

Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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ON HALLOWEEN

By His Eminence Kyrill, Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America (ROCOR).

It is that time of the year when the secular society in which we live is preparing for the festival of Halloween. Because most of us are either newly Orthodox or newly aware of our Orthodoxy, it is absolutely necessary that we carefully examine every aspect of our involvement in the world - its activities, festivals, associations and societies, in order to discern whether or not these involvements are compatible or incompatible with our holy Orthodox faith. This is a difficult task which leads to some pain when we realize that there are popular organizations and activities in which we are unable to participate.

Though our schools, our local community organizations, and all forms of entertainment in television, radio, and the press will share in and capitalize upon the festival of Halloween, it is impossible for Orthodox Christians to participate in this event at any level. The issue involved is simple faithfulness to God and the holy Orthodox Christian faith.

Halloween has its roots in paganism and continues to be a form of idolatry in which satan, the angel of death is worshipped. As we know, the very foundation of our holy Church is built upon the blood of martyrs who refused under the painful penalties of cruel torture and death to worship, venerate, or pay obeisance in any way to the idols who are satan's angels. Because of the faithfulness through obedience and self-sacrifice of the holy martyrs, God poured out upon His holy Church abundant grace and its numbers were increased daily, precisely at a time when one would have expected the threat of persecution to extinguish the flame of

faith. But, contrary to the world's understanding, humble faithfulness and obedience to God are the very lifelines of our life in Christ, through Whom we are given true spiritual peace, love, joy, and participation in the miraculous workings of His Holy Spirit. Therefore the holy Church calls us to faithfulness by our turning away from falsehood toward truth and eternal life.

With regard to our non-participation in the pagan festival of Halloween, we will be strengthened by an understanding of the spiritual danger and history of this anti-Christian feast.

The feast of Halloween began in pre-Christian times among the Celtic peoples of Great Britain, Ireland and northern France. These pagan peoples believed that physical life was born from death. Therefore, they celebrated the beginning of the "new year" in the fall (on the eve of October 31st and into the day of November 1st), when, as they believed, the season of cold, darkness, decay and death began. A certain deity, whom they called Samhain, was believed by the Celts to be the lord of death, and it was he whom they honored at their New Year's festival.

There were, from an Orthodox Christian point of view, many diabolical beliefs and practices associated with this feast which, it will be clear, have endured to our time. On the eve of the New Year's festival, the Druids who were the priests of the Celtic cult, instructed their people to extinguish all hearth fires and lights. On the evening of the festival, a huge bonfire built of oak branches, which they believed to be sacred, was ignited. Upon this fire, sacrifices of crops, animals, and even human beings, were burned as an offering in order to appease and cajole Samhain, the lord of death. It was also believed that Samhain, being pleased by

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their faithful offerings, allowed the souls of the dead to return to homes for a festal visit on this day. It is from this belief that the practice of wandering about in the dark dressed up in costumes imitating ghosts, witches, hobgoblins, fairies, and demons grew up. For the living entered into fellowship and communion with the dead by what was, and still is, a ritual act of imitation, through costume and activity of wandering around in the dark of night, even as the souls of the dead were believed to wander.

The dialogue of "trick or treat" is also an integral part of this system of beliefs and practices. It was believed that the souls of the dead who had entered into the world of darkness, decay, and death, and therefore into total communion with and submission to Samhain the lord of death, bore the affliction of great hunger on their festal visit. Out of this grew the practice of begging, which was a further ritual enactment and imitation of what the Celts believed to be the activities of the souls of the dead on their festal visit. Associated with this, is the still further implication that if the souls of the dead and their imitators were not appeased with "treats," i.e., offerings, then the wrath and anger of Samhain, whose angels and servants the souls and their imitators had become, would be unleashed through a system of "tricks," or curses.

From an Orthodox Christian point of view, participation in these practices at any level is impossible and idolatrous, a genuine betrayal of our God and our holy faith. For if we participate in the ritual activity of imitating the dead by dressing up in their attire or by wandering about in the dark, or by begging with them, then we have willfully sought fellowship with the dead, whose lord is not Samhain as the Celts believed but satan, the evil one who stands against God. Further, if we submit to the dialogue of "trick or treat," we make our offering not to innocent children, but rather to

Samhain, the lord of death, whom they have come to serve as imitators of the dead, wandering in the dark of night.

There are other practices associated with Halloween which we must stay away from. As was mentioned above, on the eve of the Celtic New Year festival, Druid priests instructed their faithful to extinguish their hearth fires and lights and to gather around the fire of sacrifice to make their offerings to pay homage to the lord of death. Because this was a sacred fire, it was from this that the fire of the New Year was to be taken and the lights and hearth fire rekindled. Out of this arose the practice of the jack o'lantern (in the USA, a pumpkin; in older days other vegetables were used) which was carved in imitation of the dead and used to convey the new light and fire to the home where the lantern was left burning throughout the night. Even the use and display of the jack o'lantern involves celebration of and participation in the pagan festival of death honoring the Celtic god Samhain. Orthodox Christians must in no way share in this Celtic activity, but rather we should counter our inclinations and habits by burning candles to the Savior and the Most Holy Mother of God and to all the holy saints.

In the ancient Celtic rite, divination was also associated with this festival. After the fire had died out the Druids examined the remains of the sacrifices in order to foretell, as they believed was possible, the events of the coming year. Since this time the Halloween festival has been the night for participation in all kinds of sorcery, fortune telling, divination, games of chance, and in latter medieval times, satan worship and witchcraft.

In the days of the early Celtic Church, which was strictly Orthodox, the holy Fathers attempted to counteract this pagan New Year Festival which honored the lord of death, by establishing the feast of All Saints on the same day (in

the East, the feast of All Saints is celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost). As was the custom of the Church, the faithful Christians attended a vigil service in the evening and in the morning a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It is from this that the term "Halloween" developed. The word Halloween has its roots in the old English of "All Hallow's Even," i.e., the eve commemorating all those who were hallowed (sanctified), i.e., Halloween.

The people who had remained pagan and therefore anti-Christian and whose paganism had become deeply intertwined with the occult, satanism, and magic, reacted to the Church's attempt to supplant their festival by increased fervor on this evening. In the early middle ages, Halloween became the supreme and central feast of the occult, a night and day upon which acts of witchcraft, demonism, sorcery, and satanism of all kinds were practiced.

Many of these practices involved desecration and mockery of Christian practices and beliefs. Costumes of skeletons developed as a mockery of the Church's reverence for holy relics; holy things were stolen, such as crosses and the reserved Sacrament, and used in perverse and sacrilegious ways. The practice of begging became a system of persecution designed to harass Christians who were, by their beliefs, unable to participate by making offerings to those who served the lord of death. The Western Church's attempt to supplant this pagan festival with the feast of All Saints failed.

The analogy of Halloween in ancient Russia was Navy Dien (old Slavonic for "the dead" was "nav") which was also called Radunitsa and celebrated in the spring. To supplant it, the Eastern Church connected this feast with Pascha and appointed it to be celebrated on Tuesday of Saint Thomas' week (the second week after Pascha). The Church also changed the name of the feast into Radonitsa, from Russian "radost" joy. Joy of Pascha and of the resurrection from the dead of all of mankind after Jesus Christ.

Gradually Radonitsa yielded to Pascha its importance and became less popular in general, but many dark and pagan practices and habits of some old feasts of Russian paganism (Semik, Kupalo, Rusalia and some aspects of the Maslennitsa) survived till the beginning of our century. Now they are gone forever, but the atheist authorities used to try to revive them. We can also recall the example of another "harmless" feast – May 1st, proclaimed "the international worker's day." That was a simple renaming of a very old satanic feast of "Walpurgis Night" (night of April 30 into the day of May 1st) - the great yearly demonic Sabbath during which all the participants united in "a fellowship of satan."

These contemporary Halloween practices have their roots in paganism, idolatry, and satan worship. How then did something that is so obviously contradictory to the holy Orthodox faith gain acceptance among Christian people? The answer to this question is: spiritual apathy and listlessness, which are the spiritual roots of atheism and the turning away from

God. In today's society one is continually urged to disregard the spiritual roots and origins of secular practices under the guise that the outward customs, practices and forms are cute, fun, entertaining, and harmless. Behind this attitude lies the dogma of atheism, which denies the existence of both God and satan and can therefore conclude that these activities, despite their obvious pagan and idolatrous origin, are harmless and of no consequence.

The Holy Church must stand against this because we are taught by Christ that God stands in judgment over everything we do and believe, and that our actions are either for God or against God. Therefore, the customs of Halloween are not innocent practices with no relationship to the spiritual world. But rather they are demonic practices, precisely as an examination of their origins proves.

Evil spirits do exist. The demons do exist. Christ came into the world so *that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil.* (Heb 2:12). It is imperative for us to realize as Christians that our greatest foe is the evil one who inspires nations and individuals to sin against mankind, and who prevents them from coming to a knowledge of the truth. Unless we realize that satan is our real enemy, we can never hope for spiritual progress for our lives. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* (Eph 6:12).

Today we witness a revival of satanic cults; we hear of a satanic service conducted on Halloween night; everywhere satan reaches out to ensnare as many innocent people as possible. The newsstands are filled with material on spiritualism, supernatural phenomena, seances, prophecies, and all sorts of demonically inspired works. It is undoubtedly an act of Divine Providence that Saint John of Kronstadt, that saintly physician of souls and bodies, should have his feast day on the very day of Halloween, a day which the world dedicated to the destroyer, corrupter, and deceiver of humanity.

God has provided us with this powerful counterpoise and weapon against the snares of satan, and we should take full advantage of this gift, for truly *Wondrous is God in His saints.*



Nothing pains the soul more than slander, whether directed against one's faith or one's manner of life. No one can be indifferent to it except those who have their eyes fixed on God. For only God has the power to rescue from peril, to convince men of the truth, and to encourage the soul with hope.

St. Maximos the Confessor

JUDGING DOES NOT BELONG TO THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

By Hieromonk Alexios of Holy Monastery of Karakallou, Holy Mountain.

I have been contemplating and praying about why not judging others seems to be a stumbling block. Perhaps, it is because we consider the spiritual life in the absolutist, rational categories of right and wrong or guilt and innocence, rather than in terms of healthy, living communion with God and diseased, deadening alienation from Him or radiant, grace-attracting humility and darkened, grace-repelling pride.

Judgment demands that the guilty be punished and wrongs be righted. Compassion seeks for the sick to be healed and the proud to be humbled. Judgment divides me from my brother as separate and different from me. Compassion unites us as being one in need of a merciful God. In a somewhat startling passage, Saint Isaac the Syrian (Homily 51) writes: "Justice does not belong to the Christian way of life and there is no mention of it in Christ's teachings... How can you call God just when you come across the Scriptural passage on the wage given to the workers? Friend, I do thee no wrong: I choose to give unto this last even unto thee. Or is thine eye evil because I am good? How can a man call God just when he comes across the passage on the prodigal son who wasted his wealth with riotous living, how, for the compunction alone which he showed, the father ran and fell upon his neck and gave him authority over all his wealth... Where, then is God's justice, for while we are sinners Christ died for us!"

As Christians, we should be concerned with being merciful around others rather than with judging them. And this can take place only if our spiritual eyes are not evil, but pure and single, as are the spiritual eyes of those who are united to God, with humble prayer, ceaselessly being offered up for all, as incense before the ever-merciful and forgiving Lord.

In the Orthodox Church, on the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee the Gospel for that day introduces this parable by noting: And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. There are two kinds of misjudgment at work here. The presumption of being righteous when one is not and the presumption that others are unrighteous when they are in fact justified before God through their repentance. As to the first misjudgment, in a fallen state, our ego strives to preserve an idealized, but inaccurate self-concept about what "good and upstanding" people we are, reminding us that, "We pray. We go to church. We take care of our family. We don't cheat anyone. We are essentially good persons." And yet we usurp this goodness as though it is ours through our own efforts, apart from God and the only source of that which is genuinely good. And we allow this seeming goodness to become a cloak

that obscures our other sins and failings for which we should repent. As to the second misjudgment, if our judgment about someone else is wrong, we not only judge, but also slander. If our judgment is correct, we still may be in danger of separating ourselves from others, of thinking of ourselves as being better than they are, of becoming unwittingly self-righteous, and of failing to love our enemies.

In an earlier article on "The Self-concept and Our Identity as Christians" I wrote: "And lo, Zachaeus' self-concept changed radically from that blessed meeting with the Lord. He understood himself now in terms of God's compassionate understanding of Zachaeus that in turn made Zachaeus all the more compassionate towards others." When one's attention descends into the heart in humble prayer, believers begin to see themselves in relation to God and their abiding need and desire for purification and illumination. Such awareness leaves little room for judging others.

In response to a recent question, I wrote: "I think your statement 'holding people accountable when the relationship warrants it' is important. There are many cases when the relationship does not warrant it. And outside of the clear examples of parents and their young children as well as priests and their flocks, it is best to be wary of what we should hold others to. Loving unconditionally is certainly unconditional as is holding ourselves accountable to others and to God. As far as the accounts of others are concerned, however, we tread carefully and lovingly if we tread at all. No there are no easy answers, but the heart can sense when what is being done or said is being done from love with kindness and compassion. Simplicity is, of course, a great virtue. Those monks who literally managed to not judge anyone, to hold no one to account for anything, were simple, guileless souls that reached salvation to a large extent by their refusal to ever judge anyone and by their commitment to always judge themselves. The result was an abyss of humility and from humility an abundance of holiness. Of course, simple monks have such a luxury. But for those whose circumstances allow it, such a way is truly blessed."

When we are engaged in the spiritual struggle or when we recognize the great gift inherent in the prayer of the Publican, we cease to search for circumstances or conditions in which we are really justified in judging our brother. Remembrance of God, vigilance in matters of the heart, and the striving for humility leave little room for those types of pursuits. When we pray with the humility and honesty of the Publican we recognize that the temptation to judge others is nothing more than a fool's errand, taking us off course and onto crooked and perverse paths that lead us away from our ultimate goal, the love of our merciful Savior who "makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, sends rain on the just and on the unjust," and promises that those who judge not will not be judged.

REGIME AND DISORDER

Source: "Elder Joseph the Hesychast: Struggles-Experiences-Teachings."



Among the duties which the ever-memorable Elder taught us during the first days of our life under him was that of good order and keeping to a regime, while he described disorder to us in the blackest of colors. He often quoted to us the saying of St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Those who have no guidance fall like leaves*—which signifies, as he told us, the lack of any regime. He also referred

to various incidents in the lives of more recent elders and particularly the life of the Elder Theophylact from the hermitage of St. Artemios, who was renowned for his virtue and spiritual gifts.

Elder Theophylact lived his whole life as an ascetic and hesychast, keeping a strict fast; he did not even eat oil. He once accepted a disciple, the future Father Arsenios, and told him laconically—because this blessed father was temperate even in his speech—“Listen, my boy: if you are going to stay with me, I want you to have order and regime in your life, because without these you will never become a monk. Look round at our few possessions as I show them to you. There’s our jug, there’s the cup, there are the bowls, there are the rusks and so forth, as you see them. I want them always to be in those places. If you happen to make a mistake, the first time I’ll remind you of their proper location according to our rule, but I won’t tolerate it the second time. If you continue this disorder a third time, I shall ask you to take your things and go so that at the least you won’t trouble me, even if you yourself don’t want to gain at all.”

The ever-memorable Elder told us that he had heard that Elder Theophylact was a man of watchfulness, and that he often experienced visions because of the purity of his mind and his spiritual state. “Once,” he told us, “I heard that the demons seized him and took him out of his cell, during the winter period and while it was snowing. They dragged him around in the snow, practically naked, all night long till morning, and then returned him home safely. On that same day, the other fathers brought him back some of his clothes, as they had uncovered from wherever the evil spirits had flung them. Perhaps they had done so to interrupt his mind in its contemplation, as they often used to do with earlier church fathers”.

Once, it is said, a roebuck (male deer, *Ed.*) came to Elder Theophylact’s cell at night and knocked on the door. When

the Elder answered the door, it showed him its leg which was broken; the Elder bandaged it up and told it to come back in eight days, which it did, at the same hour. The Elder changed the dressing, re-banded the roebuck’s leg and repeated his instruction to come again in eight days’ time. When it came back the next time, the Elder saw that its leg was healed and told the roebuck not to come again, and it obeyed accordingly!

One of the main characteristics of these blessed spiritual warriors was their strictness in keeping their rule of life. We could see this also in our own Elder, and he demanded the same of us. He told us that the beginning of acquiring character and personhood lies in insistence on following an ordered and systematic way of life. By making the decision to maintain an invariable regime, man acquires resolve and bravery, something very important and essential in our life since our contest is a struggle and, indeed, a fierce one. *Be sober, be vigilant; because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Pet 5:8). The presence of the serpent thus demands that we remain vigilant, and not just that he may not injure us somewhat; he can be confronted only with bravery and strength of resolve.

There is another equally imperative reason for order in keeping to a regime: It is the changeability of man’s unstable character since the fall of Adam; and the general sinfulness which each of us carries with us also dulls our courage and resolve. Equally, our inexperience, our ignorance, the unknown form of the invisible war, and the inequality of this struggle naturally increase one’s discouragement. There is no other human factor that is such an aid to success as our firm and steady resolve and a carefully worked out regime.

Particularly characteristic in the lives of the holy fathers is their insistence on order and the *typikon* as the principal elements in their way of life. Our Elder was particularly attached to the book of St. Isaac the Syrian, which he used almost as a manual. He would recite whole chapters to us by heart, particularly those concerning order and rule in our monastic life, from introductory “action” to the contemplation even of perfection itself as far as is possible for man. I recall how many things he reminded us of from the saint’s seventh discourse, “On Order among Beginners, Their State, and What Pertains to These.” The main thing, which I still remember nowadays, is this noteworthy sentence: *Wherever you are, consider yourself less than your brethren, and their servant.*

From the beginning of his spiritual journey, our Elder had inclined towards the life of hesychasm and isolation, and it was only natural that this should dictate a generally more austere manner of living. This is of course commonplace in those who live permanently as hesychasts, whose situation and manner and the means they use are different from those of the com-

mon cenobitic form of life pursued by most monks. Even in earlier days, as the holy fathers write, people of this sort always seemed austere at first sight. As a result, mildness in behavior is not in their character; this probably comes about without their noticing, as a result of being isolated and somewhat antisocial. I remember something of the kind in the Life of Abba Palamon, to whom St. Pachomius (who later was destined to become great in virtue and the founder of systematic cenobitic monasticism), went as a novice.

We asked the Elder a few times about the austerity of his own regime and he responded with positive examples from the lives of the ancient fathers. Those ancient fathers were in no way unaware of the duty of loving one's neighbor, yet they gave priority to love for God and the form of their particular watchfulness in the hesychastic way of life. Since we were making our way towards the same end, he often quoted to us the words of Abba Isaac, that the essential precondition for the monk to make progress is to collect himself in one place and to fast always.

I paid more attention, however, to another point of orderliness, which though it may seem elementary, it nevertheless held great significance for our first beginnings. This was the help afforded by precise observance of the *typikon*, which we maintained wherever we were, regardless of place. By not contravening the *typikon* at all, our fervor was not decreased, nor our ardor, nor our prayer, nor our (generally) inspired state. But when it happened that we did contravene our usual rule, whether of diet or of silence or of being on our guard in general, then everything was thrown into turmoil and we had great difficulty holding onto our usual practice. After a number of mishaps, this finally became a clear lesson to us.

From time to time, in our childish naiveté (state of inexperience or unsophistication, *Ed.*) we overstepped the bounds of propriety and on one occasion we asked the Elder: "Since in character you are not strict with other people, but very sympathetic, how is it that you seem so harsh in the regime of our *typikon*, which creates an obstacle for people?" He smiled and said to us, "I never expected you to have the face to ask me that, but I'll tell you. Testing and experience have convinced me to act in this way; otherwise, I would not be able to continue what God has led me to. St. Paul says: *For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.* (1 Cor 9:17). The Elder told us of his belief that his dedication to his hesychastic regime was not fortuitous, but a vocation from on high.

As he told us, "To accept people's demands with no restrictions is the common path of the all the fathers, and this, by the grace of God, is abundant in this sacred place. Anyone can easily find a response anywhere. But our duty of serving as hesychasts in the sacred tradition of stillness is not known to

all nor attainable by all. While St. Gregory Palamas was concerning himself with stillness during his days here on Athos, he would run away and hide and dig holes in the ground, and do everything he could to achieve isolation. Whom did he receive then, or whom did he meet? It is incontrovertible proof that regulation in life is the main factor in spiritual progress. This is the purpose of the laws and commandments which have been given to human life since most ancient times, whether by God or by men."

The disturbance in the integrity of our character following the fall of our first parents called for legislation to restore equilibrium to the faculties of soul and body which had been split apart. And when are law and commandments and regulation not necessary? Answer: when man regains his personhood through divine grace and the mortal puts on immortality [*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.* (1 Cor. 15:54)]. In St. Paul's words again, whatever is mortal is swallowed up—so to speak—by life [... *that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* (2 Cor 5:4)]. Then, and then indeed, no law is laid down for the just: *The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.* (1 Tim 1:9).



In order not to be in daily bondage to the passions and the devil, you must set yourself an object to aim at, have this object constantly in view, and endeavor to attain it, conquering all obstacles by the name of the Lord. What is this object? The Kingdom of God, the Divine palace of glory, prepared for believers from the creation of the world. But as this object can only be attained by certain means, it also is necessary to have such means at one's disposal. And what are these means? Faith, hope, and love, especially the last. Belief, hope, and love, especially love, disregarding all obstacles; love God above everything and your neighbor as yourself. If you have not sufficient strength to preserve in your heart these inestimable treasures, fall down more often at the feet of the God of Love.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you (Mt 7:7), for He Who has promised is true. Walking, sitting, lying down, conversing, or working, at every time, pray with your whole heart that faith and love may be given to you. You have not yet asked for them as you should ask - fervently and instantly - with the firm purpose of obtaining them. Say now, "I will begin to do so henceforth."

St. John of Kronstadt (+1908)

THE WEDDING GARMENT

By Pope Saint Gregory the Dialogist (+604).

And when the King came in to see the guests, He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. (Mt 22:11)

† † †



What is meant, brethren, by this wedding garment? It cannot signify either baptism or faith, since no one can enter the marriage feast without baptism or without faith. Undoubtedly, the mere fact of not believing excludes one from the Church. So, what can we understand by this wedding

garment but charity? We must suppose then, that this man who enters without a wedding garment is a member of our Holy Church by reason of his faith, but he lacks charity. This is the case and with good reason because our Maker wore it when He came as a bridegroom to unite Himself to the Church. Thus, it was through His charity, through God's love by which the Only-begotten could unite the souls of the elect with Himself. This is why John tells us: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* (Jn 3:16). He who came to men for love's sake, calls this love the wedding garment.

All of you, then, who are members of the Church and believe in God have indeed come to the marriage, but you are without a wedding garment if you discard the cloak of charity. If any of you is invited to an earthly wedding, he changes his dress so that he may show the groom and bride his participation in their joy; he would be ashamed to appear shabbily dressed among the guests and merry-makers. We assist at God's marriage feast and nevertheless, we are loathe to undergo a change of heart. The angels rejoice when they see God's chosen ones admitted into heaven. How do we visualize this spiritual banquet, those of us who lack that festive garment which is the only one that gives us beauty in God's sight?

We must remember that, as a cloth is woven between two wooden frames, one above and the other below, thus also charity is founded on two precepts: the love of God and the love of our neighbor. For it is written: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength ... and thy neighbor as thyself.* (Mk 12:30). It is worth noting here that a limit and measure is set to the love of our neighbor, as we read: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* The love of God, however, is marked by no limit, as we are told: *Thou*

shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength. We are not told, then, how much we must love, but the manner in which we must do so: with everything we have. For only he who does not think of himself truly loves God.

It is necessary to observe these two precepts of charity if we desire to be found wearing the wedding garment. This is what the prophet Ezekiel means when he tells us that the front of the gate of the city built on a mountain measures *two cubits* (Ezek 40:9); for undoubtedly we cannot enter the heavenly city if in this church, which is called the gate because it is outside that city, we have no love for God or man. As we see also in the book of Exodus that it is prescribed that the curtains destined for the *tabernacle* should be dyed twice in scarlet coloring (Exod 26:1). You, my brethren, you are the curtains of the tabernacle, veiling by virtue of your faith the heavenly mysteries in your hearts. But the curtains of the tabernacle must be twice dyed in scarlet. That is a color like fire. And what is charity, if it is not fire? But this charity must be twice dyed, that is, steeped in the love of God and in the love of our neighbor.

The man who loves God so that his contemplation leads him to forget his neighbor has indeed the color of scarlet, but not twice dyed. Again, he who loves his neighbor, but whose love leads him to forget God, has the color of scarlet but with a single dye. In order that your charity may be steeped in both, you must be inflamed with love of God and of your neighbor, so that compassion for your fellow-man does not induce you to abandon contemplation of God, nor an excessive desire for that contemplation make you cast aside all pity. So, every man who lives among other men should seek God, the object of his longings, but in such a fashion as not to abandon his neighbor; and he should help his neighbor in such a way that it will never check his progress towards God to Whom he speeds.

We know that the love which we owe to our neighbor is sub-divided into two precepts, as we read in Scripture: *See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another* (Tob 4:16), and Christ tells us: *As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.* (Mt 7:12). If we act towards our neighbor as we should like him to act towards us, and avoid doing to others what would be displeasing to us ourselves, then we observe the law of charity. But no one should think that he observes this law merely because he loves his neighbor; he must examine first the motive behind his love. For he who loves others, but not for God's sake, has not charity, even though he may think he has. True charity lies in loving our friend with and in God, and our enemy for God's sake. He loves for God's sake, who loves even those by whom he is not loved. Charity is usually proved only by the opposing trial of hatred. So that

our Lord says, *Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you.* (Lk 6:27). The man who loves his avowed enemies is following this command.

Great and sublime are these precepts and often hard to obey; nevertheless they constitute the wedding garment. And that man who is without it has good grounds to fear that the King, at His coming, will cast him out. For we are told: The King went in to see the guests; and He saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. It is we, brethren, who attend the marriage of the Word: who believe in the Church, are nourished by the Scriptures, and rejoice in the union of God with the Church. I would have you consider very carefully whether you attend the feast in the wedding garment. Weigh your actions in your heart one by one: whether you foster hatred of anyone, whether you envy the good fortune of others or through malice seek to injure them.

See the King entering the feast; see how He scrutinizes the disposition of our heart. To that man whom He finds stripped of charity, He says in rapid anger: *Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?* (Mt 22-12). It is striking, dearly beloved, that He calls this man “friend” at the same time as He reproves him, as if His real meaning were: Friend and no friend; friend by faith and no friend by his actions. But He was silent, since—with what pain we must say it—in that final judgment no word of excuse can help us, for He

who accuses us outwardly is also He who accuses the soul’s interior depths, who is a witness of our conscience. And yet we cannot forget that, if anyone has this garment of virtue, although not perfectly woven, he should not despair of obtaining the forgiveness of this Merciful King when He comes, since He Himself gives us this hope when He says through the Psalmist, *Thine eyes did see my imperfect being, and in thy book all shall be written.* (Pss 138:16). We have said these words for the consolation of those who have charity, although weak. We must speak now of those who lack it altogether. The Gospel continues:

Then said the King to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Mt 22:13). That rigorous sentence will bind the hands and feet of those who do not restrain themselves now from wicked actions by amending their life. In other words, suffering will bind hereafter those whom guilt binds here. The feet which refuse to visit the sick, the hands which refuse to help the needy, are now voluntarily unbound to any good works. Therefore the willing

slave of vice here upon earth will hereafter be the unwilling prisoner of endless torments. It is apt to say that he is cast into the outer darkness. Interior darkness is the blindness of the heart, while the outer darkness belongs to the everlasting night of damnation. That man is damned, then, who is banished into outer, not interior, darkness for he is expelled against his will into the night of condemnation who, in this life, fell willingly into blindness of heart. It is said that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth; the teeth of those who satiated themselves in their intemperance on earth will be set on edge in hell; their eyes will weep because in life they satisfied them with the sight of unlawful things. In this way, each member will suffer a particular torment as here it was used for the satisfaction of a particular vice.

But now that one man has been expelled, one who represents all the various types of evil, a general warning to all is given: *Many are called, but few are chosen.* (Mt 22:14). This is indeed a terrible sentence, my dear brethren. Consider that all of us have been called, by faith, to the marriage of the Heavenly King. We all believe and confess the mystery of His Incarnation, sharing in the banquet of the divine Word. But at a future date the King of Judgment is to come. We know that we have been called; we do not know whether we have been chosen. It is all the more necessary, therefore, that we abase ourselves with humility, since we have not this certainty.

There are some who never tried to do good; there are others who, although they began once, failed to persevere. We see one man pass nearly all his life in wickedness, but as he nears its end he returns to God by repentance and true penance. Another may seem to live the life of a saint, but end his days by falling into error and malice. One begins well and ends better; another plunges into evil from an early age and goes from bad to worse throughout his days. Each man, then, must live in fear, for he does not know what is to come, since we must never forget, but rather often repeat and meditate on the words: *Many are called but few are chosen.*



If anyone reproaches, grieves or offends you in any way, do not become angry against that brother; but going away, pray to God for him in this way: *O Lord, forgive him,* and ascribe this insult to the demon, for it is the demon who teaches us to offend one another.

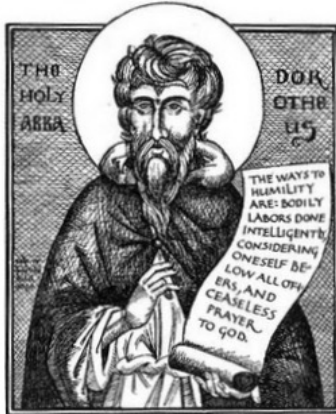
Elder Hilarion of Sarov



The Second Coming

ON LIES

By St. Dorotheos of Gaza.



Brethren, I want to remind you of a few things about falsehood. I see that you are not careful about holding your tongue and through that, we are easily led astray. You see, my brothers, as I always tell you, a habit can tend towards good or towards evil. We therefore need great vigilance so that we are not cheated by lies. No one who lies becomes united with God. The lie is alien to God. It is written that, *Falsehood is from the evil one*, and also that, *he is a liar and the father of lies* (Jn 8:44). You see he calls the devil “the father of lies,” while God is the Truth. He himself said, *I am the way, the truth and the life*. (Jn 14:6). See what we are separating ourselves from and what we attach ourselves to through lies, clearly the devil. Therefore, if we really want to be saved, we are obliged to love the truth, with all our strength and concern, guarding ourselves from all falsehood, so that we are not separated from truth and from life.

There are three different kinds of lies: Lying in thinking, lying verbally, and lying through one’s own way of life.

The person who lies in his thinking is open to suspicions. When he sees someone talking with his brother, he is suspicious and says, “They are talking about me!” If they happen to stop talking, he is still suspicious, suspecting that they stopped because of him. If someone says one word to him, he suspects that he said it to bother him. Simply he is suspicious of his neighbor in everything, saying, “he did that because of me. He said that or did that because of me.” This is the person who lies in his understanding. Nothing he says is true, but all is based on suspicion. From this comes curiosity, slander, eavesdropping, quarreling and condemnation.

Sometimes it happens that he suspects something and it turns out to be true. On account of this, he maintains that he wants to correct himself, so he is always curious thinking that, “if someone speaks against me, I will see what is the mistake he is accusing me of, and thus I can correct myself.”

First of all, this principle is from the devil, since he started with lies. That is to say, he suspected what he did not know. How is it possible for an evil tree to produce good fruits? If this person really wanted to correct himself, when a brother says to him, “don’t do that” or “why did you do that” he should not be distressed, but make a bow and thank him. Then he will be corrected. If God sees that this is his inten-

tion, He will never leave him in error, but will always send him a person who can correct him. However, to say that “I shall believe my suspicions in order to correct myself” and so eavesdrop and be curious about everything, this becomes justification from the devil to destroy him.

When I was present in the coenobium, I was tempted to find out about the inner disposition of someone through his gestures. Such a thing happened to me. I was once standing still when a woman passed in front of me carrying a pitcher. I do not know how I was carried away and stared into her eyes. Immediately, my thoughts told me that she was a prostitute. As I had told myself that, I was greatly troubled and I referred the whole matter to my elder, Abba John in this way: “Master, if without wanting to, I see someone’s gesture and my thoughts tell me his inner disposition, what should I do?” The elder answered me thus, “What! Surely, it happens that a person may have a natural defect and through inner struggle manage to overcome it! It is impossible to learn the state of a person’s soul from that. Therefore never trust your suspicions for even a straight rule can be made crooked by a crooked one. Suspicions are not true and harm us.” From that time on, even if my mind told me that the sun was the sun or that darkness was darkness, I would not believe it. Nothing is graver than suspicions. They are extremely harmful and if we keep them for a long time, they begin to convince us that we clearly see things that do not exist and have never happened.

I will also tell you of a wonderful thing that I witnessed when I was in the coenobium. There we had a brother much troubled by this passion. He was so easily persuaded by his own suspicions that he was certain that all of his suspicions were just as his thoughts dictated to him, and it could not possibly be otherwise. As time passed this passion progressed and the devil had misled him so much that he once went into the garden to spy. He always eavesdropped and pried. He thought he saw one of the brothers stealing figs and eating them. It was Friday and not yet the second hour. Having persuaded himself that what he saw was a reality, he left in silence and watched again during the Eucharist gathering, to see what the same brother would do about Holy Communion. When he saw the brother washing his hands to enter and take Communion, he ran and said to the Elder: “Look at that brother who is going to take Communion with the other brothers. Order that it not be given to him. I saw him stealing figs from the garden this morning and eating them.”

Meanwhile, this brother entered into the holy offering with great compunction. He was one of the most devout monks. When the Abba saw him, he called him, before he reached the priest who was distributing Holy Communion. He took him aside and said to him: “Tell me my brother what you have done today?” The brother was surprised and

said, "Where, master?" The Abba said, "In the garden when you went there this morning, what did you do there?" The surprised brother said again to him, "Father, I was in neither the garden, nor in the monastery this morning, for I have only just come back from the road. Immediately after the dismissal of the vigil the steward sent me on an errand far away." The errand that he referred to was many miles away and he arrived just in time for the Eucharist. The Abba called the steward and asked him: "Where did you send this brother?" He confirmed what the brother had already said, namely that he sent him to that particular town. He made a bow to the Abba saying, "Forgive me, father for not sending him to you to get your blessing. It was after the vigil and you were resting."

When the Abba heard all this he gave them both his blessing and allowed them to take Communion. Then he called the other brother who had the suspicions and reprimanded him, banning him from Holy Communion. Not only that but he gathered together all the brothers after the service and told them what happened, in tears. He marked out that brother, in front of everyone. He had three reasons for doing so: Firstly, to shame the devil and make an example of the sower of suspicion. Secondly, to allow the brother's sin to be forgiven through this dishonor and to obtain God's help for his advancement. Thirdly, to ensure that the brothers never trusted their own suspicions. He gave much advice about this to us and to the brother concerned saying that, "There is nothing more harmful than suspicion," and he proved that by this incident.

The fathers said many similar things to protect us from the harm that suspicion does to us. Therefore, brethren, let us try not to trust our suspicions, with all our strength. For there is nothing that distances a person from taking care of his own sins, or from always being curious about what does not concern him, more than this. No good comes of it; rather manifold troubles and affliction come of it. They leave a person no time to acquire fear of God. Therefore, if suspicions are sown in us through our own evil, let us immediately transform them into good thoughts. Thus, we will not harm ourselves. Suspicions are evil and they never allow the soul to find peace. This is falsehood of the understanding.

As for the liar in words, this is the person who, let us say, is too lazy to get up for the vigil, yet does not say, "Forgive me because I was too lazy to get up." Instead, he says, "I had a fever. I was faint and I couldn't get up. I didn't have the strength." He says ten lying words to avoid making a bow and humbling himself. If someone blames him for something, he sighs and tries to change his words in such a way, so as to refute the person who blames him. Likewise, if he happens to quarrel with his brother, he does not stop justifying himself and saying, "But you have this," or "But

you did that," or "I didn't say that, he did." He says all that, so that he should not have to humble himself. Also, if he happens to want something, he does not come to the point and say, "I like this, I want it," but he persists and says in a round-about way, "I suffer this and I need that" or "they told me to do that" and many other lies so as to fulfill his own will.

Every sin arises from the desire for pleasure, avarice or ambition. Lying has its roots in these three vices. Either from not blaming and humiliating oneself, or for some pleasure or for gain. The liar does not cease from turning this way and says anything to achieve his purpose. This person is never trusted, for even if he says a true word no one believes him. Even when he speaks the truth, the others are in doubt.

Sometimes there is a great need to alter or stretch events and facts. In that case, if one does not hide the details, it could cause great trouble and sorrow. When a person finds himself in such circumstances and there is no alternative, he can, as I said, alter his words so as not to become more sorrowful, troubled and endangered. As Abba Alonios (*Sayings of the Desert Fathers*) said to Abba Agathon, "Suppose two men killed someone in front of you and one of them escapes to your cell. The magistrate is looking for him and asks you saying, 'Did a murder take place in front of you?' If you do not accommodate things you will deliver that man to death."

Even in this case, whereby a person is faced with a great necessity to alter facts, that person must not be without care but he must repent; in tears before God, he must consider this course of events as a time of temptation. He must not use this very often but only as one possibility amongst many others. It is like an antidote for poison or like the purgative, which if taken continuously is harmful, but if taken once a year, when it is necessary, is beneficial. One must face the peculiar situation in a similar way so that if it is necessary, as I said, to adapt the truth, to make that one occasion amongst a great many and only when it is necessary. He must do this rarely and with the fear of God, showing to them his intention and the need, and then God will protect him because even this harms his soul.

Thus, we have discussed the liar in thought and the liar in word but we should also talk about the person that lies during his whole life.

The person that lies in his whole life is the one who, while in reality is dissolute, feigns temperance, and being greedy, he speaks about charity and praises sympathy. He is proud but admires humility. Even then, he admires it, without wanting to praise it. If that was the reason, he should with humility firstly confess his own weakness saying, "Woe is me, wretched one, for I have done nothing good in my life." After confessing his own weakness, he should then have admired and praised the virtue. He praises it without

having the intention of avoiding scandalizing others because in that case he would have thought as follows: "Indeed I am wretched and subject to passions. Why should I scandalize someone else?" With that thought, even if he had sinned, he would have touched upon good.

It is characteristic of humility to accuse yourself and a characteristic of sympathy to take care of your neighbor. However, this person does not admire virtue for the reasons I have mentioned, but rather, either to cover his own shame by giving the impression that he himself has this virtue or often to harm and mislead someone. No evil, no heresy, not even the devil himself can lead someone unless it is transformed into virtue. The Apostle says that *satan himself transforms into an angel of light*. (2 Cor 11:14). It is not strange then when his servants are transformed into the servants of righteousness. Similarly, the liar, either through fear of shame and humiliation or, as I said, because he wants to mislead and cheat someone talks about the virtues, praising and admiring them as if they were his own and he had experience of them. This is the person whose very life is a lie. This is not a simple person but a two-faced one. He has an internal and external face. His own life is two-faced and worthy of scorn.

Thus, we have said that lies come from the devil. We have also discussed truth and said that God is (the) Truth. Let us avoid falsehood, brethren, so as to be delivered from the evil one and let us struggle to obtain the truth so that we may be united to Him, Who said, *I am the Truth*. (Jn 14:6). Let God make us worthy of His own Truth.

Unto Him be glory and dominion, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



If artists who make statues and paint portraits of kings are held in high esteem, will not God bless ten thousand times more those who reveal and beautify His royal image? When we teach our children to be good, gentle, forgiving, generous, love their fellow men and regard this present age as nothing, we install virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them. Our task is to educate both ourselves and our children in godliness; otherwise what answer will we have before Christ's judgment-seat? Let us be greatly concerned for our wives and our children, and for ourselves as well. The good God Himself will bring this work to perfection, so that all of us may be counted worthy of the blessings He has promised.

St. John Chrysostom (Homily 21)

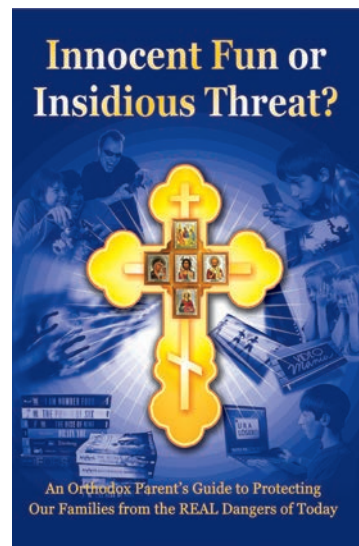
If you pile up on one side of the scales all the works demanded by ascetic life, and on the other side silence, you will find that the latter outweighs the former. Many good counsels have been given us, but if a man embraces silence, to follow them will become superfluous.

Saint Isaac of Syria

NEW BOOK: INNOCENT FUN OR INSIDIOUS THREAT

AN ORTHODOX PARENT'S GUIDE TO PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES FROM THE REAL DANGERS OF TODAY

Compiled by Mary Christodoulou; published by the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.



Today evil invades our lives more than ever before. Particularly alarming is how easily it disguises itself as entertainment, religion, and even as a subject in public schools. Unfortunately, the primary targets of this demonic onslaught are our children. The Harry Potter books and movies have initiated millions of young people into witchcraft and wizardry; celebrities promote New Age religions adverse

to Christianity; the Twilight books and movies glamorize vampires; the most popular music, video games, television shows, books, and movies not only bombard our children with images and messages of violence, cruelty, and illicit sex, but also portray demonic phenomena, such as witchcraft and psychic powers, in a way that makes them seem acceptable, and even fun.

All this evil may seem insurmountable, but we must fight against it for the sake of our children. A must-read for every Orthodox Christian, this book examines the shocking extent to which evil has infiltrated our lives, and offers guidance and hope for the struggle against it.

The book will be available to our readers in the latter part of October, 2013. It can be ordered through the Brotherhood of St. Poimen (see page 23) as well as through Amazon.com.

Price: \$10 per copy (144 pages); ePub/kindle: \$8 per copy.



We cannot follow...a kind of "reformed" Orthodoxy that happens to be mostly "correct" but is actually outside the tradition of Orthodoxy, a creation of human logic. It's a terrible temptation for our times, and most of the converts will probably be drawn into it. We fear that all our articles about zealotry in the past years have helped to produce a monster. For the future we will have to emphasize the "feel" of Orthodoxy, without which zealotry is empty and even harmful.

Blessed Fr. Seraphim Rose (+1982)

FROM THE DESERT

Source: *John Moschus, Leimonarion (The Spiritual Meadow)*.

Abba John, Abba Anoub, Abba Poimen, and some other brothers went to Terenuthis to settle for a time. They stayed in an old temple several days. Then Abba Anoub said to Abba Poimen, "For love's sake do this: let each of us live in quietness, each one by himself, without meeting one another the whole week." Abba Poimen replied, "We will do as you wish." So they did this.

Now there was in the temple a statue of stone. When he woke up in the morning, Abba Anoub threw stones at the face of the statue and in the evening he said to it, "Forgive me." During the whole week he did this. On Saturday they came together and Abba Poimen said to Abba Anoub, "Abba, I have seen you during the whole week throwing stones at the face of the statue and kneeling to ask it to forgive you. Does a believer act thus?" The old man answered him, "I did this for your sake. When you saw me throwing stones at the face of the statue, did it speak, or did it become angry?" Abba Poimen said, "No." "Or again, when I bent down in penitence, was it moved, and did it say, 'I will not forgive you?'" Again Abba Poimen answered, "No." Then the old man resumed, "Now we are seven brethren. If you wish us to live together, let us be like this statue, which is not moved whether one beats it or whether one flatters it. If you do not wish to become like this, there are four doors here in the temple. Let each one go where he will."

Then the brethren prostrated themselves and said to Abba Anoub, "We will do as you wish, Father, and we will listen to what you say to us." Abba Poimen added, "Let us live together to the rest of our time, working according to the word which the old man has given us." He made one of them housekeeper and all that he brought to them, they ate and none of them had the authority to say, "Bring us something else to eat next time," or perhaps, "We do not want to eat this." Thus they passed all their time in quietness and peace.

† † †

We came to the Thebaid, and at the city of Antinoe we visited Phebamon the Sophist for the benefit of his words. He told us that in the district around Hermopolis there had been a brigand whose name was David. He had rendered many people destitute, murdered many and committed every kind of evil deed; more so than any other man, one might say. One day, while he was still engaged in brigandage on the mountain, together with a band of more than thirty, he came to his senses, conscience-stricken by his evil deeds. He left all those who were with him and went to a monastery. He knocked at the monastery gate. The porter came out and asked him what he wanted. The robber-chief replied that he wanted to become a monk, so the porter went inside and told the abbot about him. The abbot came out and, when he saw

that the man was advanced in age, he said to him, "You cannot stay here, for the brethren labor very hard. They practice great austerity. Your temperament is different from ours and you could not tolerate the rule of the monastery." But the brigand insisted that he could tolerate these things, if only the abbot would accept him. But the abbot was persistent in his conviction that the man would not be able.

Then the robber-chief said to the abbot, "Know, then, that I am David the robber-chief; and the reason why I came here was that I might weep for my sins. If you do not accept me, I swear to you and before Him who dwells in heaven that I will return to my former way of life. I will bring those who were with me, kill you all and even destroy your monastery." When the abbot heard this, he received him into the monastery, tonsured him and gave him the holy habit. Thus he began the spiritual combat and he exceeded all the other members of the monastery in self-control, obedience, and humility. There were about seventy persons in that monastery; he benefited them all, providing them with an example.

One day when he was sitting in his cell, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, saying, "David, David; the Lord has pardoned your sins and, from this time on, you shall perform miraculous signs." David replied to the angel, "I cannot believe that in so short a time God has forgiven me all my sins, which are heavier than the sand of the sea." The angel said to him, "I did not spare Zachariah the priest when he refused to believe me concerning his son. (Lk 1:20) I imprisoned his tongue to teach him not to doubt what I said; how then should I spare you? You shall be totally incapable of speech from this time onwards."

Abba David prostrated himself before the angel and said, "When I was in the world, committing abominable acts and shedding blood, I had the gift of speech. Will you deprive me of it by imprisoning my tongue, now that I wish to serve God and offer up hymns of praise to Him?" The angel replied, "You will only be able to speak during the services. At all other times you shall be completely silent;" and that is how it was. He sang the psalms, but he could say no other word, big or little. The one who told us these things said, "I saw him many times and I glorified God."



A full stomach dries up one's weeping, whereas the shriveled stomach produces these tears. And the man who looks after his belly and at the same time hopes to control the spirit of fornication is like someone trying to put out a fire with oil.

St. John Climacus, "The Ladder of Divine Ascent"

Τὸ Ὅρος τῶν Γυμνῶν Ἀσκητῶν

Γεροδιάκονος Σιλουανός, Λευκάδα, 14 Μαΐου 2010, ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ «ΠΡΩΤΑΤΟΝ» (τεύχος 119).

Τὸ μυστήριό ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ παραμένει, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ βεβαιότητά νὰ ἐπιμένει...

Σχετικῶς μὲ τὸ γεγονός που ζήσαμε στὸ κελλί τοῦ Προφήτου Δανιήλ, παραθέτουμε παρακάτω τὴν καταγραφή αὐτοῦ τοῦ γεγονότος, πιστεύοντας πὼς ἀξίζει νὰ γνωστοποιηθεῖ καὶ σὲ ἄλλους.

Πρὸ δύο ἐτῶν περίπου, ἡ Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Ὁσίου Ξενοφῶντος μᾶς «παραχώρησε» τὸ ἀρχαῖο καὶ ἐγκαταλελειμμένο κελλί της—τοῦ Ἁγίου Προφήτου Δανιήλ καὶ τῶν Τριῶν Παίδων. Αὐτὸ τὸ κελλί βρῖσκεται σὲ μία ἐρημικὴ τοποθεσία πάνω στὸ βουνό, ἀνατολικά τῆς Μονῆς Ξενοφῶντος καὶ βόρεια τῆς Σκήτης Ξενοφῶντος. Δὲν γειτονιάζει μὲ κανένα ἄλλο κελλί, παρὰ μόνο μὲ ἓνα ἐρειπωμένο, ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος, οὔτε κὰν φαίνεται ἄλλο κελλί ἢ Σκήτη ἢ ὀτιδήποτε ἄλλο οἴκημα, στὸ ὁποῖο νὰ μαρτυρεῖται ἢ νὰ δικαιολογεῖται ἀνθρώπινη παρουσία.

Ὅποιος βρῖσκεται στὴν αὐλὴ ἢ τὸν ἐξώστη—ἀπλωταριὰ τοῦ Προφήτη Δανιήλ ἔχει μία πανοραμικὴ θέα ὅλου σχεδὸν τοῦ φαραγγιοῦ, ἀπὸ τὰ ἀνατολικά, πὸν εἶναι τὰ Δοχειαρίτικα σύνορα, μέχρι τὰ δυτικά—τὴν θάλασσα. Ἡ ἡρεμία δὲ καὶ ἡ ἡσυχία ποὺ ἔχει τὸ κελλί εἶναι χαρακτηριστικὴ, καὶ μόνο κατὰ τὴν ἀνοιξὴ καὶ τὸ καλοκαίρι διακόπτεται ἀπὸ τὶς ἀσταμάτητες λαλιὲς τῶν ἀηδονιῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὠδικῶν πτηνῶν.

Ἐκεῖ βρεθήκαμε, γιὰ μία ἀκόμη φορὰ, καὶ ἐμεῖς, οἱ φιλοξενούμενοι τῆς Μονῆς Ξενοφῶντος καὶ ἔνοικοι τοῦ Ἱεροῦ αὐτοῦ κελλίου. Ἡ παραμονὴ διήρκησε λίγες ἡμέρες, ἀλλὰ εἶχε μεγάλη εὐλογία, μία ἐμπειρία ποὺ δὲν ὑπολογίζαμε νὰ ἀξιοθούμε ποτέ. Ἄς πάρουμε τὰ πράγματα ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχή. Στὶς 21 Ἀπριλίου 2010 (παλ. ἡμ.), προπαραμονὲς τῆς πανηγύρεως τῆς Μονῆς Ξενοφῶντος, πὸν τιμᾶται ἐπ' ὀνόματι τοῦ Ἁγίου Μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου, βρεθήκαμε στὸ κελλί τοῦ Προφήτη Δανιήλ. Δὲν ἀπομακρυνθήκαμε πολὺ, διότι ἤδη εἶχε σουρουπώσει ἀρκετά. Σὲ ἓνα σημεῖο τῆς διαδρομῆς μας, ἓνας ἀπὸ τὴν ὀμάδα μας, θέλοντας νὰ συμπεράνει τὸ βάθος τοῦ φαραγγιοῦ ποὺ βρισκόταν μπροστὰ μας, ἔριξε τρεῖς πέτρες, ἀρκετὰ μεγάλες, πρὸς τὸ φαράγγι. Οἱ δύο λαϊκοὶ ποὺ βρισκόνταν στὴν παρέα, ἄδραξαν τὴν εὐκαιρία γιὰ νὰ ἀστερευτοῦν

μὲ τὴν ἐπιπόλαιη αὐτὴ πράξη λέγοντας πὼς ἴσως κάποιος ἐρημίτης ἀσκητὴς νὰ ἦταν δέκτης αὐτοῦ τοῦ πετροβολητοῦ.

Ὁ Γέροντας, ἀποσιωπώντας τὴν κωμικὴ πλευρὰ τοῦ θέματος, ἀναφέρθηκε στὴν ὑπαρξὴ τῶν ἐρημιτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀοράτων ἀσκητῶν, στὶς ἀναφορὲς γύρω ἀπὸ διάφορα σχετικὰ συμβάντα. Ὁ Γέροντας ἄφησε τὸν καθένα ἐλεύθερο νὰ ἀποδεχθεῖ ἢ ὄχι αὐτὴ τὴν παλιὰ ἀγιορείτικη παράδοση γιὰ τοὺς γυμνοὺς καὶ ἀόρατους ἀσκητὲς ποὺ ζοῦν στὶς ἐρημιὲς τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους.

Ὅταν ἐπιστρέψαμε στὸ κελλί, εἶχε ἤδη σκοτεινιάσει. Προσπαθήσαμε νὰ βάλουμε μπρὸς τὴν πετρελαιογεννήτρια, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὶς ἐπίμονες προσπάθειές μας, ἐπὶ μισὴ ὥρα περίπου, τὸ μηχανήμα δὲν λειτούργησε, καὶ ἔτσι μείναμε «ἀναγκαστικά» μὲ τὰ κερὰ καὶ τὴν λάμπα πετρελαίου (ἐκ τῶν ὑστέρων σκεφτήκαμε ὅτι δὲν ἦταν ἓνα τυχαῖο γεγονός).

Ἡ νύχτα εἶχε πέσει γιὰ τὰ καλά, τὰ ἀστέρια ἦταν εὐδιάκριτα, παρὰ τὴν ἐλαφριά συννεφιά ποὺ εἶχε ὁ οὐρανός, καὶ τὰ ἀηδόνια εἶχαν παραιτηθεῖ πλέον ἀπὸ τὸ ὀλόήμερο κελάδημά τους. Ἡ σιωπὴ σὲ ὅλη τὴν περιοχὴ ἦταν πιὸ αἰσθητὴ τώρα, μετὰ τὴν πρόσφατη παύση, παρὰ τὰ μεσάνυχτα. Ὁ Γέροντας εἶχε ἀποσυρθεῖ στὸ κελλί του, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα τρία πρόσωπα

κάθισαν μπροστὰ στὴν ἐξώπορτα τοῦ κελλιοῦ καὶ μιλοῦσαν.

Καθὼς μιλοῦσαν, ἓνας ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς διέκρινε καὶ μία ἄλλη—δεύτερη φωνή, μακρινὴ καὶ ἀκαθόριστη—καὶ μὴ θέλοντας νὰ διακόψει τὸν συνομιλητὴ του ἀρχικὰ δὲν ἀντέδρασε. Ἐφ' ὅσον ὅμως αὐτὴ ἡ φωνὴ συνεχιζόταν ἤδη γιὰ πέμπτο λεπτό, παίρνοντας θάρρος διέκοψε αὐτὸν ποὺ μιλοῦσε ρωτώντας τὸν ἕναν: «Ἀκοῦς κάτι;»

Ἀφοῦ συγκέντρωσαν καὶ οἱ δύο τὴν προσοχὴ τους, ἄκουσαν μία φωνὴ ποὺ προερχόταν ἀπὸ τὸ βάθος τοῦ χειμάρρου. Ἦταν μία ἀνδρική ἐνθουσιώδης φωνὴ, ποὺ φώναζε ἐκστατικὰ σχεδόν, μέσα στὴν σιγαλιὰ τῆς νύκτας καὶ κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ πανόραμα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ στερεώματος: «Δόξα Σοὶ ὁ Θεός», «Κύριε σώσον τὸν κόσμον Σου». Τὰ ἐπανελάμβανε συνεχῶς καὶ μεγαλόφωνα, καθὼς καὶ ἄλλα λόγια, τὰ ὁποῖα ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς ἀποστάσεως καὶ τοῦ ἀντίλαλου ἦταν ἀκαθόριστα.

Ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τὸ ὕφος τῆς φωνῆς ἦταν κάτι σὰν εὐχαριστία καὶ δοξολογία στὸν Θεὸ καθὼς καὶ ἰκεσία



για τὸ ἔλεός Του. Τὸ ἄκουσε κατόπιν καὶ ὁ ἄλλος λαϊκός, ποὺ ἦταν στὴν παρέα. Καὶ οἱ τρεῖς ἀκούγαμε ἓνα ἄνθρωπο, ποὺ βρισκόταν μέσα στὸ «πουθενά», νὰ εὐχαριστεῖ καὶ νὰ δοξολογεῖ τὸν Θεό.

Γρήγορα εἰδοποιήθηκε καὶ ὁ Γέροντας, ὁ ὁποῖος ἄκουσε αὐτὸν τὸν ἄγνωστο νὰ δοξολογεῖ ἀκατάπαυστα, καθαρότατα τὸν Θεό. Στὴν συνέχεια καὶ γιὰ ἓνα μικρὸ διάστημα ὁ ἄγνωστος ἔπαυσε τὴν μεγαλόφωνη προσευχή του. Ὅλοι ἀποσυρθήκαμε στὰ κελλιὰ μας. Ὁ καθένας κράτησε τὴν δική του στάση ἀπέναντί σὲ αὐτὴ τὴν ἀναπάντεχη ἐμπειρία, καὶ κατάκοποι καθὼς ἤμασταν, γρήγορα ἀποκοιμηθήκαμε ὅλοι.

Ὅλοι ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὸν Γέροντα, ὁ ὁποῖος κάθισε στὴν ἀπλωταριὰ ἀναμένοντας νὰ ἀκροαστεῖ μία ἀκόμα φορὰ τὸν ἄγνωστο προσευχητή. Καὶ ὄντως μετὰ ἀπὸ ἓνα διάστημα περίπου μισῆς ὥρας τὸν ἄκουσε πάλι. Αὐτὴ τὴν φορὰ ἔψαλε μεγαλόφωνα ἀναστάσιμους ὕμνους. Καὶ αὐτὸ ποὺ μπόρεσε ὁ Γέροντας νὰ διακρίνει ἦταν τὸ τροπάριο τῆς πρώτης ὥδης τοῦ κανόνα τοῦ Πάσχα «*Καθαρθώμεν τὰς αἰσθήσεις...*», καθὼς καὶ ἄλλες προσευχές, ὅπως «*Κύριε σῶσε τὸν κόσμον Σου*», καὶ ἄλλα.

Τὴν ἄλλη ἡμέρα ὅλοι κοιτάξαμε πρὸς τὴν πλευρὰ, ἀπ' ὅπου ἐρχόταν ἡ χθεσινοβραδυνὴ φωνή, προσπαθώντας νὰ καταλάβουμε τὸ ἀκριβὲς σημεῖο ποὺ βρισκόταν αὐτὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἢ κάποιον σημάδι τῆς παρουσίας του. Γρήγορα ὅμως καταλάβαμε ὅτι κοπιᾶζουμε μάταια καὶ παραιτηθήκαμε ἀπὸ τὴν προσπάθειά μας. Ἐμεινε ὅμως μέσα στὴν ψυχὴ μας ἡ περιέργεια νὰ μάθουμε ἂν τυχὸν ὑπάρχει κάποιον κελλὶ στὴν περιοχὴ αὐτή, ποὺ νὰ εἶναι ἀδιόρατο ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρὰ τοῦ δικοῦ μας κελλίου.

Κατεβήκαμε στὴν Μονὴ γιὰ τὴν ἑναρξὴ τῆς Ἀγρουπνίας πρὸς τιμὴν τοῦ Ἁγίου Μεγαλομάρτυρος Γεωργίου καὶ ὁ Γέροντας συνάντησε τὸν π. Σεραφεῖμ, ὁ ὁποῖος ἔχει γνώση τοῦ χώρου καὶ πολὺ ἀγάπη γιὰ τὸν Προφήτη Δανιὴλ καὶ εἶναι ἀλήθεια ὅτι χωρὶς τὸν π. Σεραφεῖμ δὲν θὰ γίνονταν καὶ πολλὰ πράγματα. Τὸν ρώτησε σχετικὰ, ἂν ὑπάρχει ἐκεῖ κοντὰ κάποιον κελλὶ καὶ τοῦ ἀνέφερε τὸ γεγονός. Μᾶς διαβεβαίωσε πὼς ὄχι μόνο κελλὶ δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἀπλὴ παρουσία ὁποιοῦδήποτε ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἂν ὄχι ἀδύνατη, τουλάχιστον ἀδικαιολόγητη ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς πυκνῆς βλάστησης καὶ τοῦ ἀπροσπέλαστου τῆς περιοχῆς.

Μετὰ ἀπὸ ὅλα αὐτὰ ὁ καθένας κράτησε μέσα στὴν ψυχὴ του τὴν ἀνάμνηση αὐτοῦ τοῦ γεγονότος, ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου μέσα στὴν ἀπόλυτη ἐρημιὰ, ἀνυποψίαστου γιὰ τὴν δική μας παρουσία, ποὺ φώναζε ἐνθουσιασμένος καὶ εὐχαριστοῦσε τὸν Θεό. Καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀόρατους ἀσκητὲς νὰ μὴν ἦταν, μόνο καὶ μόνο αὐτὴ ἡ ἐγκάρδια προσευχή του τὴν νύκτα

στὴν μέση τοῦ δάσους, μᾶς ἔδωσε τὸ μήνυμα ποὺ ὁ Θεὸς ἐπέτρεψε. Συμπληρωματικὰ νὰ προσθέσουμε ὅτι ἡ γεννήτρια, ἂν λειτουργοῦσε τὸ βράδυ, θὰ ἦταν σίγουρα ἀνασταλτικὴ αἰτία γιὰ τὴν αὐθόρμητη καὶ ἐξωστρεφὴ ἐκδήλωση τοῦ ἀγνώστου, διότι ἐξ αἰτίας τοῦ θορύβου καὶ τῶν φώτων θὰ γινόταν ἡ παρουσία μας πέρα γιὰ πέρα αἰσθητή. Καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ γνώμη γίνεται πιὸ ἰσχυρὴ, ἂν λάβουμε ὑπ' ὄψη μας τὸ παράδοξο, ὅτι τὴν ἄλλη ἡμέρα τὸ πρωὶ πῆρε ἀμέσως μπροστά.

Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ ἰδιαίτερη «ἐμπειρία μας» κατὰ τὴν τελευταία ἐπίσκεψή μας στὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος. Σὰς τὴν παραθέτουμε, ὅπως ἀκριβῶς τὴ ζήσαμε...



Ἡ ψευτιά καὶ ὁ πνευματικὸς ἐκφυλισμὸς ἀπλώνει μέρα μετὰ τὴν ἡμέρα ἀπάνω στοὺς Ἕλληνες καὶ τοὺς παραμορφώνει. Ἐναν λαὸ ποὺ ξεχωρίζει ἀνάμεσα σ' ὅλα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ ποὺ εἶναι γεμᾶτος πνευματικὴ ὑγεία, πᾶμε νὰ τὸν κάνουμε ἐμεῖς... οἱ λογῆς-λογῆς καλαμαράδες, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι γραμματιζόμενοι, σαχλόν, χωρὶς πνευματικὸ νεῦρο, χωρὶς πνευματικὴ ἀνδροπρέπεια, χωρὶς χαρακτήρα. Οἱ διάφοροι φωστῆρες βαστᾶνε ἀπὸ μία πατέντα στὰ χέρια, καὶ μέρα-νύχτα δουλεύουνε γιὰ νὰ «συγχρονίσουν» τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ἐνῶ στ' ἀληθινὰ σκάβουνε τὸν λάκκο τῆς Ἄμυναλα νευρόσπαστα!..

Ποιὸν θὰ συγχρονίσετε; Αὐτὸ ποὺ λέτε ἐσεῖς «συγχρονισμὸ» καὶ «ἐξέλιξη» εἶναι μία ἄθλια παραμόρφωση, σύμφωνα μ' ἓνα βλακῶδες μοντέλο, ὁποῦ κάνανε οἱ σαρακοστιανοὶ καὶ κάλπικοι ἄνθρωποι, ποὺ τοὺς λέγει ἡ Γραφή «*χλιαρούς*», δηλαδὴ σαχλοῦς, καὶ γιὰ τοὺς ὁποίους λέγει ὁ Θεὸς ὅτι «*οὕτως ὅτι χλιαρὸς εἶ, καὶ οὔτε ζεστός οὔτε ψυχρός, μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου*.» (Αποκάλ. 3:16).

Φώτης Κόντογλου



Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἐκδοσὴ τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντας κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆν».

Μήνυμα τῆς Ἐλληνορθόδοξης Ρωμηοσύνης Πόνος καὶ Ἀγάπη γιὰ τὴν Πονεμένη Πατρίδα μας...

Τοῦ Πανιερωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Λεμεσοῦ Ἀθανασίου,
«Ἐλληνορθόξη Πορεία», ἀνθολόγιο κειμένων, Ἀθήνα 2008.



Εἶναι γεγονός ὅτι καυχόμαστε γιὰ τὴν Ἐλληνική μας καταγωγή καὶ τὴν σχέση μας μὲ τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ μὲ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, ὄχι ἀδίκως βέβαια, παρόλο ποὺ καμμιά φορὰ εἴμαστε λίγο ὑπερβολικοί, ὅμως ἡ ἱστορία δικαίῳνει τὸ Ἐλληνικὸ ἔθνος...

Πάρα πολλοὶ λαοὶ ἄκουσαν τὸν λόγο τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, πάρα πολλοὶ λαοὶ δέχθηκαν τὴν ἐπισκέψεις τῶν Ἀποστόλων, πρὸς στιγμὴν ἔγιναν Χριστιανοί, ἀλλὰ στὸ πέρασμα τῶν αἰώνων εἴτε χάθηκαν γιὰ τὸ ὑποδουλώθηκαν ἀπὸ ἄλλους λαοὺς, εἴτε ἄλλαξαν θρησκεία ἐξολοκλήρου, εἴτε προσχώρησαν σὲ αἰρέσεις καὶ ἄλλες κακοδοξίες οἱ ὁποῖες νόθευσαν τὴν Ἀλήθεια τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου. Ἡ Ἐλληνικὴ φυλὴ, τὸ Ἐλληνικὸ γένος, οἱ Ἕλληνες, παρὰ τὴς πολλῆς δυσκολίας ποὺ εἶχαν, κράτησαν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, κράτησαν τὴν πίστη στὴν Ἐκκλησία, στὴν Ὁρθοδοξία. Καὶ ὄχι μόνο δὲν τὴν ἔχασαν ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴ διάρκεια τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας ἔδωσαν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο καὶ σὲ ἄλλους λαοὺς (π.χ. Ρώσους, Βούλγαρους, Ρουμάνους, Σέρβους, Γεωργιανούς), σὲ ὅλη τὴν ἀνατολικὴ Εὐρώπη.

Οἱ βυζαντινοὶ Ρωμιοὶ πρόγονοί μας ἐπέμεναν, παρόλο ποὺ ἡ Δύση ἀντιδρούσε σὲ αὐτό, ὅτι οἱ νέοι Ὁρθόδοξοι λαοὶ ἔπρεπε νὰ λατρεύουν τὸ Θεὸ στὴν γλώσσα τους. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ οἱ Ἅγιοι Κύριλλος καὶ Μεθόδιος ποὺ μετέφεραν στοὺς Σλάβους τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ἔφτιαξαν ἀλφάβητο, ὥστε νὰ μποροῦν οἱ ἄνθρωποι νὰ ἔχουν δική τους γραπτὴ γλώσσα, νὰ μορφώνονται, νὰ ἐκπολιτίζονται καὶ νὰ ἔχουν τὴ δική τους συνείδηση καὶ νὰ λατρεύουν τὸ Θεὸ στὴν δική τους γλώσσα. Οὐδέποτε χρησιμοποιήθηκε τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἕλληνες ὡς μέσο κατάκτησης τῶν ἄλλων λαῶν. Ἀντίθετα, ἦταν μία προσφορά σ' αὐτοὺς τοῦ φωτὸς τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, ἐπ' ἐλευθερία, ποτὲ μὲ τὴ βία. Δὲν ἔχουμε φαινόμενα στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ἐπιβολῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας μὲ τὴ βία.

Τὸ ἐρώτημα εἶναι, ἐμεῖς οἱ Χριστιανοὶ Ὁρθόδοξοι, πῶς μποροῦμε νὰ ταυτίσουμε τὴν ἀγάπη πρὸς τὴν πατρίδα μας σὲ συνδυασμὸ μὲ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας;

Ὡς Ἕλληνες καὶ ὡς Ὁρθόδοξοι, καυχόμαστε ὅτι μέχρι σήμερα βαστάζουμε τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας ἀπαρασάλευτη καὶ ἀπαραχάρακτη καὶ μαζί μὲ αὐτὴν ἔχουμε τὴν εὐλογία νὰ βαστάζουμε τὸ σταυρὸ, τὸν εὐλογημένον σταυρὸ τῆς Ἐλληνικῆς φυλῆς μέσα στὸν κόσμον, ποὺ κουβάλησε ὅλη αὐτὴ τὴν ἔνδοξή μας ἱστορία. Τὸ Ἐλληνικὸ γένος, ἔχοντας πανάρχαιες ρίζες μέσα στὴν ἱστορία, ἔφτασε σὲ τόσο μεγάλα μέτρα γνώσεως τῆς ἀνθρώπινης σοφίας καὶ ἐλευθερίας, ἔφθασε σὲ τόσο ὑψηλὰ ἐπίπεδα φιλοσοφικῶν πτήσεων καὶ ἀποκαλύψεων ὥστε νὰ θεωρεῖται πρόδρομος τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ.

Νομίζω ὅτι τὸ νὰ εἶναι κανεὶς Ἕλληνας, τὸ νὰ εἶναι κανεὶς Ρωμιός, δὲν εἶναι ὑπερηφάνεια ἀλλὰ εἶναι σταυρὸς καὶ μόνο σὰν σταυρὸ καὶ σὰν διακόνημα μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ κρατήσουμε σήμερα. Εἴμαστε Ἕλληνες, ἔχουμε μία ἱστορία, ὅπως ὁ κάθε λαὸς καὶ ἀναγνωρίζουμε σὲ κάθε ἄνθρωπο αὐτὸ τὸ δικαίωμα νὰ καυχᾶται γιὰ τὴν ἱστορία του, γιὰ τοὺς προγόνους του. Καυχόμαστε σὰν Ἕλληνες ὄχι γιὰ τὴν λατρεία τοὺς ψεύτικους θεοὺς τοῦ Ὀλύμπου, ἀλλὰ καυχόμαστε γιὰ τὴν εἴμαστε ἕνας λαὸς μὲ φιλοσοφικὲς ἀναζητήσεις, καυχόμαστε γιὰ τὴν εἴμαστε ἕνας λαὸς ποὺ γέννησε τὴ δημοκρατία, τὴ φιλοσοφία.

**Τὸ νὰ εἶναι κανεὶς Ἕλληνας,
τὸ νὰ εἶναι κανεὶς Ρωμιός, δὲν
εἶναι ὑπερηφάνεια ἀλλὰ εἶναι
σταυρὸς καὶ μόνο σὰν σταυρὸ
καὶ σὰν διακόνημα μποροῦμε
νὰ τὸ κρατήσουμε.**

Οἱ ἐθνικὲς γιορτὲς εἶναι βέβαια γιορτὲς μνήσεως στὸ νόημα, ἀλλὰ εἶναι καὶ κρίση τῆς ἴδιας τῆς ζωῆς μας. Καὶ πρέπει νὰ ὑφιστάμεθα αὐτὴ τὴν κρίση γιὰ τὴν διαφορετικὰ θὰ μᾶς κρίνει ἡ ἱστορία ὡς ἄνθρώπους ποὺ δὲν διδαχτήκαμε

ποτὲ ἀπὸ τὴν ἴδια τὴν ἱστορία καὶ τὴ πορεία μας.

Ἡ ἱστορία ὀφείλει νὰ μᾶς διδάξει καὶ ἐμεῖς ἂν εἴμαστε ἄξιοι τῶν προγόνων μας, πραγματικὰ παιδιά τους, τότε πρέπει νὰ μάθουμε νὰ διδασκόμαστε, γιὰ τὴν ἔχουμε τὴ βαρῦτατη αὐτὴ κληρονομία νὰ εἴμαστε Ἕλληνες. Αὐτὸ σημαίνει ὅτι ἔχουμε μία ἱστορία ἔνδοξη σὲ πολέμους καὶ σὲ ἀγῶνες. Οἱ Ἕλληνες κρατοῦσαν τὴ σημαία τους, γιὰ νὰ δείξουν ὅτι ἀγωνίζονται ὅπως ἔλεγαν «ὑπὲρ βωμῶν καὶ ἐστιῶν», γιὰ νὰ δείξουν ὅτι ἀγωνίζονται γιὰ συγκεκριμένα ἰδανικά, ἦσαν ἰδεολόγοι, δὲν ἦσαν πολεμιστὲς μὲ τὴν πραγματικὴ σημασία τῆς λέξεως, ἀλλὰ γίνονταν πολεμιστὲς ὅταν ἡ ἀνάγκη τοὺς καλοῦσε καὶ ἦταν πράγματι αὐτὴ ἡ ἀνάγκη ἀδῆρητη, γιὰ νὰ φυλάξουν τὴν πίστη τους καὶ τὴν πατρίδα τους.

Σήμερα, ἀδελφοί μου, καλοῦμαστε νὰ κρατήσουμε αὐτὴ τὴν πατρίδα μέσα στὰ περιθώρια ποὺ οἱ ἥρωές μας τὴν παρέδωσαν καὶ ὅπως αὐτοὶ βάδισαν τὸ δρόμο τους μὲ σύνεση πολλή, μὲ σοφία πολλή, μὲ ὑπομονὴ πολλή.

Οἱ ἥρωές μας ἦταν παιδιά, ἦταν ἄνθρωποι τοῦ τόπου ποὺ βγήκαν μέσα ἀπὸ τὸ καλύτερο λίκνο, τὸ λίκνο τῆς

Ἐκκλησίας καὶ πραγματικὰ στέκει κανεὶς μπροστὰ τοὺς μὲ μεγάλο θαυμασμὸ καὶ μὲ μεγάλη συγκίνηση, γιατί διαβάζει κανεὶς γιὰ τὴ ζωὴ τους, διαβάζει κανεὶς τὶς ἐπιστολὲς τους, διαβάζει αὐτὰ τὰ ὁποῖα ἔγραψαν καὶ ὄχι ἀπλῶς συγκινεῖται συναισθηματικὰ ἀλλὰ τὰ κείμενα αὐτῶν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, αὐτὲς οἱ ἐπιστολὲς τῶν ἡρώων τοῦ '55-'59 (στὴν Κύπρο) μᾶς θυμίζουν συναξάρια, μᾶς θυμίζουν λόγια νεομαρτύρων, μᾶς θυμίζουν τὶς ἐπιστολὲς τῶν μαρτύρων τῆς πίστεως, τὶς ἐπιστολὲς καὶ τὰ γραπτὰ τῶν νεομαρτύρων τῆς τουρκικῆς κατοχῆς στὸν Ἑλληνικὸ χῶρο. Δὲν διαφέρει καθόλου τὸ ἦθος τους ἀπὸ τὸ ἦθος τῶν μαρτύρων τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῶν μαρτύρων τῆς πατρίδας. Διαβάζει κανεὶς τὶς ἐπιστολὲς ἐκεῖνες καὶ βλέπει ποῦ ἔστεκαν αὐτοὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ βλέπει τί ἤθελαν σὲ αὐτὸ τὸν τόπο. Δὲν βλέπεις ἴχνος μισαλλοδοξίας, δὲν βλέπεις ἴχνος τρομοκρατίας, κι ἂς τοὺς κατηγοροῦσαν τότε ὅτι ἦταν τρομοκράτες. Διαβάζει κανεὶς τὶς ἐπιστολὲς τους καὶ βλέπει ἓνα ἰλαρὸ φῶς, τὸ φῶς τῆς πίστεως τὸ ὁποῖο τοὺς ὀδηγοῦσε στὴν ἀγάπη τῆς πατρίδας τους, τοὺς ὀδηγοῦσε στὴν ἀγάπη τῆς ἐλευθερίας ἀλλὰ δὲν τοὺς ὀδηγοῦσε ποτὲ στὸ μίσος ἀκόμα καὶ αὐτῶν ποὺ τοὺς εἶχαν κατακτήσει. Καὶ ἂν χρειάστηκε νὰ κάνουν πόλεμο καὶ νὰ κάνουν ἐπανάσταση, αὐτὸ ἦταν γιατί μὲ τὰ δεδομένα τῆς ἐποχῆς καὶ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης ἦταν μία ἀνάγκη καὶ δὲν μποροῦσαν νὰ κάμουν διαφορετικὰ.

Μέσα στὶς ἐπιστολὲς τῶν μαρτύρων καὶ τῶν ἡρώων βλέπει κανεὶς τὸ Θεό, τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ νὰ βασιλεύει, ποὺ τοὺς ἔδωσε τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ νικήσουν τὸ θάνατο, νὰ ὑπερβοῦν τὸ θάνατο, ποὺ αἰσθάνονταν τὴ ψυχὴ τους νὰ φτερουγίζει γύρω ἀπὸ τὸ θρόνο τοῦ Θεοῦ· τί ἄλλο εἶναι παρὰ τὰ ἴδια βιώματα τῶν μαρτύρων τῆς πίστεως; Δὲν εἶναι αὐτὰ οἱ ἐπισκέψεις τῆς χάριτος τοῦ Θεοῦ οἱ ὁποῖες παρηγοροῦσαν τὶς ψυχὲς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ποὺ βρισκότουσαν μόνο λίγο πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου; Ταυτόχρονα, βλέπει κανεὶς τὴν πίστη τους καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη τους πρὸς τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Τὴν Ἑλλάδα ὄχι ὡς γεωγραφικὸ χῶρο μόνο, ἀλλὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα ὡς τὴν κοιτίδα τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ, τὴ μητέρα τῆς φιλοσοφίας, τὴ μητέρα τῆς Ρωμοσύνης.

Ὁφείλουμε λοιπὸν νὰ μαθαίνουμε μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία μας, νὰ διδασκόμαστε. Ὁφείλουμε νὰ ὀδηγηθοῦμε μπροστὰ στὰ διάφορα γεγονότα τῆς ἱστορίας μας καὶ νὰ κρίνουμε τὸν ἑαυτό μας, σιωπώντας καὶ περιορίζοντας τὰ λόγια μας καὶ τὴν ἐξωστρέφειά μας καὶ νὰ ἀφήσουμε νὰ μᾶς δείξουν ὅλοι αὐτοὶ οἱ μάρτυρες τῆς πατρίδας τὸ δικό τους φρόνημα καὶ νὰ μᾶς μιλήσουν γιὰ τὴν ἱστορία μας, νὰ μᾶς μιλήσουν γιὰ τὴν πατρίδα μας, νὰ μᾶς μιλήσουν γιὰ τὴν παράδοσή μας, νὰ μᾶς δείξουν ἀπὸ ποῖο δέντρο καταγόμαστε

καὶ ἀκόμα, νὰ ἔχουμε τὸ θάρρος νὰ δοῦμε ποῦ εἴμαστε ἡμεῖς σήμερα.

Πρέπει νὰ ἔχουμε τὸ θάρρος νὰ ἀνακαλύψουμε τὸν ἑαυτό μας καὶ νὰ ποῦμε τὴ μεγάλη ἀλήθεια, ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ τόπος, ἐὰν θέλει νὰ ζήσει πρέπει νὰ γίνῃ Ἑλληνικὸς τόπος κατὰ κυριολεξία. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος πρέπει νὰ τύχει παιδείας, παιδείας φιλοσοφικῆς, παιδείας πνευματικῆς, παιδείας Ρωμαϊκῆς, μὲ Ρωμοσύνη ποὺ σημαίνει ὅτι θὰ ἀπολαύσει ὅλη αὐτὴ τὴν ἱστορία τῆς παραδόσεώς μας. Οὔτε ἀρχαιολάτρες εἴμαστε ἀλλὰ οὔτε καὶ βυζαντινόπληκτοι εἴμαστε. Ξέρουμε ὅτι ὁ τόπος ζύμωσε τὴν ἀρχαία φιλοσοφία καὶ παράδοση μὲ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία. Καὶ Ὁρθόδοξος σημαίνει ἐλεύθερος. Ὁρθόδοξος καὶ Ρωμιὸς σημαίνει ἄνθρωπος χωρὶς παρωπίδες, σημαίνει ἄνθρωπος ὁ ὁποῖος ἀγαπᾷ τὸν ἄλλο καὶ δὲν φοβᾶται τὸν ἄλλο ἄνθρωπο, γιατί ἔχει ἀρχοντιά, γιατί δὲν εἶναι κομπλεξικός, γιατί δὲν αἰσθάνεται μειονεκτικὰ μπροστὰ σὲ κανένα, γιατί εἶναι περήφανος γι' αὐτὸ ποὺ εἶναι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ περηφάνια δὲν εἶναι ἀλαζονεία ἀλλὰ εἶναι τὸ «γνώθι σ' αὐτὸν» τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἑλλήνων· εἶναι αὐτὴ ἡ γνώση τῆς βαρύτατης κληρονομιάς τὴν ὁποῖα κουβαλοῦμε πάνω μας. Αὐτὴ ἡ Ρωμαϊκὴ ὑπερηφάνια μπορεῖ νὰ ὑπηρετήσῃ καὶ ὄχι νὰ ὑπηρετεῖται, μπορεῖ νὰ σταθεῖ καὶ νὰ ἀγκαλιάσῃ τὸν κόσμο ὅλο καὶ νὰ γίνῃ διάκονος τῆς ἀνθρωπότητας.

Ἐμεῖς σὰν Ρωμιοὶ πάντοτε εἴχαμε τὴ μεγάλη ὑπομονὴ ἢ ὁποῖα ἦταν γέννημα τῆς πίστεως. Καὶ ὁ πιστὸς ἄνθρωπος βλέπει πίσω ἀπὸ τὰ φαινόμενα, πέραν τῶν φαινομενικῶν πραγμάτων. Δὲν μᾶς ἐνδιαφέρει ἡμᾶς ἂν μᾶς μισοῦν ἢ ὄχι οἱ Τοῦρκοι. Ὁ Θεὸς τί θὰ πεῖ στὸ τέλος. Δὲν θὰ γίνῃ τίποτα περισσότερο καὶ τίποτα λιγότερο ἀπὸ ὅσα ὁ Θεὸς θὰ ἐπιτρέψει. Πρέπει νὰ μάθουμε νὰ ἔχουμε τελεία ἐμπιστοσύνη στὸ Θεό. Ἐὰν ἐλπίζεις στὸ Θεὸ καὶ πιστεύεις ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι Πατέρας σου, τότε λοιπὸν γιατί φοβάσαι;

Ἄς ἀνοίξουμε τὸ δρόμο στὴν ἀληθινὴ παιδεία· νὰ φτιάξουμε πρῶτα ἀνθρώπους ἐλεύθερους καὶ ἂν φτιάξῃς ἀνθρώπους ἐλεύθερους, τότε θὰ ἀποκτήσεις καὶ πατρίδα ἐλεύθερη. Ἄν ἔχεις ἀνθρώπους δούλους, τότε καὶ ἡ ἐλεύθερη πατρίδα θὰ γίνῃ δούλη. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἶναι αὐτὸς ποὺ ἐλευθερώνεται πρῶτα καὶ ὕστερα ἐλευθερώνει καὶ γεωγραφικὰ τὸ τόπο του. Ἄν ἐνδιατρίψουμε στὴν ἱστορία μας, ἂν γνωρίσουμε τὴν παράδοσή μας, ἂν ἀσκήσουμε καλόβουλη καὶ θετικὴ κριτικὴ στὶς παρελθούσες πράξεις καὶ ἐνέργειές μας, ἂν εἴμαστε ἔντιμοι, ἀνυστερόβουλοι καὶ εἰλικρινεῖς, τότε θὰ ἀνακαλύψουμε ὅτι ὁ τόπος γεννᾷ ἡρώες, ὁ τόπος γεννᾷ μάρτυρες, ὁ τόπος γεννᾷ ἡγέτες, ὅπως τοὺς ἡγέτες οἱ ὁποῖοι σήκωσαν τὸν τόπο αὐτὸ καὶ ἔδωσαν τὴν ἀνάσταση στὴ πατρίδα μας καὶ στὴ φυλὴ μας. Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μήνυμα τῆς Ρωμοσύνης, τοῦ πόνου καὶ τῆς ἀγάπης γιὰ τὴ πατρίδα μας!

Ἡ Πόρνη τῆς Παλιᾶς μας Γειτονιάς

Τῆς Ντόρας Πολίτη.



Αὐτὴ ἦταν τὸ μί-
σμα. Οὔτε ὁ σα-
ράφης ποὺ ἔπαιρνε
τὶς χρυσὲς βέρες των
μεροκαματιάρηδων γιὰ
δύο ἐνέσεις πενικιλίνης.
Οὔτε ἡ μεγαλοκυρία
τοῦ ἀρχοντόσπιτου
ποὺ ξυλοφόρτωνε ἀλύ-
πητα τὴν παρακώρη τῆς Περσεφόνη. Οὔτε βέβαια
τ' ἀφεντικὸ τοῦ ἀρχοντόσπιτου ποὺ σορομαδοῦσε
τὴν Περσεφόνη ὅταν κοιόταν ἡ μεγαλοκυρία. Ὅχι
αὐτοί, ἡ Βασιλεία ἦταν τὸ μίσμα. Γιατί, αὐτὴ ἔπαιρνε
ἀντίτιμο ὅταν τὴν «σορομαδοῦσαν» οἱ πελάτες στὴν
κάμαρα τοῦ συνοικισμοῦ στὴ Χρυσομαλλοῦσα. Ἦταν
τότε, στὰ χρόνια τῆς λαϊκῆς γειτονιάς, τῶν ἀνθισμένων
περιβολῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς χαμένης ἀθρότητας.

Πελατεία μεγάλη δὲν εἶχε ἡ Βασιλεία. Ἦταν
κακομουτσοῦνη, τὴν εἶχαν πάρει καὶ τὰ χρόνια. Ἡ
Βασιλεία, ποτὲ δὲν μάλωνε μὲ τὴ γειτονιά, κι ἄς
ἔφτυναν στὸ κατόπι τῆς! Περνοῦσε μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὰ
κατώφλια τῶν νοικοκυράδων, μὲ ψηλὰ κρατημένο τὸ
κεφάλι. Σὰν νὰ βλεπε μόνο τὶς κορφὲς τῶν δέντρων.
Πιὸ ψηλὰ δὲν θὰ τολμοῦσε ν' ἀτενίσει. Δὲν ἔσμιγε
τὰ βλέμματα τῶν ἄλλων ἡ Βασιλεία. Λὲς κι ἂν δὲν
ἔβλεπε, δὲν θὰ τὴν ἔβλεπαν κιόλας. Καὶ μόνο σὰν
τύχαινε ξώφαλτσα ν' ἀνταμῶσεις τὰ μάτια τῆς, σ'
ἔπιανε ἓνα σύγκρουο ἀλλιώτικο καὶ δὲν ἤξερες ἀπὸ
ποῦ νὰ φύγεις.

Θυμᾶμαι ἐκεῖνα τὰ μάτια, μὲ τοὺς μελανιασμένους
κύκλους ὀλόγυρα. Εἶχαν κάτι σὰν ἰκεσία, σὰν περαστικὴ
λάμψη ἀγνότητας. Κάτι, σὰν ἄφωνο πόνου δαρμένου
σκυλιοῦ. Κάτι σὰν βουβὸ «κατηγορῶ», σὰν γροθιὰ
ποὺ σ' ἔβρισκε στὸ στομάχι καὶ πονοῦσες μέχρι βαθιὰ
στὴ... συνείδηση! Ἴσως γι' αὐτὸ τὴν ὑπερασπίστηκε
σὲ δίκη μιὰ φορὰ ὁ σπουδαῖος δικηγόρος Γεώργιος
Βογιατζῆς. Γιὰ τὸ βουβὸ «κατηγορῶ» ἴσως γιὰ τὸ πόνου
τοῦ δαρμένου σκυλιοῦ στὰ μάτια τῆς. «Μέγας εἶσαι
κύριε καὶ θαυμαστά τα ἔργα σου...».

Οἱ «παντοθεῖς» τῆς γειτονιάς, ἡ κυρὰ-Σοφία καὶ ἡ
κυρὰ-Σταυρίτσα, ἔλεγαν πὼς ἡ Βασιλεία κάνει καὶ
ψυχικά, πὼς ἡ χήρα τοῦ μεθύστακα μὲ τ' ὄρφανὸ τὴ
Βαγγελούδα ζοῦσαν γιατί ἡ πόρνη φρόντιζε. Καὶ πὼς
σὰν πῆρε φωτιὰ ὁ παλιοπύργος τῆς φαμελίτισσας
οἰκογένειας κι ἀπομείναν στὸ δρόμο, ἡ πόρνη πάλι
ἔστειλε παπλώματα καὶ προικιὰ γιὰ τὰ κορίτσια καὶ
θέλησε νὰ μὴν μαθευτεῖ τὸ χερσικό.

Κι ἄλλα πολλὰ, πάρα πολλὰ: πὼς ἄφηγε νύχτα καντήλια
χρυσὰ στὴν Παναγιὰ τὴ Χρυσομαλλοῦσα, πὼς ξεθάβαν

μὲ δικὰ τῆς ἔξοδα ξεχασμένους παρακατιανούς, τοὺς
ἔκανε καὶ κασάκια μὲ τ' ὄνομά τους ἀπ' ἔξω. Ἔτσι λέγαν
πὼς ἦταν ἡ Βασιλεία, ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ ἔξεραν. Ἐγὼ μόνο
ἔξερω—τὸ θυμᾶμαι σὰν ὄνειρο, σὰν παραμῦθι τάχα—
πὼς πίσω ἀπὸ τὸ θολὸ τζάμι τῆς στενῆς τῆς πόρτας μὲ
τὸ ξεθωριασμένο κουρτινάκι, ἔβλεπα ὅλα τα χρόνια
τῆς παιδικῆς μου ζωῆς, ἓνα καντήλι πάντα ἀναμμένο.
Κρεμόταν ἀπὸ τὸ χαμηλὸ ταβάνι, μπροστὰ σ' ἓνα καὶ
μοναδικὸ εἰκόνημα κάποιας θλιμμένης Παναγιᾶς.

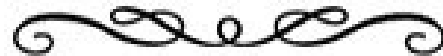
Ἐκεῖνη τὴ Μεγάλῃ Παρασκευῇ στὶς Ὁρες, ἡ
Βασιλεία τόλμησε τὸ παράτολμο. Ἐφερε στὴν
ἐκκλησιὰ ἓνα στεφάνι καμωμένο ἀπὸ ροζ μαγιάτικα
τριαντάφυλλα καὶ μὼβ βιολέτες κι ἓνα χαρτὶ γεμάτο
σπιτικὸ μοσχολίβανο. Ἦταν τὰ δῶρα τῆς γιὰ τὸν
Ἐσταυρωμένο. Μισοκρύφτηκε πίσω ἀπὸ τ' ἀνθισμένα
φλάμπουρα τῆς ἐκκλησιᾶς κι ἔδωσε σ' ἐμᾶς τὰ παιδιὰ
τὰ φτωχὰ τῆς δῶρα.

«Γιὰ τὸν Ἐπιτάφιο—εἶπε—δῶστε τα στὸν ἐπίτροπο».
Δὲν χρειάστηκε, ἐκεῖνος εἶχε δεῖ. Ἀφηνιασμένος θαρρεῖς
ὁ «εὐσεβῆς» τοῦτος, ἄρπαξε τὸ στεφάνι τῆς Βασιλείας,
τὸ πέταξε στὸ χῶμα καὶ τὸ τσαλαπάτησε μὲ λύσσα. Καὶ
τὸ μοσχολίβανο τὴν ἴδια τύχη εἶχε. «Μὴν σὲ ξαναδῶ
παλιοβρῶμα κοντὰ στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ θὰ σοῦ ξυρίσω τὸ
κεφάλι...».

Τὸ ἴδιο βράδυ, ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος ἀνέβαινε τὴ Χρυσο-
μαλλοῦσης μὲ τὸ πιστὸ ποίμνιο ν' ἀκολουθεῖ: «Αἱ
γενεαὶ πᾶσαι» ἦταν ἐκεῖ, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὴ Βασιλεία.
Ἐκεῖ, στὸ ἀνηφοράκι τῆς Ἀδαίου, κρυμμένη μὲς τὸ
σκοτάδι, πεσμένη στὰ γόνατα ἦταν ἡ πόρνη. Ἐκλαιγε,
σερνόταν μὲς τὴ σκόνη, τὰ μαῦρα μαλλιά τῆς δεμένα
μέσα στὸ πένθιμο μαντήλι. Παιδὶ ἐγὼ καὶ κοιτάξα.
Δὲν μὲ γελοῦσαν τὰ μάτια μου, εἶδα κι ἄκουσα... Μὰ
νὰ 'ταν ἡ Βασιλεία, τούτη ἡ μαυροφοροῦσα ἡ μὴν
ἦταν ἡ Μαγδαληνή;

Τὸ βράδυ στ' ὄνειρό μου, στὸ ξύπνιο μου, τί νὰ 'ταν
ἄραγε, δὲν τὸ ξεδιάλυνα ποτέ, σὰ νὰ μοῦ φάνηκε πὼς
ἀπὸ τὸ κουβούκλιο τοῦ Ἐπιταφίου σηκώθηκε ἓνας
ὀλοφώτεινος Χριστὸς μὲ τὸ στεφάνι τῆς Βασιλείας
ὀλόγυρα στὸ μέτωπο. Ἐκεῖνο ποὺ ποδοπάτησε ὁ
ἐπίτροπος. Καὶ πὼς πῆγε κοντὰ στὴ γονατισμένη πόρνη.
Μόνος Ἐκεῖνος ἀπ' τὸ πλῆθος. Μήπως καὶ στὴν ἐπίγεια
ζωὴ Του ἔτσι δὲν ἔκανε; Μὰ πάλι παιδὶ ἤμουν, ποιὸς
παίρνει στὰ σοβαρὰ τα «νεύρατα» τῶν παιδιῶν;

Πολλὰ χρόνια μετὰ, ἔμαθα πὼς ἡ Βασιλεία πέθανε
μια Μεγάλῃ Πέμπτῃ. Τὴν κηδέψανε, θέλοντας καὶ μὴ,
Μεγάλῃ Παρασκευῇ, μαζί μ' Ἐκεῖνον!...



Ἄν δὲν ἔχεις ταπεινώση πνευματικὴ ἢ προσευχὴ
πνευματικὴ, ἀπόκτησε ἔστω σωματικὴ. Κι ἀπ'
αὐτὴν θὰ σοῦ ἔρθει καὶ ἡ πνευματικὴ.

«Μικρὸς Εὐεργετινὸς» [ἐκδ. Ἰ. Μ. Παρακλήτου]

Διδάγματα από τὰ Γεγονότα τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου τὸ 1955

Γράφει ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος Χολέβας, Πολιτικός Ἐπιστήμων.

Τὸ διήμερο 6-7 Σεπτεμβρίου 1955, ὁ Ἑλληνισμὸς τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως βίωσε ἓνα ἄγριο πογκρόμ μὲ δύο θανατώσεις κληρικῶν, βιασμούς, προπηλακισμούς, καὶ ἀμέτρητες καταστροφές κοιμητηρίων, ναῶν, οἰκιῶν καὶ καταστημάτων. Ὁ ἀφηνιασμένος τουρκικὸς ὄχλος χρησιμοποιήθηκε ἀπὸ τὶς εἰδικές ὑπηρεσίες ἀνορθόδοξου πολέμου τοῦ τουρκικοῦ στρατοῦ γιὰ νὰ τρομοκρατήσει τὴν πολυπληθῆ τότε Ἑλληνορθόδοξη κοινότητα καὶ γιὰ νὰ τὴν ὀδηγήσει, ὅπως καὶ ἐγινε, στὸν σταδιακὸ ξεριζωμὸ.

Τὰ Σεπτεμβριανά, ὅπως ἔχουν πλέον καταγραφεῖ, ἦταν τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα μακροχρονίου σχεδιασμοῦ, τὸν ὁποῖο τηρεῖ μὲ ἀκρίβεια τὸ τουρκικὸ κράτος στὰ ἔθνικα θέματα, παρὰ τὴν ἐναλλαγὴ κυβερνήσεων.

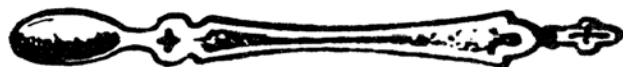
Ἀπὸ τὸ 1914, ὅταν ἄρχισε ἡ γενοκτονία τῶν Μικρασιατῶν—πέντε χρόνια προτοῦ ἀποβιβαστεῖ ὁ Ἑλληνικὸς Στρατός—μὲ ἀποκορύφωμα τὴ γενοκτονία τῶν Ποντίων Ἑλλήνων (1919-1922), μέχρι καὶ σήμερα ἡ πολιτικὴ τοῦ τουρκικοῦ κράτους κινεῖται σὲ δύο σταθεροὺς ἄξονες: (1) Τὴ δημιουργία ὁμοιογενοῦς ἔθνικοῦ κράτους μὲ τὴν ἐξόντωση ἢ ἐκδίωξη τῶν Χριστιανικῶν μειονοτήτων. (2) Τὴν ἐπέκταση τῆς στρατιωτικῆς, οἰκονομικῆς καὶ πολιτικῆς ἐπιρροῆς τῆς Τουρκίας πρὸς ὅλες τὶς κατευθύνσεις καὶ κυρίως πρὸς τὸν ἐδαφικὸ χῶρο τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. Χαρακτηριστικὸ παράδειγμα, ἡ εἰσβολὴ τοῦ Ἀττίλα στὴν Κύπρο τὸ 1974.

Στὴν ἐπίτευξη τῶν τουρκικῶν στόχων ἔχει βοηθήσει δυστυχῶς ἡ ἀφέλεια καὶ ἡ ἱστορικὴ ἀμνησία ποὺ ἐπιδεικνύει μερικὲς φορὲς ἡ ἑλληνικὴ πλευρά. Κάθε ὑποχώρησή μας δὲν ἐκλαμβάνεται ἀπὸ τὴν Ἄγκυρα ὡς φιλικὴ σχέση μεταξὺ γειτόνων, ἀλλὰ ὡς ἔνδειξη ἀδυναμίας. Θυμίζω τὰ ἱστορικὰ γεγονότα: κατὰ τὴν περίοδο 1928-1932, ὁ Ἐλευθέριος Βενιζέλος καλλιέργησε τὴν Ἑλληνοτουρκικὴ φιλία μὲ τὸν Κεμάλ Ἀτατούρκ. Ἡ ἀνταμοιβή μας ἦταν τὸ «βαρλικ βεργισί». Δηλαδή, κατὰ τὴ διάρκεια τοῦ Β΄ Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου, οἱ πολυάριθμοι Ἕλληνες (Ρωμηοὶ) τῆς Πόλης φορολογήθηκαν ὑπέρογκα καὶ ἄδικα. Ὅποιος δὲν μποροῦσε νὰ πληρώσει ἀποστελλόταν σὲ κάτεργα γιὰ καταναγκαστικὰ ἔργα καὶ πολλοὶ πέθαναν ἀπὸ τὶς κακουχίες. Τὸ 1952 ἡ Ἑλλάδα, σὲ ἔνδειξη φιλίας πρὸς τοὺς γείτονες, ἐπέτρεψε τὴ λειτουργία τουρκόφωνου γυμνασίου στὴ Θράκη μὲ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Τούρκου προέδρου τῆς Δημοκρατίας Τζελάλ Μπαγιάρ καὶ ἀναγκασε—κακῶς—ὄλους τοὺς μουσουλμάνους τῆς Θράκης νὰ μαθαίνουν τουρκικά. Ἡ ἀνταμοιβή μας ἦταν τὰ Σεπτεμβριανά τοῦ 1955.

Κάτι ποὺ πρέπει νὰ προσέχουμε πάντα εἶναι ἡ συνήθης τουρκικὴ τακτικὴ τῆς «προβοκάτσιας», δηλαδή τῶν σκηνοθετημένων ἐπεισοδίων. Τὸν Σεπτέμβριο τοῦ 1955 ὅλα ἄρχισαν ὅταν ἐξεργάγη μίαν βόμβα στὸν ἀυλόγυρο τοῦ τουρκικοῦ προξενείου στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη, ποὺ χαρακτηρίζεται σὰν τὸ σπῆτι ὅπου γεννήθηκε ὁ Κεμάλ Ἀτατούρκ. Τὸ κλίμα στὶς σχέσεις τῶν δύο χωρῶν ἦταν φορτισμένο λόγω τοῦ ἐνωτικοῦ-ἀπελευθερωτικοῦ ἀγῶνα τῶν Ἑλληνοκυπρίων κατὰ τῶν Βρετανῶν ἀπὸ τὴν 1/4/1955.

Σὲ ἐλάχιστες ὥρες οἱ ἐφημερίδες στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη κυκλοφόρησαν μὲ πηχυαίους τίτλους—ἄρα κάποιον κέντρο τοὺς εἶχε εἰδοποιήσει πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν ἔκρηξη. Ὁ ὄχλος ἐφοδιάστηκε μὲ ὁμοιόμορφους λοστούς—ἄρα ὑπῆρχε συντονισμὸς πίσω ἀπὸ τὴ μαζικὴ καταστροφὴ ἑλληνικῶν περιουσιῶν. Ὅπως ἀπεδείχθη, τὴ βόμβα τὴν εἶχε βάλει σκοπίμως ἓνας ὑπάλληλος τοῦ τουρκικοῦ προξενείου, ὁ ὁποῖος ἔπειτα ἀπὸ λίγα χρόνια ἀνταμείφθηκε μὲ θέση νομάρχου καὶ μὲ ἄλλα ἀξιώματα στὴν Τουρκία. Θυμίζω ὅτι ἡ μέθοδος τῆς σκηνοθεσίας ἐπαναλήφθηκε καὶ τὸν Ἰανουάριο τοῦ 1996, ὅταν ἡ δῆθεν τυχαία προσάραξη ἑνὸς τουρκικοῦ φορτηγοῦ πλοίου ὀδήγησε στὴν κρίση τῶν Ἴμιων.

Ἀξίζει νὰ διδασκόμαστε ἀπὸ τὶς συνήθειες μεθόδους τῆς τουρκικῆς πολιτικῆς γιὰ νὰ μὴν ξαναβρεθοῦμε πρὸ ἀπροόπτου. Τὸ 1955 ἡ κυβέρνησις τοῦ Ἀντὸν Μεντερές, μὲ δηλώσεις τοῦ ὑπουργοῦ Ἐξωτερικῶν Ζορλοῦ καὶ ἄλλων ὑπευθύνων, ἔκανε δημοσίως γνωστὴ τὴ σύνδεση τοῦ Κυπριακοῦ μὲ τὰ θέματα τοῦ Αἰγαίου καὶ τῆς Θράκης. Σήμερα ὁ Τούρκος ΥΠΕΞ Ἀχμέτ Νταβούτογλου κάνει γνωστὴ μέσω τῶν βιβλίων του τὴν ἐπιθυμία τῆς Ἄγκυρας νὰ μεταφέρει τὸ «πεῖραμα» Κύπρου στὴ δυτικὴ Θράκη. Δὲν κινδυνολογῶ, ἀλλὰ, ὅπως ἔλεγε ὁ ἀείμνηστος τουρκολόγος Νεοκλῆς Σαρρῆς, ἡ Τουρκία πάντα προαναγγέλλει τὰ σχέδιά της...



Ἡ ἀέλθει καιρὸς ποὺ ὄχι οἱ διωγμοὶ ἀλλὰ τὰ χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ αὐτοῦ του κόσμου θὰ ἀπομακρύνουν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Καὶ θὰ χαθοῦν ψυχὲς πολὺ περισσότερες ἀπὸ ὅτι τὸν καιρὸ τῶν διωγμῶν. Ἀπὸ τὴν μία θὰ χρυσώνουν τοὺς τρούλους καὶ θὰ βάζουν ἐπάνω τους τοὺς σταυροὺς καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη παντοῦ θὰ βασιλεύει κακία καὶ ψεῦδος. Ἡ ἀληθινὴ Ἐκκλησία πάντα θὰ διώκεται. Αὐτοὶ ποὺ θέλουν νὰ σωθοῦν θὰ σώζονται μὲ τὶς ἀσθένειες καὶ τὶς θλίψεις. Ὁ τρόπος ποὺ θὰ γίνονται οἱ διωγμοὶ θὰ εἶναι πολὺ πονηρὸς καὶ θὰ εἶναι πολὺ δύσκολο κανεὶς νὰ προβλέψει τοὺς διωγμοὺς. Φοβερὸς θὰ εἶναι αὐτὸς ὁ καιρὸς, καὶ πολὺ λυπᾶμαι αὐτοὺς ποὺ θὰ ζοῦνε τότε...

Ὅσιος Σεραφεῖμ Βίριτσα (+1949)

Αρχιεπίσκοπος Χρυσάνθος (Φιλιππίδης), Ο Αρχιεπίσκοπος του 1940

Ιστορία και Νέα Πνευματική Αντίδραση, σελίδα 83.



Στὰ 1881 γεννήθηκε στην σκλαβωμένη Κομοτηνή· ἡ ζωὴ του πέρασε μέσα ἀπὸ συμπληγάδες μὰ θὰ μείνει βαθειὰ στὴν μνήμη τῆς ἱστορίας τὸ βῆμα του, γιατί ὁ ἱεράρχης τῶν Ποντίων, ὁ Μητροπολίτης Τραπεζοῦντος Χρυσάνθος στήθηκε στητὸς καὶ εἶπε ΟΧΙ, ὅταν ὅλοι λέγανε ΝΑΙ ἀπ' ἄκρου σ' ἄκρου στὴν Εὐρώπη.

Τιμημένος ὅσο κανένας Μητροπολίτης Τραπεζοῦντος (1913-1938), στὰ δύσκολα χρόνια, στάθηκε στὸν Ἑλληνισμό τῆς Μαύρης θάλασσας καὶ στὶς πατρογονικές ἐστίες ἀλλὰ καὶ μετὰ στὴν προσφυγιά. Πρωταγωνίστησε γιὰ τὴν σωτηρία τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ στὴν Μακεδονία. Ἀποκρισάριος τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου ἐν Ἀθήναις, υπεύθυνος σὲ πολλὲς ἀποστολὲς ἐθνικῆς σημασίας στὴν Τιφλίδα, τὴν Ἀλβανία, τὸ Βελιγράδι, τὴν Συρία καὶ ἀλλοῦ. Λόγιος καὶ γλωσσομαθής, ἀφιέρωσε τὸ ταλέντο του σὲ μελέτες γιὰ τὴν ἐκκλησία τῆς Τραπεζοῦντος τὸ 1933, τὸ 1937 ἀναγορεύτηκε ἐπίτιμος διδάκτωρ τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου τῶν Ἀθηνῶν καὶ τὸ 1940 ὀνομάστηκε Ἀκαδημαϊκός. Ἀπὸ τὸ 1938-1941 ἦταν Αρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀθηνῶν.

Ο Πόλεμος τοῦ 1940

Ὁ Αρχιεπίσκοπος Χρυσάνθος σ' αὐτὸν τὸν πόλεμο πολέμησε μαζί μὲ τὸ μαχόμενο ἔθνος ἀπὸ τὴν πρώτη στιγμή καὶ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰταλοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τοῦ Γερμανοῦ εἰσβολέα. Δὲν ὑπῆρξε ἐνέργεια πὸν πρέπει νὰ κάνει Ὁρθόδοξος Ἱεράρχης πὸν νὰ μὴ τὴν ἔκανε, δίπλα στὸν μαχητὴ ἀλλὰ καὶ δίπλα στὸν τραυματία. Παρηγορητὴς τῆς χήρας καὶ ἐμψυχωτὴς τοῦ πολεμιστῆ, ἀκούραστα στήριξε τὸν ἄνισα μαχόμενο Ἑλληνισμό, καὶ ὅταν πλησίαζαν τὰ δύσκολα, πὸν πεισματικὰ πύκνωνε τὶς γραμμὲς μὴ καὶ περάσει ὁ ἐχθρός.

Συνθηκολόγηση

Ἄς δοῦμε τί γράφει στὸ ἡμερολόγιό του ὁ Αρχιεπίσκοπος Χρυσάνθος:

«29/4/1941—Πληροφοροῦμαι ὅτι ὁ στρατηγὸς Τσολάκογλου ἀφοῦ σύνηψε τὴν ἐπονείδιστον συμφωνία μὲ τοὺς Γερμανοὺς ἐπάνω στὸ μέτωπο, κατελθάνει ἐς Ἀθήνας πρόκειται ἐντολὴ τῶν Γερμανῶν νὰ σχηματίσει κυβέρνησιν. Τοῦτο μὲ στεναχωρεῖ πολὺ διότι θὰ περιπέσωμεν εἰς δεινὰ. Προτιμότερον

μόνοι οἱ Γερμανοὶ νὰ ἔχουν τὴν εὐθύνη τῆς διοικήσεως ὅποτε θὰ εἶναι προσεκτικότεροι.»

Πράγματι λοιπὸν, οἱ Γερμανοὶ εὐθεὶς μόλις μπῆκαν στὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ ἐνῶ ἀκόμα ἡ Ἑλλάδα πολεμοῦσε στὴν Κρήτη, πραγματοποιήσαν συναντήσεις μὲ πρόθυμους παράγοντες γιὰ νὰ φανεῖ ἡ κατοχὴ μὴ ὀμαλὴ συνέχεια, ὅλα νὰ ξεχαστοῦν. Μῆτε αἷμα στὰ ὄχυρα χύθηκε, μῆτε ἡ Ἑλλάδα εἶπε ΟΧΙ, μὴ παρένθεση πὸν πρέπει νὰ πάρουμε μὴ γόμα καὶ νὰ τὴν σβήσουμε ὅτι τάχα δὲν ἔγινε τίποτα. Ὅλοι πρόθυμοι στρατιωτικοί, κάθε εἶδους παράγοντες καὶ ἡ ἐκκλησία θὰ κάνουμε μὴ μασκαράτα καὶ θὰ ξυπνήσουμε μὲ τὸν μηχανισμό ὅπως ἦταν μὲ μὴ κυβέρνησιν πὸν διέθετε Ἑλληνικὰ πιστοποιητικὰ γέννησης, καὶ ὅλα θὰ εἶναι καλὰ ἀγγελικὰ πλασμένα. Κάποιοι Ἰταλοὶ καὶ Γερμανοὶ θὰ παρακολουθοῦσαν καὶ θὰ ἔλεγχαν τὰ πάντα, κάποιες μικρὲς ἀλλαγὲς στὰ σύνορα ὑπὲρ τῶν Βουλγάρων καὶ τῶν Ἰταλῶν (πάει ἡ Θράκη, ἡ Δ. Μακεδονία, τὰ Ἐπτάνησα ἢ Ἡπειρος καὶ οἱ Κυκλάδες), καὶ πὰ σύμμαχοι εἴμαστε βοηθήστε καὶ ἐσεῖς τώρα μὲ τὸ αἷμα σας τὴν ἐπιβολὴ τῆς νέας τάξης τοῦ Χίτλερ. Καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ στὸ Ἑλλῆ; Καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ μὲ τὰ κομμένα πόδια; Καὶ οἱ χῆρες καὶ τὰ ὄρφανά τῆς βομβαρδισμένης Πάτρας;

Τὰ «ΟΧΙ» τῆς Κατοχῆς

27/4/1941: ὁ Αρχιεπίσκοπος ἦρθε πρῶτὸν στὴν Αρχιεπισκοπὴ. «Δὲν θὰ λειτουργήσω σήμερα γιὰ νὰ εἶμαι ἔτοιμος γιὰ ὅτι προκύψει», εἶπε, καὶ ἔστειλε τὸν Αρχιδιάκονο Νικόδημο (μετέπειτα Μητροπολίτη Πατρῶν) νὰ τελέσει τὴν λειτουργία, λέγοντάς του: «Πρόσεχε παιδί μου ἔχε τὸ νοῦ σου μὴ καὶ σὲ εἰδοποιήσω».

Κυριακὴ τοῦ Θωμᾶ λοιπὸν κήρυξε ἀπ' ἄμβωνος ὁ Αρχιδιάκονος, καὶ κάποια στιγμή εἶδε ἕνα μαντατοφόρο νὰ τοῦ κάνει νόημα: Γρηγόρα στὸν Αρχιεπίσκοπο. Τελείωσε τὴν λειτουργία καὶ πῆγε στὸ γραφεῖο του καὶ τὸν βρῆκε νὰ κλαίει βλέποντας τὴν σημαία τῶν Ναζὶ νὰ κυματίζει στὸν Παρθενῶνα.

Σύντομα, κάθε εἶδους μαντατοφόροι ἄρχισαν νὰ φτάνουν στὸ γραφεῖο τοῦ Χρυσάνθου, μὲ κάθε εἶδους προτάσεις, ἀπειλές, ἐκβιασμούς, γλνκλόγια. Καὶ ὁ Χρυσάνθος ἐκεῖνες τὶς ἡμέρες θυμῆθηκε τὸν Μητροπολίτη Τραπεζοῦντος καὶ μὲ Ποντιακὸ πείσμα εἶπε τέσσερα βασικὰ ΟΧΙ.

Πρῶτο ΟΧΙ

Ἦρθε μὴ ἐπιτροπὴ καὶ πρότεινε γιὰ τὸ καλὸ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ λαοῦ (καὶ γιὰ νὰ καλοπιόσουνε τὸν κατακτητὴ), νὰ πᾶνε μὲ μπροστάρη τὴν θρησκευτικὴ μας ἡγεσία νὰ παραδώσουμε τὴν πόλη τῶν Ἀθηνῶν στοὺς Γερμανοὺς, καὶ Χρυσάνθος ἀπάντησε: «Οἱ Ἕλληνες Ἱεράρχες δὲν παραδίδουν πόλεις στὸν ἐχθρό, καθῆκον ἔχουν νὰ ἐργαστοῦν διὰ τὴν ἀπελευθέρωση».

Δεύτερο ΟΧΙ

Ἦρθαν κάποιοι καὶ εἶπαν ἂς κάνουμε κάτι νὰ μᾶς πάρουν ἀπὸ καλὸ μάτι οἱ κατακτητές, μὴ τοὺς πᾶμε πιά κόντρα· τελείωσε ὁ πόλεμος, καὶ τί νὰ κάνουμε βρὲ παιδιά; Δὲν κάνουμε μία δοξολογία στὴν Μητρόπολη; Καὶ ἀγρίεψε τὸ μάτι τοῦ Μητροπολίτη Τραπεζοῦντος... «ΔΟΞΟΛΟΓΙΑ; Δοξολογία δὲν ἔχει θέσιν ἐπὶ τῇ ὑποδουλώσει τῆς Πατρίδος μας, ἡ ὥρα τῆς δοξολογίας θὰ εἶναι ἄλλη».

Τρίτο ΟΧΙ

Μίας καὶ οἱ ραγιαδες δὲν μποροῦσαν νὰ τὸν πείσουν νὰ σκύψει, εἶπαν νὰ τὸν θαμπώσουν. Τοῦ ζήτησαν νὰ πάει νὰ δεῖ τὸν στρατηγὸ Στούμμε καὶ τότε ὑποχώρησε Χρῦσανθος. «Θὰ τὸν ἀναμένω» εἶπε. Ὁ στρατηγὸς πῆρε τὰ πόδια του καὶ πῆγε στὸ Ἀρχιεπισκοπικὸ γραφεῖο. Ἀπὸ τὴν πρώτη στιγμή κατάλαβε ὁ Γερμανὸς στρατηγὸς ὅτι δὲν εἶχε νὰ κάνει μὲ προσκυνημένο ἀνθρώπακι ἀλλὰ μὲ ἠγέτη ποὺ ὑπερασπιζόταν Θεομοπύλες καὶ τὸ ξεκίνησε μαλακὰ νὰ δεῖ ποὺ θὰ τοῦ βγεῖ: «Ὁμορφὴ ἡ πατρίδα σας», «Οἱ Γερμανοὶ λατρεύουν τὸν Ὅμηρο». Καὶ ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος εὐγενικὰ σεμνὰ ἐκπροσωπώντας τοὺς Ἕλληνες: «Ἐλπίζω νὰ σεβαστεῖτε τὴν Χώρα», «Στρατηγὲ μὴ θίξετε τὴν φιλοτιμία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ λαοῦ»...

Τέταρτο ΟΧΙ

Τέλος ὁ στρατηγὸς Στούμμε, τὴν ἐπόμενη τσοῦπ ξανὰ στὸ Ἀρχιεπισκοπικὸ γραφεῖο καὶ τί ζήτησε λές; Νὰ ὀρκίσει τὴν κυβέρνησιν Τσολλάκογλου! Τὴν ἀπάντησιν δὲν χρειάστηκε νὰ τὴν μεταφράσει διερμηνέας—τὴν εἶπε στὰ Γερμανικὰ ὁ Μητροπολίτης Τραπεζοῦντος καὶ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀθηνῶν: «Δὲν μπορῶ νὰ ὀρκίσω Κυβέρνησιν προβληθεῖσα ἀπὸ τὸν ἐχθρό· ἐμεῖς γνωρίζουμε ὅτι τὶς Κυβερνήσεις τὶς ὀρίζει ὁ λαὸς ἢ ὁ Βασιλεὺς. Ἐδῶ τώρα οὔτε ὁ λαὸς ἐψήφισε τὴν Κυβέρνησιν, οὔτε ὁ Βασιλεὺς τὴν ὄρισε. Πῶς ζητᾶτε νὰ ὀρκίσω Κυβέρνησιν ὑποδειχθεῖσα ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ; Δία νὰ εἶναι ὄργανόν των;»

Ἀναφοκοκίνησε ὁ στρατηγὸς ἀπὸ τὸ χαστοῦκι ποὺ δέχτηκε, χαιρέτησε, ἔκανε μεταβολὴ καὶ βγαίνοντας ἀπὸ τὴν πόρτα τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς σίγουρα κατάλαβε ὅτι ὁ πόλεμος δὲν εἶχε τελειώσει.

Τώρα ἦταν ἡ σειρὰ τῶν σκουλήκων, οἱ ὁποῖοι γιὰ τὸ τάχα καλὸ τῆς Πατρίδας καὶ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τὸ δικό του, τὸν ἐκλιπαροῦσαν νὰ μὴ ἀρνηθεῖ τὴν πρότασιν ποὺ τοῦ ἔκανε ὁ Στούμμε, καὶ ὁ Ἱεράρχης ἀπάντησε «Ἐν γνώσει τῶν συνεπειῶν ποὺ μὲ ἀναμένουν, δὲν δέχομαι τὴν προτεινομένη πρότασιν. Ἐμμένω εἰς τὰς ἀρχάς μου». Καὶ ὅταν τὸν παραπίεσαν: «Ὁ πρωθυπουργὸς ποὺ ὀρκισα βρίζεται καὶ ἀγωνίζεται στὴν Κρήτη» εἶπε

καὶ σίγασε πιά κάθε ἄλλη κουβέντα.

Πρέπει νὰ σημειώσουμε ὅτι αὐτὴ ἡ πράξις τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Χρῦσανθου ἦταν ἡ πρώτη πράξις ἐθνικῆς ἀντίστασιν στὴν κατεχόμενη Εὐρώπη.

Ὁ Τσολλάκογλου Πῶς Ὀρκίστηκε;

Στὶς 29/4/1941, 11π.μ., ὀρκίστηκε ἡ πρώτη κατοχικὴ κυβέρνησιν ἀπὸ τὸν διάκονο τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου Καρύτση. Φυσικὰ οὔτε ὁ Τσολλάκογλου οὔτε οἱ Γερμανοὶ λησιμόνησαν αὐτὴ τὴ συμπεριφορὰ τοῦ Χρῦσανθου. Ἔτσι, στὶς 2/6/1941 ἐπαύθει μὲ Συντακτικὴ Πράξις τῆς ψευδοκυβέρνησιν Τσολλάκογλου, γιὰ νὰ τοποθετηθεῖ κάποιο πιὸ «βολικὸ» ἄτομο στὴ θέση τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου.

Ὁ Χρῦσανθος σὲ ὅλη τὴ διάρκεια τῆς Γερμανικῆς Κατοχῆς τήρησε τὴν ἴδια ἐχθρικὴ στάσιν ἀπέναντι σὲ ὅλες τὶς δοσιλογικῆς

κυβερνήσεις, ἀκόμα καὶ ὅταν τοῦ δόθηκε ἀπὸ τὴν Κυβέρνησιν τοῦ Ἰωάννη Ράλλη ἡ δυνατότητα νὰ ἐπανέλθει στὸν ἀρχιεπισκοπικὸ θρόνο, κάτι ποὺ πλήρως ἀπέρριψε.

Μεταπελευθερωτικὰ οἱ Ἑλληνικῆς κυβερνήσεις δὲν προέβησαν στὴν ἀκύρωσιν τῶν διαταγμάτων τῆς Κυβέρνησιν Τσολλάκογλου μὲ τὰ τῶν ὁποίων εἶχε παυθεῖ ὁ Χρῦσανθος ἀπὸ τὸν ἀρχιεπισκοπικὸ θρόνο.

Ἀνεπαύθη ἐν Κυρίῳ τὸ 1949. Αἰωνία του ἡ μνήμη!...



Ὁ φυσικὸς σαρκικὸς πόλεμος ὑποχωρεῖ μὲ τὴν νησιεῖα, ἀγρυπνία, προσευχὴ, ὅταν δὲν ὑπάρχει ὑπερηφάνεια. Οἱ βλάσφημοι λογισμοὶ εἶναι ὅλοι τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ ὄχι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Μὲ βλάσφημους λογισμοὺς βασανίζει ὁ διάβολος συνήθως τοὺς εὐαίσθητους ἀνθρώπους, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς θλίβει καὶ νὰ τοὺς φέρνει σὲ ἀπόγνωσιν.

Ἡ θεικὴ πληροφορία τῆς εὐπρόσδεκτης προσευχῆς μετὰ τὴν προσευχὴ. Ἀνάλογα μὲ τὴν θυσία καὶ τὴν προσευχὴ ποὺ κάνει ὁ ἀνθρώπος γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτό του ἢ γιὰ τὸν συνάνθρωπό του, θὰ δεχθεῖ καὶ τὴν θεία βοήθεια. Ὅποιος κουράζεται γιὰ τὸν πλησίον του ἀπὸ καθαρὴ ἀγάπη, ξεκουράζεται μὲ τὴν κούρασιν. Ἐνῶ ἐκεῖνος ποὺ ἀγαπάει τὸν ἑαυτό του καὶ τεμπελιάζει, κουράζεται καὶ μὲ τὸ νὰ κάθεται.

Ὅταν ἀδικεῖσαι νὰ μὴ λες «Νὰ τὸ βρεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό», γιατί τότε καταριεῖσαι μὲ εὐγένεια.

Γέρων Παΐσιος Ἀθώνιτης (+1994)

ON ACCOUNT OF THE ANGELS: WHY I COVER MY HEAD

By Elisabet, from the web site of the "Orthodox Christian Information Center," <http://orthodoxinfo.com/>, printed with permission.

For this cause ought the woman to have power [i.e., cover] on her head, because of the angels. [1 Cor 11:10]

At first reading of this verse I thought, "Good grief, that, at least, can't have anything to do with women today." I was a new convert to Christianity and making a valiant effort to read the Bible "as if it were true." St. Paul was hard to swallow, and so were angels—along with fairies and trolls! My grudging acceptance of Christianity was based on honest doubt rather than conviction. No one had proved to me that it was true, but neither could I prove it false. On that flimsy hope I chose to make what Kierkegaard called "a leap of faith over the abyss of the absurd." It was a desperate act. I was at the end of my rope, at a loss to explain the painful contradiction between my good intentions and the reality of my life. I was no longer able to pretend success as a wife, mother of four, or writer (even though my book had been sold on first submission to a leading publisher). In truth I didn't even know who I was, although I loudly proclaimed my manifesto as atheist, humanist, and feminist, with strong opinions on most issues. I had spent most of my young life trying to define myself by "proving" I could do anything a man could do, only better. (What man could bear children!) But inside was a black hole and I was about to fall in.

Somehow I "happened" across a Bible and read that God (whoever He or It was) created *man in our image, male and female created He them*. I read of Moses encountering a *burning bush which was not consumed*—and a God who identified Himself as *I AM*. That caught my attention. If there was a great *I AM* from whom all small "I ams" received their identity, there was hope of discovering myself and what it meant to be a woman.

One night, under a canopy of stars in the desert, I cried out: "God, if you are there, I want to find You!" But my mind refused to accept the Bible stories of sacrificial lambs and Christ crucified and resurrected. Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am," and I agreed. My ability to reason was my life! With a heavy heart I gave up on the "mindless" Christian solution. But when all seemed lost, a quiet little thought lodged in my head: "If it were true—would you accept it? And can you prove that it is not?" The question

would not let go. In fear and trembling I chose to "sacrifice" my reason, accept the incomprehensible in hopes it would prove true, and live the rest of my life as if it were. It felt as if I were dying, but I saw no other way.

The proof of the pudding, of course, was in the eating. The truth of the Bible could only be tested through obedience. I determined to do whatever "leapt at me" in the daily reading of Scripture. I disagreed with St. Paul's view of women, but he did say, *there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. (Gal 3:28). Clearly we were equal in salvation and worthiness—then why different rules? Were they only cultural, not applicable to us today? Then one day I prayed, "God, You made me a woman; I want to live the fullness of womanhood as you meant it—spiritually, emotionally, every way, even if it means doing as St. Paul says!"

Soon after that, during morning prayer, 1 Cor 11:10 leapt at me. It seemed silly, but I got up from my knees, found a kerchief to put over my head, and went on with prayers. Somehow it felt right. One day I wore the scarf in my Southern Baptist church. There were glances, but no comments. Gradually it became more of a habit, both during prayers at home and in church. As the only woman with a head-covering, I felt conspicuous at times, but could not bring myself to take it off. I decided I would rather err on the side of obedience than against it. And there were the angels to consider. By now I believed in them, but why they should care about my head was still a mystery.

After I had been a "Christian" for thirteen years, a desire for the sacraments drew me to the Episcopal church. It was 1979, and three-fourths of the women in the congregation wore head-coverings. I rejoiced. During the Eucharist the priest, standing before the altar, chanted: *Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee, and saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts: heaven and earth are full of Thy glory..."* The glory hit me: We were worshipping God in the company of a heavenly host! Was St. Paul alluding to that?

When I learned of the Jesus Prayer and adopted a rule of prayer, it seemed appropriate to wear something on my head at all times. I sewed matching dresses and scarves which my friends accepted as my "style"—artistic and a bit eccentric. That was fine with me (and I hoped, with the angels!) I was saddened when other women in our parish stopped wearing a head-covering. They thought it unnecessary and outdated, and some saw it as a sign of inferiority. Women and men were equal, and—according to current unisex fashions in clothing,



life and hairstyles—practically alike and interchangeable. For nearly two thousand years Christian women had covered their heads in church, and usually elsewhere—but now we were “liberated” from that.

In 1995 I became Orthodox and was surprised to find myself again the only woman wearing a head-covering in my parish. An Orthodox sister told me, with a nod to my scarf, “We don’t have to wear that anymore.” I smiled and said, “I know, but I want to.” St. Paul had said “ought,” not “must.” It was my voluntary obedience, even if I didn’t understand the “why’s.” By now I had no intention of giving up the benefits. I felt blessed and protected, feminine, and, paradoxically, confident and free—in the presence of guardian and ministering angels.

In Orthodox worship the angels were even more in evidence. The Divine Liturgy is full of references to the various ranks of angels, emphasizing our participation with them in the joyous worship of the Holy Trinity. St. John Chrysostom (d. A.D. 407), in a sermon at the feast of the Ascension, spoke both of angels and the veiling of women: “The angels are present here... Open the eyes of faith and look upon this sight. For if the very air is filled with angels, how much more so the Church! ...Hear the Apostle teaching this, when he bids the women to cover their heads with a veil because of the presence of the angels.” Origen, another early Church Father, said, “There are angels in the midst of our assembly... we have here a twofold Church, one of men, the other of angels... And since there are angels present... women, when they pray, are ordered to have a covering upon their heads because of those angels. They assist the saints and rejoice in the Church.” Instructions for catechumens in *The Apostolic Tradition*, probably written in the second century by St. Hippolytus of Rome, include this: “Moreover, let all the women have their heads veiled with a scarf...” And St. Cyril of Alexandria, commenting on I Corinthians, wrote: “The angels find it extremely hard to bear if this law [that women cover their heads] is disregarded.”

The Church taught that it mattered to the angels whether women cover their heads. But why? Was the covering “a sign of submission to her husband,” as some commentaries say, or “a cultural statement of inferiority,” as one woman told me in explaining why she would not wear a veil? A friend and former dean of a Lutheran seminary in Norway, Håkon Haus, pointed to another possible reason. He looked up I Cor 11:10 in Greek: *Therefore the woman shall have exousia [right, power, authority] on her head for the sake of the angels.* The word *exousia*, said Håkon, also occurs in John 1:12: *As many as received Him, to them He gave exousia to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.* I felt a light go on.

Was St. Paul saying that the head-covering was an outward sign of my *authority, right, power* as a female child of God, recognized by the angels? It rang excitingly true! God asks voluntary submission and obedience of His children. I chose to wear the sign of my feminine—as distinguished from masculine—authority. But why should the angels care?

In her book, *The Holy angels*, Mother Alexandra writes: “The Celestial hierarchies are the... spiritual reality of ordered creation, the stable patterns in which disruption is unknown...” Obedience is characteristic of the angelic realm. Dionysius the Areopagite, influential since the 5th century, wrote of nine orders or hierarchies of celestial beings, arranged in three choirs. Seraphim and cherubim are in the first, arch-angels and angels in the third choir, closest to us. Without obedience there is chaos and disorder. St. John Chrysostom, in a sermon on I Cor, speaks of how distinction in male and female dress—and particularly the veiling of women—“ministers effectively to good order among mankind.” Taking



off the veil was “no small error,” said St. John; “...it is disobedience.” It “disturbs all things and betrays the gifts of God, and casts to the ground the honor bestowed... For to [the woman] it is the greatest of honor to preserve her own rank.”

To some who argued that a woman, by taking off her covering, “mounts up to the glory of man,” Chrysostom answers: “She doth not mount up, but rather falls from her own proper honor... Since not to abide within our own limits and the laws of God, but to go beyond, is not an addition, but a diminution...” Always emphasizing the equality between man and woman, Chrysostom admonishes the man “not to dishonor her who governs next to thyself.” The issue was order, not superiority or inferiority. At Matins for Orthodoxy Sunday, we sing, *Come and let us celebrate a day of joy: Now heaven makes glad! Earth with all the hosts of angels and the companies of mortal men, each in their varied order, keeps the feast.*

The answer to my prayer nearly thirty years ago, that I might know what it means to be a woman, and to live it as God wills for me, is becoming clearer in obedience—often in little things, like putting on a scarf. The mystery of womanhood is still incomprehensible, but now I think, so it must be. I don’t have to understand fully what it means to be a woman in order to know that I am a woman and to live it. God knows the meaning and I trust Him. I don’t have to fight for my place or my right; it is given me in the glorious ranks of angels and mortals.

Fr. Basil Rhodes wrote in his “Master of Divinity” thesis in 1977 on “The Veiling of Women:” “Man is the head of the woman, according to Genesis and to St. Paul who compares

the relationship of man and woman with that of the Son to the Father: *And the head of Christ is God* (I Cor 2:3). It would be a grave error to say that Christ is inferior to His Father. The veiling of the woman, for St. Paul, is an outward sign of the acceptance of God's order, and His divine purpose in creation. The veil is the woman's 'yes' to God, a physical, visual 'Amen.'

St. John Chrysostom thought that Paul, in admonishing women to wear a covering "because of the angels," meant it "not at the time of prayer only, but also continually, she ought to be covered." Fr. Rhodes agrees: "The veil can be the constant symbol of the true woman of God... a way of life... a testimony of faith and of the salvation of God, not only before men, but angels as well." Timothy McFadden, who is working on his doctoral thesis at Oxford on the subject of "Man/Woman—God/Christgod," writes: "Members of the Godhead—and His image—are not interchangeable. As God Father and Son are equal and One in nature, so also they are unique and not interchangeable. Similarly, though equal in nature, man is not woman, woman is not man. They are distinguishable."

In my pre-Christian days, when I sought to understand myself in light of the doctrines of feminism, I believed that men and women shared male and female characteristics, which made us pretty much interchangeable. (And if we were interchangeable, we didn't really need each other except to conceive babies!) Today some say we have both a masculine and a feminine self that must be lived out. But how do women live out their "masculine self," and men their "feminine self"? That presents an identity problem (another modern notion) for both men and women (not to mention adolescent boys and girls!). No doubt it also adds to the chaos and gender confusion of our times.

I no longer believe we are a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics and selves. As God in Trinity is One in essence and three Persons in function, so man and woman, created in God's image, share a human nature, yet are distinct personal selves with different functions. As Christians we both have *exousia*—power, right, and authority—as children of God, but woman's authority is distinctly feminine, as man's is distinctly masculine. Hers does not contradict or usurp his, but complements it. And as the Trinity would not be complete with one of the Three missing, so man and woman are both essential to each other and to the whole. Being in the holy order of God's creation as lived in Orthodoxy calms the troubled waters of my soul. I don't understand the mystery of Trinity—nor the mystery of man and woman—but I know I am woman, and I both want and love to live it. St. Paul wrote, "woman is the glory of man" (I Cor. 11:7), a hard verse to take for some of us. McFadden suggests that "all women may somehow participate in the glory of the Theotokos."

Woman's unique and God-given capacity to give birth made the Incarnation possible. The woman Theotokos is

indeed the glory of all mankind, "our solitary boast," as one writer called her. Eve, our first mother, contributed to the fall of man by choosing to disobey. Mary, the mother of our Lord—and of the Church which is His Body—made our salvation possible by obeying God's will. If she whom we hymn as *more honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim* is always seen in icons wearing her head-covering, it certainly cannot be a sign of "inferiority to men"!

McFadden calls the veil a "badge of authority" between equals, perceived by the angels who maintain order among themselves. Why head-coverings matter to the angels may be unclear, but that they matter seems evident. Fr. Rhodes says, "The angels watch what we do and rejoice when we obey." A scarf may be a small matter, but obedience often hinges on small things, small choices. My scarf is seen by men, but to me it signifies obedience to God, a way of living my womanhood. It is my feminine "I am" reflected outwardly. In putting on my head-covering I mean to say to God, *Behold your handmaiden, be it unto me according to Your word—Your will, not mine.*

For twelve years I have worn a scarf at all times. I now perceive that it has been—and continues to be—essential for the pilgrim journey and salvation of my soul. The bottom line for me—and a growing number of my sisters—remains obedience. And with it comes a sense of being in our rightful place in God's ordered universe, rejoicing with the angels. Now I gratefully say, "I am!" in the presence of the great *I AM*—at prayer and in church, surrounded by the angelic host, worshipping our Lord and King. To God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be the glory, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen!



New psychiatric hospitals are being built, and young psychiatrists go on for post-graduate studies. Many of them do not even believe in God, or accept the existence of the soul. How can these people help the human soul, when they themselves are full of anxiety? How can one feel truly comforted, if he does not believe in God and the true and eternal life after death? When man grasps the deeper meaning of this true life, stress goes away, divine consolation comes and he is healed. If someone went to the psychiatric hospitals and read the Abba Isaac to the patients, those who believe in God would get well; because they would come to understand the deeper meaning of life.

People try to calm themselves with tranquilizers or with theories of yoga, and they neglect altogether the true serenity that comes when the soul is humble; and God fills it with divine consolation.

Elder Paisios the Athonite (+1994)

THE POLITICAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

By Robert Oscar Lopez, "American Thinker," August 9, 2013.

I had a recent meeting with a priest, who said something to me that I would have never taken seriously prior to a year ago. He said, "You are fighting against real darkness." He was referring to my involvement in a movement to protect the rights of children to be raised by a mom and dad.

For most of my life I'd been wary of anything that seemed superstitious. The Catholicism I knew as a youth was a liberation theology championed by my lesbian mother and articulated by radical priests who'd gotten involved in Central American insurgencies. For twelve years of public school in upstate New York, regardless of the racism around us, the curriculum was wholesomely multicultural. Then I went to an Ivy League college a year after Allan Bloom published *The Closing of the American Mind*. Back then, only a few old people had realized that open-mindedness taken to the extreme would become moral blindness.

Needless to say, little in my life prompted me to speak in terms of good and evil prior to 2012. It was a year ago, however, in an article on *The Public Discourse*, that I came forward with a truthful critique of the LGBT movement. That movement and its problems were something that I knew more personally than almost anyone in the world, since I'd been raised from my toddler years onward in a gay household, and I came out as bisexual myself the same year that my mother passed away.

My piece in *The Public Discourse* on August 6, 2012, "Growing up with Two Moms," wasn't grounded in religious condemnations of homosexuality. It was, rather, an uncensored summary of what life was like for a child born into leftist utopian dreams gone awry. It did not seem implausible for me to love my mother, yet concede that her divorce from my father and her taking up with another woman for almost all the years that I was being raised by her, caused me lifelong wounds that never healed.

The gay lobby had few ways to rebut my point, so they had to resort to vomiting out random insults. I wasn't lying, so investigating my personal life wasn't going to help. I wasn't a closet case, so they couldn't "out" me the way they had crushed many of their other antagonists. And while I am just as much of a sinner as the next guy, hypocrisy was a tough charge to throw at me, because I'd actually applied what I'd learned from my own difficult childhood to my choices as a father later on. As an adult, when I found out that I had gotten a woman pregnant, I decided I would never put another human being in the same situation I knew as a boy. I would not repeat the mistake of the father who abandoned me when I was born. I would not repeat the mistake of the mother who entangled me in a homosexual imbroglio that left me socially defenseless against a cruel world when she died.

I knew what it was like to be the child of a gay parent, the child of divorce, an orphan. I knew what it was like to be a gay parent as well. I knew there was no excuse for depriving a child of a mom or a dad, just to embark on a new endeavor called "same-sex parenting," which was just a fancy word for the unjustified exploitation of children for personal gain.

I stayed with the mother of my child, to raise our child together, because I knew better than anyone else that that's the best thing for a kid. Millions of years of evolution, not to mention thousands of years of cultural history, have left the human being with a developmental template designed for growth under the custody of a man and a woman in a mutually supportive sexual relationship. My decision to place my daughter and wife ahead of politics, I realized, wasn't merely a personal choice. It was an ethical imperative that I felt called upon to share with others, because the gay lobby was pushing many people to do the opposite—that is, to place sexual ideology before the duty to love all of their children, including the halves of their children that came from the opposite sex.

In the ensuing year, my life became an endless array of traumas. Repeated attempts to get me fired failed, so finally the gay lobby placed me on a "commentator accountability" list with a host of other people identified as "anti-gay" and blocked from access in the mainstream media. The Supreme Court cases on DOMA and Proposition 8 sucked me into the vortex, as did the fight for gay marriage in Minnesota, the struggle for gay marriage in France and Britain, and the battle over gay adoption in Russia's Duma. I'd spent twenty years trying to be a writer, but I ended up receiving international attention not for what I wrote, but rather because my life seemed to people like a tawdry Jerry Springer vignette. Those who disagreed with me recruited students, family members, and colleagues to denounce me. They dug up an old novel that I'd written and trashed it, calling me the worst writer ever. They tear-gassed my camp in Paris, butted against barricades to lunge at us in Brussels, and called me "loathsome" in St. Paul. They filed complaints, issued denunciations, e-mailed me hate and vileness beyond anything I could ever imagine.

No leftist came to my defense. Only Christians did.

Being sinful and unenlightened, I became involved with politics, in the beginning, with a fear of being labeled a believer. I thought somehow that if I kept God out of my arguments, and by necessity out of my thought process, the secular, liberal world would heed my message and give a fair hearing to the rights of the weakest among us. I marched in France with leaders of the kids' rights movement, at one point a million people strong on the streets of Paris, beseeching the world to place a child's right to a mom and dad above the clamor of gay adults to own children.

The leaders of the French "Manif pour Tous" worked hard to keep religious iconography out of their march. Like me,

they saw Christian theology as a liability for their movement. De-theologizing themselves backfired. The result was that François Hollande's socialist government ignored them, legalized homosexual adoption, and put in motion plans to make sperm-banking universally available to lesbian couples—something they'd promised the French never to do. Publicly subsidized surrogacy arrangements for gay men are soon to follow.

My fear of being associated with God, of talking about God, and of diagnosing the real evil behind what we fight has been not a rational strength, but rather an existential weakness. To fight what we fight, we have to understand that it is an ancient beast, recorded in the biblical books like Job and Ecclesiastes. When Ecclesiastes wrote that there was nothing new under the sun, he meant the message for us. We can't ignore it.

A similar message was meant for us when God asked a beleaguered Job, *Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him??* (40:9). Our political foes are stronger than us, but nobody is stronger than God. Only if we call upon God will we find any reprieve from the free-fall of a post-modern America defined by Obama's left.

After seeing same-sex parenting advance in leaps and bounds in country after country, I realized that the priest is right. Ecclesiastes saw this long ago. The message to Job is still as real as it was when first delivered. **It is real darkness that we fight.**

The gay movement will never make peace with us until we disown the most important message of Christ. Christ says we must not live in the urges and ambitions of this world, but must live according to his pure vision of love. God gave up Christ to be sacrificed so that we would all be freed from the bondage of sin. There is no way to reconcile this doctrine with the gay lobby's insistence that they can define themselves according to fleshly desires of this world and buy immortality by purchasing children. Make peace with the gay lobby, and we lose God, condemning ourselves to an eternity without the greatest love of all.

"The hate you encounter," the priest told me, "is the cry of pain from people who are hurting, because they are living in such darkness."

What will the right be without God? Without the courage to name and fight evil? Without discernment? I have found an answer to those questions, but all of us must decide on our own, I suppose.



The chief cause of all the woes which befall a man and deprive him of peace and prosperity is his departure from the Single Source of life and well-being, our Creator, Provider, and Savior, God, and his flouting of the Divine laws and rules which are man's only salvation.

Archbishop Averky (+1976)

CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

By Saint Martyr Sergius Mechev (+1941).



Born on September 17th, 1892, Saint Martyr Sergius Mechev was the son of a clairvoyant lay-elder of Moscow, Archpriest Alexey Mechev. He received a secular education at a regular school, and received his religious training at home and in church, principally by observing his father in the altar.

Patriarch Tikhon became very fond of him and urged him to become a priest. His decision to do so was inspired by a discussion he had with Elder Anatole of Optina in the fall of 1918. The following April, on Holy Thursday, he was ordained by Bishop Theodore Pozdееv at St. Daniel's Monastery.

Saint Martyr Sergius served at the Maroseyka church until his arrest in November 1929. Like so many clergy, he did not recognize Metropolitan Sergius' Declaration of 1927, which essentially brought the Church under government control. He was charged with heading a counter-revolutionary underground church and sentenced to three years of exile in the far north, near Arkhangelsk. His matushka managed to visit him with their three children (another had died in infancy), and he kept in touch with his spiritual children, writing to them individually and addressing five letters to them in common, letters that have been preserved.

It was several months after his term had expired that Fr. Sergius was finally released; however, he was never free again. A second arrest followed in March 1934, carrying a five-year sentence. He spent some years in hiding, wandering from place to place, before being arrested yet again. The spiritual daughter with whom he was imprisoned reported that he was executed in early November 1941; elsewhere, his martyric death is commemorated December 9th.

† † †

For one who is repenting, my friends, it is not natural to be silent, as much as possible, in order to accomplish his salvation in repentance. But we constantly talk idly, constantly judge and criticize others, constantly do evil with our tongue. Thereby, we bring evil both upon ourselves, who are speaking evil, and upon those who are listening to our evil speaking.

The Holy Fathers point out that our tongue is a little member, but that it does great evil; how readily it arms one person against another. In failing to control our tongue, we allow it to act as an instrument of murder. St. Anthony the Great plainly says: *Whoever receives a man speaking evil or a calumniator, associates with a murderer.* You see, a calumniator and

a murderer, according to the words of the Holy Father, are one and the same. *Withdraw from the calumniator, whoever he might be, and be not ashamed to withdraw from him.* The holy fathers of our Church tell us that *it is safer to live with a serpent, than with a calumniator.* St. John Climacus forbids one to render esteem to such men. *Never render esteem to one who speaks to you evilly of a neighbor. Thereby, you will heal both yourself and your neighbor.*

You may say, my friends, that here the matter concerns calumny (slander, *Ed.*). But what if you hear that they are speaking badly of a man, and what they are saying may be true? What is to be done then? Since we are prone, my friends, to evil speaking, it is better for us not to listen to such conversations. After all, we might communicate to him of whom they were speaking: "They are saying this and that about you," or we might discuss this with another person, with a second, with a third, and so forth. Whenever you begin to stop whomever is speaking, he usually justifies himself by the fact that, after all, he heard this with his own ears. And then what happens? The one speaking evil falls into pride. No, my friends, a Christian ought not to act so, even if he himself has been present at some vile act or other. He ought not to spread another's sin, but cover it with his love. Let us learn from the saints how they acted in such cases. Here is an example.

A hermit came to a skete where some ascetics lived, and he abode there. One of the skete elders gave him a cell, and he began to live in concord with the *begoumen* (abbot, *Ed.*) and the brethren of the community. But soon this concord was broken, since the skete elder that had given the ascetic the cell envied the newcomer, to whom many people had begun to go for counsel and spiritual guidance. Prompted by envy, he sent his young disciple to the guest with an order to leave the monastery, and he commanded this to be conveyed in these words: "Get thee thence from whence thou camest."

The disciple went, and although, out of obedience, he ought to have conveyed the words of his elder exactly, he began to reason: "If I convey the words to the newcomer just as the elder said them, I might arouse malice in him, and it will cause enmity to flare up between the two elders. It is surely better that, in the name of the Lord and general peace, I hide these evil words and take everything upon myself." (Abba Dorotheus, in his instructions, allows one to do this in prayer and struggle). And so the disciple, on coming to the elder, instead of saying "Get thee thence," as he was ordered, bowed down and said: "My father has asked me to inquire of thee, 'Art thou well?'" To this, the elder replied: "Tell thy father that I ask for his prayers, for I am a little ill." On returning, the disciple said to his elder: "That elder has found himself another cell and will soon leave." Give heed, my friends; what love! After some time, the elder again sent the disciple to drive out the hermit. And the disciple, on coming to him,

said: "My father, having learned that thou art ill, has sent me to visit thee." "Tell thy father," responded the hermit, "that by his prayers I am now completely well."

The disciple conveyed something entirely different to his elder: that the guest asked to live in the monastery only a week more and would then move to another cell. In a week, the enraged elder himself went to drive the hermit out of the cell. But the disciple, having learned of this, out of love for peace and his elder, ran ahead and informed the newcomer that his father was coming to him to call him to join him in the refectory. On hearing this, the hermit went out straightway to meet the elder with a look full of love and said: "Trouble not thyself to come unto me; I myself am coming to thee." Struck by the newcomer's lack of malice, the elder was touched in his soul, his malice disappeared, and he really did conduct the guest to join him in the refectory. While the guest went on ahead, the elder learned how his disciple had acted. He fell down at his feet and said: "Henceforth thou art my preceptor, for by thy words our souls have been saved."

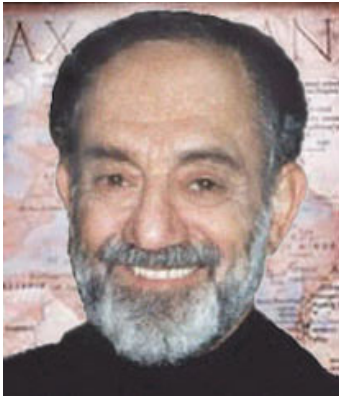
Here, my friends, is how the saints acted. Even when they were sent to say or to do something evil, they did not do this, although they ought to have done just as their elders ordered them. But we, with the greatest readiness and pleasure, recount everything evil, everything bad about a man; and if it is something we ourselves have heard, we object strenuously when we are stopped, we begin to wound one another, and we do, as the Holy Fathers say, the work of scorpions and serpents with our tongue.

During the days of fasting and repentance, we ought to watch our tongue more than ever. Ascetics truly are sick at heart over one who speaks evil of his neighbor. And we, in the name of what seems to us to be the truth, are constantly doing evil. Every society suffers more than anything else from evil speaking and condemnation, which is communicated in every possible way.

So while we are repenting, come, my friends, let us attend to our tongue, let us join real battle with it, and we will have great gain. If we will not speak evil of another, but instead of this will pray for him; if we will remember that by our one word we can undermine a whole edifice of relations between men, then we shall understand why Ephraim the Syrian asks in his prayer that the Lord not give him idle talk. Even in church, before the beginning of a service, we post bulletins, if not "on walls," then orally. Thereby, my friends, we break down the Church; we become her real destroyers and also the destroyers of our own and another's structure. Let this disciple serve as an example to us. Let us strive in every way to get out of the habit of evil speaking, calumny and condemnation. Then we shall acquire for ourselves many more friends-not in calumny and evil speaking, but friends in God and in the struggle with sin, and this will unite us in the one flock of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

ARE WE DIFFERENT?

By Protopresbyter John S. Romanides (+2001), from "Patristic Theology: The University Lectures."



St. Makarios of Egypt carefully informs and explains that Christians who do not have *noetic* prayer are not intrinsically different from believers in other religions. The only factor that makes such Christians different from believers of other religions is that these Christians intellectually believe in Christ and merely accept

Christian doctrine, while the believers in other religions do not accept Christian doctrine.

Such Christians, however, do not gain anything from this kind of intellectual faith, because it does not heal them or purify their hearts from the [enslavement to] the passions. In terms of healing the human personality, they remain without benefit and with behavior that does not differ from that of non-Christians. This can be seen in their way of life. *Purification* is the first stage in the spiritual life, a stage that is also the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who *purifies, illumines, and grants theosis*. It is God Who *purifies, illumines, and glorifies*. The teaching about *purification* and *illumination* not only defines the central task set before the catechumen, but it is also the chief duty of his spiritual father who is to open the eyes of the catechumen's soul and to prepare him for holy baptism. In order for one's soul to be purified of the passions, the fear of God and repentance must first be present and continue throughout the stage of *purification* until it is completed with divine *illumination, the illumination of our nous* by the grace of the Holy Spirit...

The passions of soul and body cannot be purified merely through knowledge. Of course, we need to know about dogma. We need to know what is written in the Bible. We need to know about prayer, and so forth. Our ability to reason can help us to weigh our decision, to determine (*diakrisis*) what our treatment should be, and even to decide whether or not we want to be cured. In this way, we count the costs, we determine whether the anticipated results are worth the effort, and we finally make our decision.

In the Patristic tradition, either you attain to *illumination* or you attain to *theosis* once you have already passed through *illumination*. Orthodox tradition is nothing other than this curative course of treatment through which the nous is purified, illumined, and eventually glorified together with the entire man, if God so wills. Therefore, is there such a

thing as an illumined liberal or an illumined conservative in this context? Of course not. You are either illumined or you are not. You have either reached *theosis* or you have not. You have either undergone this treatment, or you have not. Apart from these distinctions, there are no others.

The Fathers stress that salvation does not result automatically from Orthodox doctrine alone. Doctrine is not what saves people. It simply opens the pathway for man to reach *purification* and *illumination*. Without Orthodox dogma, however, no one can reach *purification* and *illumination*. Without an awareness and sensitivity to right doctrine, without Orthodox practice in one's daily life, and without participation in the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church, *purification* and *illumination* are not attainable.

Doctrine and liturgical life are not the means by which someone purifies his soul and reaches *illumination*. They are, however, the basic prerequisites and the necessary foundation that enables someone to be guided towards *purification* and *illumination*. In other words, doctrine alone does not automatically lead one to these states. On the basis of this tradition, a spiritual father can tell when his spiritual child has passed from a state of purification to a state of illumination. Isn't this something that a spiritual father is able to know? And how does he know it? How does a spiritual father know that their spiritual child has reached the stage of *illumination*? He knows it from what we have just described. So when we talk about theology based on experience, we are talking about piety based on experience, but not pietism. Theology is experiential piety. It is not just talk. It is really something quite concrete.

Does "contemporary" Orthodox theology enable us to detect a genuine doctor and to distinguish him from a quack? In other words, if we were to take a group of spiritual fathers today, would we be able to discover who is genuinely a spiritual father in a position to heal others? Or to put it differently, are we able today to spot a saint within a crowd? It seems difficult. Today, Christians have reached the point where it is difficult to separate spiritual doctors from quacks. And we have reached this position because we have replaced experiential patristic theology with a textbook theology of dogmas that can be classified with western theology and that does not guide the soul to *purification* from the passions. We have driven out the hesychastic tradition and replaced it with dogmas and morality (or moralism)...

God's creative energy is not the same as His preserving energy, His purifying energy, His illumining energy, or His glorifying energy. They are not the same because, if they were the same, then all creation would participate in the glorifying energy of God. All these observations stem from the holy fathers' experience of *theosis* and lay the foundation for their teaching in response to the heretics. In other words, the starting point for the Patristic teaching is the

ability to differentiate and observe distinctions between the energies of God. So the history of Orthodox theology is not the history of the attempt made by certain theologians to speculate philosophically on doctrine.

From an Orthodox viewpoint, someone probes more deeply into dogmas only when he uses them in his attempt to reach the stage of *illumination*. This is the Orthodox way to probe more deeply into the mysteries and dogmas. It is not an intellectual probing that aims at attempting to comprehend the mysteries or the dogmas or to enter their depths. Dogmas cannot be comprehended. In fact, dogmas are annulled in an experience of *theosis*, because they are replaced by the very living truth that they express. Dogmas are simply guides to God. When you behold God, then dogma is set aside.



The faster you acquire a virtue, the easier it is lost. The more slowly and laboriously you acquire it, the more steadfastly it remains; just like that squash plant that grew tall and said to the cypress tree: “See how much I’ve grown in just a few days! You’ve been here for so many years and haven’t grown much at all!” “Yes,” said the cypress tree, “but you still haven’t seen storms, heat waves, and cold spells!” And after a little while, the squash plant dried up, while the cypress tree remained where it was.

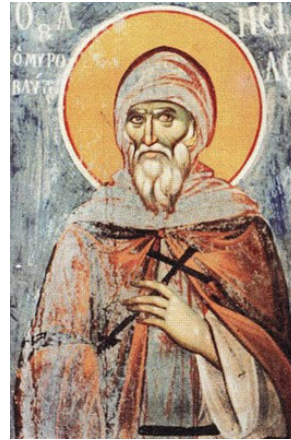
This is also how a spiritual man is. Both during a storm and during times of peace he remains the same. Why? Because the long period of time has created stability. When he first renounced the world, his spiritual condition was unstable, but with time, the grace of God gradually worked out his salvation and freedom from the passions. Thus, a person needs to force himself today, and the grace of God will start acting by itself tomorrow. Then you will not need to force yourselves to have good thoughts; the grace that remains within you is what brings them to your mind without your effort. Then you will see great mysteries! You will have a feeling, so to speak, of the remembrance of death, or of another beneficial recollection. When you wake up and are still opening your eyes, instead of feeling sleepy, you will have progressed; you will have already passed through the entire mystery of *theoria* and will say, “But how does this thing happen, since I am still getting up? How does this thing happen?” All the same, the grace of God acts by itself—it is the result of a long-standing habit.

The same thing happens with sin: whether awake or sleeping, a sinful man constantly thinks about evil. When sin is helped by a bad habit and by the devil, it becomes a constant evil. Likewise with good; a good habit assisted by the grace of God becomes second nature to him.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheou
From “*Counsels from the Holy Mountain*”

A REMINDER FOR ALL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF OUR DAYS

From the prophesies of St. Nilus the Myrrh-Gusher (+1651).



After the year 1900, toward the middle of the twentieth century, the people of that time will become unrecognizable. When the time of the advent of the Antichrist approaches, people’s minds will grow cloudy from carnal passions, and dishonor and lawlessness will grow stronger. Then the world will grow unrecognizable.

People’s appearances will change, and it will be impossible to distinguish men from women due to their shamelessness in dress and style of hair. These people will be cruel and will be like wild animals because of the temptations of the Antichrist. There will be no respect for parents and elders, love will disappear, and Christian pastors, bishops, and priests will become vile men, completely failing to distinguish the right-hand way from the left.

At that time, the morals and Traditions of Christians and of the Church will change. People will abandon modesty, and dissipation will reign. Falsehood and greed will attain great proportions, and woe to those who pile up treasures. **Lust, adultery, homosexuality, secret deeds, and murder will rule in society...**

...And this will result from the fact that the Antichrist wants to be lord over everything and become the ruler of the whole universe, and he will produce miracles and fantastic signs. He will also give depraved wisdom to an unhappy man so that he will discover a way by which one man can carry on a conversation from one end of the earth to the other. At that time, men will also fly through the air like birds and descend to the bottom of the sea like fish. And when they have achieved all this, these unhappy people will spend their lives in comfort without knowing, poor souls, that it is the deceit of the Antichrist. And the impious one! He will so complete science with vanity, that it will go off the right path and lead people to lose faith in the existence in God.

...Then God will see the downfall of the human race and will shorten the days for the sake of those few who are being saved, because the enemy wants to lead even the chosen into temptation, if that is possible.

...Then the sword of chastisement will suddenly appear to kill the perverter.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Mt 11:15)

ON THE UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN

By Elder Porphyrios.

Pray and then speak. That's what to do with your children. If you are constantly lecturing them, you'll become tire-some and when they grow up they'll feel a kind of oppression. Prefer prayer and speak to them through prayer. Speak to God and God will speak to their hearts. That is, you shouldn't give guidance to your children with a voice that they hear with their ears. You may do this too, but above all you should speak to God about your children.

Say, "Lord Jesus Christ, give Your light to my children. I entrust them to You. You gave them to me, but I am weak and unable to guide them, so, please, illuminate them." And God will speak to them and they will say to themselves, "Oh dear, I shouldn't have upset my mother by doing that!" And with the grace of God this will come from their heart.

This is the most perfect way: for the mother to speak to God and for God to speak to the children. If you do not communicate in this way, constant lecturing becomes a kind of intimidation. And when the child grows up it begins to rebel, that is, to take revenge, so to speak, on its father and mother who coerced it. One way is the perfect way - for the mother's and father's holiness and love in Christ to speak. The radiance of sanctity and not human effort makes for good children.

It is not sufficient for the parents to be devout. They mustn't oppress the children to make them good by force. We may repel our children from Christ when we pursue the things of our religion with egotism. Children cannot endure coercion. Don't compel them to come with you to church. You can say, "Whoever wants can come with me now or come later." Leave God to speak to their souls. The reason why the children of some devout parents become rebellious when they grow up and reject the Church and everything connected with it and go off to seek satisfaction elsewhere is because of this pressure which they feel from their "good" parents. The so-called "devout" parents, who were anxious to make good Christians of their children with their human love, pressurized their children and produced the opposite result. The children are pressurized when they are young, and when they reach the age of sixteen, seventeen or eighteen years old, they end up the opposite of what was intended. By way of reaction they start to mix with bad company and to use bad language.

Two sisters came to see me. One of them had gone through some very distressing experiences and they asked me what was the cause of these. I answered them:

"It's because of your home; it stems from your parents." And as I looked at the girl I said:

"These are things you've inherited from your mother."

"But," she said, "my parents are such perfect people. They're Christians, they go to confession, they receive Communion

and we had a religious upbringing. Unless it is religion that is to blame..."

I said to them:

"I don't believe a word of all that you're telling me. I see one thing only, and that is that your parents don't live with the joy of Christ."

On hearing this, the other girl said:

"Listen, Maria, the Father's quite right. Our parents go to confession and receive Holy Communion, but did we ever have any peace at home. Our father was constantly complaining about our mother. And every day either the one refused to sit at the table or the other refused to go out somewhere together. So you see what the Father is saying is true."

"What's your father's name?" I asked her,

She told me.

"What's your mother's name?"

She told me.

"Well," I said, "the feelings you've got inside you towards your mother are not at all good."

You see, the moment she told me her father's name I saw his soul, and the moment she told me her mother's name, I saw her mother and I saw the way her daughter looked at her.

Another day a mother came to visit me with one of her daughters. She was very distressed and broke down in tears.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"I'm in total despair over my older daughter. She threw her husband out of the house and deceived us all with a pack of lies."

"What kind of lies?" I inquired.

"She threw her husband out of the house ages ago and she didn't tell us anything. We would ask on the phone, "How's Stelios doing?", and she would reply, "Oh, he's fine. He's just gone out to buy a newspaper." Each time she would think up some new excuse so that we wouldn't suspect anything. And this went on for two whole years. A few days ago we learned the truth from Stelios himself when we bumped into him by chance."

So I said to her:

"The fault's your own. It's you that's to blame, you and your husband, but you most of all."

"What do you mean!" She said indignantly. "I loved my children to the point that I was never out of the kitchen. I had no life of my own at all. I took them to the church and I was always telling them the right thing to do. How can you say that I'm to blame?"

I turned to her other daughter who was with her and asked: "What do you think about the matter?"

"The Father's right, Mom," she said. "We never ever enjoyed a single day when you weren't quarrelling with Dad."

"Do you see? It is you that are to blame. You traumatized the children. They are not to blame, but they are suffering the consequences."

WHO IS THE TRUTH...

Source: "St. Silouan the Athonite" by Archimandrite Sophrony, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, p. 111-113.



The Lord said to Pontius Pilate, *I came into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*, to which Pilate replied skeptically, "What is truth?" and convinced that there could be no answer to the query, did not look for one, even from Christ, but went out to the Jews.

Pilate was right. There is no answer to the question "WHAT is truth?" if we have in mind the

ultimate truth at the root of the whole existence of the world. But if Pilate, meaning Primal or Axiomatic Truth, had phrased his question as it should have been phrased—if he had asked "WHO is truth?" he would have received the answer that, a little while previously, Christ, foreseeing Pilate's query, gave at the Last Supper to his beloved disciples, and through them to the whole world: *I am the truth*.

Science and philosophy set themselves the question, "WHAT" is truth?, whereas Christian religious perception always considers truth as "WHO."

Scientists and philosophers, not infrequently, look upon Christians as unsound daydreamers, whereas they themselves stand on firm ground and so label themselves positivists. In a curious way they do not realize all the negativeness of truth as "WHAT." They do not understand that authentic Truth, absolute Truth, can be only "WHO," never "WHAT," since Truth is not some abstract formula, some abstract idea, but life itself.

In fact, what could be more abstract, more negative than truth as "WHAT?" And we notice this tremendous paradox throughout the history of the human race, starting with Adam's fall. Enchanted by his reasoning mind, man lives intoxicated as it were, so that not only "positive" science and philosophy, like Pilate, pose the question, "WHAT is truth?" but even in the religious life of mankind we find the same great delusion, with people continually seeking truth as "WHAT." They reason that if they can arrive at the truth they seek as WHAT, they will be possessed of magic power and become unrestrained masters of being.

If man in his religious life adopts the course of rational research, his approach to the world will inevitably be pantheistic. Every time the theologizing mind essays of its own strength to know the truth about God, whether or not it understands, fatally it falls into the same error in which science and philosophy and pantheism are sunk—intuiting truth as "WHAT."

Truth as "WHO" is never arrived at through reason. God as "WHO" can be known only through communion in being—that is, only by the Holy Spirit. Starets Silouan constantly emphasized this. And the Lord Himself spoke of it thus:

If a man loveth me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him... The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things.

Orthodox ascetic experience rejects the course of abstract contemplation. Whoever restricts his thinking about God to abstract contemplation of good, beauty, eternity, love and so on, is on the wrong road. The one who only strips himself of all empirical forms and conceptions has also not found the true path.

Orthodox contemplation of God is not abstract contemplation of good, love and the like. Nor is it a simple withdrawal of the mind from all empirical forms and conceptions. True contemplation is given by God through His coming into the soul. The soul then contemplates God and beholds that He loves, that He is good, magnificent, eternal; sees Him celestial, ineffable. But in the abstract nothing can be contemplated.

Imagination plays no part in true spiritual life, which is wholly concrete and positive. Genuine concourse with God is to be sought solely through personal prayer to the personal God. Real spiritual Christian experience is communion with God absolutely free, and so does not depend only on man's efforts and will, as is possible in non-Christian (pantheistic) experience.



After any good deed, or after some spiritual joy that you might possibly experience, take heed, lest you be tempted by a thought of pride. Because not only will you lose what you have gained, but the war [of thoughts] that shall follow will be greater.

The enemy is full of envy, and if he is unable to hinder the good work, he tries to blacken it with thoughts of pride. If you do not drive away these thoughts, God will allow a fall; so that you might come to yourselves. Lucifer was not driven out of Paradise because of evil deeds, but because of his pride.

Knell before your icon corner, and say to Him: *Having been far from Thee for so many years, I have grieved Thee—living in darkness. But grant me now a little of Thy light, and do not forsake me, O my Christ. Thee alone do I have. People love today and abandon tomorrow. I am a sheep of Thy rational flock. Seek me out, who am gone astray, O God; and have mercy on me. Thy fatherly arms, do Thou open to me quickly.*

Elder Ieronymos of Aigina (+1966)

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THE TALE OF THE PRAYER AND THE LITTLE FOX

From The Prologue.



In Egypt, in whose ancient Christian past there had once been many grand monasteries, there once lived a monk who befriended an uneducated and simple peasant farmer. One day this peasant said to the monk, “I

too respect God who created this world! Every evening I pour out a bowl of goat’s milk and leave it out under a palm tree. In the evening God comes and drinks up my milk! He is very fond of it! There’s never once been a time when even a drop of milk is left in the bowl.”

Hearing these words, the monk could not help smiling. He kindly and logically explained to his friend that God doesn’t need a bowl of goat’s milk. But the peasant so stubbornly insisted that he was right that the monk then suggested that the next night they secretly watch to see what happened after the bowl of milk was left under the palm tree.

No sooner said than done. When night fell, the monk and the peasant hid themselves some distance from the tree, and soon in the moonlight they saw how a little fox crept up to the bowl and lapped up all the milk till the bowl was empty. “Indeed!” The peasant sighed disappointedly. “Now I can see that it wasn’t God!”

The monk tried to comfort the peasant and explained that God is a spirit, that God is something completely beyond our poor ability to comprehend in our world, and that people comprehend His presence each in their own unique way. But the peasant merely stood hanging his head sadly. Then he wept and went back home to his hovel.

The monk also went back to his cell, but when he got there he was amazed to see an angel blocking his path. Utterly terrified, the monk fell to his knees, but the angel said to him:

“That simple fellow had neither education nor wisdom nor book-learning enough to be able to comprehend God otherwise. Then you with your wisdom and book learning took away what little he had! You will say that doubtless you reasoned correctly. But there’s one thing that you don’t know, oh learned man: God, seeing the sincerity and true heart of this good peasant, every night sent the little fox to that palm tree to comfort him and accept his sacrifice.”

Good and blessed is that simplicity which some have by nature, but better is that which has been goaded out of wickedness by hard work. The former is protected from much complexity and the passions, while the latter is the gateway to the greatest humility and meekness. There is not much reward for the one and no end of reward for the other. If you wish to draw the Lord to you, approach Him as disciples to a master, in all simplicity, openly, honestly, without duplicity, without idle curiosity. He is simple and uncompounded. And He wants the souls that come to Him to be simple and pure. Indeed you will never see simplicity separated from humility.

St. John Climacus, “*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*”