

Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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ON THE 41ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROE VS WADE DECISION

By Fr. Demetrios Carellas, January 22, 2014.

A Necessary Prelude

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

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

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

† † †

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The Horror of Abortion

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

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

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

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

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



Icon-Prayer Card:



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ON TRIALS AND THE SPIRITUAL LAW

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Abba Mark the Ascetic.

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

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

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

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

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



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

St. Ambrose of Optina

ON MARRIAGE

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

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

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

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

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

SHOULD THE CHURCH BE IN STEP WITH THE TIMES?

By Archbishop Averky (+1976).

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

† † †

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

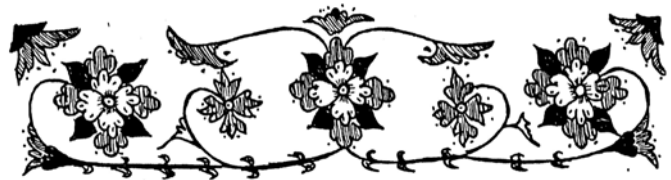
And so? Should our Church too follow this fashionable path, “in step with the times,” so as not to be left behind the march of life? But what kind of “church” will this be that will allow itself all this, or even merely look at it with all-forgiving condescension? It will be no longer a church at all,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

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

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

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

Amen.



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

St. Anthony the Great

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

St. Nektarios of Aigina

ON THE QUESTION OF LIFE-PRESERVING INTERVENTION

By Hieromonk (Priestmonk) Leonty Durkit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are some spiritual guidelines about health, sick-

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Bishop Porfiriye of Jegar (Serbia)

NOTHING IS FEARFUL TO HIM WHO RELIES ON GOD

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

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

† † †



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amen.



DIFFICULTIES IN CHILDBEARING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

† † †

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

Ένας Έναντιόν Όλων, Άγιος Μάρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός

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

Τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Φλωρίνης Ἀγυουσίνου Καντιώτου.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

κοινωνοῦμε σῶμα καὶ αἷμα τοῦ

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

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



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

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

Τι μᾶς διδάσκει ὁ ἅγιος Μάρκος; Πρῶτον ἕνα δίδαγμα ἐθνικό. Νὰ προσέξουμε καὶ σήμερα, γιατί πάλι κινδυνεύουμε ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους τὰ ἴδια ἔχουμε. Τότε κατέφυγαν στὸν πάπα· τὰ ἴδια καὶ σήμερα. Τὴν ὥρα τοῦ κινδύνου ἐμεῖς ποῦ ἀποβλέπουμε; Στους ἰσχυροὺς τῆς ἡμέρας, ἄλλη μιὰ φορὰ, γιὰ νὰ μᾶς βοηθήσουν. Δὲν κάνω πολιτική, ἀλλὰ σᾶς λέω τὴν πικρὰ ἀλήθεια. Ὅταν ἦμεθα στὴ Μικρὰ Ἀσία, μᾶς ἄφησαν καὶ οἱ Ἄγγλοι καὶ οἱ Ἴταλοὶ καὶ οἱ Γάλλοι. Μείναμε μόνοι. Ἐνῶ λίγο ἂν μᾶς βοηθοῦσαν, δὲν θὰ θρηνοῦσαμε τὴν καταστροφή.

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

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

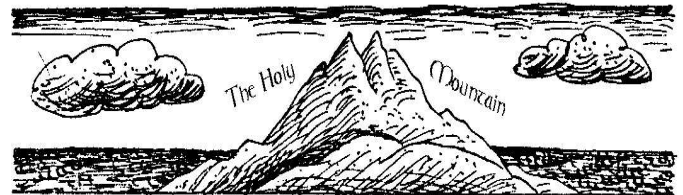
κάνουν συγκέντρωσι. Τῆς ἔδιναν, γιὰ μιὰ ὥρα, πολλὰ χρήματα. Κι αὐτὴ τὴ ἀπήντησε: «Φτωχὰ εἶμαι, ἀλλὰ τὸν κληματογράφο σ' ἐσᾶς δὲν τὸν δίνω. Ὅλα τα δολλάρια τῆς Ἀμερικῆς νὰ μοῦ δώσετε, δὲ μαγαρίζω τὴν αἶθουσα!»...

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

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

Φώτης Κόντογλου (+1965)

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



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

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

Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου Χρυσοστόμου

Προφητική Ἐπιστολή

Τοῦ στάρτης Ἀνατολίου τῆς Ὀπτινα (+1927).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Νὰ φοβῆσαι τὸν Κύριον παιδί μου!

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

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

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

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

Καρδιά Συντετριμμένη

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

μὲ τὸ παρὰ πονο.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Ὁσιος Πορφύριος ὁ Κανσοκαλυβίτης (+1991)

Δέξαι με Ωσπερ τὸν Ἄσωτον Υἱόν...

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



Ἀγαπητὲ ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀδελφὲ καὶ συλλειτουργγὲ Χαράλαμπε.

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

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

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

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

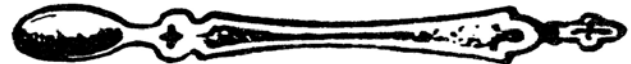
καὶ Φιλάνθρωπος καὶ Ἐλεήμων Θεός...

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

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

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

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



Μὲ τὴν ἀδιάκριτη ἀγάπη τους οἱ γονεῖς ἀποβλακώνουν τὰ παιδιὰ τους. Ἐπειδὴ στερήθηκαν αὐτοί, δὲν θέλουν νὰ στερῆσουν τίποτε στὰ παιδιὰ τους, τοὺς τὰ πηγαίνουν ὅλα στὸ χέρι (μᾶνα ἔλα νὰ μοῦ δέσεις τὸ κορδόνι).

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

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

Γέρον Παΐσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης (+1994)

Τί σημαίνει ή Φράση «Αίωvία ή Μνήμη»

Στὸν μανάβη Μελέτιο Τζ. ποὺ ρωτᾷ: Τί σημαίνει ή φράση «αίωvία ή μνήμη»;

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Εἰρήνη καὶ ὑγεία ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριο,
+ Νικόλαος



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



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

A PHYSICIAN'S VIEW ON THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

THE THOUGHT OF ABORTION FOR CONVENIENCE IS REPUGNANT!

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



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

beautiful child that has resulted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FROM TIME TO ETERNITY, THE INTERNAL MISSION OF OUR CHURCH

By St. Justin Popovich (1873 – 1979).



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORTHODOX HOLY TRADITION THROUGH THE SCIENCES OF ASTRONOMY & MEDICINE

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

imagination instead, they turn into speculative thinkers and scholastics.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

St. John Chrysostom

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

LEGEND HAS IT?

GREEKS SEEK STRENGTH IN THE POWERS OF ELDER PAISIOS THE ATHONITE

By Gordon Fairclough, from the Wall Street Journal, December 3rd, 2012.

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

† † †

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



THE WORD "ANATHEMA" AND ITS MEANING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A BEGGAR FOR CHRIST

From *humansarefree.com*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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† † †

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TIME IS ALWAYS OF THE ESSENCE!

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

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

† † †

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

