

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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Editor: George Karras

Story Editors:

Markos Antoniathis & Kostas Matsourakis

A SANE FAMILY IN AN INSANE WORLD

By Fr. Seraphim Johnson.

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

[Deut 4:9]

† † †

The Fallen World is Insane

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

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

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

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

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

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.orthodoxheritage.org)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Christian Task is to Restore Sanity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Creating a Sane Family

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So What Do I Do Now?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Blessed Elder Paisios the Athonite, (+1994)

THE LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE

By St. John Maximovitch.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

O wondrous path of little things, I sing thee a hymn! Surround yourselves, O people, gird up yourselves with little works of good—with a chain of little, simple, easy and good feelings which cost us naught, a chain of bright thoughts, words and deeds. Let us abandon the big and the difficult. That is for them that love it and not for us for whom the Lord in His Mercy, for us who have not yet learned to love the greater, has poured forth the lesser love everywhere, free as water and air.

DEMONS OF DARKNESS

Source: *Empirical Dogmatics: The Spoken Theology of Protopresbyter John Romanides*, by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos (quoted text is attributed to Fr. John Romanides).

For we are not ignorant of his devices!

[2 Cor 2:11]

† † †

A part from the angels (bodiless hosts) there are demons. The Prophets, Apostles and Fathers have experience of this fact and describe the presence of demons. Appearances of demons are described throughout Holy Scripture, and St. John the Evangelist actually declares that the purpose of the Christ's incarnation is *that He might destroy the works of the devil*. (1 Jn 3:8).

The demons were originally angels, because God did not create evil, but through their pride they fell away from God's glory and became demons. Christ said: *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*. (Lk 10:18). We shall draw attention to a few points that are relevant to the existence of the demons and their method of warfare.

As creatures of God and spirits, the demons are "ethereal beings," but on account of their fall they do not participate in the glory of God as Light, so they are dark beings. All creation shares in the creative and sustaining energy of God, and this includes the demons. "Even the devil has a share in the uncreated energy of God," that is to say, in His uncreated creative and sustaining energy; not in the glorifying energy of God but in the punitive energy.

As a noetic spirit the devil is not bound by time and place, but he is not present everywhere, as is God. He moves at great speed. "The devil, for example, moves so quickly that he can bother a million people, so he will be here, there and in China, though without being present everywhere. Because of his immense ability to move he can be both here and elsewhere. His speed of movement is not restricted by matter. So he is not restricted either by our human body or by our dimensions."

God loves the whole creation, but not everyone shares in the same way in this love. It depends on the therapeutic treatment that each one undergoes. The devil, however, cannot be cured, because he generated evil. "God loves the devil as well. The devil, however, is not going to be saved. God loves everyone. The issue is not that I shall be saved if God loves me. The issue is whether someone undergoes the treatment necessary to enable him to reach the state of illumination, so that, when he stands in sight of the glory of God, he will see the glory of God as Light and not as everlasting fire and outer darkness."

In the West they believe the opposite. "The teaching that Christ loves the devil as well is something that Augustine cannot accept even in his dreams. It is so far from his thoughts." Certainly this love does not lead to salvation, because it does not meet with a positive and free response. The Fathers have

ample knowledge of the existence and energy of the demons from experience. Since they have been freed from the passions and their souls have become subtle, they see both angels and demons. "The Fathers are not speculative thinkers. When they speak about *theoria* they speak with very great precision. They know exactly what they are saying about theology, dogmas and the wiles of the devil..."

The glorified know the demons' thoughts and actions from experience. The Apostle Paul writes: *For we are not ignorant of his devices*. (2 Cor 2:11). "If someone becomes a specialist in the struggle against the devil he is very well aware of how the devil and the demons work."

The devil knew God before the Fall and still sees the glory of God. However, as he is incurable, his nature is darkened and he sees fire. That is why iconographers depict him as dark or black. "The devil is the greatest 'negative theologian', because he sees the glory of God as darkness and fire."

The devil knows Holy Scripture and interprets it from his own perspective, as we clearly see in the temptations of Christ, when he used scriptural passages in accordance with his own opinions. "For the Fathers *illumination* does not mean that someone has studied and knows the Old and New Testaments by heart. The devil also knows the Old and New Testaments by heart. It is not only Christians who know them. The devil can interpret Holy Scripture as much as he likes." Thus the devil becomes a catechist to those who accept him. "I think that perhaps the best catechist and the greatest catechumen who existed then—when catechism was simply intellectual and not purification of the heart—was the devil himself."

The devil's warfare against human beings takes many different forms. "When someone reads the Fathers of the Church he finds there an excellent strategy, according to the devil. Because the devil did not know anything about immutable laws as criteria for legal ethics, truth and so on. The devil did not take account of any laws. He is not someone who wages war as we do today, so to speak. As you know, the Geneva Conventions say that when someone is taken prisoner he must be provided with medical care, that he should eat three times a day, that he should have clean sheets every two to three days and that he should have a pillowcase and not sleep on the floor. And all states have accepted these regulations internationally and war is now waged on the basis of legislation.

Well, before those Conventions, when nations went to war there were no rules. Everyone attacked the enemy as he wished. There were no regulations. The war waged between human beings and the devil is something like that. The devil does not recognize any rule of good behavior in his conflict with man. For that reason it is extremely difficult for someone to become an Orthodox theologian. Why?

The best guide on this subject is St. Symeon the New Theologian, who gives detailed descriptions of these matters. He says that the devil's first concern is without doubt that we

should not even hear the name of Christ or anything about the name of Christ. If, contrary to the devil's hopes, we hear something about Christ and it begins to attract our interest, he then changes tactics. Having lost that battle, he has other strongholds. He wages another type of war, because he has another strategy afterwards for someone who has become a catechumen. He teaches him, 'Stop fasting now.' Then he says, 'Your spiritual father gave you this interpretation for that passage, but there is another better interpretation.' The devil begins teaching him how to interpret Holy Scripture and how to teach about the Person of Christ, and he becomes a teacher of Christianity.

If someone progresses from *purification* to *illumination*, the devil then begins to introduce his own way of enlightening man. 'Leave that now. It is not the nous that should be illuminated: the rational faculty should be illuminated. Set the nous aside and don't pay much attention to those who say that purification means purification of the nous. Purification means purification of the rational faculty. So you ought to go and study, become highly educated, learn philosophy and so on.'

If someone reaches *illumination*, the devil has his technique at every level. Even if a monk arrives at *glorification* he will still try to destroy him then. The Fathers mention examples of glorified people who were brought down. That is why the icon in the *Ladder* of St John Climacus shows a monk at the very top with one foot in Paradise and the devil is dragging him down by the other foot.

I ask the students at the university now, 'Which of you, when you finish your theology degree, will be that kind of theologian?' Because theology and the troparia of the Church draw a parallel between learning theology and strategy and sport.

In sport, particularly in those days, when someone entered the contest, there were no rules of good behavior like those that we have now in competitions. Now we have the umpire with his whistle, who calls 'foul', 'out' and so on. In those days sport was like war, without rules of behavior and without an umpire. And the devil has no umpire, so the Christian is an athlete and a soldier. When someone is going to become a theologian he really ought to take an interest in strategy and sport rather than philosophy. Generally speaking, he will learn more about the struggle from how the generals wage war than he will learn from philosophers. From all this it is clear that no distinction exists in the Fathers between theologians and

spiritual fathers. Theologians are spiritual fathers and spiritual fathers are theologians."

The devil also creates various inspirations and brings thoughts (*logismoi*) or even good feelings. "There are some people who think that, when they feel well disposed towards someone, for instance, when they see someone who is poor and they feel sympathy for him—these are human feelings. And [they think that] when someone has good feelings, we should say that they are inspired by God. Yes, but good feelings can also be inspired by the devil. Inspirations come from many different sources. According to patristic tradition the only unerring feeling that can exist in man is when the Holy Spirit prays within him. Thus, good feelings can proceed from the devil as well, not only from God."

We can distinguish the faith that is a gift of the Holy Spirit from the faith that comes from the devil. "Faith saves. But which faith? The faith that the Holy Spirit gives us. Not

the faith that we offer to God. Because we offer our own faith; we give God our works, everything. Then God comes and gives these same things back to us through the Holy Spirit, and from then on they become spiritual and not demonic. A faith that is not spiritual faith has to become spiritual. A work that is not a spiritual work eventually becomes a demonic work. What was the work of the Pharisee? If the Pharisee were alive today he

would be the best Christian in our parishes, the way they have ended up."

Situations that arise within the Church can also be demonic. "If we have music in Church that provokes demonic feelings, then it is demonic. Not that what provokes erotic love is demonic in itself, but that is not the purpose of the Church. We cannot have romantic relationships with the saints, Christ and the All-Holy Virgin."

The ecstatic states observed among Neoplatonists are demonic. "For the Fathers of the Church Neoplatonic ecstasy is a reality, but it is a gift from the devil, not from the Holy Spirit. The Fathers emphasize this. For that reason we find the Fathers condemning Neoplatonists and religiosity, because they are overwhelmed by demonic energies. That is why they have those strange experiences. Nowadays, of course, serious people do not concern themselves with Platonic mysticism. There are, however, many religious people in the West who are involved in spirituality in that way. Thus success in Platonism is a demonic act, for us at least, by our criteria."



Some ascetic acts may be demonic. “When the Fathers speak about asceticism and self-control, self-control is not only for single people but also for those who are married. That is why we have fasts: so that sometimes we practice self-restraint. Married people also practice self-control, at least by mutual agreement, according to the Apostle Paul’s exhortation, because if it is one-sided this abstinence can be dangerous, as St. Paul says. The devil has many tricks, so it has to be by agreement.” In addition, “Asceticism that does not make progress and stands still becomes demonic because it eventually leads to pride.”

Without a doubt the devil actively attacks people, but he can only produce negative results if they co-operate and respond to the devil’s wiles. Someone becomes the devil’s victim when he retains evil thoughts (*logismoi*) within himself. In the extremely varied warfare waged by the devil, man needs to learn to distinguish simple thoughts from complex thoughts, God’s energy from demonic energies, and the appearance of God’s Light from the devil’s light. “Something that may be considered demonic from the Orthodox standpoint may be considered healthy from another point of view. What Orthodox theology regards as originating from the devil, the newspapers *Apoyevmatini* and *Eleftherotypia* may regard as good for people. The problem for Orthodox Christians is knowing what the criterion should be.”

“Most of all someone needs to learn to distinguish the energies of the devil, so that he can discern which energy influencing him is from God and which energy is from other created things and particularly from the devil. This ability to discern between created and uncreated energies is the basis of the spiritual gift of discerning spirits. One has to distinguish between the energies of the evil spirit and of the Holy Spirit.” Sometimes the devil *transforms himself into an angel of light* (2 Cor 11:14). Demonic light is different from the Light of God. “The uncreated Light never comes from outside. It always comes from within. The demon is external and the light of the devil is external. When the devil reveals light to someone it comes from outside.”

“When the devil appears to man, he appears in conjunction with him, never merged with him. The created light of the devil cannot merge with man. For that reason, when the devil appears he always appears with shape and color, and he is always outside man. It is a light that co-exists, say the Fathers. The devil’s light exists alongside man. When it is the uncreated Light, however, it is without shape, form or color

and amorphous, and it is seen through merging. So someone who is glorified is within the Light and everything around him is within the Light. And the Light shines from everywhere and the Light is pervasive. The devil’s light is limited to one place and is also colored.”

Anyone who has the gift of discernment can immediately perceive delusion and is not deluded. That is why in patristic language the glorified are described as *unerring*, which means that they do not go astray. Discerning spiritual fathers play an important role on this spiritual journey. In any case, a spiritual father ought to be a theologian, in the charismatic sense of the term, as theology is knowledge of God and whoever acquires this knowledge can discern *the spirits, whether they are of God.* (1 Jn 4:1). “The fact that the spiritual father has noetic prayer signifies that he has the gift of discerning spirits and knows the wiles of the devil beyond all doubt. He knows the energies of the devil with amazing accuracy. He is a spiritual father. But this is Orthodox theology. Consequently this means that the spiritual father is inevitably Orthodox; it is impossible for him not to be Orthodox. Obviously the spiritual father ought to be a guide, not someone who speculates about these issues. He should have precise knowledge of these matters and guide his spiritual children with precision. If he speculates he is lost and his followers will be lost. This is inevitable. From the patristic point of view this is virtue. This is also why heresy leads people to Hell.”

The devil incited Adam and Eve to sin, to disobey God’s will, with the result that death came about. This means that the devil, not God, is the creator of death. From that time onwards the devil has dominated man through death. St. Paul, referring to the purpose of Christ’s incarnation, when He assumed a mortal body subject to suffering but free from sin, writes: *He Himself [Christ] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* (Heb 2:14-15).

It is clear that the devil is closely linked with death and dominates man, because through fear of death man lives carnally, he is in the grip of selfish love and acquires the passions of love of praise, love of pleasure and love of money. “Satan, who is himself the origin of sin, through death and corruption implicates the whole of humankind and creation in sin and death. To be in the power of death, according to the Apostle Paul, is to be a slave to the devil and a sinner,



because of the inability of the flesh to live in accordance with the law of God, which is unselfish love.”

Christ was victorious over the devil, death and sin through His Cross and Resurrection. As death entered man’s body at the instigation of the devil, victory over the devil and death cannot come about through speculations and rational thoughts, only through the Cross, Tomb and Resurrection of Christ. “It is clear that for St. Paul the bodily Resurrection of Christ is the destruction of the devil, death and corruption. Christ is the first to rise from the dead. If there is no Resurrection there can be no salvation. As death is a consequence of the interruption of communion with God’s life and love, and for that reason man and the creation are held captive by the devil, only a real resurrection can destroy the power of the devil. Central to biblical and patristic thought is a Christology of actual union, which depends on biblical teaching about Satan, death, corruption and human destiny. Satan rules by means of death, completely and physically. His defeat has to be complete and physical. The reinstatement of communion ought not to come about only in the realm of the noetic dimension, but more significantly through the creation of which man is an integral part.”

Consequently Christians overcome the devil, death and sin when they share in Christ’s victory, when they are members of the Church, members of the risen Body of Christ. “Death is the devil’s greatest power and is destroyed within the Body of Christ, where the faithful continuously fight against Satan and struggle to acquire unselfish love. This battle against the devil and this struggle for unselfish love are centered on the collective Eucharistic life of the local parish.”

The Christian’s struggle is essentially against the devil: inwardly against thoughts (*logismoi*) and passions, and outwardly. This is also the struggle of the Church. “The Church’s struggle is not only inward, namely, that it strives against the devil and temptations to enable everybody to attain to illumination. The Tradition itself continuously comes into conflict with things outside the Church. But it is difficult to define what these things outside the Church are. An officer in the Emperor’s army may not be baptized, and may have one foot inside the Church and the other foot outside. The boundaries between the Church and the world are not clear for us Orthodox. We cannot accept as Orthodox the view that Augustine expresses in *The City of God (De Civitate Dei)*, that there is the role of the devil and here is the role of grace. Until we depart to the Lord the devil is with us continuously and struggles to swallow us up.”

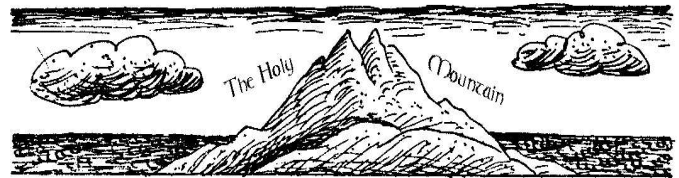
The Christian must be set free from the energies of the demons. This used to happen during catechism, which is why the catechumen used to learn this art of war against the devil. The Fathers laid down the readings from the Gospel from this perspective. During the period of *purification* the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were read. In fact

the Gospel of Mark speaks about fighting demonic energies and its dominant theme is *purification*. This *purification* took place in the period of Great Lent, through the exorcisms, for candidates for baptism, the catechumens. After baptism, which took place on Great and Holy Saturday, the Gospel of John was read, which pays almost no attention to the devil.

“Salvation for humankind and creation cannot come about by means of a simple act of forgiveness of any legalistic record of sins. Nor can it come about by rendering satisfaction to the devil or to God. Salvation can come about through the destruction of the devil and his power.” Anyone who fights the devil by the power of Christ and overcomes him understands his wiles and becomes a real theologian. Orthodox theology is *polemical* and it is interpreted by means of *the art of war*. “Being a theologian means first and foremost that someone is an expert in the wiles of the devil. Illumination and particularly glorification transmit the gift of discerning spirits so that the devil may be put to shame, especially when he resorts to teaching theology and spirituality to those who are beginning to slip out of his hands.”

Any sort of theology that does not know the wiles of the devil is heretical and under the influence of the devil. “The enemy of life and death (the devil) can only be destroyed when Christians are able to say with certitude, *For we are not ignorant of his devices.* (2 Cor. 2:11). Any kind of theology that cannot define precisely the methods and deceptions of the devil is clearly heretical, as such a theology has already been deceived by the devil. That is exactly why the Fathers could affirm that heresy is the work of the devil.”

In any case, participation in the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God depends on warfare against the demons. Otherwise one cannot experience the glory and rule of God. “The glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God reaches man through the expulsion of demons. We have purification, which is essentially the expulsion of demons. When the demons are driven out the glory and rule of God comes.” It follows that “every saint of the Church represents the triumph of faith over the powers of the devil.”

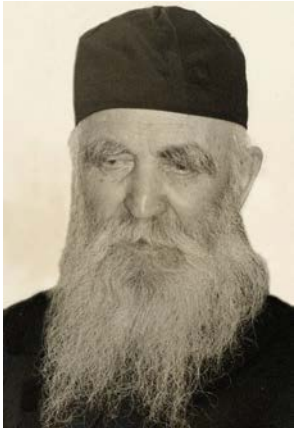


You don’t see how, with every prayer you utter, many demons fall and turn back. You only see how much you are wounded. Know that they also are being beaten, and flee. Each time we show patience, they flee in leaps; and with each prayer they are seriously wounded. So, in time of war, don’t expect that—while you are firing bullets and cannonballs—they’ll retaliate with Turkish Delight and chocolates.

Blessed Elder Joseph the Hesychast, (+1959)

THE IMPIETY OF PEOPLE HAS REACHED THE HIGH POINT

By the Holy Elder Philotheos of Paros, written to a General in 1955. [this timeless piece of factual observations and advice remains even more accurate and vital in our days, some 60 years after its authorship]



The impiety, corruption, senselessness and lack of conscience of people, both lay-people and clergymen, men and women, rich and poor, generals and soldiers, the rulers and the ruled over has reached a high point and is speedily progressing in leaps and bounds till it reaches the greatest precipice.

What is countering this pitiful progression of spiritual impiety? It is: the infinite compassion of

God; His immeasurable mercy and unimaginable long-suffering; the intercessions of His all immaculate Mother and of all the Saints; the little virtue, faith, hope and love of the few people; their prayers and petitions to the Lord for the salvation of the whole world; the lack of evil in the babes and infants (although even the majority of the babies from their birth receive from their evil and corrupted parents as an inheritance and partake of the wickedness, the evil and bad habits of their birth-givers). All the above things **restrain the most just wrath and the most righteous anger of the merciful and infinitely compassionate God.**

But until when? Until the cup is filled, which as it seems, has been filled and has begun to pour out not completely, but little by little. This slow change in God's wrath is again allowed for our benefit. What benefit, you ask? So that we can understand how harsh it is to sin and not repent, and so that fearing we might cease sinning and enraging God, who is our most loving-caring Father, the Provider, the Ruler, the Protector and Granter of all good things.

Unfortunately nothing, nothing at all scares or intimidates us; we have become worse than the irrational beasts because they know their protector and master. Man, however, not only does not know Him, but even blasphemes against Him. When animals happen to pass by a slippery place and slip or fall, they remember the fall and they won't pass by that area again, they might even prefer that someone kill them rather than that they pass by that place.

Man, on the other hand, who is more senseless/foolish than the animals, when he happens to fall in a certain area and becomes wounded, wounded in soul, he does not think of the fall, the harm, but he runs there with pleasure. Have mercy, have mercy O Lord upon such minds. But even if a

father, mother, brother, spiritual father, teacher or priest or spiritual guide is found who advises him, he continues to propel himself to the avenues of fallen and sinful behaviors.

Be careful, guard yourself, depart, don't go to that place, to that person, do not do that sin, it is dangerous, it is a double death of body and soul, it is hell! Most people will not only not accept such counsel, but they even get mad, angry, and are hostile towards the doctor. For these reasons, the people of today's generation, aside from the other sins which they have, also have pride, and being prideful they neither receive counsel, nor correction nor repentance. The teacher, if he is a priest and spiritual father, must be careful to invent medicines and appropriate ways, to correct them. Neither should he be silent, nor should he censure them harshly and abruptly, because strict censures are bruises to prideful and impious ones, and if he abruptly censures them, he will lose them completely.

The teacher must become wise and very discerning, and because no one is wise in this world of himself, he must through fervent prayer ask God, the granter of true wisdom, to give him the gift of wisdom and prudence, like Solomon, to govern souls. Many times with the same medicine one person is healed and the other is harmed—the teacher and the priest must have the gift of discernment. Nevertheless a good, sweet, mild, humble manner benefits the fallen man more...

To the scorners, the hostile, the impious, the lewd and rude people, he should not give the holy things. And, most importantly, **to the heretics after the first and second counsel, let him give up! Amen.**



My blessed child, do not be afraid in the struggle. Nourish your soul with courage and hope. Disregard the adversities that come from the demons. See to it that every fight is crowned with success. In God's eyes nothing is in vain—even the slightest forcefulness is good. Do not lose your nerve at all; fight valiantly; coerce yourself, press yourself, for it is by pressing grapes that sweet wine is made, which gladdens the heart. Courage, my child; we shall prevail with God's help.

If something pushes you to criticism in any matter regarding a brother or the monastery, try to pray about the matter instead, without passing it under the judgement of your reason. If you turn within yourself through prayer, humility, and mourning, you will find a spiritual treasure—just keep pride and criticism far from you.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheos
From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"

Πίσω από την Πόρτα του Ναού

Αρχμ. Παύλου Παπαδοπούλου.

Ήταν ο άνθρωπος της παρέας. Πειράγματα, Αισχρολόγια, άστεϊσμοί και άλλα πολλά ήταν στον ημερήσιο κατάλογο των κατορθωμάτων του. Τα χρόνια περνούσαν και ποτέ του δεν συνδέθηκε με κάποιους ανθρώπους... ποτέ του δεν έμπιστευτήκε κανέναν. Όλοι τον θέλανε για την παρέα αλλά μέχρι εκεί. Αλλά και ο ίδιος κανέναν δεν έπαιρνε στα σοβαρά, κανέναν δεν αισθανόταν δικό του άνθρωπο, φίλο του, οίκείο του.

Κάπου στα τριάντα του, γνώρισε μία κοπέλα. Την γνώρισε μέσα από μία τυχαία παρέα, διαμέσου γνωστών αγνώστων. Η κοπέλα αυτή είχε κάτι το διαφορετικό, κάτι το «περίεργο». Του κίνησε το ενδιαφέρον. Όταν τύχαινε στην παρέα να βρίσκεται και εκείνη (σπάνια), αυτός σταματούσε τις άνοησίες, σταματούσε τις αισχροτήτες τις όποιες οί υπόλοιποι τον ώθοῦσαν να πράξει για χάριν της παρέας και του κεφιοῦ. Μετά από μερικούς μήνες πήρε το θάρρος και την ζήτησε να βγούνε έξω. Εκείνη δέχτηκε, προσφέροντάς του μία ευχάριστη έκπληξη. Δεν περίμενε να βγει μαζί του ραντεβού...

Από το πρώτο ραντεβού κατάλαβε ότι είχε να κάνει με μία κοπέλα που πίστευε βαθιά στον Θεό. Απ' την άλλη, αυτός στο στόμα του έπιανε κάτι το «έκκλησιαστικό» μόνο για να το κοροϊδέψει και να το κατακρίνει. Τα λόγια της κοπέλας είχαν μία γλυκύτητα. Μιλούσε και νόμιζες ότι σε μιλούσε μία μελωδία. Τα ραντεβού έφευγαν το ένα μετά το άλλο... ή κοπέλα πάντα χαμογελαστή και πρόσχαρη, εκείνος άνησυχος και προβληματισμένος. Του μιλούσε για τον Θεό, του μιλούσε για την ζωή μέσα στην Εκκλησία, του μιλούσε για την γνήσια και ανιδιοτελή αγάπη. Εκείνος αναπαύοταν μόνο στην σιγουριά των ματιών της.

Ποτέ δεν άγγιξε εκείνη την κοπέλα, μέχρις ότου στο τελευταίο τους ραντεβού του είπε:

—Θα ήθελα να προσευχηθείς για έμένα... την άλλη εβδομάδα θα κάνω μία πολύ σοβαρή έγχειρηση στην καρδιά...

Τα λόγια της πάγωσαν το βλέμμα του. Άσυναίσθητα έπιασε τα χέρια της. Του ήταν άδιανόητο ότι μπορεί να την έχανε.

—Ναί, θα προσευχηθώ..., είπε με τρεμάμενη φωνή.

Η κοπέλα σηκώθηκε, τον άσπάσθηκε και έφυγε λέγοντας:

—Θα σε πάρω τηλέφωνο.

Εκείνος δεν είπε τίποτα.

Η ημέρα της έγχειρησης ήρθε. Σηκώθηκε το πρωί ένθουμούμενος ότι θα «πρέπει» να προσευχηθεί. Της το ύποσχέθηκε. Δεν ήξερε πώς. Δεν γνώριζε απ' αυτά τα πράγματα... Θυμήθηκε την μαυροφορεμένη γιαγιά του που τον πήγαινε, όταν ήταν μικρός, σε ένα μοναστηράκι δίπλα στο χωριό του. Ήταν το μοναδικό ίσως μέρος που θεωρούσε άσπιλο, γνήσιο και άγνό. Κίνησε προς τα εκεί.

Ήταν πλέον μεσημέρι, σχεδόν εκείνη η ώρα που η κοπέλα θα έκανε την έγχειρηση. Έσβησε τη μηχανή του αυτοκινήτου και μαζί της έκλεισε και το ραδιόφωνο που τόσο ώρα έπαιζε στους κοσμικούς του ρυθμούς.

Σιωπή. Έκανε να βγει από το αυτοκίνητο προσεκτικά και ακόμα πιο εύλαβικά έκλεισε την πόρτα του αυτοκινήτου. Αυτή η ήσυχία είχε κάτι το ιερό, σαν να έκρουβε κάτι το πολύτιμο. Πρώτη φορά στη ζωή του βίωνε κάτι τέτοιο. Ήσυχία, μέσα στην άνησυχία του. Προχώρησε προς το ναό. Μερικά κεράκια τρεμόπαιζαν στο μανουάλι του έξωνά-



θηκα. Στάθηκε μπροστά στην πόρτα του ναού, ή οποία του έφερε μπροστά του το ήλαρο πρόσωπο της γιαγιάς του. Μικρό παιδί τον έπαιρνε από το χέρι και έρχόταν εδώ να ανάψουν τα καντήλια. Τόσα χρόνια όλες αυτές οι ιερές μνημες είχαν πέσει στο σκοτάδι της λήθης... σαν να μην τα είχε ζήσει. Έκανε τον σταυρό του και έπιασε το χερούλι της πόρτας για να μπει στα ένδοτερα.

Η πόρτα άνοιξε και μαζί της άνοιξε ή πόρτα της καρδιάς του. Η πόρτα του ναού άνοιξε και μαζί της άνοιξαν και οι βρύσες των ματιών του. Έκλαιγε μέσα στην πρωτόγνωρη αυτή σιωπή. Έκλαιγε βουβά καθώς τα χείλη του άσπαζόταν την εικόνα της Παναγιάς. Ήταν μόνος του στον ναό. Για αρκετή ώρα τα δακρυσμένα μάτια του περιεργαζόταν τις άγιογραφίες, τα προσκυνητάρια, το τέμπλο, τους πολυέλεους, τα στασίδια.

Πήγε και κάθισε στο πρώτο σκαλοπάτι που οδηγούσε προς το πατάρι. Μπροστά του άπλωνόταν μυστικά μία απόκοσμη και συνάμα γνώριμη οίκειότητα. Ένοιωθε

σπίτι του. Ἐνοιωθε μέσα στὸν ναό, σὰν νὰ βρισκόταν μέσα στὴν ἀγκαλιὰ τῆς συγχωρεμένης του μητέρας...

—Θεέ μου, κἄνε καλὰ αὐτὴ τὴν κοπέλα ποὺ τόσο πολὺ σὲ ἀγαπᾷ... βοήθησέ την... βοήθησε καὶ ἐμένα...

Τὰ λεπτὰ περνοῦσαν. Δὲν ἔλεγε νὰ φύγει ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνο τὸ σκαλοπάτι. Καθόταν ἐκεῖ γεμάτος ἀγωνία γιὰ τὴν ἡρεμία ποὺ ἔνοιωθε. Κάτι τοῦ ἔλεγε ὅτι ὅλα θὰ πᾶνε καλὰ. Μετὰ ἀπὸ ἀρκετὴ ὥρα σηκώθηκε, ἀσπᾶσθηκε τὶς εἰκόνες στὰ προσκυνητάρια καὶ ἔφυγε. Μετὰ ἀπὸ δύο ἡμέρες κάποιος συγγενῆς τῆς κοπέλας τὸν πῆρε τηλέφωνο:

—Ὅλα καλὰ πῆγανε... μὴν ἀνησυχεῖς...

Ἔστερα ἀπὸ δύο ἡμέρες πῆγε τὴν εἶδε στὸ νοσοκομεῖο.

—Φαίνεται διαφορετικός..., τοῦ εἶπε μόλις τὸν εἶδε ἡ κοπέλα.

—Σ' εὐχαριστῶ... ἐσὺ μοῦ ἔδειξες τὸν δρόμο πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ...

Ἦταν ἡ τελευταία φορὰ ποὺ τὴν ἔβλεπε. Τὴν φίλησε γιὰ πρώτη καὶ μοναδική φορὰ, στὸ μέτωπο, τῆς χαμογέλασε καὶ ἔφυγε.

Πέρασαν πολλὰ χρόνια ἀπὸ τότε. Καὶ νὰ ποὺ ἦρθε ἡ ὥρα νὰ φύγει ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν ζωὴ, σὲ βαθιὰ γεράματα, ἐκεῖνος ὁ νέος. Ἐκοιμήθη καθισμένος στὸ σκαλοπάτι τοῦ ναοῦ ποὺ τότε εἶχε δακρῦσει... Ἐκοιμήθη μετὰ ἀπὸ χρόνια μέσα στὸ μοναχικὸ ράσο, λέγοντας τὴν εὐχή...

Ὅλα ἄρχισαν μέσα ἀπὸ μία κοσμικὴ παρέα. Μεταμορφώθηκαν μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν οὐράνια παρέα τῆς Χάρης τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ ὅλα ξαναρχίζουσι τώρα, μέσα σὲ Φῶς, μέσα σὲ Ἀγάπη, μέσα στὴν αἰωνιότητα... πίσω ἀπὸ τὴν πόρτα τοῦ ναοῦ.

Εὐλίην πόρτα, κλειστὴ καὶ σιωπηλὴ, σοῦ μιλοῦσε γιὰ ὅλα ἐκεῖνα ποὺ εἶχε δεῖ καὶ ἀκούσει. Κι ἐκεῖνος, ὁ μοναχός, πλέον ἀκίνητος, σοῦ ἔγνεφε γιὰ τὰ λάθη ποὺ ἔκανε, γιὰ τὴν μετάνοια ποὺ ἔζησε, γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη ποὺ ἔδωσε καὶ ἔλαβε, γιὰ τὶς ἡμέρες τῆς σιωπῆς ποὺ βίωσε σὰν σὲ πανηγύρι...



Μὴ φοβᾶσαι, ἀδελφέ μου, νὰ μείνεις μοναχός μετὰ τὸν ἑαυτό σου! Μὴ καταγίνεσαι ὀλοένα μετὰ χίλια πράγματα, γιὰ νὰ τὸν ξεχάσεις! Γιατὶ ὅποιος ἔχασε τὸν ἑαυτό του, κάθετα μετὰ ἴσκιους καὶ μετὰ φαντάσματα μέσα στὴν ἔρημο τοῦ θανάτου. Ἀγάπησε τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὶς πεθαμμένες σοφίες τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Περισσότερο ἀπὸ κάθε τιμὴ καὶ δόξα ἐτούτου τοῦ κόσμου. Καὶ μοναχὰ τότε, θὰ χαίρεσαι σὲ κάθε ὥρα τῆς ζωῆς σου. Κανένας δρόμος δὲν βγάζει στὴν εἰρήνη τῆς καρδιάς, παρὰ μόνον ὁ Χριστός, ποὺ σὲ καλεῖ πονετικὰ καὶ ποὺ σοῦ λέγει: «*Εγὼ εἰμὶ ἡ ὁδός*».

Φώτης Κόντογλου

Ῥωμοσύνη καὶ Ὁρθοδοξία

Τοῦ Φώτη Κόντογλου, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο «Παναγία καὶ Ὑπεραγία», τῶν ἐκδόσεων «Ἀρμός».



Ἡ Ῥωμοσύνη εἶναι ζυμωμένη μετὰ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, γι' αὐτὸ Χριστιανὸς καὶ Ἕλληνας ἦταν τὸ ἴδιο.

Ἡ Ῥωμοσύνη καὶ ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία εἶναι ἓνα πρᾶγμα. Γιὰ νὰ μὴν πάρω τοὺς

πολὺ παλιούς, παίρνω δυὸ τρεῖς ἀπὸ ἐκείνους ποὺ ἀγωνισθήκανε γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία τῆς Ἑλλάδας, ποὺ ὅποτε μιᾶνε γιὰ τὴν λευτεριά, μιᾶνε καὶ γιὰ τὴν θρησκεία. Ὁ Ρήγας Φεραῖος λέγει: «Νὰ κάνουμε τὸν ὄρκο ἀπάνω στὸ Σταυρό». Ἔνας ἄλλος ποιητῆς γράφει:

«Γιὰ τῆς πατρίδας τὴν ἐλευθερία,
γιὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν πίστη τὴν ἀγία,
γι' αὐτὰ τὰ δυὸ πολεμῶ,
μ' αὐτὰ νὰ ζήσω ἐπιθυμῶ.
Κι ἂν δὲν τὰ ἀποχτήσω,
τί μ' ὠφελεῖ νὰ ζήσω;»

Οἱ ἀγράμματοι ποιητῆς τῶν βουνῶν, μέσα στὰ τραγούδια ποὺ κάνανε, καὶ ποὺ δὲ θὰ τὰ φτάξει ποτὲ κανένας γραμματιζούμενος, μιᾶνε κάθε τόσο γιὰ τὴν θρησκεία μας, γιὰ τὸ Χριστό, γιὰ τὴν Παναγία, γιὰ τοὺς δώδεκα Ἀποστόλους, γιὰ τοὺς ἁγίους. Πολλὲς παροιμίες καὶ ρητὰ καὶ λόγια ποὺ λέγει ὁ λαός μας, εἶναι παρμένα ἀπὸ τὰ γράμματα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Ἡ Ῥωμοσύνη εἶναι ζυμωμένη μετὰ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, γι' αὐτὸ Χριστιανὸς καὶ Ἕλληνας ἦταν τὸ ἴδιο. Ἀπὸ τότε ποὺ γινήκανε Χριστιανοὶ οἱ Ἕλληνες, πήρανε στὰ χέρια τους τὴ σημαία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τὴν κάνανε σημαία δική τους: **Πίστις καὶ Πατρίς!**

Ποτάμια Ἑλληνικὸ αἶμα χυθῆκανε γιὰ τὴν πίστη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀπὸ τὰ χρόνια τοῦ Νέρωνα καὶ τοῦ Διοκλητιανοῦ, ἕως τὰ 1838, ποὺ μαρτύρησε ὁ ἅγιος Γεώργιος ὁ ἐξ Ἰωαννίνων. Ποιὰ ἄλλη φυλὴ ὑπόφερε τόσα μαρτύρια γιὰ τὸ Χριστό; Αὐτὸ τὸ ἀκατάλυτο ἔθνος ποὺ ἔπρεπε νὰ πληθύνει καὶ νὰ καπλαντίσει τὸν κόσμον, ἀπόμεινε ὀλιγάνθρωπο γιὰτὶ ἀποδεκατίσθηκε ἐπὶ χίλια ὀχτακόσια χρόνια ἀπὸ φυλὲς Χριστιανομάχες.

Ἀγιασμένη Ἑλλάδα! Εἶσαι ἁγιασμένη, γιὰτὶ εἶσαι βασανισμένη. Κι ἡ κάθε γιορτὴ σου μνημονεύει καὶ ἓνα μαρτύριό σου. Τὰ πάθη τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰ ἔκανες δικὰ σου πάθη, τὰ μαρτύρια τῶν ἁγίων εἶναι τὰ δικὰ σου μαρτύρια!...

Χωρίς την Ανάσταση του Χριστού δεν θα Υπήρχε Χριστιανισμός!

Άγιος Ιουστίνος Πόποβιτς.

Ἐάν υπάρχει μία ἀλήθεια στην ὁποία θὰ μπορούσαν νὰ συνοψισθοῦν ὅλες οἱ εὐαγγελικὲς ἀλήθειες, ἡ ἀλήθεια αὐτὴ θὰ ἦταν ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Καὶ ἀκόμη, ἐάν υπάρχει μία πραγματικότητα στην ὁποία θὰ μπορούσαν νὰ συνοψισθοῦν ὅλες οἱ καινοδιαθηκικὲς πραγματικότητες, ἡ πραγματικότητα αὐτὴ θὰ ἦταν ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Μόνο στην ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξηγοῦνται ὅλα τὰ θαύματά Του, ὅλες οἱ ἀλήθειές Του, ὅλα τὰ λόγια Του, ὅλα τὰ γεγονότα τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης.

Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ὁ Κύριος δίδασκε γιὰ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ Ἰδιος ὄντως εἶναι ἡ αἰώνια ζωὴ. Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του δίδασκε γιὰ τὴν ἀνάσταση τῶν νεκρῶν, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ Ἰδιος εἶναι πράγματι ἡ ἀνάσταση τῶν νεκρῶν. Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του δίδασκε ὅτι ἡ πίστη σ' Αὐτὸν μεταφέρει ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ Ἰδιος νίκησε τὸ θάνατο καὶ ἔτσι ἐξασφάλισε στοὺς θανατωμένους ἀνθρώπους τὴν μετάβαση ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου στὴν ἀνάσταση.

Μὲ τὴν ἁμαρτία ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐγίνε θνητὸς καὶ πεπερασμένος· μὲ τὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Θεανθρώπου γίνεται ἀθάνατος καὶ αἰώνιος. Σ' αὐτὸ δὲ ἀκριβῶς ἐγκείται ἡ δύναμη καὶ τὸ κράτος καὶ ἡ παντοδυναμία τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀναστάσεως. Καὶ γιὰ αὐτὸ, χωρὶς τὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ δεν θὰ ὑπῆρχε καν ὁ Χριστιανισμός.

Μεταξὺ τῶν θαυμάτων, ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου εἶναι τὸ μεγαλύτερο θαῦμα. Ὅλα τὰ ἄλλα θαύματα πηγάζουν ἀπὸ αὐτὸ καὶ συνοψίζονται σ' αὐτό. Ἀπ' αὐτὸ πηγάζουν ἡ πίστη καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ ἐλπίδα καὶ ἡ προσευχὴ καὶ ἡ θεοσεβεία. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο καμιά ἄλλη θρησκεία δεν ἔχει· αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο ἀνυψώνει τὸν Κύριο ὑπεράνω ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν θεῶν. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο κατὰ τρόπο μοναδικὸ καὶ ἀναμφισβήτητο δείχνει καὶ ἀποδεικνύει ὅτι ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἶναι ὁ μόνος ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ Κύριος σὲ ὅλους τοὺς ὄρατους καὶ ἀόρατους κόσμους.

Τὸ ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος πιστεύει ἀληθινὰ στὸν Ἀναστάνα Κύριο τὸ ἀποδεικνύει μὲ τὸ νὰ ἀγωνίζεται κατὰ τῆς

ἁμαρτίας καὶ τῶν παθῶν καὶ ἐάν μὲν ἀγωνίζεται, πρέπει νὰ γνωρίζει ὅτι ἀγωνίζεται γιὰ τὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ. Ἐάν ὁμως δεν ἀγωνίζεται, τότε μάταιη ἡ πίστη του! Διότι, ἐάν ἡ πίστη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου δεν εἶναι ἀγώνας γιὰ τὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν αἰωνιότητα, τότε τί εἶναι; Ἐάν μὲ τὴν πίστη στὸ Χριστὸ δεν φθάνει κανεὶς στὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ θανάτου νίκη, τότε πρὸς τί ἡ πίστη μας; Ἐάν ὁ Χριστὸς δεν ἀναστήθηκε, τοῦτο σημαίνει ὅτι ἡ ἁμαρτία καὶ ὁ θάνατος δεν ἔχουν νικηθεῖ. Ἐάν δὲ δεν ἔχουν αὐτὰ τὰ δύο νικηθεῖ, τότε γιὰτί νὰ πιστεύει κανεὶς στὸ Χριστό; Εκείνος ὁμως ὁ ὁποῖος μὲ τὴν πίστη στὸν Ἀναστάνα Χριστὸ ἀγωνίζεται ἐναντίον κάθε ἁμαρτίας του, αὐτὸς ἐνισχύει σιγὰ-σιγὰ μέσα του τὴν αἴσθηση ὅτι ὁ Κύριος πραγματικὰ ἀναστήθηκε, ἄμβλυσε τὸ κέντρο τοῦ θανάτου, νίκησε τὸ θάνατο σὲ ὅλα τα μέτωπα τῆς μάχης.



Χωρὶς τὴν ἀνάσταση δεν ὑπάρχει οὔτε στὸν οὐρανὸ οὔτε κάτω ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸ τίποτε πῶς παράλογο ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο αὐτὸ οὔτε μεγαλύτερη ἀπελπισία ἀπὸ τὴ ζωὴ αὐτὴ, δίχως ἀθανασία. Σ' ὅλους τοὺς κόσμους δεν ὑπάρχει περισσότερο δυστυχισμένη ὑπαρξὴ ἀπὸ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ποὺ δεν πιστεύει στὴν ἀνάσταση τῶν νεκρῶν.

Γι' αὐτὸ, γιὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη ὑπαρξὴ, ὁ Ἀναστημένος Κύριος εἶναι τὰ «πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν» σ' ὅλους τοὺς κόσμους: Ὁ,τι τὸ Ὡραῖο, τὸ Καλὸ, τὸ Ἀληθινὸ, τὸ Προσφιλὲς, τὸ Χαρμόσυνο, τὸ Θεῖο, τὸ Σοφὸ, τὸ Αἰώνιο. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὅλη ἡ Ἀγάπη μας, ὅλη ἡ Ἀλήθειά μας, ὅλη ἡ Χαρά μας, ὅλο το Ἄγαθὸ μας, ὅλη ἡ Ζωὴ μας, ἡ Αἰώνια Ζωὴ σὲ ὅλες τὶς αἰωνιότητες καὶ ἀπεραντοσύνης. Ἀμήν.



Πρῶτα-πρῶτα τὰ παιδιὰ ἀντιγράφουν ἐμᾶς καὶ μάλιστα ἀπὸ μωρὰ. Ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ καὶ πέρα θὰ πρέπει νὰ ἐνεργοῦμε ἐπάνω τους ὅπως στὰ ρολόγια. Ὅσο παίρνει τὸ ἐλατήριό τους, τὰ κουρδίζουμε γρηγορὰ. Μετὰ σιγὰ-σιγὰ, προσέχοντας νὰ μὴ σπάσουμε τὸ ἐλατήριό τους μὲ τὸ ζόρισμα.

Ὅσο κανεὶς ἀπομακρύνεται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, τόσο πῶς δύσκολα γίνονται γι' αὐτὸν τὰ πράγματα. Μπορεῖ κανεὶς νὰ μὴν ἔχει τίποτε, ὅταν ὁμως ἔχει τὸ Θεό, δεν θέλει τίποτα.

Γέρων Παΐσιος Ἀθωνίτης

Τὸ Πάρισμο τῆς Πόλης - Μέρος 1^ο

Φώτης Κόντογλου.

Σὰν γυρίσανε λοιπόν οἱ ἀπεσταλμένοι τοῦ Σουλτάνου καὶ τοῦ πήγανε τὴν ἀπόκριση τοῦ Παλαιολόγου, πὼς δὲν παραδίνει τὴν Πόλη, ἀποφάσισε μὲ κάθε τρόπο νὰ τὴν πατήση.

Στὶς 24 Μαγιοῦ πρόσταξε τοὺς τελάληδες καὶ διαλαλήσανε στὸ στρατόπεδο πὼς στὶς 29 θὰ γινότανε τὸ μεγάλο γιουροῦσι (ἔφοδος) ἀπὸ στεριά καὶ ἀπὸ θάλασσα. Στὶς 26 καὶ στὶς 27 τὴ νύχτα, οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἀνάψανε τόσες φωτιές καὶ τόσα φανάρια, καὶ τέτοιες ἀγριοφωνές καὶ βουητὸ ἔβγαιναν ἀπ' τὸ στρατόπεδό τους, ποὺ οἱ Χριστιανοὶ νομίσανε πὼς φτάζανε πιά τὰ συντέλειά τους.

Τὴ Δευτέρα, στὶς 28 Μαγιοῦ, ὁ σουλτάνος εἶπε καὶ διαλαλήσανε νὰ τομιασθοῦνε οἱ στρατιῶτες γιὰ τὸν μεγάλο πόλεμο, νὰ λουστοῦνε ἑφτὰ φορὲς καὶ νὰ νηστεύουνε. Τοὺς ἔβγαλε κ' ἓναν λόγο καὶ τοὺς εἶπε πὼς σὰν πάρουνε τὴν Πόλη θὰ τοὺς τὴν ἀφήσῃ τρεῖς μέρες καὶ τρεῖς νύχτες, καὶ πὼς θὲ νᾶνε δικά τους ὅ,τι βροῦνε μέσα, χρυσάφι, ἀσήμι, φορέματα, ἄντρες, παιδιά καὶ γυναῖκες καὶ πὼς ὅσοι εἶνε γιὰ νὰ σκοτωθοῦνε, καθὼς γίνεται πάντα στὸν πόλεμο, αὐτοὶ δὲ μποροῦνε νὰ ξεφύγουνε, γιατί εἶνε γραμμένο ἀπὸ πρὶν ἀπάνω στὸ κούτελό τους, ὅπως λέγει ὁ «Προφήτης» καὶ πὼς θὰ πᾶνε στὸν «Παράδεισο» νὰ τρῶνε καὶ νὰ πίνουνε παντοτεινὰ μαζί μὲ τὸν «Προφήτη», καὶ νὰ κοιμοῦνται μὲ τίς πιὸ ὁμορφες γυναῖκες. Οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἐνθουσιαστήκανε ἀπὸ τὰ λόγια του καὶ βάλανε κάτι φωνές, ποὺ πολλὲς γυναῖκες ἀποβάλανε.

Ἀπ' τὸ πρῶν εἶχανε στὸ στρατόπεδό τους μεγάλο σῦρε-φέρε. Οἱ ντελάληδες τριγυρίζανε μὲ τοῦμπανα καὶ μὲ ζουρνᾶδες καὶ λέγανε: «Γειά σας, παιδιά τοῦ «Προφήτη», αὔριο θὰ πιάσουμε τόσους Χριστιανούς, ποὺ θὰ πουλάμε δυὸ γιὰ ἓναν παρὰ καὶ θὰ κάνουμε τὰ γένεια τους σκοινιά γιὰ νὰ δέσουμε τοὺς σκύλους μας. Τὶς γυναῖκες τους καὶ τίς κόρες τους θὰ τίς ἀτιμάσουμε!»

Ὅλη κεῖνη τὴν ἡμέρα τὰ κανόνια δουλέψανε ἀκατάπαντα, μὰ οἱ Χριστιανοὶ καταφέρνανε καὶ βουλώνανε τὰ γκρεμισμένα τειχιὰ μὲ πέτρες καὶ μὲ χῶμα ἢ τὰ χτίζανε κιόλας. Πρὸς τὸ βράδυ οἱ Τοῦρκοι μεθύσανε καὶ κάνανε σὰν τρελλοί. Ἀνάψανε μεγάλες

φωτιές στὴ στεριά καὶ ἀμέτρητα φανάρια στὰ καράβια, κ' ἡ ἀναλαμπὴ ἔπεφτε ἴσαμε πέρα ἀπάνω στὴ στεριά τῆς Ἀνατολῆς. Ζουρνᾶδες καὶ τουμπελέκια χαλούσανε τὸν κόσμον, ντερβισάδες χορεύανε, πῶλεγες πὼς ἀνοίξε ἡ γῆ καὶ βγήκανε οἱ δαιμόνοι.

Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ εἶχανε πέσει στὴν προσευχὴ. Μέρα νύχτα οἱ ἐκκλησιές ἦτανε γεμάτες κόσμον, τὸ πιὸ πολὺ γυναῖκες, κοπέλλες καὶ γρηές ἀλαλιασμένες, ποὺ λέγανε πὼς ἦτανε διάβολοι μεταμορφωμένοι οἱ ἄγριοι αὐτοὶ ἀνθρώποι ποὺ διψοῦσανε τὸ αἷμα τους. Ὁ κόσμος πίστευε πιά πὼς ἔφταξε ἡ μέρα ποὺ θὰ κουρσεύανε οἱ Τοῦρκοι τὴν Πόλη, καὶ νὰ γίνουνε ὅσα προφήτεψε ὁ Ἅγιος Κωνσταντῖνος, ποὺ τὸν βλέπανε στ' ἄγαλμα καβαλλάρη κοντὰ στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία κ' ἔδειχνε μὲ τὸ χέρι κατὰ τὴν Ἀνατολή, σημεῖο πὼς ἀπὸ κεῖ θᾶρθῃ ὁ Τοῦρκος ποὺ θὰ πάρῃ τὴν Πόλη.

Κι' ἄλλη προφητεία ἔλεγε πὼς, σὰν βασιλέψῃ ἓνας βασιλιάς, ποὺ θὰ λένε Ἑλένη τὴ μητέρα του, στὶς μέρες του θὰ σκλαβωθῇ ἡ Πόλη. Κι' ἄλλη τρίτη προφητεία πῶλεγε, πὼς ἅμα δείξῃ σημεῖο τὸ φεγγάρι στὸν οὐρανό, σὲ λίγες μέρες ἡ Πόλη θὰ χαλαστῇ.

Λοιπὸν καὶ τὰ τρία αὐτὰ σημάδια εἶχανε ξεδιαλυθῇ. Γιατὶ καὶ τὸ βασιλέα τὸν λέγανε Κωνσταντῖνο κ' εἶχε μητέρα Ἑλένη, μὰ καὶ τὸ φεγγάρι εἶχε δείξει σημεῖο. Στὶς 22 Μαγιοῦ, τὴν πρώτη ὥρα τῆς νύχτας, τὸ φεγγάρι, ἀντὶ νάβγῃ στοργυλὸ, βγήκε σὰν δρεπάνι καὶ στάθηκε ἔτσι ἴσαμε τρεῖς ὥρες μέσα στὸν οὐρανό, ποὺ ἦτανε καθαρὸς σὰν κρούσταλλο. Ὑστερα λίγο λίγο γιόμισε ὁ γύρος του καὶ στὶς ἕξι ὥρες τῆς νύχτας εἶχε γίνῃ ὀλοστόργυλο. Αὐτὸ τὸ σημεῖο εἰδοποίησε τὸν Παλαιολόγο πὼς ἤγγικε τὸ τέλος τῆς βασιλείας του. Οἱ Χριστιανοί, σὰν τῶδανε, κόπηκε τὸ αἷμα τους.

Ὁ βασιλιάς πρόσταξε νὰ κάνουνε λιτανεῖα καὶ βγάλανε τίς εἰκόνες καὶ μπροστὰ πηγαίνανε οἱ δεσποτάδες, οἱ παπάδες κ' οἱ καλογέροι κι ἀπὸ πίσω ὅσος κόσμος δὲν ἦτανε στὶς πόστες, κ' ὅλοι λέγανε «Κύριε ἐλέησον!» Τὴ Δευτέρα τὸ βράδυ συναχτήκανε οἱ πολεμάρχοι, οἱ στρατιῶτες κ' ὅλος ὁ λαὸς καὶ τοὺς μίλησε ὁ βασιλιάς νὰ μὴ χάσουνε τὴν ἐλπίδα τους στὸ Θεὸ καὶ στὴν Παναγιά.

Τὰ λόγια του μᾶς τὰ κράτησε ὁ φίλος του ὁ Φραντζῆς, κ' εἶνε σὰν συναξάρι: «Ὑμεῖς, εὐγενέστατοι ἄρχοντες κ' ἐκλαμπρότατοι Δήμαρχοι καὶ γενναιοτάτοι συστρατιῶται καὶ πᾶς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ τίμιος λαός.



Είξεύρετε, ὅτι ἐφθασεν ἡ ὥρα καὶ ὁ ἐχθρὸς τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν θέλει στενοχωρήσει ἡμᾶς μετὰ πάσης τέχνης καὶ μηχανῆς, ... ἵνα, εἰ δυνατόν, ὡς ὄφεις τὸν ἰὸν ἐκχύσει καὶ ὡς λέων ἀνήμερος καταπίη ἡμᾶς. Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω καὶ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς ἵνα στήτε ἀνδρείως καὶ μετὰ γενναίας ψυχῆς, ὡς πάντοτε ἕως τοῦ νῦν ἐποιήσατε, κατὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν. Παραδίδωμι δὲ ὑμῖν τὴν ἐκλαμπροτάτην καὶ περίφημον ταύτην πόλιν καὶ πατρίδα ἡμῶν καὶ βασιλεύουσαν τῶν πόλεων!

Αὐτὸς ὁ ἀλιτῆριος Ἀμηρᾶς πεντήκοντα καὶ ἐπτὰ ἡμέρας ἄγει σήμερον ἀφοῦ, ἐλθὼν, μᾶς ἠπειλήσε. Τώρα δέ, ἀδελφοί, μὴ δειλιάσετε. Ἡμεῖς γὰρ πᾶσαν ἐλπίδα εἰς τὴν ἄμαχον δόξαν ἀνεθέμεθα, ἐκεῖνοι δὲ εἰς τὰ ὄπλα. Διό, ὃ συστρατιῶται, γίνεσθε ἔτοιμοι καὶ στερεοὶ καὶ μεγαλόψυχοι διὰ τοὺς οἰκτιροὺς τοῦ θεοῦ. Μιμηθῆτε τοὺς ποτε τῶν Καρχηδονίων ὀλίγους ἐλέφαντας, πῶς τοσοῦτον πλῆθος ἵππων Ῥωμαίων τῆ φωνῇ καὶ θεῶ ἐδίωξαν· καὶ ἐὰν ζῶον ἄλογον ἐδίωξε, πόσον μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς οἱ τῶν ζῶων καὶ ἀλόγων ὑπάρχοντες κύριοι, καὶ οἱ καθ' ἡμῶν ἐρχόμενοι ἵνα παράταξιν μεθ' ἡμῶν ποιήσωσιν, ὡς ζῶα ἄλογα, καὶ χεῖρονες εἰσιν. Αἰ πέλται ὑμῶν καὶ ῥομφαῖαι καὶ τὰ τόξα καὶ ἀκόντια πρὸς αὐτοὺς πεμπέτωσαν παρ' ὑμῶν. Καὶ οὕτως λογίσθητε ὡς ἐπὶ ἀγρίων χοίρων καὶ πληθὺν κυνήγιον, ἵνα γνῶσωσιν οἱ ἀσεβεῖς ὅτι οὐ μετὰ ἀλόγων ζῶων, ὡς αὐτοί, παράταξιν ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ μετὰ κυρίων καὶ αὐθέντων αὐτῶν καὶ ἀπογόνων Ἑλλήνων καὶ Ῥωμαίων.»

Πολὺ μεγάλο παράπονο ἔχουν τὰ λόγια, ποὺ λέγει γιὰ τὴν Παναγιὰ καὶ γιὰ τὴν Πόλη, τὴν ἀγαπημένη τῆς πολιτεία. Θαρρεῖς πῶς μοιρολογᾷ τὴν κόρη του: «Τὸ καταφύγιον τῶν Χριστιανῶν· ἡ ἐλπίς καὶ ἡ χαρὰ πάντων τῶν Ἑλλήνων· τὸ καύχημα πάντων ὅσοι ζῶσιν ὑπὸ τὴν ἡλίου Ἀνατολήν. Ζητεῖ δὲ (ὁ Ἀμηρᾶς) πῶς νὰ εὔρη καιρὸν νὰ ἀφανίσῃ ὡς ῥόδον τοῦ ἀγροῦ τὴν ποτὲ περιφανῆ καὶ ἀνθίζουσαν ταύτην τῶν πόλεων βασιλεύουσαν.»

Ἔστερα γυρίζει καὶ λέγει στοὺς Βενετσάνους, ποὺ στεκόντανε στὰ δεξιά του: «Ἐνετοὶ εὐγενεῖς, ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ἐν Χριστῷ, ἄνδρες ἰσχυροὶ! Τὴν σήμερον παρακαλῶ νὰ ὑπερασπισθῆτε μεθ' ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σας τὴν πόλιν ταύτην, γνωρίζοντες, ὅτι δευτέραν πατρίδα καὶ μητέρα ἔχετε αἰώνως.»

Στὸ τέλος γυρίζει καὶ λέγει σ' ὅλο τὸ λαό: «Καιρὸν δὲν ἔχω νὰ σᾶς εἶπω περισσότερα. Ἴδου τὸ

τεταπεινωμένον μου τοῦτο σκῆπτρον εἰς τὰς χεῖρας πάντων ὑμῶν ἀνατίθημι. Φυλάξατέ το μετ' εὐνοίας! Πολὺ δὲ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς νὰ δείξητε τὴν πρέπουσαν εὐπειθειαν...»

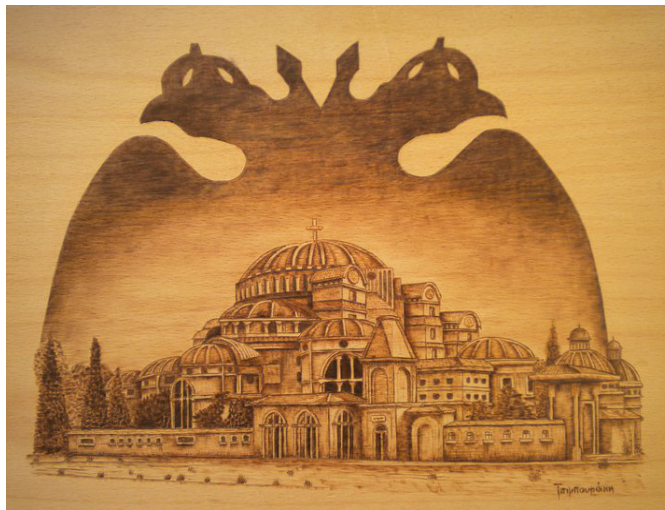
Ὁ βασιλιὰς ἔκλαιγε, ἔκλαιγε κι' ὁ λαὸς καὶ φώναζε: «Ἄς πεθάνουμε γιὰ τὴν πίστη τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ γιὰ τὴν πατρίδα μας!» Ἀγκαλιαζόντανε καὶ συγχωρονιόντανε. Ἔστερα τραβήξανε στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία. Κόσμος, παλαβωμένος ἀπ' τὸ φόβο, τὴν εἶχε γιομίσει κι' οἱ καμάρες ἀντιλαλούσανε ἀπὸ τὸ θρῆνο. Οἱ γυναῖκες κλαίγανε σιγανά, τὰ παιδιὰ ξεφωνίζανε κι' ὄλοι τρέμανε σὰν τὰ καλάμια. Ποιὰ καρδιὰ δὲ θὰ ῥάγιζε! «Εἰ καὶ ἀπὸ ξύλον ἄνθρωπος ἢ ἐκ πέτρας ἦν, οὐκ ἐδύνατο μὴ θρηνησαι.»

Οἱ διάκοι λέγανε μπροστὰ στὴν Ἁγία Πόρτα τὰ Εἰρηνικά, μὰ ἡ ὄχλοβοὴ δὲν ἄφηνε ν' ἀκουστῆ ἢ φωνὴ τους. Σὰν ἀρχίσανε οἱ ψαλτάδες, τὸ Κοινωνικὸ «Εἰς μνημόσυνον αἰώνιον ἔσται δίκαιος, ἀλληλούϊα», ὁ βασιλιὰς τραβήξε κατὰ τὸ τέμπλο, ντυμένος μὲ τὰ τριμμένα ροῦχα του, δακρυσμένος, μαραζωμένος, μὲ γένεια καὶ μαλλιά ἀχτένιστα σὰν βαρυποινίτης, κι' ἔπεσε στὰ γόνατα μπροστὰ στὰ εἰκονίσματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς Παναγιᾶς μ' ἀναστεναγμούς, μουρμουρίζοντας: «Ἐκύκλωσαν αἰ τοῦ βίου μὲ ζάλαι ὡς περ μέλισσαι κηρίον, Παρθένε, καὶ τὴν ἐμὴν κατασχοῦσαι καρδιάν κατατιτρώσκουσι βέλει τῶν θλίψεων.»

Καὶ σὰν ἐβγήκε ὁ Πατριάρχης μὲ τὸ ποτήρι, πῆγε καὶ μετάλαβε κι' ἔστερα γύρισε κατὰ τὸ λαὸ κι' εἶπε: «Χριστιανοί, συγχωρήστε τὶς ἁμαρτίες μου, κι' ὁ Θεὸς ἄς συγχωρήσῃ τὶς δικές σας!» Κι' ὁ κόσμος μὲ μιὰ φωνὴ φώναζε: «Συγχωρεμένος!»

Μέσα στ' Ἅγιο Βῆμα, ὁ Πατριάρχης, σκυμμένος ἀπάνω στὰ τίμια δῶρα, μνημόνευε: «Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τῆς πόλεως, ἐν ἣ παροικοῦμεν, καὶ πάσης πόλεως καὶ χώρας, καὶ τῶν πίστει οἰκούντων ἐν αὐταῖς. Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, πλεόντων, ὁδοιπορούντων, νοσοῦντων, καμνόντων, αἰχμαλώτων. Μνήσθητι, Κύριε, τῶν μεμνημένων τῶν πενήτων, καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας ἡμᾶς τὰ ἐλέη σου ἐξαπόστειλον.»

Σὰν τελείωσε ἡ λειτουργία, ἦτανε νύχτα. Ὁ βασιλιὰς πῆγε στὸ παλάτι καὶ κάθησε λίγη ὥρα γιὰ νὰ συγχωρεθῆ μὲ τοὺς δικούς του καὶ μὲ τοὺς ὑπηρέτες του. «Ἐν τῇδε τῇ ὥρᾳ τίς διηγῆσεται τοὺς τότε κλαυθμοὺς καὶ θρήνους, τοὺς ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ;»



Καὶ σὰν τοὺς ἀποχαιρέτισε, καβαλλίκεψε τ' ἀλόγο του μαζί με τὴ συνοδεία του καὶ ἐπιθεώρησε τὸ κάστρο γιὰ νὰ δῆ ἂν εἶνε στὸν τόπο του ὁ καθένας. Ὅλοι βρισκόντανε στὶς πόστες τους, κ' οἱ πόρτες ἦτανε καλὰ ἀμπαρωμένες.

Φτάνοντας στὴν πόρτα Καλιγαρία, ἀνέβηκε μοναχὸς ἀπάνω στὸ κάστρο, ἔχοντας μαζί του τὸ Φραντζῆ, τὸν μπιστεμένο φίλο του, κ' ἀκούσανε ἀπ' ὄξω βουὴ καὶ φωνὲς πολλές, κ' οἱ φύλακες τοὺς εἶπανε πὼς ἀπὸ τὴν ὥρα ποὺ νύχτωσε οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἔτσι βουίζανε, γιὰτὶ κουβαλοῦσανε κοντὰ στὸ κάστρο τὶς μηχανές καὶ τὶς σκάλες. Τὴν ὥρα, ποὺ φώναξε πρώτη φορὰ ὁ κόκκορας, ἔφταξε ὁ βασιλιάς στὴν πόρτα τοῦ Ἁγίου Ῥωμανοῦ. Στὸ δεύτερο λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ ἄρχισε ὁ πόλεμος.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι ξαμολυθήκανε ἀπὸ παντοῦ, σὰν ἄγρια βουβάλια, βγάζοντας ἀφροὺς ἀπ' τὰ στόματά τους. Τέτοιο οὐρλιασμα καὶ ποδοβολητὸ ἔβγαине ἀπὸ κεῖνο τ' ἀμέτρητο κοπάδι καὶ τόσο μεγάλο πατιρντὶ κάνανε τὰ τούμπανα, οἱ ζουρνάδες κ' οἱ ντερβισάδες, π' ἀντιλαλήσανε ὀλοτρόγυρα τὰ βουνά, σὰ νὰ γκρεμνίζόντανε. Τοῦτοι, ποὺ κάνανε τὸ πρῶτο ρεσάλτο, ἦτανε οἱ πιὸ πολλοὶ Χριστιανοί, ποὺ δουλεύανε στὸ σουλτάνο μετὰ τὸ στανιό, καὶ τοὺς ἔρριξε πρῶτους στὴ φωτιά, γιὰ νὰ πάρουνε ὅλη τὴ μπόρα.

Κουβαλοῦσανε σκάλες ἀναρίθμητες καὶ τὶς ἀκουμποῦσανε στὸν τοῖχο, μὰ οἱ Ἕλληνες τοὺς γκρεμνίζανε καὶ ρίχνανε μεγάλες πέτρες ἀπὸ πάνω τους καὶ τοὺς σκοτώνανε. Τὸ χαντάκι γιόμισε σκοτωμένους καὶ λαβωμένους.

Ὅσοι γλυτώνανε, θέλανε νὰ στρίψουνε πίσω, μὰ οἱ γενιτσάροι τοὺς λιανίζανε μετὰ τὰ γιαταγάνια, ὅπου, βλέποντας πὼς κ' ἔτσι κ' ἀλλοιῶς θὰ πεθαίνανε, γυρίζανε καὶ πολεμοῦσανε. Στὸ μεταξὺ ἄρχισε νὰ γλυκοχαράζη καὶ νὰ σβύνουνε τᾶστρα ἕνα ἕνα.

Σὰν τσακισθήκανε τοῦτοι οἱ πρῶτοι, χυμῆζανε ἄλλοι πειδὸ λυσσασμένοι, σὰν τὰ πεινασμένα λιοντάρια ποὺ πέφτουνε ἀπάνω σε λάφια.

Κι' αὐτοὶ στεριώσανε πλῆθος σκάλες κ' ἀνεβαίνανε ἀπάνω μ' ἀλαλαγμὸ πολύν. Μὰ πάλι οἱ Χριστιανοὶ τοὺς γκρεμνίσανε καὶ μετὰ τὶς σαγίτες καὶ μετὰ τὰ μικρὰ κανόνια ποῦχανε, σκοτώσανε τὸσους Τοῦρκοι, ποὺ στοιβαστήκανε ὁ ἕνας ἀπὸ τὸν ἄλλον σὰν σακκιά.

Δὲν προφτάζανε νὰ φχαριστήσουνε τὸ Θεὸ κ'

ἔπεσε ἀπάνω στὸ κάστρο τρίτο κοπάδι, τὸ πειδὸ μανιασμένο μετὰ φωνὲς φοβερὲς καὶ μετὰ τούμπανα, κατὰ τὰ συνηθισμένα. Αὐτοὶ ἦτανε τ' ἄνθος, οἱ διαλεχτοὶ τοῦ σουλτάνου, οἱ γενιτσάροι, οἱ σουμπασίδες καὶ τέλος οἱ πειδὸ ἀντρειωμένοι Τοῦρκοι.

Μ' ὅλο ποὺ οἱ Ἕλληνες ἦτανε τσακισμένοι ἀπ' τὴν κούραση, μπορέσανε καὶ βαστάξανε καὶ τούτη τὴ φορὰ. Κάψανε τὶς μηχανές, τσακίσανε τὶς ἀνεμόσκαλες, μ' ἕναν λόγο τέτοιο φονικὸ κάνανε, ποὺ γιὰ μιὰ στιγμή οἱ Τοῦρκοι δειλιάσανε καὶ λίγο ἔλειψε νὰ γυρίσουνε τὶς πλάτες.

Μὰ ὁ σουλτάν Μεμέτης ἔπεσε ὁ ἴδιος ἀπάνω τους μετὰ τὸ γιαταγάνι στὸ χέρι, κ' ἄλλους ἔσφαξε, ἄλλους πλήγωνε. Τὸ ἴδιο κάνανε κ' οἱ ἀξιωματικοὶ του μετὰ τὰ καμουτσιὰ καὶ μετὰ μεγάλες φωνές, σὰ νὰ σαλαγοῦσανε κανένα κοπάδι καμῆλες. Οἱ ζεμπέκηδες βγάλανε πάλι μιὰ φωνὴ ἴσαμε τὸν οὐρανὸ, δίνοντας κουράγιο ὁ ἕνας στὸν ἄλλο κ' ὠρμήσανε ἀπάνω στὸν τοῖχο. Οἱ πιὸ ἄφοβοι κ' οἱ πιὸ δυνατοὶ ἀνεβαίνανε ὁ ἕνας ἀπάνω στοὺς ὤμους τ' ἄλλουνοῦ κ' ἔτσι κάνανε σκάλες καὶ φτάνανε ἴσαμε τὸ φρύδι τοῦ τοίχου, πῶξωνε τὸ μεγάλο κάστρο ἀπ' ἔξω, καὶ ποὺ ἦτανε χαμηλότερο. Κι' ἅμα



βρεθήκανε κάμποσοι ἀνεβασμένοι ἐκεῖ ἀπάνω, γίνηκε πόλεμος σκληρὸς καὶ σκοτωμὸς ἀλύπητος κ' ἀπὸ τὶς δυὸ μεριές. Οἱ Ῥωμοὶ ἄρχισανε νὰ παραδίνουνε. Τότε ὅμως ὁ Θεόφιλος Παλαιολόγος κ' ὁ Δημήτρης Κατακουζηνὸς ὠρμήσανε καὶ γκρεμνίσανε τοὺς Τοῦρκοι καὶ τοὺς σκοτώσανε.

Ὁ βασιλιάς ἔτρεξε πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ μέρος κ' ἐπίασε καὶ φώναξε γιὰ νὰ τοὺς δώση καρδιά: «Ἀδέσφια μου, βαστάτε γερά, γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ! Βλέπω πὼς οἱ ὄχτροι δειλιάζουνε καὶ διασκορπίζονται, γιὰτὶ δὲν ἔρχονται μετὰ τάξη, ὅπως συνηθίζουμε!»

Τότες ἄρχισανε νὰ χτυπᾶνε οἱ καμπάνες σ' ὅλη τὴν πολιτεία. Θρῆνος καὶ κλαυθμὸς ἔβγαине ἀπὸ παντοῦ. Οἱ γυναῖκες καὶ τὰ παιδιά εἶχανε γίνει σὰν κερένια ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο τους, ὅσο ἀκούγανε ἐκεῖνες τὶς φωνές, ποὺ δὲ βγαίνανε ἀπὸ λαρυγγία ἀνθρώπινα, μὰ ἀπὸ θηρία. Ἄντρες καὶ γυναῖκες ἦτανε γονατιστοὶ καὶ κλαίγανε καὶ παρακαλοῦσανε τὸ Θεὸ νὰ τοὺς λυπηθῆ.

Στὸ μεταξὺ οἱ Τοῦρκοι πολεμοῦσανε μετὰ τὴν ἴδια καὶ περισσότερη μανία. Ὁ μεγάλος τράκος γινότανε κοντὰ στὴν πόρτα τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ, ποὺ βρισκότανε

ὁ Παλαιολόγος, καὶ ρίχνανε σαγίτες ἀμέτρητες σὰν τὸν ἄμμο τῆς θάλασσας καὶ κάμποσες μπάλλες μὲ τὰ κανόνια. Τὸ μεγάλο κανόνι, ποὺ τὸ λένε χωνεῖα οἱ παλιοὶ ἱστορικοί, σφεντόνιζε κάθε τόσο κι' ἀπὸ μιὰ κοτρῶνα ποῦχε βάρος διακόσες λίτρες.

Ὁ Βενετσάνος Νικολὸς Μπάρμπαρος λέγει πὼς οἱ μπάλλες κ' οἱ πέτρες κ' οἱ σαγίτες, ποῦχανε πέσει μέσα στὴ χαμηλὴ μάντρα τοῦ κάστρου, ἦτανε νὰ φορτώσης ἀπάνου ἀπὸ ὀγδόντα καμήλια, κ' ὄσες εἶχανε πέσει μέσα στὸ χαντάκι ἦτανε γιὰ νὰ φορτώσης ἴσαμε εἴκοσι καμήλια. Μιὰ ἀπ' αὐτὲς τὶς μπάλλες ἄνοιξε μιὰ σκισμάδα στὴ μάντρα τοῦ χαμηλοῦ κάστρου καὶ σήκωσε τέτοιον καπνὸ καὶ τέτοιο χῶμα, ποὺ δὲ φαινότανε τίποτα.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι, βοηθούμενοι ἀπ' τὸν καπνὸ, μπήκανε στὸ μικρὸ κάστρο ἴσαμε καμμιά τρακοσαριά, μὰ οἱ Χριστιανοὶ γλήγορα τοὺς διώξανε καὶ κόψανε τοὺς πιδὸ πολλοὺς. Αὐτὸ δυνάμωσε γιὰ λίγο τὴν καρδιά τους. Μὰ σὲ λίγο ξαναμπήκανε πάλι οἱ Τοῦρκοι, καὶ τούτῃ τῇ φορὰ γιόμισε ὁ τόπος, ἀπάν' ἀπὸ τριάντα χιλιάδες. Ἦτανε μεθυσμένοι ἀπ' τὸ αἶμα, κι' ἀνεβαίνανε ποδοπατώντας καὶ σπρώχνοντας ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον σὰν ἀγριοκάτσικα. Βγάζανε τέτοια γαυγίσματα, πῶλεγες πὼς εἶνε ἡ κόλαση. Κι' ἀφοῦ σκοτωθήκανε πολὺ πλῆθος, κρατήσανε τὸ μικρὸ τὸ κάστρο καὶ σὲ λίγο εἶχανε ἔμπει μέσα στὴν πρώτη μάντρα περισσότεροι ἀπὸ ἑβδομήντα χιλιάδες. Οἱ σκοτωμένοι κειτόντανε κουβάρες σὰν σακκιά.

Ἀπάνω σ' αὐτὰ πληγώθηκε στὸ ποδάρι ὁ στρατηγὸς Γιουστινιάνης. Μὲ μιὰς μαθεύτηκε τούτῃ ἡ δυστυχία ἀπὸ τὴν μιὰ ἄκρη ὡς τὴν ἄλλη κι' ὅλοι μαραθῆκανε. Ὁ βασιλιάς ἔφταξε, καὶ βλέποντας τοὺς στρατιῶτες φοβισμένους καὶ τὸ Γιουστινιανὸ νᾶνε σαστισμένους καὶ νὰ θέλῃ νὰ τραβηχτῇ ἀπ' τὸ κάστρο, τοῦ λέγει: «Ἀδερφέ μου, τί κάνεις; γύρισε πίσω στὴν πόστα σου γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ· ἡ λαβωματιά σου δὲν εἶνε βαρειά. Ἀπάνω σε τούτῃ τῇ στιγμῇ μᾶς ἀφήνεις πῶχουμε περισσότερο τὴν ἀνάγκη σου; στὰ χέρια τὰ δικὰ σου κρέμεται ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολη!» Μὰ ὁ Γιουστινιανὸς, ποὺ στάθηκε πάντα παλληκάρι, εἶχε πάθει μεγάλη ταραχὴ κ' ἔφυγε. Πέρασε στὸ Γαλατᾶ καὶ κεῖ πέρα πέθανε σὲ λίγες μέρες.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι καταλάβανε πὼς κάτι ἔτρεχε στὸ μέρος τῶν Γραικῶν καὶ πήρανε τὰ μπρός. Τότες ἓνας γενίτσαρος φοβερός, Χασάνης Λουπαδίτης λεγόμενος, πήδηξε πρῶτος ἀπάνω στὸ μεγάλο κάστρο, βαστώντας μὲ τόνα χέρι τὸ σκουτάρι του (ἀσπίδα) ἀπάν' ἀπὸ τὸ κεφάλι του κι' ἀπὸ τᾶλλο τὸ σπαθί του. Ἀπὸ πίσω του σκαλώσανε εὐθύς καμμιά τριανταριά σύντροφοί του.

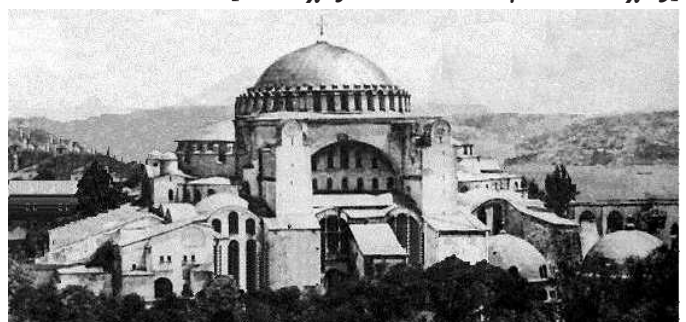
Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ γκρεμίσανε τοὺς μισοὺς κι' ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χασάνης ἔπεσε χάμω, βαρεμένος ἀπὸ τὶς πέτρες,

ποὺ ρίχνανε βροχὴ οἱ Γραικοί. Μ' ὅλα ταῦτα πάλι ξανασηκώθηκε ἀπάνω στὸ γόνατό του καὶ πολέμαγε. Μὰ τοῦπεσε τὸ σκουτάρι κ' εὐθύς γιόμισε τὸ κορμί του ἀπὸ σαγίτες καὶ ξεψύχησε. Ὡς νὰ σκοτωθῇ αὐτός, εἶχανε ἀνεβῆ πολλοὶ Τοῦρκοι στὸ μεγάλο κάστρο. Μέσα στὴν ὀγλοβοὴ κάποιιοι ἀπὸ δαύτους κατεβήκανε ἀπὸ μέσα καὶ βγάλανε τὶς ἀμπάρες. Τότες ἀκουστήκανε ἀπὸ παντοῦ φωνὲς φοβερές: «Ἡ Πόλη πατήθηκε!» Ὁ κόσμος ἔτρεχε στὴ θάλασσα νὰ γλυτώσῃ.

Κεῖνῃ τὴν ὥρα ἔβγαينه ὁ ἥλιος. Οἱ Τοῦρκοι μπαίνανε σὰν ποτάμι ἀφρισμένο ἀπὸ τὰ κάστρα κι' ἀπὸ τὴν πόρτα. Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ ἀπελπισμένοι πέφτανε μὲ σφαλιχὰ μάτια ἀπάνω τους, κ' ἔγινε τέτοιος σκοτωμός, ποὺ τὸ αἶμα ἔτρεχε νὰ κολυμπήσῃ δαμάλι. Ὁ βασιλέας, παραμιλώντας ἀπ' τὴν ἀπελπισία του, χύμηξε στὴν πόρτα μὲ τὰ παλληκάρια του κ' ἔπεσε μέσα στὸ πειδὸ πηχτὸ τουρκομάνι, βαρώντας μὲ τὸ σπαθί του. Ὁ Δὸν Φραγκίσκος ὁ Τολεδάνος, πῶλαχε νᾶνε στὸ δεξιὸ του χέρι, ἔχασε τὸ σπαθί του καὶ χύθηκε καὶ ξέσκιζε τοὺς Τούρκους μὲ τὰ νύχια καὶ μὲ τὰ δόντια.

Ὁ Θεόφιλος Παλαιολόγος, βλέποντας ματωμένο τὸ βασιλέα, ἔβαλε μιὰ φωνὴ κ' ἔκραξε κλαίγοντας: «Θέλω ν' ἀποθάνω κι' ὄχι νὰ ζήσω!» Ὁ Γιάννης ὁ Δαλμάτης κι' ἄλλοι πολλοὶ ἐκεῖ βουλιάζανε καὶ χαθήκανε. Ὁ βασιλιάς, βλέποντας πὼς ἀπόμεινε μονάχος ζωντανός, φώναξε: «Δὲν ὑπάρχει Χριστιανὸς νὰ κόψῃ τὸ κεφάλι μου!» Τὴν ἴδια τὴν στιγμῇ τὸν βαρέσανε δυὸ Τοῦρκοι, ὁ ἓνας στὸ πρόσωπο κι' ὁ ἄλλος στὸν ὄμο. Τὸ κορμί του κύλησε κι' ἀνακατεύτηκε μέσα στὸ σωρὸ πῶφραξε τὴν πόρτα...

[Συνεχίζεται στὸ ἐπόμενο τεῦχος]



Τὸ ἐπ' ἐμοί, ἐνόσω ζῶ καὶ ἀναπνέω καὶ σοφρονῶ, δὲν θὰ παύσω πάντοτε, νὰ ἡμῶ μετὰ λατρείας τὸν Χριστόν μου, νὰ περιγράφω μετ' ἔρωτος τὴν φύσιν, καὶ νὰ ζωγραφῶ μετὰ στοργῆς τὰ γνήσια Ἑλληνικὰ ἔθῃ. Ἐὰν ἐπιλάθωμαί σου, Ἱερουσαλήμ, ἐπιλησθεῖν ἡ δεξιὰ μου· κολληθεῖν ἡ γλῶσσά μου τῷ λάρυγγί μου, ἐὰν οὐ μὴ σου μνησθῶ, ἐὰν μὴ προανατάξωμαί σοι ὡς ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς εὐφροσύνης μου.

Ἀλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης
«Λαμπριάτικος Ψάλτης»

Ἡ Παναίρεσις τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ

Τοῦ κ. Μιχαήλ Ε. Μιχαηλίδη, Θεολόγου, Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 4/4/2014.

Στὴν ἐποχή μας, εἶναι πιά γεγονός, κορυφώνεται ἡ αἴρεση τοῦ «οἰκουμενισμοῦ», μὲ τὸν κατακλυσμὸ τῶν ἀνεπίτρεπτων καὶ ἀντορθόδοξων ἐκδηλώσεων, περιστατικῶν καὶ παραβιάσεων τοῦ δόγματος καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν Κανόνων τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας. Ἔχουν πυκνώσει σὲ τέτοιο βαθμὸ οἱ διαχριστιανικὲς καὶ διαθρησκειακὲς συνάξεις καὶ συνελεύσεις συμπροσευχῆς καὶ διαλόγου—μὲ πρωτοπόρο τὸ «Παγκόσμιο Συμβούλιο Ἐκκλησιῶν»—ὥστε μὲ τὸ ζύμωμα τῶν ἑκατοντάδων προτεσταντικῶν καὶ ἄλλων, κατ' ὄνομα, χριστιανικῶν ομάδων, νὰ μὴ ξέρει κανεὶς ποῦ βαδίζει καὶ ποῖο Θεὸ πιστεύει!

Ἐὰν ὁ διαχριστιανικὸς οἰκουμενισμὸς μοιάζει μὲ πρόχειρο θεατράκι, ὁ διαθρησκειακὸς οἰκουμενισμὸς εἶναι τραγωδία. Ἐὰν μὲ τοὺς ἑτερόδοξους ὑπάρχουν κάποια σημεῖα ἐπαφῆς, μὲ τοὺς ἀλλόθρησκους τὸ θρησκευτικο-θεολογικὸ χάσμα, εἶναι ἀγεφύρωτο. Μ' αὐτοὺς δὲν ὑπάρχει κανένα περιθώριο συνεννόησης.

Πῶς εἶναι δυνατὴ συνεννόηση μὲ μιὰ τρομοκρατικὴ, γιὰ παράδειγμα, θρησκεία, ὅπως ἀποδεικνύεται ὁ μουσουλμανισμὸς μὲ την... διδασκαλία του γιὰ τὸ «τζιχάντ»; Μὲ τοὺς ἑτερόδοξους πάλι, τοὺς παπικούς (ἢ ρωμαιοκαθολικούς), τοὺς προτεστάντες, μὲ τὶς ἑκατοντάδες αἰρετικὲς παραφυάδες, τοὺς Ἀγγλικανούς, τοὺς Μορμόνους, ἢ τοὺς ἀντίχριστους χλιαστές (Γιεχωβάδες), ἢ ἀπόσταση ποῦ μᾶς χωρίζει, εἶναι ἀνάλογη μὲ τὴ βαρῦτητα τῆς αἰρετικῆς τους διδασκαλίας. Κατὰ τὸν Παῦλο: «Φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοί, ἐμωράνθησαν» (Ρωμ. 1: 22), καὶ κατὰ τὸ θεόπνευστο βιβλίον τοῦ Ἰωβ, ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι: «Ὁ δρασσομένης τοὺς σοφοὺς ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ αὐτῶν». (Α΄ Κορ. 3:19).

Καὶ μιὰ καὶ ἀναφερόμαστε στοὺς Ἀγγλικανούς, τελευταία εἶδηση ἀναφέρει ὅτι οἱ τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς «ἐκκλησίας» συσκέπτονται—μετὰ τὴν πρωτοπορεία τους στὴν παγκόσμια διαστροφή τῆς ὁμοφυλοφιλίας, νὰ γράψουν κάποια «ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἀκολουθία» γιὰ τὰ νέα «ξεύγη»!... Μετὰ ἀπ' αὐτά, ἀναρωτιέται κανεὶς, ἂν πρόκειται γιὰ «Ἀγγλικανικὴ ἐκκλησία», ἢ «δαιμονικὴ ἐκκλησία»!

Πῶς κατάντησε ἡ «γῆραια Ἀλβιών»! Ἀπὸ «χώρα τῆς Βίβλου», ἔγινε χώρα τῆς μασωνίας, τῆς μαγείας, τῆς ὁμοφυλοφιλίας καὶ πάσης διαστροφῆς. Εἶναι ἀπὸ χρόνια σβησμένες οἱ λυχνίες ὄλων τῶν αἰρετικῶν ἐκκλησιῶν. Μία εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινή, ἡ ἀγία, ἡ ἀποστολικὴ καὶ ἡ καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία: Ἡ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ. «Αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον, μετὰ μίαν καί, δευτέραν νουθεσίαν παραιτοῦ, εἰδὼς ὅτι ἐξέστραπται ὁ τοιοῦτος, καὶ

ἀμαρτάνει ὧν αὐτοκατάκριτος.» (Τίτ. 3:10-11). Οἱ διασκέψεις δὲν πρέπει νὰ γίνονται γιὰ τὶς διασκέψεις! Ἡ θαυμάσια προσευχὴ τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας τοῦ Μ. Βασιλείου, ἅς γίνῃ καὶ δική μας προσευχή: «Τοὺς πεπλανημένους ἐπανάγαγε, καὶ σύναψον τῇ ἀγίᾳ σου Καθολικῇ καὶ Ἀποστολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ». Καὶ ὁ Κύριος ξέρει πότε θὰ κάμῃ τὸ θαῦμα Του. Σύνθημά μας: **Ὅλοι στὸ Χριστὸ διὰ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας.**



Τὸ Νόημα τῆς Ἄλωσης τῆς Πόλης σὲ Ἐξι Προτάσεις

Ἀπὸ τὸν μεγάλο Βυζαντινολόγο Σέρ Στήβεν Ράνσιμαν.

- (1) Ἡ τραγωδία ἦταν τελικὴ.
- (2) Στὶς 29 Μαΐου, 1453 ἕνας πολιτισμὸς σαρώθηκε ἀμετάκλητα.
- (3) Ἄφησε μιὰ ἔνδοξη κληρονομιά στὰ γράμματα καὶ στὶς τέχνες.
- (4) Ὁ πολιτισμὸς αὐτὸς ἔβγαλε χῶρες ὀλόκληρες ἀπὸ τὴν βαρβαρότητα καὶ προσέφερε σὲ ἄλλες τὴν ἐκλέπτυνση τῶν ἡθῶν.
- (5) Ἐπὶ 11 αἰῶνες ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολη ἦταν τὸ κέντρο ἑνὸς κόσμου φωτός.
- (6) Τώρα ἔγινε ἡ ἔδρα τῆς θηριωδίας, τῆς ἀμάθειας, τῆς μεγαλόπρεπης ἀκαλαισθησίας!



Ἡ καρδιακὴ προσευχὴ βοηθάει ὄχι μόνο τοὺς ἄλλους ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν ἑαυτὸ μας, γιὰ τὴν βοηθίαν νὰ ἔρθῃ ἡ ἐσωτερικὴ καλοσύνη. Ὅταν ἐρχόμαστε στὴν θέση τοῦ ἄλλου, ἐρχεται φυσιολογικὰ ἡ ἀγάπη, ὁ πόνος, ἡ ταπείνωση, ἡ εὐγνωμοσύνη μας στὸν Θεὸ μὲ τὴν συνεχῆ δοξολογία, καὶ τότε ἡ προσευχὴ γιὰ τὸν συνάνθρωπό μας γίνεται εὐπρόσδεκτη ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ τὸν βοηθάει.

Γέροντας Παΐσιος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης (+1994)

Ἡ προσευχὴ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὄπλο, χωρὶς τὸ ὁποῖο ὅ,τιδήποτε κι ἂν κάνει ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅσοδήποτε κι ἂν ἀγωνισθεῖ, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ κατορθώσῃ τίποτε. Ὅλα ὅσα κάνει, ἐπιδιώκει καὶ ἐργάζεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, κατευδώνονται καὶ πραγματοποιοῦνται μὲ τὴ χάρη καὶ τὴ βοήθεια τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Γέροντας Εὐσέβιος Ματθόπουλος (+1929)

Ἄθρα καὶ κεκρυμένως καὶ οὐδενῶς ὀρῶντος Ἀπροσεύχεσθα!

Ἅγιος Κύριλλος Ἀλεξανδρείας (+444)

ON THE RECENT EVENTS IN JERUSALEM AND THEIR ECCLESIOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

By a Greek Orthodox Priest.

What is one to make of the recent events in Jerusalem commemorating the 50th anniversary of the meeting of Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, during which the Patriarch of Constantinople, along with the Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and other hierarchs of the Patriarchate, met with the Pope of Rome to conduct joint prayer services and issue joint statements? What problems, if any, do these meetings and statements pose to us as Orthodox Christians and to our Orthodox Faith? And, what, in the final analysis, is the essential theological problem at stake here?

These are some of the questions that many faithful ask, and they deserve a thorough answer in return. This short article will attempt to provide some answers, or at least the beginnings of such answers.

Those who would see in these ecumenical gatherings an overwhelmingly positive development speak of them as “exchanges of generosity, goodwill and hope,” and “exchanges in the spirit of Christian love” which are “true expressions of the faith of the Apostles, the Fathers, and the Orthodox.” The champions of these gatherings never fail to admit that “although there are serious differences” between the Orthodox Church and Catholicism “which must not be overlooked, nevertheless our faith demands that we join together and witness to our shared Christian commitments.” This is how a well-known American Orthodox theologian referred to the Jerusalem event and I believe he is accurately repeating the general conception among supporters.

If, however, we are to understand the meaning of these events in a spiritual and theological manner, we must go beyond the tired clichés and overused platitudes and examine the underlying ecclesiology which is either being implied or being expressed by the Patriarch and his supporters during these meetings. It is quite easy, and unfortunately quite common even among Orthodox Christians, to be satisfied with the flowery language of love and reconciliation and not pay attention to the deeper significance of the theology being expressed in word and deed. If we are to avoid such a pitfall and assist others in the same, we must acquire an Orthodox mindset and judge these important matters within the Orthodox framework and criteria.

The underlying problem here that few discuss is the ecclesiological implications of the Patriarchate and its supporters’ new view of the Church. If the Jerusalem meeting and the accompanying gatherings (such as those in Paris, Boston and Atlanta) are judged to be *destructive* of Church unity and

to *undermine* the mission of the Church, it is not, of course, because of the flowery language of love and understanding incessantly used on all sides, but because they are not grounded in the Orthodox Faith, in Orthodox ecclesiology. If, however, our representatives in these meetings are not expressing an Orthodox teaching on the Church, what are they expressing?

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of previous statements by hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople one could reference in order to answer this question. Citing them is both beyond the scope of this article and unnecessary, for in remarks made by the Patriarch of Constantinople in his first speech given in Jerusalem on May 23rd, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the essence of the new ecclesiology is clearly articulated:

The One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, founded by the “Word in the beginning,” by the one “truly with God,” and the Word “truly God”, according to the evangelist of love, unfortunately, during her engagement on earth, on account of **the dominance of human weakness** and of impermanence of the will of the human intellect, **was divided in time**. This brought about various conditions and groups, of which **each claimed for itself “authenticity” and “truth.”** The Truth, however, is One, Christ, and the One Church founded by Him.

Both before and after the great Schism of 1054 between East and West, our Holy Orthodox Church made attempts to overcome the differences, which originated from the beginning and for the most part from factors outside of the environs of the Church. Unfortunately, **the human element dominated**, and through the accumulation of “theological,” “practical,” and “social” additions **the Local Churches were led into division of the unity of the Faith**, into isolation, which developed occasionally into hostile polemics.

Note that the Patriarch states:

1. The One Church **was divided in time**.
2. That this division was the result of **the dominance of human weakness**. It is not stated, but it follows that this human weakness was stronger than the Divine Will for the Church He founded.
3. That the various groups, parts of the One Church, which resulted from this division **each “claimed” to be the authentic and true Church**. The implication here is that none of them, including the Orthodox Church, can rightfully lay claim to being exclusively the One Church.
4. And, yet, somehow, in spite of these competing groups all exclusively claiming authenticity and truth, **the Church is one**. Once again, it follows from all that is said that this oneness exists only **outside** of time, since the Church, as he said, was **divided in time**.

In order to gain a total picture of the new ecclesiology being presented, we should add to these views on the Church the Patriarch(ate)'s stance vis-à-vis Catholicism, which was on exhibit in both word and deed throughout the Jerusalem event. In all of the promotional material and patriarchal addresses, Catholicism—which synods of the Church and saints have for centuries now considered to be a **heretical parasynagogue**—is considered to be a Local Church, the Church *in* Rome. Likewise, the current Pope is considered to be a “contemporary successor of the early apostle [Peter] and current leader of the ancient church [of Rome].” The Patriarch has also referred to the current Pope as his brother bishop, co-responsible for the good governing of the One Church. He considers the sacraments performed by the Pope and his clerics as the self-same mysteries of the One Church. Thus it is not surprising that he views the Church as **divided in history and yet somehow still one**, if only outside of history.

What can we now say of this image of the Church presented by the Patriarch? We can say that:

1. It is in total harmony with the Second Vatican Council's new ecclesiology as laid out in the conciliar documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*.

2. It is entirely at odds with the vision of the Church presented in relevant conciliar documents of the Orthodox Church, such as the decisions of the Council of 1484, the Patriarchal Encyclicals of 1848 and 1895, and in the writings of those Holy Fathers who have expressed the mind of the Church on the subject, such as Sts. Gregory Palamas, Nectarius of Pentapolis, Mark of Ephesus, Paisius Velichkovsky, and many others.

The Patriarch and his supporters are aligning themselves and attempting to align all of Orthodoxy with the ecclesiological line drawn during the Second Vatican Council. This new ecclesiology allows for a division of the Church “in time,” such that the Orthodox Church and Catholicism are considered “two lungs” of the One Church—yet nevertheless divided. In this ecclesiology, the universal Church includes both Catholicism and all other Christian confessions. It is supposed that the Church is a communion of bodies that are more or less churches, a communion realized at various degrees of fullness, such that one part of the Church, that under the Pope, is considered “fully” the Church, and another part of the Church, such as a Protestant confession, “imperfectly” or only “partially” the Church. Thus, this ecclesiology allows for participation in the Church's sacraments outside of her canonical boundaries, outside of the one Eucharistic assembly, which is antithetical with a properly understood “Eucharistic ecclesiology.”

Hence, the ecclesiology expressed in word and deed by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the ecclesiology of Vatican II converge in the **acceptance of a divided Church**, or a Church rent asunder by the heavy hand of history. It might be characterized as ecclesiological Nestorianism, in which the Church is divided into two separate beings: on the one hand the Church in heaven, **outside of time**, alone true and whole; on the other, the Church, or rather “churches,” on earth, **in time**, deficient and relative, lost in history's shadows, seeking to draw near to one another and to that transcendent perfection, as much as is possible in “the weakness of the impermanent human will.”

In this ecclesiology, the tumultuous and injurious divisions of human history have overcome the Church “in time.” The human nature of the Church, being divided and rent asunder, has been separated from the Theanthropic Head. This is a Church on earth deprived of its ontological nature and **not** “one and holy,” no longer possessing **all the truth** through its hypostatic union with the divine nature of the Logos.

This ecclesiology is, without doubt, at total odds with the belief and confession of the Orthodox in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

That which is required of every Orthodox [Christian] is to pass on the **good uneasiness to the heretic**, in order that **they may understand that they are in delusion**, so as not to **falsely be at peace** with their thoughts and be deprived in this life of the rich blessings of Orthodoxy and in the next life the much greater and eternal blessings of God.

Elder Paisios the Athonite (+1994)

The Church of Christ, as the Apostle Paul supremely defined it, is *His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all* (τὸ σῶμα Αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι πληρωμένου). The fullness of Christ is identified with the Body of Christ which is, like Christ when He walked on earth *in time*, as *Theanthropos*, visible and indivisible, being marked by divine-human characteristics. As Vladimir Lossky has written, *all that can be asserted or denied about Christ can equally well be applied to the Church, inasmuch as it is a theandric organism*. It follows, then, that just as we could never assert that Christ is divided, neither could we countenance the Church ever being divided. (cf. 1 Cor 1:13).

The Church, it goes without saying, was founded, established, spread, and exists to this day *in time* (and will exist until the Second Coming, and beyond). This is so because the Church is the Theanthropic Body of the Christ, who entered *into time*, walked, died, rose, ascended and is to return again *in time*. The Church is the continuation of the Incarnation *in time*. And just as our Lord was seen and touched and venerated in the flesh, *in time*, so too does His Body, the Church, continue—**united and holy**—*in time*. If we were to accept the division of the Church, we would be accepting the nullification of the Incarnation and the salvation of the world. As this new ecclesiology of a “divided church” ultimately annuls man's salvation, it could be rightly considered as heresy.

Our belief in the unity and continuity of the Body of Christ, our confession of faith, this dogma of the Church, is based on nothing less than the divine promises of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he said such words as these:

“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you *into all truth*.” (Jn. 16:13).

“I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [of faith] I will build my church; and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.” (Mt 16:18).

“Lo, *I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*.” (Mt 28:16).

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; *I have overcome the world*.” (Jn 16:33).

Likewise, from the mouth of Christ, the divine Apostle Paul, we hear more promises of the indivisibility and invincibility of the Church:

“And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is His body, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*.” (Eph 1:22-23).

“The house of God, which is the church of the living God, *the pillar and ground of the truth*.” (1 Tit 3:5).

“There is *one body*, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph 4:5).

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” (Heb 13:8).

And, from the Apostle of Love, John the Theologian, we read that it is our faith in the God-man and His divine-human Body that is invincible and victorious over the fallen spirit of this world, which is above all, a spirit of division:

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*.” (1 Jn 5:4).

So, then, has not the Spirit of Truth led His Church into “all truth”? Or, are we as Orthodox only advancing a “claim” of authenticity and truth? Has He not guarded His Church so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it? Or, has “human weakness” overcome Christ’s Body? Has He not remained with us, guiding us even until today and on to the end of time? Or, does He no longer exist as One “in time”? Has not our faith in the God-man overcome the world and the spirit of division? Or, is it, as the Patriarch supposes, that the “human element” and “human weakness” has overcome our faith and the unity of the Body of Christ?

To better understand the impossibility of both the Orthodox Church and Catholicism maintaining the identity of

the One Church while being divided over matters of faith, let us look briefly at the marital union. In marriage, a man and a woman are united *in Christ*. There exists a three-fold unity, or a unity between two persons in a third Person. This is no mere human accord. This is a theanthropic unity, a manifestation of the mystery of the Incarnation and thus of the Church, according to the divine words of the Apostle Paul: *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church*. (Eph 5:32).

All unity in the Church is theanthropic. Indeed, truly united human beings are only to be found in the Church, for in the Church alone does man *put on* divine-humanity (Gal. 3:27), the human nature of Christ. As the fallen, unredeemed human nature is hopelessly broken and divided within itself, separated from the principle of his unity, God, man can only be united by “putting on” a new human nature, the human nature of the God-man, which takes place in the mysteries, first of which is baptism. Therefore, we are restored to

unity in ourselves, between ourselves and with God only through unity with the God-man in His human nature, in His Body, the Church.

Has there been division? Has the “marriage” fallen apart? Know that first one of the two persons ceased to exist “in Christ,” fell away from Christ, and only then from the other. This human division is necessarily preceded by a break in communion with the Divine

Person in which the two persons were united. Something similar can be said on the ecclesiastical plane.

The Patriarch maintains that even though “the Local Churches were led into division of the unity of the Faith” and “the One Church was divided in time,” nevertheless both the Orthodox Church and Catholicism are united to Christ and manifest this unity with Him in common sacraments. This is impossible, however, for if both were united to Christ, they would **necessarily** be united to one another, since they find their unity *in Christ*. Simply put: if we are both *in Christ*, we are united. If we are divided, we can’t **both** be *in Christ*. In terms of ecclesiology, this means that both can’t be “the Church.”

From the moment that one holds that the Church is divided, he can no longer hold that the members of the Church are united to the theanthropic nature of the Body of Christ. The Church that is envisioned is necessarily a merely human organism, in which the “dominance of human weakness and of [the] impermanence of the will of the human intellect” reigns and brings division.

“**B**ut if,” they say, “we had devised some middle ground between the dogmas (of the Papists and the Orthodox), then thanks to this we would have united with them and accomplished our business superbly, without at all having been forced to say anything except what corresponds to custom and has been handed down (by the Fathers).” This is precisely the means by which many, from of old, have been deceived and persuaded to follow those who have led them off the steep precipice of impiety; believing that there is some middle ground between the two teachings that can reconcile obvious contradictions, **they have been exposed to peril.**

St. Mark of Ephesus (+1444)

We can also see this truth evidenced in the words of the Apostle of Love, the beloved Evangelist, John the Theologian. He states that *if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* (1 Jn 4:20). Similarly, since love unites us to God, if we say that we are united with God but divided from our brother, we do not speak the truth. Furthermore, on the ecclesiastical plane, if we say that the “churches” are **both** united with God but are divided between themselves, we do not speak the truth. For, if both are united to God they would also be united to one another, since unity in the Church is *in and through Christ*.

Based on this new teaching from the Patriarch(ate), some maintain that a “false union” has already been forged. Most dismiss this claim straightaway. It is true that the common cup, at least officially and openly, was not at stake in Jerusalem or immediately anywhere. However, a type of “false union” has undeniably been established on the level of ecclesiology. For, when the mysteries of a heterodox confession are recognized *per se*, as the very mysteries of the Church, and, likewise, their bishops are accepted and embraced as bishops of the One Church, then have we not already established a union with them? Have we not a union both in terms of recognizing their “ecclesiality” (i.e., the One Church *in Rome*) and in adopting a common confession of faith with respect to the Church?

If we recognize their baptism as the one baptism, it is inconsistent not to recognize the Eucharistic Synaxis in which their baptism is performed. And if we recognize their Eucharist as the One Body, it is both hypocritical and sinful not to establish Eucharistic communion with them immediately.

It is precisely here that the untenable nature of the Patriarchate’s stance becomes apparent. The fact that the Church has never accepted inter-communion with Catholicism witnesses not to just some tactical decision or conservative stance, but to her self-identity as the One Church and to her view of Catholicism as heresy. If this were not the case, it would be as if we are playing with the mysteries and the truth of the Gospel. As St. Mark of Ephesus famously expressed it, the “cutting off of the Latins” was precisely because the Church no longer saw their “church,” their Eucharistic assembly, as if in a mirror, as expressing the “Catholic” Church in Rome. Their identity was no longer that of the Church, but of heresy.

From all that has been written here, it should be clear that there are eternal consequences from every new departure from “the faith once delivered,” and the new ecclesiology is no exception. By ignoring the contemporary voices of the Church—from St. Justin Popovich to the Venerable Philotheos Zervakos, to the Venerable Paisios the Athonite—those who went to Jerusalem espousing the new ecclesiology are leading their unsuspecting followers out of the Church

and those already outside further away from entry into the Church.

This new ecclesiology is the spiritual and theological challenge of our day to which every Orthodox Christian remains indifferent to his own peril, for it carries with it soteriological consequences. In the face of a terribly divisive and deceptive heresy, we are all called to confess Christ today, as did our ancient forbearers in the days of Arianism. Our confession of faith, however, is not only in His Person in the Incarnation, but His Person in the *continuation* of the Incarnation, the Church. To confess the faith today is to confess and declare the unity of His divine and human natures in His Body, the one and only Orthodox Church—*unmixed, unchanged, undivided and inseparable* (ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως). [Oros of the Fourth Ecumenical Council].



ON TRIALS AND THE SPIRITUAL LAW

Source: “The Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959): Struggles, Experiences, Teachings.”

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

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

At the beginning of our stay with him, we usually paid quite frequent visits to him so that he could give us advice and see how we were getting on. Naturally, whether or not we told him what was on our minds, he would explain the meaning of events in detail, beginning from the results and analyzing what had led up to them, right back to the initial provocation. He would explain where these things came from, and why they came and to what extent, with such precision that we were astounded at the place the *law of the spirit of life* (Rom 8:2) held within him. Once, when we made a mistake (and how many mistakes are not caused by inexperience!) he gave me as a penance the pointless labor of a long journey. Because I knew that he never did anything without a reason, I did not ask any questions, but he told me of his own accord: *If we do not arouse a corresponding pain through arduous asceticism along with our repentance, we do not satisfy the judgment of the spiritual law, and it is possible that we may get some trial which we do not know how it will turn out.* I can say that across the whole range of our actions and affairs, both general and particular, the basis and criterion was the spiritual law. As Abba Mark says, *real knowledge is patiently to accept affliction and not to blame others for our own misfortunes.*

The Elder was also in the habit of referring frequently to the significance of trials, both as the totality of the various ills by which mankind is tested, and as events concerning individuals. On the basis of the spiritual law as the intellect of God's comprehensive providence, he accepted *educative episodes* as appropriate instruments for our correction, and called them trials. Even though he knew in depth the importance of the benefit derived from these and repeated the patristic saying *take away trials, and no one would be saved* and the statement that they were *sure to come* (Lk 17:1), he would examine with minute accuracy the causes and occasions which prompt them, and taught us how to avoid them as far as possible. His experience centered on this double duty, as he called it: to deal wisely with the causes and occasions of trials so as to forestall them on the one hand, and on the other—whenever they do occur—to confront them bravely, with faith and in hope of the ensuing benefit. *Unexpected trials are sent by God to teach us to practice the ascetic life, and they lead us to repentance even when we are reluctant.* And again: *The afflictions that come upon us are the result of our own sins.* With these sayings the Elder reminded us of the “professor of the spiritual law,” as he called him, Abba Mark the Ascetic.

The practical aspect of the life in Christ conceals the most complex mystery in human life. Two titanic forces linked together by man create an immense and unbreakable tug-of-war with man in the middle, each frantically pulling him

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

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



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

There are many causes, known in detail to our Fathers, which give rise to changes: they may be natural, stemming from needs of ours which are not reprehensible, or they may be acquired, stemming from passions and demons. But whether they come from the one cause or the other, the reality is that they conspire against our will.

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF FATHERS

Excerpted from an article by Stephen F. Duncan, Ph.D., professor of Family & Human Development Specialties, MSU Extension Service, from the parish newsletter of Saint Lawrence Orthodox Parish, Felton, CA.



American society is now coming to the close of an era when many secular authorities discounted the role of fathers in families. Recently, scientists have discovered fathers. There are two major trends in American fatherhood today: father absence and father involvement.

A large and increasing number of children are being raised without the continued presence of a father. While

the number of American families since 1970 has risen 20 percent, the number of mother-only families has increased by 51 percent. The most extensive study to date on this topic concluded, that “Children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average, than children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents, regardless of the parents’ race or educational background, regardless of whether the parents are married when the child is born, and regardless of whether the resident parent remarries.”

In pre-industrial revolution times, fathers “played a central role in the family. Prior to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, fathers were intimately involved in the daily lives of their children. Fathers taught their children how to work and worked along side of them, especially sons. Fathers were also responsible for teaching their children spiritual values and to read and write, if they were literate themselves.” With industrialization and urbanization came the separation of the work sphere from the family residence for most families. Fathers typically left home to work in factories and were separated from their families not just for eight hours, but often for 14–16 hours. This work away from home hindered their role in domestic affairs. Fathers more often were “absentee managers” and became more emotionally distant.

More recently, a new kind of father is emerging, resembling more closely those of pre-industrial eras. This father still plays a major breadwinner role but is also more involved in domestic tasks and caring for children. Father involvement makes a real difference. Kids do better when their relationship with Dad is close and warm.

Dads & Babies

Children form attachments to fathers as well as mothers from age 7–13 months. By 15 months, a greater percentage of children would respond with “Daddy” when shown their father’s picture than would respond to their mother’s picture. During the first weeks in a baby’s life, when moms are usually at home, dads become the child’s “most significant other.” It is through the father that the baby first learns about comings and goings, transitions, separations and non-mother nurturing.

Fathers are as capable as mothers of caretaking, demonstrating competence, and being sensitive to a child’s needs. Fathers are actually better at keeping a baby’s attention.

Children whose fathers were actively involved with them during the first eight weeks of life managed stress better as elementary students.

Premature infants whose fathers spent more time playing with them had better mental development by age 3, whether their father resided in the same house or not.

Play is a more prominent part of father-child than mother-child relations. Fathers are more likely to initiate rough and tumble play while mothers are more likely to initiate organized games and teaching. Children prefer Dad as a play partner, but more often go to Mom in stressful situations.

Modeling

Sons of nurturing fathers are more likely to model and internalize their modes of thinking and problem-solving. A close and warm relationship with Dad fosters a daughter’s sense of competence especially in math skills, and a secure sense of femininity.

Fathers play a major role in preparing children for life outside the family. Fathers’ emotional support of Mom greatly influences the general well-being of children.

Later Development

On average, when compared with children of less involved fathers:

(1) Children of highly involved fathers show increased cognitive competence, increased empathy, enhanced school performance, greater motivation to succeed, enhanced social development and self-esteem, less sex-stereotyped beliefs, stronger gender identity and character, and more intrinsic motivation.

(2) Children of highly involved fathers have fewer psychological and behavioral problems, are less likely to become delinquent, and are less likely to use drugs.

Personal & Family Benefits

Fathers also benefit personally from their involvement. Men’s sense of personal happiness and satisfaction is more strongly linked to their family roles than their work roles. Men who invest in children have better overall health and lower levels of psychological distress. Involved fathers tend to be more giving and caring when they reach middle age.

And, contrary to expectation, involved fathers can actually achieve high levels of job success. For instance, in one four-decade study, involved fathers were more likely to have advanced in their occupations, when compared with less involved dads.

In two-parent families, when Dad is actively involved with the kids, Mom's stress level goes down, and both parents feel more fulfilled. This has a positive impact on the parents' marriage and on the children.

Being a Great Dad

Being a dad today is more complicated than it used to be. Dads were once expected to "bring home the bacon" while Moms raised the children. Nowadays, the message is different. Dads should still be a major breadwinner, but more is expected, regardless of whether or not Mom works outside the home. He should be willing to change diapers, dress children, cook meals, clean house, volunteer at school and help do all those things that his wife used to be expected to do alone. There is a clear message out there: Dad, you ought to be a more involved father, and Mom, you need to let Dad get involved.

Final Tips

Nurture your marriage first, prioritize fatherhood, get involved with your child from the beginning, learn the fatherhood craft, have regular one-on-one time with each child, show affection often, take kids to work, stay connected when you have to be away, and teach them. Connect with your child at all levels. Fathering is essential for our children's spiritual, intellectual and psychological growth and development.



WORK IS A BLESSING

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



—Geronda, in the old days they would say, "Better to wear out your shoes rather than blankets." What did they mean?

—They meant, "Better to wear out your shoes by working than to stay in bed and be lazy." Work is a blessing, a gift of God. It gives energy to the body, refreshment to the nous. If God had not given us

work, man would have become idle. Hard workers do not stop even in old age. If they stop working while they still have strength, they end up suffering from depression; this is death for them. I remember one little old man in Konitsa, almost ninety years old, who worked continuously. He finally died out in the fields, two hours from home.

Besides, the state of bodily comfort which some people seek is never permanent. They may forget their stress for a time—have their food, their sweets, their baths, their leisure. But, as soon as this is over, they seek another form of comfort. They are constantly anxious because everything leaves them wanting; they feel an emptiness, and their souls seek to be filled. He who wearies from work, however, has a constant joy, spiritual joy.

—Geronda, what if you have back problems and aren't able to do just any work?

—Fine, but doesn't the back need exercise? Doesn't work that exercises the back help? Listen, I'll tell you: "If someone eats, drinks, and sleeps but doesn't work, he starts unraveling; he wants to sleep all the time because his body and nerves slacken. Little by little he comes to the point where he can't do anything. As soon as he walks a little, he falls apart. Instead, if he works a little and moves around, his hands and feet become stronger. Notice that those who love work don't sleep much, and they don't sleep from fatigue—they might not get any sleep for a time, yet they keep their strength: work has seasoned them, and they became strong in body.

Especially for a young person, work is health. I have observed that some pampered children become tough and seasoned when they go into the military. The military is good for them. Naturally, this happened more in the old days. Today they are afraid to push the soldiers, because with a little strain the veins are constricted and they suffer from nervous shock. I tell parents to pay someone to allow their children to work for them, to promote their health—this serves to give them a job they like, so that they will learn to like work in general. For, a young person who is energetic also has brains, and if he doesn't work he will become lazy. Of course, when he sees others succeeding he is confused by his egoism and can't take pleasure in anything. He constantly has disturbing thoughts and his mind is muddled. Later the devil goes to him and says: "Loser! What a good-for-nothing you are! So and so became a professor, and that other guy has his own business making good money, but where will you end up?" This makes him feel hopeless. If he had worked, however, he would have acquired confidence in himself, in a good sense of the word. He would see that even he is able to get along, and his mind would stay occupied on his job and free him from disturbing thoughts. That way it's a win-win.

THE DANGER OF DELUSION DURING PRAYER

By St. Ignatios Brianchaninov, Bishop of the Caucasus and Stavropol (+1867), from "On the Prayer of Jesus," ch. 16.



I offer fathers and brothers my poor advice, begging them not to reject it. Do not force yourself prematurely to the discovery within yourself of the action of the prayer of the heart. Prudent caution is most necessary, especially in our time when it is almost impossible to find a satisfactory spiritual guide in these matters, when the

ascetic must himself force his way gropingly by the direction of the writings of the holy Fathers to the treasury of spiritual knowledge, and also must gropingly select for himself what is suited to his needs.

While living according to the commandments of the Gospel, attentively practice the prayer of Jesus according to the method of St. John of the Ladder, combining prayer with weeping, having as the beginning and end of prayer repentance. In its own time, as it is only known to God, the action of the prayer of the heart will be revealed of itself. Such action, revealed by the touch of the finger of God, is more excellent than that which is acquired by vigorously forcing oneself by means of material aids. It is far more superior in many respects. It is far more extensive and voluminous, far more abundant. It is quite safe from delusion and other dangers. He who receives in this way sees in what he receives only the mercy of God, a gift of God, while he who attains by the vigorous use of material aids, though seeing the gift of God, he cannot fail to see his own effort and labor, he cannot fail to see his own mechanical aid which he has used, he cannot fail to ascribe to it special importance. This "subtle way" of the common man's spirit is a considerable defect, a considerable obstacle, a considerable hindrance to the development of spiritual proficiency. For the development of spiritual proficiency there is no end, no limits. An insignificant, unnoticed hope or trust in something outside God can stop the advance of progress and proficiency, in which faith in God is leader, guide, legs and wings. *Christ for the believer is all*, said St. Mark. (Philokalia—Spiritual Law, chapter 4).

Of those who have used with special diligence the material aids very few have attained success, but very many have deranged and harmed themselves. With an experienced spiritual guide, this use of the material aids incurs little danger; but with the guidance of books it is very dangerous

since it is so easy, through ignorance and imprudence, to fall into delusion and other kinds of spiritual and bodily disorder. Thus some, on seeing the harmful consequences of indiscreet labor and having only a superficial and confused idea of the prayer of Jesus and the circumstances that accompany it, attributed these consequences not to ignorance and imprudence but to the most holy prayer of Jesus itself. Can anything be sadder and more disastrous than this blasphemy, this delusion?

In teaching the prayer of the heart the holy Fathers did not say exactly in which part of the heart it ought to be performed, probably because in those times there was no need for such instruction. St. Nikiforos says, as of something well-known, that the power of speech is located in the breast and that when this faculty is aroused to participation in the prayer, the heart is also aroused to such participation. It is difficult for those who know something thoroughly in all its details to foresee and anticipate with a solution all the questions and problems that may arise from complete ignorance. Where ignorance sees darkness, knowledge finds nothing obscure. In later times a vague reference to the heart in the patristic writings caused great perplexity and a wrong practice of prayer in those who without a spiritual guide and without studying with due care the writings of the Fathers, on the basis of superficial ideas snatched from a hasty reading, decided to engage in the artistic prayer of the heart, putting all their hope and trust in the material aids to its practice. A definite explanation of this subject has therefore become indispensable.

The human heart has the shape of an oblong bag, which widens upwards and narrows towards the base. It is fastened by its upper extremity, which is opposite the left nipple of the breast, but its lower part, which descends towards the end of the ribs, is free; when shaken, this shaking is called the beating of the heart. Many, having no idea of the arrangement of the heart, think that their heart is where they feel its beating. In undertaking on their own the practice of the prayer of the heart and in trying to lead their breathing into their heart, they direct it to just that part of the heart and cause carnal excitement there. Then when this greatly increases the beating of the heart they invite it to themselves and thrust on themselves a wrong state and delusion.

The monk Basil and the elder [St.] Paisios Velichkovsky say that many of their contemporaries harmed themselves by misusing material aids. And in later times, cases of derangement caused in this way were frequently met. In fact they are met even now, although the disposition to practice the prayer of Jesus has decreased almost to a vanishing point. One is surely bound to meet them. They are the inevitable consequence of ignorant, self-directed, conceited, premature and proud zeal, and finally of a complete lack of experienced spiritual guides.

The monk Basil, referring to St. Theophylact and other Fathers, affirms that the three powers of the soul, the power of speech (or reason), the power of fervor, and the power of desire are disposed thus: the power of speech (reason), or the spirit of the man is present in the breast and in the upper part of the heart; the power of fervor in the middle part; and the power of desire or natural cupidity in the lower part. He who tries to set in motion and warm the lower part of the heart, sets in motion the power of cupidity which, on account of the nearness to it of the sexual parts and on account of their nature, sets in motion those parts. The most violent burning of carnal desire thus follows an ignorant use of a material aid. What a strange phenomenon! An ascetic apparently engages in prayer, but the occupation produces lust which it ought to mortify. And ignorance, having misused a material aid, ascribes to the prayer of Jesus what it ought to ascribe to misuse.

The prayer of the heart springs from the union of the mind with the spirit, which were separated by the fall and are united by the grace of redemption. In the human spirit are concentrated feelings of conscience, humility, meekness, love for God and one's neighbor, and other similar properties. During prayer, the action of these properties needs to be united with the action of the mind. All of one's attention should be directed to this end. This union is affected by the finger of God Who alone can heal the wound of the fall. But the practicer of prayer shows the sincerity of his will to receive healing by his constant perseverance in prayer, by shutting his mind in the words of the prayer, and by exterior and interior activity according to the commandments of the Gospel, which render the spirit capable of union with the mind of the person praying. In addition to this, the artistic direction of the mind towards the seat of speech in the upper part of the heart helps to some extent. Generally speaking, excessive exertion in the use of this material aid is harmful as it arouses material warmth. Warmth of flesh and blood should have no place in prayer.

On account of its soul-saving effect upon us of prayer in general, and of the remembrance of God or the prayer of Jesus in particular, as means to remaining in constant union with God and to constantly repulsing the attacks of the enemy, engagement in the prayer of Jesus is especially hateful to the devil. Those who pray in the name of the Lord Jesus are liable to special persecution by the devil. *All the labor and all the care of our adversary*, says St. Makarios the Great, *consists in trying to divert our thought from the remembrance of God and from love for Him. To this end he uses the charm of the world, and draws us away from the true good to false, unreal goods.* Therefore, he who has consecrated himself to the true service of God must especially guard himself against letting his thoughts wander by the unceasing prayer of Jesus and must on no account allow himself to be mentally idle.

Without paying any attention to the thoughts and images that make their appearance, he must constantly return to prayer by the name of Jesus as to a harbor or haven, believing that Jesus indefatigably takes care of that servant of His who keeps near Him constantly by the unwearying remembrance of Him.

The wicked demons, says St. Nilos the Sinaite, *at night try to disturb the spiritual workers themselves, but during the day they do so through men by surrounding him with calumnies, adversities and mishaps.* This order in the satanic struggle is soon observed in actual experience by every practicer of prayer. The demons tempt by thoughts, by mental images, by the remembrance of the most needed objects, by reflections on apparently spiritual subjects, by arousing anxiety and worry and various fears and apprehensions, and by other manifestations of unbelief. In all the varied conflicts of the demons, a sense of disturbance or agitation always serves as a true sign of the approach of fallen spirits, even though the action produced by them has an appearance of justice.

To ascetics living in solitude and praying vigorously, devils appear in the form of monsters, in the form of tempting objects, sometimes in the form of radiant angels, martyrs, saints and even Christ Himself. One should not fear the threats of the devils, and towards all apparitions in general one should maintain an attitude of extreme incredulity. In such cases, which however are rare, our foremost duty is to have recourse to God, to surrender ourselves wholly to His will and to ask for His help. We should, in conclusion, pay no attention to the apparitions and not enter into relations or conversation with them, regarding ourselves as unfit to deal with hostile spirits and unworthy to converse with holy spirits.



With the prayer [i.e. the Jesus Prayer], man becomes like a child. It brings him back to the simplicity and innocence that Adam had in Paradise before the fall. Through the prayer, you sanctify the place you are sitting and the work you are doing. Prayer arranges all things. It enables you to walk on water. It eliminates distances between you and others. It changes the will of others. It gives courage, faith, and patience in life.

Blessed Elder Amphilochios of Patmos (+1970)

Apt silence bridles anger; moderation in food bridles aimless desire; and the single-phrased Jesus Prayer bridles unruly thought.

Fear is the son of Faith and the shepherd of Commandments. He who is without faith will not be found worthy to be a sheep of the Lord's pasture.

Ilias the Presbyter

LORD JESUS CHRIST

From the Newsletter of the Orthodox Community of St. John of Kronstadt, Bath, England; March 1991.

LORD

On Mount Sinai, at the burning bush, the Lord revealed Himself to Moses as the Saviour of Israel. He did not give Moses a lecture on the divine nature: He ordered him to pull the Israelites out of Egypt and bring them back to that same mountain. From then on, Israel has known the Lord as its Saviour because it had experienced that salvation.

Fifty days after Passover, the Lord brought them all to Sinai to give them the Law: this is commemorated in the "Jewish Feast of Pentecost." The Law changed the descendants of Jacob from a group of immigrant settlers and slaves into a people. To this day, the people of Israel know the Lord as Saviour, and themselves as the people who are bound to the Lord by His commandments.

This also concerns us Christians: whenever we use the name "The Lord" for God, we refer to the first of the Ten Commandments: *I am the Lord thy God, Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.* Any thought, any reflection on God, must concentrate on these two aspects of the relationship: He is the Saviour, we keep the commandments.

Why did God have to reveal Himself in this way? Because Israel had no way of knowing the Lord unless He pulled them out of Egypt. At the last moment, before they were irretrievably assimilated into the pagan culture of Egypt, God pulled them out. And this remains the same not only for the Jews, but also for us Christians today. At the last minute, before we become assimilated by the pagan culture which surrounds us, the Lord has to pull us out, and make us into a people who no longer conform to the standards and the way of life of this society. He has to make us into a people shaped by His will. There is a simple alternative for all human beings: either we will be shaped by God's will, or we will be pagans.

JESUS

The name Jesus, to us, means *Salvation*. When the Son of God became a human being, He completed what had been revealed on Mount Sinai. The same Lord, the same Saviour, came among us and dealt in a definitive way with sin and death. To such an extent that not only we, Christians, but the Jews themselves acknowledge that something happened to the Torah two thousand years ago; it was then when the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, the part of the Law which deals with the Levitical priesthood and the animal sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple ceased to be relevant, except as imagery in the Bible to make us understand the ways of the Lord. Events clearly substantiated the claims of Saint Stephen during his trial before the Sanhedrin. Many Jews have acknowledged

that the Lord had allowed the role of the Levitical priesthood to lapse "de facto" since the destruction of the Temple. Why should a substantial part of the Torah—the priesthood—turn out to have been a mere prefiguration of another, and higher, priesthood?

The reason is to be found in St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews: through His sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus entered through the veil into the Holy of Holies; He became *our high priest after the order of Melchizedek*. The salvation He brings is explained by the third part of His Name: Christ.

CHRIST

The Messiah is David's successor who has come to bring all nations to obey the Lord, the God of Israel. From the moment Jesus came into this world, the days of the false gods were numbered. Once the Messiah has come, there is no longer room in the world for the rule, and side by side, of the God of Israel and the demonic forces of paganism. The latter will collapse by the power of the grace of Jesus, by the victory of His Cross, Resurrection and outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The collapse of pagan religions does not rely on the use of violence and persecution; Jesus does not win through inquisitions. The Righteous One does not use the weapons of the evil one. Neither does He tolerate relativism: there is no prayer we can share with the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Shintoist, because one cannot mix the worship of the Lord with the cult of their deities. Because of their Covenant with the Lord, both Jews and Christians have the duty to stay away from the "interfaith" syncretism which is becoming part of our culture.

LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD, HAVE MERCY ON ME, A SINNER!

This simple but radical faith, this relationship with the Incarnate Lord, challenges us with personal questions:

1. What is my personal Egypt which I have to leave behind? Before I can receive the Lord's life-giving commandments, are there involvements from which I must break free? The most insidious ones are cultural ones: the values of a non-Christian society around us.

2. Egypt reveals itself for what it is once we have heard the Law of Sinai. As St. Paul pointed out, before the Law taught us, we did not discern sin, nor did we know what the requirements of holiness were. A Christian community which neither knows its Bible nor takes its distances from pagan culture cannot be truly Christian, let alone evangelize.

3. Jesus, the Risen Lord, empowers me by His Holy Spirit. If the power of the Holy Spirit is not obviously at work in my life, it is time I prayed in my heart: *Lord, Thou strengthenest me with Thy Body and Blood and Thy Holy Spirit in the Divine Liturgy. Grant me to come worthily to the communion of Thy pure Body and precious Blood and release the power of Thy Holy Spirit in my life.*

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NO TEARS FOR TWO YEARS...

By Archimandrite Gregory, Abbot of Docheiariou Monastery, translated from Greek by the staff of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.

Helen lived in Karpenisi and had married a very tough and cruel man who would beat her at the slightest provocation that he perceived; his violence (mostly kicks) towards Helen would parallel the neighborhood kids kicking their favorite soccer ball, as hard as possible. Her life was indeed difficult, yet she persevered with her only consolation being her closeness to the Mother of God. Her suffering and her affection for the Holy Mother encouraged and motivated her to serve in the Monastery of Panaghia Prousiotissa (in the island of Karpenisi) during the annual August fast for the Glorious Lady, the Theotokos, taking care of the Church and the other cleaning needs of the monastery.

Helen described to us the following story: During an early period of my marriage, I worked for a doctor, cleaning and taking care of his office; the job paid well and the doctor was always prompt in his payments to me; he was, however, a very tough and difficult boss, not unlike my husband. One day, I was picking up the office garbage-can to throw away its contents in the outside dumpster; suddenly, as I approached the dumpster, I heard a soft cry. I opened the lid and saw a baby covered in blood. "Holy Mother," I exclaimed, "what am I to do? I cannot possibly take the baby to the doctor as he is the one who has apparently thrown it in the dumpster believing it to be dead; and taking the baby home would infuriate my husband—he would 'crucify' me as a Paschal lamb."

I picked up the infant, kissed it, and, wiping the blood from his little body, I wrapped him in my bosom, trying to warm him up; it was a frosty winter day. When I arrived home, alone, I said to myself: "God is with me, I will keep him and nothing will happen." I washed him, wrapped him in an old shirt, crossed him and getting on my knees in front of the icon of the Mother of God, I prayed intensely: "Holy Panaghia Prousiotissa, send your grace upon this child and keep him from crying and revealing his presence." And the miracle happened. The baby did not cry for two whole years! I kept him in secret and fed him when nobody was around; and, he would sleep under our bed each and every night, always in quiet. When my husband would come home, my anxiety for his discovery would elevate, my heart rate would increase, but the baby remained my own little secret, for well over two years.

As time passed, my little boy started crawling. One afternoon during lunch, the baby made its way to the table and revealed his presence to my husband. Just as my husband saw him, his eyes widened and lit up as those of a lion, and with a stern voice he screamed: "What is that?" I crossed myself and proceeded to reveal my two-year secret. His disposition then changed, as by a miracle, he was moved beyond any of my expectations; he did not only express his full understanding but accepted my little angel boy as if it was his own.

Many years have passed since then, my husband has fallen asleep and this child is now married and works in Karpenisi. And from all of my children, he happens to be the only one that looks after me, during these, my difficult elderly years; my other children have pretty much forgotten their mother...