

# 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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## HOLY PRIESTHOOD & SPIRITUAL THERAPY

By Bishop Hierotheos Vlachos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and St. Vlassios; excerpt from his highly esteemed book "Orthodox Psychotherapy."

The priest has a double task. One is to perform the sacraments and the other is to heal people so that they can worthily approach and receive Holy Communion. We have further pointed out that there are many priests who are priests outwardly and perform their function unhindered but in essence have defiled the priesthood, and that this is apparent from the fact that they are not able to heal. They perform the sacraments, and the gifts are sanctified through them, but they cannot cure others or save their own souls.

On the other hand, there are laymen and monks who do not have the sacramental priesthood but can heal people because they have spiritual priesthood. We should like to dwell briefly on this point.

Through baptism and the effort to keep Christ's commandments all Christians have put on Christ, and in this way we share the royal, prophetic and high priestly office of Christ.

This teaching is recorded in the texts of the New Testament. In the Book of Revelation John the Evangelist writes: *To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us kings and priests to his God and Father...* (Rev 1:5). The Apostle Peter says: *You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people.* (1 Pet 2:9). And the Apostle Paul writes to the Christians of Rome: *I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* (Rom 12:1).

In many Fathers too we find this teaching that every person is a priest of Christ in the sense which we defined and will develop further later on. St. John Chrysostom presents Abraham too as a priest because *where there is fire, an altar and a knife, why do you doubt his priesthood?* Abraham's sacrifice was twofold. He offered both his only-begotten son and the ram, *and above all, his own will.* With the blood of the ram he sanctified his right hand, with the slaying of the child (which he had decided to do) he sanctified his soul. *Thus he was ordained a priest, by the blood of his only-begotten, by the sacrifice of the lamb.* Just after this, St. John Chrysostom exhorts his listeners: *So you too are made king and priest and prophet in the laver: a king, having dashed to earth all the deeds of wickedness and slain your sins, a priest in that you offer yourself to God and sacrifice your body, and are yourself being slain also.*

All the faithful baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity and living according to the will of the Holy Trinitarian God are priests, they have spiritual priesthood. We prefer the expression *spiritual priesthood* to other terms like *general* or *lay* priesthood, because clergy and lay people alike can have this priesthood, and because not all the baptized have it, but only those who have become the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity. The faithful who have noetic prayer have spiritual priesthood, especially those who have reached such a degree of grace as to pray for the whole world. This is the spiritual service on behalf of the world. The prayers of these people who sacrifice themselves, praying on behalf of all, sustain the world and heal men. Therefore by prayer they become exorcists, driving out the demons which rule in human societies. This is the great work of those who pray unceasingly for the whole world.

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St. Gregory of Sinai wrote about this spiritual priesthood, which is also the essential foundation of the sacramental priesthood. For as we have said, those of the faithful who were healed and had noetic prayer were chosen to receive the special grace of the priesthood as well. According to St. Gregory, noetic prayer is *the mystical liturgy of the mind*. A person who possesses the gift of noetic prayer senses the operation of grace within him, which is purifying, illuminating and mystical. All who reach this state are priests. *A true sanctuary is a heart that has been freed from evil thoughts and receives the operation of the Spirit, for everything in that heart is said and done spiritually.*

This passage from the holy Father prompts me to say that the spiritual priesthood is that which is to be consummated in another age, in the kingdom of heaven. Without wishing to dwell on the subject of the ineffaceable or non-sacramental priesthood, we stress the truth that the sacramental priesthood is for the benefit of the laity, to serve its needs, while the spiritual priesthood is that which will continue to be celebrated at the heavenly altar in the life to come. All who have spiritual priesthood are *true clergy now and forever*. This priesthood can include all categories of men, and naturally also of women. Therefore it is not very important that in the Orthodox tradition women cannot receive sacramental priesthood. They have the possibility of being the *true clergy*.

Elsewhere St. Gregory of Sinai is explicit: *All devout kings and priests are truly anointed in baptismal renewal just as those of old were anointed symbolically*. The priests of the Old Testament were *truly symbols of our truth*, but *our kingdom and priesthood are not the same in character and form*.

When a man's nous has been discovered, when he has been freed from his captivity and received the Holy Spirit,

it is *spiritual priesthood* and then he celebrates a mystical liturgy in the sanctuary of his soul and partakes of the lamb in betrothal with God. In this spiritual priesthood he eats the Lamb of God in the spiritual altar of his soul, but at the same time he becomes like the lamb. Thus we understand well that when noetic prayer is working in us, there is an unceasing divine liturgy which nourishes our whole existence. St. Gregory of Sinai writes: *The noetic work of the nous is a spiritual liturgy. Like a betrothal before the coming delight which surpasses all understanding, this liturgy is performed by the nous, which mystically sacrifices the Lamb of God on the altar of the soul and partakes of it. To eat the Lamb of God on the inner altar of the soul means not only to apprehend it, or partake of it, but also to become like it in the future life. Here we enjoy the words of the mysteries, but there we hope to receive their very substance.*

The same saint also writes that the kingdom of heaven is like the tabernacle fashioned by God for Moses, *for in the world to come it too will have two veils*. And all the *priests of grace* will enter the first tabernacle, but only those will enter the second tabernacle who are henceforth to celebrate *in the darkness of theology hierarchically in perfection* having Jesus as the first celebrant and bishop before the face of the Trinity. Therefore all who have acquired the gift of theology as we explained it above, that is, all who after natural *theoria* have entered the divine darkness, are themselves priests of God; they constitute this true and spiritual priesthood. And since they are the spiritual priesthood, they can heal the sick.

Nikitas Stethatos teaches that if any priest, deacon, or even monk participates in divine grace with all the presuppositions set down by the Fathers, *he is a true bishop* even if he has not been ordained a bishop by men. On the contrary,

anyone who is uninitiated in the spiritual life is *falsely named even if by ordination he is set over all the others in rank and mocks them and behaves arrogantly.*

Probably what we quoted earlier, that *all who constitute the spiritual priesthood can heal the sick*, was not well received. However, the teaching of St. Symeon the New Theologian on this point is very revealing. The saint writes that the power of binding and loosing sins belonged only to the bishops, who had received it by succession from the Apostles. But when *the bishops became good for nothing, this awesome function passed to priests who led a blameless life worthy of the grace of God.* When the priests too, along with the bishops, fell into spiritual error, *this function was transmitted to the chosen people of God, namely the monks, not that it was taken away from the priests and bishops, but they estranged themselves from it.*

According to St. Symeon, the power of binding and loosing sins was not given *simply because of their ordination.* The laying on of hands only gave the metropolitans and bishops permission to celebrate the Eucharist. The power to remit sins was given *only to those of the priests and bishops and monks who could be numbered among the disciples of Christ on account of their purity.*

We believe that St. Symeon developed this teaching in the first place in order to emphasize that the sacrament of priesthood did not magically transmit the authority to forgive men their sins if one did not have inner spiritual priesthood; secondly, to show the wretched state of the clergy of that time; thirdly, to underline the value of the spiritual priesthood, which lies in noetic prayer and vision of God and these unfortunately, then as now, were neglected; and fourthly because he himself had personal experience of this: his spiritual father, who had not been ordained by a bishop, had the grace of the Holy Spirit and was able to forgive sins.

Nevertheless his spiritual father, Symeon the Pious, did not overlook the sacrament of ordination. St. Symeon the New Theologian writes: *I know that the grace of binding and loosing sins is given by God to those who are sons by adoption and his holy servants. I too was a disciple of such a father who had not received the laying on of hands on the part of men but who through the hand of God, that is, the Spirit, enrolled me among the disciples and ordered me to receive the laying on of hands by men according to the prescribed form I who for a long time had been impelled by the Spirit toward such a reality.* He continues: *Having heard the commandments of Christ, he became a partaker of His grace and of His gifts and received from Him the power to bind and loose, kindled by the Holy Spirit.*

When we speak of remission of sins we should understand it mainly as the curing of passions. Thus we see clearly today that *gifted* monks heal us without having sacramental priesthood. Being clear-sighted, they perceive the problem which

is troubling us, they give us a remedy and a method of healing, and so we are cured of what was inwardly disturbing us. The existence of such holy men is a comfort for the people.

### Our Search for Therapists

We come now to the search for therapists. Since we have been made aware of spiritual illness and of the great value of priest-therapists, we must search for them in order to be freed from the ulcers in our souls. A really great effort is needed in order to find these true leaders of the people, the doctors of our souls and bodies, since certainly many bodily illnesses are of spiritual origin.

In his homily on the New Sunday Gospel, St. Gregory Palamas advises: Let every Christian after attending church on Sunday *diligently seek* someone who, imitating the Apostles who were in the upper room after the Crucifixion, remains *completely enclosed most of the time, desiring to be with the Lord in silent prayer and psalmody as well as in other ways.* Let him approach him then, let him enter his house with faith *as a heavenly place having within it the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.* Let him sit with the man who lives there, let him remain with him as long as he can, asking *about God and the things of God,* learning with humility and appealing for his prayer. Then, says the saint, *I know that Christ will come to him invisibly and grant inner peace to the pondering of his soul and increase his faith and give him support, and in time to come will enroll him in the kingdom of heaven.*

It is necessary to seek out such a spiritual father. On this point it is worthwhile to listen to what St. Symeon the New Theologian has to say. Ask God, he says, to show you a man *who is able to direct you well, one whom you ought to obey.* We should show obedience to the man whom God shows us *mystically in person or outwardly through His servant,* and revere him *as if he were Christ himself.* We should show our dispassionate spiritual father the kind of confidence and love that a sick person shows to his doctor, expecting treatment and healing from him. Rather we should have even more confidence and love, in view of the difference between the soul and the body. Christ himself is present in the spiritual father. He is *the mouth of God.*

Further on, St. Symeon matches the Apostles' attitude towards Christ to the attitude which we should have towards our spiritual father, because it is in that way that our soul can be healed. As the Apostles followed Christ, let us do so also. When people dishonor and pour scorn on our spiritual father, we must not abandon him. And as Peter took his sword and cut off the ear, *take the sword and stretch forth your hand and cut off not only the ear but the hand and the tongue of him who attempts to speak against your father or to touch him. If you deny him, weep like Peter. If you see him crucified, die with him if you can. If that is not possible, do not join with the traitors and evil men. If he is released from imprisonment, return to him again and vener-*

ate him the more, like a martyr. If he dies from ill treatment, then boldly seek his body and pay him more honor than when you attended on him while he was alive, and so anoint it with perfumes and give it a costly burial.

It is very characteristic that the spiritual father, the therapist, is put in the place of Christ. St. Symeon also uses a type of prayer in which one asks to find a suitable spiritual guide who will offer us spiritual healing:

*O Lord, who desirest not the death of a sinner but that he should turn and live, Thou who didst come down to earth in order to restore life to those lying dead through sin and in order to make them worthy of seeing Thee the true light as far as that is possible to man, send me a man who knows Thee, so that in serving him and subjecting myself to him with all my strength, as to Thee, and in doing Thy will in his, I may please Thee the only true God, and so that even I, a sinner, may be worthy of Thy Kingdom.* If a Christian prays in this way, God will show him the spiritual father suitable for him, to tend the illnesses and wounds of his soul.

Certainly one should not overlook the fact that such therapists, both in St. Symeon's time and today, are rare. He says: *In truth those who have the skill properly to direct and heal rational souls are rare, and especially so at the present time.*

In conclusion it should be said that it is necessary to seek out and find such scientific doctors, therapists, or even nurses, in order to be spiritually healed. There is no other way of healing. God is our true Healer, but so are the friends of Christ, the saints in whom dwells the Trinitarian God Himself.



He who is obedient, is an imitator of Christ, and he who is proud and talks back is an imitator of the devil. So, let us be careful: Whom are we imitating? Christ or the devil?

The only hope of salvation from the delusions and the heresies, the innovations and the traps of wicked people and of the devil is prayer, repentance and humility.

Christians must be true, both in word and deed. Unfortunately today, with sin super-abounded and super-exceeded, most people call the light darkness and the darkness light; they characterize truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth; the sweet is now bitter and the bitter has become sweet. Most importantly, good is characterized as evil and evil as good. We find such people in all ranks of society except for a few select people, for whose sake and through whose intercessions our Lord grants His mercy upon us.

Having Christ as ally and armed with the weapons of Faith, Love and humble-mindedness and the Precious Cross, we will defeat the invisible and visible enemies.

**Elder Philotheos Zervakos (+1980)**

## HOW DO WE MEET GOD?

*Elder Porphyrios: Testimonies and Experiences, by Klitos Ioannides.*

In our question of "How can we, who live in the world, in the bustle, turmoil and schizophrenia of contemporary life, meet God," Elder Porphyrios told us the following story, presented here in brief:

Shortly after he was appointed chaplain to the Church of St. Gerasimos in the Athens Polyclinic, by *Omonia Square*, he had a problem at the time of the Liturgy. Directly across the street from the Church was a store that sold gramophones and records. The shopkeeper played records on the gramophone in order to attract customers. He played them so loudly, however, that Elder Porphyrios could not bear it. He had reached the point where he thought of resigning even though he wanted the post very much.

In this situation, as throughout his whole life, Elder Porphyrios did not put his own wants first, but with much prayer and humility, asked God to show him what he should do.

Therefore, following three days of fasting and prayer he found a notebook that belonged to the son of a Church council member, in the corner of the Church. He was a student at the University. It was a physics notebook, -Lord, we always marvel at your works- which gave Elder Porphyrios the solution to his problem.

Leafing through the pages, he found some notes that referred to acoustic waves. Studying it, he had a thought. If you throw a pebble into a lake, the water is disturbed and circles form. If, on the other hand, you threw a rock into another section of the lake, new bigger circles are created which neutralize the first circles.

This was the answer from God that Elder Porphyrios was waiting for. The next day, he tried to concentrate all his spiritual and mental powers into the prayers and the acts of the Divine Liturgy. Thus, on the basis of the reasoning he had done about the lake, he formed circles in his mind and his heart that canceled out the circles that were formed by the gramophone. It no longer disturbed nor distracted him from the Divine Liturgy.



It is a great art to succeed in having your soul sanctified. A person can become a saint anywhere. He can become a saint in *Omonia Square*, if he wants. At your work, whatever it may be, you can become a saint through meekness, patience, and love. Make a new start every day, with new resolution, with enthusiasm and love, prayer and silence—not with anxiety so that you get a pain in the chest.

**St. Porphyrios (+1991)**

## ON THE PUSILLANIMITY HERESY

By Fr. John Bockman (+2000), archpriest and teacher.

Pusillanimity, a virtually obsolete word, is the name of a heresy rampant in the world today. Most people have never heard of it, but it has some important thought elements which make it useful in pursuing the spiritual life. Therefore, Orthodox Christians should consider it carefully. Pusillanimity denotes spiritual cowardice, lack of “manly” strength, spiritual inertia, a certain diminution of faith and trust in God. Before we clarify the nature of this heresy, let us examine the background of its applicability to today’s social and religious environment.

A recent forum called *Global Fashion: American Commercial Culture in the World* sponsored by the Center for Arts and Culture met on November 3, 1999. A participant named Todd Gitlin of New York University advanced the proposition that the United States is exporting “revolutionary values” around the world. He described it as “a brash culture that knows no boundaries.”

The world seems to be demanding whatever the American culture has to offer, good, bad, or indifferent, but it is also protesting against some elements of it. We know, for example, that Moslem fundamentalists call America “the Great Satan” for reasons that should be obvious. People abroad who are resisting American culture feel that American culture is like a typhoon, a force that is not only unavoidable, but also terribly destructive.

American culture’s current effect on foreign languages and therefore on ideas, mores, and attitudes is phenomenal. But it’s not just the whole secular world that has been influenced by American popular culture. The Orthodox world and we Orthodox faithful ourselves have also been affected by it. Radio, television, the movies, newspapers and magazines have gradually conditioned the mind and hearts of people everywhere to sensationalism, commercialism, secularism, materialism, and to what amounts to paganism.

If we have personally experienced a true spiritual conversion sometime in our life, and are struggling against our passions, we are aware that these harmful spiritual effects are a serious problem in our spiritual life, and that to remain true to our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ we must take vigilant measures to minimize those effects in our life. The struggle of a truly converted Orthodox Christian will be in large part a struggle against the American secular world and its value system.

At this point we must observe that Holy Baptism alone does not magically bring about a total conversion. It gives us the grace and spiritual strength necessary to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in making a full conversion, but the eventual outcome depends on whether we individually choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we may say that in any given Orthodox community there will be those who have

been converted, those who are being converted, and those who have not yet begun to be converted. People baptized as babies, for example, must sooner or later undergo voluntary conversion in cooperation with the Holy Spirit if they are to become truly Orthodox.

Among the effects of American popular culture is the tendency to give in to this state which we are calling pusillanimity, that is, to spiritual cowardice or a lack of spiritual courage. Those Orthodox patriarchs, hierarchs, priests, and people who believe that in our day it is impossible to arrive at the height of virtue achieved by the saints of old are on dangerous spiritual ground. If they teach this, they are heretics and we must avoid them.

At least one chief hierarch of an American Orthodox jurisdiction, for example, has said publicly that Americans will not tolerate long services. (It is true, of course, that some Americans will not tolerate long services, but can that reasonably be said of all? Look at us!) Therefore, rather than attempting to teach and encourage personal self-discipline, endurance, and spiritual strength-building, this hierarch prescribes a limit of 45 minutes on the Divine Liturgy. That policy requires that the Liturgy and Homily be shortened, greatly reducing the educative powers of the Liturgy and the preaching. This robs the faithful who don’t understand they are being robbed. This conditions the laity to demand one compromise of Orthodox practice after another, causing great detriment to the integrity of Orthodoxy.

The heresy of pusillanimity proposes that since we are not living in the time of the apostles, and are not in the immediate physical presence of the Saviour, it is impossible for us to become holy in the way the apostles were holy. It is impossible for us to pray and fast and attend services the way the early Christians and great saints of later centuries did. It is said that only the destitute and starving poor actually fast today, and that only out of necessity. That only the old *babushkas* and *yiayias* really spend time praying. Therefore, it is argued, the Church should abandon or greatly restrict the Orthodox fasts and the numbers and length of the services for the vast majority of people. And since only monks, generally unmarried and unskilled in business and management, are allowed by the Canons to become bishops, the Church must remove the restriction against the episcopal ordination of married men. They say the Church has to get the “best educated” men in the episcopate.

Arguments such as these accommodate the spiritual weaknesses of pusillanimous Orthodox clergy and laity alike. Already widowers and unmarried men are being chosen bishops in New Calendar jurisdictions who have never spent more than a few hours in a monastery, but are tonsured as monks pro forma in a great big hurry. Soon some secularized Orthodox women can be expected to start clamoring for the priesthood and the episcopate. These are or will be violations of the Holy Canons and blasphemies against the Holy Spirit. The next

thing you will see is agitation for an “ecumenical council” to add Canons which will nullify the Canons of past centuries. No true Ecumenical Council had ever abrogated the Canons of previous ecumenical councils, and never will.

Why is pusillanimity a heresy? It is a heresy because it denies the continuous and continuing presence and operation of the Holy Spirit in the Church. It minimizes the Holy Spirit, and minimizes Jesus Christ Who sent the Holy Spirit upon the Church to keep it from error. Pusillanimity is the belief that one cannot obey the Gospel as did people of old. It is the claim that there are no spiritual fathers left in the world today. It is the belief that the Church of Christ has not yet been established, but awaits the concurrence of world religions, many of which deny the divinity of Christ and other basic Orthodox dogmas.

St. Symeon the New Theologian who lived in the last half of the tenth and into the first decades of the eleventh century did much to expose this heresy. His times were much like ours. Many people had become dissatisfied with what the Church had become. It is worthy of note that the beginning of the second millennium occurred during St. Symeon’s time. The West especially was wracked with religious dissent. The so-called Great Schism occurred shortly after St. Symeon’s repose. Out of the religious confusion the West developed scholasticism which in turn resurrected the philosophy of the pagan Greeks. It wanted to “save” the Church by turning back, not to Christ, but to the pagan, Aristotle. Scholasticism pushed Western Christianity in a direction away from the early Church and away from the Holy Fathers. Out of it grew the Roman Catholic Church and its papal monarchy which has proceeded on an increasingly rationalistic and innovative course. It is noteworthy, however, that the philosophical basis of Roman Catholicism has begun to break down at this, the end of the twentieth century.

The Eastern Orthodox Church was also tempted to move toward a Byzantine form of scholasticism in imitation of the West. For a time, two opposing theologies faced each other in Byzantium. One was abstract and philosophical like Western Scholasticism. The other, championed by St. Symeon, strove to restore theology to its pristine form as “wisdom infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul after its thorough purification through rigorous asceticism and a state of constant repentance.” St. Symeon was so successful in defeating Scholastic tendencies among Orthodox theologians of his time, that the Church designated him as one of only three men titled Theologians: St. John the Theologian, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. Symeon the New Theologian.

It is very important for Orthodox people to know that this wandering away from True Orthodox theology has occurred again and again in history. Again and again someone gets the idea that the Church is out of step, too old-fashioned, and needs to be “saved from oblivion” by being brought into harmony with contemporary life. This idea prevailed several times in

Russia. Russian seminarians started to go to the West where they picked up scholastic ideas and brought them home. Russian Orthodox seminaries started to teach Western theology as though it were Orthodox, and they came to be unfamiliar with the Tradition of Orthodox spirituality. St. Paisius Velichkovsky rescued the Russian Church at one point. Finally along came the Communist state, and weak, pusillanimous churchmen felt they had to compromise with the state to “save” the Church. The Church became in effect an arm of the Communist government. Sanctity in Russia had to go underground into the Catacomb Church.

When Greece finally achieved independence from the Turks, Greek hierarchs started to fraternize with the Anglicans and to send theological students to Western Europe where they absorbed Roman Catholic theology. The result was adoption of the New Calendar and growing accommodation to the Western world and its theological errors. It is only in our time that the Greek Church is beginning to recover from this Western Captivity under such people as Father John Romanides of America and Greece and Bishop Hierotheos Vlachos of Greece.

There is never anything that man can do to save the Church. Only the Lord can save the Church. And we ask it in a hymn at the end of every Divine Liturgy. What we can do is remain faithful to His word and to the Holy Spirit who operates in the Church through the Holy Mysteries. We can struggle by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving to cooperate with the Holy Spirit by holding fast to the traditions of Holy Orthodoxy.



There are those of whom I speak and who are called heretics by me. They are the ones who say that in our present age there is no one in our midst who is able to observe the commandments and be like the holy fathers....Those who declare this is impossible have fallen not into one particular heresy but into all of them, so to speak – a heresy surpassing all others in its impiety and greatest blasphemy. They are buried underneath it....The one who speaks in such a manner turns all of Scripture upside down....These antichrists affirm, “It is impossible, impossible.” Why then is it impossible? Tell me. In what other way did the saints shine on earth and did they become lamps of the world? If it were impossible, they would never have succeeded in it. For they were men like us, and possessed no more than we do except a will directed toward the good. They had zeal, patience, humility, and love for God. Therefore, acquire all this and your soul which today is as hard as rock shall become a fountain of tears inside you. However, if you refuse to suffer such anguish and affliction, at least do not say that all this is impossible.

**St. Symeon the New Theologian**  
*Discourse XXIX: “The Heresy of Pusillanimity”*

## WHEN ALEXANDRIA APOLOGIZED

*On the restoration to ecclesiastical order of one of the greatest Orthodox saints.*

On September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1998 the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria sent out an apology. Here is what they wrote:

*The Holy Spirit has enlightened the gathered members of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa, under the leadership of H.B. Petros VII, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa, more than a century since Saint Nektarios, the great Teacher and Father of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Church was expelled from the Church of Alexandria, to reach the following decision:*

*Taking into account the resolution of the Church to rank Saint Nektarios amongst the saints because of his innumerable miracles and his acceptance within the religious conscience of Orthodox Christians throughout the world, we appeal to the mercy of the ever-charitable God.*

*We hereby restore the ecclesiastical order of the Saint of our Century, Saint Nektarios, and grant to him all due credits and honors. We beseech Saint Nektarios to forgive both us, unworthy as we are, and our predecessors, our brothers of the Throne of Alexandria, for opposition to the Saint and for all which, due to human weakness or error, our Holy Father, Bishop of Pentapolis, Saint Nektarios, suffered.*

PETROS VII Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa.

† † †

What led to this apology? Let's find out...

St. Nektarios, known for his countless miracles of healing, and as, "A Saint for our Time," was born in 1846 in Thrace. When he was fourteen, he left his home and traveled to Constantinople in search of work and study. There, St. Nektarios lived a very modest life constantly praying to Christ and believing that He would provide everything he needed to live. Many acts of kindness were shown to St. Nektarios by his neighbors and townspeople, and it was through them, and by the grace of God, that St. Nektarios became an accomplished academic at the age of twenty-one. By this time, too, St. Nektarios was considered a theological scholar and a devout Christian. Upon completing his studies, he left Constantinople and entered a monastery in Chios.

Some time later, the Patriarch Sophronios of Alexandria, Egypt, offered St. Nektarios a scholarship to study theology at the University of Athens. Upon completing studies at the university, St. Nektarios was ordained to the priesthood to serve in Cairo, Egypt, where he became quite popular as a preacher and confessor. Within five months of his ordination, the Metropolitan of Nubia blessed St. Nektarios with the title of archimandrite, and two months later he was appointed to the high position of Patriarchal Trustee.

It was in January of 1889 that the Metropolitan Nilos suddenly passed away. As the seat was under the Patriarchate of Alexandria, Patriarch Sophronios nominated St. Nektarios to fill the vacancy. Therefore, on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1889, St. Nektarios was

ordained a bishop and began to serve his congregation with humility and an oath to never succumb to the temptations of this world. He served as bishop until countless rumors and false accusations were brought up against him. Patriarch Sophronios became subjected to unbearable pressure regarding the rumors circulating about Metropolitan Nektarios (including the rumor that Nektarios wanted to become patriarch instead of Sophronios). Soon after, Sophronios stripped Metropolitan Nektarios of his authority and duty as bishop. Upon this humbling and confusing experience, St. Nektarios returned to Athens where he continued to serve God by preaching and teaching in its many churches.

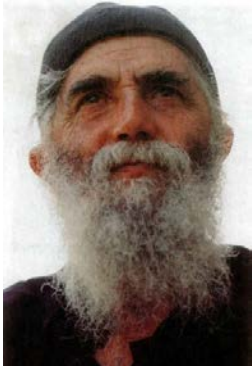
In the beginning this was difficult because so many lies and rumors had hurt his reputation in the eyes of the people. But over time, love won. His popularity among the people in Athens again gained him popularity, and led to his appointment as dean of Rizarios Ecclesiastical School in Athens, where he dedicated fourteen years of his wisdom and loving care, until his body forced him to retire on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1908. Once a new dean was found and instated as his replacement, St. Nektarios retreated to the island of Aegina, to the monastery that he helped to establish years before.

With his return to Aegina, the monastery began to receive countless visitors who sought to be in the presence of St. Nektarios' pious and loving nature. While there, St. Nektarios witnessed the completion of the building of the chapel on the grounds, which he first started in July of 1906. On June 2, 1908, the chapel was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and he began to settle in and plan for the building of his simple home on the grounds. Throughout the years that he spent in Aegina, St. Nektarios wrote and published many theological treatises, guided the nuns of the monastery toward divine work, and performed many miracles of healing. It was also while serving at the monastery, that St. Nektarios endured many spiritual and physical tribulations, as well as witnessed the magnificent power of the Trinity and the Virgin Mary.

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1920, St. Nektarios retired his spirit to the Lord. However, even in death St. Nektarios continues to perform miracles, the first of which occurred in the very hospital room in which he died. With the passing of St. Nektarios, a hospital nurse, assisted by a nun from the monastery, immediately began to change his clothes and threw his undershirt on the next bed. In this bed lay a paralytic, who once the undershirt landed upon him, was instantly healed and jumped out of bed, praising God for his miraculous healing. This was the first of many miracles that St. Nektarios began to perform in death. The stories of these miracles, along with his body remaining completely intact and emanating a magnificent fragrance for twenty years after his death, led the nuns at the monastery to venerate him as a Saint of the Church. Finally, in April of 1961, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople further blessed St. Nektarios with a proclamation of sainthood.

## LOVE FOR WORK

From "Family Life," by Elder Paisios the Athonite, published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece.



—Geronda, why do so many people feel bored at work?

—Maybe they don't love their job? Or, maybe they work on the same thing continually? With some jobs, say at a factory where they make door and window frames, a laborer might do the same thing from morning till the time he leaves: glue, glue, glue. Another constantly handles windows; another, putty. They constantly do

the same monotonous work; and their boss is always watching them, not for just one or two days, either. It is always the "same old, same old," to the point of boredom. In the old days it wasn't like that though. A contractor would be given four walls from the carpenters and was expected to present the owner with a finished house and the key. He would have built the floors, the door and window frames, and would even have set the windows with putty. Afterwards he would have built spiral staircases, turned banisters; after that he would have painted, built the cupboards and the shelves, even the furniture! Even if he didn't do all of it himself, he knew how to do it. In a pinch a contractor could even put the tiles on the roof.

Today so many people are tormented because they don't love their jobs. They eagerly await the hour when they can go home. But when one has zeal for his job and is interested in what he is doing, no matter how much he works, his zeal grows. He is devoted to his job; and when it is time to leave he says, "Where did the time go?" He even forgets to eat and sleep; he forgets everything! Fasting like this, he isn't hungry; sleepless, he isn't tired, but instead rejoices that he doesn't need sleep. It's not that he suffers from hunger or lack of sleep; it's that work is like a feast day for him.

—Geronda, how is it that when two people have the same job, one can be spiritually profited from it while the other is spiritually harmed?

—It depends on how each one does his work and what is within him. If one works with humility and love, everything is bright, clean, and delightful, and he will feel refreshed. But if one allows prideful thoughts and thinks that he does his work better than others, he may feel a certain satisfaction, but this satisfaction doesn't fill his heart because his soul is not growing; he has no rest.

When a person doesn't do his work with love he grows tired. For such a one merely knowing he must climb a hill to finish a job makes him tired, because he doesn't love his work. The

one who does his job with all his heart, however, goes up and down the hill without even realizing it. A worker could dig in the sun, for example, and not get tired, as long as he does it from his heart. But if he doesn't do it from his heart, he is always stopping, loafing around and complaining. "Oh, it is so hot," he says, and so he suffers.

—Geronda, can a person become so absorbed with his career, his job, that he becomes indifferent or inconsiderate towards his family, etc.?

—He should love his job simply; he shouldn't "fall in love" with it. If he doesn't love his work, he will tire out doubly, both bodily and spiritually. Then even his bodily rest won't relax him because he will be spiritually exhausted. Spiritual exhaustion is something that overwhelms a man. When someone works with all his heart and is joyful, he is spiritually relaxed and his bodily exhaustion disappears.

You see, I know a general who still does all the jobs of his privates. How he worries about them! Like a father! Do you know what joy he feels?! Those under him also rejoice. Once he set out at midnight from Evro, headed to Larisa for the feast of Saint Achillius. He wanted to make it in time for Divine Liturgy, even though it would have been fine for him simply to go later, and be there only for the Doxology service afterwards. But he said, "I must be on time to honor the Saint." He does everything with all his heart! The gratification felt in one who does his work with *filotimo* is a good gratification. It was given by God so that His creature would not tire out. This is true rest from weariness.

—Geronda, how about our God-given, individual talent?

—Each person should increase the talent he has; for God, having given it him, expects a return. For example, the mind is powerful, but depending upon how one uses it, can be used for good or evil. Someone who is very bright—if he uses his mind properly—is able to invent things which may help the world. But if he doesn't use his mind properly he might invent a way, let's say, to rob his neighbor. People who draw cartoons in newspapers and the like are able, in only one cartoon—one sketch—to present their whole message. And if the cartoon is dealing with ecclesiastical issues and such, they are even able to present theology sufficiently. Some of them could have delved deeper into divine teachings if they would have studied theology—had they put their mind to it. That is, they could have sharpened their mind; they could have sanctified it, and thus would have helped themselves and others. But instead, many do negative work; obscene if they are obscene, ridiculous if they are ridiculous.

In other words, those with exceptional abilities will either become useful or destructive, while doubtless those who are not exceptional won't be able to do great good, but at least they also won't be able to do great harm.



## ON ABORTION

By Joe Sobran, *Sobran's Newsletter*, August 24, 2000.

In his famous essay “Politics and the English Language,” George Orwell analyzed the corrupting influence of dishonest politics on the way we speak and think. There is no better example than the effect abortion has had on our language.

Though abortion—including the killing of viable infants at the verge of birth—is now a “sacrament” of the Democratic Party, nobody admits to being “pro-abortion”; they are “pro-choice.” This is an obvious lie. The right to choose anything presupposes the right to live. The child, fetus, embryo, or whatever you want to call the entity growing within its mother’s womb has no “choice” about being killed. It will never have a choice about anything.

The pro-abortion side is pro-abortion in the same way that advocates of slavery were pro-slavery. “Oh,” they protest, “but we don’t insist that everyone get an abortion; we only want people”—that is, mothers—“to have a choice!” Then nobody was pro-slavery either, since nobody insisted that every white man own a slave; they were “pro-choice.” They wanted each white man to be “free” to decide whether to buy slaves; or they wanted every state to decide whether to permit slavery. Of course they overlooked the obvious fact that the slaves themselves had no choice; in their minds this was irrelevant.

The bad conscience of the pro-aborters shows in their studious avoidance of the word kill to describe what abortion is. Why be coy about it? We don’t mind speaking of “killing” when we kill lower life forms. Lawn products kill weeds; mouthwashes kill germs; insecticides kill bugs; mousetraps kill mice. If the human fetus is an insignificant little thing, why shrink from saying an abortion kills it? But the pro-abortion side prefers the evasive euphemism that abortion “terminates a pregnancy.”

As Orwell noted, dishonest people instinctively prefer the abstract to the concrete. Abstract language avoids creating unpleasant mental images that might cause horror and shame; concrete language may remind us of what we are really doing. This is why military jargon dehumanizes the targets of bombs and artillery: so that soldiers and pilots won’t vividly imagine the men, women, and children they are killing. Part of the job of military leadership is to anesthetize the consciences of fighting men. And political leaders (who usually start the wars in the first place) do their part by describing the bombing of cities as “defending freedom.”



In the modern world people are trained to avoid looking directly at the effects of violence they commit or sanction. If possible, the killing is delegated to specialists, who themselves are increasingly remote from their victims—as in the U.S. bombings of Iraq and Yugoslavia, where American casualties were nearly zero. Most of us don’t mind if our military kills people on the other side of the world; we feel no pain, even vicariously. We may even buy the official explanation that our bombs are “preventing another Holocaust.” It may seem otherwise to the Iraqis and Slavs on whose homes those bombs are falling.

But just as the news media refrain from showing us what those bombs actually do, they never show us what an abortion looks like. They even refuse to carry ads by abortion opponents, on grounds that pictures of slaughtered fetuses are in “bad taste.” They certainly are in bad taste; all atrocities are. But the media are willing to show some atrocities, as in the killing fields of Rwanda a few years ago. Since we’re forever debating abortion, why not let us see one? Why the blackout?

The answer, of course, is that the news media themselves are pro-abortion. They adopt the dishonest language of the pro-abortion side: pro-choice, fetus, terminate, and—my favorite—abortion provider (to make the abortionist sound like a humanitarian).

A few years ago NBC produced a sympathetic movie about a woman seeking an abortion—Norma McCorvey, the “Roe” of *Roe v. Wade*. But when Mrs. McCorvey later changed her mind and became an active opponent of abortion, did NBC do a sequel? Unimaginable.

We have to keep our guard up at all times against political language, especially in seemingly bland journalism, that is subtly infected with propagandistic purposes.



The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.

**Thomas Jefferson**

I’ve noticed that everyone who is for abortion has already been born.

**Ronald Reagan**

Sweeter even than to have had the joy of children of my own has it been for me to help bring about a better state of things for mothers generally, so that their unborn little ones could not be willed away from them.

**Susan B. Anthony**

## THE ECONOMY OF OUR SALVATION

By Father Panagiotēs Carras.

*This is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart will I inscribe them.*

[Heb 8:10].

† † †

When Adam was led into captivity, God did not cease to love mankind nor did He abandon the creation which was made in His Image and Likeness. Adam and Eve were wounded but not dead. They were outside of Paradise but not away from God. They were now in a captive land, not in their Father's house, but their Creator came searching for them so that they could be led back to the Kingdom of Heaven and become once more children of God.

Within Paradise Adam had been given the opportunity to become a son of God. God had made a Covenant or agreement with Adam. Our Heavenly Father would adopt Adam and make Him His Son when Adam would mature in his love for God. Adam on the other hand was to abide by a single commandment—not to eat of the fruit of the *Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil*. The *Tree* would be the symbol of this Covenant. Our Forefathers did not honour this Covenant and chose to go their own way.

The path which they took led them into a captivity from which they could not save themselves. Their Heavenly Father, however, came searching to find the lost sheep. The Will of God and His providence to lead Adam out of captivity is called the *Economy of Salvation*. The word *Economy* is derived from the Greek word *ekonomia* which literally means “looking after one's house”. The term *Economy of Salvation* is used by St. Irenaeus (Demonstration 47) and other holy Orthodox fathers and refers to everything that God has done to save us from Satan's captivity.

The *Economy of Salvation* began before Adam had fallen: *According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.* (Eph 1:4). Immediately after the Fall God imposed certain hardships on mankind so that he would have something to make him realize that he was a stranger in a foreign land. Along with these hardships God also promised Adam there would be an end to this captivity. *I will put an enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* (Gen 3:15). These are the words of our Lord as He cursed Satan. He speaks of the struggle between mankind and Satan, and how finally Satan's head will be crushed by our Lord and Saviour, the Seed of Eve.

The Old Testament records the mighty acts of God as He led mankind along the long road to *sonship*. Within the Old Testament we see God's wisdom, patience and love for us. Concerning the *Economy of Salvation*, St. Irenaeus tells us *inasmuch as God is invincible and long-suffering, He did indeed show Himself to be long-suffering in the matter of the correction of man and the probation of us all.* (Against Heresies, III, 23:1). In the Old Testament, the Prophets recorded the many ways that God sought to bring us closer to Him and the stubbornness of the human race which chose to remain under the captivity of Satan. In the days of Noah, our Heavenly Father again made a Covenant with mankind. In time this Covenant was also rejected by mankind and there was not one person in the whole world that loved God.

With the passage of time God appeared to Abraham who, not knowing God, nevertheless desired to find him. *God, having pity on him who alone quietly sought Him, appeared to Abraham, manifesting Himself through the Word as through a ray of light.* (St. Irenaeus, Demonstration, 24.) Abraham was instructed by God to take his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot and to leave their homeland and to go to the land of Caanan. Once again God made a Covenant with mankind. It was revealed to Abraham by the *Logos*, the Word of God, that if he and his descendants were faithful to God, then they would become the people of God. The sign that God chose for this Covenant was circumcision. The new nation, the Hebrews, who at this time became the Chosen People of God were circumcised to show they accepted this Covenant.

Among all the inhabitants of the world only the Hebrew people, the descendants of Abraham, knew God. All other nations worshipped demons. God made a Covenant and founded the nation from which our Lord would arise: *I will establish My Covenant between Me and thee... and thy seed after thee, to their generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be Thy God, and the God of Thy seed after thee.* (Gen 17:2,7).

With the passing of generations, the Hebrew people lost much of the faith that they had in God and the Lord brought forth another Covenant to strengthen the faith of the Israelites. This was the Covenant of the Hebrew Pascha or Passover. The sign for this Covenant was the Law of God which was given to Moses. The Mosaic Law revealed to them how sin alienated them from God but was powerless to save them from the captivity of Satan. The Hebrew people entered into a new stage of the *Economy of Salvation*: the period of the law. St. Paul tells us that Satan and death which kept mankind separated from God was now exposed for what it is. *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not*



sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression (Rom 5:14). Commenting on this, St. Irenaeus tells us: *The law coming, which was given by Moses, and testifying of sin, that it is a sinner, did truly take away death's kingdom, showing that he was no king, but a robber ... a murderer.* God was leading mankind, step by step, to the day when Adam's children would be able to become children of God.

St. Paul tells us that the Hebrew nation during the period of the Old Testament, i.e., Covenant, was like a child being guided by his tutor until the day would come when he would no longer need a guardian: *Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.* (Gal 4:1-2). God in His wisdom provided the Israelites of old both with restrictions and instruction in order to help them in their struggle to remain faithful to the Covenant of the first Pascha.

The restrictions which were placed upon them had the purpose of keeping them from worshipping false gods or living an ungodly life and thus abandoning God. The Law of Moses was given to the Hebrew nation to guard them from wandering away from their Heavenly Father. It was not able to bring mankind to *sonship*, but it served to preserve the Israelites from being completely under the rule of Satan. *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by which we draw nigh unto God.* (Heb 7:19). Faithfulness to the Law of God was what the Lord required from His people. If the Covenant with God were to be maintained, it could be accomplished only through the keeping of the Law.

The Israelites knew God through His mighty acts and the Old Testament is a record of the Acts of God which the Israelites transmitted from generation to generation. For the Hebrew people, God was a living God Who made himself known to His Chosen people. Throughout their history God was with them, protecting them and guiding them through every adversity. Even when Jerusalem was destroyed and they were led captives into Babylon, the Covenant between the Lord God and His Chosen people was maintained. The holy Prophet Daniel and the three youths would not worship another God but steadfastly kept all of the Lord's commandments and in this way remained faithful to the Covenant which God had made with their fathers.

The saints of the Old Testament were not faithful to God only because they had seen the acts of God but more so because it had been revealed to them that the day would come when the Lord would establish a new Covenant, the Covenant of *Adoption*. The expectations of the Saints of old Israel are expressed by Prophet Jeremiah: *Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a New Covenant, not like the Covenant which I made with their fathers... This is the Covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: putting my*

*laws into their mind, I will also write them on their heart; and I will be a God to them. And they shall be a people to me. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow-citizen and everyone his brother saying, now the Lord; because they will know me.* (Jer 31:31-34). The Lord God gave the Hebrew people His laws to protect them from falling away but he also gave them His holy Prophets so that they would prepare themselves for the coming of the New Covenant. The Israelites would fall away many times but God always preserved a faithful remnant who were true Israelites: *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.* (Rom 9:6). It was to these faithful Israelites, *to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises* (Rom 9:4).

The Theotokos and the first Christians were the true Israelites who awaited the *Day of the Lord*. (Joel 2:11, Mal 3:1-2). They understood the prophecies of the Old Testament which foretold the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Son of God became man the teachings of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament became evident. Throughout the books of the New Testament we are constantly reminded that everything which our Lord and Saviour enacted was *according to the Prophets*. (Lk 24:27, 1 Cor 15:3-5). Throughout the Old Testament we can find Prophecies which refer to the Salvific Acts of our Lord and Saviour. Our Lord's *birth from a Virgin* was foretold by Prophet Isaiah (Isa 7:14). The *curing of many illnesses* was similarly foreseen (Isa 61:1-2). Our Saviour's *entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey* (Zech 9:9), *His suffering* (Isa 50:6), the *parting of His garments* (Pss 22:8), the *Crucifixion* (Pss 69:4, 21, Isa 53:3-12), the *power of the Holy Cross over Satan* (St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue 91:112, Exo 17:11), the *Resurrection* (Pss 3:6), the *Ascension* (Pss 23:7) were all known by the Prophets.

The saints of the Old Covenant knew that one day the Son of God would become man and as Emmanuel (*God is with us*—Isa 7:14, 8:8-10) would be with His people as a father is with his children. The whole of the Old Testament looks towards the day of the New Covenant.



**B**lessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Everything we do, our every objective, must be undertaken for the sake of this purity of heart. This is why we take on loneliness, fasting, vigils, work, nakedness. For this we must practice the reading of the Scripture, together with all the other virtuous activities, and we do so to trap and to hold our hearts free of the harm of every dangerous passion and in order to rise step by step to the high point of love.

St. John Cassian (+435)

## OUR HOLY MOTHER

By His Eminence Metropolitan Seraphim of Kastoria, translated by John Sanidopoulos.

As of today we find ourselves once again to be in the month of August. This is the last month of our ecclesiastical year, since from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, the beginning of the Indiction, a new ecclesiastical year begins.

Since the glorious years of Byzantium this month has been dedicated to the Honorable Cross, hence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August we celebrate the Procession of the Honorable Cross. The Honorable Cross, the Honorable Wood, exited the Sacred Palace where it was kept and it arrived at the Great Church from where for fifteen consecutive days it was brought throughout the entire City for the sanctification of the faithful.

All these days there are held various Sacred Services and Vigils, as well as the Service of the Sanctification of the Holy Water, *baptizing the Honorable Wood in the sacred water*, in order for the people to be protected from infectious diseases and epidemics which favor the heatwave of August. Even the fast is dedicated to the Honorable Cross. Coupled with the prayers of our Orthodox Church, it is a ladder of communication with God and seeking divine mercy. *Heavenly gifts are received with fasting, vigils and prayer.* These are the methods always used by our Church, and today in particular we need to use them in order to protect ourselves from demonic influence, but also as a measure by which we can capture the grace of God.

However, the Honorable Cross was stolen by the Crusaders, like so many other relics, and brought to the West. For this reason the litany of the Honorable Cross stopped, and this month was then dedicated to the person of the Panaghia, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August to almost the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, since we celebrate the eminent Marian feast of the Dormition on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Hence, the person of the Panaghia monopolizes the thoughts of all Orthodox who could be found in all the corners of the earth this month.

The mother of the world celebrates. The mother who understands, who listens and who rapidly obeys, like the *Gorgypikoos* (She Who is Quick to Hear) as she named herself at Docheiariou Monastery on the Holy Mountain. The mother who covers her children, who wipes the tears of tragedy and suffering. The mother who calms the hearts from the storms of life, and who pacifies the mind, as St. Theodore the Studite will write and chant. The mother who as soon

as one stands opposite her icon she fills with joy, which is why they chant together with the sacred hymnographer: *In hymns we thank, glorify and praise your immeasurable mercy and great strength, confessing to all.* The mother who is the protector of all Christians. *“The protection of Christians, Virgin Mother of the Lord.”*

To our mother. To the mother of the world we leave our hope and our endurance always, especially in these difficult days our homeland is going through. To our mother we open our heart, as the Venerable Sophia of Kleisoura would say.

We supplicate to the Panaghia with the sacred troparia of our Church, as Elder Paisios advised, with the purpose of guiding us to her Son and our God. And, our Panaghia is supplicated today by persons whom we do not give any importance to, who repeat daily thousands of times the

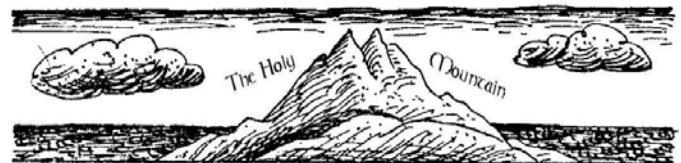
archangelic greeting of *Rejoice, Theotokos and Virgin.*

Along with the entire choir of Saints in the Kingdom of Heaven, together with those also who live today in the trenches of life and with the prayers of those who support the world, we also send her our supplications:

For our Church, for our nation, for the ill who suffer, for our needy brethren, for those battered by the scourges of our times, for the blood being spilled in Syria, Egypt, and in other countries, for every human soul which is to be found with every need.

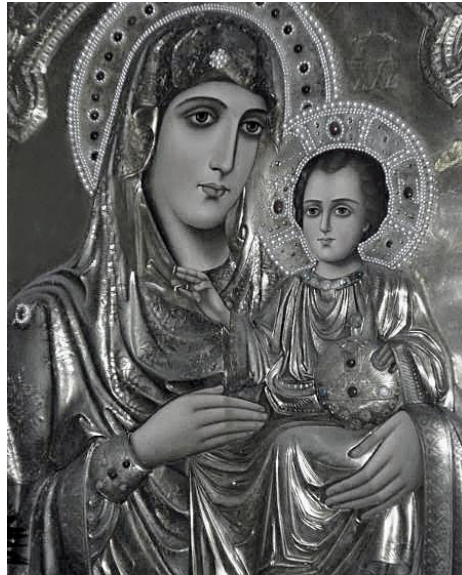
May the Panaghia speak to the hearts of the powerful of the earth. May she speak to all of our hearts. May she teach us humility in order to find our lost self. May she help us to regain again that which we lost, that is, our sustenance together with our life-providing and life-bearing Holy Tradition.

My Panaghia, my joy, my consolation, my hope, my breath, save us from every circumstance.



What could I give our Most Holy Sovereign Lady for coming to me and bringing enlightenment, instead of turning away in loathing from my sin? I did not behold Her with my eyes but the Holy Spirit gave me to know Her through Her words, which were filled with grace, and my spirit rejoices and my soul leaps to Her in love, so that the mere invocation of Her name is sweet to my heart.

**Saint Silouan of Mount Athos**



## Ὁ Μέγας Ὑποκριτής

Τοῦ πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου π. Διονυσίου Τάτση, «Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος», 30 Μαΐου, 2014.



**Κ**οινή διαπίστωση εἶναι ὅτι οἱ αἰρετικοὶ ἐπιλέγουν τὴν ὑποκρισία προκειμένου νὰ ἐπηρεάζουν εὐκολώτερα τοὺς καλοπροαίρετους καὶ ἀγαθοὺς. Μὲ τὸ διαφορετικὸ τοὺς πρόσωπο ἐμφανίζουν τὸ μαῦρο ὡς ἄσπρο καὶ προσπαθοῦν νὰ σπείρουν τὸ σπόρο τῆς ἀπώλειας

στὶς ψυχὲς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Ἰδιαίτερα προσφιλὴς εἶναι ἡ τακτικὴ αὐτὴ καὶ στὸν αἰρετικὸ Πάπα, ὁ ὁποῖος ἐμφανίζεται στὰ πλήθη τοῦ λαοῦ ὡς ὁ μοναδικὸς ἐκπρόσωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὅσο τὰ πλήθη τὸν χειροκροτοῦν τόσο αὐτὸς γίνεται θρασύτερος καὶ αὐξάνει τὴν αἰρετικὴ του πλάνη. Νομίζει ὅτι τὰ πλήθη ποὺ τὸν ἐπευφημοῦν τὸν ἐλευθερώνουν ἀπὸ τὴ μεγάλη εὐθύνη, ποὺ ἔχει γιὰ τὴ διαστροφή τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ γιὰ τὰ πολιτικὰ ἐγκλήματα, ποὺ διέπραξε ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνες.

Ἡ πλάνη δὲν συνειδητοποιεῖται, ὅταν βρισκόμαστε μέσα στὴν κοσμικὴ δόξα καὶ συγχέουμε τὴν πίστη μὲ τὴν ἐξουσία. Ὅλοι μιλοῦν γιὰ τὸν Πάπα, ποὺ ἔχει δύναμη καὶ ὡς ἀρχηγὸς πολλῶν ἑκατομμυρίων χριστιανῶν μπορεῖ νὰ ἐπηρεάσει καταστάσεις καὶ ὄχι ὡς ἓνα Ἐπίσκοπο τοῦ Θεοῦ, ποὺ ὀδηγεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους στὴ σωτηρία. Τὰ πλήθη τοῦ λαοῦ παρασύρονται στὴν προσωπολατρία καὶ παραμένουν στὴν πλάνη καὶ τὴν αἵρεση. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἡ δυνατότητα πιά, ἀνθρωπίνως πάντα, νὰ ἀλλάξουν τὰ πράγματα καὶ νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν οἱ αἰρετικοὶ στὴ Μία, Ἁγία, Καθολικὴ καὶ Ἀποστολικὴ Ἐκκλησία, ἐνῶ εἶναι πολὺ πιθανὸ οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας νὰ ὀδηγηθοῦν στὴν πλάνη καὶ νὰ ὑποδουλωθοῦν στὸν Πάπα.

Ἦδη ἔχουν γίνει πολλὰ βήματα προσέγγισης καὶ ἀναγνωρίζεται ὁ Πάπας ὡς ἀδελφός, γίνονται συμπροσευχὲς καὶ κοινὲς ἐκδηλώσεις, γιὰ νὰ ἐμφανιστεῖ ἡ παπικὴ «ἐκκλησία» ἰσότιμη μὲ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη. Καὶ μετὰ τὸ κοινὸ ποτήριο, δηλαδὴ ἡ ἔνωση τῆς Ἀληθείας μὲ τὴν αἵρεση. Ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ τελευταῖα βήματα θὰ γίνουν χωρὶς ἰδιαίτερο θόρυβο, γιὰ νὰ μὴ προκαλέσουν τοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους. Σιγά-σιγά, σὲ περιοχὲς ὅπου οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι εἶναι λίγοι καὶ ἀντιμετωπίζουν διάφορα προβλήματα. Ἐκεῖ κυριαρχεῖ στοὺς ἀνθρώπους τὸ κοσμικὸ φρόνημα,

τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ συμβιβασμοῦ καὶ λείπει παντελῶς ἡ μετὰ παρηρησίας ὁμολογία τῆς πίστεως.

Μὲ τὸν τρόπο αὐτὸ θὰ «ἐπιτευχθεῖ» ἡ ἔνωση τῶν «ἐκκλησιῶν» καὶ τὰ δεινὰ θὰ πολλαπλασιαστοῦν. Θὰ βρεθοῦν καὶ πολλοὶ Ὁρθόδοξοι ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν κιβωτὸ τῆς σωτηρίας, γιὰ τὴν ἀκολουθήσουν τοὺς οἰκουμενιστὲς καὶ ἐνωτικoὺς. Βέβαια, ἡ Ἐκκλησία δὲν θὰ πληγεῖ. Πολλὰ μέλη τῆς ὁμοῦ θὰ βρεθοῦν μακριὰ τῆς καὶ θὰ χάσουν τὸν πνευματικὸ τους προσανατολισμό.

Εἶναι μεγάλη ἀνάγκη νὰ ἀφυπνιστοῦν πνευματικὰ οἱ πιστοὶ καὶ νὰ ἀνησυχῆσουν γιὰ ὅσα ἀπεργάζονται οἱ οἰκουμενιστὲς εἰς βάρος τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας. Νὰ διαφωνήσουν δημοσίως καὶ νὰ ἀρνηθοῦν τὶς ἐνέργειες καὶ ἐκδηλώσεις τους καὶ νὰ ὁμολογήσουν τὴν πίστη τους. Καμία ἐμπιστοσύνη πιά στοὺς οἰκουμενιστὲς καὶ ἄς εἶναι μεγαλόσχημοι κληρικοί. Στὰ θέματα τῆς πίστεως πρέπει νὰ εἶμαστε καθαρὸι καὶ σταθεροί. Δὲν διαπραγματευόμαστε τὴν πίστη μας, οὔτε φυσικὰ τὴ νοθεύουμε μὲ νεώτερες θεολογικὲς ἀναλύσεις, ποὺ κάνουν μερικοὶ θεωρητικοὶ τῆς οἰκουμενιστικῆς παραφροσύνης.



**Τ**ὸ Βατικανὸν εἶναι ἡ «Ἐκκλησία» τῶν μεγάλων πλανῶν καὶ τῶν ἐσκεμμένων αἱρέσεων. Ἔχουν τόσο διαστρέψει τὴν ἀμώμητον Θρησκείαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὥστε τὴν ἔχουν καταστήσει ἀγνώριστον...

Δὲν ὑπάρχει, δι' ἐμὲ τοῦλάχιστον, οὐδεμία ἀμφιβολία, ὅτι ἡ μοναδικὴ ἐλπίς τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία. Καθολικισμὸς καὶ Προτεσταντισμὸς ὁμοῦ, ἀποτελοῦν τὴν πλήρη διαστροφήν τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ, τὸν ὁποῖον ἀλώβητον διατηρεῖ ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία.

**Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς Μιχαὴλ (+1958)**

[Διετέλεσε Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀμερικῆς κατὰ τα ἐτῆ 1949-1958]



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

## Έμφανίσεις και Θαύματα της Παναγίας ανά τους Αιώνες

Από διάφορες Έλληνορθόδοξες ιστοσελίδες.

**Ο**ί έμφανίσεις και οί θαυματουργικές έπεμβάσεις τής Παναγίας σέ όλες τες Όρθόδοξες Χριστιανικές χώρες είναι κυριολεκτικά άναρίθμητες. Εικόνες πού δακρύζουν, μυροβλύζουν ή αίμορραγούν, θεραπείες, έμφανίσεις σέ άγιους, αλλά και σέ άλλοθρησκους, καθώς και σωτηρία όλόκληρων πόλεων από έπιδημίες ή έπιδρομές βαρβάρων.

Μία από τες πιο γνωστές έπεμβάσεις τής Θεοτόκου είναι ή θαλασσοταραχή πού κατέστρεψε το στόλο των Άβάρων το 626 μ.Χ., σώζοντας την πολιορκημένη Κωνσταντινούπολη. Τότε ό λαός τής Πόλης συγκεντρώθηκε στό ναό τής Παναγίας των Βλαχερνών και έψαλε όρθιος τόν Ακάθιστο Όγμο, δηλαδή τούς γνωστούς μας «Χαιρετισμούς». Οί Χαιρετισμοί τής Παναγίας, ένα από τά σημαντικότερα ποιήματα πού γράφτηκαν ποτέ στην Έλληνική γλώσσα, φαίνεται ότι ύπηρχαν από πριν. Όμως εκείνη τή νύχτα γράφτηκε τó πασίγνωστο τροπάριο «Τή Όπερμάχω», ως εύχαριστία πρòς τή Θεοτόκο.

Παρόμοιο γεγονός συνέβη το 861 μ.Χ., όταν οί Ρώσοι, ειδωλολάτρες άκόμη, έπιτέθηκαν στην Κωνσταντινούπολη. Ό πατριάρχης άγιος Φώτιος ό Μέγας, μαζί με όλο το λαό, λιτάνευσε τήν τιμία έσθήτα τής Θεοτόκου και κατόπιν τήν έριξε στη θάλασσα· και ένώ έπικρατούσε γαλήνη, ξαφνικά ξέσπασε φοβερή τρικυμία και καταπόντισε σχεδόν όλα τα πλοία των έχθρων. Τό γεγονός αυτό όδήγησε τόν άρχηγό των Ρώσων Διη τόν Όσκόλδ, και πλήθος του λαού του να προσέλθουν στόν Χριστιανισμό.

Άνάλογο γεγονός έχουμε στη Φολέγανδρο, όπου, τήν Πρωτομαγιά του 1790, μετά από λιτάνευση τής εικόνας τής Παναγίας, θαλασσοταραχή βυθισε 18 πειρατικά πλοία των Άλγερινών.

Στή Ρωσία (όπου υπάρχουν πάρα πολλές ιστορικές και θαυματουργές εικόνες τής Θεοτόκου), τó 1395, όταν εισέβαλλε ό Ταμερλάνος, έφεραν σέ χρόνο ρεκόρ τήν εικόνα της Παναγίας του Βλαντιμίρ στη Μόσχα, όπου τήν προϋπάντησε όλος ό λαός τής Μόσχας άνδρες, γυναίκες και παιδιά. Όλοι προσευχόταν με δάκρυα. Τότε ή Παναγία έμφανίστηκε σέ όνειρο του Ταμερλάνου, λουσιμένη στό φώς, συνοδευόμενη από άγγέλους με πύρινα σπαθιά. Ό Ταμερλάνος, αφού συμβουλευτήκε τούς σοφούς Μογγόλους και έμαθε ότι

αυτή ή γυναίκα ήταν ή Παναγία, ύποχώρησε. Αυτό τó όνειρο είναι καταγεγραμμένο όχι μόνο στα παλαιά ρωσικά χρονικά αλλά και στα ταταρικά χρονικά. Σέ άνάμνηση του γεγονότος ιδρύθηκε στη Μόσχα ή μονή Σρετένσκι (Προϋπάντηση).

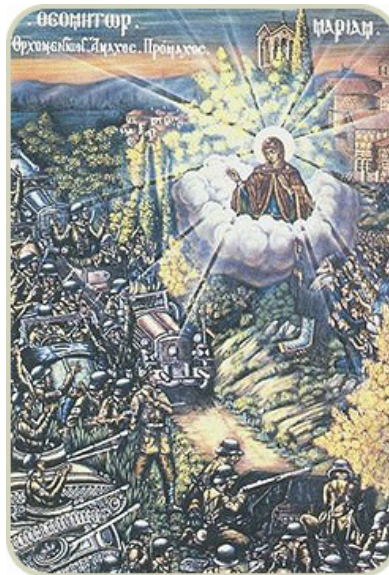
Κατά τόν 20<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα, έχουμε μία σειρά έντυπωσιακών έμφανίσεων τής Παναγίας στούς Έλληνες στρατιώτες, πού πολεμούσαν στό Άλβανικό μέτωπο. Σώζεται μάλιστα έπίσημη άναφορά του άνθυπασπιστή Νικολάου Γκάτζαρου, με ήμερομηνία 3 Μαρτίου 1941, πού περιγράφει έμφάνιση και όμιλία τής Παναγίας πρòς αυτόν.

Στό άρθρο του π. Δημ. Άθανασίου «Άγνωστες μαρτυρίες για τες έμφανίσεις τής Παναγίας στα βουνά τής Πίνδου στόν πόλεμο του 1940», στό ιστολόγιο «Πνευματικά Θησαυρίσματα», διαβάζουμε διάφορες σχετικές μαρτυρίες, καθώς και ότι ο ζωγράφος Γιάννης Τσαρούχης ζωγραφισε πάνω στό καπάκι

ένος κιβωτίου ρέγγας τήν Παναγία τής Νίκης, ή όποία απέκτησε τή φήμη ότι είναι θαυματουργή. «Σέ έξαλλη θρησκευτική έκσταση άπαιτούσαν (ένν. οί Έλληνες στρατιώτες από τήν Άρτα) ή θαυματουργή εικόνα να μείνει ένα βράδυ τουλάχιστον στην κατασκήνωσή τους. Άκουγες φωνές από παντού. Όλοι οί στρατιώτες φωνάζανε: “Η Παρθένα, ή Παρθένα. Να τήν αφήσετε μία βραδιά.” Έκείνη τήν ώρα βάρεσε συναγεμός, πέσαμε μπρούμυτα σύμφωνα με τες διαταγές πού είχαμε. Κανένας Άρτινός δέν έκανε τó ίδιο. “Βρò συνάδελφε”, μου είπε ένας, “βαστάς τήν Παρθένα και φοβάσαι;”».

Μετά τó τέλος του Β΄ Παγκοσμίου πολέμου, άναγνωρίστηκε ή σπουδαιότητα των θαυματουργών έπεμβάσεων τής Παναγίας. Για τó λόγο αυτό ή γιορτή τής Άγίας Σκέπης, πού είχε καθιερωθεί να γιορτάζεται πρòς τιμήν τής Παναγίας τήν 1<sup>η</sup> Οκτωβρίου, μεταφέρθηκε από τó 1952 στις 28 Οκτωβρίου για να ένθυμιούνται όλοι τη θαυματουργή βοήθειά της στη δυσκολότερη, ίσως, περίοδο του Έλληνικού έθνους».

Είναι γνωστό—και τó καταγράφει σε άρθρο του και ό ποιητής Ντίνος Χριστιανόπουλος—ότι στη Θεσσαλονίκη, κατά τή διάρκεια των γερμανικών βομβαρδισμών, στα τζάμια των σπιτιών σχηματιζόταν ή εικόνα τής Παναγίας: «Ξαφνικά, έμφανίστηκαν σέ καμιά δεκαριά σημεία, στό κέντρο τής πόλης (Θεσσαλονίκης), εικόνες τής Παναγίας στα τζάμια διαφόρων μαγαζιών. Στην αρχή μάς τó λέγαν και δέν τó πιστεύαμε. Οί Παναγίες πού έμφανίστηκαν στα



τζάμια δὲν ἦταν ζωγραφισμένες, ἀλλὰ ἀχειροποίητες. Ἡ εἰκόνα σχηματιζόταν στὸ ἐσωτερικὸ τοῦ τζαμιοῦ, μέσα δηλαδή στὴν ὕλη τοῦ γυαλιοῦ, δὲν ἦταν οὔτε ἀπὸ τὴν ἔξω μεριά οὔτε ἀπὸ τὴν μέσα. Καὶ ἦταν καὶ χρωματισμένη, ἀλλὰ μὲ ἄυλα καὶ ἀνεξίτηλα χρώματα. Κάποτε πῆγα κι ἐγὼ καὶ ἔτσι ἀξιώθηκα νὰ δῶ τὴν Παναγία ἀπὸ κοντά. Ἔπιανε τὸ τζάμι καὶ δὲν ἔπιανε τίποτα. Ἀλλὰ ἡ εἰκόνα ὑπῆρχε. Δὲν κάλυπτε ὅλη τὴν ἐπιφάνεια τοῦ τζαμιοῦ, ἀλλὰ μόνο τὸ κέντρο του. Τὰ χρώματα ἦταν πολὺ ἄυλα καὶ ἀχνά. Ὁ κόσμος προσκυνοῦσε καὶ ἀσπάζονταν τὴν ἀχειροποίητη εἰκόνα στὸ τζάμι, μερικοὶ ἄναβαν καὶ κἀνα κερὶ ποὺ ἔφερναν μαζί τους, ἀλλὰ κανεὶς δὲν ἔδινε λεφτά. Καὶ ἄλλωστε ποῦ νὰ τὰ δώσει καὶ γιατί; Ἦταν πραγματικὰ μία ἀπὸ τὶς συγκινητικότερες στιγμὲς τοῦ Ἑλληνοϊταλικοῦ πολέμου».

Τὸ περιστάτικὸ συνέβη καὶ στὴν Ἀταλάντη Φθιώτιδος τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Ἑμφύλιου Πολέμου (1945-1949). Ἐξάλλου, στὶς 10 Σεπτεμβρίου 1943 μία δύναμη ναζιστικῶν τεθωρακισμένων σταμάτησε ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸν Ὀρχομενὸ Βοιωτίας, ἀδυνατώντας νὰ προχωρήσει γιὰ νὰ καταστρέψει τὸ χωριό. Ὁ Γερμανὸς διοικητὴς τους, ὀνόματι Ὅφμαν, εἶδε σὲ ὄραμα τὴ μορφὴ τῆς Παναγίας καὶ ὄχι μόνο ἔδωσε διαταγὴ νὰ ἀνασταλεῖ ἡ καταστροφὴ, ἀλλὰ καὶ χρηματοδότησε τὴν πρώτη ἀπεικόνιση τοῦ θαύματος, μὲ τὴ Θεοτόκο νὰ σταματᾷ τὰ γερμανικὰ τάνκς. Οἱ κάτοικοι τοῦ Ὀρχομενοῦ τοποθέτησαν ἓνα μνημεῖο στὸ σημεῖο τοῦ θαύματος, ἐνῶ κάθε χρόνο, ὅσο τοῦ ἐπέτρεπε ἡ ἡλικία του, ὁ Ὅφμαν ἐρχοταν ἀπὸ τὴ Γερμανία καὶ παρευρισκόταν στὸν ἑορτασμό, κατὰ τὴν ἐπέτειο τοῦ γεγονότος.

Οἱ ἐμφανίσεις τῆς Παναγίας σὲ ἁγίους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπλοὺς ἀνθρώπους, εἶναι ἐπισης ἀναρίθμητες. Ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὶς ἐμφανίσεις Τῆς στὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος, ἃς ἀναφερθοῦμε στὸ περιφημὸ ὄραμα τῆς Ἁγίας Σκέπης, ποὺ εἶδε ὁ ἅγιος Ἀνδρέας ὁ διὰ Χριστὸν Σαλός, στὸ ναὸ τῆς Παναγίας τῶν Βλαχερνῶν: ἡ Παναγία σκέπαζε ἀπὸ ψηλά τὸ λαό, προστατεύοντάς τον, μ' ἓνα συμβολικὸ τεράστιο ὕφασμα. Ἀπὸ τὸ ὄραμα αὐτό, πολὺ ἀργότερα, καθιερώθηκε ἡ ἑορτὴ τῆς Ἁγίας Σκέπης (1 Ὀκτωβρίου), ξεκινώντας ἀπὸ τὴ Ρωσία, ἐνῶ στὴν Ἑλλάδα, ὅπως γράφουμε παραπάνω, μεταφέρθηκε στὶς 28 Ὀκτωβρίου πρὸς τιμὴν τῶν ἐμφανίσεων τῆς Παναγίας στὸ μέτωπο.

Μία πολὺ γνωστὴ ἐμφάνιση τῆς Παναγίας ἐπίσης εἶναι στὸ μεγάλο θαυματουργὸ ἅγιο τῶν Ρωσικῶν δασῶν, Σεραφεῖμ τοῦ Σάρωφ (†1833), ὁ ὁποῖος εἶχε δεῖ τὴ Θεοτόκο ἀρκετὲς φορὲς. Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐφανίστηκε μέσα σὲ ὑπέρολαμπρο φῶς καὶ εὐωδία, συνοδευόμενη ἀπὸ δύο ἀγγέλους, τὸν ἅγιο Ἰωάννη τὸν Πρόδρομο, τὸν ἅγιο Ἰωάννη τὸ Θεολόγο καὶ 12 ἅγιες (Παρθενομάρτυρες). Τὸ ὄραμα εἶδε ἔκπληκτη καὶ ἡ μοναχὴ Εὐπραξία, πνευματικὴ θυγατέρα τοῦ ἁγίου, στὴν ὁποία ἡ Παναγία

εἶπε: «Μαρτύριο δὲν εἶναι μόνο ἡ θυσία τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλὰ κι ὁ πόνος ποὺ ὑποφέρει ἡ ψυχὴ γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Κυρίου». Ὅταν τελείωσε τὸ ὄραμα, ποὺ κράτησε 4 ὥρες, ὁ ἅγιος εἶπε στὴν Εὐπραξία πὼς ἦταν ἡ 12<sup>η</sup> φορὰ ποὺ ἔβλεπε τὴ Θεοτόκο.

Ἀλλὰ καὶ στὸ μεγαλομάρτυρα τῶν ἀθεϊστικῶν φυλακῶν τῆς Ρουμανίας Ἅγιο Βαλέριο Γκαφένκου (†1952) ἐφανίστηκε ἡ Παναγία, τὸν στήριξε στὸ μαρτύριό του καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Εγὼ εἶμαι ἡ ἀγάπη σου! Νὰ μὴ φοβάσαι! Νὰ μὴ ἀμφιβάλλεις! Ἡ νίκη θὰ εἶναι τοῦ Υἱοῦ μου! Αὐτὸς ἀγίασε τώρα αὐτὸ τὸν τόπο καὶ τὸν ἐτοίμασε γιὰ ὅσα θὰ γίνουν στὸ μέλλον. Οἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ σκότους ἀυξάνουν καὶ ἀκόμη θὰ φοβίζουν τὸν κόσμο, ἀλλὰ θὰ ἀφανιστοῦν. Ὁ Υἱός μου περιμένει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν στὴν πίστη. Σήμερα οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ σκότους εἶναι πιδ ἀτρόμητοι ἀπὸ τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός. Ἔστω κι ἂν σᾶς φαίνεται ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει πιά πίστη στὴ γῆ, νὰ ξέρετε ὅτι ἡ ἀπολύτρωση θὰ ἔλθει, ἀλλὰ μὲ φωτιὰ καὶ ἐμπρησμούς. Ὁ κόσμος πρέπει ἀκόμη νὰ ὑποφέρει. Ἐδῶ, ὅμως, ὑπάρχει πολλὴ πίστη καὶ ἤρθα νὰ σᾶς ἐνθαρρύνω. Κρατεῖτε τὴν ὁμολογία σας. Ὁ κόσμος ἀνήκει στὸν Χριστό!»

Να ἀναφέρουμε τέλος ὅτι τὸν 8<sup>ο</sup> αἰῶνα μ.Χ., τὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς Εἰκονομαχίας, ὁ χαλίφης τῆς Δαμασκοῦ, παρακινημένος ἀπὸ τὸν εἰκονομάχο αὐτοκράτορα Λέοντα Γ', ἔκοψε τὸ χέρι τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννη τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ, ποὺ ἔγραφε ὑπὲρ τῆς τιμῆς (ὄχι λατρείας) τῶν ἱερῶν εἰκόνων. Ὁ ἅγιος τοποθέτησε τὸ κομμένο του χέρι στὴ θέση του καὶ προσευχήθηκε ὅλη τὴ νύχτα μπροστὰ στὴν εἰκόνα τῆς Θεοτόκου. Τὸ πρῶτὸ τὸ χέρι εἶχε κολλήσει καὶ θεραπευτεῖ. Τότε ὁ ἅγιος κατασκεύασε τὴν περίφημη εἰκόνα τῆς Παναγίας Τριχερούσας, στὴν ὁποία τὸ τρίτο χέρι σημαίνει τὸ δικό του κομμένο καὶ ἀποκαταστημένο χέρι.

Ὅταν ὁ ἅγιος κοιμήθηκε, ὡς μοναχὸς στὴ μονὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Σάββα (στὴν Παλαιστίνη), ἄφησε ἐντολὴ νὰ δοθεῖ ἡ εἰκόνα στὸν πρῶτο ἐπίσκοπο μὲ τὸ ὄνομα Σάββας ποὺ θὰ ἐπισκεπτόταν τὸ μοναστήρι. Αὐτὸς ἦταν ὁ ἅγιος Σάββας, πρῶν ἡγούμενος καὶ μέγας πνευματικὸς πατέρας τῆς Σερβίας, γύρω στὸ 1200 μ.Χ.! Ὁ ἅγιος πῆρε τὴν εἰκόνα στὴ Σερβία. Ὅμως ἀργότερα, σὲ ἐποχὴ ταραχῶν, γιὰ νὰ τὴν προστατεύσουν, τὴ φόρτωσαν σ' ἓνα γαϊδουράκι καὶ τὸ ἄφησαν ἐλεύθερο. Ἐκεῖνο περπάτησε πολλὰ χιλιόμετρα κι ἔφτασε στὸ σέρβικο μοναστήρι τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὅρους, στὴ μονὴ Χιλανδαρίου. Ἐκεῖ φυλάχτηκε ἡ εἰκόνα. Τέλη τοῦ 18<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνα, σημειώθηκε στὴ μονὴ διχογνωμία γιὰ τὴν ἐκλογή νέου ἡγουμένου. Τότε ἡ εἰκόνα ἔφυγε ἀπὸ τὸ Ἱερό, ὅπου βρισκόταν, καὶ πετάχτηκε στὴ θέση τοῦ ἡγουμένου. Ἔτσι, ἡ μονὴ Χιλανδαρίου εἶχε ὡς ἡγούμενο τὴν Παναγία τὴν Τριχερούσα. Νέος ἡγούμενος ἐκλέχτηκε μόλις τὸ 1991.

## Τὸ Πάρισμο τῆς Πόλης—Μέρος 2ον

Φώτης Κόντογλου.



### Τὸ Κούρσεμα τῆς Πόλης...

Σὰν πατήθηκε πιά ἡ πόρτα τοῦ Ῥωμανοῦ καὶ σκοτώθηκε ὁ βασιλιάς, οἱ Τοῦρκοι γιουργιάρανε μέσα στὴν Πόλη σὰν τ' ἀγριεμένο ξεροπόταμο ποῦ

κατεβαίνει στενεμένο ἀνάμεσα στ' ἀψηλὰ βράχια, ὕστερ' ἀπὸ νεροποντή.

Δὲ μπαίνανε ἑκατὸ-ἑκατό, μηδὲ διακόσιοι, μὰ χιλιάδα ἀπάνω στὴ χιλιάδα. Τέτοια ἦταν ἡ μανία τους μὴ δὲν προφτάξουνε νὰ κουρσέσουνε, ποῦ ἀπ' τὸ στρίμωγμα λαβωνόντανε συναμεταξύ τους καὶ πολλοὶ σκάσανε ποδοπατημένοι ἀπ' τοὺς δικούς τους. Καὶ σὰ μπαίνανε μέσα στὸ κάστρο, σκορπίζανε ἄλλος ἐδῶ, ἄλλος ἐκεῖ, κοπάδια-κοπάδια, σφάζοντας ὅποιον βρῖσκανε μπροστά τους, εἴτε γυναῖκα, εἴτε παιδί, εἴτε ἄντρα.

Τὸ μεγάλο μακελεῖο βάσταξε ἀπ' τὴν ἀνατολὴ τοῦ ἡλίου ἴσαμε τὸ μεσημέρι. Πολλοὶ χριστιανοὶ κρυφτήκανε μέσα σὲ λαγούμια καὶ σὲ σπηλιές κ' ὕστερά τους βρήκανε καὶ τοὺς σκλαβώσανε.

Φτάνοντας οἱ Τοῦρκοι στὴν πλατεία, ἀνεβήκανε στὸν πύργο καὶ κατεβάσανε τὴ βυζαντινὴ σημαία καὶ τὴ σημαία τ' ἀγίου Μάρκου καὶ ἰσάρανε στὸν τόπο τους τὸ σαντάρδο τοῦ σουλτάνου. Τὰ κάστρα ἀπὸ τὴ μιὰν ἄκρη ἴσαμε τὴν ἄλλη πέσανε στὰ χέρια τοῦ Τοῦρκου.

Μονάχα οἱ Κρητικοί, ποῦ βρισκότανε μέσα στοὺς πύργους τοῦ Λέοντα καὶ τοῦ Βασιλείου, βαστήξανε τὸν πόλεμο ἴσαμε τὸ μεσημέρι. Ὁ σουλτὰν Μεμέτης σὰν τᾶκουσε θαύμασε τὴν παλληκαριά τους καὶ τοὺς ἄφησε νὰ φύγουνε στὴν πατρίδα τους, παίρνοντας μαζί τους ὅ,τι εἶχανε ἀπάνω τους.

Ὅπως εἶπα πρωτύτερα, πολλὸς κόσμος ἔτρεξε στὴ θάλασσα νὰ γλυτώσῃ, μὰ ἔπεσε μαζεμένος στὰ καράβια καὶ πολλὰ βουλιάσανε καὶ πνιγήκανε πολλὸς λαός. Οἱ πορτιέρηδες, βλέποντας τὸν κόσμο ποῦ ὠρμούσε ὄξ' ἀπὸ τὶς πόρτες, θυμηθήκανε ἓνα παλιὸ ρητὸ πῶλεγε πῶς ἡ Πόλη θὰ ξαναπαιρνότανε ἀπ' τὰ χέρια τῶν Τοῦρκων ἂν γυρίζανε πίσω οἱ Χριστιανοί, κλειδώσανε τὶς πόρτες καὶ ρίξανε τὰ κλειδιά ὄξ' ἀπ' τὸ κάστρο.

Τότε δὲ φούντωσε ἡ σφαγή, ποῦ δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ τὴ χωρέσῃ τὸ μυαλὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὅσοι γλυτώσανε χάσανε τὰ φρένα τους καὶ τρέχανε νὰ κλειστοῦνε στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία. Κεῖνὴ τὴν ὥρα ἦτανε πῶχαν' ἡ μάννα τὸ παιδί καὶ τὸ παιδί τὴ μάννα. Θεὲ μεγαλοδύναμη, ἀπάνω σ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς συμφοριασμένους ἔπεσε ὅλη ἡ ὀργή σου!

Μερμηγκιὰ ἀμέτρητη πλημμύρισε τὴν ἐκκλησιά, ἀπάνω, κάτω, στὸ νάρθηκα, στ' ἅγιο βῆμα, σὲ κάθε μεριά. Σφαλίζανε τὶς πόρτες καὶ παρακαλοῦσανε μὲ μεγάλες φωνές τὸ Θεὸ νὰ τοὺς λυπηθῇ.

Οἱ κουμπέδες κ' οἱ θεόρατες καμάρες ἀντιβούζιζανε καὶ ρίχνανε πιδὸ πολλὴ τρομάρα στὶς καρδιές τῶν κοριτσιῶν τὰ μικρὰ παιδάκια ξεψυχούσανε ἀπ' τὸ φόβο τους. Σὲ λίγο φτάσανε οἱ Τοῦρκοι καὶ πιάσανε νὰ βαρᾶνε μὲ τοὺς μπαλτάδες τὶς πόρτες. Τὸ κοπάδι, ποῦ ἦτανε μαντρισμένο μέσα βέλαζε λυπητερὰ σὲ κάθε τσεκουριά.

Ποῖα γλώσσα μπορεῖ νὰ πῇ τί γίνηκε σὰν μπήκανε μέσα οἱ Τοῦρκοι, βαστώντας στὰ χέρια τους ἄλλοι ματωμένα μαχαίρια μιὰ ὀργυιὰ μάκρος, ἄλλοι πελέκια ἀκονισμένα, ἄλλοι κοντάρια, π' ἀστράφτανε οἱ σουβλερὲς μύτες τους. Ἡ ἐκκλησιά πιτσιλίστηκε ἀπ' τὰ αἵματα σὲ δυὸ μπόγια ὕψος, πῶλεγες πῶς ἦτανε χασάπικο. Ὅσοι ἀπομείνανε ζωντανοὶ εἶχανε τρελλαθῇ.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι δένανε τοὺς ἄντρες μὲ σκοινιά, τὶς γυναῖκες μὲ τὶς ζῶνες τους. Ἐβλεπες ἀφεντάδες δεμένους πιστάγκωνα μαζί μὲ τοὺς ὑπηρέτες, κυράδες μὲ τὶς δοῦλες, παπάδες μὲ γρηές, δεσποτάδες, παλληκάρια βουτημένα στὸ αἷμα.

Ὁ ἓνας μπροστὰ στὸν ἄλλον βιάσανε τὶς γυναῖκες, ἀνάμεσα σε κουφάρια καὶ σὲ λαβωμένους ποῦ μουγκρίζανε. Ἄλλοι πάλι ἀπὸ κεῖνα τ' ἀγρόμια ξεγυμνώνανε τὴν ἐκκλησιά. Μέσα σὲ μιὰ ὥρα ἀπομείνανε μονάχα οἱ τοῖχοι.

Δὲν ἀφήσανε μηδὲ καντήλι, μηδὲ δισκοπότηρο, μηδὲ βαγγέλιο, μηδὲ εἰκόνα, μηδὲ ροῦχα, τίποτα! Πῶς περνᾷ ἡ ἀκριδα ἀπὸ νὰ καταπράσινο περιβόλι κ' ὕστερα, σὰν κἀνὴ φτερά, ἀφήνει χῶμα μοναχό, ἔτσι ἀπόμεινε κ' ἡ Ἁγία-Σοφία ξεγυμνωμένη. Τὸ μαχαίρι κ' ἡ φωτιά βάσταξε τρία μερόνυχτα, ὅπως εἶχε ταμένο στοὺς στρατιῶτες του ὁ σουλτάνος. Ἡ ἀπέραντη Κωνσταντινούπολη ἀντιλαλοῦσε μέρα νύχτα.

Τὶ αἷμα καὶ τί δάκρυα χυθήκανε! Χιλιάδες καρδιές χτυπούσανε, τέτοια συμφορὰ δὲ μπορεῖ νὰ τὴ συλλογισθῇ ἄνθρωπος. Ἄλλοι σφαζόντανε πρὶν πᾶνε στὰ σπίτια τους, ἄλλοι καταφέρνανε νὰ φτάξουνε στὰ δικά τους μὰ δὲ βρῖσκανε τὰ παιδιά τους καὶ τὶς γυναῖκες τους.

Ἄντρώγυνα χωρίζοντουσαν, ὁ ἓνας Τοῦρκος ἔσερνε τὸν ἄντρα κ' ὁ ἄλλος τὴ γυναῖκα. Τὰ παιδιὰ τὰ ξεκολλούσανε ἀπ' τὸ λαϊμὸ τῆς μάννας, τὰ κορίτσια τὰ σέρνανε ἀπ' τὰ μαλλιά μέσα στὸ δρόμο.

Πεινασμένα σκυλιὰ πίνανε τὸ αἷμα π' ἄχνιζε μέσα στὰ χαντάκια. Πιδὸ πολλὰ ἦτανε τὰ κομμένα κεφάλια, ποῦ κειτόντανε στὸ χῶμα, παρὰ οἱ πέτρες τῆς γῆς. Φρόνιμες νοικοκυράδες, ποῦ δὲν τὶς εἶχε δὴ ὁ ἥλιος, ἀτμαζόντανε γυμνὲς μέσα στὶς πλατείες.



Παπάδες περπατούσανε βιαστικά, φορτωμένοι με βαρειά σεντούκια, πού τους τάχανε φορτωμένα οί ζεμπέκηδες και τους δέρνανε σαν γαϊδούρια και τους τραβούσανε με τὸ καπίστρι ποῦχανε περασμένο στὸ λαιμό τους. «Καὶ ἦν ἰδεῖν ὄρμαθους ἐξερχομένους ἄπειρους ὡσπερ ἀγέλας».

Στὰ καράβια δὲν εἶχε ἀπομείνει μηδὲ ἓνας Τοῦρκος, γιατί ριχτήκανε στὸ πλιάτσικο. Μὲ μεγάλη μανία γυρεύανε νὰ βροῦνε τὰ γυναικεῖα μοναστήρια, τὰ πατούσανε καὶ κουβαλούσανε τὶς καλογρηῆς μέσα στὰ καράβια κ' ἐκεῖ ὁ διάβολος πιά μπορεῖ νὰ πῆ τὸ τί γίνηκε. Πολλὲς γυναῖκες, γιὰ νὰ ξεφύγουνε τὴν ἀτιμία, πέσανε καὶ πνιγήκανε στὴ θάλασσα καὶ στὰ πηγάδια.

Οἱ Τοῦρκοι εἶχανε τούτη τὴ συνήθεια· ἅμα μπαίνανε μέσα σ' ἓνα σπίτι γιὰ νὰ κουρσέψουνε, στήνανε μιὰ σημαία ἀπάνω στὰ κεραμίδια. Οἱ ἄλλοι Τοῦρκοι, βλέποντας τούτη τὴ σημαία, δὲ μπαίνανε ποτὲ μέσα, μὰ τραβούσανε πάρα πέρα, νάβρουνε ἄλλο σπίτι λεύτερο. Ἦσαμε διακόσες χιλιάδες τέτοια κουρέλια σαλεύανε ἀπάνω στὴν Πόλη, γιατί οἱ Τοῦρκοι βάζανε πολλὲς παντιέρες στὸ ἴδιο σπίτι γιὰ νὰ κάνουνε πανηγύρι.

Ὅλη τὴ μέρα σφάζανε. Τόσο μουσκεμένη ἦτανε ἡ γῆς, πῶλεγες πὼς ἔβρεξε αἷμα, κ' ὅπου ἔβρισκε χαντάκι τὸ αἷμα ἔτρεχε σὰ νάτανε βροχονέρι. Τὰ κουφάρια τὰ ρίχνανε στὸ μπουγάζι τοῦ Βοσπόρου, καὶ τὸ ρέμα τὰ κατρακυλοῦσε σὰ νάτανε πεπόνια, Χριστιανοὶ-Τοῦρκοι ἀνακατεμένοι.

Ὁ σουλτάνος δὲ μπῆκε μέσα στὴν Πόλη μετὸ στρατό, παρὰ ἀπόμεινε στὸ στρατόπεδο. Κατὰ τὸ μεσημέρι οἱ πασάδες τοῦ πήγανε τὰ κλειδιά, σημάδι πὼς ἦτανε πιά δική του ἡ Κωνσταντινούπολη. Τότε καβαλλίκεψε καὶ μπῆκε μετὴ συνοδεία του μέσα στὸ κάστρο καὶ τράβηξε ἴσια στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία.

Δὲ μπῆκε μέσα στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ μετὰ τᾶλογο, παρὰ ξεπέζεψε καὶ μπαίνοντας μέσα θαύμασε πολλὴν ὥρα καὶ περιεργάσθηκε τὸ χτίριο. Ὑστερα φώναξε ἓναν χότζα καὶ τοῦπε ν' ἀνεβῆ ἀπάνω στὸν ἄμβωνα καὶ νὰ φωνάξῃ τὴν προσευχή τους «Ἀλλάχου ἔκπερ, Ἀλλάχου ἔκπερ, Μουχαμετοῦλ ρεσοῦλ Οὐλλάχ.» Σὰν τελείωσε ὁ χότζας, ἀνέβηκε ὁ ἴδιος στὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα καὶ τὸ ξανάπε. Τὴν ὥρα πῶβγαινε ἔξω, εἶδε ἓναν Τοῦρκο πὸν τσάκιζε τὰ μάρμαρα. Ὁ Μεμέτης τὸν βάρεσε μετὸ καμουτσὶ λέγοντάς του: «Κιοπέκ, σὰς ἄφησα τὸ θησαυρὸ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, μὰ τὰ χτίρια εἶνε δικὰ μου!»

Ἀπὸ κεῖ τράβηξε μετὸν πασάδες καὶ ρώτηξε γιὰ τὸ βασιλιὰ τῆς Πόλης, ζῆ ἢ πέθανε. Καὶ σὰν τοῦπανε πὼς

σκοτώθηκε, πρόσταξε καὶ πλύνανε πολλὰ κεφάλια στὸ μέρος ποὺ χάθηκε, γιὰ νὰ τὸν γνωρίσουνε, μὰ δὲ μπορέσανε μέσα σὲ τέτοιο πλῆθος.

Σὲ λίγο ὅμως βρέθηκε τὸ κορμί του καὶ τὸ γνωρίσανε ἀπ' τὰ κόκκινα ποδήματά του μετὸν κεντημένους ἀητούς. Κόψανε τὸ κεφάλι καὶ τὸ βάλανε σὲ μιὰ πλατεία κοντὰ στ' ἄγαλμα τοῦ Γιουστινιανοῦ καὶ κεῖ στάθηκε ἴσαμε τὸ βράδυ.

Ὑστερα τὸ μπαλσαμώσανε καὶ τῶστειλε ὁ σουλτάνος στὴν ἀνατολὴ ἀπὸ χώρα σὲ χώρα, γιὰ νὰ δῆ ὁ κόσμος τὴ νίκη του. Τὸ σῶμα τὸ πήρανε οἱ Χριστιανοὶ καὶ τὸ θάψανε.

Τὰ πλιάτσικα κ' οἱ σκλάβοι, ἄλλα στοίβαχθήκανε στὶς τέντες, ἄλλα φορτωθήκανε στὰ καράβια καὶ τραβήξανε νὰ τὰ πουλήσουνε, ὅπως ἔστερξε ὁ σουλτάνος. Κάθε Τοῦρκος ἦτανε φορτωμένος.

Τὶ μαλάματα, τί ἀσήμια, τί χαλκώματα, τί ροῦχα μεταξωτά, τί βιβλία! Καράβια ὀλάκερα γεμίσανε καλογέρους καὶ καλογρηῆς. Ἔβλεπες ζεϊμπέκια ψειριασμένα νάνε ντυμένα μετὰ ροῦχα δεσποτικά, ἄλλοι φοράγανε χρυσὰ πετραχήλια, ἄλλοι κορῶνες καὶ καλυμμαύχια στὸ κεφάλι. Σκυλιὰ δεμένα μετὰ ζῶνες κεντημένες, ἐπιγονάτια καὶ φελόνια γιὰ σαγῆ στ' ἄλογα. Μέσα στοὺς ἀσημένιους δίσκους βάζανε ντομάτες καὶ κρέατα, πίνανε κρασὶ μέσα στὰ δισκοπότηρα. Φορτώσανε στὶς καρότσες βιβλία, ποὺ δὲν εἶχανε μετρημὸ καὶ τὰ σκορπίσανε σ' ἀνατολὴ καὶ δύση. Γιὰ ἓνα γρόσι πουλιόντανε ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης, ὁ Πλάτωνας κ' οἱ ἄλλοι ξακουσμένοι σοφοὶ τῆς ἀρχαιότητος, γραμμένοι σὲ πετσί, μετὰ χρυσοκοντυλιῆς καὶ μετὰ χρυσὰ δεσμάτια. Τὰ εἰκονίσματα τὰ σκίζανε μετὰ τὸ τσεκούρι καὶ βράζανε κρέας μέσα στὰ καζάνια.

Τὴ δευτέρη μέρα, δηλαδὴ στὶς 30 Μαγιοῦ, ξαναμπῆκε στὴν Πόλη ὁ σουλτάνος, μετὰ πολλὴ παράταξη, κ' ἀφοῦ τριγύρισε σὲ διάφορα μέρη, πήγε καὶ στὸ παλάτι. Καὶ βλέποντάς το ἔρημο εἶπε ἓναν στίχο κάποιου Πέρση ποιητῆ γιὰ τὴν ματαιότητα τοῦ κόσμου.

Ἦτανε πιά πεθαμένη καὶ θαμμένη ἡ ξακουσμένη Κωνσταντινούπολη, ἡ Θεοσκεπάστη, ἡ Νέα Σιών, ἡ Ἐφτάλοφη, τὸ καμάρι τῆς Ἀνατολῆς, πῶβρισκε ἄνθρωπος καὶ τοῦ πουλιοῦ τὰ γάλα.

Ποῦχε τὸ κάστρο μετὰ τοὺς τρακόσους πύργους, τὰ παζάρια, τὰ ἀρτοπρατεῖα, τὰ χαλκοπρατεῖα, τὰ ἀργυροπωλεῖα, τὰ βλατοπωλεῖα, τὰ κηροπωλεῖα, τὰ λουτρά, τὰ συντριβάνια, τὶς βρύσες, τὶς δεκαεννιὰ στέρνες, τὰ ἵπποδρόμια, τὰ παλάτια, τὶς τρακόσες



ἐκκλησιᾶς καὶ τὰ διακόσια μοναστήρια, τ' ἀμέτρητα τ' ἀγάλματα κι' ὅ,τι μπορεῖ νὰ βάλῃ ὁ νοῦς τ' ἀνθρώπου. «Τῆ δευτέρᾳ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης, εἰσελθὼν ὁ Μεχμέτης, περιόδευσε τὴν πόλιν· καὶ ἦν ἡ πᾶσα ἄοικος, οὔτε ἄνθρωπος, οὔτε κτῆνος, οὔτε ὄρνεον κραυγάζον ἢ λαλοῦν ἐντός.»

Κοντὰ στὸ παλάτι ἐτοιμάσανε ἓνα μεγάλο τραπέζι γιὰ τὸ σουλτάνο, κι' ἀφοῦ ἔφαγε, ἤπιε πολὺ κρασί καὶ μέθυσε. Τότε πρόσταξε νὰ τοῦ πάνε τὸ ναύαρχο Νοταρᾶ μὲ τὰ παιδιὰ του καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἀποκεφαλίσουνε. Πρῶτα σφάξανε τὰ παιδιὰ μπροστὰ στὸ συμφοριασμένον τὸν πατέρα, πῶλεγε ὀλοένα «δίκαιος εἶ, Κύριε!», κ' ὕστερα τὸν ἴδιον. Δὲν περάσανε λίγες μέρες καὶ πρόσταξε νὰ κόψουνε καὶ τὸ Χαλίλ πασᾶ, πὸν τὸν ὑποπευότανε πὼς εἶχε προδώσει τὰ μυστικά του στοὺς γραικοὺς.

Τὸ τέλος τῆς Πόλης φαίνεται ἀκόμα πιδ λυπητερὸ ἄμα συλλογισθῆ κανένας πὼς χαλάσθηκε τὸ μήνα Μάη, τὶς μέρες πὸν μοσκοβολούσανε οἱ πασκαλιᾶς κ' οἱ τριανταφυλλιᾶς. Ἀνήμερα πὸν σκλαβώθηκε ἡ Πόλη ἦτανε τῆς Ἁγίας Θεοδοσίας, πὸν τὴ γιορτάζανε πάντα οἱ Πολίτες στὶς 29 Μαγιοῦ μὲ μεγάλη δόξα στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ της, πὸν γίνηκε ὕστερα τζαμί. Μ' ὅλη τὴν ἀγωνία πὸν περνούσανε, οἱ γυναῖκες τὴν εἶχανε στολισμένη, κατὰ τὰ συνηθισμένα, μὲ στεφάνια καὶ μὲ περιπλοκάδες ἀπὸ τριαντάφυλλα. Τὴν ὥρα, πὸν μπήκανε μέσα οἱ Τοῦρκοι, ψέλνανε ἀκόμα οἱ ψαλτάδες. Τοὺς περάσανε ὅλους ἀπ' τὸ μαχαίρι, κι' ἀπὸ τότε βαστᾶ ἡ ὀνομασία «Γκιουλ Τζαμί», δηλαδὴ «Τὸ Τζαμί μὲ τὰ τριαντάφυλλα», καὶ μ' αὐτὸ τὸνομα στέκει ὡς τὰ σήμερα. Μέσα σ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἐκκλησιὰ λένε πὼς ὑπάρχει κ' ἓνα μνημόρι, ὀπῶχει ἀπάνω στὴν πλάκα τοῦρκικα γράμματα, πὸν λένε «Ἐδῶ κείται ἓνας μαθητὴς τοῦ Χριστοῦ» καὶ πὼς αὐτὸς εἶνε ὁ τάφος τοῦ βασιλιᾶ Παλαιολόγου.

Τοὺς Γενοβέζους τοῦ Γαλατᾶ ὁ σουλτάνος δὲν τοὺς πείραξε, γιὰτὶ σταθήκανε φίλοι του στὸν πόλεμο, τοὺς χάρισε μάλιστα καὶ προνόμια. Τὸ φιορμάνι πὸν τοὺς ἔδωσε ἀρχίζει μὲ τοῦτα τὰ λόγια: «Ἐγὼ ὁ μέγας αὐθέντης καὶ μέγας Ἀμηρᾶς σουλτάνος ὁ Μεχμέτ Μπέης, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ μεγάλου αὐθέντου Ἀμηρᾶ Σουλτάνου τοῦ Μουράτ Μπέη. Ὁμνύω εἰς τὸν Θεὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ εἰς τὸν μέγαν ἡμῶν προφήτην Μωάμεθ, καὶ εἰς τὰ ἑπτὰ μουσάφια ὀπὸν ἔχομεν καὶ ὀμολογοῦμεν, καὶ εἰς τὰς ρκδ' (124) χιλιάδας προφήτας τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ πρὸς τὰς ψυχὰς τοῦ ἀάπτου μου καὶ τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ πρὸς

ἐμαυτὸν καὶ πρὸς τὰ παιδιὰ μου, καὶ στὸ σπαθὶ ὀπὸν ζώννομαι...».

Ἀπόβραδο θλιβερὸ στὴν πλέον ἀπόμερη ἐκείνη ἄκρα τοῦ Βυζαντίου, πάνω ἀπὸ τὶς συνοικίαις τῆς πύλης τῆς Γυρολμίνης, τῆς Παναγίας τῆς Σούδας καὶ τοῦ Παλατιοῦ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν. Στενὸ, ὑγρὸ καλντερίμι ἀναοριχᾶται παράλληλα μὲ τὶς σκιᾶς τῶν γκρεμισμένων πύργων πρὸς τὴν καστρόπορτα τοῦ Πολυανδρίου, πύλη διπλὴ ὀπου, κατὰ τὸν Φραντζῆ: «...μετὰ τὴν εἰσροὴν τῶν Τούρκων διὰ τῆς Κερκόπορτας, τοσαύτη ἐγένεν συρροὴ (...) ὥστε τὰ πτώματα τῶν πιπτόντων φίλων καὶ ἐχθρῶν κατέφραξαν τὰς πύλας». Ὁ δρόμος κατηφορίζει μετὰ πρὸς τὴν κοιλάδα τοῦ Λύκου ποταμοῦ, προσπερνώντας τὰ Ἀρματίου τὴν ἐκ παραφθορᾶς μετέπειτα ἐνορία Σαρμασικιουγιᾶ νὰ συνεχίσει ἀνάμεσα σὲ σκοῦρα πορφυρόχρωμα χαλάσματα πρὸς τὸν τραγικὸ λόφο τοῦ Πέμπτου.

Τότε ἀκόμα ἔξω ἀπὸ τὰ χερσαῖα Θεοδοσιανὰ τεῖχη ἡ ἀπέραντη Θρακικὴ πεδιάδα ἀπλωνόταν καταπράσινη, γυμνὴ ἀπὸ κτίσματα, καὶ μόνον ἐκεῖ, ἀπέναντι στὴν πύλη τοῦ Ἁγίου Ῥωμανοῦ Τόπκαπι, πύλη τοῦ κανονιοῦ ὀπως τὴν ὀνόμασαν οἱ Τοῦρκοι μία συστοιχία αἰωνόβιων κυπαρισσιῶν δῆλωνε τὴ θέση ὀπὸν ὁ πορθητὴς εἶχε στήσει τὴ σκηνὴ του, τσαντίρι θεόρατο περιχαρακωμένο μὲ σανίδες καὶ τάφρο, ἔχοντας τριγύρω του τοὺς ἐμπειρότερους τοξότες καὶ ἐπιλεκτοὺς ὑπερασπιστῆς τῆς σουλτανικῆς αὐλῆς. Δεξιὰ του εἶχαν ἐγκατασταθεῖ οἱ πολυάνθρωπες ὀρδὲς τῆς Ἀνατολῆς καί, ἀριστερά, οἱ στρατιᾶς τῆς Εὐρώπης.

Φωτιᾶς τὴν νύχτα ἄναβαν πέρα ἀπὸ τὴν Καμηλογέφυρα, στὰ ὑψώματα τοῦ Πικριδίου καὶ τοῦ Γαλατᾶ ὀπου στρατοπέδευε ὁ κηδεστὴς τοῦ σουλτάνου Ζαγανὸς πασᾶς. Δώδεκα σπιθαμῆς, λένε, μετροῦσε ἡ περίμετρος τῆς κάθε πετρόσφαιρας πὸν ἔξακόντιζε τὸ γιγαντιαῖο ἐκεῖνο κανόνι πὸν εἶχε κατασκευάσει ὁ Οὐγγρος Ὁρβανός!

Καὶ οἱ Θεοδοσιανοὶ πύργοι κατηφόριζαν πρὸς τὴν Προποντίδα, ὀδεύοντας μέσα στὶς ὀμίγλες τῶν περασμένων, σημαδεμένοι αἰῶνες τῶρα μὲ ἀνάγλυφους θυρεοὺς, σταυροὺς πλινθόκτιστους, ὑπολείμματα ἐπιγραφῶν καὶ ἐπικλήσεων: «Νικᾶ ἡ τύχη τῶν σκηπτούχων Λέοντος καὶ Κωνσταντίνου καὶ Εἰρήνης τῆς εὐσεβεστάτης Ἀγούστης», «Πύργος Ῥωμανοῦ τοῦ Φιλοχρίστου Δεσπότη», «Μιχαὴλ καὶ Θεοφίλου μεγάλων Βασιλέων», «Πύργος Ἰωάννου ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστοῦ Βασιλέως καὶ Ἀυτοκράτορος τοῦ Παλαιολόγου», «Χριστὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἀτάραχος καὶ



ἀπολέμητον φύλαττε τὴν Πόλιν σου, νίκας δωρούμενος τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ὑμῶν...». Καὶ συνέχιζε νὰ ἐλίσσεται πρὸς τὴν Προποντίδα τὸ ἐρειπωμένο τεῖχος, αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀγκάλιαζε παλιὰ μὲ γρανιτένια μπράτσα τὴ Θεοφύλαχτη Πόλη καὶ ποὺ τὴν ἄλβανοι μπαχτσεβαναῖοι καλλιεργοῦσαν τὰ κηπευτικὰ καὶ τὰ μαρούλια τους στὴν πλατιὰ του ξεραμένη τάφρο.

Θλιβερὸ τὸ ἀπόβραδο τῆς 29ης Μαΐου, ἡμερομηνία ὀρόσημο στὴν πορεία τῆς Ρωμοσύνης ἀλλὰ καὶ ὄλου τοῦ Χριστιανικοῦ κόσμου· κι ἀναρωτιέμαι πόσοι τάχα ἀπέμειναν νὰ θυμούνται πὼς χρόνια πρὶν, στὴν ἀπόμακρη ἐκείνη ρηγιώνα τοῦ Βυζαντίου, κάθε χρόνο, κάθε τέτοια μέρα ποὺ οἱ κυρίαρχοι πανηγύριζαν τὴν ἐπέτειο τῆς Ἀλώσεως, γενόταν σιωπηλὰ σὺνάξη μιᾶς πλειάδας ἀθεράπευτων νοσταλγῶν τοῦ Βυζαντίου καὶ ἐκεῖ, πίσω ἀπὸ τοὺς ὑψηλοὺς μαντρότοιχους τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου, τοῦ παρὰ τὴν Πύλην τοῦ Ἁγίου Ῥωμανοῦ ὅπου ἔπεσε ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος, τελοῦσαν τρισάγιο εἰς μνήμην τοῦ ὕστατου βυζαντινοῦ αὐτοκράτορα. «Ἐμπνευστὴς τοῦ μνημοσύνου», διηγεῖται ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος Γρίβας, «ἦταν ὁ Τζανὴς ὁ Παπαδόπουλος, ὁ σοφὸς ἐκεῖνος καὶ ἐνθουσιώδης καθηγητὴς τῆς ἱστορίας στὴν Μεγάλη τοῦ Γένους Σχολή. Παρόντες καὶ οἱ χρόνια τώρα μακαριστοὶ Θεοφάνης Μέντζος, Ἀντώνης Μαλέτσκος, Εἰρήναρχος Κόβας, Νικόλαος Δάμσας, Μιλτιάδης Νομίδης...».

Ἦταν ἡ δεκαετία τοῦ 1930. Ἀργότερα ἔσπευσαν νὰ τοὺς πλαισιώσουν ὁ Δημήτρης Χαβιαρόπουλος, ὁ Γιῶργος Πατριαρχέας μὲ νεότατο τότε τὸν Καλλίνικο Γκιουζέλογλου. Τὴν πρώτη ἐκείνη φορά, τὸ 1927, ὁ ἀνίδεος καὶ ἀγαθὸς ἱερέας ποὺ ἐκλήθη πρὸς τέλος τῆς μυσταγωγίας, ἄρχισε χωρὶς τὴν παραμικρὴ ὑποψία νὰ μουρμουρίζει λόγια χιλιοειπωμένα γι' αὐτόν, ἕνα βιαστικὸ καὶ συνηθισμένο τρισάγιο γιὰ τὸν κάθε παπᾶ. «Ὅταν κοντοστάθηκε νὰ ρωτήσῃ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ μνημονομένου καὶ τοῦ ψιθυρίσαμε πὼς ἐπρόκειτο γιὰ τὸν «Κωνσταντῖνο Παλαιολόγο τὸν αὐτοκράτορα καὶ πάντα τοὺς πρὸ τῶν τειχῶν τῆς Βασιλίδος πεσόντας κατὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν,» κόμπιασε, διέκοψε συγκινημένος καὶ ξανάρχισε ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχή, ἀκολουθώντας ὅλο ἐκεῖνο τὸ βυζαντινοπρεπὲς αὐστηρὸ τυπικὸ ποὺ συνήθως παρακάμπτουν οἱ περισσότεροὶ λειτουργοί...».

Χρόνια ἀργότερα, μέσα στὴ θλιβερὴ ἀλλοτρίωση τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅταν ἄλλοι φύγαμε καὶ ἄλλοι χάθηκαν γιὰ πάντα, ἀπέμεινε στερνὸς ὁ καλὸς μου φίλος ὁ Καλλίνικος, μόνος νὰ τρυγυρνᾷ κάθε ἐπέτειο τοῦ κουρσέματος, πότε

στὰ τεῖχη καὶ πότε κάτω ἀπ' τοὺς θόλους τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ Σοφίας, ν' ἀναπολεῖ καὶ νὰ προσεύχεται ἐκεῖ, δίπλα στὴ σιδερόκλειστη πύλη τῶν κατηχομένων ὅπου παιδιὰ μᾶς ἔβαζαν ν' ἀκούσουμε τὶς ἀχνὲς ψαλμωδίες τῶν τελευταίων λειτουργῶν καὶ τὴ θρηνωδία τοῦ «Παπᾶ τῆς Ἁγία-Σοφίας».

Τὸν θρύλο καὶ τὸ παραμῦθι του μὲ συγκίνηση πάντα καὶ ἐνθουσιασμὸ μᾶς τὸ ἐπαναλάμβανε ὁ Ἄγγελος Βουδούρης, ὁ ἀξέχαστος καθηγητὴς μας τῶν θρησκευτικῶν, ἐκεῖ στὸ πετρόκτιστο φαναριώτικο σπίτι του, δίπλα στὸ μετόχι τοῦ Παναγίου Τάφου. Ἦς τὸ ξανακούσουμε: «Τὴν ὥρα ποὺ οἱ Τοῦρκοι μπῆκαν στὴν Ἁγία Σοφία, δὲν εἶχε τελειώσει ἀκόμα ἡ θεία λειτουργία. Πῆρε τότε βιαστικὰ ὁ παπᾶς τ' ἅγιο δισκοπότηρο, ἀνέβηκε στὰ κατηχούμενα, μπῆκε σὲ μιὰ θύρα καὶ ἡ θύρα ἔκλεισε ἀμέσως. Οἱ Τοῦρκοι, ποὺ τὸν κунήγησαν, εἶδαν νὰ γίνεται ἄφαντος καὶ βροῆκαν ἔμπρὸς στὸ σημεῖο ποὺ χάθηκε τοῖχο. Προσπάθησαν νὰ



τὸν ρίξουν μὰ δὲν μπόρεσαν! Ἔφεραν ὕστερα χτίστες, μὰ κι ἐκεῖνοι δὲν ἔκαμαν τίποτα. Κάλεσαν κατόπιν ὅλους τοὺς χτίστες τῆς Πόλης, ἔβαλαν τὰ πάντα εἰς ἐνέργειαν γιὰ νὰ γκρεμίσουν τὸν τοῖχο ἐκεῖνο, ἀλλὰ οἱ κόποι τους πῆγαν χαμένοι. Οὔτε μὲ τοὺς λοστούς, οὔτε μὲ τὶς ἀξίνες, οὔτε μὲ ὅλα τα σύνεργα ποὺ κουβάλησαν δὲν μπόρεσαν νὰ τὸν χαλάσουν. Γιατὶ εἶναι θέλημα Θεοῦ νὰ ἀνοίξῃ ἡ θύρα μόνη της, ὅταν ἔρθῃ ἡ ἅγια ἐκείνη ὥρα καὶ νὰ βγῇ ὁ παπᾶς νὰ τελειώσῃ τὴ θεία λειτουργία στὴν Ἁγία-Σοφία, τότε ποὺ θὰ πάρουμε τὴν Πόλη...».

Θαρρῶ πὼς τότε, στ' ἀνέφελα ἐκεῖνα παιδικὰ μας χρόνια, πίσω ἀπὸ τὰ κλειστὰ θυρόφυλλα τῶν κατηχομένων, ἀκούγονταν ἀκόμα οἱ ἀχνὲς ψαλμωδίες τοῦ παπᾶ τῆς Ἁγία-Σοφίας καὶ πέρα κατὰ τὴν Χρυσόπορτα, στὰ θεμέλια πύργου παμμέγιστου, κοιμόταν ὁ Μαρωμαρμένος Βασιλιάς...



Γιὰ κάποιους ἀνιστόρητους (κυρίως νεοπαγανιστὲς) ποὺ προσπαθοῦν νὰ ἀποβάλλουν τὴν Βυζαντινὴ μας ἱστορία (τὴν Ρωμανία μας) ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλληνική, ἐπειδὴ τοὺς ἐνοχλεῖ ὁ Ἑλληνορθόδοξος πολιτισμὸς της, θὰ ἤθελα νὰ τονίσω ὅτι ὅταν ὁ κορυφαῖος παγκοσμίως Βρετανὸς βυζαντινολόγος σὲρ Στῆβεν Ράνσιμαν μιλάει γιὰ Ἑλληνες ὑπερασπιστὲς τῆς Πόλης ξέρεи πάρα πολὺ καλά γιατί τοὺς ἀποκαλεῖ ἔτσι....

**Ἀνώνυμος**

## Αξιόλογες Συμβουλές

*Δύο γράμματα από τον γέροντα Έφραϊμ, Αριζόνα, ΗΠΑ.*

*Γερά Μονή Αγίου Αντωνίου, 7/1/2010*

**Ε**ύλογημένη μου ψυχούλα του Κυρίου Ίησοῦ...  
 Ὑγίαινε καὶ σώτου ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ τοῦ Ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ μας. Εὐχόμαι νὰ ἀγωνίζεσαι νὰ σώσεις τὴν καλή σου ψυχούλα. Πρέπει νὰ ἀγωνιζώμεθα, μνημονεύοντας τὸ Πανάγιον ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ίησοῦ, **Κύριε Ίησοῦ Χριστέ, ἐλέησον μεὶ καὶ Παναγία θεοτόκε βοήθει μοι.** Αὐτὰ τὰ δύο Πανάγια ὀνόματα ἂν τὰ κρατήσεις γενναῖα στὴ ψυχὴ σου δηλ. νοερώς καὶ στοματικὰ νὰ τὰ προσφέρεις, θὰ τύχης μεγάλης βοήθειας στὴν ἀσφάλεια τῆς ψυχῆς σου, τῆς ζωῆς σου. Οἱ δαίμονες μόνο ἔτσι κτυποῦνται καὶ διώκονται ἀπὸ κοντὰ μας. Θὰ εἶσαι ὀπλισμένη ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχικὰ χαρούμενη. Νὰ ἐξομολογήσαι τακτικὰ καὶ νὰ ὑπακούης στὸν πνευματικὸ σου πατέρα.

Νὰ προσέχεις τὸ στοματάκι σου νὰ μὴν κατακρίνεις κανένα καὶ νὰ ἀγαπᾷς τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου καὶ νὰ τοὺς προσεύχεσαι. Νὰ κατακρίνεις μόνο τὸν ἑαυτὸν σου. Νὰ ἀγαπᾷς τὴν Ἐκκλησία, τὸν ἐκκλησιασμό. Νὰ νουθετᾷς τὰ παιδιά σου καὶ μετὰ τὸ παράδειγμά σου. Στὴν προσευχὴ σου νὰ προσεύχεσαι γιὰ ὅλο τὸν κόσμο. Ἐγγὺς τὸ τέλος μας τὰ γεγονότα μᾶς πληροφοροῦν ὅτι νὰ εἴμεθα ἔτοιμοι.

Κορούλα μου σὲ χαιρετῶ μετὰ πατρικὴ ἀγάπη καὶ στοργή.

+ Γ. Ἐφραϊμ

† † †

*Γερά Μονή Αγίου Αντωνίου, 12/7/ 2011*

**Ε**ύλογημένη ψυχούλα τοῦ Θεοῦ ...,  
 Διάβασα τὰ ὅσα μου ἔγραψες. θὰ σοῦ γράψω μερικὲς συμβουλές.

Ἡ Εὐχὴ τοῦ Ίησοῦ μας νᾶναι ἡ τροφή, τὸ ποτό, τὸ ὀξυγόνο καὶ ἡ ἀναπνοή μας. Δὲν γίνεται ζωὴ Χριστοῦ μέσα μας, χωρὶς τὸ πανάγιον ὄνομα τοῦ Ίησοῦ μας.

Αὐτὴ ἡ προσευχὴ εἶναι ἀτομικὴ βόμβα κατὰ τοῦ διαβόλου, γιὰ αὐτὸ καὶ ἔχει τόση δυσκολία στὴν προσπάθεια νὰ τὴν κρατήσουμε στὴν ἀναπνοή μας, στὴν καρδιά μας, μετὰ ἓνα λόγο: Χωρὶς Ίησοῦ εἴμεθα νεκροὶ ψυχικῶς. Ἐπειδὴ ἐγὼ ζῶ αὐτὴν τὴν νεκρότητα τῆς βρώμικης ψυχῆς μου, σοῦ τὸ γράφω σὰν μία μεγάλη ἀλήθεια καὶ διαπίστωση.

Βιάζε, παιδάκι μου, τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου νὰ προσεύχεται. Προσπάθησε νὰ κρατᾷς τὸν νοῦ σου ἀπὸ τὸν μετεωρισμὸ καὶ διασκορπισμὸ. Ὁ διασκορπισμὸς τοῦ νοῦ φέρνει ὅλη τὴ σαβούρα τῆς κοσμικῆς βρωμίας στὴν ψυχὴ μας, μετὰ ἀποτέλεσμα νὰ λερωίνεται ὅλος ὁ ψυχοσωματικὸς ἑαυτὸς μας καὶ ἔτσι, ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ νὰ φεύγει ἀπὸ τὴν ψυχὴ μας καὶ νὰ νοιώθουμε ἔλεγχο τρανταχετὸ στὴν συνείδησι.

Ἀγωνίσου νὰ δώχνεις τοὺς κακοὺς καὶ βρώμικους καὶ ὑπερήφανους λογισμοὺς τοῦ διαβόλου. Νὰ εἶσαι πανέτοιμη καὶ ρωμαλέα στὸν Ζῆλο (τὸν κατὰ Θεὸν) καὶ ἄκρως νηπτικὴ ὥστε μόλις ἡ ψυχὴ ἀντιληφθεῖ πὼς ἔφθασαν οἱ κακὲς σκέψεις, αὐτομάτως νὰ δουλέψει ὁ νηπτικὸς μηχανισμὸς, δηλ. ἡ ἐτοιμότητα καὶ ἡ μαχητικότητα τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς ἀνατροπὴ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως μετὰ τὴν εὐχή, καταστροφὴ τῶν βρώμικων φαντασιῶν, καὶ μετὰ τὸ πνευματικὸ μαστίγιο τῆς αὐτομεμψίας. Μία τέτοια ἀντιμετώπισι, τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα θᾶναι θετικὸ καὶ σωτήριο.

Τὴν αὐτομεμψία, ψυχούλα μου, νὰ τὴν ὑπεραγαπήσουμε. Νὰ τὴν ἔχουμε σὰν καινούργιο γυαλιστερὸ μαχαίρι, καὶ τὰ μάτια μας τετρακόσια· μόλις δοῦμε νὰ ἐμφανίζεται ἡ φωτιὰ τῆς κατάκρισης, ἀμέσως τὸ σπαθί (στὴν αὐτομεμψία) νὰ κτυπήσουμε τὸν διάβολο, πρὶν μᾶς σπαθίσει αὐτὸς νὰ κατακρίνουμε.

Ἡ αὐτοκατηγορία εἶναι ὁ πρόδρομος τῆς χαριτωμένης καὶ πανέμορφης ταπεινώσεως. *«Μάθετε ἀπὸ μένα νὰ εἴστε ταπεινοὶ καὶ πράοι κι τότε θὰ νοιώσετε τὴν ὁμορφά τῆς ἀγάπης μου».* Χωρὶς ταπεινώση, σκέτο βρώμικο σῶμα, χωρὶς ψυχὴ. Ὅταν ὁμως μᾶς ἀγγίξει ἡ Θεοχαρίτη ταπεινώση τοῦ Ίησοῦ, τότε ὅλα εὐωδιάζουν Οὐράνιο μύρον καὶ ὀσφραίνεται ἡ κουρασμένη ψυχούλα μας καὶ δὲν ξέρει πὼς νὰ εὐχαριστήσῃ Τὸν θεῖον Δοτήρα.

Στὴν κάθε σου δυσκολία καὶ μπλέξιμο λογισμῶν τρέχε στὸν πνευματικὸ σου, νὰ σὲ ξεμπλέξει μετὰ τὴν ἐμπειρία του καὶ τὴν φώτισή του. Καὶ μόνον μετὰ τὴν ἐξομολόγησι θὰ νοιώσεις ἐλάφρωση καὶ ἀναπτέρωση.

Μετὰ ἀνύστακτες εὐχοῦλες καὶ ἀγάπη σὲ χαιρετῶ.

Ὁ ἐλάχιστος,

+ Γ. Ἐφραϊμ



**Ο**που ὑπάρχει θεῖα χάρις δὲν κρύβεται, γιατί ἀκτινοβολεῖ. Ὁ χαριτωμένος ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ, μεταδίδει τὴ θεῖα Χάρις καὶ ἀλλοιώνει τοὺς σαρκικοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

**Ἡ** πνευματικὴ ἐργασία στὸν ἑαυτὸ μας εἶναι ἀθόρυβη ἐργασία στὸν πλησίον, γιατί μιλάει τὸ παράδειγμα καὶ τότε τὸν μιμῶνται οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ διορθῶνται. Ἀπὸ πνευματικὰ κεφάλαιο παίρνουμε τοὺς πνευματικοὺς τόκους καὶ συντηροῦμαστε.

**Υ**πάρχουν ἄνθρωποι ποὺ τὸ νὰ μὴν ἁμαρτήσουν τὸ θεωροῦν προσβολὴ τὴν ἁμαρτία τὴ θεωροῦν πρόοδο καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴ κατεστημένο. Γιατί ἡ ἁμαρτία ἔχει γίνε μόδα...

**Γέρον Παΐσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης (+1994)**

## THE VOICE OF ORTHODOXY: METROPOLITAN SERAPHIM OF PIRAEUS

*By Protopresbyter Theodoros Zisis, professor of the Theological School of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, From the Greek Orthodox magazine "Theodromia" (Θεοδρομία), June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014 (the article was initially composed in 2007). Translated by the Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros (Melissochori, Thessaloniki, Greece) and edited for clarification by the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.*

For decades now the pan-heresy of Ecumenism infects the Orthodox faith and life. The shepherds, the guardians of the flock who should be alert and chase away the wolves of the papist and protestant heresies, many of them keep silent and hide, either out of fear and cowardice or so that they may not fall in disfavor of the powerful, while others have succumbed to the heresies and like wolves in sheepskins spiritually maul the flock. Many presbyters and monks have assumed the protection of the faith but so has the flock itself as well, all of them with spectacular candor. This is not, however, the first time in the history of the Church that the flock proved more prudent than its shepherds, being invisibly shepherded by the chief shepherd, Christ, Who, by the way, installed the shepherds, not to devour but to protect the flock, not to usurp the hierarchal grace for their benefit but to even sacrifice their life as He did for the salvation of the sheep. The good shepherd does not leave when he sees the wolf approaching, and even more so he does not join the wolves but *lays down his life for the sheep.* (Jn 10:15).

The sacrificial prototype of the Great Shepherd Christ, was followed by the Apostles and the Holy Church Fathers, who were expended and martyred, either struggling against the heresies of their time, or against internal distortions and forgeries of the evangelical ascetic ethos. One such example is the great Holy Father and Teacher John Chrysostom, whom not too long ago we celebrated the 1600<sup>th</sup> year of his martyrdom and heroic repose on his way to exile (407-2007).

This teaching of the holy bishops, strugglers and early fighters of the faith was never interrupted in the two thousand year march of the Church to conspicuously establish that there is an uninterrupted apostolic succession, not only in the positions and administration, but especially in the faith and life as we sing in the dismissal of the holy hieromartyrs. *As a sharer of the ways and a successor to the throne of the Apostles, O inspired of God, you found discipline to be a means of ascent to divine vision. Wherefore, having rightly divided the word of truth, you also contested for the Faith even unto blood, O Hieromartyr...* Following the natural silence (due to old age) of the great metropolitan Augustine Kantiotis of Florina (+2010, *Ed.*), in this apostolic and patristic nature of our times, we all wonder about the almost complete absence of courageous

and activist bishops. There is no Kantiotis. When would at last be heard a bold, strong and loud voice of Orthodoxy, to scare the croaking frogs in the stagnant disease-bearing waters of the Ecumenical heresy? There were of course some voices of a handful of bishops who supported and fed this hope of becoming more vociferous; these voices were heard even by the wolves and caused them to flee, while encouragement spread among the sheep.

God heard the warm and hearty prayers of countless faithful as they all prayed for a change to this climate of silence and fright under which "fear overshadowed everything and the people were squashed by slavery." The impossible He makes possible, even when the turnover of conditions seems humanly impossible. *The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.* (1 Sam 2:4). The powerful weakened but it was preordained by God that a loud Orthodox voice of an even young bishop be heard. This voice was the voice of the Metropolitan of Piraeus, the Most Reverend Seraphim. He amazed and pleased us all with everything he wrote, as reported to archimandrite Marko Manoli, this unshakeable and great fighter of Orthodoxy, a spiritual and elder of the "Panhellenic Orthodox Union" and also spiritual overseer of the "Orthodox Press" (Ὁρθοδόξου Τύπος). Whatever he writes and declares is the Faith, the voice, the teaching of the Holy Fathers and the self-consciousness of the Church.

He comprehends, accepts and declares that "the comparative funnel of Ecumenism, as expressed today by the World Council of the so called churches as well as the diverse multinational forums, deceive and debase the Christian revelation and make the message of salvation worldly, rendering it into a morality deprived of the life, grace and power of God. In the final end this effort is just one more hopeless attempt by the dragon of the abyss to neutralize the crucifixion and resurrection message of life of the Apostolic Catholic Church." Ecumenism is thus a comparative pan-heresy, the "churches" of the World Council are called churches when they are not, and the associated display of events, gatherings and overall ecumenical efforts are the direct off-spring of the devil. The opposition towards these works of darkness is truly Seraphimic, angelic.

Apostolic and patristic, powerful and true are all of the declarations made through the powerful voice of this Orthodox bishop about the heresy of Papism. He writes that having separated from the Church it (Papism) lost the divine grace, causing it to fall into multiple heresies, bringing about the adulteration and disfigurement of Christianity thus becoming the cause and foundation of atheism in Europe. The metropolitan forestalls the papist declaration of July, that the papist "church" is the only authentic church and asserts that this applies only to the Orthodox Church. And, for the first time in the last several years, we hear from the

mouth of an Orthodox bishop a strong recommendation for our departure away from the theological dialogues of the great pan-heresy of ecumenism.

He writes: "Humbly, I am of the opinion that our mother, the Holy Orthodox Church, as the only true and historically continuous and undivided Church, ought to declare *urbi et orbi* the truth and surety of her self-consciousness through her documented positions and texts. (*urbi et orbi* denotes a hierarchal address or apostolic blessing given to the City of Rome and to the entire world on certain occasions. It was a standard opening of Ancient Roman proclamations; *Ed.*). Following this, She ought to depart from the said dialogues that provide an alibi, unfortunately, to the leaders and subordinates of all these who live within such heresy as well as those that are subjugated under the shadow of death. And in turn, all of them must be invited to join Her, through words and deeds and true evangelical living, so that all those residing outside the salvific Orthodox Faith return to the common millennium that has apostolically delivered Truth, while all others may rediscover the salvation and the conquering of death through the resurrection, the most valuable and fragrant blessing that emanates from our Holy Orthodox Tradition."

Such a salvific declaration and soul-cleansing solution, if adopted and acted upon by the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece, will heal the wounds of the Old Calendarism; will quiet down and spread calm among the faithful who agonize over the direction of the Holy Church's path and the right-mindedness of Her bishops; and it will, most certainly, arouse a problematic uneasiness among the heterodox and guide them towards a healthy uneasiness towards a true path to salvation.

We appreciate that the Metropolitan's voice was indeed recognized by the heretical Latins as very powerful. Thus, in fear of the potential losses which they could realize by the suggested change of direction for the Church of Greece towards ecumenism, the Pope went on to immediately declare that "Papism is the only authentic Church and that, although the Orthodox Churches had some elements of ecclesiology, they were lacking and were defective and deficient because they do not recognize the supremacy of the Pope, and as such, 'they do not offer salvation'." The resonance and significance of the positions taken by the Metropolitan of Piraeus were also exemplified through the actions of the papists in Greece; being quite disturbed by these statements, they composed several letters to Metropolitan Seraphim (through their "catholic" bishop of Syros, Fransiscan Papananoli), expressing their sadness and appealing that he set aside and nullify what was written. These letters are of special interest since, through them, the Latins expose both the papist mentality as well as the lack of repentance towards their many heretical positions.

The response by the Metropolitan of Piraeus to the papist "bishop" is significantly more interesting; within his response, bishop Seraphim, with apostolic outspokenness and patristic frankness, identifies papism as a simple "religious community" that has absolutely no relationship with the Church of Christ due to her numerous heresies and deceits. And, in a personal manner as well as at a brotherly level, he points out to the Latin leader that he is not a bishop of the church but instead just "spiritually responsible for the schismatic and heretical practicing faithful of your community." Finally, after he most successfully refutes all of the Papist "bishop's" claims, he advises him to return to the Orthodox Catholic Church. "In closing, I ask your word that you will abandon the false Latin faith and that you will return to the Undivided Catholic Church of the first thousand years, whose Faith, Theology, Asceticism, Spirituality, Governance, Truth and Tradition are being declared unchanged and absent of novelty and innovations, through the many ages of Her historic continuity, by the Orthodox Catholic Church. Expel from your eyes the dimness of the thousand years' errant life and rejoin the One Holy Apostolic and Indivisible Church, of which the *gates of Hades will not overcome*, so that you may return to the One and Only Body of Christ and find His Mercy and Grace."

Has a more authentic, patristic, daring and courageous voice been heard by anyone in the last decades from a bishop? As of lately, many clerics and monastics are considering of directing the Greek bishops, through an article, to assume their responsibility and decide through a properly called synod whether: (1) Papism is a Church or a heresy, (2) if Ecumenism is justified ecclesiologically, and (3) to ask them that the Church of Greece depart from the Ecumenical Council of the so called churches. The text has already been composed by the Metropolitan of Piraeus. We place our signature upon this text with pleasure, together with the hands of thousands of clerics, monastics and laity, and we believe among them will be many bishops.

We shall await for the properly executed synodic ratification of the indisputable and truly Orthodox positions that it will express. No matter what the follow-on course of events end up being, we *are pleased and joyful* as we witness the sunrise of the victory of Orthodoxy towards the panheresy of Ecumenism. We are equally grateful that we now have anti-heretical Orthodox bishops, and we are not without any bishops who support our cause, as the Ecumenists often exclaim within and outside of the their heretical circles. We thank and glorify the Trinitarian God for bringing forth new confessors of the faith and we repeat the supplication of the divine liturgy: *First remember Lord the bishop of Piraeus Seraphim, grant that he may serve Your holy churches in peace. Keep him safe, honorable, and healthy for many years, rightly teaching the word of Your truth.*

## TALKING ABOUT THE DEVIL

By Thomas Shaw, January 1999, originally published in "The Orthodox Reader," re-posted at the web pages of "Discerning Thoughts."

Two decades ago, while still a young Orthodox Christian, I had the privilege of hearing Fr. Alexander Schmemmann speak. I cannot clearly remember now the topic of his talk, but one sentence still rings in my ears: "What surprises those in the Ecumenical Movement is that while they are discussing the great project of unification of the churches, the Orthodox are still talking about the Devil."

Orthodoxy is still talking about the Devil because we continue to see his effect on the culture around us and we continue to experience his war upon the Church. Because we are engaged in this unseen warfare, Orthodox theology has always been dynamic. Each generation must discover the truths of the Holy Tradition anew, and in that process of discovery there will be differing understandings of the content of the Tradition. This dynamism has always brought forth controversial theologians within the Church. They are those who step outside the safe formulas and attempt to rephrase the Tradition using unfamiliar guideposts.

One such theologian is Fr. John Romanides. His work, in contrast to today's micro-specialist, presents a strong unified thesis that he applies over vast periods of time and place. His boldness is dismissed as simplistic and overly dogmatic by some. I first encountered Fr. Romanides as a student of theology at the University of Thessaloniki. I was in the last course he taught in Orthodox Dogmatics before his retirement. I took classes from him for three years and have read most of his works, including *Franks, Romanism, Feudalism and Doctrine* (available from Holy Cross Theological School).

Fr. Romanides is every bit the absentminded professor. His nickname at Holy Cross was Fr. Midnight because he seemed so unaware of his surroundings when he talked. He would always begin a lecture the same way. Sitting down, he would speak in a soft, almost inaudible, voice. Beginning almost in mid-thought, it seemed as if the lecture were already going on in his head. As he warmed to his subject his voice would raise and his eyes would flash. Sometimes he would become very quiet and would even seem to nod off for brief periods. His lectures were always well attended because he was a man with something to say.

It seemed odd that even though his area of expertise was dogmatics, his lectures always seemed to be history. The details of the goings-on in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century France and Italy were constantly being related, or the details of 18<sup>th</sup> century France and Russia. He was criticized for this. After all, he was not a trained historian! But as a patristic theologian,

he taught that the Fathers cannot be understood without understanding their history.

Fr. Romanides has an overarching thesis: the purpose of the Church is to heal man of spiritual illness brought on by the Fall (this spiritual illness is characterized by the quest for happiness) and enable him to know God. His secondary thesis is that dogmatic controversies throughout the history of the Church are caused by those who do not understand the function of the Church as a spiritual hospital. Thus, the real difference with the West is their loss of this understanding which occurred because **the Western ecclesiastical institutions were subverted by political forces into mere political institutions**. As political institutions they became concerned with man's happiness instead of his glorification; with mere forgiveness of sins rather than purification.

It is this thesis that is controversial. It is accepted in ecumenical circles that the explanation of the schism of East and West is cultural. According to this concept, the Western, Latin-speaking, Roman Church and the Eastern, Greek-speaking, Byzantine Church became estranged due to cultural and political factors. The essential elements of the

**B**eing a theologian means first and foremost that someone is an expert in the wiles of the devil.

**Fr. John Romanides(+2001)**

"undivided Church" remain the same in both East and West. The task of ecumenical theology is to regain this lost common understanding.

Romanides' thesis attacks these concepts. There never was a "Byzantine" Empire. This was an invention of 18<sup>th</sup> century Western historians. The Roman political institutions remained intact from the founding of New Rome, Constantinople, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century to its fall in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Romanides, then, tells a different story. Not the story of the Greek East and the Latin West, but the story of Romans and Franks. His is a story not of people drifting apart, but of the Romans struggling to assert the truths of Orthodoxy even when faced with impossible opposition. His understanding of the crucial centuries leading up to the schism and the crusades is one of the systematic subjections of the Roman population of the West to the Frankish overlords who eventually were able to capture even the Roman papacy and conform it to their feudalistic scheme.

The truth of his thesis is captured in our language, where *franchise* (to have the rights of a Frank) means to be able to vote, and *villain* (Roman town dwellers) means an evil man. It was not the Roman Empire in the East that was estranged from its roots and traditions, but the Roman Empire in the West which was replaced with feudalism. So, while other theologians discuss the great project of unifying the churches, Romanides keeps talking about the Devil. It is the story of warfare, seen and unseen. It is the story of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church in the West and the threat to us as Orthodox if we do not understand our history,

our heritage, and our Holy Tradition rightly. If we allow the Holy Orthodox Church to become a religion, we will be playing the Devil's own game and will subject ourselves to our overlords without a peep.

Because of the controversy surrounding Romanides' secondary thesis, many lose track of his first and primary thesis. Let Fr. John state it himself:

"We are obliged to have a clear picture of the context within which the Church and the State viewed the contribution of the glorified to the cure of the sickness of religion which warps the human personality by means of its search for happiness both in this life and after the death of the body. It is within this context that the Roman Empire legally incorporated the Orthodox Church into its administrative structure. Neither the State nor the Church saw the mission of the Church as the simple forgiveness of sins of the faithful for their entrance into heaven in the next life... Both the Church and State knew well that the forgiveness of sins was only the beginning of the cure of the happiness-seeking sickness of humanity. This cure begins by the purification of the heart, it arrives at the restoration of the heart to its natural state of illumination and the whole person begins to be perfected beyond one's natural capacities by the glorification of body and soul by God's uncreated glory. The result of this cure and perfection was not only the proper preparation for life after the death of one's body, but also the transformation of society here and now from a collection of selfish and self-centered individuals to a society of persons with selfless love *which does not seek its own.*"



The absence of true pastoral care on the part of the shepherds is a cause of doctrinal divergence, delusion, and heresy.

Since the majority of people thirst for religious instruction and those responsible and competent do little to meet this need by drawing on pure and Orthodox sources rather than foreign and distorted ones, it was only to be expected that many pious and well-intentioned people would be misled, in good faith, on hearing the Christian doctrine, albeit adulterated, wherever this is preached, because when the springs and fountains grow cloudy, with those in authority concealing the clear spring waters, men and beasts, dying of thirst, will prefer to drink from the cloudy stream, finding some slight hope of deliverance in this, rather than die of thirst...

Alexandros Papadiamantis

From "*Greece's Dostoevsky: The Theological Vision of Alexandros Papadiamantis*" (ch. 2, pg. 72)

## LET US LAY ASIDE ALL EARTHLY CARE

From "*Life of St. Papa-Nicholas Planas.*"



One day, after the Liturgy, we took a carriage and went somewhere together with Father (Fr. Nicholas Planas, *Ed.*). In the carriage he said to us:

"Today Chrysoula was also in church."

"No, my Father," we said to him, "she wasn't."

"Why, what are you saying? I censured her." He responded.

"No," we repeated, "she wasn't there."

"Oh, well," he said without any concern, and then with conviction, "it was her spirit."

We wondered at what he told us, because the same thing had occurred at a certain monastery, where the priest censured the stall of an absent deacon and would not censure a monk who was in his stall. The monk wondered about this and complained to the priest; how did he omit to censure him, even though he passed in front of him, and yet censured the empty stall? And thus the priest was given an opportunity to hear the confessions of both, that is, what thoughts they had during the Liturgy. The monk confessed that his mind ran towards thoughts which were sinful and far removed from his sacred calling. Whereas the poor deacon, even though he had undertaken a duty outside of the church, kept his mind present in church.

For this reason we also asked the sister (Chrysoula, to whom Fr. Nicholas had referred to, *Ed.*) what she had been thinking of during the previous day, and she said (with great simplicity, for she was illiterate) that her mind and soul had been present at the Divine Liturgy. Her hands were weaving, but her mind was wholly in church. This was why Father Nicholas saw her, and censured her, and without hesitation said that it was her spirit.

Let us also take care when we are in church. Is our spirit also present along with us? The Church cries out with her compunctionate hymn: *Let us lay aside all earthly care*, etc. Do we hear, or does each one of us bring many thoughts unsuitable for the place in which we are present? It is a sad thing that we cannot become masters of the spirit, to control it, to command it to think upon the Heavenly Mystery: the descent of the Lord during the solemn hour of the Liturgy, etc. Whereas we see a simple soul who, even though in reality she was doing other pressing and earthly chores, noetically was found present in church.



## GOD'S ANOINTED SUFFERER: TSAR-MARTYR NICHOLAS II [FEASTDAY JULY 4/17]

From the ROCA parish of St. Nicholas, in Endicott, NY (<http://www.stnicholasendicott.org/>).

*The battle against Tsar Nicholas II was clearly bound up with the battle against God and faith... He became a Martyr, having remained faithful to the Ruler of those who rule, and accepted death in the same way as the martyrs accepted it.*

St. John (Maximovitch) the Wonderworker (+1966)

† † †



Very soon after Russia accepted the seed of the Gospel (in the year 988) her soil was sanctified by the blood of martyrs. The pure young sons of Grand Duke Vladimir, Boris and Gleb, accepted death at the hands of a political assassin in order to save their people from civil war and terrible upheaval. They became *sufferers for righteousness* (1 Pet 3:14); being conformed to the innocent suf-

fering of Christ, they became true *Passion-Bearers*.

As in the beginning of Holy Russia, so at the end: it pleased God to reveal Himself to the Russian people through the innocent suffering of Sts. Boris and Gleb; now, in these latter times, He had again unveiled Himself through the purifying suffering of a Tsar, the Anointed of God and supreme protector of Christ's Church in Russia, Nicholas II.

Western writers do not understand Orthodox monarchy. And because America rebelled against the King of England, Americans in particular have no sympathy for the idea of Monarchy. Indeed, it is almost a sacred tradition to applaud any nation that "comes to its senses" and overthrows its king! The Tsars of Russia are viewed in this same man-centered, rather than God-centered, light.

However, in Orthodox Russia there once existed a society composed not of "church and state" (such as existed in medieval Europe) but of "government and priesthood"—a holy commonwealth. The Tsar was never placed outside the Church or "above the law," but always within the Church and subject to the Law of Christ. He was very much the "servant of the Gospel;" he was required to live by it and rule by it in order to be worthy of the blessings of God upon himself, his family, and his nation. Such a righteous father to his people was the last Tsar, Nicholas II. And now, in this year of grace, 1981, in spite of more than 60 years of Marxist deception, it pleases God to reveal Nicholas and those that suffered with

him, to the Church and to the whole world (if only the world will hear it!).

Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch has written: *Why was Tsar Nicholas II persecuted, slandered, and killed? Because he was Tsar, Tsar by the Grace of God. He was the bearer and incarnation of the Orthodox worldview that the Tsar is the servant of God, the Anointed of God, and that to Him he must give an account for the people entrusted to him by destiny..*

In Orthodox teaching, Tsar Nicholas was the last representative of lawful Christian authority in the world, the last one to restrain the *mystery of iniquity*. (2 Thess 2:7). (And, indeed, from the time of his martyrdom can be dated the unprecedented lawlessness, godlessness, and apostasy of this final age: the complete unleashing of the forces of darkness, which now threaten to completely engulf the world as a preparation for the reign of the Antichrist).

An Orthodox monarch receives his authority from God, but by what means and in what manner does it come to him? Authority to govern in the Name of God and perform the highest earthly ministry descends upon a Tsar in the Sacrament of Anointing, at the time of his coronation. After the crowning, he is told that *this visible and material adornment of thy head is to thee a manifest sign that the King of Glory, Christ, invisibly crowneth thee*. The Anointing takes place after the reading of the Gospel in Divine Liturgy. The chief hierarch anoints the Tsar with Holy Chrism on the brow, eyes, nostrils, lips, ears, breast, and hands, saying each time: *The Seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit*.

Thus, Nicholas II received his authority through a Sacrament. The Holy Spirit was upon him! *By rejecting the Tsar, the people blasphemed the Sacrament and trampled upon the grace of God.* (Illustrated History of the Russian People).

In 1917, Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow saw in a vision the Savior speaking to Tsar Nicholas: *You see, said the Lord, two cups in my hands: one is bitter for your people, and the other is sweet for you*. In the vision, the Tsar begged for the bitter cup. The Savior then took a large glowing coal from the cup and put it in the Tsar's hands. The Tsar's whole body then began to grow light, until he was shining like a radiant spirit. Then the vision changed to a field of flowers, in the middle of which Nicholas was distributing manna to a multitude of people. A voice spoke: *The Tsar has taken the guilt of the Russian people upon himself and the Russian people is forgiven*. Nicholas himself once said: *Perhaps an expiatory sacrifice is needed for Russia's salvation. I will be that sacrifice. May God's will be done!*

He had a very strong sense of his destiny as an Orthodox ruler. Although he had an opportunity to flee the country with his family and seek refuge outside Russia, he and his Empress deliberately chose to stay and accept whatever awaited them. He had been born on the feast of the Prophet Job and because of this he often remarked to his advisors: *I have a secret*

*conviction that I am destined for a terrible trial, that I shall not receive my reward on this earth.* No wonder that our Russian Bishops Abroad wrote (in 1968): “Job the Much-Suffering, on the day of whose commemoration the Tsar was born, said in his grievous suffering, concerning the day of his conception: *As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year.* (Job 3:6). Terrible was the night of the murder of the Tsar!”

On that unspeakable night, “the prisoners were all in a deep sleep when they were awakened and ordered to dress in order to leave the city... The Imperial Family descended to the basement where the Sovereign sat down, with his ill son, on a chair in the middle of the room. The Duchesses, the doctor, and three dedicated servants were seated around him. Everyone was waiting for the signal to depart. At the executioner’s announcement (which stunned all the prisoners) of the impending execution, the Empress succeeded in crossing herself. She was killed instantly, together with the Sovereign. God spared them from hearing the groans of the Tsarevitch and the cries of the wounded Grand Duchess Anastasia. The first bullets did not bring death to the youngest ones and they were savagely killed with blows of bayonets and gun butts and with shots at point-blank range. The most innocent and holy had suffered the greatest torture.” (Illustrated Russian History).

In the words of Fr. Dimitry Dudko, one of the first of that wave of modern confessors to speak out against the betrayal of the Church in Russia: *The Tsar is a saint and, moreover, one of the greatest saints. O great saint of Russia, Great-Martyr Nicholas, pray to God for us!*

† † †

St. Seraphim prophesied in clear words about the tragic fate foreordained by God for the Tsar who would be present at the Sarov solemnity of faith, when there would be Pascha in the midst of summer (the glorification of St. Seraphim in 1903). According to his prophecy, if there would be repentance in the Russian people, God would yet have mercy on her, but first He would allow for a time the triumph of lawless men: the Tsar would be overthrown and killed, so that the people might know in experience what life was like under the Tsar anointed by God, and under the rule of men who have trampled underfoot the law of God. St. Seraphim, by revelation from God, wrote in his own hand a letter to the Tsar who would come to Sarov and Diveyevo, entrusting it to his friend Motovilov, who gave it to Abbess Maria, who in turn handed it personally to Emperor Nicholas II in Diveyevo on July 20, 1903. What was written in the letter remains a secret, but one can suppose that the holy elder saw all that was to happen and warned against the frightful events to come...

Abbot Seraphim, Peking, 1920  
Orthodox Russia, 1981, No.1

## ON FALSE TEACHERS

By St. Nikolai Velimirovic (+1956).

Man is at war in this world. Continual is the battle and numerous are the enemies. Among the most dangerous enemies belong the false teachers. Only if the mind of man is directed toward the Living God will he be safeguarded from these dangerous enemies.

False teachers are either as blind men or as thieves; first, because of their blindness they lead both themselves and others into destruction and second, because of their hatred and envy they intentionally lead others astray, and hand over both their souls and bodies to the fires of hell.

The Lord Himself prophesied: *Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many!* (Mt 24:11). The apostle only confirms the words of his Lord. Both false prophets and false teachers will sow the seed of destruction among the people. These are “damnable heresies” by which some will deny their Lord Who redeemed mankind by His All-pure Holy Blood.

Many false teachers have already appeared and have sown many heresies, damnable as tares, throughout the world. Brethren, if you know those “damnable heresies” which the Holy Fathers condemned at the [Ecumenical] Councils, then you will be able to recognize the principle seed of poison, which the devil through his servants sow in the field, over which the Savior had sown pure wheat. But even if you know or, if you do not know, direct your mind toward the Lord, enclose your mind with the sign of the Cross, call to your assistance the Holy and All-immaculate One, the Theotokos, the chosen ones of God, and especially your guardian angel and do not be afraid. Along with these always ask the Church, and the Church, being more experienced and victorious against all falsehoods, will tell you what the truth is. For you are from yesterday and the Church is from time immemorial. Your memory is shorter than the memory of the Church:

*O Lord Jesus, Thou art the only Path, the only Truth, the only Life. O Lord, do not permit that we be led by false teachers and to apostate ourselves from Thee. To Thee be glory and thanks always. Amen.*

To this should be added what St. Vincent of Lerins said in the 5<sup>th</sup> century: *All possible care must be taken that we hold that Faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.*

How does Ecumenism measure up to this standard? It doesn’t. From a historical point of view, at least, one can assuredly say that Ecumenism was believed nowhere, never, by no one. St. Vincent provides us with a truly Orthodox understanding of the true Catholic Faith in its response to a widespread, but erroneous doctrine: *What if some novel contagion seek to infect not merely an insignificant portion of the Church, but the whole? Then it will be the Christian’s care to cleave to antiquity [i.e. the Church’s ancient teaching], which at this day cannot possibly be seduced by any fraud of novelty.*

## A CASE OF OBEDIENCE

*A selection from the book "The Life and Instructions of Saint Ambrose of Optina."*

Not long before the repose of Elder Ambrose, about two years, I had to go to Optina to collect some money. We had made an *iconostasis* there, and I went to get the payment for our work, a rather substantial sum of money, from the superior. I received the money, and before leaving went to get a blessing from Elder Ambrose for the trip home. I was in a hurry to get back because the following day some people were coming to place a large order, amounting to several tens of thousands.

That day there was as usual a packed crowd of people waiting to see the Elder. He was told that I was waiting, and through his cell-attendant gave instructions that I was to come to him that evening for tea. Although I was anxious to get on my way, the joy and honor of being invited to have tea with the Elder outweighed all other considerations, and I decided to postpone my return trip until the evening, certain that if I travelled all night I would make it home in time.

Evening came and I went to the Elder's cell. He was so cheerful, so joyous: I scarcely felt the ground beneath my feet. Our Batiushka detained me quite a long time. It was already dusk when he said to me, "Well, go with God. Spend the night here and tomorrow I bless you to go to the Liturgy. Afterwards come here for a cup of tea."

How is this possible? I thought to myself. But I didn't venture to contradict the Elder. I spent the night, attended the Liturgy, and went to the Elder's for tea—all the while fretting over my customers. Still, I thought, I could make it back by evening and maybe they'll still be there. Don't bet on it! I finished drinking tea and wanted to say to the Elder, "Bless me to go home," but I didn't have a chance to say a word. "Come tonight," he said, "and spend the night with me." I felt as though my legs were about to give way but still I couldn't bring myself to object.

A day went by, and the night. In the morning I felt bolder and I made up my mind, "Come what may, today I'm leaving. Who knows, maybe my customers waited a day for me." But just imagine! The Elder didn't give me time even to open my mouth before he said to me, "Go to Vespers tonight, and tomorrow to Liturgy. Spend the night with me again tonight!" Was he playing games with me? At this point I was really annoyed and, I have to admit, I even sinned against the Elder. Some clairvoyant, I thought. He's sure to know that thanks to his kindness I've missed a really good

deal. That evening at Vespers I was in no mood to pray. Knocking about in my head were thoughts like "That's your elder for you! That's your clairvoyant! Your income has gone whistling." I was really in a temper.

As if to compound my sin, the Elder, as if—forgive me Lord—to mock me, greeted me after Vespers with such joy. I felt offended, bitter. In the same mood I spent a third night. That night my distress gradually calmed down: water under the bridge. In the morning I came to the Elder. "Well, it's high time you went home. Go with God! God bless you! And in time don't forget to thank Him!"

Here all my distress simply melted away. Leaving Optina, I felt so light-hearted, so joyful that it's impossible to describe. But what did Batiushka mean, "In time don't forget to thank God"? It must be, I thought, because I was granted to attend the Divine Liturgy three days in a row. I didn't even rush home, nor did I give a thought to my customers. I was so grateful that Batiushka had spent so much time with me. I arrived home, and what do you suppose? No sooner had I passed through the gates than my customers rode in after me. They were three days late for our scheduled appointment!

But wait, this isn't the end of the story. Just listen what happened later. Time passed. Our dear Elder Ambrose died. Some two years after his righteous repose my senior workman died. He was a trustworthy fellow; I wouldn't even call him a worker: he was pure gold. He lived with me for more than twenty years. Then he became ill unto death. We sent for a priest, so that he could have Confession and receive the Mysteries while he was still conscious.

Then, from the bed of the dying man the priest comes to me and says, "The sick man is calling for you; he wants to see you. Hurry, before he dies!"

I go into his room and he, as soon as he sees me, with difficulty props himself up on his elbows, looks at me, and sobs: "Forgive my sin, master! I wanted to kill you!" "God be with you, my dear fellow! What are you saying? You're raving!" "No, boss, I really did want to kill you. Do you remember when you were three days late in returning from Optina? Three of us, according to my plan, waited for three days to ambush you from under the bridge. We were greedy for the money you were bringing from Optina in payment for the *iconostasis*. You would have lost your life that night, were it not that the Lord, on account of someone's prayers, saved you from death without repentance. Forgive me, the sinner. For God's sake let my soul depart in peace." "May God forgive you, as I forgive!"

The sick man groaned, and died. God rest his soul...



## THE REALITY OF OUR CONTEMPORARY WESTERN WORLD

An excerpt from "Against False Union" by Dr. Alexander Kalomiros (published in 1990).

### Contemporary Idolatry

And now let us see who are those Europeans with whom they want us to be united as a state and as a Church?

A frightening antinomy characterizes the Europeans: it is the antithesis between the inward and outward man. The European appears to be one thing, but is really something else. He lives and moves in the falsehood of compromises. His entire culture is a collection of conventional lies to which he has adapted himself. He is extremely egocentric, but he conducts himself with absolute and almost exaggerated courtesy.

In the "underdeveloped" countries where the people still lack the finesse of European culture, everyone more or less expresses his inner world with some freedom and simplicity which you cannot find in Europe. Their manners are coarse, but the people are more genuine. In Europe this is considered a lack of culture and spiritual development.

In this way, the constant game of hypocrisy has come to be regarded as culture, where the white-washed tombs are full of stench, and the outside of the cup always cleaned for the sake of the appearance to the people.

But as it happens with Pharisees, that constant lie in which they live does not humble them. On the contrary, their outward perfection makes them certain of their superiority. The most characteristic mark of the Europeans is their conceit. They look down upon all the people whom they consider uncultured or underdeveloped.

A few of them might have a great concern for the needs of others, of persons, of groups, or even of nations, and especially the underdeveloped ones, towards whom they nurture compassionate sentiments, but deep down they are concerned for others the way an entomologist is concerned for insects. The sentiments they nurture for people are inferior to the love they have for their dogs.

They have the same high idea of their civilization as they have of themselves. Having critical minds, they do not accept anything unquestioned, and are proud of it. They consider all values relative, even those which they accept; and they discuss with apparent profundity all that humanity has ever believed. Their customary position is that of well-disposed agnostics who are willing to agree with whatever you tell them, but let you understand that, of course, there is no way of proving anything you say, and therefore, it leaves them neither hot nor cold.

One thing, though, which these agnostics never think of doubting is the value of their own civilization. For them there never arose a higher civilization than their own. There might be sharp criticism about particular cultural problems and great

disagreements over details, but the soundness of their culture's general direction has never been questioned.

The civilization of Europe is based upon a religion, but upon a religion which no one wishes to name as such, because this religion is not the worship of one or many gods, but the worship of man.

The religion of the ancient Greeks and their civilization was nothing else than the worship of man. If the civilization of ancient Greece found such a good reception in the hearts of Europeans, one can attribute it exactly to this inward kinship.

Like the ancient Greeks, the Europeans deified man's reason, his passions, the powers and weaknesses of his soul; in a word, they made man the center, measure, and purpose of all things. The culture of Europe proceeds from man; it exists for man; and it receives its justification from man. There might be disagreements about the ways in which the improvement of man's life may be attained; there might be differences in the manner of worshipping man; there might be different conclusions drawn from man's measurement; but for all and always, man is the center around which they revolve, the source of their inspiration and purpose of their actions.

This is the European. Whatever religion he thinks he might have, deep down his religion is the worship of the idol "man." The European has ceased to see the image of God in man; he sees only the image of himself. In other words, the religion of Europe is the old religion of humanity, the one which separated man from God. God's purpose is to deify man. But man, deceived by the devil, thought that he could become god without the grace of his Creator, on his own initiative and with only his own powers. He rushed to eat of the tree of knowledge before he was mature enough for such food.

The result was that his eyes were opened to know good and evil, to see his bodily and spiritual nakedness, and he was shocked. He could no longer bear to face his Lord and God, and he ran to hide from His face. He realized that a great chasm had been opened between him and his Creator. Then, his merciful Father cursed the first cause of his destruction, the devil—"that old serpent"—and in His infinite love even promised salvation: *And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman [the all-holy Virgin], and between thy seed and her seed [Christ]; and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* (Gen 3:15). And in order that man should not live eternally in that condition of spiritual death, He cast him out of Paradise, *that he should not extend his hand and take from the tree of life and eat and live unto the ages.* (Gen 3:22). Thus, out of His compassion and love, God permitted bodily death and corruption, which, like spiritual death, was the result of the broken communion with the Source of life, so that man would not carry about through the ages his spiritual death, misfortune, and nakedness. And man, being separated from God and living in the constant reality of death, became a slave to the devil.

It was, therefore, as a reaction to the experience of his own nothingness that man worshipped man, proclaiming him god. In fact, the ancients taught that the human soul is a part of the divine nature, in other words, that it is divine in essence and therefore has no need of God.

This inward will of man to believe in his own divinity, together with the fact of his submission to the demonic powers, is the basis of every form of idolatry. The religion of Europe, then, is none other than that primordial idolatry in modern form. **Papacy, Protestantism, humanism, atheism, democracy, fascism, capitalism, communism, and anything else European, are expressions of the same humanistic spirit.**

The civilization of Europe is nothing but the result of man's agonized and persistent effort to place his throne above the throne of God. It is nothing but the erection of a new tower of Babel; confusion about the method of erection may prevail, but the goal remains common for all concerned. The ideal of the European is identical with the ideal of Lucifer. Deep down, it is the same contempt for the goodness of God, the same insult against His love, the same revolt and estrangement from His providence, the same ingratitude, the same desolate path which, instead of leading upward as man thinks he is going, leads to the abyss of death.

#### **With the Cross As Banner**

But the real religion of Europe is concealed and appears formally with a Christian mask. For all the world, Europe is a "Christian land." The devil is truly the clever one par excellence, and his jests have the most tragic consequences for humanity.

The greatest evil which ever befell the world had the Cross as a banner. The Aristotelianism of Western theologians and their discipleship to the idolatrous rationalistic thought of ancient Greece, the transformation of theology into philosophy, the adulteration of the Faith, the Papacy, the thirst for power and worldly authority, the Crusades, the mixing of religion with politics, the Inquisition, the missions which proved to be advance guards for colonizing powers, conquests, wars, the systematic blood-sucking of nations, orgies, frauds, humiliations, and tyranny took place in the name of the Crucified One.

In the face of this tragic deterioration of religion, it was natural that atheism and Protestantism should spring up as an aspiration for deliverance and health. One should note that the atheism which appeared in Europe was not just an indifference, or agnosticism, or a simple epicurean disposition. The atheism of Europe was not an academic denial. It was a strong hate for the God of the Christians as they had come to know Him in Europe; it was a strong passion, a blasphemy, an indignation of the human soul.

In the Orthodox Christian East, from the time of Constantine the Great until the Greek Revolution, such epidemics never appeared. The people of the East had come to know a God completely different from the god which the people of

the West had known; that is why they never came to deny Him, no matter how sinful they were. The first atheists in Greece came from Europe. Their denial, without their even knowing it, was against the religion which they had come to know in Europe. Their atheism was nourished by the faults of the Christians and the adulteration of the Christian truth which had taken place in the West.

Similarly, Protestantism might appear to be a separate heresy. But in actuality, it originated as a rejection of Catholicism. Protestantism never had a religious position. On the contrary, it was and is a religious denial. What justifies it is the presence of Catholicism. If Catholicism would disappear, then Protestantism would have no reason for existence.

#### **The Way of Knowledge**

Today, atheism as well as Protestantism might be turned against Orthodoxy. But this assault is based on a deception. They detest Orthodoxy because they see her with their own criteria, with their own mentality. They see her as a variant of Catholicism. This is not due to an ill disposition on their part, but to a total inability to judge by other standards and to think with another mentality.

**Catholicism, Protestantism, and atheism are on the same level.** They are offsprings of the same mentality. All three are philosophical systems, offsprings of rationalism, that is, of the notion that human reason is the foundation of certainty, the measure of truth, and the way of knowledge.

Orthodoxy is on a completely different level. The Orthodox have a different mentality. They regard philosophy as a dead end which never led man to certainty, truth, and knowledge. They respect human reason as no one else, and they never violate it. They regard it as one of the useful factors in detecting falsehood and uncovering error. But they do not accept it as capable of giving man certainty, of enlightening him to see the truth, or guiding him to knowledge.

Knowledge is the vision of God and of His creation in a heart purified by divine grace and the struggles and prayers of man. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Truth is not a series of definitions, but God Himself, Who appeared concretely in the person of Christ, Who said: *I am the Truth.*

Certainty is not a matter of intellectual harmony; it is a deep assurance of the heart. It comes to man after inner vision and is accompanied by the warmth of divine grace. Intellectual harmony, which is the outcome of a logical ordering of things, is never accompanied by this assurance.

Philosophy is characterized by conceptualization. The human intellect cannot accept reality as it is. It transposes it first into symbols and then elaborates upon the symbols. But the symbols are counterfeit figures of reality. The concepts are as distant from reality as a picture of a fish from a live fish. The truth of the philosopher is a series of figures and images. These symbols present one great advantage; they are comprehensible. They are cut to man's measurements and satisfy the

intellect. But they also present a great disadvantage; they have no relation to living reality.

Living reality does not fit into the categories of the human intellect. It is a condition above reason. Philosophy is an attempt to transpose the suprarational into rational. But this is counterfeit and fraudulent. That is why Orthodoxy rejects philosophy and does not accept it as a way to knowledge.

The only way to knowledge is purity of heart. It alone permits the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in man. In this way alone is God and His whole creation known, without being conceptualized. He is known as He really is, without becoming comprehensible and without being diminished in order to fit into the stifling limits of the human intellect. Thus, the *nous* of man, living and uncomprehending, comes into union with the living and incomprehensible God. Knowledge is the living contact of man with the Creator and His creation, in mutual love.

The experience of knowledge is something which cannot be expressed in human words. When the Apostle Paul came to know, he said that he had heard unspeakable words—something which is impossible for man to express.

Such is the deeper Christian theology—inexpressible. Dogmas are helpful formulations. But they are not actual knowledge; they simply guide and protect from error. A man can have knowledge without knowing the dogmas, and he can know all the dogmas and accept them without having knowledge. This is why, beyond the affirmative theology of dogmas, the Fathers placed the deep mystery of negative theology where no definition is acceptable, where the mind is silent and ceases to move, where the heart opens its door to receive the Great Visitor *Who stands at the door and knocks*, where the mind sees Him Who Is. And let no one think that these things are true only in regard to the suprarational knowledge which is a movement of God towards man. Man can know nothing with his reason, and he can be certain of nothing—neither of himself, of the world, nor even of the most ordinary and common things.

Who honestly waited to hear Descartes' syllogism "I think, therefore I am" to be certain that he truly exists? And who waited for the philosophers to prove that the world around him is real in order to believe that it is? Besides, such a proof has never existed and will never exist, and they who are engaged in philosophy well know it. No one has ever been able to actually prove by his reason that our thoughts and our own selves, as well as the world around us, are not fantasies. But even if someone were to prove it logically, which is impossible, that logical proof would not be able to assure anyone.

If we are certain that we exist and that our friends are not figments of our imagination, this is not due to the proofs of the philosophers, but to an inward knowledge and an inward consciousness which gives us certainty of everything without syllogisms and proofs.

This is natural knowledge. It is the knowledge of the heart and not of the brain. It is the sure foundation for every thought. Reason can build upon it without fear of toppling. But without it, reason builds upon sand. It is this natural knowledge which guides man in the way of the Gospel and enables him to separate truth from falsehood, good from evil. It is the first step which raises man to the throne of God. When man with his free will ascends the first steps of natural knowledge, then God Himself leans over and covers him with that heavenly knowledge of the mysteries *which are not permitted for man to utter*.

The preaching of the Apostles and Fathers, the Prophets, and the Gospel, the words of Christ Himself, are directed to man's natural knowledge. This is the province of dogmas and affirmative theology. It is the manger where faith is born. The beginning of faith is the heart's ability to grasp that the truth speaks in the small book called the Gospel, that in that commonplace church of poor and faithful people, God descends and dwells. When fear takes hold of one because he steps on the earth which the hand of God laid out, because he gazes at the great and broad sea, because he walks and breathes, then his eyes will begin to shed tears—tears of repentance, tears of love, tears of joy—and he will feel the first caresses of unspeakable mysteries.

Natural knowledge exists in all men, but it is not of the same purity in all. Love of pleasure has the power to darken it. The passions are like a fog, and that is why **few men find the road to truth**. How many people have been lost in the maze of philosophy, seeking a little light which they shall never see?

In this maze it is not important if one is a Christian or atheist, Protestant or Catholic, Platonist or Aristotelian. There is one common identifying mark on them all—darkness. Whoever enters the cave of rationalism ceases to see. And whatever garments he is wearing, they take on the same dark color. In their discussions they understand each other very well because they have the same presuppositions, the presuppositions of darkness. But it is impossible for them to understand those who are not in the maze and who see the light. And no matter what those on the outside tell them, they understand everything with their own presuppositions and cannot see in what way the others might be superior.



It is possible to find a middle word that between two views will signify both. But a middle view between two opposite views concerning the same thing is impossible... **There is no room for compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith.**

St. Mark of Ephesus

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## ON THE FINAL JUDGMENT

By Elder Paisios the Athonite.

### How will the Final Judgment take place?

On the Day of Judgment, each person's state will be revealed in an instant and each one will move on to where he deserves to be. Each person will observe his own wretched state like on a television screen, as well as the other's state. He will see himself reflected against the other and will bow his head in shame and thus move on to the place that he deserves.

For example, a daughter-in-law who used to sit indifferently cross-legged in the presence of her mother-in-law, who although suffering a broken leg, was nevertheless taking care of her little grandchild, will not be able to say "Why, o my Christ, are you putting my mother-in-law in Paradise but not me?" Because that precise scene will appear before her eyes (during Judgment). She will be recalling the scene of her mother-in-law standing on her broken leg to attend to her little grandchild, and she will know she doesn't deserve to go to Paradise—and neither will there be any space for her there.

Or, when monks who have seen the difficulties and the trials that secular people have been undergoing and how they were confronted—but they themselves (as monks) had not lived accordingly—they will hang their heads in shame, and head for where they deserve.



Nuns who had not pleased God will see there all the hero-mothers—who had taken no vows nor had the blessings and opportunities that the nuns had—and how those mothers struggled and to what spiritual state they had reached... And at the same time, their daughters, the nuns, had preoccupied and tormented themselves with all those petty matters; these nuns will be ashamed of themselves!

That is how my thoughts perceive that Judgment will take place. Christ is not going to say: "Hey you, come here! What have you done?" Or "You there, you are going to Hell!" While "You over here, you are going to Heaven." Rather, each one of us will compare himself to the others and will proceed to where he knows his place is.

### How is a soul purged?

When a person upholds God's commandments, works on himself and cleanses himself of passions, that is when his nous becomes illumined, then reaches the heights of *theoria* ("seeing" God) and the soul is brightened and becomes like it was before the Fall of

the first-fashioned humans. It is the state a person will be in, after the resurrection of the dead. However, one can see the resurrection of his soul even before the common resurrection, if one becomes cleansed of all his passions; his body will then become angelic, immaterial, and it will not care about material sustenance.