

# Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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## ON THE NEW YEAR

*St. Barsanuphius of Optina, on Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1913 (after the Liturgy—on the year of his repose).*

*St. Barsanuphius is one of our lesser known Orthodox saints who possessed the gifts of clairvoyance and of healing people afflicted with physical and spiritual ailments. A small story best demonstrates the divine gifts the saint possessed.*

*One of his spiritual sons, Fr. Innocent Pavlov, recalled his first Confession with the elder. He became fearful because the saint seemed to know his innermost thoughts, reminding him of people and events which he had forgotten. St. Barsanuphius spoke gently and told him that it was God who had revealed to him these things about Fr. Innocent. "During my lifetime, do not tell anyone about what you are experiencing now," he said, "but you may speak of it after my death."*

† † †

I greet all of you gathered here with the New Year.

I congratulate you with the joys that I hope the Lord might send you in the coming year. I congratulate you also with the sorrows that will inevitably visit you this year: perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow, or in the near future.

Incidentally, do not be confused by sorrows or fear them. Sorrows and joys are closely bound up with each other. This may seem strange to you, but remember the words of the Savior: *A woman when she is in travail bath*

*sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*

(Jn 16:21). Day turns to night, and night turns to day, bad weather turns to good; so also does sorrow turn into joy, and joy into sorrow.

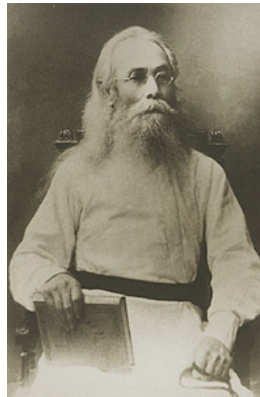
The Apostle Paul pronounced threatening words against those who do not endure any punishment that comes from God: *If you are left without punishment, you are illegitimate children. Do not be depressed; let those be depressed who do not believe in God. For them, of course, sorrow is onerous, because they know only earthly pleasures. But*

*people who believe in God should not despond, because through sorrows they receive the rights of sons, without which one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Scorning the impious decree, the Children brought up together in godliness feared not the threat of fire, but standing in the midst of the*

*flames, they sang: 'O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou. (Irmos of the Nativity of Christ, tone 1, canticle 7).*

Sorrows are that very threat of fire, or trial, but we must not fear them; rather we must be like the godly children and sing unto God in our sorrows, believing that they are sent to us by God for our salvation. May the Lord save you all, and lead you to the Kingdom of Unwaning Light! Amen.



*The Brotherhood of St. POIMEN wishes our readers a blessed and prosperous 2013. We completed our tenth year of publication, in spite of the challenges we have faced and ONLY through the prayers, ideas, feedback and monetary support of our many readers, world-wide. We humbly wish to remind you that this publication is made possible through your donations and thus ask that you not forget your 2013 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 20<sup>th</sup> century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His truth be brought forth.

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## THE SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD

*By Elder Cleopa of Romania, from "The Truth of Our Faith," Ch. 15.*



**Inquirer:** Father, what can you tell us about the exact date of the Second Coming of Christ?

**Elder Cleopa:** Christ's true Church provides us with a number of apt testimonies which show that God did not entrust this date to anyone, neither to angels, nor to men, nor even to His own Son as man.

Listen to the divine words of

Scripture on the subject:

*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be ... Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Mt 24:36-51).*

If neither the angels in heaven nor the Son of Man Himself as man know the appointed time, how is it possible for it to be known among men? From the words of the Saviour it is

understood only that we must be ever vigilant and mindful of our salvation, ever ready for the coming of the Lord, for we know neither the day nor the hour of His coming, nor even the hour of our own end in this life. His appearance will be unexpected, as the Lord forewarned us when he said, *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. (Mt 25:13).*

**Inquirer:** It is true that at first the Apostles didn't know the exact date of the Second Coming of the Saviour (Mt 24:36), however, from the time they were strengthened from on high at the descent of the Holy Spirit they were made aware of all. For, as the Saviour foretold, by the Holy Spirit all the mysteries were revealed: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. (Jn. 16:12-13).* From the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the Apostles, as well as all faithful Christians, with the illumination and wisdom given them by the Holy Spirit, were made able to know all truth. In other words, they became aware of the entirety of the divine plan for the history of the world and its end, and thus were able to determine through Holy Scripture the events of the future, such as the date of the Second Coming. Isn't such a determination possible?

**Elder Cleopa:** William Miller calculated that, according to Scripture, the Second Coming of Christ would take place between the first of March 1843 and the first of March 1844. He had announced this date as early as 1833 in the brochure "Prophecy from Holy Scripture of the Second Coming of the Lord in the year 1843." Another "prophet," Joseph Chimes, had proposed in the journals "The Voice of

Midnight" (1842) and "The Bell of Danger" that the Lord would come in the year 1843.

The closest disciple of Miller, a Mr. Snow, decided to add to the prophecy of Miller another seven months and ten days, predetermining the date of the Second Coming of the Lord as the tenth of October 1844. He was also put to ridicule along with his teacher. Those who believed their pronouncements spent their fortunes, handing out all they had and buying white garments and candles in order to go out and meet the Lord.

It is possible that the shop windows were even filled then with white garments for those "travelling to heaven" on the tenth of October 1844. Yet, this day passed like all others. The so-called prophets became the recipients of every kind of shame, derision and mockery from those deluded people who had scattered their fortunes trusting in the false prophecies.

From these pitiful experiences we must at least come to understand that the promise of our Saviour Jesus Christ concerning the revelation of the future by the Holy Spirit did not refer to the date of the Second Coming, as it appeared to many, but rather to prophecies pertaining to various events and signs due to come to pass in the Church. For, indeed, there have been revelations through the Holy Spirit, as we see, for example, in the Book of Revelation and other books of Holy Scripture. These revelations contain a variety of eschatological teachings (on the appearance of the Antichrist, of the false prophets, the unleashing of the persecutions of Christians), as well as the indispensable wisdom of the Apostles which enabled them to present the divine teachings when they were led to give a defence before their accusers (Mt 10:19-20). These are the future events of which the Saviour speaks in the text that you read.

**Inquirer:** The Apostle Paul writes: *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.* (1Thess 5:4-5). From these words it follows that Christians can and should know the exact date of the Second Coming in order to be ready to accept it.

**Elder Cleopa:** Why have you read from only verses four and five of chapter five from First Thessalonians, leaving out verses one and two which serve to interpret verses four and five? Listen to what the Apostle Paul says there: *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.* (1 Thess 5:1-2). This is the truth to which the Christ's Church has remained faithful.

The true Church teaches, equally with the Apostle Paul, that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night and that no one knows the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man will come.

It is possible **only for the approach of the Second Coming** to be known by the signs which must come before:

~ The preaching of the Gospel throughout the world. (Mt 24:15).

~ The turn of the Jews to Christianity after the preaching of the Gospel in the entire world. (2 Rom 11:25-34).

~ The appearance of the Antichrist, also called the man of iniquity or the beast, together with his representatives, pseudo-christs, false prophets, and every type of false wonder worked by the power of Satan in order to deceive the people. The Antichrist will sit in the place of God acting as if he were God and as an unrelenting beast he will pursue

with all rage and furor the chosen servants of God. (1 Jn 2:18; 2Thess 2:3-11; Rev 13:1-8, 20:1-10; Mt 24:9).

~ The multiplication of wickedness and the growing cold of love between men, hatred and betrayal of one another. (Mt 24:10-12).

~ A torrent of bloodshed, wars and rumors of wars between nations, people and states. (Mt 24:6-7).

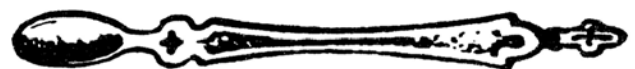
~ The appearance of calamities such as mass starvation, sicknesses, etc. (Mt 24:7-9).

~ The appearance of certain signs in the world such as the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of stars from the sky, the passing away of heaven and earth.

~ The appearance in the heavens of the sign of the Son of Man, the True Cross, because this is the sign of victory of our Lord and no other sign so alerts us of His imminent arrival as does His Cross.

The Lord explains these signs thus: *Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.* (Mt 24:32-33).

Therefore, concerning the signs that will precede the Second Coming of the Lord, we have explanations and confirmation from the Saviour Himself, while of the exact date of His coming neither the angels nor even the Son of Man Himself, as man, are informed, but the Father alone knows.



Send your treasures to the heavenly storage room. Deposit your wealth in God's Bank, distributing it to the poor, the orphans and the widows, so that you can receive a million times more in the Second coming of Christ...

**Elder Philotheos Zervakos (+1980)**



## ALPHA AND OMEGA

From the Editor of "Orthodox America," Issue 161, Vol. XVIII, no. 5, January, 2000.



The arrival of a new year traditionally prompts reflections and resolutions, and when this new year brings with it not only a new century but a new millennium, it simply expands our time frame. Our thoughts

are drawn back to the origin of time and the creation of the world, and forward to the end of time, to the end of this world and the beginning of *a new heaven and a new earth*.

When the new millennium was still some distance away, there was a noticeable increase in end time speculations, heightened by the spectre of a Y2K disaster. But the millennial fervor cooled as the media downplayed the prospect of a catastrophe. Ministries and ministers, such as Jerry Falwell and Midnight Cry, who marketed end-time messages, did not find the anticipated demand for their tapes and other materials. Meanwhile, the Center for Millennial Studies, when asked whether it would close its books, indicated that it would turn its attention to study disappointment about failed prophecies in end-time groups ("Religion Watch," 12/99).

In the mid 1970s, I was involved in a group that had grown out of the Jesus Movement. The fervor and singular devotion of its members was due in part to a perception that Christ was coming "soon." One fellow told me, only half jokingly, that if Christ did not come within five years, he was going to leave the group and, presumably, his faith in Christ. It may be that this came from being immersed in the New Testament—where one does find the expectation that the Second Coming is imminent—without an appreciation for the two intervening millennia of church history. In any case, these Protestants often quoted passages such as, *Believe on the Lord Jesus and ye shall be saved* (Acts 16:31; cf Jn 3:16), but never, *He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved* (Mt 24:13), or, *In patience possess ye your souls* (Lk 1:19).

Guarded by Sacred Tradition, Orthodox are less prone to eschatological speculation. It is understood that while we should know the signs of the times, we should be more concerned about the end of our lives than about the end of the world. Here we have as much need for a lesson in patience and endurance as our Protestant friends.

Ours is a fast-paced world, where speed and efficiency are regarded as virtues. We drive fast cars, we eat fast food, we expect fast service; technologies compete to provide us with instant communication, instant gratification, and the more they succeed, the further they raise our expectations. Anything that interferes, that causes delay, that causes us to have to wait, anything that disrupts our tight schedules, becomes

reason for annoyance, vexation, irritation: we fume at the slower drivers on the highway, we become irritated with ourselves for invariably choosing the slow line at the checkout, we itch to get going when someone stops to chat. (It is one of the blessings of old age that time ceases to be such a relentless task master.) Daily we encounter numerous occasions that test our patience. They are not inconsequential.

The Holy Fathers emphasize the need for patient waiting and perseverance in the Christian struggle. It is not at the beginning but at the finish line that crowns are awarded. The Apostle Paul writes: *We are of Christ's household if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end* (Heb 3:14); and the Apostle James writes, *Behold, we count them happy which endure* (Jas 5:11), bringing to mind the patience of Job. Tertullian wrote a most instructive homily on the subject of patience, revealing it to be an essential companion of many other virtues. "[Patience] fortifies faith, is the pilot of peace; assists charity; establishes humility; waits long for repentance; sets her seal on confession; rules the flesh; preserves the spirit; bridles the tongue; restrains the hand; tramples temptations underfoot; drives away scandals; ... is beautiful in either sex, in every time of life." ("Of Patience," XV.) Saint John Chrysostom writes further, "*Patience means practicing forgiveness*." (Homily on Ephesians).

Patience is essential to prayer. The Apostle Paul enjoins the Ephesians to pray always, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (6:18). Patience cannot be sustained without hope. The farmer patiently cultivates his fields with the hope that they will yield fruit in due season. The athlete runs with his eye on the prize. It is in the hope of a just settlement that the sisters continue to endure. Similarly, it is the hope of eternal blessedness promised by our Lord Jesus Christ that gives us the will to persevere in the Christian struggle.

Jesus Christ is our consummate desire, the very reason for our patience and perseverance, the object of our hope. In Him we embrace all eternity, for *He is eternal, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*. (Rev 22:13). It is He Who set in motion the millennia, and it is He Who shall halt their advance. For centuries, science has been trying to unlock the mystery of creation. For us it is sufficient to know that God created the heaven and the earth, and the time will come when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and these, too, shall be "good." As Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich writes: "When we know that the beginning is good, then we know that it tends towards and that its end will be good. Lo, in the words about the beginning there is hidden a prophecy about the end. As is the beginning, so will be the end. The end will be found in Him Who made the beginning."

Therefore, if we desire to partake of this good, *Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*. (Heb 12:1-2).

## THE MODEL OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRAYER

By St. Philaret the Confessor, Metropolitan of New York (+1985).



For Orthodox Christians, the model of prayer is, of course, the “Our Father” (the “Lord’s Prayer”). If we look at its composition and content, we see that, externally, it is divided into three parts: invocation, seven petitions, and a glorification. In its inner content, it can be divided into three common parts: the main one, which encompasses an invocation and the first three petitions; the petition about daily bread; and, three

petitions about our personal sins.

What is the foremost thing about which a Christian must pray? About that goal for which we must strive most of all: the Kingdom of God and His Truth. We see that this is the first part of the prayer. In appealing to God as the Heavenly Father, an Orthodox Christian testifies that our true fatherland is not on earth, but in heaven. *Our abode is in the heavens*, the Apostle firmly says.

In this appeal to the Father, an Orthodox Christian prays that God’s name be hallowed, both in the personal life of each of us and in human history. It is especially hallowed when we Orthodox Christians, through the example of our own lives, lead unbelievers to glorify the name of our Heavenly Father. Further, we pray that the Kingdom of God be manifested on earth.

Observing life, we see in it a constant struggle between two principles: light and darkness, truth and falsehood, good and evil. When we see this, we cannot but pray that there will be a victory of light over darkness and that there will be a triumph of God’s Kingdom—the kingdom of Truth and Good.

In the third petition of the Lord’s Prayer, we pray that God’s will be fulfilled in man’s life in the same way that it is fulfilled in the Heavenly world. The Christian conscience is aware and firmly convinces us that not only is it our duty, but it is real wisdom and the truth of life to submit to God’s will. The Heavenly Father knows what is beneficial and necessary for each one of us, and through His infinite love and goodness, wishes us good and salvation even more than we desire it for ourselves. Therefore, Apostle Peter says, *Cast all your cares on Him; for He cares for you.* (1Pet 5:7).

The fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer is the only one which deals with bodily needs. We also turn to God and ask for all that is necessary for bodily life.

The fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer concerns forgiveness of sins. In this petition, as elsewhere in His teaching, our Saviour makes it clear that an indispensable precondition of our receiving forgiveness of sins from God is our own forgiveness of our neighbors. But how often this petition is spoken falsely! We read, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*, while in reality, we neither forgive nor forget, but are offended and conceal vexation in our heart, and even a desire for revenge. Therefore, each time a Christian repeats this petition, he must consider whether he has forgiven his enemies and offenders. If not, how can he expect forgiveness from God for himself?

The two last petitions, the sixth and seventh ones, speak of one thing: the causes of sin. At first we ask that its embryos be removed from us, that is, that we be delivered from enticements and temptations, and then that we be delivered from the evil one, that is, from the root of all sins, Satan. People usually fear external misfortunes: failures, illnesses, poverty, etc. Christianity teaches us to be more fearful for our immortal soul. *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot harm the soul*, our Lord said, *but rather fear the one who can destroy the body and the soul...* Concerning external misfortunes, particularly trials and persecutions endured for the Faith, our Lord said to those who suffer them, *Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in the heavens.*

It is not external misfortunes and poverty that the Orthodox Christian must fear, but rather he must fear his own sins and falls. Everyone knows how much we become accustomed to sinning, literally sinning at each step and at each moment of our life. Sin is a violation of the Truth of God’s Law, and the result of sin is suffering and grief. The Lord’s Prayer instills in our hearts a great aversion to these spiritual evils, so that while humbly confessing our weakness and inclination toward sin, we ask God to preserve us from falling into sins and to deliver us from the evil master of sin—the devil.

At the end of these seven petitions, there has been added a solemn glorification of God’s power, authority and glory.<sup>[\*]</sup> This glorification of God’s grandeur contains a filial expression of unwavering and clear conviction that everything we ask for will be given to us from the love of the Heavenly Father: for His *is the kingdom and the power and the glory, unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

The Lord’s Prayer is not the only prayer of glorification, however. There are prayers which are purely and simply glorifications, such as *Praise the name of the Lord* or *Holy, Holy, Holy...* We do not use them as often, but they are representative of the endings of our prayers, especially in the Divine Services. Prayers of glorification must be seen as

especially elevated, for in them, we express Christian love for God and bow before the Most High.

The third aspect of prayer is thanksgiving. Quite understandably, a Christian who loves God and knows of His love, mercy and benefits cannot but experience feelings of thanksgiving in his heart. The most important prayer of thanksgiving is the most important Divine Service—the Holy Liturgy. Its main part, referred to as the *Thanksgiving (Eucharistic) Canon* begins with the words, *We thank the Lord...* And the pure, bloodless sacrifice, a sacrifice of truth, a sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ which is given us in the Holy Communion, is fulfilled by Christ Himself, by His Grace and almighty power, and it is only received by us, with a devotion of thankful love. This is why in the most important moments of the Liturgy, the priest solemnly exclaims, *Thine Own of Thine Own, we offer to Thee, in behalf of all and for all*, while the faithful respond with the hymn of thanksgiving, *We hymn Thee, we praise Thee, we give thanks to Thee, O our God...*

† † †

[\*]The words, *For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory...* are not part of the Lord's prayer as such, but a liturgical response to it, included by the Evangelist. The fact that it appears in the Gospel shows how old the Liturgy is.



**P**ray as often as possible. Try to feel compunction and to weep, and you will see how much you will be relieved from thoughts and grief.

**P**rayer is a conversation of man with God. He who prays with a broken and humbled spirit is filled with divine gifts and blessings—that is, with joy, peace, comfort, illumination, and consolation—and he, too, becomes blessed. Prayer is a doubled-edged sword that slays despair, saves from danger, assuages grief, and so on. Prayer is a preventative medicine for all diseases of soul and body.

**B**e extremely careful with your imagination. Do not accept any image, because it will become an idol that you will worship. A wandering mind is a shameless bird and paints the most grotesque images: it enters into the depths of our neighbor's conscience and depicts his secret and hidden things. Immediately destroy the image with the prayer as soon as it begins to form. The more you delay, the more you will toil and suffer later.

By Elder Ephraim of Philotheou  
From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"

## IN HIS SERVICE...

*From the sermon of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd (new martyr) at his consecration as bishop on March 15, 1909. According to KGB archives, Metropolitan Joseph was shot with Metropolitan Cyril in Chimkent on November 7, 1937, on the eve of the Feast of the Holy Archangel Michael.*



**I**n this unique, exceptionally significant, and most sacred moment of my life, when the call of our Lord—*follow me*—has touched even my extreme unworthiness, both joy and trembling, both blessedness and suffering embrace my lowly soul. Before my mental gaze stand the choirs of holy apostles, the ranks of great hierarchs, the builders and disseminators of Orthodox Faith and Christ's Church on earth... From the simple to the highly-educated, from the greatly infirm to those strong and rich in the powers of soul—they have all offered and placed their life and all their strength on the altar of Christ's love, have given themselves as food to that sacred Fire of Christ by which the whole universe blazes in Grace.

For me, too, to touch this Grace-giving Fire; for me, too, to offer my feeble powers—or rather infirmities—to the altar of the Universal Church; for me, too, to place my life in the furnace of the Flame of Christ, to hear the Lord's call to serve such a great work of God and receive the possibility of answering this call with the labor of the highest Apostolic expression of love and devotion to the Sweetest Heavenly Hierarchy.

Oh, how many grounds there are in this for joy! How sufficient this is to fill one with a feeling of unutterable heartfelt consolation and tender feeling! Yet, the source of such joy and consolation at the same time represents for me a source as well of an oppressive fear, of apprehensions, of heartfelt trouble and suffering. The beauty of the Apostles' feat, the beauty of the highest expression of love and devotion to the Savior, of the highest service of the Church of God on earth appear to my gaze not as mere words, but as true deeds, as the most living reality, outside all embellishments of thought and word.

And what labors, what ascetic feats, what sufferings has this reality not given us as an example, instruction, and fortification! Behold the bloody wounds on the bodies of the absolute prisoners of Christ's love, wounds lifted up with a meek prayer for their torturers upon their lips and with the shining of an unearthly joy in their faces! Behold all the horrors of persecution, torments, tortures—every kind and every endurance of death by means of which hell has attempted to unbalance the emissaries of the Crucified One, only deepening thereby its own defeat and disgrace!

## WE MUST BE BORN AGAIN!

*Transcribed, abridged, and translated from a taped talk with the nuns of the Lesna Convent, 1997; printed in "Pravoslavnaya Rus," no. 4 (1649), 2000, Jordanville.*

When Christianity came to the human race, naturally there were found those people who, having read the Gospel, desired to realize it in their lives, at least to some small degree, at least one letter.

Indeed, when we read the Gospel, we understand that this is not just words, for in these words there is a power, in them is fire. This fire is not immediately apparent to everyone, but when it does become apparent to a person, he begins to think: Who am I, after all? And, how shall I lead my life in the light of these evangelical commands?

Those people who desired to fulfill in their lives the words of our Saviour, very soon realized that they are very difficult to realize in the circumstances in which we normally live. What happens normally? People get married, they have children; the children need to be brought up, to be cared for; someone has to work to support the family... And in this way they are overtaken by the cares of earthly life. Many understood that under such circumstances it is extremely difficult (although not impossible) to realize the Gospel ideal in their lives. How, then, was one to find a way that would allow one to realize to the maximum the evangelical precepts? It was this consideration that gave birth to monasticism.

Monasticism worked out specific forms of living. First there appeared great hermits, but not everyone could emulate them, inasmuch as it is very difficult to lead an ascetic life on one's own. Then there appeared the first communal monastic community, which at that time was not yet called a monastery; it was simply people who came together for the sake of their salvation. Gradually, monasticism acquired its customary character: it began not only to live apart, but also adopted a distinctive dress. The heart of monasticism is the sincere desire to realize the Gospel in one's life.

From monasticism came yet another very important concept: the need not only to avoid sin but to do something even greater. It is what the Saviour said to Nikodemos, who came secretly to converse with Him. Nikodemos was interested in learning the very essence, the ultimate meaning of the Saviour's mission on earth. And the Lord answered him. Now, He did not cite common truths: that one must

not sin, that one must live well, be good, etc. No. He said that one must be born again!

To be born again: this is the essential meaning of Christianity. And this is the meaning not only of monasticism, but of Christianity in general (although, of course, this task—to change oneself completely—stands at the center of monastic life). It is not only monastics but lay people who must be very vigilant towards themselves, towards their relations with others, who must control each movement of their soul. Because the aim is not only not to sin but to be totally reborn!

Can it be that the Lord descended from heaven, took on flesh and became man only in order to repeat to us, for the thousandth(!) time, what had been said by all the prophets: *Do not sin?* No. Everyone knows that one must not sin, even pagans and primitive peoples, for the law of conscience is written upon their hearts, as the apostle says. Go, find the most savage tribe of men, and you will be persuaded that even they know that one should not steal, one should not take another's wife, one should not kill. This is part of the natural law, which is known to all mankind. Nevertheless, the unbelievable, the unique, the astounding happened: God became man. And the Lord, throughout the course of His earthly mission, three and a half years, tried to explain, at first to the Apostles at least, that He is God. And He could not.

This was very difficult, because the human heart had hardened, people had become spiritually coarse; they could not understand that Christ was God. For them this was unfathomable: What did He mean, He was God? Even the devil, as our Orthodox Church teaches, did not believe and did not know that Christ was God. He saw in Him an extraordinary man, a wonderworker, but the devil had seen miracles before the time of Christ. Moses struck his rod and divided the sea, and the water stood *this way and that*. Do not think that it was divided by some kind of winds, as some Protestants teach. In the Holy Scripture it is said specifically that the waters became like two walls, forming a passageway.

The devil saw all this, but it did not impress him, for he was a former angel, and he was proud of the fact that he himself could perform many wonders. The devil thought that Christ was one of the righteous, and he knew that all the righteous had gone down into Hades: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others—with the exception of the prophet Elijah and Enoch, who were taken up into heaven.



The Saviour performed miracles. Once He said, *Sea, be calm*, and the waters became still and smooth as glass. It was then that the apostles asked themselves for the first time: *Who is this that even the water and the winds obey Him?* But the thought that God Himself had become man remained for them unbelievable. They still had a difficult way to go before they came to an understanding of this idea.

We already know that our Lord is Christ God. The age-old tradition of the Church tells us this. Now our principal task is to attain the Gospel ideal and to become united to our Saviour.

I happened to come into conversation with a young woman in Canada, who had graduated from university and became a psychiatrist. I asked her, "Tell me, what ideal do you hold up to people who are mentally ill? What are they to strive towards?" She answered, "The ideal of an average person, the common man." "What is that?" I responded. "Who can define the ideal of the common man? That is very vague. We have..." "Who is 'we'?" she asked. "We Christians," I answered. "We have a definite ideal—our Lord Jesus Christ. He is both God and Man, and for us He is the image of the ideal man."

And so we must strive to resemble, at least to some small degree, the Son of Man. This is what constitutes the meaning of Christianity. But here arises another question: How is one to approach this, what is one to do? Of course, the Lord also said simple things, that one must not sin, but this is not what constitutes the essence of Christianity. The essence is to make oneself incapable of sinning, to make oneself a stranger to sin. And what hinders our becoming so? Passions! Therefore we must become dispassionate.

Here we must understand what is meant by passion. Saint Makarios the Great explains that God gave us gifts; the greatest of these was love, then wisdom, then righteous zeal. These are the three principal gifts. And what have we done with them? We have distorted them, perverted them, and turned them into passions. For example, love... My God, what this word doesn't cover!—a whole succession of terrible sins, and all this is now called "love." Who did this? Of course we did, tempted by the devil, who put on as it were human nature. These passions now torment us, for we have become a depraved humanity. Everyone, from childhood, is depraved.

According to Saint Makarios, we have been given the task of transforming these passions back into virtues. For example, from lust to return to true, pure love for God and

neighbor. To put wisdom in its place. We deceive, we are cunning, we become rogues and cheats—these are manifestations of a perverted wisdom. The same goes for anger, scorn, hatred, murder—these are perversions of that zeal given us by God, for anger is to be used against our sins, against Satan, not against our neighbor.

Therefore, the task set before us consists not only in not sinning but in making ourselves incapable of sinning, in attaining dispassion. This is the aim of Christianity. If we do not understand this, then we do not understand what is Christianity. If, on the other hand, we do understand all this, then, in looking at an evildoer—and evildoers can also be highly gifted—we should say, "What a pity that this fellow is so gifted in evil. He could be a great wise man, but he has perverted the gift granted him." When we see a profligate, we should not despise and laugh at her (certainly not take advantage of her) but say, "What a pity that this woman, having such a great gift of love, is making such foul use of it and is distorting it."

This is what our attitude should be towards sinners. To become incapable of sinning is a difficult task indeed; it is the task of our whole life, for the Saviour said that in order to do this one must be born again. When the Jewish teacher Nikodemos heard these words from the Saviour, he exclaimed, *This is as difficult as entering again into our mother's womb.* Then the Saviour accused him: *You are a teacher of the people and yet you do not understand this.* That is, he did not understand that one must be born again spiritually.

Yes, this is a great task: to become dispassionate, that is, to become saints. We mustn't be afraid of this word. What is a saint? A saint is a normal person, a person as God made him. It is all the rest who are abnormal. We are all abnormal, for we have departed from God's norms. The Lord, after all, created man sinless, immortal, pure, holy, wise. What have we done with these gifts? We have perverted them so now there acts in all of us passions that compel us to do things that are sinful. Passion is a great and terrible power. We repent of our sins, but it is shameful to confess the same sins over and over again, our whole life long. It begs the question: Will that day ever come when we no longer fall into the same sinful actions? It will, if we seriously undertake to war against our passions.

Take the *Octoechos* [liturgical book containing the weekly variable texts in each of the eight tones, *Ed.*] or a canon to any saint; there is not a single liturgical text in which the passions are not mentioned, in which there is not an appeal





to the Lord, to the Mother of God or to a saint, asking for help in uprooting our passions. We read all this, and it's as if we do not understand; we continue to fall into the same sins. Instead, we should take deeply to heart the idea that we must rid ourselves of sin and become normal—from the spiritual point of view—people.

In our prayers, we must always have the thought: “Lord, deliver me from my passions.” There is nothing more important than this. Let this prayer constantly be with you; whether you pray in the morning, or at night, knock on the door of God's mercy, that the Lord help you to rid yourself of passions.

A true physician, a good psychologist, and especially a spiritual father, if they look at our face, can immediately identify the passion that principally affects us. Look, for example, at the face of an alcoholic. Similarly, each of us must come to know his chief passion. Here again, we must ask God to reveal this to us. And He will, either directly or through some person or through our guardian angel, or in a dream—if it is a spiritual dream and not some foolish fantasy, which is what most often comes to us.

When we learn what is our chief passion, we must rise up against it with our whole soul. This is of utmost importance. And then we will see what this passion will begin to do. It will begin to roar like a lion; it will refuse to take on its primordial nature, given by God as an undistorted gift. We will see how many difficulties and temptations must be endured by that person who has come to know his soul.

We often say, proudly, “Oh, I can see right through that person.” We see nothing, we penetrate nothing, we do not know even our own selves. Try to understand yourself first of all, then you will begin to understand others. When we come to understand our own sinful essence, then we begin to pray day and night that God deliver us from our passions. What else should we pray for if not this? For if we cease to be vessels of passion, many sins will simply fall away from us. Where will sinful actions come from if the passion that provoked the person to sin no longer exists in that person? From nowhere!

For that person who understands this, there awaits a frightful battle, but the Lord will help him, together with his guardian angel. And what about the prince of this world, the devil? He also keeps a sharp eye over all humanity, and just imagine, suddenly he sees that some little soul wants to quit his realm. Immediately he assigns a horde of demons to attack that person, and they begin to tempt him, particularly, trying to divert him from heartfelt prayer. How? A demon will say very artfully, “Make more prostrations. You are making a thousand? Not enough. Do more. And say the Jesus Prayer.” Meanwhile, he is sneering. And what happens? There is no Jesus Prayer; there is only a drum rattle. The essence of the Jesus Prayer lies in its meaning, its purpose,

which is to open the heart to the Lord, that He might free it from demons. Remember, the heart is never empty: it is always occupied with something. For this reason, one must first free the heart from passions. Passions are not always crude, as, for example, murder or hatred; they can also be very subtle. And being full of them we think that we are dispassionate, while we are all passionate.

Freeing ourselves from passions is the beginning of our spiritual struggle. When the Lord frees us from them, then we begin to pray with the heart. And once we attain to prayer of the heart, demons can no longer lodge there, for the heart is filled with God's grace. We become deified, and with the help of Divine grace we pray to the Source of this grace—God. In this way we become united with God.

If the Lord gives us, even for just a moment, to know the grace of prayer of the heart, we will never forget it, not for as long as we live. Remember how the elder Zosima saw Saint Mary of Egypt standing in the air during such prayer? This is how prayer uplifts a person. The way to heartfelt prayer is the only true way for us; do not seek another way. Whoever has come to know such prayer remains outwardly the same as other people, but inwardly he will be completely different, because he will be with God. This way is open to all, to both monastics and lay people. Therefore, let us strive for prayer of the heart, for dispassion and for holiness. The acquisition of this is the greatest miracle.

It is easier to turn a stone into bread and a serpent into a fish than it is to change one's soul and to be freed of passions. But with God's help, even this can be accomplished. Let us hold fast to this holy path.



When the devil fights us, we ought to fight him back. Our greatest weapon is prayer. Do not be negligent; kneel immediately and pray to God, and quickly you will feel strong. Prayer is conversation with God. When we experience the joy of prayer, then we will feel great exultation. It is a foretaste of the life of Paradise. But you have to struggle, in order to experience that joy. And—if you struggle mightily—God will give it to you.”

Prayer leads up to the heights of divine vision. Misael, my elder, when he prayed, the whole of him glowed with light. And when he reached this state, he no longer prayed with words, but noetically. Words are like the kindling wood, until the fire is lit. When the fire is kindled, in other words, when contrition and compunction come, a person is no longer able to speak. He senses and hears God within himself. Then come tears. This is a great gift. Then the man abandons the senses, and nothing speaks but the heart—the longing, the *sighs that cannot be uttered*. (Rom 8:26).

Elder Ieronymos of Aigina (+1966)

## ON HEART TRANSPLANTS

*An Orthodox view on heart transplants, by Saint Philaret the Confessor, from "The Orthodox Word," Vol. 4, No. 3 (May-June 1968), pp. 134-137.*

*The world, including most people who would identify themselves as Christians, receives every new attainment of modern science as an undoubted blessing to be accepted as a matter of course. Orthodox Christians, however, must be more discriminating, for our hope is not in this world that passes, but in eternal life. Here this saintly former chief hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad speaks on the latest such attainment, to and for those whose spiritual consciousness has not been totally deadened by modern worldliness and rationalism.*

† † †

This age is a strange age. We know that throughout the extent of human history there have been moments of spiritual and cultural crisis, of moral decline and restoration; there have been moments also of a so-called "reevaluation of values." But only in our age has there arisen in the world a manifestation much more frightening and menacing; namely, the loss of values, their catastrophic disappearance from the life, from the spiritual and intellectual horizon, of contemporary humanity.

One may readily observe today the loss of normal conceptions of nation and family, the loss of the value of life itself, in itself and as the greatest gift of God, and the striving to get away from the obligation to live—in the fantasy-world of narcotics, so to speak in a temporary suicide. And parallel to the disappearance of true values there appear counterfeit values. For today literally everything is counterfeited: Christianity is counterfeited, religiousness is counterfeited, the very Gospel is counterfeited; culture in its best manifestations, the striving for peace, etc., etc.—everything is steeped in lie and falsehood, and a man with a living soul and conscience suffocates in the reign of the lie and the counterfeit.

In this stifling atmosphere of evident and undoubted spiritual decomposition, the "last word" is the most terrible of all. We speak of the newest "attainment" of medical science: the rapidly expanding medical "breakthrough" of human heart transplantation.

Here before us is the most terrifying of all counterfeits: the counterfeit of life itself—this greatest gift of the Creator! A man lives out his life, his powers decay and fade away, the organism dies away, and the heart, this center of the organism's life, is just about to stop... No medicines, no remedies or attempts to prolong, to detain this departing life, can help any longer. But now—a solution is found! The man is given a new, strange heart, and with this is introduced into his organism a new, strange life, belonging to another man.

The heart is the center, the mid-point of man's existence. And not only in the spiritual sense, where heart is the term for the center of one's spiritual person, one's "I"; in physical life, too, the physical heart is the chief organ and central point of the organism, being mysteriously and indissolubly connected with the experiences of one's soul.

It is well known to all how a man's purely psychical and nervous experiences—joy, anger, fright, etc.—are reflected immediately in the action of the heart, and conversely how an unhealthy condition of the heart acts oppressively on the psyche and consciousness. Yes, here the bond is indissoluble—and if, instead of the continuation of a man's personal spiritual-bodily life, concentrated in his own heart, there is imposed on him a strange heart and some kind of strange life, until then totally unknown to him—then what is this if not a counterfeit of his departing life; what is this if not the annihilation of his spiritual-bodily life, his individuality, his personal "I"? And how and as whom will such a man present himself at the general resurrection?

But the new attainment does not end even here. It is intended also to introduce into the organism of a man the heart of an animal—i.e., so that after the general resurrection a "man" will stand at the Last Judgement with the heart of an ape (or a cat, or a pig, or whatever). [As we all know, the use of an animal heart into humans has now become medically possible, *Ed.*]. Can one imagine a more senseless and blasphemous mockery of human nature itself, created in the image and likeness of God?

Madness and horror! But what has called forth this nightmare of criminal interference in man's life—in that life, the lawful Master of which is its Creator alone, and no one else? The answer is not difficult to find. The loss of Christian hope, actual disbelief in the future life, failure to understand the Gospel and disbelief in it, in its Divine truthfulness—these are what have called forth these monstrous and blasphemous experiments on the personality and life of man. The Christian view of life and death, the Christian understanding and conception of earthly life as time given by God for preparation for eternity—have been completely lost. And from this we observe the obvious result: terror in the face of death, seen as the absolute perishing of life and the annihilation of personality; and a clutching at earthly life—live, live, live, at any cost or means prolong earthly life, after which there is nothing!...

How far from this is the radiant Christian view of life and death. Imagine a deeply-believing Christian who has labored his whole life on the fulfillment of the Lord's commandments and on the purification of his own heart, and who finally draws near to that Christian end for which he has prayed and for which he has been preparing his whole life; if suddenly one were to say to him: "Don't you want to live a while longer? Here—we will cut out your heart and

put in its place a different one, perhaps an ape's—and you will live for a while yet..." What would a believing Christian answer to this but the words of the Gospel: *Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but these that be of men.* (Mt 16:23).

The Holy Apostle Paul cried once: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* (Eph 5:15-17). Oh, how circumspectly we must walk in our day—with caution, lest we apostatize spiritually and fall into the snare of the enemy. For in truth, our days are yet more evil than the times of the Apostles. And it was not for nothing that in these latter, already post-revolutionary days, one of the Far-Eastern archpastors prayed constantly to God thus: *Cut off the allurements of lies, loosen pressing temptations, and with the power of Thy Grace protect and keep all of us, and grant our hearts to sense the truth.*

For contemporary humanity for the most part has lost completely the feeling, the sense, the acceptance of truth and the ability to discern in its spiritual essence what is happening in the world. And the threatening, sorrowful prophecy of the Apostle is being accomplished concerning those who did not learn to love the truth: *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.* (2Thess 2:11-12).

Christian! Remember what life is, and what is death! And thanking your Creator for the most precious gift of His goodness—for your life—use this gift as is proper, so that at the end of your earthly life you may, without clutching faintheartedly at this passing life, die in such a way that upon you may be fulfilled the joyful promise of the Apocalypse: *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.* (Rev 14:13).

† † †

## TEACHINGS FROM OUR FAITH

*From Orthodox Tradition, Vol. VII, No. 2, p. 15.*

**The Human Heart.** It was a belief among the ancients—among physicians in the age of the Egyptian Pharaohs, for example—that the heart is the center of the body, responsible for regulating all of its functions.

The teachings of the Orthodox Church also hold that the heart is the center of the person, containing not only our individual identity, but harboring, in its chambers, many of the spiritual virtues to which we strive. The hesychastic teachings of St. Gregory Palamas, drawn from an ancient tradition of the Church, concentrate human activity in the heart. It is the physical regulation of the heart beat and breathing which, in part, accounts for the intensity of concentrated

prayer achieved by those who reach up in prayer with their bodies to touch and be transformed by the Grace of God. Our bodies correctly used, St. Gregory Palamas tells us, are not evil, but are the very temple of the Holy Spirit. And the heart is the repository of Divine Grace.

In our times, when the brain is considered the center of the human person and the repository of the personality, it seems absurd to imagine that the heart, a "mere pump," could literally play a role in spiritual life. For that reason, many Orthodox theologians have begun to speak of the heart as a metaphor for the soul and deny that the heart plays a physical role in our spiritual life.

Nonetheless, some contemporary scientists are beginning to take a new look at the heart. Dr. Nikolai Khokhlov, a member of the advisory board of the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, spoke informally at the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery some years ago of research that he was about to investigate during an appointment at the prestigious Max Planck Institute. This research suggested that the heart, contrary to current theory, is a kind of regulating mechanism for the human body, controlling metabolism, overall body functions, and even some brain activity. This research wholly supports the assumptions of the ancients and the experience and teachings of the Orthodox Fathers.

We must be very cautious, then, about dismissing the teachings of the Fathers on the human heart simply because modern science, which may not yet fully understand the more subtle workings of the heart, seems to attribute to the brain those things which the Fathers attribute to the heart. Science may yet vindicate the Fathers and once again show us the divine source of their knowledge.

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**Embalming and Autopsies.** In the Orthodox Church we do not make the dualistic distinction between the body and the soul that one finds in some ancient, pre-Christian sects and in certain early Christian heresies. The body and soul, according to Orthodox teaching, are integrally bound together. The good health and correct, moral use of the body can affect the soul, just as a healthy and sound soul can reflect itself in the external appearance of the body (and especially in the eyes).

When a Christian dies, we show tremendous respect to his body as the place where the spirit of the human being resided. The body of a holy person, for example, is highly revered, since even his flesh and blood have been permeated by the holiness of his life. To embalm and disfigure the dead body for no reason—and embalming is not required in most states in the U.S.—is to show disrespect to it. And autopsies, when they are done for no specific purpose and routinely, are blasphemous. One need only attend an autopsy to understand that this statement is not hyperbolic, but wholly

accurate. Except when indicated by forensic considerations or specific needs in medical research, autopsies should be discouraged among Orthodox Christians.

The bodies of monastics and bishops, whose lives are dedicated to spiritual principles and aims, should under no circumstances be embalmed or, except in the case of suspected foul play, subjected to post-mortem examination. This is a rule which every Orthodox Christian physician should understand and one which he should attempt to uphold with every possible means. Since monastics should, if possible, repose in their monasteries—rather than in the hospital, as is usually the case in the Western world now—Orthodox physicians should be available and ready to assist in the preparation of the needed certificates of death, so as to avoid the eventuality of an autopsy.

If our faith is one limited only to intellectual precepts, and not to the world of our bodies as well, then it is an artificial and incomplete faith.



## TENDER CARE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR HELPS THE FAMILY

*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.*

People today will have as many problems as the amount of material goods they acquire. They neither thank God for His benefactions, nor notice the grief of their fellow-man that they may provide some kind of charity. They squander what they have and don't even think of their neighbor who does not even have enough to eat. How can the Grace of God come after such things? The head of a family therefore must manage his things to set aside something in order to give alms. He should say to his wife and children that in such-and-such a place there is a certain sick, homeless person, or some poor family who is in great need. If they don't have money to give, let them say, "Let's at least give a Christian book, as we have so many." In giving to those who have need, they do well both to the needy and to their family.

In Russia the poor faithful are in such great need! I once gave a little box of incense to a Russian priest and told him: "A humble gift." "You really consider this to be a poor gift?" he says to me. "Our incense is... 'cough-cough.'" And here in Greece, how greatly the refugees suffer! In Halkidiki I saw a refugee, a tile-setter, who made only a dollar a square meter [1]. He said, "Glory to Thee, O God, that we have bread." For that reason, when a certain contractor told me that in his line of work they were burdened by many sins, I told him, "If you will support those

refugees and help them financially, you will be unburdened of your sins. They have nowhere to live. Compared to them you are like Onasis."

In order for us to practice the virtues, God allows there to be the sick, the poor, etc. He could have taken care of everyone, both the sick and the poor, but then we would have had the illusion that we were virtuous people. For example, we would have said that we were all merciful while we are not, whereas now our works make clear our virtues. Glory to God that people exist who sacrifice themselves for their fellow-man. I knew someone who, as soon as he was released from the military, accepted to be unjustly convicted of a great crime in order to save a family. He neither considered the ridicule nor his future.

Everywhere I see how God takes care to ensure that at least one member of each family has faith and piety, that the others will be helped! I knew a family in Konitsa in which, all but one person was completely indifferent towards the Church. Only one daughter was different. As soon as she heard the church bell her feet flew; she would leave half-way through her chores and go to church. Moreover, even when the Germans came, when the church caretaker rang the bell for the people to flee from their homes, she instead went to church for Vespers!

Although she was also very charitable, her parents were totally stingy. Her father, instead of eating food, would eat a dry rusk which he would dip in a little water; and her mother was very tight-fisted! Even when her children had good jobs and were well off, to light a fire she would grab a smoldering ember from the fireplace and light it up with bug spray, so as not to waste a match! For a coffee pot she used an old tin can! When I was at Stomiou Monastery, because her mother loved me so much, if her daughter wanted to take something from their house to give to the poor and couldn't do it secretly, she would say: "Mother, the monk wants this." "Give it, give it to him," she would tell her. Only for the monks would her mother not get angry.

Even during the German Occupation the girl secretly helped the poor. She would take wheat from the family pantry, carry it to the mill, grind it, and then distribute it to the poor families. Once she was caught by her mother who grabbed her. She then prayed, "My God, help me to find a job and to give all my earnings as alms." The next day a certain establishment called for her. O, the joy she had! She kept her vow too: she didn't even buy herself a pair of socks from her wages; she gave it all as alms. How many people now say to her: "God save you, and bless the bones of your parents!" You see, through her alms, God even took care of her mother.

† † †

[1] This was said in 1992. It is quite clear that both in Russia and also among Greek refugees, this wage rate may no longer be the case (albeit the recent economic struggles in Greece may invalidate such a supposition), *Ed.*

## Φοβερή Όπτασία

Φοβερή όπτασία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἀντωνίου γιὰ τοὺς αἰρετικούς: Ἄλογα κτήνη γύρω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα. Ἀπὸ τὸ «Ρωμαϊκὸ Ὀδοιπορικόν», 17 Ἰανουαρίου, 2013.

Εἶναι ὄντως φοβερὸ τὸ ὄραμα ποὺ εἶδε ὁ Ἅγιος Ἀντώνιος σχετικὰ μὲ τὴν παρουσία αἰρετικῶν μέσα σὲ Ὁρθόδοξους ναοὺς. Τὸ ὄραμα αὐτὸ αἰτιολογεῖ καὶ ἐξηγεῖ παραστατικὰ γιὰ ποῖο λόγο οἱ Ἅγιοι Πατέρες ἀπαγορεύουν μὲ συνοδικοὺς κανόνες τὴν εἴσοδο αἰρετικῶν σὲ καθαγιασμένους χώρους, τὴν συμμετοχὴ τους σὲ ἀκολουθίες καὶ λειτουργίες, τὶς συμπροσευχές καὶ τὰ συλλεΐτουργα. Οἱ αἰρετικοὶ μὴ δεχόμενοι τὴν διδασκαλία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τῶν Ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν Ἁγίων, ἐπηρεάζονται ἀπὸ τοὺς δαίμονες καὶ τὸν πατέρα τους τὸν διάβολο, στὴν προβολὴ πλανεμένων ἀπόψεων. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ διδασκαλία τους «μᾶλλον ἄγνοος καὶ ἄλογος καὶ διανοίας ἐστὶν οὐκ ὀρθῆς, ὡς ἡ τῶν ἡμιόνων ἀλογία».

Συγκλονίσθηκε λοιπόν, καὶ ἐτρόμαξε ὁ Ἅγιος Ἀντώνιος, ὅταν ἐπέτρεψε ὁ Θεὸς νὰ δῆ στὸ ὄραμά του τοὺς Ἀρειανοὺς νὰ περικυκλώνουν τὸ Ἅγιο Θυσιαστήριο ὡς ἡμίονοι (= μουλάρια), νὰ τὸ λακτίζουν καὶ νὰ τὸ μαιίνουν. Τόση ἦταν ἡ λύπη καὶ ἡ στεναχώρια του, ὥστε ἔβαλε τὰ κλάμματα, ὅπως πικράθηκαν καὶ ἔκλαυσαν πολλοὶ εὐσεβεῖς, ὅταν εἶδαν τὸν αἰρεσιάρχη πάπα νὰ εἰσάγεται μέσα στὸν ναὸ τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου στὸ Φανάρι (τὸν ὁποῖο μάλιστα Ἅγιο κατήργησε τὸ Βατικανό) καὶ νὰ τὸν μολύνῃ. Εἴμαστε βέβαιοι πὼς, ἂν διαβάσουν καὶ μάθουν αὐτὸ τὸ ὄραμα τοῦ Ἁγίου οἱ πατριάρχες, οἱ ἀρχιεπίσκοποι καὶ οἱ ἐπίσκοποι, ἂν βέβαια ἐξακολουθοῦν ὡς Ὁρθόδοξοι νὰ σέβονται καὶ νὰ ἀκολουθοῦν τὴν ζωὴ καὶ τὴν διδασκαλία τῶν Ἁγίων, θὰ διακόψουν τὶς λειτουργικὲς ἀμοιβαῖες φιλοξενίες καὶ ἐπισκέψεις, τὶς ἐβδομάδες συμπροσευχῆς καὶ τὶς ἀποστολὲς ἀντιπροσωπειῶν σὲς θρονικὲς ἐορτές. Γιατὶ διαφορετικὰ θὰ συμπεριλαμβάνονται καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς συνεργοὶ στὸ φρικτὸ ὄραμα τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἀντωνίου.

Κατὰ τὴν διήγηση τοῦ Μ. Ἀθανασίου στὸ «Βίο», ἐνῶ ἠσχολεῖτο μὲ τὸ ἐργόχειρό του καθιστὸς ὁ Μ. Ἀντώνιος, περιῆλθε σὲ ἓνα εἶδος ἐκστάσεως καὶ ἀναστέναξε πολὺ βλέποντας τὴν ὄπτασία. Μετὰ ἀπὸ ἀρκετὴ ὥρα στράφηκε πρὸς τοὺς παρισταμένους μοναχοὺς, ἐξακολούθησε νὰ στενάξῃ καὶ νὰ τρέμῃ. Ἔπεσε στὰ γόνατα γιὰ νὰ προσευχηθῇ καὶ ἔμεινε

γονατιστὸς ἐπὶ πολλὴ ὥρα. Ὅταν σηκώθηκε ἔκλαιγε ὁ Γέροντας. Ἐτρόμαξαν οἱ παριστάμενοι καὶ ἐφοβήθηκαν πολὺ, γι' αὐτὸ τὸν παρακάλεσαν νὰ τοὺς ἐξηγήσῃ. Καὶ ἀφοῦ τὸν ἐπίεσαν πολὺ καὶ τὸν ἐξεβίασαν ἀναστέναξε πάλι καὶ εἶπε:

«Παιδιά μου εἶναι καλύτερα νὰ πεθάνω, πρὶν νὰ συμβοῦν ὅσα εἶδα στὴν ὄπτασία. Θὰ πέσῃ στὴν Ἐκκλησία ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ θὰ παραδοθῇ σὲ ἀνθρώπους ποὺ εἶναι ἄλογα κτήνη. Εἶδα τὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα τοῦ ναοῦ, στὸ Κυριακὸ τῆς σκῆτης νὰ περικυκλώνεται σ' ὅλες τὶς πλευρὲς ἀπὸ μουλάρια, τὰ ὁποῖα κλωτσοῦσαν καὶ χοροπηδοῦσαν, ὅπως συνηθίζουν νὰ κάνουν αὐτὰ τὰ ἄλογα κτήνη. Εἶδατε καὶ ἀντιληφθήκατε πὼς ἐστέναξα προηγουμένως; Τὸ ἔκανα γιὰτὶ ἄκουσα φωνὴ ποὺ ἔλεγε: «Θὰ μianθῇ τὸ θυσιαστήριό μου».

Αὐτὰ εἶδε ὁ Γέροντας. Καὶ μετὰ ἀπὸ δύο ἀκριβῶς ἔτη ἔγινε ἐπίθεση τῶν Ἀρειανῶν καὶ ἡ ἀρπαγὴ τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν. Ἀρπαξαν τὰ ἱερά σκευὴ μὲ τὴ βία, τὰ ἔδωσαν σὲ εἰδωλολάτρες νὰ τὰ κρατοῦν, τοὺς ἐξανάγκασαν νὰ μετέχουν σὲς συνάξεις τους καὶ παρόντων αὐτῶν ἔκαναν στὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα ὅ,τι ἤθελαν. Τότε καταλάβαμε ὅλοι μας, λέγει ὁ Μ. Ἀθανάσιος, ὅτι τὰ λακτίσματα ἐκεῖνα τῶν ἡμιόνων προεμήνυαν στὸν Ἀντώνιο ὅσα πράττουν τώρα οἱ Ἀρειανοὶ ὡς κτήνη.

Μετὰ τὴν ὄπτασία ἐνίωσε τὴν ἀνάγκη ὁ Γέροντας νὰ ἐνθαρρύνῃ καὶ νὰ παρηγορήσῃ τοὺς γύρω του λέγοντας:

«Μὴ λυπᾶσθε, παιδιά μου, γιὰτὶ ὅπως ὀργίσθηκε ὁ Κύριος, ἔτσι πάλι καὶ θὰ θεραπεύσῃ τὸ κακὸ. Σύντομα ἡ Ἐκκλησία θὰ ἐπαναποκτήσῃ τὴν ὁμορφίαν της καὶ θὰ λάμψῃ. Θὰ δεῖτε αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἐξορίστηκαν νὰ ἐπιστρέφουν, τὴν ἀσέβεια νὰ ὑποχωρῇ καὶ νὰ κρύβεται, καὶ τὴν εὐσεβὴ πίστη νὰ ἐμφανίζεται καὶ νὰ κυριαρχῇ παντοῦ, ἀρκεῖ σεῖς νὰ μὴν μianθῆτε ἀπὸ τὴν αἵρεση τῶν Ἀρειανῶν, γιὰτὶ δὲν εἶναι ἡ διδασκαλία τῶν Ἀποστόλων, ἀλλὰ τῶν δαιμόνων καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν τοῦ διαβόλου, ἄλογη καὶ ἄκαρπη, σὰν τὴν ἀλογία τῶν ἡμιόνων».



Ἡ κακία ποὺ γίνεται δεκτὴ μὲ τὸ λογισμό, κάνει τὴν καρδιὰ θυμώδη καὶ ἀπειλητικὴ, ἐνῶ ὅταν πολεμηθεῖ μὲ τὴν προσευχὴ καὶ τὴν ἐλπίδα προκαλεῖ μετάνοια καὶ συντριβή.

Ἀββᾶς Μᾶρκος

## Μαρτυρία τοῦ Μητροπολίτη Λεμεσοῦ Ἀθανασίου γιὰ τὸν Γέροντα Παῖσιο

Πηγή: Ἱερομονάχου Ἰσαάκ, «Βίος Γέροντος Παΐσιου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου», σελίδες: 256-261. Ἐκδόσεις Καλύβης Ἀναστάσεως, Καψάλα, Ἅγιον Ὄρος, 2004.

Πήγα στὸν Γέροντα τὸν Σεπτέμβριο τοῦ 1977, ἡμέρα Δευτέρα, παραμονή τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ. Χτύπησα τὴν πόρτα πολὺ πρωί, ὁ Γέροντας μοῦ ἀνοιξε. Ἦταν πολὺ χαρούμενος καὶ εὐδιάθετος.

Ἄ, εὐτυχῶς ποὺ ἦρθες διάκο, μοῦ λέγει, καὶ ἔχω πανήγυρη αὐριο. Θάρθουν ψάλτες, παρήγγειλα ροφὸ καὶ ἔλειπε ἕνας διάκος. Ἦρθες ἐσύ, ἐντάξει ἢ πανήγυρη.

Ἔλεγε καὶ ἄλλα τέτοια ἀστεῖα. Ὑστερα μοῦ εἶπε:

—Θα μείνης ἐδῶ ἀπόψε.

Ἦξερα ὅτι ὁ Γέροντας δὲν κρατοῦσε κανέναν τὴ νύχτα μαζί του. Μόλις μοῦ τὸ εἶπε πέταξα ἀπὸ τὴν χαρὰ μου.

Πήγαμε στὸ Ἐκκλησιάκι, μὲ ἔβαλε καὶ τακτοποίησα τὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα, ξεσκόνισα, σκούπισα τὸν διάδρομο, ἔκανα διάφορες δουλειές. Μέσα μου αισθανόμουν πολὺ μεγάλη χαρὰ. Τὸ μεσημέρι πήγαμε νὰ φάμε. Ἔκανε τσάϊ, ἔφερε παξιμάδι καὶ ἔβγαλε ἄγρια λάχανα ἀπὸ τὸν κήπο του. Μοῦ ἔκανε ἐντύπωση ὅταν κάναμε τὴν προσευχή. Ὁ Γέροντας εἶπε τὸ «Πάτερ ἡμῶν...» σήκωσε τὰ χέρια του καὶ τὸ εἶπε μὲ τόσο πόθο καὶ τόσην εὐλάβεια ποὺ ἦταν σὰν νὰ μιλοῦσε πραγματικὰ μὲ τὸν Θεό.

Μετὰ μὲ πήγε στὸ κελλὶ καὶ ξεκουράστηκα καμμιὰ ὥρα. Ὑστερα κάναμε τὸν μικρὸ Ἑσπερινὸ μὲ κομποσχοίνι.

Ὅταν τελειώσαμε μοῦ εἶπε ὁ Γέροντας:

—Κοίταξε, διάκο, τώρα θὰ κάνουμε ἀγρυπνία μὲ κομποσχοίνι καὶ τὸ πρωὶ θὰ ῥθει ὁ παπὰς νὰ μᾶς λειτουργήσει. Ξέρεις νὰ κάνης κομποσχοίνι; Θὰ σοῦ πῶ τί θὰ κάνεις, καὶ μοῦ ἔδωσε ἕνα πρόγραμμα.

Ἦταν ἕνα σοφὸ πρόγραμμα γιὰ νὰ μὴν νυστάξω τὴν νύχτα. Μοῦ εἶπε νὰ κάνω ἕνα κομποσχοίνι τριακοσάρι λέγοντας τὸ «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ἐλέησον μέ». Ἔπειτα νὰ κάνω ἕνα κομποσχοίνι ἑκατοστάρι στὴν Παναγία. Ἔνα κομποσχοίνι τριακοσάρι στὸν Χριστὸ γιὰ τοὺς ζῶντες. Ἔνα κομποσχοίνι ἑκατοστάρι στὴν Παναγία γιὰ τοὺς ζῶντες. Ἔνα κομποσχοίνι τριακοσάρι στὸν Χριστὸ γιὰ τοὺς κεκοιμημένους. Ἔνα κομποσχοίνι ἑκατοστάρι στὴν Παναγία γιὰ τοὺς κεκοιμημένους. Ἔνα κομποσχοίνι τριακοσάρι στὸν Τίμιο Σταυρὸ καὶ μετὰ ἕνα τριακοσάρι «δόξα σοί, ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, δόξα σοί». Πρῶτη φορὰ ἄκουγα ὅτι γινόταν αὐτὸ τὸ

πραῖγμα. Μοῦ ἐξήγησε:

—Αὐτὸ τὸ κομποσχοίνι εἶναι δοξολογία. Θὰ τὰ τελειώνεις καὶ θ' ἀρχίζεις ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχή.

Μοῦ εἶπε,

—Αν ἀκούσης κανένα θόρυβο, μὴν τρομάξεις. Κυκλοφοροῦν ἐδῶ ἀγριογούρουνα, τσακάλια κ.ἄ..

Μὲ ἔβαλε στὸ μικρὸ Ἀρχονταρῖκι του καὶ εἶπε ὅτι κοντὰ στὰ μεσάνυχτα θὰ μὲ φωνάξει νὰ πᾶμε στὴν Ἐκκλησία νὰ διαβάσουμε τὴν Θεία Μετάληψη. Ἄκουγα τὸν Γέροντα κατὰ διαστήματα ν' ἀναστενάξει βαθειά. Κάπου-κάπου χτυποῦσε τὸν τοῖχο καὶ ρωτοῦσε:

—Ε, διάκο, κοιμᾶσαι; Εἶσαι καλά;

Στὶς μία παρὰ, περασμένα μεσάνυχτα πήγαμε στὸ Ἐκκλησιάκι. Μὲ ἔβαλε στὸ μοναδικὸ στασίδι ποῦ ὑπῆρχε, καὶ μοῦ ἔδωσε ἕνα κερὶ νὰ διαβάσω τὴν Θεία Μετάληψη. Αὐτὸς στεκόταν δίπλα μου, σ' ἀριστερὰ καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ λέη τοὺς στίχους: «Δόξα σοί, ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, δόξα σοί». Κάθε φορὰ ποὺ ἔλεγε τὸν στίχο ἔκανε τὸν σταυρὸ του καὶ ἔσκυβε μέχρι κάτω.

Ὅταν φθάσαμε στὸ τροπάριο «Μαρία Μήτηρ Θεοῦ...», θυμᾶμαι ὅτι τόσο μόνο διάβασα, μετὰ τὸ «Ὑπεραγία Θεοτόκε σώσον ἡμᾶς», ποὺ εἶπε ὁ Γέροντας, αἰσθάνθηκα ἕνα πραῖγμα... δὲν ξέρω, δὲν μπορῶ νὰ τὸ ἐκφράσω καὶ σταμάτησα. Ἄρχισε τότε νὰ κουνιέται τὸ καντήλι τῆς Παναγίας, ὄχι ἀπότομα, ἀλλὰ



σταθερὰ διέγραφε μία κίνηση ὅσο εἶναι τὸ πλάτος τῆς εἰκόνας καὶ ὅλο το Ἐκκλησιάκι πλημμύρισε ἀπὸ φῶς. Εβλεπα χωρὶς τὴν λαμπάδα καὶ σκέφθηκα πρὸς στιγμὴν νὰ τὴν σβήσω.

Γύρισα πρὸς τὸν Γέροντα. Τὸν εἶδα νὰ ἔχη τὰ χέρια τοῦ σταυρωμένα στὸ στήθος καὶ σκυμμένον μέχρι κάτω. Κατάλαβε ὅτι ἤθελα νὰ τὸν ρωτήσω καὶ μοῦ ἔκανε νόημα νὰ μὴν μιλήσω. Ἔμεινα στὸ στασίδι καὶ ὁ Γέροντας σκυφτὸς δίπλα μου. Αἰσθανόμουν τόση ἀγάπη καὶ εὐλάβεια πρὸς τὸν Γέροντα καὶ ἐνιωθα ὅτι βρισκόμουν στὸν παράδεισο.

Μείναμε σ' αὐτὴν τὴν κατάσταση μισή, μία ὥρα, δὲν μπόρεσα ἀκριβῶς νὰ καταλάβω. Δὲν ἤξερα τί νὰ κάνω. Ἄσυναίσθητα συνέχισα νὰ διαβάζω ἀπὸ μόνος μου τὴν Μετάληψη καὶ ὅταν ἔφθασα στὴν εὐχή «Ἀπὸ ρυπαρῶν χειλέων...», σιγά-σιγά ἔσβησε τὸ φῶς πρῶτα καὶ μετὰ σταμάτησε νὰ κουνιέται τὸ καντήλι. Τελειώσαμε τὴν Μετάληψη καὶ βγήκαμε ἔξω στὸν διάδρομο. Μὲ ἔβαλε νὰ καθίσω σ' ἕνα скаμινάκι καὶ αὐτὸς κάθησε σ' ἕνα μπαουλάκι σιωπηλός.

Μετὰ ἀπὸ ὥρα, τὸν ρώτησα:

—Γέροντα, τί ἦταν αὐτὸ τὸ πραῖγμα;

—Ποιό πράγμα;  
 —Τὸ καντήλι. Πῶς κουνιόταν τὸ καντήλι τόση ὥρα;  
 —Τί εἶδες;  
 —Κουνιόταν τὸ καντήλι τῆς Παναγίας δεξιά—  
 ἄριστερά.  
 —Μόνο αὐτὸ εἶδες;  
 —Καὶ φῶς.  
 —Ἄλλο;  
 —Δεν εἶδα ἄλλο τίποτε. (Ὁ Γέροντας γιὰ νὰ ρωτάει  
 τί ἄλλο εἶδα, φαίνεται ὅτι εἶδε κάτι παραπάνω).  
 —Καλά, δὲν ἦταν τίποτε.  
 —Πῶς δὲν ἦταν τίποτε, Γέροντα; Κουνιόταν τὸ  
 καντήλι καὶ εἶχε φῶς!

—Ἔ, δὲν ἄκουσες ποὺ γράφουν τὰ βιβλία, ὅτι ἡ  
 Παναγία γυρνάει ὅλα τα κελλιά τῶν μοναχῶν καὶ  
 βλέπει τί κάνουν; Νά, πέρασε καὶ ἀπὸ δῶ καὶ εἶδε δυὸ  
 παλαβοὺς καὶ εἶπε νὰ μᾶς χαιρετίσει καὶ κούνησε τὸ  
 καντήλι της.

Ἵστερα ἀπὸ μόνος του ἄρχισε νὰ μοῦ διηγῆται  
 διάφορες ἐμπειρίες του. Μοῦ ἀνέφερε πῶς εἶδε τὴν  
 ἁγία Εὐφημία, καὶ πολλὰ ἄλλα. Εἶχε ἀλλάξει ὅλη ἡ  
 διάθεσή του. Μέχρι τὸ πρῶί μου μιλοῦσε πνευματικά.  
 Μοῦ τόνισε:

—Σου τὰ λέω αὐτά, διάκο, ἀπὸ ἀγάπη γιὰ νὰ σὲ  
 βοηθήσω, ὄχι νὰ νομίσης ὅτι εἶμαι κάτι.

Στὶς 5:30 ἦρθε ὁ παπᾶς καὶ ὁ Γέροντας ἠθελε νὰ  
 λειτουργήσω, ἀλλὰ ἐγὼ δὲν εἶχα διακονικά ἄμφια.  
 Μοῦ ἔφερε ἓνα στιχάρι παλαιό, ἔφερε ἓνα πετραχῆλι,  
 τὸ ἔκανε ὀράριο καὶ τὸ ἐπίασε μὲ παραμάννα, βρῆκε  
 κάτι ἐπιμάννα, μοῦ τὰ τύλιξε στὰ χέρια. Ἦμιον σὰν  
 παλιάτσος, ἀλλὰ ἦταν ἡ ὠραιότερη λειτουργία τῆς  
 ζωῆς μου. Ἦμασταν μόνο οἱ τρεῖς μας.

Μὲ κράτησε μαζί του μέχρι τὸ Σάββατο. Μὲ ἔστειλε  
 μία φορὰ στὸ Μπουραζέρι, νὰ δῶ τοὺς πατριῶτες μου  
 καὶ νὰ μείνω τὸ μεσημέρι γιὰ νὰ φάω. Καὶ ἄλλη μία  
 φορὰ μὲ ἔστειλε στὴν Σταυρονικήτα πάλι γιὰ νὰ φάω,  
 γιατί στὸ Κελλί του εἶχε μόνο τσαί καὶ παξιμάδι...



**Ο** Θεός, ἡ μόνη ἐλπίδα, καταφυγή καὶ σωτηρία  
 μας, ἄκουσε μὲ προσοχή, στὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Μονο-  
 γενοῦς Σου Υἱοῦ, τὶς δεήσεις μας. Ἀξιῶσέ μας, μὲ τὴν  
 ἀγαθότητα καὶ τὸ ἔλεός Σου νὰ γίνουμε μέτοχοι τῶν  
 αἰωνίων ἀγαθῶν τῆς Βασιλείας Σου, ποὺ ἐτοίμασες  
 ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴ τοῦ κόσμου γιὰ ὅσους Σε ἀγαποῦν.  
 Καὶ ἔτσι νὰ δοξάζουμε τὸ πάντιμο καὶ μεγαλοπρεπὲς  
 ὄνομά Σου καὶ τοῦ Μονογενοῦς Σου Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ  
 παναγίου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ζωοποιοῦ Σου Πνεύματος  
 εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων. Ἀμήν.

**π. Εὐσέβιος Ματθόπουλος**

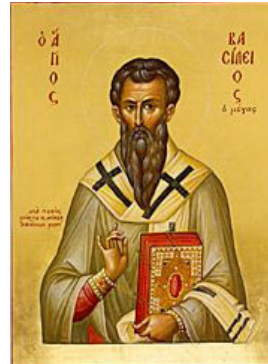
## Μέγας Βασίλειος: Περί Τόκων καὶ Δανείων

Δημήτρης Νατσιός, ἀπὸ τὸ «Ἀντίβαρο», 29.12.2010.

«Πλούσιος εἶ; Μὴ δανείζου. Πένης εἶ; Μὴ δανείζου»

(Μέγας Βασίλειος)

† † †



**Μ**πορεῖ στὰ ἄχρηστα  
 «περιοδικὰ ποικίλης  
 ὕλης», τὰ κατ' εὐφημισμὸν  
 βιβλία γλώσσας τοῦ Δημοτικοῦ,  
 ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος «νὰ ἀπλώνει  
 τὴ μπουγάδα του καὶ νὰ κρεμᾶ  
 τὸ... μακρὺ του σῶβρακο»  
 (γλώσσα Δ' Δημοτικοῦ, β'  
 τεῦχος, σελ. 52) ἢ, σύμφωνα μὲ  
 τὸ κρानιοκενοῦς ἐμπνεύσεως  
 εὔρημα τοῦ «περιοδικοῦ» τῆς

Ε' Δημοτικοῦ, νὰ ἐπιδίδεται σὲ μαγικά πράγματα,  
 ὅπως, γιὰ παράδειγμα, νὰ συγκεντρώνει, ἐν εἶδει  
 χαλκομανίας, ἔλατα στὸ κόκκινο παλτό του (γλώσσα  
 Ε' Δημοτικοῦ, β' τεῦχος, σελ. 30-31). Ὅμως, στὰ  
 βιβλία τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας,  
 διαβάζουμε γιατί εἶναι ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος ὁ φωστὴρ  
 τῆς Οἰκουμένης.

Εἶναι δυνατὸν σὲ σχολικὰ βιβλία τάχα καὶ νὰ  
 συντηρεῖται καὶ νὰ προβάλλεται ἀκόμη αὐτὸ  
 τὸ διαφημιστικὸ παχύσαρκο ξωτικό, αὐτὴ ἡ  
 χαζοχαρούμενη φιγούρα ποὺ μοιράζει παιχνίδια  
 στὰ μοσχοαναθρεμμένα βλαστάρια τῶν δυτικῶν  
 κοινωνιῶν, παιχνίδια ποὺ ἔφτιαξαν λιπόσαρκα  
 καὶ κοκαλιασμένα χερᾶκια παιδιῶν τοῦ Τρίτου ἢ  
 Τέταρτου Κόσμου; Ποιόν, αὐτὸν ποὺ καὶ τοὺς λεπροὺς  
 τῆς Βασιλειάδας ἀσπαζόταν καὶ ἀγκάλιαζε, αὐτὸν  
 ποὺ ἔγινε εὐγλωττος καὶ σιωπῶσα παραίνεση ἀρετῆς  
 καὶ φιλανθρωπίας, ποὺ «ἔπεισεν ἀνθρώπους ὄντας,  
 ἀνθρώπων μὴ καταφρονεῖν».

Μᾶς τηγανίζει ἡ κρίση σήμερα καὶ μᾶς κουνοῦν  
 τὸ δάκτυλο ἀπειλητικὰ οἱ δυτικὲς «ἀλώπεκες τοῦ  
 σκότους», γιατί ἀνεχτήκαμε ἓνα ἐκπαιδευτικὸ  
 σύστημα ποὺ ἔθρεψε καὶ πάχυνε τοὺς πειθήνιους  
 ζητωκραυγαστὲς ποὺ ἀνέχονται τὶς ἀνθυπομετρούτητες  
 ποὺ δῆθεν κυβερνοῦν. Νὰ κρατᾶς στὴν ἀγκαλιά  
 σου Σωκράτη καὶ Πλάτωνα, Μέγα Βασίλειο καὶ  
 Χρυσόστομο, Μακρυγιάννη καὶ Παπαδιαμάντη καὶ νὰ  
 διδάσκεις «ὀδηγίες χρήσης καφετιέρας» στὸ Δημοτικὸ  
 ἢ παιδευτικὰ ξεράσματα, σὰν τὸ τρισάθλιο  
 «Ὁσάκις», στὸ Γυμνάσιο.

Πῶς ὅμως νὰ ἀνεχτοῦν, οἱ διαβίου ἀμαθεῖς, κείμενα  
 ποὺ καὶ μόνο μὲ τὴν ἀνάγνωσή τους ἐλέγχεται, ὄση  
 ἀπέμεινε, ἡ συνείδησή τους; Μία ὑδαρῆς καὶ μπαζωμένη  
 συνείδηση δὲν ἀντέχει, καθρεφτίζεται, ὅταν διαβάξει:  
 «Ἐσὺ δὲν εἶσαι πλεονέχτης; Ἐσὺ δὲν εἶσαι κλέφτης,

ἀφοῦ σφετερίζεσαι ἐκεῖνα πὸν δέχθηκες ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ γιὰ νὰ τὰ διαχειριστεῖς ὡς οἰκονόμος; Μήπως νομίζεις ὅτι θὰ ὀνομαστῆ λωποδύτης μόνον ἐκεῖνος πὸν γδύνει κάποιον καὶ τοῦ ἀρπάξει τὰ ρούχα, ἐνῶ ἐκεῖνος πὸν δὲν ντύνει τὸν γυμνὸ, ἂν καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ τὸ κάμει, ἀξίζει νὰ πάρει ἄλλο ὄνομα; Πρόσεξε! Τὸ ψωμὶ πὸν ἐστὶν παρακρατεῖς, εἶναι τοῦ πεινασμένου τὸ ἔνδυμα πὸν φυλάγεις στὶς ἀποθήκες σου, εἶναι τοῦ γυμνοῦ τὸ παπούτσι πὸν σαπίζει στὸ σπίτι σου, εἶναι τοῦ ξυπόλυτου τὰ χρήματα πὸν τὰ κατακρατεῖς χωμένα στὴ γῆ (σ.σ. ἢ σὲ τραπεζικούς λογαριασμούς, στὴν ἡμεδαπὴ ἢ στὴν ἀλλοδαπὴ Ἑλβετία), εἶναι ἐκεῖνου πὸν ἔχει ἀνάγκη. Ὡστε λοιπὸν τόσους ἀδικεῖς, ὅσους θὰ μπορούσες νὰ βοηθήσεις». (Μεγ. Βασιλείου «περὶ πλεονεξίας» Ε.Π. 31, 276-277).

Ἡ κρίση—καὶ οἱ γεννήτορές της—πολεμοῦνται μὲ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη βιοτή, μὲ ἀνδρεία καὶ ὄχι μὲ μυξοκλάματα. Ὁ Χριστιανὸς Ὁρθόδοξος κλαίει γιὰ τὰ πάθια καὶ τοὺς καημοὺς τοῦ κόσμου, δὲν κλαίγεται ὅμως σὰν καημένο κνώδαλο. Ἀρχοντόπουλο, μὲ πτυχία καὶ «διδασκαλικά» ἦταν ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος. Στάχτη καὶ σποδὸς ὅλα. Τὰ πούλησε καὶ τὰ μοίρασε στοὺς φίλους τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοὺς φτωχοὺς, γιὰτί «ὅσο πλεονάζεις τῷ πλούτῳ τοσοῦτῳ ἐλλείπεις τῇ ἀγάπῃ», θὰ πεῖ ὁ ἀσκητικώτατος Γέροντας τῆς Καππαδοκίας.

Στὰ πανεπιστήμια, τὰ φημισμένα καὶ ξακουστά, τῆς Ἑσπερίας, στὰ ὁποῖα σπουδάζουν οἱ πορφυρογέννητοι τῶν τριῶν οἰκογενειῶν, πὸν κυβερνοῦν τὸν τόπο τὰ τελευταῖα 30-40 χρόνια, μαθαίνουν γράμματα πολλὰ καὶ σπουδάματα... σπουδαῖα, ὄχι ὅμως καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ πράματα. Γι' αὐτὸ βύθισαν τὴν χώρα στὴν οἰκονομικὴ φρίκη καὶ στὸν κοινωνικὸ κανιβαλισμὸ. Ἐπαναπατρίζονται μὲ μοναδικὸ προσὸν τὴν ἐπωνυματοφορία καὶ μετακενώνουν τὰ ἄθεα γράμματα καὶ τίς παραλυμένες θεωρίες στὴ δόλια πατρίδα μας καί... «μαζὶ τὰ φάγαμε». («Ἡ ἀσίγαστη γενικότητα τῶν πιθήκων», θὰ ἔλεγε ὁ Καροῦζος).

Ἄν δὲν μᾶς κυβερνοῦσε τὸ μεταμοντέρνο συνονθύλευμα καὶ οἱ ἀπελέκητοι γόννοι, θὰ μπορούσε ἢ πατρίδα μας νὰ φτιάξει σχολεῖα—ὄλων τῶν βαθμίδων—τὰ ὁποῖα μὲ πνευματικὰ «προσανάμματα καὶ φυλλώματα» τοὺς κλασσικοὺς καὶ τοὺς Πατέρες θὰ μάθαινε στὰ ἀνυπεράσπιστα σήμερα παιδιὰ «τί θὰ εἶπῃ πατρίδα, τί θὰ εἶπῃ θρησκεία, τί θὰ εἶπῃ φιλοτιμία, ἀρετὴ καὶ τιμιότη» (Μακρυγιάννης). Γιὰ νὰ ἐκτιμήσεις ὅμως τὴν μεγαλοπρέπεια καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωποποιὸ ἀξία τῶν ἐλληνικῶν γραμμάτων καὶ πρὶν καὶ μετὰ τὴν γέννηση τοῦ Χριστοῦ, πρέπει νὰ ἔχεις γευτεῖ τὸν γλυκασμὸ τους στὰ ἄγουρα καὶ κρίσιμα χρόνια τῆς ζωῆς σου. Ὅταν ὅμως αὐτὰ τὰ χρόνια βοσκᾶς καὶ χορταίνεις μὲ τὰ ξυλοκέρατα τῆς Δύσης, τὰ ὅλο ἐγωισμὸ καὶ ἀπανθρωπιά, τότε γίνεται αὐτὸ πὸν

ἔλεγε ὁ Κολοκοτρώνης: «καημένη Ἑλλάδα, στέλνουμε στὴ Δύση ἀητούς καὶ μᾶς γυρίζουν κουροῦνες».

Καὶ στὰ σχολεῖα, ἀντὶ νὰ μορφώσουμε ἀητούς πὸν θὰ πετοῦν ψηλὰ καὶ θὰ ἀγναντεύουν τὸ πέλαγος, μπουκώνουμε «τὸ μέλλον τοῦ τόπου» μὲ σκύβαλα, γιὰτί τέτοια μᾶς κουβάλησαν οἱ ἀτάλαντοι γόννοι ἀπὸ τὰ καλά τους πανεπιστήμια. (Μέχρι τὸ 1960 τὰ πανεπιστήμιά μας ἦταν ἀπὸ τὰ καλύτερα τοῦ κόσμου. Μετά, ὅταν ἐπέστρεψαν «δαφνοστεφεῖς» οἱ ἀντιστασιακοὶ τῶν γαλλικῶν μπιστρῶ, κατάντησαν «ἄσυλα» ἀμάθειας καὶ καταλήψεων).

Πιορτάζουμε σὲ λίγες μέρες, τὴν Πρωτοχρονιά, τὸν Μέγα Βασίλειο, πὸν τόσο ἀγαποῦσε καὶ σεβόταν ὁ λαός μας, ὅταν ἀκόμη βαστοῦσε τὸ ρωμαϊκὸ ἦθος. Λένε κάποιιοι δοκησίσοφοι τῆς σήμερον ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία, οἱ ἱεράρχες της, δὲν πρέπει νὰ ἀνακατεύονται μὲ θέματα τῆς πολιτείας, ἀλλὰ νὰ κοιτοῦν τὰ τοῦ οἴκου τους. Δηλαδή, νὰ βυσοδομοῦν οἱ διεφθαρμένοι πολιτικάντηδες καὶ νὰ ἐγκληματοῦν ἀνεξέλεγκτα. Γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία ὅμως «τύπος καὶ ὑπογραμμὸς» εἶναι οἱ ἅγιοι, οἱ ὁποῖοι δὲν δίσταζαν νὰ συγκρουστοῦν καὶ μὲ τὸν Καίσαρα.

«Τὴν βασιλέως φιλίαν μέγα μὲν ἠγοῦμαι μετ' εὐσεβείας, ἄνευ δὲ ταύτης, ὀλεθρίαν ἀποκαλώ», θὰ πεῖ ὁ ἅγιος Βασίλειος στὸν αἰρετικὸ αὐτοκράτορα Οὐάλη. Σήμερα ὑποταχτήκαμε στὶς ἄπληστες συμμορίες τοῦ ΔΝΤ, τῆς τρώικας καὶ γονατίζουμε ἀπὸ τὰ καταστρεπτικὰ δάνεια. «Νὰ μὴ δεχτεῖς ποτὲ δανειστὴ, πὸν σὲ πολιορκεῖ. Νὰ μὴ ἀνεχθεῖς ποτὲ νὰ σὲ ἀναζητοῦν, γιὰ νὰ βροῦν τὰ ἴχνη σου καὶ νὰ σὲ συλλάβουν σὰν ἄλλο θῆραμα (οἱ τοκογλύφοι). Τὸ δάνειο εἶναι ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ ψεύδους εἶναι ἀφορμὴ ἀχαριστίας, ἀγνωμοσύνης καὶ ἐπιπορκίας. Ἄλλα λέει ἐκεῖνος πὸν δανεῖζεται καὶ ἄλλα ἐκεῖνος πὸν δανεῖζει... Εἶσαι φτωχὸς τώρα, ἀλλὰ ἐλεύθερος. Ὅταν δανειστεῖς, ὄχι μόνον δὲν θὰ πλουτίσεις, ἀλλὰ θὰ χάσεις καὶ τὴν ἐλευθερία σου... Ἡ φτώχεια δὲν φέρνει καμμιά ντροπὴ. Γιὰτί λοιπὸν νὰ προσθέτουμε στὸν ἑαυτὸ μας τὴν ντροπὴ τοῦ δανείου; Κανεῖς δὲν θεραπεύει τὰ τραύματά του μὲ ἄλλο τραῦμα, οὔτε θεραπεύει τὸ ἕνα κακὸ μὲ ἄλλο κακὸ, οὔτε ἐπανορθώνει τὴ φτώχεια μὲ τόκους. Εἶσαι πλούσιος; Μὴ δανεῖζεσαι. Εἶσαι φτωχός; Μὴ δανεῖζεσαι». (Μεγ. Βασιλείου, 2 ΕΠΕ 5, 78-80).

Ἄν μορφώνονταν οἱ γενιὲς τῶν Ἑλλήνων μὲ τέτοια κείμενα...



Ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας εἶναι φτιαγμένη ἀπὸ τὸ δῶρο τῆς προσευχῆς»

Vasilii Rozanov



## Περί Όνειρων

Αρχιμανδρίτη π. Βαρνάβα Λαμπρόπουλου.

Πρέπει να δίνουμε σημασία στα όνειρα; Ένα ερώτημα που μας απασχολεί συχνά. Μας απασχολεί έντονότερα μετά από μία νύκτα που ίσως είδαμε κάποιο τρομακτικό όνειρο. Και όχι σπάνια, μας συγκλονίζει το γεγονός ότι κάποιο όνειρο που είδαμε, βγήκε αληθινό! Τότε είναι που θεωρείται η πίστη μας στα όνειρα. Και σιγά-σιγά καταντάμε να τα θεωρούμε σίγουρες προειδοποιήσεις για το τι θα μας συμβεί στο μέλλον.

Πρέπει, λοιπόν, να πιστεύουμε στα όνειρα;

Άς μη βιαστούμε να δώσουμε απάντηση. Ποτέ δεν πρέπει να δίνουμε βιαστικές απαντήσεις σε ερωτήματα της πνευματικής ζωής. Ούτε πρέπει να στηριζόμαστε μόνο στη δική μας «σοφία» και στη δική μας «πειρα» για να απαντήσουμε σε τέτοια ερωτήματα. Άς μην είμαστε τόσο σίγουροι, ότι τα ξέρουμε όλα! Και ως έχουμε την σύνεση να ρωτάμε τους αληθινά σοφούς και αληθινά πεπειραμένους δασκάλους και οδηγούς της πνευματικής ζωής: τους αγίους.

Κάτω, λοιπόν, από το δικό τους φως, κάτω από το φως των αγίων ως ξεετάσουμε πρώτα κάποια επί μέρους ερωτήματα. Και οι απαντήσεις σ' αυτά τα ερωτήματα, θα μας βοηθήσουν να απαντήσουμε και στο ερώτημα, αν τελικά πρέπει να δίνουμε σημασία στα όνειρα.

### 1<sup>ον</sup> Ερώτημα

**Από ποιες αιτίες προέρχονται τα όνειρα;**

Απάντηση: Τρεις είναι οι αιτίες που προκαλούν τα όνειρα:

(α) Οι δικές μας επιθυμίες και σκέψεις κατά την διάρκεια της ημέρας.

(β) Ο Θεός και το θέλημά Του.

(γ) Ο διάβολος και οι παγίδες του.

Την πρώτη αιτία την καταλαβαίνουμε καλά, αν θυμηθούμε την παροιμία: «ό πεινασμένος, στον ύπνο του καρβέλια βλέπει». Κατά παρόμοιο τρόπο, όπως μας εξηγεί ο άγιος Μάξιμος, και ο διψασμένος βλέπει νερό. Ο γαστρίμαργος φαντάζεται ποικιλίες φαγητών. Ο φιλήδονος φαντάζεται μορφές γυναικών. Ο κενόδοξος όνειρεύεται δόξες και χειροκροτήματα. Ο φιλάργυρος βλέπει ότι κέρδισε

το λαχείο. Ο μνησίκακος όνειρεύεται την εκδίκηση κατά του ανθρώπου που τον λύπησε. Και ο φθονερός παραμιλάει από την χαρά του, όταν όνειρευτεί ότι ύποφέρει εκείνος τον όποιο φθονεί.

Τα πιο συνηθισμένα, λοιπόν, όνειρα έχουν την ρίζα τους στα δικά μας πάθη και στις δικές μας επιθυμίες. Όχι στον Θεό ή στον διάβολο. Το πολύ-πολύ να βρει ευκαιρία ο διάβολος εκμεταλλευόμενος τα πάθη και τις επιθυμίες μας, να μας έμπαίξει και να μας ξεγελάσει. Και να μας παρουσιάσει στον ύπνο μας, τα όποιαδήποτε «καρβέλια», με τέτοιο τρόπο που να νομίσουμε ότι μας τα στέλνει ο Θεός!

Όταν, λοιπόν, δοῦμε στον ύπνο μας ότι ίκανοποιήθηκε κάποια έντονη επιθυμία μας, ως μη βιαστούμε να βγάλουμε το συμπέρασμα, ότι εισακούσθηκαν... οι προσευχές μας! Άς μην είμαστε σίγουροι, ότι έτσι

μας θυμήθηκε ο Θεός! Ίσως... κάποιος άλλος μας θυμήθηκε, και βρήκε την ευκαιρία να μας κοροϊδέψει.

### 2<sup>ον</sup> Ερώτημα

**Μπορούμε με σιγουριά να διακρίνουμε από που προήλθε το όνειρο που είδαμε;**

Απάντηση: Μόνο οι άγιοι έχουν τόσο φωτισμένη διάκριση, ώστε να ξεχωρίζουν, αν κάποιο όνειρο προέρχεται σίγουρα

από τον Θεό ή από τον διάβολο ή από προσωπικούς λογισμούς και επιθυμίες. Κι όμως, ιδιαίτερα οι άγιοι, είναι πολύ «κουμπωμένοι» απέναντι στα όνειρα. Η ταπεινώση, τους κάνει να είναι πολύ επιφυλακτικοί. Να μην εμπιστεύονται τον λογισμό τους. Ξέροντας από πρώτο χέρι την πονηρία του διαβόλου, φοβούνται μήπως κρύβονται δαιμονικές παγίδες πίσω από δήθεν θεϊκά όνειρα. Και ο μόνος τρόπος για να ξεφύγει κανείς από τις παγίδες του διαβόλου είναι η ταπεινοφροσύνη. «Ποιοι είμαστε εμείς», λέγει ο άγιος Έφραϊμ ο Σύρος, «που φθάσαμε σε τέτοια μέτρα άρετής, ώστε να βλέπουμε όπτασιές αγγέλων;»

Όταν, λοιπόν, άγιοι του ύψους του αγίου Έφραϊμ θεωρούν άναξιο τον έαυτό τους να δοῦν αγγέλους, πώς τολμάμε εμείς να θεωρούμε πολύ φυσικό(!) ότι είδαμε στον ύπνο μας τον Χριστό ή την Παναγία; Όταν οι άγιοι όμολογούν, με ταπεινώση, ότι δεν μπορούν να διακρίνουν, τι κρύβεται πίσω από το κάθε όνειρο, πώς εμείς «κόβουμε το κεφάλι μας», ότι το τάδε όνειρο που είδαμε ήταν θεϊκό; Τότε και ο διάβολος «κόβει το κεφάλι του» ότι δεν έχουμε ίχνος



ταπεινώσης. Καί ἄρα μπορεῖ ἄνετα μὲ τὶς παγίδες του νὰ μᾶς «χορέψει στὸ ταψί»!

### 3<sup>ον</sup> Ἐρώτημα

**Μὲ τὴν ὑπερβολικὴ ἐπιφυλακτικότητά ἀπέναντι στὰ ὄνειρα, μήπως ὑπάρχει φόβος νὰ θεωρήσωμε «δαιμονικὴ παγίδα» κάποιο ὄνειρο ποὺ ὄντως προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό; Δὲν εἶναι ἄραγε ἁμαρτία νὰ μὴ δώσωμε σημασία σὲ ἓνα ὄνειρο ποὺ πραγματικὰ μᾶς μεταφέρει ἓνα μήνυμα τοῦ Θεοῦ; Ἐπιτρέπεται «μαζὶ μὲ τὰ ξερὰ νὰ κάψουμε καὶ τὰ χλωρὰ»;**

Ἀπάντηση: Ὁ ἅγιος Ἀντώνιος μᾶς ἐγγυᾶται, ὅτι, ἂν μαζὶ μὲ τὰ ξερὰ (δαιμονικά) κάψουμε καὶ μερικὰ χλωρὰ (θεϊκὰ) ὄνειρα, (ἀπὸ φόβο μήπως πέσωμε σὲ δαιμονικὴ παγίδα), δὲν πρόκειται νὰ θυμώσει ὁ Θεὸς μαζὶ μας! Καὶ μᾶς τὸ ἐξηγεῖ μὲ ἓνα ωραιότατο παράδειγμα:

Ἕνας νοικοκύρης, μετὰ ἀπὸ μακρινὸ καὶ πολυχρόνιο ταξίδι, γυρίζει στὸ σπίτι του. Εἶναι νύκτα. Σκοτάδι. Χτυπάει τὴν πόρτα καὶ φωνάζει στὸ θυρωρὸ νὰ τοῦ ἀνοίξει. Ὁ θυρωρὸς ὅμως δὲν πείθεται στὴν φωνὴ τοῦ ἀφεντικοῦ του. Καὶ δὲν τοῦ ἀνοίγει. Φοβᾶται μήπως εἶναι κάποιος ἄλλος, ποὺ προσποιεῖται τὴν φωνὴ τοῦ ἀφεντικοῦ του, γιὰ νὰ τὸν ἐξαπατήσει· νὰ καταφέρει νὰ μπεῖ μέσα καὶ νὰ κλέψει. Ὅταν λοιπὸν ξημερώσει, πῶς θὰ φερθεῖ τὸ ἀφεντικὸ στὸν πιστὸ θυρωρὸ; Ὅχι μόνο δὲν θὰ τὸν τιμωρήσει ποὺ δὲν τοῦ ἀνοίξε, ἀλλὰ καὶ θὰ τὸν ἐπαινεῖ! Θὰ τοῦ πεῖ «μπράβο»! Γιατί κι αὐτὴ ἀκόμα τὴν φωνὴ τοῦ κυρίου του, τὴν θεώρησε πλάνη, ἀπὸ φόβο μήπως μπεῖ κάποιος κλέφτης. Ἐπομένως, ὅταν δὲν δίνωμε σημασία ἀκόμη καὶ σὲ ὄνειρα ποὺ μᾶς φαίνονται 100% θεϊκὰ, ὄχι μόνο δὲν ἁμαρτάνομε, ἀλλὰ θὰ ἀκούσουμε ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ «μπράβο» γιὰ τὴν ταπεινώση καὶ τὴν προσοχή μας!

Μετὰ ἀπὸ αὐτὰ ἀναρωτιέται κανεὶς: Ἄραγε σὲ ποιά ἄλλα ὄνειρα θὰ ἄξιζε νὰ δώσει κανεὶς σημασία; Ἀφοῦ οὔτε στὰ ὄνειρα ποὺ μᾶς φαίνονται 100% θεϊκὰ δὲν πρέπει νὰ δίνει κανεὶς σημασία, μήπως πρέπει ὅλα ἀνεξαιρέτως τὰ ὄνειρα νὰ τὰ πετᾶμε στὸ καλάθι τῶν ἄχρηστων; Ἀλλὰ ἂς διατυπώσωμε καὶ ἓνα τελευταῖο ἐρώτημα, ποὺ μερικοὶ τὸ χρησιμοποιοῦν σὰν ἐπιχείρημα πίστεως στὰ ὄνειρα.

### 4<sup>ον</sup> Ἐρώτημα

**Εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ εἶναι δαιμονικὸ ἓνα ὄνειρο ποῦ βγῆκε ἀληθινὸ; Μπορεῖ ἄραγε ὁ σατανᾶς νὰ προβλέπει τὸ μέλλον;**

Ἀπάντηση: Τίποτε δὲν προγνωρίζουν οἱ δαίμονες, βεβαιώνει ὁ ἅγιος Ἀντώνιος. Ἀπλῶς, ἀπὸ αὐτὰ ποὺ βλέπουν καὶ ἀκοῦνε ὑποπτεύονται καὶ συμπεραίνουν αὐτὰ ποὺ πρόκειται νὰ συμβοῦν. «Ρίχνουν στὰ ἄδεια γιὰ νὰ πιάσουν στὰ γεμάτα». Τὶ τὸ σπουδαῖο, δηλαδή, ἂν δοῦν κάποιον νὰ ἐτοιμάζεται νὰ μᾶς ἐπισκεφθεῖ, καὶ νᾶρθουν αὐτοὶ νωρίτερα νὰ μᾶς τὸ σφυρίζουν; Οἱ

δαίμονες μόνο αὐτὰ ποὺ βλέπουν, τὰ ἀρπάζουν σὰν κλέφτες, καὶ σὰν κατάσκοποι τρέχουν γρηγορώτερα καὶ μᾶς τὰ ἀναγγέλλουν!

Ἐξ ἄλλου παρόμοιες προγνωστικὲς ἰκανότητες ἔχουν καὶ οἱ γιατροὶ σχετικὰ μὲ τὴν ἐξέλιξη μίας νόσου, καὶ οἱ μετεωρολόγοι σχετικὰ μὲ τὴν ἐξέλιξη τοῦ καιροῦ. Πηγὴ ὅμως τῆς πρόγνωσής τους δὲν εἶναι κάποια μυστικὴ ἀποκαλυπτικὴ δύναμη, ἀλλὰ ἡ παρατήρηση καὶ ἡ πείρα παρόμοιων καταστάσεων. Καὶ ὁ διάβολος εἶναι ἀπίστας καὶ στὰ δυό. Καὶ στὴν παρατήρηση τῶν σφαλμάτων μας, καὶ στὴν τεράστια πείρα τῆς ἀφελείας μας καὶ τῆς ἐπιπολαιότητος, μὲ τὴν ὁποία ἀντιμετωπίζουμε τὰ προβλήματα τῆς πνευματικῆς ζωῆς. Ἄρα, ὁ διάβολος δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ προβλέψει τὸ μέλλον. Ἀπλῶς προσπαθεῖ ρίχνοντας ἄδεια (δηλαδή μὲ κάποιες εὐλογοφανεῖς «προβλέψεις») νὰ πιάσει γεμάτα (δηλαδή νὰ κερδίσει τὴν ἐμπιστοσύνη τῶν ἀφελῶν ἀνθρώπων). Καὶ ὁ ἅγιος Ἀντώνιος, ποὺ δὲν τοῦ ξέφευγε κανένα τερτίπι τοῦ διαβόλου, καταλήγει στὴν ἐξῆς συμβουλή: «*Ἀκόμη κι ὅταν οἱ δαίμονες μᾶς λένε κάτι γιὰ τὸ μέλλον, ἐπιβάλλεται νὰ τοὺς ἀντικρουνοῦμε καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἀνατρεποῦμε μὲ τὴν ἀδιαφορία μας καὶ τὴν προσευχὴ μας. Γιατί, ἀπλούστατα, δὲν ἔχομε τὴν ἀνάγκη τους!*».

Ὅποιος ἔχει τὴν ἀνάγκη τους, ἂς δέχεται ὅ,τι τοῦ σφυρίζουν στὰ ὄνειρα. Καὶ ἂς τοὺς συμβουλευέται μὲσω τῶν μέντιουμ καὶ τῶν ἀστρολόγων! Μόνο ποὺ ἔτσι παύει νὰ εἶναι «δοῦλος Χριστοῦ»! Καὶ γίνεται παίγνιο (κοινῶς «κλοτσοσκοῦφι») τῶν δαιμόνων!

Μετὰ τὰ ὅσα ἀναφέραμε παραπάνω, ἀβίαστα βγαίνει τὸ συμπέρασμα ὅτι: ἡ πίστη στὰ ὄνειρα ὄχι μόνο δὲν ὠφελεῖ σὲ τίποτε, ἀλλὰ καὶ κρύβει τεράστιους πνευματικούς κινδύνους.

Τὰ μόνα ὄνειρα ποὺ ὠφελοῦν, λέγει ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης τῆς Κλίμακος, εἶναι τὰ ὄνειρα ποὺ μᾶς θυμίζουν τὴν Μέλλουσα Κρίση. Τὸ φοβερὸ Δικαστήριό τῆς Δευτέρας Παρουσίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτά, ἂν ἀντὶ νὰ μᾶς παρακινοῦν σὲ περισσότερη μετάνοια μᾶς ὀδηγοῦν σὲ ἀπόγνωση, πρέπει νὰ τὰ περιφρονοῦμε. Καὶ νὰ μὴ τὰ πιστεύουμε.

Νὰ προσθέσουμε καὶ κάτι τελευταῖο: Δικαιολογεῖται κάποια προσοχὴ σὲ κάποια ὄνειρα, μόνο ὅταν ἐπαναληφθοῦν ἀρκετὲς φορὲς. Ἀλλὰ καὶ τότε δὲν προσπαθοῦμε νὰ τὰ ἐρμηνεύσουμε μόνοι μας, ἢ μὲ τὴν βοήθεια τῆς γειτόνισσας! Ἀλλὰ τρέχομε νὰ τὰ θέσωμε στὴν κρίση τοῦ πνευματικοῦ μας πατρός.

Πρέπει κάποτε νὰ καταλάβωμε, ὅτι ἂν σὲ ὅλα τὰ πράγματα ἐπιτρέπονται αὐτοσχεδιασμοί, στὸ μόνο ποὺ δὲν ἐπιτρέπεται νὰ αὐτοσχεδιάζουμε, εἶναι στὴν πνευματικὴ μας ζωὴ. Καὶ μάλιστα ὅσο ζοῦμε στὴν «νύκτα» τῆς παρούσης ζωῆς, ποὺ εἶναι πολλοὶ οἱ κλέφτες ποῦ θέλουν νὰ μᾶς «ληστέψουν»!

## Ὁ Κόσμος στὸν Δρόμο του...

Τοῦ Φώτη Κόντογλου.

Ποῦ ν' Ἀκούσουμε οἱ Ἄνθρωποι τοῦ Καιροῦ μας κουβέντα γιὰ Θεό, γιὰ Ψυχή, γιὰ Ἄλλη Ζωή!

Πολλοὶ ἀναγνώστες μου γράφουνε, παρακαλώντας με, καὶ μάλιστα ξεροκίζοντάς με, νὰ γράψω γιὰ νὰ χτυπήσω τὴν ἀνηθικότητα, ποὺ δέρνει τὴν κοινωνία, πρὸ πάντων τῆ νεολαία, καὶ ποὺ «τὴ σερβίρουν τὰ σινεμά», ὅπως μου γράφουνε. Φωνάζουνε: «Ψώσετε τὴ φωνή σας!». Ἐνας σπουδαστής μου γράφει ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀγγλία: «Μὴ σταματήσετε αὐτὸν τὸν ὠραῖον ἀγώνα, μὴν πτοηθῆτε ἀπὸ τὴς ἐπιθέσεις. Ὑπάρχουν βέβαια πολλοὶ ἀντίπαλοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλοὶ θαυμαστὲς τοῦ ὠραίου σας ἔργου. Σὰς χρειαζόμαστε γιὰ νὰ δώσετε φτερὰ στὴς καρδιές μας, ποὺ εἶναι γεμάτες κενὸ καὶ ἀπαισιοδοξία».

Καημένοι ἄνθρωποι, πόση σημασία δίνετε στὸ πρόσωπό μου καὶ σ' αὐτὰ ποὺ γράφω! Τί φωνὴ νὰ ὑψώσω, ποὺ εἶναι βραχνιασμένη καὶ ἀδύνατη, καὶ χάνεται μέσα στὸν κυκεῶνα τῆς σημερινῆς ζωῆς; Ὅχι φωνή, ἀλλὰ καὶ τ' ἀστροπελέκι νὰ κρατᾶ στὰ χέρια του κανένας σήμερα, καὶ νὰ τὸ σφενδονίζει γιὰ νὰ κάνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ν' ἀλλάξουνε δρόμο, πάλι τίποτα δὲν θὰ κάνει. Ὁ ἴδιος ὁ ἅγιος Γιάννης ὁ Πρόδρομος, τὸ ἐρημοποῦλι τῆς ἐρήμου, ποὺ τὸν φοβόντανε οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ, γιατί τοὺς ἔλεγε «γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν», κι αὐτὸς μάταια φώναζε. Ἡ φωνὴ του χανότανε μέσα στὴν ἐρημο, «φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ». Καὶ πότε; Τὸν καιρὸ ποὺ ὑπήρχανε ἀκόμα κάποια αὐτιά νὰ τὸν ἀκούσουνε, κι ἀπλὲς καρδιές γιὰ νὰ τὸν καταλάβουνε. Ὅχι ἐμεῖς ποὺ χρειαζόμαστε δασκάλεμα, καὶ ποὺ ἔχουμε τόσα... στὴν καμπούρα μας! Πῶς νὰ γίνουμε δάσκαλοι γιὰ τοὺς ἄλλους; Γεμίζουμε χαρτιά μὲ μυριάδες λόγια, μὰ τί τὸ ὄφελος; Ὁ κόσμος τραβᾷ τὸν δρόμο του καὶ δὲν σκοτίζεται ἀπὸ κηρύγματα. Κι ἂν δώσει προσοχὴ καὶ κανένας στὰ γραψίματά μας, μπορεῖ νὰ θυμώσει ποὺ χαλάσαμε τὴν ἡσυχία του, καὶ νὰ πεῖ πῶς εἴμαστε ὑποκριτές, ψευτογιασμένοι, κουκουβάγιες ποὺ βγαίνουνε ἀπὸ τὰ χαλάσματα τοῦ παλιοῦ καιροῦ. Σήμερα οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι τέτοιοι, ποὺ μήτε τὸ κήρυγμα τοῦ ἁγίου Κοσμά τοῦ Αἰτωλοῦ δὲν θὰ ἔκανε τίποτα.

Λοιπόν, ἄς τὸ πάρουμε ἀπόφαση. Τὸ κακὸ δὲν περιορίζεται πιά μὲ τίποτα, μὲ κανένα τρόπο, μὲ καμμιά δύναμη. Ὅσοι μιλοῦνε καὶ γράφουνε γιὰ νὰ φέρουνε στὸν ἴσιο δρόμο τοὺς πολλοὺς ποὺ ξεστρατίσανε, ἄς ξέρουμε πῶς δέρνουνε τὸν ἀγέρα, εἶναι «ἀέρα δέροντες», ποὺ ἔλεγε καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος. Καὶ ἅγιος νὰ εἶναι αὐτός, ποὺ συμβουλεύει, πάλι δὲν θάβρει αὐτιά γιὰ ν' ἀκούσουνε τὴ φωνὴ του, ὄχι ἄνθρωποι σὰν ἐμᾶς, ποὺ ἔχουμε οἱ ἴδιοι ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ δασκάλεμα.

Ναί, ὁ κόσμος δὲν ἀλλάζει πορεία. Ἄς μὴν περιμένουμε πιά τίποτα καλύτερο, θὰ πηγαίνουμε ὁλοένα

στὰ χειρότερα. Ἀνήφορος πιά δὲν ὑπάρχει. Μοναχὰ κατήφορος. Ὅσοι ἔχουνε μέσα τους τὸν φόβο τοῦ Θεοῦ, αὐτοὶ οἱ λίγοι θ' ἀπομείνουνε, «τὸ μικρὸν ποιόνιον» ποὺ εἶπε ὁ Χριστός. Κι ἂν γράφουμε, γι' αὐτοὺς γράφουμε καὶ γιὰ τοὺς ἴδιους τοὺς ἑαυτούς μας ποὺ κιντυνεύουμε νὰ ἀρπαχτοῦμε ἀπὸ τὰ δίχτυα ποὺ ἔναι μπλεγμένοι ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ θέλουμε νὰ δασκαλέψουνε. Γιὰ νὰ καθόμαστε ἀνύσταχοι.

Ὅσοι εἶναι αἰσιόδοξοι γιὰ τὸ μέλλον τῆς ἀνθρωπότητας, βλέπουνε μὲ ἄλλα μάτια τὸν κόσμος, ἀπ' ὅ,τι τὸν βλέπομε ἐμεῖς. Ἐμεῖς εἴμαστε οἱ γκριλιάρηδες, οἱ Ἰερεμίες, οἱ Κασσάντρες, καὶ γι' αὐτὸ ὁ κόσμος μᾶς ὀχτρεύεται. Κι ἔχει δίκιο. Ὁ καθένας νοιώθει διαφορετικὰ τὴ ζωὴ, τὴ χαρὰ, τὸ καλὸ καὶ τὸ κακὸ. Γιὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ποὺ λέμε πῶς δὲν πᾶνε καλά, ὁ σημερινὸς κόσμος εἶναι ὁ πιὸ θαυμάσιος, ἢ σημερινὴ ζωὴ εἶναι ἢ πιὸ καλύτερη κι ἢ πιὸ βλογημένη ἀπὸ ὅλες ποὺ πέρασε ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Ἡ σημερινὴ νεολαία εἶναι μεθυσμένη ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνο ποὺ λέμε ἐμεῖς «ἀνηθικότητα», καὶ ποὺ αὐτὴ τὸ λέγει «ἐλευθερία». Τί κάθεσαι λοιπὸν ἐσὺ καὶ τσαμπουρνίζεις μὲ τὴν ἠθικὴ σου; Γι' αὐτοὺς εἶναι τὸ πιὸ μεγάλο χάρισμα ἢ ἀνηθικότητα, καὶ μποροῦνε νὰ σκοτώσουνε ἐκεῖνον ποὺ χτυπᾷ τὴν «ἐλευθερία» τους. Αἰῶνες ἀγωνιζότανε ὁ ἄνθρωπος, χωρὶς νὰ μπορέσει νὰ τὴν ἀποχτήσῃ. Καὶ τώρα ποὺ τὴν ἔκανε χτήμα του, νὰ τὴν ἀφήσει γιὰ τὴν παλαιοντολογικὴ ἠθικὴ μας;

Ποτὲ δὲν μίσησε ἄνθρωπος τὸν ἄνθρωπο τόσο πολὺ, ὅσο στὸν καιρὸ μας. Καὶ τὸν μίσησε στ' ὄνομα αὐτῆς τῆς «ἐλευθερίας», ποὺ λέγει πῶς εἶναι τὸ πολῦτιμο ἀπόκτημα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας. Μισημένες εἶναι οἱ ἠθικὲς κουκουβάγιες κι οἱ χριστιανικὲς μοιρολογηστρες. Ποτὲ ὁ χριστιανὸς δὲν μισήθηκε ὅσο σήμερα, οὔτε ἐπὶ Νέρωνα.

Ποῦ ν' ἀκούσουμε οἱ ἄνθρωποι τοῦ καιροῦ μας κουβέντα γιὰ Θεό, γιὰ ψυχή, γιὰ ἄλλη ζωὴ! Ἡ ψυχὴ τους ἔχει παραμορφωθεῖ ὁλότελα ἀπὸ τὴς κάθε λογῆς ἀνοησίες ποὺ βλέπουμε στὸν κινηματογράφο. Ἡ ταινία ποὺ δὲν ἔχει μέσα τῆς πολλῆ ἀνοησία, δὲν γνωρίζει ἐπιτυχία. Ἀνοησία, καὶ ἀκαλαισθησία, αὐτὰ τὰ δύο βασιλεύουνε σήμερα. Εἶναι ἀπίστευτο τὸ τί ἀκούγει κανένας γιὰ ἀστεία στὴς συναναστροφές ποὺ κάνουνε οἱ νέοι. Κρυόμπλαστα, ἀσυναρτησίες, μωρολογίες. Χάθηκε ἀπ' αὐτοὺς κι ἢ πιὸ συνηθισμένη ἐξυπνάδα. Τὰ καημένα τὰ παιδιά, παίρνουνε ἀφορμὴ ἀπὸ ἓνα τίποτα, γιὰ νὰ χαχανίσουνε. Τὰ δέρνει ἢ ἀμηχανία κι ἢ βαρυνεστημάρα κι αὐτὴ εἶναι ἢ αἰτία ποὺ τὰ κάνει νὰ χοροπηδᾶνε σὰν τρελλά, νὰ τσακίζουνε ὅ,τι βροῦνε μπροστά τους, νὰ τὰ βάζουνε μὲ ἀνύποπτους ἀνθρώπους. Γι' αὐτὰ τὰ πλάσματα ἢ ζωὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἓνα ἀνιαρὸ πρᾶγμα δίχως σκοπὸ, δίχως ἀληθινὴ χαρὰ, δίχως ἀγνὸν ἐνθουσιασμό.

Ποιὸς φταίγει γι' αὐτὴ τὴν κατάσταση; Ὅλοι μας. Ὅλοι συνεργήσαμε γιὰ νὰ καταντήσῃ ἡ ζωὴ ἔτσι ποὺ κατήντησε. Ὅλοι δουλέψαμε γιὰ νὰ χτισθεῖ τοῦτος ὁ τερατώδης πύργος τοῦ Βαβέλ. Ἄλλοι κουβαλήσανε γιὰ πέτρες τὶς πετρωμένες καὶ ἀναίσθητες καρδιές τους, ἄλλοι κουβαλήσανε λάσπη ἀπὸ τὰ κατάβαθμά τους ποὺ φωλιάζουνε τὰ βρωμερὰ πάθη. Ἐκεῖνος ὁ παλιὸς πύργος τοῦ Βαβέλ ρήμαξε κι ἐξαφανίσθηκε. Μὰ τοῦτος θὰ στέκεται ἀσάλευτος, κι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὀλοένα θὰ τὸν κάνουνε πιδ ψηλόν, μὲ σκοπὸ νὰ χτυπήσουνε τὸν Θεό.

Ἔσεῖς ποὺ θλιβόσατε καὶ πονᾶτε γι' αὐτὴ τὴν κατάσταση, καλὰ κάνετε νὰ λυπόσατε, μὰ μὴν ὄνειρευόσατε πὼς θάρθουνε καλύτερες μέρες γιὰ τὸν κόσμο. Ὁ κόσμος τρέχει σὰν τρελλός. Κατὰ μὲν τὴ δική του γνώμη ἀνηφορίζει στὸν θρίαμβο, κατὰ δὲ τὴ δική σας γνώμη κατηφορίζει στὰ τάρταρα καὶ στὸν χαμό. Ποιὸς ἀπὸ τοὺς δύο ἔχει δίκιο, μοναχὰ ὁ Θεὸς τὸ γνωρίζει. Αὐτὸ τὸ τρέξιμο δὲν θὰ πάψει ὡς τὴν τελευταία μέρα, ποὺ θὰ λάμψει ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ θὰ δικαιωθοῦνε ὅσοι τὴν πιστέψανε σωστά, καὶ μαρτυρήσανε γι' αὐτὴ καὶ ἐμπαιχτήκανε γι' αὐτή.

Ἴσως νάρχεται κιόλας ὁ Ἀντίχριστος. Τὰ σημεῖα καὶ τὰ τέρατα ποὺ προφητεύτηκε πὼς θὰ κάνει ἀρχίσανε νὰ φανερώνονται. Ἡ ἐπιστήμη βασιλεύει κι ἡ ἀθεΐα βασιλεύει μαζί της.

Μία βροντερὴ φωνὴ ἀκούγεται ἀπὸ πάνω, μὰ τὴν ἀκοῦνε μόνο ἐκεῖνοι, ποὺ ἔχουνε αὐτιά γιὰ νὰ τὴν ἀκούσουνε. Καὶ λέγει: «*Νά, ἔρχομαι σὰν τὸν κλέφτη. Καλότυχος ἐκεῖνος ποὺ ξαγρυπνᾷ καὶ βαστᾷ καθαρὰ τὰ φορέματά του. Ὁ καιρὸς εἶναι κοντά. Ὁ ἄδικος ἄς ἀδικήσῃ ἀκόμα, κι ὁ βρωμερὸς ἄς βρωμισθεῖ ἀκόμα, κι ὁ δίκαιος ἄς κάνει δικαιοσύνη ἀκόμα, κι ὁ ἅγιος ἄς ἀγιάσῃ ἀκόμα. Νά, ἔρχομαι γρήγορα!*».



## ὑπέρθεος Ὁ Πάπας!

Τοῦ θεολόγου κ. Νικ. Ἰω. Σωτηροπούλου.

**Ἐ**γρᾶφη γιὰ τὸν Πάπα, ὅτι μὲ τὶς παμμέγιστες ἀξιώσεις γιὰ τὸ πρόσωπό του παρουσιάζεται ὡς ἡμίθεος.

Ἐπικεινὸς χαρακτηρισμὸς τὸ «ἡμίθεος», λέγουμε ἐμεῖς. Κατὰ τὴ Β' Βατικάνεια Σύνοδο, τῆς ὁποίας τὰ 50 ἔτη ἔσπευσε νὰ συνεορτάσῃ μὲ τὸν Πάπα ὁ Πατριάρχης κ. Βαρθολομαῖος, ἐὰν παρουσιασθῇ διαφορὰ μεταξὺ τῆς κρίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς γνώμης τοῦ Πάπα, οἱ πιστοὶ πρέπει νὰ προτιμήσουν τὴ γνώμη τοῦ Πάπα! Ἐπίσης κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴ Σύνοδο ὁ Πάπας δύναται νὰ ἐπεμβαίη στὴν Ἁγία Γραφή καὶ νὰ τὴν τροποποιῇ, νὰ προσθέτῃ,

ν' ἀφαιρῇ, νὰ διορθώη καὶ τοὺς Ἀποστόλους! (Ἄραγε καὶ τὸν Ἀπόστολο Πέτρο;).

Αὐτὲς οἱ ἀποφάνσεις καὶ ἀποφάσεις τῆς Συνόδου τοῦ Βατικανοῦ παρουσιάζουν τὸν Πάπα ὄχι ἀπλῶς ὡς ἡμίθεο, ἀλλ' ὡς θεό, ἢ μᾶλλον ὡς ὑπέρθεο, ναί, ὡς ὑπέρθεο, ἀφοῦ ἡ γνώμη τοῦ Πάπα πρέπει νὰ προτιμᾶται τῆς κρίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ Πάπας δύναται νὰ ἐπεμβαίη στὸ θεόπνευστο καὶ αἰώνιο κείμενο τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς καὶ νὰ ἐπιφέρῃ μεταβολές. Ὁ Ἐωσφόρος φιλοδόξησε νὰ θέσῃ τὸ θρόνο του ὑπεράνω τῶν νεφῶν, νὰ γίνῃ ὁμοῖος μὲ τὸν Ὑψίστο. Ὁ δὲ Πάπας θέτει τὸ θρόνο του ὑπεράνω τῶν οὐρανῶν, γίνεται ἀνώτερος τοῦ Ὑψίστου!

Θεέ μου! Δὲν βλέπουν ὁ Πατριάρχης καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι φιλοπαπικοὶ τὴ σχιζοφρένεια τοῦ Παπισμοῦ; Πὼς ἀσπάζονται τὸ εἶδωλο τοῦ Πάπα τὸ ὑψωμένο ὑψηλότερα ἀπὸ τὴ χρυσὴ εἰκόνα τοῦ Ναβουχοδονόσορος;

Ἀλλὰ δόξα σοι, Κύριε, διότι ἔχεις καὶ στὴν ἐποχὴ μας εὐσεβεῖς ψυχές, οἱ ὁποῖες δὲν προσκυνοῦν τὸ εἶδωλο τοῦ Πάπα, ἀλλὰ προσκυνοῦν ἐσένα, τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸ Θεό.



## ὑπενθύμισις... πρὸς Ὅλους μας!

Προφητεία Ὁσίου Νείλου τοῦ Μυροβλήτου.

**Ὅ**ταν πλησιάσῃ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἐλεύσεως τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου θὰ σκοτισθῇ ἡ διάνοια τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ θὰ πληθυνθῇ σφόδρα ἡ ἀσέβεια καὶ ἡ ἀνομία..

Τότε ἄρχεται ὁ κόσμος νὰ γίνεται ἀγνώριστος, θὰ μετασηματίζονται αἱ μορφαὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ δὲν θὰ γνωρίζονται οἱ ἄνδρες ἀπὸ τὰς γυναῖκας διὰ τῆς ἀναισχύντου ἐνδυμασίας καὶ τῶν τριχῶν τῆς κεφαλῆς.

Οἱ τότε ἄνθρωποι θὰ ἀγριέψουν καὶ θὰ γένουν ὡσὰν θηρία ἀπὸ τὴν πλάνην τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου. Δὲν θὰ ὑπάρχει σεβασμὸς εἰς τοὺς γονεῖς καὶ τοὺς γεροντότερους.

Ἡ ἀγάπη θὰ ἐκλείψῃ [...] Ἡ σωφροσύνη θὰ ἀπολεσθῇ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ θὰ βασιλεύσῃ ἡ ἀσωτεία. Τὸ ψεῦδος καὶ ἡ φιλαργυρία θὰ φθάσουν εἰς τὸν μέγιστον βαθμὸν καὶ οὐαὶ εἰς τοὺς θησαυρίζοντας ἀργύρια.

Αἱ πορνεῖαι, μοιχεῖαι, ἀρσενοκοιταίαι, κλοπαὶ καὶ φόνοι, θὰ πολιτεύονται ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς μεγίστης ἁμαρτίας καὶ ἀσελγίας, οἱ ἄνθρωποι θέλουν στερηθῇ τὴν χάριν τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ὅπου ἔλαβον εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Βάπτισμα ὡς καὶ τὴν τύψιν τῆς συνειδήσεως [...] **Τότε αἰφνιδίως θέλει ἔλθει ἡ δίτομος ρομφαῖα καὶ θὰ θανατώσῃ τὸν πλάνον καὶ τοὺς ὀπαδοὺς αὐτοῦ.**

## THE JESUS PRAYER

By St. Theophan the Recluse, from "The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology," by Igumen Charion of Valamo, Faber and Faber, 1966, pp 92-101.

You have read about the Jesus Prayer, have you not? And you know that our knowledge for this prayer arises from practical experience. Only with the help of this prayer can the necessary order of the soul be firmly maintained; only through this prayer can we preserve our inner order undisturbed even when distracted by household cares. This prayer alone makes it possible to fulfill the injunction of the Fathers: the hands at work, the mind and heart with God. When this prayer becomes grafted in our heart, then there are no inner interruptions and it continues always in the same, evenly flowing way.

The path to achievement of a systematic interior order is very hard, but it is possible to preserve this (or a similar) state of mind during the various and inevitable duties you have to perform; and what makes it possible is the Jesus Prayer when it is grafted in the heart. How can it be so grafted? It does happen. He who strives is increasingly conscious of this engrafting, without knowing how it has been achieved. To strive for this inner order, we must walk always in the presence of God, repeating the Jesus Prayer as frequently as possible. As soon as there is a free moment, begin again at once, and the engrafting will be achieved.

### The Jesus Prayer, and the Warmth Which Accompanies It

To pray is to stand spiritually before God in our heart, in glorification, thanksgiving, supplication, and contrite penitence. Everything must be spiritual. The root of all prayer is devout fear of God; from this comes belief about God and faith in Him, submission of oneself to God, hope in God, and cleaving to Him with the feeling of love, in oblivion of all created things. When prayer is powerful, all these spiritual feelings and movements are present in the heart with corresponding vigor.

How does the Jesus Prayer help us in this? Through the feeling of warmth which develops in and around the heart as the effect of this Prayer. The habit of prayer is not formed suddenly, but requires long work and toil. The Jesus Prayer, and the warmth which accompanies it, helps better than anything else in the formation of the habit of prayer. Note that these are the means, and not the deed itself.

When we pray we must stand in our mind before God, and think of Him alone. Yet various thoughts keep jostling in the mind, and draw it away from God. In order to teach the mind to rest on one thing, the Holy Fathers used short prayers and acquired the habit of reciting them unceasingly. This unceasing repetition of a short prayer kept the mind on the thought of God and dispersed all irrelevant thoughts. They adopted various short prayers, but it is the Jesus Prayer which has become particularly established amongst us and is most generally employed: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner!*

So this is what the Jesus Prayer is. It is one among various short prayers, oral like all others. Its purpose is to keep the mind on the single thought of God. Whoever has formed the habit of this Prayer and uses it properly, really does remember God incessantly.

Since the remembrance of God in a sincerely believing heart is naturally accompanied by a sense of piety, hope, thanksgiving, devotion to God's will, and by other spiritual feelings, the Jesus Prayer, which produces and preserves this remembrance of God, is called spiritual prayer. It is rightly so called only when it is accompanied by these spiritual feelings. But when not accompanied by them it remains oral like any other prayer of the same type.

### "Warmth" of the Prayer

What is the meaning of this warmth which accompanies the practice of the Prayer? In order to keep the mind on one thing by the use of a short prayer, it is necessary to preserve attention and so lead it into the heart: for so long as the mind remains in the head, where thoughts jostle one another, it has no time to concentrate on one thing. But when attention descends into the heart, it attracts all the powers of the soul and body into one point there. This concentration of all human life in one place is immediately reflected in the heart by a special sensation that is the beginning of future warmth. This sensation, faint at the beginning, becomes gradually stronger, firmer, deeper.

At first only tepid, it grows into warm feeling and concentrates the attention upon itself. And so it comes about that, whereas in the initial stages the attention is kept in the heart by an effort of will, in due course this attention, by its own vigor, gives birth to warmth in the heart. This warmth then holds the attention without special effort. From this, the two go on supporting one another, and must remain inseparable; because dispersion of attention cools the warmth, and diminishing warmth weakens attention.



From this there follows a rule of the spiritual life: if you keep the heart alive towards God, you will always be in remembrance of God. This rule is laid down by St. John of the Ladder.

The question now arises whether this warmth is spiritual. No, it is not spiritual. It is ordinary physical warmth. But since it keeps the attention of the mind in the heart, and thus helps the development there of the spiritual movements described earlier, it is called spiritual—provided, however, that it is not accompanied by sensual pleasure, however slight, but keeps the soul and body in sober mood.

Since the warmth accompanying the Jesus Prayer does not include spiritual feelings, it should not be characterized as spiritual, but rather as the warm-blooded impact of the spiritual prayer. There is nothing in itself bad about this warm-blooded feeling, unless it is connected with sensual pleasure, however slight. The rise of any sensual impact must be suppressed.

Things begin to go wrong when the warmth moves about in other parts of the body, often lower than the heart. And matters become still worse when, in enjoyment of this warmth, we imagine it to be all that matters, without bothering about spiritual feelings or even about remembrance of God; and so we set our heart only on having this warmth.

This wrong course is occasionally possible, though not for all people, nor at all times. It must be noticed and corrected, for otherwise only physical warmth will remain, and we must not consider this warmth as spiritual or due to grace. This warmth is spiritual only when it is accompanied by the spiritual impetus of prayer. Anyone who calls it spiritual without this movement is mistaken. And anyone who imagines it to be due to grace is in even greater error.

Warmth which is filled with grace is of a special nature and it is only this which is truly spiritual. It is distinct from the warmth of the flesh, and does not produce any noticeable changes in the body, but manifests itself by a subtle feeling of sweetness. Everyone can easily identify and distinguish spiritual warmth by this particular feeling. Each of us must do it for himself: this is no business for an outsider.

#### The Easiest Way to Acquire Unceasing Prayer

Acquiring the habit of the Jesus Prayer, so that it takes root in ourselves, is the easiest way of ascending into the region of unceasing prayer. Men of great spirituality have found, through God's enlightenment, that this form of prayer is a simple yet most effective means of establishing

and strengthening the whole of the spiritual and ascetic life; as such, in their rules for prayer they have left detailed instructions about it.

In all our efforts and ascetic struggles, what we seek is purification of the heart and restoration of the spirit. There are two ways to accomplish this: the active way, the practice of the ascetic labors; and the contemplative way, the turning of the mind to God.

By the first way the soul becomes purified and so receives God; by the second way, God of Whom the soul becomes aware, Himself burns away every impurity and thus comes to dwell in the purified soul. The whole of this second way is summed up in the one Jesus Prayer, as St. Gregory of Sinai says: "God is gained either by activity and work, or by the art of invoking the Name of Jesus."

He adds that the first way is longer than the second, the second being quicker and more effective. For this

reason, some of the Holy Fathers have given prime importance, among all the different kinds of spiritual exercise, to the Jesus Prayer. It enlightens, strengthens, and animates; it defeats all enemies visible and invisible, and leads directly to God. All of us may experience how truly powerful and effective it is. The Name of the Lord Jesus is the treasury of all good



things, the treasury of strength and of life in the spirit.

Therefore, it is very beneficial and we should, from the very first, give full instructions on the practice of the Jesus Prayer to everyone who repents or begins to seek the Lord. And only after the introduction of the beginner to the Jesus Prayer should we introduce him to other practices; the Jesus Prayer is the way that he can most quickly become steadfast and spiritually aware, thus achieving inner peace. Lack of this experience, many of the faithful end up wasting their time and labor in going no further than the formal and external "religious" activities of the soul and body.

The practice of the Jesus Prayer is called an "art," and it is a very simple one. Standing with consciousness and attention in the heart, cry out unceasingly: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner*, without having in your mind any visual concept or image, and believing that the Lord sees you and listens to you.

It is important to keep your consciousness in the heart, and as you do so also control your breathing a little so as to keep time with the words of the prayer. But the most important thing is to believe that God is near and hears.

Say the prayer for God's "ear" alone. At the beginning, this prayer appears to be as only a lengthy activity, like any other, but in time it passes into the mind and finally takes root in the heart.

There are deviations from this right way of praying; therefore we must learn it from someone who knows all about it. Mistakes occur chiefly from the attention being in the head and not in the heart. He who keeps his attention in the heart is safe. Safer still is he who at all times clings to God in contrition, and prays to be delivered from illusion.

**"Techniques" and "Methods" Do Not Matter:  
One Thing Alone Is Essential**

The prayer, *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me* is an oral prayer like any other. There is nothing special about it in itself, but it receives all its power from the state of mind in which it is made.

The various methods described by the Fathers (sitting down, making prostrations, and the other techniques used when performing this prayer) are not suitable for everyone: indeed without a personal spiritual father directing the faithful, these practices can actually be quite dangerous. It is better not to try them. There is just one method which is obligatory for all: to stand with the attention in the heart. All other things are beside the point, and do not lead to the "crux" of the matter.

Nothing in the words of the prayer and their uttering can alone bring forth its fruit. All fruit could be received without this prayer, and even without any oral prayer, but merely by directing the mind and heart towards God. However, to do this is quite difficult and it occurs only through divine grace (as does the prayer of the heart).

The essence of the whole thing is established in the clear and pure remembrance of God, and one's desire to walk in His presence. You can say to anyone: "Follow whatever methods you like—recite the Jesus Prayer, perform bows and prostrations, go to Church and do what you wish—only strive to be always in constant remembrance of God." I remember meeting a man in Kiev who said: "I must admit; I did not use any methods at all, I did not know the Jesus Prayer, yet by God's mercy I walk always in His presence. But how this has come to pass, I myself do not know; God alone granted me this gift! We must always remember this: pure prayer of the heart is always God-given; otherwise we may confuse the gift of His grace with some achievement of our own.



People say that we all must attain the Jesus Prayer, for that is inner prayer. This is not correct. The Jesus Prayer is a good means to arrive at inner prayer, but in itself it is not inner but outer prayer. Those who attain the habit of the Jesus Prayer do very well. But if they stop only at this and go no further, they stop half way. Even though we are reciting the Jesus Prayer, it is still necessary for us to keep the thought of God; otherwise the prayer is dry food. It is good that the name of Jesus should cleave to your tongue. In spite of reciting His name, it is still possible not to remember God at all and even to harbor thoughts which are opposed to Him. Consequently everything depends on consciously and freely turning to God, and on a balanced effort to hold oneself in this state.

**The Jesus Prayer Is Stronger than Other Prayers**

As we indicated earlier, the Jesus Prayer is an oral prayer like any other prayer. It is stronger than all other prayers only in virtue of the all-powerful Name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. But it is necessary to invoke His Name with a full and unwavering faith—with a deep certainty that He is near, sees and hears, pays whole-hearted attention to our petition, and is ready to fulfill it and to grant what we seek. There is nothing to be ashamed of in such a hope. If fulfillment is sometimes delayed, this may be because the petitioner is still not yet ready to receive what he asks.

**Not a Talisman...**

It is said of the fruit of this Prayer that there is nothing higher in the world. This is wrong. As if it were some "talisman" (an object with magic charm properties, *Ed.*). The Jesus Prayer is not some talisman. Its power comes from faith in the Lord, and from a deep union of the mind and heart with Him. With such a disposition, the invocation of the Lord's Name becomes very effective in many ways. But a mere repetition of the words does not signify anything.

Do not forget that you must not limit yourself to a mechanical repetition of the words of the Jesus Prayer. This will lead to nothing except a habit of repeating the Prayer automatically with the tongue, without even thinking about it. There is of course nothing wrong in this, but it constitutes only the extreme outer limit of the work. The essential thing is to stand consciously in the presence of the Lord, with fear, faith and love.

**Oral and Inner Prayer**

One can recite the Jesus Prayer with the mind in the heart without movement of the tongue. This is better than oral

prayer. Use oral prayer as a support to inner prayer. Sometimes it is required in order to strengthen inner prayer.

#### Avoid Visual Concepts

Hold no intermediate image between the mind and the Lord when practicing the Jesus Prayer. The words pronounced are merely a help, and are not essential. The principal thing is to stand before the Lord with the mind in the heart. This, and not the words, is inner spiritual prayer. The words here are as much or as little the essential part of the prayer as the words of any other prayer. The essential part is to dwell in God, and this walking before God means that you live with the conviction ever before your consciousness that God is in you, as He is in everything; you live in the firm assurance that He sees all that is within you, knowing you better than you know yourself. This awareness of the eye of God looking at your inner being must not be accompanied by any visual concept, but must be confined to a simple conviction or feeling. A man in a warm room feels how the warmth envelops and penetrates him. The same must be the effect on our spiritual nature of the all-encompassing presence of God, Who is the fire in the room of our being.

The words of the Prayer are only the instrument and not the essence of the work; but they are an instrument which is very strong and effective, for the name of the Lord Jesus is fearful to the enemies of our salvation and a blessing to all who seek Him. Do not forget that this practice is simple, and must not have anything fanciful about it. Pray about everything to the Lord, to our most pure Lady, to your Guardian Angel; and they will teach you everything, either directly or through others.

#### Images and Illusion

In order not to fall into illusion, while practicing inner prayer, do not permit yourself any concepts, images, or visions. For vivid imaginations, darting to and from, and flights of fancy do not cease even when the mind stands in the heart and recites prayer; and no one is able to rule over them, except those who have attained perfection by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and who have acquired stability of mind through Jesus Christ. Realize that God is everywhere; and so (among other places) there, where your thoughts and feelings are. You cannot succeed in freeing yourself entirely from images, but gradually they evaporate more and more. And through His grace, there comes a point when they disappear completely.



If we remembered that it is written, *By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned*, we would choose to remain silent.

Abba Poimen the Great

## ALEXANDROS PAPADIAMANDIS

Source: "Greece's Dostoevsky: The Theological Vision of Alexandros Papadiamandis," by Anestis Keselopoulos (Protecting Veil Press, 2011).

One of the greatest figures in modern Greek literature, Alexandros Papadiamandis was born on the Greek island of Skiathos on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1851, "the second Sunday of Lent and the feast day of St. Gregory Palamas, while they were chanting the *triadiká* in church" [hymns sung in honor of the Holy Trinity, *Ed.*] (as we are informed by his fellow countryman Papa-George Rigas, distinguished scholar of folk traditions and specialist of the liturgical *typicon*). While this first inkling of God's favor appeared during Papadiamandis's birth, the second took place during his Baptism: "He was baptized on the Monday of Bright Week and named Alexandros. Something unusual happened while the priest, Papa-Nicholas, performed the Baptism; as he poured the oil in the baptismal font, the oil immediately made the form of the cross on the water. Papa-Nicholas interpreted this strange phenomenon, saying, 'This child will be great.'"

His father was the pious priest Adamantios Emmanuel. Papadiamandis writes that he was "a beneficent guide in all ecclesiastical questions and a sublime adornment of ecclesiastical celebrations" in the church of the Three Hierarchs and in the country chapels of Skiathos. From an early age, Alexandros followed his father around the island helping him, sometimes in the altar and sometimes at the lectern as chanter. With his exceptional sensitivity, Alexandros treasured his experiences of sharing this liturgical service with his father. His heart was filled with and his nous was instructed by images from the priestly life and the Church's services. He was so influenced by them that most of the scenes he chose to paint as a child were taken from the life of the Church. Reflecting on this time, he writes in his autobiographical memoir, "When I was young I would paint Saints, or I would write [hymnographical] verses."

From his childhood years, Alexandros had the opportunity to live the tradition of the *Kollyvádes*<sup>(1)</sup> fathers (those Greek Orthodox Athonite elders involved in the eighteenth century movement that inspired spiritual renewal and a return to more traditional liturgical and spiritual practices). This tradition had been preserved on Skiathos through the presence of a monastery built by the Kollyvádes, the Monastery of the Annunciation. Although the monastery was in decline during Papadiamandis's later years, the diligently preserved kollyvadian tradition remained alive in the inhabitants of the island. He would later write, "In this small monastery [of the Panagia of Kounistras in Skiathos] at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, six of my relatives were priest-monks." Papadiamandis gives an



account of the monastery's spiritual life and foundation on Skiathos:

"Papa-Gregory... the ascetic, descended from the heights of Athos together with his elder, Papa-Niphon, and thirty other monks. They sailed to the island of Gregory's birth [Skiathos], and there, in the gorge of Angallianous, they built a beautiful, awe-inspiring monastery—patriarchal, *Stavropegic*<sup>(2)</sup>, and *coenobitic*<sup>(3)</sup>—with an exquisite, very fine church, built with great care. It was so beautiful that during those years, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was famous and enjoyed great respect among the monasteries of Athos. These ascetics... were the so-called *Kollyvades*, who were under persecution on the Holy Mountain, as they insisted on *precision*<sup>(4)</sup> (regarding frequent communion), and on many other things."

The renowned Elder Dionysios was a distinguished spiritual father and learned priest-monk who lived on Skiathos, whose roots were in the kollyvadian tradition. Papadiamandis knew him personally and did not hide his admiration for him. He was "the inspired spiritual father in the small monastery of the Prophet Elijah." Papadiamandis had such monks and monasteries in mind when he wrote, "the rule of prayer should be complete, following all the old *typicons*, with the vigils and pre-dawn Matins, with all the appointed verses and readings from the Psalter."

Papadiamandis was initiated into this kollyvadian—the genuine Orthodox—tradition, in his own home by his father, Papa-Adamantios, and by the broader world of the Church in Skiathos. In an unsigned obituary for his father, he wrote that Papa-Adamantios, like all of the older priests of the island, was taught how to celebrate the Mysteries<sup>(5)</sup> by those venerable *Kollyvades*, who, at the end of the last century, established the Monastery of the Annunciation... which became a seedbed of humble priests for our island, priests who were lovers of the divine services. Simple and virtuous, they enjoyed the love and respect of the inhabitants, having no affectations or hypocrisy, and displaying no vanity as they lived their lives as priests.

Seeds of spiritual struggle that had been planted in Papadiamandis during his childhood and adolescence at home and in the wider environment of Skiathos were brought to fruition when he went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain for a few months, at the age of twenty-one. In one of his stories, we read about some of the events of his visit, mainly at the Skete of Xenophontos, and we perceive how the charm of the Holy Mountain was an inspiration for

him. While there, he met many ascetics and *hesychasts*<sup>(6)</sup> and became familiar with the liturgical life of the monks. He was enthralled by the vigils of the monastics and recorded in his heart not only the strict *typicon* and the Byzantine melodies but also the spirit that governed it all. In this way, Athos and its traditions affected the path his life took and enriched it with unforgettable memories.

Given his rich spiritual upbringing, experiences, and heritage, it is only natural that Papadiamandis would choose to spend his life within this rich Orthodox tradition, preserving the Orthodox liturgical ethos through his writings and life. The critics of his age believed that there was little value in a detailed description of "how a village priest went to celebrate the liturgy in a country chapel for a little community of peasants or shepherds, who and how many took part in the festival, and what their customs were like." Papadiamandis, however, did not regard the celebrations as mere holidays, but himself lived the events and the life of the Church as the center and foundation of all events and all life.



Papadiamandis moved within this ecclesiastical environment and within the wider Greek tradition. He lived both aspects of this tradition, ancient and Byzantine, in a diachronic unity, which spanned the ages. He had utter integrity, both as a person and as a Greek, within whose Hellenism was Byzantium and in whose love for Byzantium might be discerned Hellenism. In his texts, Ancient Greece resembles a flower that, wilting

from its desire for the truth, then bears great fruit in the warmth of the Sun of Righteousness [Christ]. When history is viewed as a progression toward the discovery of the fullness of the truth of Orthodoxy, tradition truly lives, and history is kept from being fragmented. Other important figures in modern Greek literature such as Photios Kontoglou<sup>(7)</sup> and, even more so, Nikos Gabriel Pentzakis<sup>(8)</sup> would act from this perspective later on, with both their pens and their brushes. Together with our author, they are regarded as solid links in this tradition.

God favored Papadiamandis with many gifts, and he struggled to use them in a way that would bear the most God-pleasing fruit. The reverent and liturgical ethos expressed through Papadiamandis' writings and life bear witness to the successful cultivation of his gifts. His desire to glorify God is shown even more in the way his life ended and in his attitude toward death. In a prayer he offered at the end of a poem entitled, "To the Little Panagia in the Turret," he beseeches her, "comfort me, as well, my Panagia, before

I depart and will be no more.” In a letter written by Papa-George Rigas, we learn about the last moments of Papadiamandis’s life on earth:

His repose took place as follows: He became ill on the 29th of November 1910. On the third day of his illness, he fainted. When he revived, he asked, “What happened to me?” “It’s nothing, a small fainting spell,” his three brothers who were at his side told him. “I haven’t fainted,” Alexandros said, “in so many years; doesn’t it seem that it’s a prelude to my repose? Get the priest immediately and don’t delay.”

Soon after, having been called [by his brothers], the priest and the doctor arrived at the same time. Papadiamandis was, above all things, a pious Christian. So, as soon as he saw the doctor, he asked him, “What are you doing here?” “I came to see you,” the doctor told him. “Keep quiet,” the sick man told him. “I will first follow the ecclesiastical path [and call upon the help of God], and then you can come later.”

He had control of his faculties until the end and wanted to write a story. Until the end, his mind was dedicated to God. On his own, a few hours before his repose, he called for the priest to come so he could partake of Holy Communion. “Perhaps later on I won’t be able to swallow!” he explained. It was the eve of his repose and, as irony would have it, it was the day they told him that he would receive the medal of the Cross of the Savior.

On the eve of his repose, the second of January, he said, “Light a candle [and] bring me an [ecclesiastical] book.” The candle was lit. The book was about to be brought. However, Papadiamandis wearily said, “Don’t worry about the book; tonight I will sing whatever I remember by heart.” And he began to chant in a trembling voice, *Thy Hand Touching* [a troparion from the Hours of the eve of Theophany].

Papadiamandis sang this final hymn and, as day broke between the second and third of January of his sixtieth year, he wearily fell asleep. After passing through the furnace of pain and trials and tasting many of the bitter dregs of life while faithfully living the liturgical life of the Church, he now stretched out his strong wings to fly to the upper chapel of the angels, toward which he had oriented his whole life.

It snowed on the following day and, like Uncle Yiannos in the story, “Love in the Snow,” Papadiamandis lay down his worn-out body, presenting himself, his life, and his work before the Judge, the Ancient of Days, the Thrice-Holy. This was, finally, the only judgment with which he was concerned as he passed through life. Though his life and struggle in this world have ended, his work will continue to give witness to his devotion to the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church for generations to come.

† † †

(1) The name *Kollyvádes* is derived from the Greek word *kóllyva*, the boiled wheat prepared by the faithful to be blessed in church in memory of the reposed. The use of

wheat as a Christian symbol for the soul is rooted in Christ’s words in John 12:24. The name *Kollyvádes* was derisively given to this movement of spiritual renewal because one of the issues addressed was the performance of memorial services for the reposed on Sundays. The *kollyvadian* fathers were opposed to this innovation, as it was not in accordance with the traditional resurrectional character of Sunday.

(2) A *Stavropegic* monastery is one that falls under the direct supervision of the most senior bishop in any given Church jurisdiction. In the case of large parts of Greece, a *Stavropegic* monastery would fall directly under the supervision of the Patriarch of Constantinople. In the same way, the monasteries of Mount Athos are also *Stavropegic* and enjoy a similar spiritual independence from the local bishop.

(3) *Coenobitic* literally means “common life” and refers to a monastery where all members of the community share monastic life: in prayer, worship, and work. This is the most common form of monastic life.

(4) Within ecclesiastical vocabulary, *precision* [*akríveia*] generally denotes the precise keeping of the Church’s traditions (canonical, liturgical, etc.) as opposed to the use of *economy*—understood as a loosening of these traditions at a certain time, for a certain person (or persons), when *precision* obstructs the path to salvation.

(5) The Greek word *mystírion* is translated throughout this work as “Mystery” rather than as “sacrament,” as it corresponds more closely to the theological meaning of the word. It is capitalized so as to differentiate it from the common meaning of the word.

(6) *Hesychasts* are monastics that undertake the ascetic practice of *hesychia*, meaning “stillness.” It is an ancient spiritual tradition that helps the ascetic remain constantly in prayer.

(7) *Photios Kontoglou* (1895-1965): A writer, artist, and iconographer. An important figure in modern Greek literature, he is best known for his study of Byzantine iconography and his great struggle to reintroduce traditional iconography into modern Greece.

(8) *Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis* (1908-1993): A novelist, poet, artist, and pharmacist whose pharmacy in Thessalonica became a refuge for poets and painters in the mid-twentieth century. He is buried at the women’s monastery of Ormylia in Halkidiki.



The devil loves and always rejoices over the ungoverned; those who are not subject to one who has power, under God, to help them and to give them a hand.

St. Dorotheos of Gaza

## A SELF-SACRIFICING LIFE: DR. IVAN LESHKO-POPEL

*From "Russian Ascetics of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries," Holy Trinity Monastery, 1966.*

*There are many quiet and unsung heroes among the laity, whose good deeds and spiritual exploits remain largely hidden. May the following life take its rightful place upon a candle stand where it can shed its light abroad in our hearts, warming them with the noble beauty of self-sacrifice.*

† † †

In mid-December 1903, in the town of Ekaterinoslav, there died an army doctor, Ivan Vasilievitch Leshko-Popel, a man not yet old, about 45 years of age. His death shook literally the whole town. Night and day hundreds of people streamed to his coffin, and a great multitude gathered for his funeral.

"Just let me have a last look at the dear one, at least through the window," begged an old workman on the street who was too feeble to squeeze his way into the house.

On the day of the burial, a crowd of poor folk, almost paupers, awaited the bringing out of the body. Wreaths were carried out of the house: porcelain wreaths, wreaths of flowers, metal wreaths, wreaths from his medical colleagues, wreaths from fellow army personnel, wreaths from grateful patients.

"And what about us?" asked the poor. "After all, he was our doctor. Are we going to bid him farewell empty-handed? We should also give him a wreath."

Someone took off his cap and threw into it a five kopeck piece. Dirty, gnarled hands reached into pockets and "precious" coins showered into the cap: kopecks, two kopeck pieces, three kopeck pieces. It was counted up: two rubles and some change. They went to the store.

"Give us a wreath for our dear doctor."

No luck; there was no wreath for two rubles. The prices were much higher. The proprietor came out.

"For whom is the wreath?"

"For Ivan Vasilievitch."

"Give them a nice wreath," the proprietor ordered. "And inscribe it as they request? 'To our dear doctor, from his grateful poor people.'"

The doctor-ascetic Ivan Vasilievitch Leshko-Popel was born on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1860 in the town of Rogachov in the Mogilev province. He was educated in the Mogilev secondary school, then in the natural history branch of the Petersburg University, and finally in the army medical academy. In all his years as a student Ivan was considered an "odd fellow," an impression which he continued to enjoy among the ordinary, insensitive people, even after his professional reputation was established.

His classmates could not remember that the young Vanya ever hit, teased or otherwise offended anyone. On the contrary, he would always seek out and befriend the weaker ones. If someone was a slow learner who tried hard but couldn't manage his lessons, Popel would try to help him. "Please, let's study together," he would say to one of those having difficulty. "I find it easier." And he would make it seem as if the slow learner was granting him a favor.

In the upper classes, Popel became a real tutor. But even here his oddness revealed itself. While the other tutors enjoyed expensive, well-paid lessons, Ivan Popel arranged to give lessons for next to nothing. And on top of that, he spent 3 to 4 hours a week tutoring free of charge.

"What's a poor lad to do?" explained Popel, abashed when they laughed at his tutorial earnings. "If a father can't afford an extra ten rubles a month, must the student therefore lose a year? Time, my friend, is more precious to the poor than to the rich."

At the university Ivan Vasilievitch gave lessons with the same financial results: he expended a great deal of time but earned little.

"Riches carry many temptations," he would joke good-naturedly. "Once you begin to receive lots of money, all kinds of whims enter your head. To receive less is better for the soul."

From his meager earnings, Ivan Vasilievitch often helped his poorer classmates.

"Popel, you're rich, a capitalist," his classmates laughed. "You always have extra money."

"A rich man is not he that has a lot of money," Ivan Vasilievitch jested in return, "but he that spends little."

At home, during summer vacations, Popel was also forever taking care of the poor; he'd invite some ragged beggar in, then he'd discover some poor old sick woman and busy himself with sending her to a hospital; then he'd treat some children with rolls of coins. Sometimes they would deceive him. "Well, what of it?" he would say calmly. "Better that I be deceived in my opinion of who is poor, than to fail a poor man who has hopes that I'll be able to help him."

When Leshko-Popel entered medical school it became even more difficult for him financially. There was no time for private tutoring. All his time was taken by his studies. There was a wide range of subjects and the examinations were tough. The students used to complain that the professors were too demanding, but Popel was in favor of strictness.

"If I were a professor," he said, "I would drive my medical students without any mercy. For goodness' sake, a doctor is entrusted with the most precious thing there is—a man's life. What leniency can there be here where the most exact and thorough knowledge is required?"

During his fourth year in the medical school, he found himself a "follower." Under his care in the clinic there lay a gravely ill woman who worked as a cook. There was little

hope in her recovery. The patient herself sensed this and was becoming worn out.

"I don't feel sorry for myself, but for my son," she cried. "He's nine years old. What's to become of him?"

Popel was touched by the sick woman's grief. He comforted her, questioned her, and one day said:

"Would it be easier for you if you knew your little boy, was taken care of?"

"My dear, yes, then I would die with a prayer on my lips and peace in my heart."

"Then don't fear, Auntie Irene, I'll take your Kostya."

"Are you serious?" the sick woman could not believe her ears.

"Word of honor," he replied.

"May God bless you. Now I no longer need to fear death. I trust you and I am at peace concerning my son."

The following day towards the evening the sick woman died, and the next morning Ivan Vasilievitch took Kostya home to his apartment. The boy slept on top of a trunk in Popel's small, crowded room; for his food Ivan Vasilievitch scraped up six rubles out of his nearly empty pocket.

After graduating from the academy, Popel was assigned as a doctor of the reserve battalion in Ekaterinoslav where he remained until his death fifteen years later. This was a time of ceaseless labors for him; he knew neither rest, nor days off, nor, if you will, close friends. At seven in the morning he would begin receiving patients. Poor people, workers, blacksmiths, locksmiths and other tradesmen, old women from the market place, washer women, poor Jews—they all crowded to see him. Leshko-Popel would examine each one carefully, give a word of encouragement, write out a prescription, often giving them some medicine there on the spot.

After the clinic he would begin his round of house calls. With rapid strides the slight figure of the doctor would traverse the town from one end to the other. The thin coat was rarely buttoned—there was no time. The day was short and there were many sick people—and all in various parts of the town and on the outskirts. Later a bicycle was found, and the same thin coughing figure began to fly about town just as the wind.

"Ivan Vasilievitch," one of his patients somewhere would say of an evening, "won't you stay and dine with us?"

"I have no time. But could I have a little something to take along with me?" asked the doctor hurriedly, not having had a bite to eat all day.

One of Ivan Vasilievitch's regular patients would not let him leave her before he had eaten a piece of beef-steak and had drunk a cup of coffee or tea.

"If you don't feed the poor dear, he'll forget about food altogether," she would say.

Ivan Vasilievitch returned home late, in a state of total exhaustion. He went to bed and slept like a log. But often during

the night the door bell would ring; some poor peasant from across the valley had called asking for Ivan Vasilievitch. Other doctors living in closer proximity had declined to come at this hour, but the worn-out Popel could not refuse; he got up and went. In the morning, at seven o'clock the reception of patients began again, and another round of visits. And so it was for fifteen years.

Once, when the air was fragrant with the bloom of spring, some acquaintances met Popel in the town park. He was passing through.

"Please, sit down, doctor."

A smile ran across the pale face of the tired doctor. "Yes, it would be nice to sit down and rest." But he glanced at his watch and hurried on his way. "I have no time. Today I have to attend to several sick people."

Ivan Vasilievitch had a large practice also among the wealthy. Here he made good money and could have made himself quite a fortune had he so desired. But he could not. Everything he earned from the rich he gave to the poor.

There came to see him an impoverished schoolgirl with an emaciated green face; she had anemia. Popel prescribed iron pills. "Take them before eating."

"Can they be taken before tea?"

"God forbid. Tea and iron—make ink."

"What's to be done?" asked the skinny girl in bewilderment. "Mama and I never eat dinner; we just drink tea with rusks."

The doctor gave her a packet. "Give this to your mother for some meat." The packet contained three rubles. And for the next two months the widowed seamstress and her daughter received a package of meat daily from the butcher. "It's paid for," they were told.

Once Ivan Vasilievitch was called to a blacksmith's dwelling on the edge of town. A family of seven. The smith was afflicted with rheumatism; he was the only laborer in the family. They lived in a hut; it was cold and damp, and moisture gathered on the walls in rivulets. What hope could there be of curing rheumatism here? But they couldn't afford to leave. In three days a dry apartment was found, a half year's rent paid in advance—Dr. Popel's arrangement.

Ivan Vasilievitch Leshko-Popel was no ordinary doctor; his healing arts were directed as much towards the soul as towards the body. He knew how to comfort people, and he was a guardian angel to all the poor. There was nothing he would not do for the sake of alleviating another's suffering.

A young girl across town was dying of tuberculosis. She was beyond medical help. Nevertheless, Popel stopped in to see her every day, warding off despair and bringing sunshine to her last days.

"Why do you waste your time in coming to see us?" asked the mother, fully aware of her daughter's condition.

"If it brings some hope, some joy to the sick, surely it is not in vain," answered the doctor.

Finally it was clear that the candle was burning itself out. Friends persuaded the worn-out doctor to rest at one of their country homes. He came—and at once discovered some sick people in the nearby villages. He began treating them, busier than ever. “Go with God, Ivan Vasilievitch,” said his friends. “It’s better for you in town.”

Constantly forcing himself towards the good, the doctor-ascetic soon reached the end of his earthly sojourn. He fell ill and disregarded his condition until he collapsed—and it was too late. Even the special medicine sent by his colleagues could not help.

He received the Holy Mysteries. “Here is the end. Everything has been done for the final journey. Death. If I’m sad, it’s not because I’m dying, but because there is so much left to be done.” He smiled weakly, then turned to his children:

“Live in harmony together. Love one another. Take care of your mother. Lighten her load, and help others as much as you can, that their life, too, be made easier.”

He said nothing to his wife, but simply looked at her with a gaze which conveyed a gentle love for one who had cast warmth and light on the difficult path he had chosen.

That is all there is to the life of this simple doctor. It is a touching story of a profoundly good man, and what is best of all—it is true.

Friends and admirers of the doctor erected a handsome memorial in his honor. This is good. But it would be better still if we could preserve even a small piece of Ivan Vasilievitch Popel in our hearts, and somewhere, somehow manifest the spirit of this self sacrificing doctor-ascetic, for therein lies a rare beauty which can adorn our souls in this life and lead us into the higher realities of the world to come.



**W**e should keep the self out of our actions. We should not act for the sake of our own comfort. This will keep Christ away from us. We should act for the comfort of others, and this way we too shall be comforted. God will then find comfort in us, and we shall cease to be merely human; we shall become deified. But if we put only the mind in charge, everything will be carnal and human.

**T**he correct spiritual approach is to forget the good you do to others, and to remember the good others do to you. When one reaches that state of spiritual being, then he is indeed human—a man of God. But, on the other hand, if someone constantly forgets the good done to him by others, and only remembers the good he has done to others, this work is contrary to what Christ seeks from us.

**Elder Paisios the Athonite**

## THE GREAT WAGER BETWEEN BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

By Photios Kontoglou, from “The Soul After Death,” Fr. Seraphim Rose, Platina, 1980, pp.227-232.

**O**n Pascha Monday, in the evening after midnight, before lying down to sleep I went out into the little garden behind my house. The sky was dark and covered with stars. I seemed to see it for the first time, and a distant psalmody seemed to descend from it. My lips murmured, very softly: *Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship the footstool of His feet.* A holy man once told me that during these hours the heavens are opened. The air exhaled a fragrance of the flowers and herbs I had planted. *Heaven and earth are filled with the glory of the Lord.*

I could well have remained there alone until break of day. I was as if without a body and without any bond to the earth. But fearing that my absence would disturb those with me in the house, I returned and lay down.

Sleep had not really taken possession of me; I do not know whether I was awake or asleep, when suddenly a strange man rose up before me. He was as pale as a dead man. His eyes were as if open, and he looked at me in terror. His face was like a mask, like a mummy’s. His glistening, dark yellow skin was stretched tight over his dead man’s head with all its cavities. He was as if panting. In one hand he held some kind of bizarre object which I could not make out; the other hand was clutching his breast as if he were suffering.

This creature filled me with terror. I looked at him and he looked at me without speaking, as if he were waiting for me to recognize him, strange as he was. And a voice said to me: “It is so-and-so!” And I recognized him immediately. Then he opened his mouth and sighed. His voice came from far away; it came up as from a deep well.

He was in great agony, and I suffered for him. His hands, his feet, his eyes—everything showed that he was suffering. In my despair I was going to help him, but he gave me a sign with his hand to stop. He began to groan in such a way that I froze. Then he said to me: “I have not come; I have been sent. I shake without stop; I am dizzy. Pray God to have pity on me. I want to die but I cannot. Alas! Everything you told me before is true. Do you remember how, several days before my death, you came to see me and spoke about religion? There were two other friends with me, unbelievers like myself. You spoke, and they mocked. When you left, they said: ‘What a pity! He is intelligent and he believes the stupid things old women believe!’

“Another time, and other times too, I told you: ‘Dear Photios, save up money, or else you will die a pauper. Look at my riches, and I want more of them.’ You told me then: ‘Have you signed a pact with death, that you can live as many years as you want and enjoy a happy old age?’

“And I replied: ‘You will see to what an age I will live. Now I am 75; I will live past a hundred. My children are free from want. My son earns a lot of money, and I have married my daughter to a rich Ethiopian. My wife and I have more money than we need. I am not like you who listen to what the priests say: *A Christian ending to our life...* and the rest. What have you to gain from a Christian ending? Better a full pocket and no worries... Give alms? Why did your so merciful God create paupers? Why should I feed them? And they ask you, in order to go to Paradise, to feed idlers! Do you want to talk about Paradise? You know that I am the son of a priest and that I know well all these tricks. That those who have no brains believe them is well enough, but you who have a mind have gone astray. If you continue to live as you are doing, you will die before me, and you will be responsible for those you have led astray. As a physician I tell you and affirm that I will live a hundred and ten years...”

After saying all this, he turned this way and that as if he were on a grill. I heard his groans: “Ah! Ouch! Oh! Oh!” He was silent for a moment, and then continued: “This is what I said, and in a few days I was dead! I was dead, and I lost the wager! What confusion was mine, what horror! Lost, I descended into the abyss. What suffering I have had up to now, what agony! Everything you told me was true. You have won the wager!

“When I was in the world where you are now, I was an intellectual, I was a physician. I had learned how to speak and to be listened to, to mock religion, to discuss whatever falls under the senses. And now I see that everything I called stories, myths, paper lanterns—is true. The agony which I am experiencing now—this is what is true, this is the worm that never sleeps, this is the gnashing of teeth.”

After having spoken thus, he disappeared. I still heard his groans, which gradually faded away. Sleep had begun to take possession of me, when I felt an icy hand touch me. I opened my eyes and saw him again before me. This time he was more horrible and smaller in body. He had become like a nursing infant, with a large old man’s head which he was shaking.

“In a short time the day will break, and those who have sent me will come to seek me!”

“Who are they?” I asked.

He spoke some confused words which I could not make out. Then he added: “There where I am, there are also many who mock you and your faith. Now they understand that their spiritual darts have not gone beyond the cemetery. There are both those you have done good to, and those who have slandered you. The more you forgive them, the more they detest you. Man is evil. Instead of rejoicing him, kindness makes him bitter, because it makes him feel his defeat. The state of these latter is worse than mine. They cannot leave their dark prison to come and find you as I have done. They are severely tormented, lashed by the whip of God’s love, as

one of the Saints has said [St. Isaac the Syrian]. The world is something else entirely from what we see! Our intellect shows it to us in reverse. Now we understand that our intellect was only stupid, our conversations were spiteful meanness, our joys were lies and illusions.

“You, who bear God in your hearts, Whose word is Truth, the only Truth—you have won the great wager between believers and unbelievers. This wager I have lost. I tremble, I sigh, and I find no rest. In truth, there is no repentance in hell. Woe to those who walk as I did when I was on earth. Our flesh was drunk and mocked those who believed in God and eternal life; almost everyone applauded us. They treated you as mad, as imbeciles. And the more you accept our mockeries, the more our rage increases.

“Now I see how much the conduct of evil men grieved you. How could you bear with such patience the poisoned darts which issued from our lips which treated you as hypocrites, mockers of God, and deceivers of the people. If these evil men who are still on earth would see where I am, if only they were in my place, they would tremble for everything they are doing. I would like to appear to them and tell them to change their path, but I do not have the permission to do so, just as the rich man did not have it when he begged Abraham to send Lazarus the pauper. Lazarus was not sent so that those who sinned might be worthy of punishment and those who went on the ways of God might be worthy of salvation.

*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* (Rev 22:11).

With these words he disappeared...



**D**o you want us, our brethren, to tell you what you ought to fear? It is this: to deny Christ, instead of courageously confessing Him. This alone is truly to be feared. For if you deny Christ, then He will deny you on the day of Judgment: *But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father Who is in heaven.* (Mt 10:33).

**St. Makarios of Corinth**

**W**hat torments us most is our thoughts. Thoughts make us do all kinds of things, then we lose our peace and are tormented by our conscience. These pangs of conscience are nothing but the judgment of God within us. And so we must make peace with our Heavenly Father and turn to Him from our heart—asking Him to forgive us and give us of His Grace and His Divine strength; in order that we may always remain in peace and joy, like the angels and the Saints.

**Elder Thaddeus of Serbia**

## THE POVERTY OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

By Nikolaj Velimirovic, from his book *Agony of the Church* (published in 1917).

The poverty of European civilization has been revealed by this war (WWI, *Ed.*). The ugly nakedness of Europe has brought to shame all those who used to bow before Europe's mask. It was a silken shining mask hiding the inner ugliness and poverty of Europe. The mask was called: culture, civilization, progress, modernism. All was only *vanitas vanitatum* and *povertas povertatum* (vanity of vanities and poverty of poverties, *Ed.*). When the soul fled away, what remained was empty, ugly and dangerous. When religion plunged into impotence, then:

Science became a mask of pride. Art, a mask of vanity. Politics, a mask of selfishness. Laws, a mask of greediness. Theology, a mask of skepticism. Technical knowledge, a poor surrogate for spirituality. Journalism, a desperate surrogate for literature. Literature, a sick nostalgia and a nonsense, a dwarf-acrobacy. Civilization, a pretext for imperialism. Fight for right, an atavistic (the reappearance of a characteristic in an organism after several generations of absence, *Ed.*) formula of the primitive creeds. Morals, the most controversial matter. Individualism, the second name for egoism and egotism.

Christ—a banished beggar looking for a shelter, while in the royal and pharisaic palaces lived: Machiavelli, the atheist; Napoleon, the atheist; Marx, the atheist; and Nietzsche, the atheist, imperially ruling Europe's rulers.

The spirit was wrong and everything became wrong. The spirit of any civilization is inspired by its religion, but the spirit of modern Europe was not inspired by Europe's religion at all. A terrific effort was made in many quarters to liberate Europe from the spirit of her religion. The effort-makers forgot one thing, i.e., that no civilization ever was liberated from religion and still lived. Whenever this liberation seemed to be fulfilled, the respective civilization decayed and died out, leaving behind barbaric materialism in towns and superstitions in villages.

Europe had to live with Christianity, or to die in barbaric materialism and superstitions without it. The way to death was chosen. From Continental Europe first the infection came to the whole white race. It was there that the dangerous formula was pointed out: "Beyond good and evil." Other parts of the white world followed slowly, taking first the path between Good and Evil. Good was changed for Power. Evil was explained away as "biological necessity." Christianity, which inspired the greatest things that Europe ever possessed in every point of human activity, was degraded by means of new watchwords; individualism, liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, imperialism, secularism, which in essence meant nothing but de-Christianization of the European society, or, in other words, emptiness of European civilization. Europe

abandoned the greatest things she possessed and clung to the lower and lowest ones. The greatest thing was—Christ.

As you cannot imagine Arabic civilization in Spain without Islam, or India's civilization without Hinduism, or Rome without the Roman Pantheon, so you cannot imagine Europe's civilization without Christ. Yet some people thought that Christ was not so essentially needed for Europe, and behaved accordingly without Him or against Him. Christ was Europe's God. When this God was banished (from politics, art, science, social life, business, education), everybody consequently asked for a God, and everybody thought himself to be a god, and in truth there it failed, not on theories in Europe proclaiming, openly or disguisedly, everyone a god. So the godless Europe became full of gods!

Being de-Christianized, Europe still thought to be civilized. In reality she was a poor valley full of dry bones. The only thing she had to boast of was her material power. By material power only she impressed and frightened the unchristian (but not anti-Christian) countries of Central and Eastern Asia, and depraved the rustic tribes in Africa and elsewhere. She went to conquer not by God or for God, but by material power and for material pleasure. Her spirituality did not astonish any of the peoples on earth. Her materialism astonished all of them. Her inner poverty was seen by India, China, Japan, and partly by Russia. What an amazing poverty! She gained the whole world, and when she looked inside herself she could not find her soul. Where has fled Europe's soul? The present war will give the answer. It is not a war to destroy the world but to show Europe's poverty and to bring back her soul. It will last—this war—as long as Europe remains soulless, Godless, Christless. It will stop when Europe gets the vision of her soul, her only God, her only wealth.



But what advantage is it to us to foreknow these things, if it is not our lot to escape them? Therefore, with the whole bent of our mind, we must make it our business, that when the opportunity of being at liberty is ours, that we should escape the avenging torments of evildoers by the implementation of righteous life. For it is so said by Solomon, *Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you are going.* (Qoh 9:10). So Isaiah says, *Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.* (Isa 55:6). And so Paul says, *Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation.* (2 Cor 6:2). And he says again, *While we have opportunity, let us do good to all men.* (Gal 6:10).

St. Gregory the Great

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## TWO KINDS OF FAITH

By Rev. John S. Romanides (+2001).

*Fr. John Romanides is one of the most important Orthodox theologians of the Twentieth Century. He has been responsible for a renaissance of traditional (Hesychastic) understanding of salvation and Christianity in the Greek Orthodox Church and beyond.*

† † †

Human beings can have two kinds of faith. The first kind of faith, which has its seat in the mind, is the reasonable faith of acceptance. In this case, a person rationally accepts something and believes in what he has accepted, but this faith does not justify him. When Holy Scripture says, *man is saved by faith alone* (Eph 2:8), it does not mean that he is saved merely by the faith of acceptance.

There is, however, another kind of faith, the faith of the heart. It is referred to in this way because this kind of faith is not found in the human reason or intellect, but in the region of the heart. This faith of the heart is a gift of God that you will not receive unless God decides to grant it. It is also called *inner faith*, which is the kind of faith that the father of the young lunatic in the Gospel asked Christ to give him when he said, *Lord, help my unbelief*. (Mk 9:24). Naturally, the father already believed with his reason, but he did not have that deep inner faith that is a gift of God.

Inner faith is rooted in an (empirical) experience of grace. And since it is an experience of grace, what would this make

inner faith as far as an Orthodox Christian is concerned? Inner faith is noetic prayer. When someone has noetic prayer in his heart, which means the prayer of the Holy Spirit in his heart, then he has inner faith. Through this kind of faith and by means of prayer, he beholds things that are invisible. When someone has this kind of vision, it is called *theoria*. *Theoria*, in fact, means vision.

As a rule, there are two ways for vision to take place.

When a person has not yet attained to *theosis*, it is still possible for him to see by means of the prayer what the Holy Spirit is saying within his heart. After attaining to *theosis*, however, he can see by means of *theosis*, in which both this inner faith (i.e., prayer of the heart) and hope are set aside, and only love for God remains (as a gift of God).

This is what St. Paul means when he says, *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away*. [1Cor 13:10 and 13:13; since faith and hope have fulfilled their purpose and man has reached the point of seeing God, the source of his faith and hope, he now simply knows and loves the One Who is Love]. When the perfect is come, faith and hope are done away, and only love remains. And this love is *theosis*. In *theosis*, knowledge comes to an end; prophecy is set aside; tongues, which are noetic prayer, cease; and only love remains. St. Paul says this in passages of great clarity and beauty. The Church Fathers in turn offer interpretations of these subjects that are indisputably correct. These interpretations are found throughout the entire Philokolia.