδάκι, ἂν ἔχῃ δαιμόνιο, κοιτάζει φοβισμένο τὸ χέρι μὲ τὸ ὅποιο κρατῶ τὸ ἅγιο Λεῖψανο. Ἄν ὅμως δὲν ἔχῃ δαιμόνιο, ἄλλα λ.χ. κάποια ἀρρώστια ἐγκεφαλική, δὲν ἀντιδρᾷ καθόλου. Ἄλλοτε πάλι τοὺς δίνω νερὸ στὸ ὅποιο προηγουμένως ἔχω βουτήξει τεμάχιο ἁγίου Λειψάνου, ἀλλά, ἂν ἔχουν δαιμόνιο, δὲν τὸ πίνουν ἀπομακρύνονται.

Σὲ ἕνα δαιμονισμένο παιδάκι ἔδωσα μιὰ φορὰ νὰ φάῃ πρῶτα γλυκά, γιὰ νὰ διψᾷ πολύ, καὶ μετὰ τοῦ ἔφερα ἀπὸ αὐτὸ τὸ νερὸ. «Στὸν Γιαννάκη, εἶπα, θὰ δώσω πιδ καλὸ νερό». Μόλις ἤπιε λίγο, ἄρχισε νὰ φωνάζῃ: «Αὐτὸ τὸ νερὸ μὲ καίει. Τί ἔχει μέσα;». «Τίποτε», τοῦ λέω. «Τί μὲ κάνεις; Μὲ καίει», φώναζε. «Δὲν καίει ἐσένα· κάποιον ἄλλον καίει», τοῦ λέω. Τὸν σταύρωνα στὸ κεφάλι, καὶ τινάζονταν τὰ χέρια, τὰ πόδια του... Ἐπαθε δαιμονικὴ κρίση.

Τὸ δαιμόνιο τὸ ἔκανε ἕνα κουβάρι. Θυμάστε κι ἐκεῖνον τὸν φοιτητὴ ποῦ εἶχε ἔρθει ἐδῶ παλιά; «Ἐχω μέσα μου δαιμόνιο, μοῦ ἔλεγε, καὶ μὲ τυραννάει πολύ. Περνάω μαρτύριο ἀπὸ τὸν δαίμονα, γιατί μὲ ἀναγκάζει νὰ λέω καὶ αἰσχρά. Ἐχω φθάσει σὲ ἀπελπισία. Αἰσθάνομαι νὰ μὲ πιέζῃ μέσα μου, νὰ

μὲ σφίγγη πότε ἐδῶ, πότε ἐκεῖ», καὶ ὁ καημένος ἔδειχνε τὴν κοιλιὰ του, τὸ στήθος, τὰ πλευρά, τὰ χέρια. Ἐπειδὴ ἦταν πολὺ εὐαίσθητος, γιὰ νὰ μὴν τὸν πληγῶσω καὶ γιὰ νὰ τὸν παρηγορήσω, τοῦ εἶπα: «Κοίταξε, δὲν ἔχεις μέσα σου δαιμόνιο· μιὰ ἐξωτερικὴ δαιμονικὴ ἐπίδραση εἶναι ἐπάνω σου».

Ὅταν πήγαμε στὴν ἐκκλησία, εἶπα στὶς ἀδελφές ποὺ ἦταν ἐκεῖ νὰ κάνουν εὐχὴ γιὰ τὸ δυστυχισμένο πλάσμα τοῦ Θεοῦ, κι ἐγὼ πήρα ἀπὸ τὸ Ἱερὸ ἕνα τεμάχιο ἁγίου Λειψάνου τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἀρσενίου, τὸν πλησίασα καὶ τὸν ξαναρώτησα: «Σὲ ποῖο σημεῖο σὲ πιέζει καὶ σὲ βασανίζει ὁ δαίμονας; Ποῦ νομίζεις ὅτι βρίσκεται;».

Μοῦ ἔδειξε τότε τὰ πλευρά του. «Ποῦ, ἐδῶ;», τὸν ρώτησα καὶ ἀκούμπησα ἐπάνω τὴν χούφτα μου μὲ τὸ ἅγιο Λεῖψανο. Βγάζει ἀμέσως ἕνα οὐρλιαχτό! «Μ' ἔκαψες, μ' ἔκαψες! Δὲν φεύγω...ὦχ! Δὲν φεύγω!». Φώναζε, ἔβριζε, ἔλεγε αἰσχρά. Τότε ἄρχισα μέσα μου νὰ λέω: «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, δίωξε τὸ ἀκάθαρτο πνεῦμα ἀπὸ τὸ πλάσμα Σου καὶ νὰ τὸν σταυρώσω μὲ τὸ ἱερὸ Λεῖψανο».

Αὐτὸ γινόταν ἐπὶ εἴκοσι λεπτά. Ὑστερα ὁ δαίμονας τὸν σπάρραξε, τὸν ἔρριξε κάτω. Ἐκανε τοῦμπες. Τὸ κουστοῦμι του ἔγινε μέσ' στὶς σκόνες. Τὸν σηκώσαμε ὄρθιο. Ἐτρεμε ὀλόκληρος καὶ ἔκανε ἔντονες σπασμωδικές κινήσεις. Πιάσθηκε ἀπὸ τὸ τέμπλο, γιὰ νὰ στηριχτεῖ. Ἀπὸ τὰ χέρια τοῦ ἔτρεχε κρύος ἰδρώτας, ὅπως εἶναι ἡ δροσιὰ στὰ χορτάρια. σὲ λίγο ἔφυγε ὁ δαίμονας καὶ ἠρέμησε. Ἐγινε καλὰ καὶ τώρα εἶναι μιὰ χαρά.

Μὴ Δίνετε Σημασίαν στὰ Λόγια τοῦ Δαιμονισμένου

- Γέροντα, τί πρέπει νὰ προσέχη κανεῖς, ὅταν συζητᾷ μὲ ἕνα δαιμονισμένο;

- Νὰ λήη τὴν εὐχὴ καὶ νὰ τοῦ φέρεται μὲ καλωσύνη.

- Γέροντα, θυμοῦνται οἱ δαιμονισμένοι τί λένε πάνω στὴν κρίση τους;

- Ἄλλα τὰ θυμοῦνται καὶ ἄλλα δὲν τὰ θυμοῦνται.

Δὲν ξέρουμε πῶς ἐργάζεται ὁ Θεός. Μερικὲς φορὲς ἐπιτρέπει νὰ τὰ θυμοῦνται, γιὰ νὰ ταπεινωθοῦν καὶ νὰ μετανοήσουν.

Καὶ ὅταν ζητᾷ κάτι ὁ δαιμονισμένος, δὲν εἶναι εὐκόλο νὰ καταλάβῃ κανεῖς πότε αὐτὸ εἶναι ἀπὸ τὸν διάβολο καὶ πότε τὸ ἔχει ἀνάγκη ὁ ἴδιος. Εἶχα συναντήσει κάπου μιὰ δαιμονισμένη κοπέλλα. Αὐτὴ εἶχε διαβάσει Καζαντζάκη καὶ πίστευε κάτι βλάσφημα πράγματα μὲ ἀποτέλεσμα νὰ δαιμονισθῇ.

Ξαφνικὰ τὴν ἐπίασε τὸ δαιμόνιο καὶ ἔβαλε κάτι φωνές! «Καίγομαι, καίγομαι!». Οἱ δικοί της τὴν κρατοῦσαν, γιὰ νὰ τὴν σταυρώσω. Μετὰ φώναζε: «Νερό, νερό!». Λέω: «Φέρτε τῆς νερό». «Ὅχι, ὄχι, μοῦ λένε, γιατί μᾶς εἶπε κάποιος νὰ μὴν κάνουμε ὑπακοὴ στὸν διάβολο». «Τώρα, λέω, ἡ καημένη διψάει. Φέρτε

νερό». Καταλάβαινα πότε ἦταν τὸ κάψιμο ἀπὸ τὸν διάβολο καὶ πότε ἦταν ἀπὸ δίψα. Ἦπτε ἡ καημένη κανα-δυὸ ποτήρια νερό. «Κάρβουνα, ἔλεγε, ἔχω μέσα μου, τόσο κάψιμο νιώθω. Καὶ ἕνα κουβὰ νερὸ νὰ ἔπινα, δὲν θὰ ἔσβηνε μέσα μου ἡ φωτιά». Τέτοιο κάψιμο ἔνιωθε!

- Ὅταν, Γέροντα, φωνάζει ἕνας δαιμονισμένος, πῶς καταλαβαίνουμε πότε μιλάει ὁ διάβολος μέσω τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πότε ὁ ἄνθρωπος;

- Ὅταν μιλάει ὁ διάβολος, τὰ χεῖλη δὲν κινοῦνται κανονικά: κινοῦνται σάν μηχανή. Ἐνῶ, ὅταν μιλάει ὁ ἄνθρωπος, κινοῦνται φυσιολογικά. Ὅταν φωνάζει ἕνας δαιμονισμένος, τὴν ὥρα ποὺ τοῦ διαβάζουν ἐξορκισμούς ἢ οἱ ἄλλοι εὐχονται γι' αὐτόν, ἄλλοτε ἢ ἴδια ἡ ψυχὴ βασανίζεται καὶ λέει λ.χ. στὸν διάβολο: «φύγε, τί κάθου;» καὶ ἄλλοτε ὁ διάβολος βρίζει τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἢ τὸν ἱερέα ἢ βλασφημᾷ τὸν Χριστό, τὴν Παναγία, τοὺς Ἁγίους. Ἄλλοτε λέει ψέματα ἢ ἄλλοτε πιέζεται ἀπὸ τὴν δύναμη τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ νὰ πῇ τὴν ἀλήθεια.

Μερικὲς φορὲς πάλι ὁ δαιμονισμένος λέει δικὰ του ἀπὸ τὰ πνευματικὰ ποὺ ἔχει διαβάσει κ.λπ. Τί νὰ πῶ; Μπερδεμένα πράγματα. Γι' αὐτό, ὅταν συζητᾷτε μαζί του, νὰ προσέχετε πολὺ. Μὴ δίνετε σημασίαν στὰ λόγια του. Μπορεῖ νὰ λήη λ.χ. «μὲ καῖς». Ἄν πραγματικὰ τὸν καῖς καὶ πῆς «τὸν καῖω», κάηκες. Ἄν δὲν τὸν καῖς καὶ πιστέψης ὅτι τὸν καῖς, κάηκες δυὸ φορὲς. Ἦ μπορεῖ νὰ φωνάζει «βρωμιᾶρες» καὶ σὲ μιὰ νὰ πῇ: «Ἐσὺ εἶσαι καθαρὴ». Ἄν ἐκεῖνη τὸ πιστέψη, πάει, χάθηκε. Γι' αὐτὸ μὴν κάνετε πειράματα μὲ τὸν διάβολο.

Σὲ ἕνα μοναστήρι πήγαν ἕνα δαιμονισμένο καὶ ὁ ἡγούμενος εἶπε στοὺς πατέρες νὰ πᾶνε στὴν ἐκκλησία νὰ κάνουν κομποσχοῖνι. Εἶχαν ἐκεῖ καὶ τὴν κάρα τοῦ Ἁγίου Παρθενίου, ἐπισκόπου Λαμπάκου, καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιο στρουμώθηκε πολὺ. Συγχρόνως, ὁ ἡγούμενος ἀνέθεσε καὶ σὲ ἕνα ἱερομόναχο νὰ διαβάσῃ στὸν δαιμονισμένο ἐξορκισμούς.

Ὁ ἱερομόναχος αὐτὸς ἦταν εὐλαβὴς μὲν ἐξωτερικὰ, ἀλλὰ ἐσωτερικὰ εἶχε κρυφὴ ὑπερηφάνεια. Ἦταν ἀγωνιστὴς καὶ τυπικὸς σὲ ὅλα. Νουθετοῦσε πνευματικὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, γιατί ἦταν καὶ λόγιος. Ὁ ἴδιος ὅμως δὲν βοηθιοῦταν ἀπὸ κανέναν, γιατί οἱ ἄλλοι, ἀπὸ σεβασμὸ, ὅταν τὸν ἔβλεπαν νὰ κάνῃ κάτι στραβό, δίσταζαν νὰ τοῦ τὸ ποῦν. Μὲ ἄλλα λόγια, εἶχε δημιουργήσει ψευδαισθήσεις στὸν ἑαυτό του ὅτι εἶναι ὁ πιὸ ἐνάρετος τῆς μονῆς κ.λπ. Ὁ πονηρὸς βρῆκε εὐκαιρία ἐκεῖνη τὴν ἡμέρα νὰ τοῦ κάνῃ κακό. Ἐβαλε τὴν πονηριά του, γιὰ νὰ τοῦ δώσῃ τὴν ἐντύπωση ὅτι αὐτὸς διώχνει τὸ δαιμόνιο ἀπὸ τὸν δαιμονισμένο.

Μόλις λοιπὸν ἄρχισε νὰ διαβάσῃ τοὺς ἐξορκισμούς, ἄρχισε τὸ δαιμόνιο νὰ φωνάζει: «καίγομαι! ποῦ μὲ διώχνεις, ἄσπλαχνε;», ὁπότε νόμισε ὅτι καίγεται ἀπὸ

τὸν δικό του ἔξορκισμό—ἐνῶ ὁ δαίμονας ζοριζόταν, γιατί προσεύχονταν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πατέρες καὶ ἀπάντησε στὸν δαίμονα: «Νὰ ἔρθης σ' ἐμένα».

Τὸ εἶχε πει αὐτὸ ὁ Ἅγιος Παρθένιος σὲ ἕνα δαιμόνιο, ἄλλα ἐκεῖνος ἦταν ἅγιος. Μιὰ φορὰ δηλαδὴ ποὺ ἕνα δαιμόνιο φώναζε: «καίγομαι, καίγομαι, ποῦ νὰ πάω;», ὁ Ἅγιος τοῦ εἶπε: «Ἐλα σ' ἐμένα». Τότε τὸ δαιμόνιο εἶπε στὸν Ἅγιο: «καὶ μόνον τὸ ὄνομά σου μὲ καίει, Παρθένιε!», καὶ ἔφυγε ἀπὸ τὸν δαιμονισμένο ποὺ ταλαιπωροῦσε.

Πῆγε καὶ αὐτὸς νὰ κἀνῃ τὸν Ἅγιο Παρθένιο καὶ δαιμονίσθηκε. Ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνη τὴν στιγμή τὸν ἔξουσίαζε πιά ὁ δαίμονας. Χρόνια ὀλόκληρα βασανίζοταν καὶ δὲν μποροῦσε νὰ ἀναπαυθῆ πουθενά. Συνέχεια γύριζε, πότε ἔξω στὸν κόσμο καὶ πότε μέσα στὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος. Τί τράβηξε ὁ καημένος! Τοῦ εἶχε δημιουργήσει αὐτὴ ἡ κατάσταση ψυχικὴ κούραση καὶ σωματικὴ κόπωση μὲ τρεμούλα. καὶ νὰ δῆτε, ἐνῶ ἦταν καλὸς παπᾶς, δὲν μποροῦσε μετὰ νὰ λειτουργήσῃ. Βλέπετε τί κάνει ὁ διάβολος;

- Γέροντα, ἔχει κάποια σχέση ὁ καφὲς μὲ τὶς ἀντιδράσεις ἑνὸς δαιμονισμένου;

- Ὅταν τὸ νευρικὸ σύστημα εἶναι ταραγμένο καὶ πιῆ κανεὶς πολλοὺς καφέδες, κλονίζονται τὰ νεῦρα καὶ τὸ ταγκαλάκι ἐκμεταλλεύεται αὐτὴν τὴν κατάσταση. Δὲν εἶναι ὅτι ὁ καφὲς εἶναι κάτι δαιμονικό. Χρησιμοποιεῖ τὸ ταγκαλάκι τὴν ἐπίδρασή του στὰ νεῦρα, καὶ ὁ δαιμονισμένος ἀντιδράει χειρότερα.



Ὅποιος ἔχει ταπεινοφροσύνη, γλώσσα δὲν ἔχει γιὰ νὰ ἐλέγξει τὸν ἕναν ποὺ εἶναι ἀμελής ἢ τὸν ἄλλον ποὺ εἶναι ἀσεβής· οὔτε μάτια ἔχει, γιὰ νὰ παρατηρεῖ τὰ ἐλαττώματα ἄλλου· οὔτε αὐτιά ἔχει, γιὰ νὰ ἀκούει ὅσα δὲν ὠφελοῦν τὴν ψυχὴ του. Καὶ δὲν ἔχει νὰ μιλήσῃ σὲ κανέναν γιὰ τίποτε ἄλλο, παρὰ μόνο γιὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες του· ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἔχει εἰρηνικὲς σχέσεις ὄχι γιὰ κάποια φιλία, ἀλλὰ γιὰ χάρη τῆς ἐντολῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ (Μαρκ. 9:50): *Καλὸν τὸ ἄλα ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἄλα ἄναλον γένηται, ἐν τίνι αὐτὸ ἀρτύσετε; ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἄλα, καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις.*

Ἄν κανεὶς δὲν βαδίζει τὸν δρόμο τοῦτο (τῆς ταπεινοφροσύνης), ἀκόμα κι ἂν νηστεύει (αὐστηρά, τρώγοντας κάθε) ἕξι μέρες ἢ ἐπιδοθεῖ σὲ (ὅποιοιςδήποτε) μεγάλους ἀγῶνες, χαμένοι πηγαίνουν ὅλοι του οἱ κόποι.

Ἀββᾶς Ἡσαΐας

Γιὰ Ὅσους «Σκοτώνουν» τὸν Πολύτιμο Χρόνο τους

Ἀπὸ ἕνα Ἑλληνορθόδοξο φυλλάδιο.



Ζοῦσε στοὺς πρώτους Ζαῖώνας ἕνας Μοναχός, ὁ ὁποῖος ὅσες φορὲς τὸν ἐρωτοῦσε ὁ Ἡγούμενός του «πῶς πηγαίνεις στὴν ὑγεία σου, ἀδελφέ;», αὐτὸς πάντοτε παραπονιόταν ὅτι ἦταν κατάκοπος ἀπὸ τὴν πολλὴ ἐργασία.

Ἀκούγοντας καθημερινῶς ὁ Ἡγούμενος τὸ ἴδιο παράπονο ἐρώτησε κάποια ἡμέρα τὸν Μοναχό: «Τί εἶδους ἐργασία κάμνεις

καὶ κοπιᾶζεις τόσο πολύ, ἀδελφέ;» Καὶ ὁ Μοναχὸς ἀπάντησε:

«Ἄγιε Ἡγούμενε ἔχω τόσες ἐργασίες κάθε ἡμέρα καὶ νύκτα, ὥστε οἱ δυνάμεις μου δὲν θὰ ἔφθαναν γι' αὐτές, ἐὰν ὁ Θεὸς δὲν μὲ βοηθοῦσε.

Πρῶτον, ἔχω δυὸ γεράκια, τὰ ὁποῖα προσπαθῶ νὰ κρατῶ δέσμια καὶ νὰ τὰ ἐξημερῶνω. **Δεύτερον**, ἔχω δυὸ λαγούς, τοὺς ὁποῖους φυλάγω γιὰ νὰ μὴ φύγουν. **Τρίτον**, ἔχω δυὸ βόδια, τὰ ὁποῖα ἐπιβλέπω γιὰ νὰ ἐργάζονται. **Τέταρτον**, ἔχω ἕνα λύκο τὸν ὁποῖον προσέχω διὰ νὰ μὴ βλάψῃ κανένα. **Πέμπτον**, ἔχω ἕνα λιοντάρι, τὸ ὁποῖο προσπαθῶ νὰ κατανικήσω. Καὶ **ἕκτον**, ἔχω ἕνα ἀσθενή, τὸν ὁποῖον πρέπει πάντοτε νὰ τὸν περιποιοῦμαι».

Ὁ Ἡγούμενος ἀφοῦ ἄκουσε αὐτὰ γέλασε λίγο καὶ εἶπε στὸν Μοναχό: «Αὐτά. παιδί μου, δὲν γίνονται, διότι εἶναι ἀδύνατον νὰ ἐκτελεῖ κανεὶς τόσες ἐργασίες».

«Καὶ ὅμως, σεβαστέ μου πάτερ», ἀπάντησε ὁ Μοναχός, «σοῦ εἶπα τὴν ἀλήθεια».

Καὶ ὁ Ἡγούμενος, ὁ ὁποῖος νόμιζε μέχρι ἕνα βαθμὸ ἐπιπόλαια καὶ χωρὶς περιεχόμενο τὰ λόγια τοῦ Μοναχοῦ, εἶπε: «Ἐξήγησέ μου, παιδί μου».

Καὶ ὁ Μοναχὸς ἀπάντησε:

«**Πρῶτον**, τὰ δυὸ γεράκια, Πάτερ μου, εἶναι τὰ δυὸ μάτια μου, τὰ ὁποῖα πετοῦν, πηγαίνουν ἀπὸ δῶ καὶ ἀπ' ἐκεῖ καὶ πρέπει νὰ φροντίζω γιὰ νὰ μὴ δοῦν κάτι, τὸ ὁποῖο θὰ μποροῦσε νὰ μὲ προτρέψῃ σὲ κάποια ἁμαρτία, πρῶγμα δυστυχῶς ποὺ ἔπαθε ὁ προφήτης καὶ βασιλιάς Δαβὶδ, βλέποντας τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ Οὐρίου, τὴν Βηρσαβέε.

Δεύτερον, οἱ δυὸ λαγοί, εἶναι τὰ πόδια μου, τὰ ὁποῖα πρέπει νὰ ἐμποδίζω ἀπὸ τὸ νὰ τρέχουν στὶς ἡδονὲς καὶ τὸν δρόμο τῆς ἁμαρτίας διότι εἰς τὸ βάπτισμά μου, ὅταν ὁ ἱερεὺς ἔχρει αὐτὰ εἶπε: *Τοῦ πορεύεσθε τὰ διαβήματά*

Σου, δηλαδή του Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Φαντάζεσαι λοιπόν, Πάτερ μου, πόσους κόπους χρειάζεται αυτό;

Τρίτον, τὰ δυὸ βόδια εἶναι τὰ χέρια μου, τὰ ὅποια ἐπιβλέπω μὲ μεγάλη προσοχή γιὰ νὰ ἐργάζονται. Νὰ ἐργάζονται ὅμως τὸ ἀγαθὸν ὡς τὰ χέρια τοῦ Κυρίου, ποὺ πάλι στὸ βάπτισμά μου γι' αὐτὰ ὁ ἱερεὺς εἶπε *Αἱ χεῖρες σου ἐποίησάν με καὶ ἔπλασάν με*.

Τέταρτον, ὁ λύκος εἶναι ἡ γλώσσα μου, ἡ ὁποία πάντοτε ἔχει ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ χαλινάρι, γιὰ νὰ μὴ δαγκάσει κανένα ἀδελφόν μου, μὲ τὴν κατηγορία, ποὺ εἶναι παρὼν ἢ ἀπὼν καὶ πεθάνει. Καὶ ἀντιλαμβάνεσαι, πάτερ μου, ὅταν τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα διὰ τοῦ Ἀδελφόθεου Ἰακώβου γιὰ τὴν γλώσσα λέγει: *Εἶ τις ἐν λόγῳ οὐ πταίει, οὗτος τέλειος ἀνὴρ, καὶ πάλιν: Ἡ γλώσσα πῦρ, ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας. οὕτως ἡ γλώσσα καθίσταται ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν ἢ σπιλοῦσα (μολύνουσα) ὄλον τὸ σῶμα...*, καὶ πάλιν: *Τὴν δὲ γλῶσσαν οὐδεὶς δύναται ἀνθρώπων δαμάσαι ἀκατάσχετον κακόν, μεστὴ ἰοῦ θανατηφόρου. Ἐν αὐτῇ εὐλογοῦμεν τὸν Θεὸν καὶ πατέρα, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ καταρώμεθα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ γεγονότας...* (Ἰακ. 3:2, 6, 8-9). Τί πρέπει νὰ κάμνω ἐγὼ μὲ αὐτὸ τὸ θηρίο, τὸν λύκο ποὺ ἔχω στὸ στόμα μου;

Ἄλλα καὶ ἀκόμη, πῶς ἐγὼ, πάτερ μου, νὰ ἐπιτύχω αὐτὸ ποὺ λέγει ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος γιὰ τὴν γλώσσα, γιὰ νὰ μὴ λέγει περισσότερα ἢ λιγότερα, ἀλλὰ ὅλα μὲ τὸ ζῦγισμα νὰ λέγω, γιὰ νὰ εἶμαι δίκαιος χωρὶς κόπου μεγάλου; Λέγει ὁ Ἅγιος ὅτι: *Ζυγαριὰ νὰ ἔχομεν τὴν γλῶσσα μας ὥστε μὲ μεγάλη προσοχή νὰ ζυγίζομε τὰ λόγια μας καὶ νὰ μὴ λέμε περισσότερα οὔτε λιγότερα ἀλλὰ τὰ σωστὰ μὲ ἀκρίβεια. Διότι, ἐὰν ζυγίζομε μὲ ἀκρίβεια καὶ μεγάλη προσοχή τὸν χρυσὸ καὶ ἄλλα πράγματα, πρέπει, μὲ μεγαλύτερη προσοχή καὶ ἀκρίβεια, νὰ προσέχομε τὰ λόγια μας.*

Καὶ ἀκόμη, πάτερ μου, πῶς νὰ μὴ παλέψω μὲ τὸν λύκο αὐτόν, τὴν γλῶσσα μου, ποὺ διαβάζω τὸν Ἀββᾶ Σισώη καὶ λέγει: *Ἀδελφέ, ἔχω τριάντα χρόνια ὅπου δὲν κάμνω πλέον δέησιν εἰς τὸν Θεὸν περὶ ἁμαρτίας, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ μόνον λέγω εἰς τὴν προσευχήν μου... Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ σκέπασόν με ἀπὸ τῆς γλώσσης μου, διότι τόσους χρόνους ἔχω ἀσκητεύοντας καὶ πάλιν σκοντάπτω μὲ τὴν γλῶσσαν καὶ ἁμαρτάνω...*

Πέμπτον, ὁ λέων, πάτερ μου, εἶναι ἡ καρδιά μου, κατὰ τῆς ὁποίας διεξάγω νύκτα καὶ ἡμέρα πεισματώδη ἀγώνα καὶ δυστυχῶς μὲ ἔλκει μὲ μεγάλη βία σὲ ὅλα ὅσα βλάπτουν καὶ καταστρέφουν τὴν ψυχὴν μου. Βλέπεις, πάτερ μου, ὅτι ἐγκείται ἡ διάνοια τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπιμελῶς ἐπὶ τὰ πονηρὰ ἐκ νεότητος αὐτοῦ (Γέν. 8:21). Καὶ ἀκόμη, ὅτι ἡ καρδιά μου εἶναι ἀκάθαρτος ὡς εἶπεν ὁ Κύριός μου: *Ἐκ γὰρ τῆς καρδίας ἐξέρχονται διαλογισμοὶ πονηροί, φόνοι, μοιχεῖαι, πορνεῖαι, κλοπαί, ψευδομαρτυρίαι, βλασφημίαι.* (Μαθ. 15:19)

Πράγματι, ἔτσι εἶναι καὶ πρέπει νὰ κουρασθῶ νὰ τὴν καθαρίσω, μοῦ τὸ ἐπιβεβαίωσε ὁ Προφήτης Δαβὶδ ποὺ λέγει εἰς τὸν Κύριον: *Καρδίαν καθαρὰν κτίσον ἐν ἐμοὶ ὁ θεὸς καὶ πνεῦμα εὐθὲς ἐγκαίνισον ἐν τοῖς ἐγκάτοις μου.* (Ψαλμ. 50:12)

Ἑκτον, πάτερ μου, ὁ ἀσθενής, εἶναι τὸ σῶμα μου, τὸ ὁποῖον ποτὲ δὲν εὐρίσκεται στὴν ἴδια κατάσταση. Ἄλλοτε θέλει τροφή καὶ ἄλλοτε νηστεία. Ἄλλοτε ἀνάπαυση καὶ ἄλλοτε τυραννία. Ἄλλοτε περιθάλψη καὶ ἄλλοτε ὄχι, καὶ γιὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτὸν εἶμαι ἀναγκασμένος νὰ ἔχω τὴν προσοχή μου διαρκῶς γυρισμένη πρὸς αὐτό, γιὰ νὰ τὸ περιποιοῦμαι ὅσο εἶναι δίκαιο, ἐπειδὴ χρειάζεται καὶ αὐτὸ ὅπως τὸ σοφλί γιὰ τὸ αὐτό».

Ἀφοῦ ἄκουσε αὐτὰ ὁ Ἠγούμενος ἀπὸ τὸν σοφὸ τοῦ Μοναχό, τὸν συγχάρηκε καὶ εἶπε: «Ἐὰν ὅλοι κάναμε ὅπως ἐσὺ τέκνον μου, δηλαδή νὰ ἐργαζόμαστε διὰ νὰ συγκρατήσομε τὰ πάθη μας καὶ ἐνημερώσομε τὸν κακὸν ἑαυτοῦ μας, ἡ γῆ θὰ γινόταν οὐρανὸς καὶ ὅλοι θὰ ἦμασταν εὐτυχισμένοι καὶ εἰρηνικοί».

Δυστυχῶς, ἀγαπητοί, ἐμεῖς δὲν ἐργαζόμαστε γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ μας, καὶ ἡ κοινωνία μας κατάντησε ζούγκλα, καίτοι στὴν Κυριακὴ προσευχὴ ὁ Κύριός μας προτρέπει νὰ λέμε: *Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς...* Ἄλλα ποῦ ἐμεῖς νὰ βροῦμε τὸν χρόνο γιὰ τὴν ψυχὴ μας, τὴν ἀρετὴ, τὴν πίστη, τὸν Χριστό, τὴν σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς μας.

Βλέπετε τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου ἀνόητα καὶ ἁμαρτωλά: τὰ ἔχουμε περισπούδαστα, μόδα, καφενεῖο, χαρτί, γῆπεδο, ταβέρνα, διαφθορά, χορὸς καὶ γενικὰ ὅτι ἔχει σχέση μὲ τὴν σάρκα. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ φθάσαμε τόσο χαμηλὰ καὶ ζοῦμε σὰν νὰ μὴ γνωρίσαμε Χριστόν: καὶ ἔτσι, ἡμεθα ἄξιοι τῆς «τύχης» μας. Καὶ γι' αὐτὸ τιμωροῦμεθα ἀπὸ τὶς ἐπιλογὲς καὶ τὶς ἁμαρτίες μας.

Εἶθε νὰ θελήσομε νὰ δεχθοῦμε τὸν Θεῖο φωτισμὸ, νὰ ἐργαστοῦμε γιὰ τὴν κάθαρση τῶν αἰσθήσεων καὶ ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη, καὶ τὴν ἀποκτῆση τῶν ἀρετῶν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου γιὰ νὰ ἔχομε ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας, μὲ τὶς πρεσβεῖες τῆς Παναγίας καὶ ὅλων τῶν Ἁγίων.



Στὸ τέλος κάθε αἰτήματός μας νὰ λέμε: *Οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ' ὡς Σὺ.* (Μαθ. 26:39). Μόνο σ' ἓνα αἶτημα δὲν χρειάζεται νὰ τὸ προσθέτομε αὐτό: σ' ἐκεῖνο τῆς σωτηρίας μας, διότι ὁ Θεὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν. (Α' Τιμ. 2:4)

π. Ἐπιφάνιος Θεοδωρόπουλος (+1989)

Ἡ Τουρκία, ἡ Καταραμένη Φυλή, θὰ Σβήσῃ Ὄταν Κατέβῃ ἡ Ρώσικη Ἀρμάδα

Τὸ κείμενο αὐτὸ εἶναι αὐτοτελὲς τὸ 10^{ον} κεφάλαιο ἀπὸ τὸ ἐκδοθὲν βιβλίον γιὰ τὸν Γέροντα Παῖσιο, «Λόγοι χάριτος καὶ Σοφίας», ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀγιορείτη π. Μακάριο Ἀγιαννανίτη. Πρέπει νὰ τονίσουμε ὅτι ἐξακολουθοῦμε νὰ εἴμεθα ρεαλιστικοὶ παρατηρητὲς τῶν σημερινῶν γεγονότων καὶ δὲν ἀσπαζόμαστε τίς προβλέψεις μελλοντικῶν γεγονότων ἀπὸ τὸν οἰονδήποτε. Ἀλλὰ σίγουρα τὸ παραπάνω ἀπὸ σπασμα θὰ ἀποτελέσει σημεῖο ἀνάλυσης πολλῶν εἰδικῶν...

Σήμερα ὁ νέος Ἰσραὴλ εἴμεθα ἡμεῖς οἱ Ἕλληνες. Ἡ δική μας παιδεία ὅμως εἶναι ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ καὶ ὄχι ἑπτάκις, διότι ἡμεῖς εἴχαμε τὴ γνώση. Τὸ ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ, ποὺ εἶναι ἡ αἰχμαλωσία μας (1453 Ἄλωση Κων/πόλεως) ἀπὸ τὸ Ἰσλάμ, τώρα ἀκριβῶς τελειώνει. Αὐτὸς ἦταν ὁ κανόνας τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ τίς ἁμαρτίες μας.

Ἐνα παρόμοιο εἶχε γίνει μὲ τὸν ρωσικὸ λαό. Πρὶν 50 χρόνια μαζί μὲ τὸν γέροντά μου, τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν Ἐγκλειστο, συναντήσαμε ἕνα Ρῶσο μοναχό, γέροντα. Γιὰ νὰ τὸν ἐνισχύσουμε γιὰ τὰ δεινὰ τοῦ Ρωσικοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τὴν δοκιμασία τῶν πιστῶν ἀπὸ τὸν κομμουνισμό, θελήσαμε νὰ τοῦ δώσουμε θάρρος, λέγοντάς του λόγια παρηγοριάς. Αὐτὸς ὅμως λέει: «Δὲν εἶναι τίποτα, κανόνας εἶναι ποὺ θὰ κρατήσῃ ἑβδομήντα χρόνια». Ἐσὺ πῶς τὸ ξέρεις; ρωτήσαμε.

Καὶ ἡ ἀπάντησή του ἦταν: «Τὸ 1917, ὅταν ἐπεκράτησε ὁ κομμουνισμός, ὁ Χριστιανισμὸς ἐκηρύχθη ἐκτὸς νόμου, καὶ ὅποιος σκότωνα Χριστιανὸς ἦταν ἥρωας. Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ πανικοβλήθησαν καὶ οἱ μὲν πλούσιοι ἐδραπέτευσαν πρὸς τὴν Εὐρώπη, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι ἔτρεχαν στοὺς ναοὺς, ἐλπίζοντας ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς θὰ κάμει θαῦμα γιὰ νὰ τοὺς σώσει. Σὲ ἕνα μεγάλο ναό, τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων, μπῆκαν πέντε περίπου χιλιάδες Χριστιανοί.

Οἱ μπόλσεβίκοι ὅταν τοὺς βρῆκαν ἔβαλαν φωτιὰ στὸ ναό. Ἐνας ἀπὸ τοὺς Χριστιανὸς δὲν πέθανε. Εἶχε κατορθώσει νὰ ἀνέβῃ ψηλὰ στοὺς τρούλους καὶ ἔμενε δίπλα ἀπὸ ἕνα παράθυρο καὶ ἀνέπνεε. Αὐτὸς λοιπὸν μοῦ εἶπε, ὅτι ὅταν ἦρθε ἡ ὥρα ποὺ ἄρχισε ὁ κόσμος νὰ πεθαίνει, κλαίγανε καὶ φωνάζανε, παρουσιάστηκαν οἱ Δώδεκα ἀπὸ στολοὶ καὶ τοὺς εἶπαν ὅτι δὲν μποροῦν νὰ βοηθήσουν, διότι δὲν τὸ ἐπιτρέπει ὁ Θεός. Εἶναι κανόνας γιὰ τίς ἁμαρτίες μας ποὺ θὰ κρατήσῃ 70 χρόνια».

Αὐτὰ μᾶς εἶπε ὁ Ρῶσος μοναχὸς 50 χρόνια πρὶν. Τὸ διάστημα ποὺ διέρρευσε ἀπὸ τότε, εἶχα σχεδὸν

ξεχάσει τὰ λόγια του. Ὄταν ὅμως ἔπεσε ὁ χάριτος πύργος τοῦ «ἀνατολικοῦ εὐδαιμονισμοῦ», τότε τὸ θυμήθηκα. Κάθισα καὶ μέτρησα καὶ εἶδα ὅτι ἦταν ἀκριβῶς ἑβδομήντα χρόνια. Τώρα καὶ ὁ δικὸς μας κανόνας τῶν ἑβδομηκοντάκις ἑπτὰ τελειώνει καὶ θὰ ἐπανέλθουν. Τώρα ὁ πνευματικὸς νόμος θὰ ἐφαρμοσθεῖ πολυτρόπως.

Πρῶτα θὰ παιδεύσει ὁ Θεὸς τοὺς μεγάλους ἐχθροὺς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, ποὺ εἶναι ὁ Ἰσλαμισμὸς καὶ ὁ Καθολικισμὸς. Αὐτοὶ ποὺ ἀμείλικτα χτυποῦν τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, τώρα θὰ ἐκλείψουν. Ἀκόμα καὶ αὐτοὶ ποὺ κατέστρεψαν τὸν Βυζαντινὸ πολιτισμὸ δὲν εἶναι οἱ Τούρκοι ποὺ τὸν κατέστρεψαν, εἶναι οἱ σταυροφόροι, οἱ Εὐρωπαῖοι, οἱ Καθολικοὶ ποὺ ἐνίσχυσαν τοὺς Τούρκους γιὰ νὰ καταστρέψουν τὸ Βυζάντιο.

Τοὺς ἀπογόνους τους, λοιπὸν, θὰ τοὺς μαζέψῃ ὁ Θεὸς ἐκεῖ μέσα καὶ θὰ σφαγοῦν ἐκεῖ. Ἐσεῖς εἶστε νεότεροι καὶ θὰ τὸ δεῖτε, ἀφοῦ θὰ εἶστε ἐν τῇ ζωῇ. Τώρα θὰ γίνει ἡ Μεγάλῃ Σύρραξη, ὁ Ἀρμαγεδὼν. Αὐτὸ ποὺ τώρα ξεκίνησε στὰ Βαλκάνια δὲν θὰ σταματήσῃ.

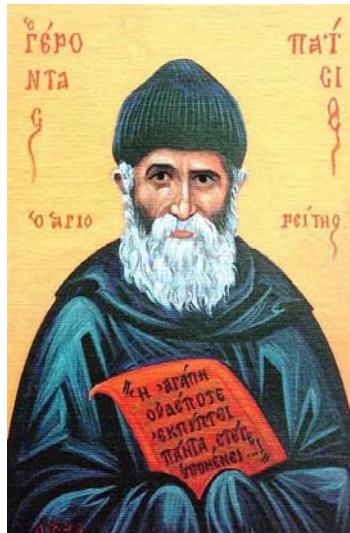
Ἐκεῖνος ποὺ θὰ τὸ ἐμποδίζει νὰ ἀπλωθεῖ εἶναι ἡ διαιρεμένη Ρώσικη ἡγεσία (σ.σ. Γέλτσιν) ἡ ὁποία πλευρίζει τοὺς Ἀμερικανούς. Ὅμως ὁ Ρωσικὸς λαὸς θὰ τοὺς ρίξει καὶ οἱ Χριστιανικοὶ λαοὶ τῶν Βαλκανίων θὰ προελάσουν. **(Τὰ λέει αὐτὰ ὁ Γέροντας Παῖσιος πέντε-ἕξι χρόνια πρὶν τὴν ἄνοδο τοῦ Β. Πούτιν στὴν ἐξουσία!)**

Οἱ Ρῶσοι θέλουν τώρα νὰ βγοῦν στὴ Μεσόγειο. Αὐτὸ θὰ εἶναι τὸ ἐλατήριο. Ὅμως δὲν θὰ εἶναι αὐτὴ ἡ πραγματικὴ

ἀλήθεια. Ἡ ἀλήθεια εἶναι ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς τοὺς προσκαλεῖ ὡς ὄργανά Του. Κατεβαίνοντας αὐτοὶ θὰ σβήσουν καὶ θὰ ἀφανίσουν τὴν Τούρκικη λαίλαπα μέσα σὲ μιὰ ἑβδομάδα. Κι ὅταν κατέβουν οἱ φίλοι τῆς Τουρκίας (οἱ ἀπὸ γονοὶ δηλαδὴ τῶν σταυροφόρων) τὸ ΝΑΤΟ, γιὰ νὰ τὴ σώσουν, τότε ἐκεῖ θὰ γίνει, ἡ μεγάλη Σύρραξη καὶ θὰ σφαγοῦν. **(Τὰ λέει 16 χρόνια πρὶν κατεβῇ ἡ ρωσικὴ ἀρμάδα!)**

Ἡ Κύπρος θὰ δεχτεῖ ράπισμα ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους (γιατί τώρα εἶναι ἀνέγγιχτη), ἀλλὰ θὰ εἶναι προσωρινό. Ἡ Τουρκία θὰ σβήσῃ, ἀλλὰ δὲν θὰ ὑπάρχει οὔτε μία σελίδα στὴν παγκόσμια ἱστορία ποὺ νὰ φέρνει στὴ μνήμη ὅτι ὑπῆρξε αὐτὴ ἡ καταραμένη φυλή.

Ἀγαπῶ πολὺ τὴν πατρίδα μου καὶ λυποῦμαι πολὺ ποὺ σήμερα τὰ Ἑλληνόπουλα ντρέπονται νὰ ποῦν πῶς εἶναι Ἕλληνες. Ἡ λέξη «Ἕλληνας» δὲν ἀποδίδει φυλετισμὸ. Ἡ λέξη «Ἕλληνας» ἀποτελεῖ φυλετισμὸ γιὰ κάθε ἄλλον πλὴν τῶν Ἑλλήνων. Τώρα ὅμως δὲν εἴμεθα Ἕλληνες, εἴμεθα Ρωμαῖοι, εἴμεθα Βυζαντινοί,



εἴμεθα Θεανθρωπιστές. Ἀνεβήκαμε πιδ ψηλά.

Εἶναι κρῖμα, γιατί σήμερα κατόρθωσε ὁ διάβολος κι αἰχμαλώτισε τὶς ἡγεσίες. Κλαίω τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Δὲν ἔχει μείνει τίποτα ὄρθιο σήμερα. Ἡ Ἑλλάδα γιὰ νὰ σωθεῖ, πρέπει ὅλοι οἱ ἡγέτες της, ὅπου καὶ ἂν βρίσκονται, νὰ πᾶνε ἐξορία. Νὰ φύγουν, γιατί παρόντες μολύνουν.

Σήμερα πουλήθηκαν ὅλα. Σήμερα ὅμως ποὺ ὅλοι γονατίσαμε καὶ δὲν ὑπάρχει ἐλπίς, θὰ ἐπέμβει ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πατέρων μας γιὰ τὰ αἵματα τῶν Μαρτύρων μας καὶ τὰ λείψανα τῶν Ἁγίων μας. Τὸ αἷμα τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ ποὺ χύθηκε γιὰ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, ἐὰν ἐνωθεῖ σήμερα θὰ γίνεῖ πλωτὸ ποτάμι, νὰ πνίξει τοὺς κανίβαλους ποὺ λέγονται «μεγάλοι».

Ὅταν ἔγινε ἡ πρώτη διάσπαση τοῦ ἀτόμου καὶ κατασκευάστηκε ἡ ἀτομικὴ βόμβα, ἄκουσα ὁ ἴδιος τὸν Ἀϊζενχάουερ νὰ δηλώνει: «Σήμερα εὐρισκόμεθα στὰ προπύλαια τῆς ἐλληνικῆς μαθηματικῆς». Εἶπε τὴν ἀλήθεια ὁ κανίβαλος!

Οἱ ἐλπίδες μας εἶναι μόνο στὸν Θεό. Κι ἐσεῖς νὰ ζεῖτε Χριστιανικά, γιατί σας λέω ὑπεύθυνα—καὶ θὰ τὸ δεῖτε—ὅτι δὲν ἔχουμε πολλὲς μέρες. Αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀνάβει τώρα στὰ Βαλκάνια θὰ συνεχιστεῖ. Αὐτὸ θὰ εἶναι ἡ ἀφετηρία μέσω τῆς ὁποίας ὁ Θεός, μετὰ τὸ δικό Του τρόπο, θὰ ἐλευθερώσει τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς καὶ θὰ τοὺς ὑψώσει πάλι στὴν γραμμὴ τους. Καὶ θὰ ἐπανέλθει τὸ Βυζάντιο. Καὶ ξέρετε γιατί; Διότι οἱ Εὐρωπαῖοι λαοὶ θὰ ξαναενωθοῦν. Ποιὸς θὰ τοὺς καθοδηγεῖ; Δὲν κρατᾶει κανεὶς. Μόνο ἐμεῖς κρατᾶμε τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη.



Ὅποιος κυνηγᾷ τὸν πλοῦτο, ἔχει πάντοτε ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ χρήματα. Ὅποιος ἀδιαφορεῖ γιὰ τὸν πλοῦτο, εἶναι πάντοτε πλούσιος. Γιατί 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 συνάζει, ὁ ἄλλος μετὰ τὸ νὰ προσφέρει. Ὁ πρῶτος σπέρνει στὴ γῆ, ὁ δεῦτερος στὸν οὐρανό. Καὶ ὅσο καλύτερος εἶναι ὁ οὐρανὸς ἀπὸ τὴ γῆ, τόσο καὶ ἡ εὐφορία του εἶναι μεγαλύτερη ἀπὸ τὴν εὐφορία τῆς γῆς. Γι' αὐτὸ ὁ Κύριός μας 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».

Ἄγ. Ἰωάννης Χρυσόστομος

Τιμωρεῖ ὁ Θεός;

Τοῦ κ. Μιχαήλ Ε. Μιχαηλίδη, Θεολόγου.

Ἐνα ἐρώτημα προβάλλεται συχνὰ καὶ ἀπὸ πολλοὺς: «Τιμωρεῖ ὁ Θεός»; Εἶναι δυνατό, ὁ Θεὸς τῆς ἀγάπης, νὰ τιμωρεῖ τὰ πλάσματά Του, εἴτε σὲ τοῦτο τὸν κόσμον, εἴτε στὴν κόλαση μετὰ τὴν αἰώνια τιμωρία; Καὶ ἄλλοι μὲν ρωτᾶνε μετὰ καλὴ προαίρεση, ἄλλοι, ἐπιστρατεύοντας τὴ λογικὴ καὶ ἀναζητᾶνε λύση, καὶ ἄλλοι κολλημένοι σὰ στρεῖδι στὴν πλάνη, παραμένοντες πεισματικά σὲ λάθος δρόμο.

Στὴν ἐρώτηση τούτη, ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη ἀπάντηση εἶναι, χωρὶς περιστροφές: Ἀσφαλῶς καὶ τιμωρεῖ ὁ Θεός. Ἀλλ' ἡ τιμωρία τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν ἔχει καμιά σχέση μετὰ τὴ νομικὴ ἔννοια τῆς ποινῆς.

Ὁ Θεὸς ἔχει ἄπειρη ἀγάπη, ἀλλ' εἶναι καὶ σὲ ἀπὸλυτο βαθμὸ δίκαιος. Ταυτόχρονα εἶναι καὶ ἄπειρη ἢ σοφία καὶ ἡ παντοδυναμία Του. Ἐπομένως, ὅταν μιλάμε γιὰ τιμωρία, ἐννοοῦμε στὴ θεολογικὴ γλῶσσα, τὰ παιδαγωγικὰ ἐκεῖνα μέτρα ποὺ λαμβάνει ἡ ἀπὸλυτὴ καὶ παντέλεια δικαιοσύνη τοῦ Θεοῦ, γιὰ ὅποιαδήποτε παράβαση, ποὺ ἐλεύθερα ἔπραξε ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Ὁ Θεός, καθὼς διδάσκει ὁ Μ.Βασίλειος, δὲν εἶναι αἴτιος τοῦ κακοῦ, ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτεξούσιο τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ἡ ἐλευθερία του. Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος, μάλιστα, φτάνει στὸ σημεῖο νὰ ὁμολογεῖ, ὅτι, *ὀλίγα ὧν ἡμάρτομεν μεμαστιγώμεθα*. Δηλαδή, λίγη εἶναι ἀκόμα ἡ τιμωρία μας, μπροστὰ στὶς τόσες παραβάσεις καὶ ἁμαρτίες μας.

Ὅ,τι ἐπιτρέπει ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀποβλέπει στὴ σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς μας. Ἡ τιμωρία εἶναι διδάσκαλος θεογνωσίας, λέγει ὁ Κύριος Θεοδώρητος. Ἰδιαίτερα στὸ θέμα τῶν τιμωριῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ, πολλὴ σημαντικὴ εἶναι οἱ ἀπὸ ψεῖς τοῦ ἱεροῦ Χρυσοστόμου, ὁ ὁποῖος λέγει ὅτι, ὁ Θεὸς «τὴν τιμωρίαν ἔνεκεν νοθεσίας ἡμῖν ἐπάγει». Καὶ προσθέτει: «Αἱ τιμωρίαι αἱ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, φιλανθρωπία μᾶλλον εἰσιν ἢ τιμωρία». Ἄν, δηλαδή, τὶς καλοξετάσουμε, θὰ διαπιστώσουμε τὴ φιλανθρωπία μᾶλλον τοῦ Θεοῦ. Μάλιστα, *ἕκαστον τιμωρίας εἶδος, ἀγαθότητος γέμει πολλῆς*.

Παντοῦ ὁ μέγας τοῦ ἁμβωνα κήρυκας, βλέπει καὶ ἀνιχνεύει τὴν ἀγάπη καὶ τὴ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἐπίκαιρος ὁ λόγος τοῦ Παύλου: *Τὶς ἔγνω νοῦν Κυρίου;* Ποιὸς γνωρίζει τὰ σχέδια τοῦ Θεοῦ; Εἶναι ἀνεξιχνίαστες οἱ βουλές Του. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ πάλι ὁ ἱερὸς Χρυσόστομος, θὰ προβάλλει ἰσχυρὰ τὰ ἐπιχειρήματά του: *Ἀπειλεῖ τὴν τιμωρίαν ἵνα φύγωμεν τὴν πείραν τῆς τιμωρίας, φοβεῖ τῷ λόγῳ, ἵνα μὴ κολάσῃ τῷ ἔργῳ*.

Ἀκόμα κι ὅταν ἀπειλεῖ ὁ Θεός, τὸ κάμνει γιὰ νὰ μᾶς προφυλάξει ἀπὸ τὸ κακὸ καὶ τὶς συνέπειες τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Καὶ πρέπει νὰ ξέροντε, λέει, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς οὔτε πάντας ὁμοῦ κολάζει, οὔτε πάντας κατ' ἀξίαν. τὰ

κριτήρια τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν εἶναι γιὰ ὅλους τὰ ἴδια. Κάποτε, μάλιστα, *εἶδος εὐεργεσίας τὸ κολάζειν*.

Καταπληκτικὴ καὶ ἡ ἐπόμενη παρατήρησή του: *Ὡσπερ γάρ διὰ τὰ νοσήματα τὰ φάρμακα, οὕτω διὰ τὰ ἁμαρτήματα αἱ κολάσεις*. Καὶ μὴ ξεχνᾶς, λέγει, ὅτι, δίδωσί σοι προθεσίαν ὁ Θεός, ὥστε ἀπονίφασθαι, ὅταν δὲ ἐπιμένῃς, ἐπάγει λοιπόν τὴν τιμωρίαν. Μὲ τὴν τιμωρία, δηλαδή, σοῦ δίνει ὁ Θεὸς εὐκαιρία γιὰ νὰ προσέξεις ἀπ' τὴν ἁμαρτία. Ὅταν ὅμως ἐσὺ ἐπιμένεις νὰ πράττεις τὸ κακό, τότε ἐπιφέρει τὴν τιμωρία. Καὶ αὐτά, σὲ σχέση μὲ τὴν τιμωρία τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ τὴν παραβάσει τῶν ἀνθρώπων, τὴν ὁποῖαν ἐπιτρέπει καὶ παραχωρεῖ ὁ Θεός, σὲ ὅσους καὶ ὅποιους κρίνει ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἡ πανσοφία Του.

Ἀλλὰ ἡ ἀποψη μερικῶν, ὅτι, ὁ Θεὸς δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ τιμωρήσει τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸ ἄνθρωπο—καὶ μάλιστα, αἰώνια—εἶναι ἐσφαλμένη. Προσεγγίζει τὴ μεγάλη πλάνη τοῦ Ὁριγένη γιὰ τὴν «ἀποκατάσταση τῶν πάντων» ὅτι, δηλαδή, μετὰ ἀπὸ μιὰ μακρὰ περίοδο κάθαρσης τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν στὴν κόλαση, στὸ τέλος θὰ ἀποκατασταθοῦν καὶ θὰ σωθοῦν ὅλοι.

Σὲ τούτη τὴν ἀποψη, ὁ Καθηγητὴς Ἀνδρέας Θεοδώρου ἀπαντᾷ: «Ἀγάπη καὶ δικαιοσύνη εἶναι δύο βασικὲς θεῖες ιδιότητες, ποῦ ἡ μία δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ καταργήσει οὔτε ν' ἀναπληρώσει τὴν ἄλλη, ἀλλὰ ὑπάρχουν ἐνεργεῖς καὶ συνταιριασμένες στὴ θεότητα, ὡς ἔκφραση ἐξωτερικὴ τῆς ἄπειρης θείας βουλής. Χρειάζεται προσοχή. Διότι, ὅταν λέμε ὅτι ὁ ἀγαθὸς Θεὸς δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ τιμωρήσει τὸν ἁμαρτωλὸ ἄνθρωπο, κάνουμε σύγχυση τῶν θεῶν ιδιοτήτων, καταργοῦμε τὴ θεία δικαιοσύνη καὶ σὲ τελευταία ἀνάλυση, φθείρουμε τὴν ἔννοια τοῦ Χριστιανικοῦ Θεοῦ. Βέβαια, ὁ ἴδιος ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὡς ἐλεύθερος, κολάζει τὸν ἑαυτό του, ἀνάλογα μὲ τὸν τρόπο ποῦ ὁ ἴδιος ἐπιλέγει καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ». Προσθέτει καὶ μιὰ ὠραία παρατήρηση, λέγοντας ὅτι, «ἂν καὶ ἡ θεωρία τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως εἶναι πολὺ ἐλκυστικὴ, δὲν εἶναι, ὡστόσο, καὶ ἀληθινή». Καὶ καταλήγει: «Ὅτι ἡ κόλαση εἶναι αἰώνια, ἀποτελεῖ ἄρθρο βεβαίωτα τῆς πίστεως».

Ἐάν δὲν πρόκειται νὰ ὑπάρξει αἰώνια κόλαση, τότε, *φάγομεν καὶ πῖομεν, αὔριον γάρ ἀποθνήσκομεν* (Α΄ Κορ. 15:32). Ἡ αἰωνιότητα τῆς κόλασης εἶναι ρητὴ διαβεβαίωση τῆς Γραφῆς: *Καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*» (Ματθ. 25:46).

Ζωή, θάνατος, κρίση. Τὸ τρίπτυχο τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου προσώπου. *Ἀπόκειται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο κρίσις*. (Ἑβρ. 9:27). Μετὰ τὸ θάνατο ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ μερικὴ κρίση, καὶ στὴ συνέχεια, ἡ τελικὴ κρίση καὶ ἡ αἰώνια ζωὴ. Κατὰ τὸν ἱερὸ Χρυσόστομο: «Οὐκ ἔδωκας δίκην ἐνταῦθα. διὰ τοῦτο μάλιστα πίστευε γέενναν εἶναι καὶ κόλασιν,

ἐπειδὴ δίκην ἐνταῦθα οὐκ ἔδωκας». Καὶ σύ, ὁ ἀσεβὴς καὶ ἁμαρτωλός, λέγει, ἐπειδὴ δὲ δικάστηκες καὶ δὲν τιμωρήθηκες ἐδῶ, ὅσο ζοῦσες, γιὰ τοῦτο νὰ 'σαι βέβαιος, ὅτι θὰ ὑπάρξει γέεννα καὶ κόλαση αἰώνια.

Ἄς ἰκετεύουμε τὸν Κύριο, ὥστε ν' ἀξιωθοῦμε νὰ δώσουμε *καλὴν ἀπολογίαὴν τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ φοβεροῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ*.



Οἱ Δοκιμασίαι εἶναι Ὅπως ἡ Λάσπη καὶ τὸ Κερί

Γέροντα, βλέποντας κανεὶς τὴς ἐφημερίδες, τὴς εἰδήσεις, τὸ τί συμβαίνει στὴ γειτονιά μας, στὸν κόσμον ὁλόκληρο, διαπιστώνει ὅτι εἶναι διάχυτος ὁ πόνος. Ὁ πόλεμος, ἡ ἀρρώστια, ὁ καρκίνος, οἱ δοκιμασίαι. Γιατί τὰ ἐπιτρέπει ὁ Θεὸς τῆς Ἀγάπης αὐτά;

Νὰ ξέρετε ὅτι ὁ καλὸς Θεὸς δὲν θέλει νὰ ἐκδικηθεῖ κανέναν. Ὁ Θεὸς δὲν θέλει νὰ γίνῃ δῆμιος μὲ κανέναν. Ὁ Θεὸς πολλὰς φορὰς συλλαμβάνει καὶ παίρνει τὴν ἀσθένεια τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τὸν βοηθᾷ νὰ ἔρθῃ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. Νὰ μαλακώσει ἡ καρδιά του. Θυμᾶμαι τὸν Γερό-Παῖσιο ποῦ ἔλεγε: «Πολλὰς φορὰς οἱ δοκιμασίαι εἶναι ὅπως τὴ λάσπη καὶ τὸ κερί. Ὅταν ὁ ἥλιος δώσει πάνω στὴ λάσπη, ἡ λάσπη γίνεται πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. Ὅταν ὁ ἥλιος δώσει εἰς τὸ κερί, τὸ κερί λιώνει. Δὲν γίνεται σκληρό.» Ἐξαρτᾶται ὁ ἄνθρωπος σὲ ποῖαν ὁμάδα εἶναι καὶ πὼς φτιάχνει τὴ ζωὴ του γιὰ νὰ μπορέσει ἡ δοκιμασία νὰ μὴν τὸν σκληρύνει, ἀλλὰ νὰ τὸν μαλακώσει, νὰ τὸν ταπεινώσει. Νὰ τὸν φέρῃ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν καὶ νὰ καταλάβῃ τὴν δοκιμασίαν, ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔχει ὀρισμένους δυνατοὺς καὶ μόνον. Βλέπετε ἕνα ἄνθρωπος, μιὰ στάλα αἵματος νὰ μπεῖ στὸ μυαλό του, ἀχρηστεύτηκε ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

Γέρον Ἐφραίμ Βατοπαιδινὸς
Καθηγούμενος Ἱ. Μ. Βατοπαιδίου Ἁγ. Ὁρους



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, ἂς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντες κατὰ περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆ».

IDAHO TEEN SACRIFICES HER LIFE TO DELIVER HER SON

By Melanie Jones, *International Business Times*, December 28, 2011
(another worthy story that “escaped” the eye of the mass media).



Jenni Lake, an Idaho teen who stopped her cancer treatments to avoid aborting her pregnancy, died just 12 days after she gave birth to a baby boy she named Chad Michael. She passed away with no regrets about the decision to choose her son’s life over her own, and to risk everything she’d hoped for in the new hope that he might be healthy.

Jenni Lake was diagnosed with cancer when she was 16 years old. She was a sophomore at Pocatello High School when she began to get painful migraines. After visiting her family doctor, she traveled to Salt Lake City for an MRI. There, a scan revealed a two-centimeter mass nestled in her brain. Her biopsy revealed stage three astrocytoma, a form of cancer centered in the brain and spinal cord that is almost always fatal. She had three tumors in her brain and three on her spine. Chemo and radiation treatments had to begin immediately.

Sometime later, she discovered that she was also pregnant. Jenni Lake was faced with a tremendous decision. Her oncologist told her that the cancer treatments keeping her alive could not be given to a pregnant woman without damaging or killing the fetus. She had two options: get an abortion and continue being treated for cancer, or keep her pregnancy and prepare to die. Her family believed and hoped that since the tumors had already starting to shrink, and the baby was ten weeks old, she had a strong chance of carrying the baby to term and then starting the cancer treatment again.

So Jenni Lake chose option two, and paid for it with her life. At the end of her pregnancy, Lake weighed only 108 pounds. Her cancer has come back with a vengeance in the many months since she stopped treatment, and she had already begun to reconcile herself to death.

“I’m done,” Lake told her nurse just before delivering a healthy baby boy. “I did what I was supposed to do. My baby is going to get here safe.”

A day after the November 9 birth, Mrs. Phillips learned that her daughter’s decision to forgo treatment for tumors on her brain and spine so she could carry the baby would have fatal repercussions. The cancer had marked too much

territory. Nothing could be done, Mrs. Phillips said. As Jenni Lake began to fade away, the returning astrocytoma ravaging her body and making her weaker by the day, family members report that she never showed any regret for her decision. Nor did her vision, sometimes a casualty of the final stages, fade in the final days of her illness.

When Jenni Lake’s baby son was placed beside her for the last time, her father says she smiled at Chad Michael, her pride and joy, the reason she was about to die.

“I can kind of see him,” she told her father. It would be the last words she ever said. It was only 12 days past the birth—half spent in the hospital and the other half at home—before Jenni was gone. She passed away on Nov. 21, 2011, shortly before Thanksgiving Day. She was not yet 18 years old.

In the month since her death, Jenni Lake’s family and friends continue to rightfully insist that her legacy is not one of tragedy, but of heroic sacrifice. And that is the legacy they will be passing on to her son Chad Michael. The family gathered at their ranch style home in Pocatello, Idaho this Christmas with a tree decorated with ornaments that reminded them of Jenni, who passed away in a bedroom just down the hall.

In the photograph, the baby’s ruddy cheeks and healthy weight offer a stark contrast to the frail girl who gave birth to him.



Worldly sincerity contains indiscretion. Truth is truth; but if, at some point, you speak the truth without discernment, this is not truth. For example, it is true that so and so is mentally disturbed. But if you go and tell this truth, you do not benefit anyone. Or, another person says, “In order to be sincere, I am going to sin in the public square.” This is not sincerity.

Anyone who has a great degree of discernment, also has: noble love, sacrifice and humility; and he speaks—even the bitterest truth—with great simplicity, sweetened with kindness. The benefits reaped are greater than those of sweet words, as bitter medicines do greater good than sweet syrups. Truth, when used without discernment, can be criminal. Some people act in the name of truth, and commit crimes. When someone has sincerity without discernment, he can do double harm—first to himself and then to others; because this sincerity is without compassion.

Whoever wants to be truly sincere, should start by being sincere with himself; for that’s where spiritual sincerity begins. When someone is not sincere with himself, he’s—at least—only fooling and wronging himself. But when he behaves without sincerity towards others, he sins mortally; because he fools others.

Elder Paisios the Athonite (+1994)

A MUSLIM TURK IS BAPTIZED

By Fr. Zacharias Kerstyuk, the story was transcribed by Elena Verbenina and translated from Russian by Fr. Andrew Phillips (Source: <http://http://www.pravoslavie.ru>)

This story comes from Archpriest Zacharias Kerstyuk, who works for the external relations department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Fr Zacharias was the attending to the parishioners at St Andrew's Church at the Ukrainian Embassy in Tripoli in Libya, but now serves in Spain.

† † †

He is Turkish, a ship's captain and travels all over the world. He is 49 years old and has spent 25 of those year at sea and has been in all sorts of difficult situations. He is a clever man and speaks five languages.

This spring his ship was in the Atlantic, when it suddenly broke down. The main engine stopped and the generators locked up. They drifted for a long time, unable to even send out an SOS. There was nothing to eat or drink and the crew began to get alarmed. Everything they tried ended in failure. Despair set in. There were over thirty in the crew, Georgians, Syrians, Turks and two Ukrainians. Their only hope was in God.

The Muslim captain began to pray for help. He also saw how sincerely the Georgian Orthodox prayed. Then, he himself turned to Jesus: "If Jesus helps me, then I'll become a Christian," he decided. The day was not over before the engines came back to life.

They reached Algiers on the smoky engines, but the port would not take them in. All they would allow was for them to bring food and drink on board and anchor in their territorial waters. They stood at anchor for a whole month there, waiting for spares from the shipping company. Refusing to wait any longer for help from the ship's owners, the IMO (International Maritime Organization) ordered them to proceed to the nearest European port. This was Cartagena in Spain. The ship stopped five miles from shore—it had run out of fuel. With great difficulty they were towed into port.

Since there were Ukrainians on board and I am a Ukrainian, I was at once contacted about the irregular situation in which our nationals were involved. I went aboard and met the Ukrainians who introduced me to the rest of the crew. I spoke at length with the captain about Orthodoxy, about God. I saw that the man had truly made a life-changing conscious decision.

I had three preparatory talks with the captain. Since this was a very important step, I received his wife's permission.

These people had been born into Islam but only kept it superficially, just like the many who among us call themselves Orthodox only because they were baptized in it in childhood.

The wife said that she accepted her husband's decision, as that was his will. The man said to me: "I want to be Orthodox, Jesus helped me, I'll keep everything that is asked of me because I believe." Seeing such a firm will in him, I baptized him in the Mediterranean Sea. He told me that he had never sensed or felt the presence of God in Islam, but he could feel Jesus in his heart. The next Sunday the captain came to communion for the first time.

The captain invited his friends to the service, six of whom also took communion. I have not seen people taking communion the way he did, with such devotion, for a long time. At that moment another two sailors in the crew also expressed their desire to get baptized. We are having preparatory talks and I hope to baptize them next week.

At my first talk with the captain, I asked: "Aren't you afraid that the Muslim sailors will cut your throat?" He answered: "So what, I'll lock the doors tighter at night."

During the talk Muslim sailors came along and looked at me in such a way that I felt frightened. The second meeting was much more pleasant and the third very easy. I answered their questions. We spoke about life, joked and I showed them crosses which I offered them. They took them, put them on and I heard them talking to each other: "Perhaps it's true and Jesus did help?"

After that I went to see them again and I saw them, Syrians and Turks, still wearing the crosses around their necks as before. Having been at death's door, these people can now make a lot more sense of life.



The truly rich are not those who keep their riches to themselves but those who give to others. Happiness comes not from possessing wealth but from giving it away. Whatever is generously given away becomes a fruit of the soul. It therefore becomes the soul's wealth.

Saint Clement of Alexandria (+215)

THE END OF THE WORLD AND THE ANTICHRIST

By Bishop Alexander Mileant (+2005).

In Holy Scripture the term Antichrist has a twofold meaning. In a broad and general sense this word indicates every person hostile to Christ's teaching (the Greek prefix *anti* signifies against). This is the meaning St. John the Theologian used to speak of many Antichrists in his epistles. In a particular sense the name Antichrist signifies a definite person—the leading adversary of Christ who is to appear before the end of the world. The appearance of this definite Antichrist on the world scene constitutes the final and decisive sign that the Second Coming of Christ is at hand.

Close to the end of the world, all the growing aversion towards God on the part of mankind will become, so to speak, concentrated in this definite man of sin, who will lead the final desperate battle against Christianity. Of the characteristics and actions of this Antichrist, we read in St. Paul's second epistle to the Thessalonians: *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* (2 Thes 2:3-12)

A number of external factors will have to play a significant role in strengthening the power of the coming Antichrist. Possibly, during his time the threat of nuclear and biological warfare, or the specter of a horrible political and economic crisis will hang over mankind. Governments will be on the verge of collapse, and nations in turmoil and revolt. Then, on the murky waters of a global cataclysm, a "brilliant" leader

will surface as the sole savior of mankind. Backing him will be a formidable organization with the goal of global domination. With its support, the Antichrist will emerge with a prepared program of socio-economic reforms, which will be actively supported and advocated by the mass media. What will be the secret of the Antichrist's persuasive power and his ability to direct world events? We can envision him as a gifted and inflammatory orator, like Lenin or Hitler. His ideas and propositions will be readily accepted because they will express the thoughts and feelings of the masses of his materialistic epoch.

One would think that many Jews, opposed to Christianity, will see in the Antichrist their long-awaited Messiah, while the majority of people will be inspired by hopes that he will put an end to wars and crises and will bring about a general prosperity. Having in mind such a blindness among people

who fail to see the catastrophe hanging over their heads, St. Paul wrote: *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.* (1 Thes 5:2-6).

The Antichrist will not be content with mere political authority and outward transformations. Praised by all, he will become so conceited that he will regard himself as a superhuman endowed with divine power. He will proclaim a new world-view—a new religion and new morality in place of "outmoded" and "unsuccessful" Christian teaching. Possessed by delusions of grandeur, he will present himself as God and sit in the temple, (possibly in Jerusalem's rebuilt temple, where the King Solomon's temple used to be) demanding divine worship.

According to St. Paul, the activities of the Antichrist will be extremely successful, being supported by satan, and accompanied by lying signs, false miracles, and all kinds of unrighteous deception of the perishing. By the Antichrist's signs and miracles we should understand not only the deceptive tricks aimed to delight the crowd but also the highest accomplishments of science, which will be exploited to strengthen his rule (According to Rev 13:15, the false prophet will have the *power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*)



The most sophisticated form of surveillance on people will be used to control their activities. Those wishing to buy or to sell anything will have to present official permission to do so (According to Rev 13:17, *no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name*) Radio, TV programs, and the press will strive to shape the most favorable image of the world Leader in order to strengthen his political power and admiration among people. Any person daring to question the genius of this Leader, or disagreeing with his measures, will be ridiculed, persecuted, and ultimately destroyed as a public enemy.

An image of the coming Antichrist is portrayed by the prophet Daniel in the appearance of a minor horn. Here the prophet describes the characteristics of the Syrian King Antioch Epiphanos—the cruel persecutor of the faithful Jews about 175-164 BC—as a prototype of the Antichrist. In the book of Revelation, the Antichrist is depicted as a beast, coming out of the sea. Some of the characteristics of this monster remind us of the Roman emperors Nero and Domitian, fierce persecutors of Christians in the first century AD. These emperors were contemporaries of St. John who wrote the book of Revelation. To avoid confusion, one should bear in mind that in the book of Revelation, the term beast applies not only to the personal Antichrist but also to the whole governmental machine of his anti-Christian empire.

The distinctive features, personality and mode of operation of the Antichrist are described by St. Cyrill of Jerusalem in his Catechetical Letters (4 and 15) and by St. Ephraim the Syrian in his Homily on the Coming of the Lord and the Antichrist. The famous Russian philosopher Vladimir S. Soloviev attempted to depict the coming of the Antichrist in his *Tale of the Antichrist*, but his representation and occasionally joking style do not convey all the horror and utter gloom which will threaten mankind in its final period of existence. His tale is a naive idyll when compared to the horror which will dominate people who have lost God.

Studying the historical prototypes of the coming Antichrist, like the king Antioch Epithanos, emperors Nero and Domitian, Lenin and similar “genius” rulers, certain general traits come to mind. All of them in general were worthless people, both in the intellectual and the governmental arena. They came to power not because of their exceptional talents or achievements but because of favorable circumstances. They were more conspirators than governors. All of them suffered from disproportionate delusions of grandeur; in their personal lives they were liars, immoral and cruel. One may thus speculate that the final world Leader will be distinguished by similar traits.

If we take literally the time indicated by Holy Scripture regarding the rule of the beast, the activity of the Antichrist will last for about 3-1/2 years. It will end with the Second Coming of Christ, the General Resurrection of the Dead,

and the Last Judgment (Daniel 7:25; Rev 11:2-3, 12:13, 13:5). The Revelation of St. John mentions the appearance of two witnesses, who will proclaim the truth, perform miracles, and, upon completion of their witness, be killed by the Antichrist. These witnesses have been foreseen by some Fathers of the Church to be the two righteous of the Old Testament period—the patriarch Enoch (Gen 5:23) and the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 2:11)—because only these two men did not die but were taken alive to Heaven. They will have to return to earth to complete their earthly mission, to suffer for the Word of God and to die as all mortals should.

In summary, such is the teaching of the Word of God about the approaching times, and the behavior and sentiments of the people prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Although these signs are overt and clear, the ability to see and realize them nevertheless will depend on a person’s spiritual keenness. Most people, preoccupied with their material well-being, will be incapable of understanding what is happening before their eyes, or the point toward which the world is headed. For this reason the Savior warned His disciples: *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* (Lk 21:34-36)



Socrates was once asked to define or describe the term “Educated Man.” His response amazed many as he did not refer to the accumulation of scholastic knowledge. Here is what he said: “Education is a matter of an individual’s character as often exemplified through his behavior. Here is the type of men whom I consider to possess true education:

1. All those who are capable of controlling unpleasant situations instead of being controlled by them.
2. Men who confront all of life’s events bravely and logically.
3. All those who maintain the highest level of honesty and integrity in their dealings and transactions.
4. Those who consistently confront unpleasant events and unpopular people benevolently.
5. Men that consistently maintain life’s pleasures in check.
6. All those who never allow misfortunes or failures to defeat their spirit.
7. And, finally, those men who have not been corrupted by success, good fortune, glory, and wealth.”

THE LAW OF LOVE

By St. John of Kronstadt.

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. [Lk 6:31]



The Holy Evangelist Luke speaks in the Gospel about the teaching and commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ, about how we should be with people in society, so that we might please both God and people, make also a good name for ourselves, have a good conscience, and be made worthy of the promised, incorruptible Heavenly Homeland for our wise behavior in our earthly homeland (Lk. 6:31-36).

What wise, lofty, saving, and truly divine teachings and commandments! But how badly our daily life conforms to them. The Lord teaches us to treat people as we would have people treat us; that is, simple-heartedly, well-wishing, sympathetically, patiently. He set our own selves as a measuring stick for our relationship to other people; and this measuring stick, this scope, is love. *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.* (Eph 5:29) But in community it often happens to the contrary—peoples' relationships to each other are often quite wrong, not distinguished by a spirit of simplicity and sincerity, love and good will, love of peace, meekness and condescension, purity and holiness, sympathy and compassion, and Christian patience. They are often distinguished by a spirit of insincerity and duplicity, coldness and haughtiness, deceit and ill will, or impurity and sensuality, low egoism and self-seeking.

The root, cause, or source of one or another way of treating one person or another is within a person's heart. *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things.* (Mt. 12:35) This occurs either from his natural character traits, or from an either good or bad upbringing; from various passions, inclinations, or habits—for example, of seeking certain pleasures; from either good or bad examples; from life circumstances; from more or less comfortable material standards; from the milieu in which he lives or his standing in society; from various life lessons or trials; and finally, from how much he has been or not been penetrated with the Gospel spirit of Christ.

Thus, the measuring stick of relationships to others is simplicity and sincerity, good will, and love for all—this is the best side of relationships to others. But not rarely, the nature of relationships to others is cunning, suspicion,

dislike, rudeness, envy, extreme selfishness, self-seeking, partiality, vanity, ambition, vainglory, sensuality, or extreme haughtiness; that is, a high opinion of one's self, which seeks to humiliate others.

In general, we can observe more insincere relationships amongst people than pure-hearted ones, because the whole heart is infected to a greater or lesser extent with the impurity of sin, covered with the corruption of the passions. For, *Who can say: My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?* (Prov 20:9), say the Scriptures. Therefore, some words are smooth as oil, and yet they are poison darts. Thus, according to the teaching of our Savior, the measure of our relationships to others should be correct love for our own selves. As we would like others to treat us, so shall we treat them—that is, simply, pure-heartedly, meekly, lovingly, trustingly, condescendingly, sympathetically, patiently.

The Lord offers Himself as an example to us, and we should ceaselessly look at it and learn from it. *Learn of me,* He says, *because I am meek, and humble of heart.* (Mt. 11:29) The Apostle Paul says, *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* (Heb. 12:14) He also teaches, *Let love be without dissimulation... Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another... Distributing to the necessity of saints (that is, to your brother Christians); given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.* (Rom 12:9-21; 13:1)

These are the rules of behavior for Christians amongst themselves, which the Apostle Paul wrote for us in his epistle to the Romans. Each of us is equally obligated to uphold them. Where is the highest motivation for us to treat each other this way? In the image and likeness of God, in which man is created, and in that we are the children of the One Heavenly Father, members of Christ, branches of the one vine of Christ, sheep of His one rational flock. We partake of the one life bread of Christ, and drink from the same chalice of His divine Blood. We have drunk of the same Holy Spirit, and we await the same incorruptible, eternal inheritance. This is our motivation for mutual, sincere, loving relationships!

For if ye love them which love you, says the Lord in the Gospel, *what thank have ye? For sinners (that is, idolaters), also*

love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same; that is, as long as they receive benefit, which means that they love only themselves—for they only love in their benefactors the benefit they receive.

And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again, and in this case you love only yourself, your own gain, and not the benefit of others, and do not satisfy his need perfectly. If Christians do not fulfill these natural virtues, then they are much worse than pagans, who do by nature the things contained in the law (Rom. 2:14), not having the power of grace; while Christians, as we know, have received all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Pet. 1:3), for the fulfillment of all Christ's commandments.

Look, Christian, into the mirror of the divine commandments and know what you are. Do you at least love those who love you? Or do you not even love them at times? Do you do good to your benefactors? Do you lend to those who pay back loans? Do you tend towards self-interest and lack of trust? Many want to be satisfied with love only for those who love them, and do not want to force themselves to love those who hate them, or who have animosity toward them. O Christian, with such pagan love you will stand ashamed at the Last Judgment. *But love ye your enemies, the Lord continues, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.* (Lk 6:35).

It would seem that our Savior is giving us a difficult task by commanding us to love our enemies and to do good to them. The corrupt human heart says, "This is impossible, this is against nature and common sense!" It is really only difficult for the corrupted heart, a heart not renewed or strengthened by grace. But for the heart reborn by grace, this is an easy thing, for the Lord helps the believer in everything; and we can see many such examples in the lives of the saints.

But to whom should we give, not expecting anything in return? To poor people, those of lowly station, for whom repaying a debt is extremely difficult and often impossible. But wealthy people should always repay their debts; lenders do not sin if they seek repayment of debt by honest means or lawsuits. Otherwise, this would be harmful pandering to unconscionable people, who think to get rich easily at the expense of others. *Be ye therefore merciful, says the Lord, as your Father also is merciful.* (Lk 6:36)

The Lord requires mercy from Christians, His children by grace, like unto the mercy of the Heavenly Father. Truly, if Christians are the children of the Heavenly Father, bought

with the blood of His Son, and they are promised incorruptible, eternal blessedness in the Heavenly Homeland, then they should manifest love and mercy in this life towards their brothers, corresponding in greatness to the love and mercy which God has toward them, and to the boundless greatness of incorruptible blessings, the great honor and heavenly crowns that have been promised them.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, says the holy Apostle John the Theologian (1 Jn 4:11).

Amen.



However, it is important to come to an understanding about the hearing of the word of God. Years ago many people were not able to read. Today the opposite is true. Almost everyone can read. So in the past, the basic source of knowledge leading to the truths of God was the sense of hearing, the ear. People could not read. However, even today the hearing of the word is very basic for all people because the word is offered through a living tongue. And much like the word of God, it is alive; so when the word of God is heard through a living tongue, this makes it especially graceful. The word of God in this case can be presented along with the personal experiences of the speaker. And this can be a source of courage to listeners as far as the application of the word of God goes. It is not the same if you hear it on the radio, or if you read it in a book. It is something very different. This is why we go to hear the word of God and we do not rely on reading alone. Reading does not replace the spoken word. And the hearing of the spoken word does not replace reading. These two parallel things are equally important.

I must also tell you that the hearing of the word of God presupposes the presence of other people. The word of God is connected with the presence and vision of other people. In other words, it is connected with the Church. And this is very important, to have the word of God be heard in the Church, very beneficial and of great value. On the other hand, if I sit by myself listening to a cassette, it is like eating canned food according to the holy one of Florina, Metropolitan Avgoustinos Kantiotis. The canned word of God does not have the same freshness as the live participation. Of course I will listen to my cassettes; I will read my books; but I will also make it a point to go and hear the living word of God, to get together with the other faithful, my other brothers and sisters in Christ. This is so I can become a presence and show forth the Church, not only in its liturgical worship but also in the hearing of the word of God.

Elder Athanasios Mitilinaios (+2006)

THE MYSTERY OF BAPTISM

By Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, from "Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition," St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1994.

The Establishment of the Mystery of Baptism

In the first place in the series of Mysteries of the Holy Church stands the Mystery of Baptism. It serves as the door leading into the Kingdom of Grace, or the Church, and it grants access to participation in the other Mysteries. Even before the establishment of the Mystery of Baptism, the Lord Jesus Christ in His conversation with Nicodemus indicated the absolute necessity of it for salvation: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven.* When Nicodemus expressed his perplexity, How can a man be born when he is old, the Saviour replied that the new birth would be accomplished by water and the Spirit: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.* (Jn 3:3-6)

The establishment of this grace giving Mystery occurred after the Resurrection of Christ. Having appeared to His disciples, the Lord said to them that He had received from His Father all authority in Heaven and on earth, and He continued: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World.* (Mt 28:19-20) And to this He added: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* (Mk 16:16).

On the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, when after the speech of the Apostle Peter his listeners asked what they should do, the Apostle Peter said to them: *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* In the same book of the Acts are recorded several instances of baptism performed by the Apostles. Thus, the Apostle Peter baptized Cornelius (ch. 10), the Apostle Paul baptized Lydia and those of her household (ch. 16), as well as the guard of the prison with his whole household.

The Meaning of the Mystery

The mystical grace-given aspect of baptism is indicated in the above-cited passages of Sacred Scripture; baptism is a

new birth, and it is performed *for the salvation of men* (Mk 16: 16). Moreover, setting forth the grace-given significance of Baptism, the Apostles in their Epistles indicate that in it we are *sanctified, cleansed, justified*; that in baptism we *die to sin* so as to walk in renewed life; we are *buried with Christ*, and we arise with Him. Christ loved, the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (that is, baptism with the utterance of the words instituted to accompany it: Eph 5:25-26). *Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God* (I Cor 6:11).

We are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4), baptism is called the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). As for the subjective side—the state of soul of the person being baptized—it is indicated by the Apostle Peter, who calls baptism the promise of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet 3:21). Through baptism at the same time one is joined to the Church.

The Means of the Performance of the Mystery

The comparison of baptism with a washing by water, with the grave, and other such things indicates that this Mystery is to be performed through immersion. The Greek word βαπτίζω (vaptizo) itself signifies "to immerse." Concerning the baptism of the eunuch by Philip, we read in



the book of Acts: They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip (Acts 8:38). As an exception, the Church acknowledges the Christian martyrdom of the unbaptized as a "baptism of blood." Baptism by sprinkling the Church acknowledges but does not approve it; it is considered as being not canonical.

The immersion in water is done three times with the pronouncement of the words: "*The servant of God (name) is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,*" in accordance with the commandment given by Christ Himself (Mt 28:19). Thus was it performed in the ancient Church. The Epistle of the Apostle Barnabas already mentions this, and Tertullian directly indicates that *the manner of baptism is prescribed*, indicating the words of the Savior concerning baptism; Tertullian also testifies to the triple immersion and likewise indicates one particularity:

that the one being baptized is asked to renounce satan and his angels, and then to confess the Faith.

In certain passages of Sacred Scripture there is mention of baptism *in the Name of the Lord Jesus* (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48). According to the interpretation of the ancient Fathers, the expression *in the Name of the Lord Jesus* means *according to the command and tradition of Christ*, or as a testimony of one's faith in Christ. Thus, this expression does not deny the fact of baptism *in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*, as it has seemed to certain historians of Christianity who are of the "rational school." It is entirely natural that the writer of the book of Acts, the Holy Apostle Luke, and St. Paul as well (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 1:13), when speaking of baptism, *in Christ* have in mind the differentiation of this baptism from the baptism of John or anything similar to it; baptism, *in Christ* is THE baptism into Christianity. Thus even now there is sung at Baptism, "*As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal 3:27).

The Indispensability of Baptism

Since in baptism a man receives (in place of the old existence he had) a new existence and life and becomes a child of God, a member of the Body of Christ or the Church, an inheritor of eternal life, it is therefore evident that baptism is indispensable for all, including infants, so that growing in body and spirit they might grow in Christ. In the Apostolic Scriptures many times there is mention of the baptism of whole families (the house of Lydia, the house of the prison guard, the house of Stephan—1 Cor 1:16), and nowhere is it mentioned that infants were excluded from this. The Fathers of the Church, in their instructions to the faithful, insist upon the baptism of children. St. Gregory the Theologian, addressing Christian mothers, says, *Do you have an infant? Do not give time for harm to increase. Let him be sanctified in infancy, and from youth dedicated to the Spirit, Do you fear the seal because of the weakness of nature, as someone fainthearted and small in faith? But Anna even before giving birth promised Samuel to God, and after his birth she quickly dedicated him and raised him for the sacred garment, without fearing human weakness, but believing in God.*

However, it is indispensable in this matter that the persons who offer the infant for baptism should recognize all their responsibility for the raising up of the baptized infant in Christian faith and virtue. We read an instruction concerning this, for example, in the work *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, known under the name of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, which has always been highly respected by the Church: *It was pleasing to our divine instructors to allow infants also to be baptized, under the sacred condition that the natural parents of the child should entrust him to someone among the faithful who would instruct him well in divine subjects and then take*

care for the child as a father, given from above, and as a guard of his eternal salvation. This man, when he gives the promise to guide the child in pious life, is compelled by the bishop to utter the renunciations and the sacred confession.

How important for us is this instruction which comes from the ancient Christian Church! From it we see what responsibility the sponsor or godfather of the baptized person takes upon himself. How careful the parents of the child must be in choosing a sponsor! Of course, in a normal Christian family, the parents themselves usually teach their children the truths of faith and their moral duty. But the contemporary breakup of the foundations of social life compel one to be on guard so that the child will not remain without Christian guidance. And even under favorable conditions, a sponsor should keep close spiritual contact with his godchild and be ready at any needful moment to come to him with heartfelt Christian help.

The tenth paragraph of the Symbol of Faith reads: *I confess one baptism for the remission of sins.* This signifies that **baptism in the Orthodox Church, as a spiritual birth, if it has been performed as a sacred rite correctly through triple immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, cannot be repeated.**

Baptism: the Door to the Reception of Other Grace-giving Gifts

As we see from the above-cited statements of the holy Apostles, and likewise from the whole teaching of the Church, baptism is not only a symbol of cleansing and washing away the defilement of the soul, but in itself is the beginning and source of the Divine gifts which cleanse and annihilate all the sinful defilements and communicate a new way of life. All sins are forgiven, both original sin and personal sins; the way is opened for a new life; opened is also the possibility to receive the gifts of God.

Further spiritual growth depends upon the free will of man. But since temptation is capable of finding sympathy in the nature of man who from the day of his first fall into sin has had an inclination to sin, therefore moral perfection cannot be accomplished without battle. A man finds help for this inward battle in the whole grace-given life of the Church...

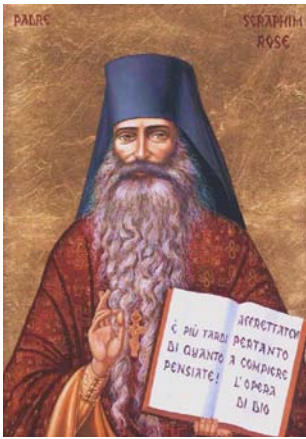


Against impure thoughts, use the spiritual sword: the name of [Jesus]. You must offer repentance to the Lord, and you must not hide anything from your spiritual father. Wounds that are exposed heal quickly.

St. Joseph the Hesychast (+1959)

WHY STUDY THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

By Blessed Hieromonk Seraphim Rose.



The subject of this article is watching for the signs of the times.

First of all, we have to know what is meant by the phrase “signs of the times.” This expression comes straight from the Gospel, from the words of our Savior in Matthew 16:3. Christ tells the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to Him, *Ye can discern the face of the sky*, that is, tell what the weather will be; *but*

can ye not discern the signs of the times? In other words, He’s telling them that this has nothing to do with science, or with knowing our place in the world, or anything of the sort. It’s a religious question. **We study the signs of the times in order to be able to recognize Christ.**

During the time of Christ, the Pharisees and Sadducees did not study the signs of the times in order to see that Christ had come, that the Son of God was already on earth. There were already signs that they should have recognized. For example, in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, there is a prophecy concerning the seventy weeks of years, which means that the Messiah was to come about 490 years from the time of Daniel. Those Jews who read their books very carefully knew exactly what this was all about, and at about the time that Christ came they knew that it was time for the messiah.

But this is an outward sign. More importantly, the Pharisees and Sadducees should have been watching for the inward signs. If their hearts had been right with God, and if they had not been merely trying to fulfill the outward commandment of the law, their hearts would have responded and recognized God in the flesh when He came. And many of the Jews did—the apostles, the disciples, and many others.

This same passage in the 16th chapter of St. Matthew speaks further about signs. Our Lord told the Jews, *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.* The events of the Old Testament contain prefigurations of events in the New Testament. When Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale, this was a prefiguration of our Lord’s being three days in the tomb. And this sign—the sign of Jonah—was given to the people of Christ’s time.

Our Lord was telling the Pharisees and Sadducees that an evil and adulterous generation seeks for spectacular events,

that is, fire coming down from heaven, or the Romans being chased away, angels manifesting themselves and banishing the foreign government of the Romans, and things of that sort. Christ told them this kind of sign would not be given. An evil and adulterous generation seeks after this, but those who are pure of heart seek rather something more spiritual. And the one sign that is given to them is the sign of Jonah. Of course, it is a great thing that a man should be three days in the grave and then rise up, being God.

Thus, from our Savior’s words, we know that we are not to watch for spectacular signs, but we are rather to look inwardly for spiritual signs. Also, we are to watch for those things which according to Scripture must come to pass.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!



Your greatest joy is to have a son who sanctifies the Precious Gifts, whose honor it is to forgive sins, and who intercedes constantly for your family. Had he become a king, he would not have obtained the glory of a priest. During the Divine Liturgy the priest is higher than the angels because even the angels at that hour tremble as they serve at the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

Elder Amphilokhios of Patmos (+1970)

The priest’s cassock is superior to trousers. A cassock has double grace!

Blessed Papa-Dimitri Gagastathis (+1975)

When one bishop asked Hieromonk Callistratus, the saintly abbot of the Monastery of Mileseva, “What is the most important thing for a priest?”, he answered, “The most important thing for a priest is to communicate—first with the Master, afterwards with the lords of the Master’s servants, and finally with the Master’s servants. The Master is He who is called the Christ, the lords of the Master’s servants are the Saints, and the Master’s servants are the people of this world. For it has been said, he who communicates only with the Master’s servants does not care about the Master, and provokes the wrath of the Master.”

St Nikolai Velimirovich (+1956)

God lights the priest up as a lamp and places him upon the lamp stand of His light-bearing throne.

Saint Isidore of Pelusium (+449)

THE FUNCTION OF THE PROPHET

By Archbishop Dmitri of Dallas (OCA), August 9, 1995.

The function of the prophet of the Old Testament was twofold: to foretell the future, the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of the vocation of the Hebrew people; to call them to account for their sins and disobedience and for their departures from God's righteousness. The prophets called them to repentance for their transgressions, chief among which was being influenced by the idolatrous and barbarous religions of their neighbors and adopting their ways.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in His own prophetic ministry, condemned false religion and false thinking about religion, and, in doing so, He deeply offended the self-righteous religious leaders who were responsible for guiding the people of Israel.

Throughout her history, the Church has been beset by the assaults of the Evil One, heresies that would undermine the doctrine of the person of the Lord Himself (Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, etc.), surrender to pressures for conformity (iconoclasm), and politically motivated alliances (the false union of Florence). Many Christians, at times a majority of them, were attracted by these destructive movements, and were offended at the prophetic voice, which was never lacking, that perceived the real dangers in them. The Church, by God's grace, overcame them all and reached the twentieth century intact.

It is my opinion that many Orthodox Christians today are willing for the Church to surrender to the temptation to conform to the role that contemporary society assigns to religion: to bless this world's so-called progress in the moral and spiritual spheres, to reject all exclusivity or uniqueness in the interest of unity, and to concern itself with the world of the here and now rather than with the world to come. Many are unaware of the primary danger that the Church faces: the gradual infiltration of materialistic, humanistic and secularist thinking, that the ground is being laid for a western captivity far worse than those of the past, latinizations and protestantizations.

Prophetic voices are needed to call us all back to the realization that the forces of this world still want to destroy the Church, the precious Truth that has been entrusted to her—to understand that what the Church has is essential for the life of the world and its salvation and that this cannot be mitigated. These voices will offend—so be it!

One such voice is that of the author of "Letters to Father Aristotle." Frank Schaeffer has come to us from where that secularism has already done a great deal of its damage, and he is in a unique position to discern the signs of the times. He is an intensely loyal Orthodox layman, loyal also to his local church and the jurisdiction to which it belongs. He is one of us, and we American Orthodox should give heed to what he has to say.

ELDER EPHRAIM OF VATOPAIDI ON RUSSIA, THE ANTICHRIST AND THE BELT OF THE THEOTOKOS

November 29, 2011, Interfax News Service.

The Abbot of the Vatopaidi Monastery, Archimandrite Ephraim, who accompanied the Belt of the Mother of God from the Monastery to Russian cities, believes in Russia's special spiritual mission. "Russia won't collapse. On the contrary, it will strengthen and play the leading part in saving Orthodoxy on Earth," the Bulletin of St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation quoted Father Ephraim as saying.

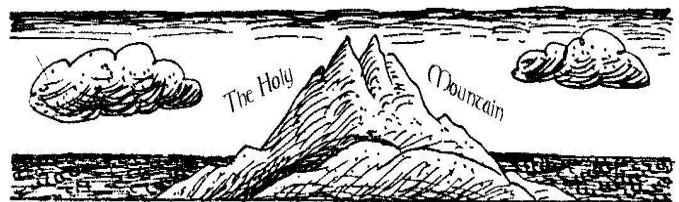
As was reported, a week after the Belt of the Mother of God departed from Russia, belts blessed on the holy relic will be distributed in one of Moscow's churches. Father Ephraim advised to wear them as a usual belt. "You can wash it, but it's better not to pour the first water down the drain, but rather to water a tree as the belt is blessed," he said.

Addressing some Orthodox believers who are expecting the apocalypse soon, the priest recommended to study "Christ, rather than Antichrist." He said, "You know, it's an unhealthy spiritual condition when people talk much of the Antichrist, the end of the world, and so on. Some people are too much involved in the topic," he said.

After visiting St. Petersburg the relic was taken to other Russian cities. The last destination was Moscow. The belt returned to Athos on November 28. The shrine has left Greece for the first time in the history of its stay in the Vatopaidi Monastery.

For many years Vatopaidi monks have made small belts, blessed them on the belt of the Mother of God and distributed them among believers. They take a bobbin with 300 meters of ribbon, which is blessed on the reliquary with a special prayer. Then the bobbin is handed over to the monks: they divide the fabric for a meter and a half belts, twist them and put them into plastic bags together with a text telling them about the shrine and instructions how to pray and observe a fast.

Orthodox believe that thanks to the intercession of the Holy Virgin these belts help cure female infertility, and bear and give birth to a healthy child. As the belt of the Mother of God is kept on Athos where women are not allowed, Russian women have a rare chance to kneel down before the shrine, pray for granting children, health for relatives and friends, and bring prosperity to Russia.



Christ the Lord called that Church the Catholic Church which maintains the true and saving confession of the faith.

St. Maximus the Confessor

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THE ANGELS AS STARS IN HEAVEN

By St. John of Kronstadt (+1908).

Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire

[Pss 104:4]

These are the words of the King and Prophet David. With these words, he said that God created the wisest minds, the fleshless spirits, servants loyal to Him, who burn with eternal love for God, fulfill God's will and abide in the unapproachable light of the Throne of Glory. The Lord created the angels as wise, powerful, eternally holy, pure and within Divine truth. Ponder this, dear brothers and sisters, delve into this with your minds. The Lord divided all the angels into nine orders, or ranks: Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers, Authorities and others; they all obey each other—the lower orders obey the higher orders. In the likeness of the heavenly hierarchy, the Lord established three ranks in the Church Militant: the bishops, priests and deacons, who also obey each other.

God created an innumerable multitude of angels. When you came to liturgy this morning, maybe someone among you looked into the sky and saw how many stars fill the heavens. There are so many stars that it seems that the sky is filled with poppy seeds. No mortal can count them all. Likewise, one cannot count the number of holy angels. One star shines brighter, another less so, but each of them is greater than our world, larger than the Earth; this is known and has been proven.

The countless multitude of angels abide in the heavens, in the presence of God, fulfill God's will and eternally glorify God.

Some of them are appointed by God to humans, these are our guardian angels who protect people throughout their lives, from baptism until death, keep evil away from them and direct them to all truth and goodness. If a person lives righteously, lives well, he will feel this himself. Think, dear brothers and sisters, how close the angels are to us!

You know or have heard of the miracle performed by Archangel Michael. A few impious people had decided to kill St. Archippus and the destroy the church he built; they channeled a great river towards the church, but Archangel Michael appeared to Archippus, consoled him, split a cliff asunder, and directed the river towards the rocky chasm, so that the water did not flood the church, and the church and Archippus were saved.

Angels are not prone to sin, they cannot even think sinful thoughts—their notions and desires are pure. They are imparted with all perfection, they are always wise, always strong, always good. They firmly established themselves in love for God, in holiness and truth and do not fall into sin, only some of them, a third overall, saddened the Lord with their disobedience and could no longer be citizens of the heavens; they were cast down by God.

And you, my friends, should emulate the angels loyal to God, and after being citizens of the earthly fatherland, you will become co-citizens with them of the heavenly fatherland. Emulate the angles, especially since you are created in the image of God; this gift is common to angels and men. Honor the angels, my friends, imitate their holiness, their love and devotion to God, and you will be worthy of the blessed live in heaven together with them. Amen.