

Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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ON OUR TIMES

St. Paisios of the Holy Mount Athos.

The spirit of lukewarmness reigns. There's no manliness at all. We've been spoiled for good. How does God still tolerate us? Today's generation is the generation of indifference. There are no warriors. The great majority are fit for parades and feasts only.

Godlessness and blasphemy are allowed to appear on television. And the Church is silent and doesn't excommunicate the blasphemers. And they need to be excommunicated. What are they waiting for? Let's not wait for someone else to pull the snake out from its hole so that we can live in peace.

They're silent out of indifference. What's bad is that even people who've got something inside have begun to grow cool, saying: "Can I really do anything to change the situation?" We have to witness our faith with boldness, because if we continue to be silent we'll have to answer in the end. In these difficult days each must do what's in their power. Leave what's out of their power to the will of God. In this way our conscience will be clear.

If we don't resist, then our ancestors will arise from their graves. They suffered so much for the Fatherland, and we? What are we doing for it? If Christians don't begin to witness their faith, to resist evil, then the destroyers will become even more insolent. But today's Christians are no warriors. If the Church keeps silent, to avoid conflict with the government, if the metropolitans are silent, if the monks hold their peace, then who will speak up?

† † †

A lukewarm clergy lulls the people to sleep, leaves them in their for-

mer condition so they won't be upset. "Look," they say, "by all means do not tell them that there will be a war, or the Second Coming, that one must prepare oneself for death. We must not make people alarmed!" And others speak with a false kindness, saying: "We mustn't expose heretics and their delusions, so as to show our love for them." Today's people are water-soluble. There's no leaven in them.

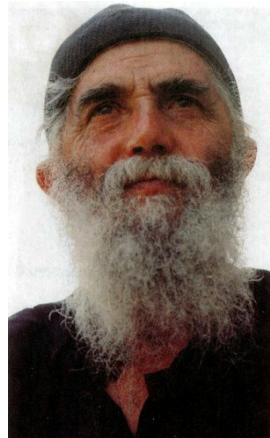
If I avoid upsetting myself to protect my fleshly comfort then I'm indifferent to holiness! Spiritual meekness is one thing, and softness and indifference are quite another. Some say: "I'm a Christian and therefore I have to be joyful and calm." But they're not Christian. They're simply indifferent. And their joy is only a worldly joy.

The person in whom these worldly seeds are present is not a spiritual person. A spiritual person consists of nothing but pain. In other words, he's in pain at what's going on, he's in pain for people's condition. And divine comfort is bestowed upon him for his pain.

† † †

Our goal is to live an Orthodox life, not just to speak or write Orthodox. If the preacher has no personal experience then his sermons won't go to the heart, won't change people. To think like an Orthodox is easy, but to live an Orthodox life requires effort.

Today God tolerates what's going on. Tolerates, so that evil people will be unable to justify themselves. God expects patience, prayer and struggle from us. If you anger when you yourself are offended, your anger is unclean. But if someone is offended in the service of holiness, that means the zeal of God is in him. Indignation can be righteous when



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

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it’s indignation for God’s sake. That’s the only justifiable kind of indignation in a person.

It’s unseemly to become angry in one’s own defense. Resisting evildoers is another matter, however, when it’s in defense of serious spiritual matters, when our holy faith, Orthodoxy, is concerned. Then it’s your duty. To think of others, to counter the blasphemers in order to defend one’s neighbor—this is pure, because it is carried out in love.

† † †

Evil lies within us. There is no love in us, so we don’t feel all people to be brothers and are tempted by [our knowledge of] their sinful ways. But it’s not right when moral failings become known to all. The injunction of the Gospels to “*tell it unto the church*” (Mt 18:17) doesn’t mean that everything has to become known to everyone. By exposing the moral failings of our brother we arm the enemies of the Church, give them another pretext to escalate the war against Her. And the faith of the weak is shaken in this way too.

If you want to help the Church, then try to mend your own ways, rather than others’. In straightening yourself out you straighten out a particle of the Church. If everyone were to do that then the Church would be in perfect order. But today’s people attend to everything under the sun, only not to themselves, because it’s easy to teach others, while mending one’s own ways requires effort.

† † †

If we expose someone out of love, with pain in our hearts, then a change will occur in his heart whether he understands us or not. But to expose without love, with partiality, only enrages the object of our exposure. Our hostility strikes against his egoism, producing sparks like flint against steel.

If we tolerate our brother out of love, he will feel it. But he also feels our hostility, even if we keep it inside and don’t

express it. Our hostility arouses alarm in him. We must always ask ourselves: “Why do I want to say what I’m about to say? What is motivating me? Do I really care about my neighbor or do I just want to show him how wonderful I am, to show off a bit?” If someone tries to solve ecclesiastical problems allegedly out of faith, but really thinking of his own advantage, then how can such a person win God’s blessing?

† † †

Sweet words and great truths have value when uttered by righteous lips. They take root only in people of good will and clean conscience.

Truth, when used without judgment, can commit a crime. And he who possesses sincerity without reason commits a twofold evil, first against himself, then against others, because there’s no empathy in his sincerity. A Christian must not be a fanatic but have love in his heart for all. He who throws words around carelessly, even true words, does evil.

Veneration is a good thing, and the predisposition for good is also good, but spiritual judgment and breadth are needed to guard against fanaticism, that false companion of reverence.

† † †

Wakefulness and sobriety are needed. All that a person does he must do for the sake of God. Christ must be at the source of every movement. Much attention is required, for when we do something with the aim of pleasing others we gain no benefit.

We ascend to the heavens not through earthly striving but by humbling ourselves spiritually. He who goes low goes sure and never falls. Ours is an age of sensationalism and hullabaloo. But the spiritual life is not noisy. Divine enlightenment is required and when it’s not there the person abides in darkness. He may act out of good intentions but create many problems in his confusion, both for the Church and for society.

There was a time when the Holy Spirit enlightened us and showed us the way. A grand business! Today it finds no reason to descend to us. Difficult years are ahead. The Old Testament Tower of Babel was child's play compared with our age.

† † †

It's possible that you'll live through much which is described in the Book of Revelations. Much is coming to the surface, little by little. The situation is horrible. Madness has gone beyond all bounds. Apostasy is upon us, and now the only thing left is for the *son of perdition* (2 Thess 2:3) to come.

The world has turned into a madhouse. A great confusion will reign, in which each government will begin to do whatever comes into its head. We'll see how the most unlikely, the most insane, events will happen. The only good thing is that these events will happen in very quick succession.

Ecumenism, common markets (European Union), a one-world government, a single made-to-order religion: such is the plan of these devils. The Zionists are already preparing their messiah. For them the false-messiah will be king, will rule here on earth.

A great discord will arise. In this discord everyone will clamor for a king to save them. At that moment they'll offer up their man, who'll say: "I'm the Imam, I'm the fifth Buddha, I'm the Christ whom Christians are awaiting. I'm the one whom the Jehovah's Witnesses have been waiting for. I'm the Jewish messiah."

† † †

Very difficult times are ahead for the faithful. Great trials await us. Christians will suffer great persecutions. Meanwhile, it's obvious that people don't understand that we're on the verge of the end times, that the seal of the Antichrist is becoming a reality. As if nothing's happening. That's why Holy Scripture says that even the chosen will be deceived.

The Zionists want to rule the earth. To achieve their ends they use black magic and satanism. They regard satan-worship as a means to gain the strength they need to carry out their plans. They want to rule the earth using satanic power. God is not something they take into account.

One sign that the fulfillment of prophecy is near will be the destruction of the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem. They'll destroy it in order to restore the Temple of Solomon which used to be on the same place. In the end the Jews will pronounce the Antichrist messiah in this rebuilt temple.

The rabbis know that the true Messiah has already come and that they crucified Him. They know this, and yet they are blinded by egoism and fanaticism.

† † †

Two thousand years ago it was written in the Book of Revelations that people will be marked with the number "666." As Holy Scripture says, the ancient Hebrews laid a tax on the peoples they conquered in various wars. The yearly tax was equal to 666 talents of gold. (1 Kgs 10:14: *the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold*; and 2 Chr 9:13: *the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold*). Today, in order to subjugate the whole world they'll once again introduce the old tax number linked to their glorious past. That is, "666" is the number of mammon.

Everything is going as planned. They put the number a long time ago on credit cards. As a result, he who is not marked with the number "666" will be unable to buy, sell, get a loan, or find work.

† † †

Providence tells me that the Antichrist wants to subjugate the world using this system. It will be foisted upon people with the help of the mechanisms which control the world economy, for only those who receive the mark, an image with the number "666," will be able to take part in economic life.

The mark will be an image which will first be placed on all products, and then people will be compelled to wear it on their hand or forehead. Little by little, after the introduction of ID cards with the three sixes, after the creation of a personal dossier, they'll use cunning to introduce the mark.

In Brussels a whole palace with three sixes has been built to house a central computer. This computer can keep track of billions of people. And we Orthodox are resisting this because we don't want the Antichrist and we don't want dictatorship either.

† † †

The most we can suffer is martyrdom.

There will be three and a half hard years. Those who don't agree with the system will have a rough time. They'll constantly be trying to imprison them, using any pretext they can find. They won't torture anyone, but without the mark it will simply be impossible for a person to live. "You're suffering without the mark," they'll say. "And if you had just accepted it you would have had no difficulties."

For this reason, by learning to live a simple, moderate life here and now you'll be able to get through those years. By getting a little bit of land, raising a little wheat and some



potatoes, planting some olive trees, and keeping animals of some sort, a goat or chickens, the Christian will be able to feed his family. Stockpiling is of little use: Food doesn't keep for long before spoiling.

But these oppressions will not last for long; three, three and a half years. For the sake of the chosen the days will be hastened. God won't leave a person without help. Tomorrow thunder will strike, and the brief dictatorship of the Antichrist-satan will come. Then Christ will intervene, will give the whole anti-Christian system a good shaking up. He'll trample upon evil and turn everything to good use in the end.

- And if someone receives the mark unknowingly?

It'd be better to say "uncaringly." How can one be unknowing, when everything is crystal clear? And if a person doesn't know, then he should become interested and find out. By accepting the mark, even unknowingly, a person loses Divine Grace and gives himself up to demonic influence.

When a priest immerses the infant in the baptismal font, the infant receives the Holy Spirit without knowing it, and Divine Grace begins to abide in him.

- Some people say: "What's destined by God to be will be. What business is it of ours?"

They can say whatever they want, but in reality it's not like that! Unfortunately, some modern priests diaper their flock like infants, to keep them from getting upset. "What's going on today isn't important," they say. "Don't be alarmed. All you need is to have faith in your hearts." Or they scold: "Don't speak on that topic, about ID cards or the mark of the beast. It will just upset people." If they were to say instead: "Let's try to live more spiritually, to be nearer to Christ and not to be afraid of anything. You see, the most we can suffer is martyrdom," then they'd at least be preparing their flock for the coming tribulations.

Knowing the truth, a person will begin to mull things over and shake himself out of his sleep. What's going on will begin to cause him pain. He'll begin to pray and to be on his guard, so as to not fall into that trap.

† † †

What do we see now? It's bad enough that cunning "interpreters of Scripture" are commenting prophecy after their own fashion. They're representatives of the clergy, but they're more cowardly than lay people. And it would behoove them to exhibit a healthy spiritual unease and help Christians

by sowing beneficial concern so they'll be strengthened in their faith and receive divine consolation.

I'm amazed: Doesn't what's happening give them any cause for concern? And why don't they at least add a question mark to the interpretations they come up with? And if they help the Antichrist and thus lead other souls to perdition?

No, behind the "perfected credit card system," behind "computerized security," lurks worldwide dictatorship and the yoke of the Antichrist: *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.* (Rev 13:16-18).

† † †



The world has lost control of itself. Honor and self-sacrifice have abandoned people. The taste of sacrificial joy is unknown to today's people, and that's why they're so tortured. For only when you co-participate in the pain of another do miracles happen.

If a person doesn't cultivate in himself the spirit of self-sacrifice then he thinks only of himself and doesn't receive Divine Grace. The more a person forgets himself, the more God remembers him. Those who die heroically

don't really die. And where there's no heroism nothing worthwhile can be expected.

Our time is like a bubbling and steaming cauldron. One needs temperament, audacity, courage. Take care not to be caught unprepared, if something is to happen. Start getting ready now so that you'll be able to resist difficulties. Christ Himself tells us: *Therefore be ye also ready* (Mt 24:44), doesn't He? Today, living in such complicated times, we have to be not merely ready, but triply ready, at the minimum!

Possibly we may meet not only with sudden death, but with other dangers. So let's drive away the desire to arrange our lives comfortably! May love of honor and the spirit of self-sacrifice live in us.

† † †

I see that something is in the works, that something lies just around the corner, but it's constantly being put off. Little delays all the time. Who's creating the delays? God? Another month passes, then another couple of months!

That's how it all goes. But since we know what awaits us, let's develop love in ourselves, to the degree that we can. That's the main thing: for true brotherly love to exist between us. Kindness, love — that's strength! Guard the secret as well as you can and don't indulge in excessive frankness. If "he and I and the bell-ringer" are all in on the secret, then what will come of that?

Death in battle adds greatly to God's mercy, for a person who dies the death of the brave sacrifices himself to defend others. Those who give up their lives out of pure love in order to defend their neighbor are imitating Christ. These people are supreme heroes. They arouse fear in our enemies. Death herself trembles before them, because they scorn her due to their great love, and attain immortality in this fashion, finding the key to eternity under the gravestone. They enter into eternal blessedness without difficulty.

That's why I say to you: Cultivate self-sacrifice, brotherly love. May each of you attain a spiritual condition which will allow you to get out of difficult situations. Without a spiritual condition a person loses courage, because he loves himself. He can renounce Christ, betray Him.

You must be ready for death. We believe that nothing is in vain, that our sacrifice has meaning.

† † †

Remove your "I" from everything you do. The person who leaves his "I" rises above the earth, moves in another atmosphere. As long as he remains inside himself he cannot become a heavenly being.

There is no spiritual life without sacrifice. Try to remember, at least a little bit, that death exists. And since we'll die in any case, let's not take care of ourselves too much. Look after your health, but not to the degree where you begin to bow down before your peace and well-being. I'm not asking anyone to throw themselves headlong into dangerous adventures, but you have to have at least a bit of heroism, my brother!..

Feats are committed not by the tall in size but by the audacious, the heartfelt, and the self-sacrificing. There's no barbarity in spiritual audacity. Such people don't fire at the enemy, but over his head, forcing him to surrender. A kind man prefers being killed to killing. The harmonious person is prepared for accepting divine powers.

The mean, the cowardly, and the small of spirit, on the other hand, use impudence to hide their fear. They're afraid of themselves as well as others and shoot without stopping. Courage and audacity are one thing; criminality and malice quite another. In order to succeed at anything one needs a

wild streak, in the positive sense. He who lacks this wild streak can become neither a hero nor a saint. The heart must become uncalculating.

† † †

In our age audacity has become a rarity. Water, not blood, flows in people's veins. So if a war were to break out, God forbid, many would simply die of fright while others would lose heart, because they're used to an easy life. Fear is necessary when it helps a person turn to God. Fear from lack of faith, from lack of trust in God, on the other hand, is ruinous.

Such fear is driven out by audacity. We must remember: The more a person fears, the more he is tempted by the enemy. If a person refuses to strive to become courageous, and doesn't strive for real love, then when a difficult situation arises he'll become a laughingstock.

The warrior takes joy in the fact that he's dying so that others won't have to. If you dispose yourself this way then nothing will

be frightening. Courage is born from much love, kindness and self-sacrifice. Today people don't even want to hear about death. However, the person that does not maintain remembrance of death is living outside of reality. Those who fear death and love life's vanities are in a state of spiritual stagnation. Bold people, who always keep death before them and think about it constantly, on the other hand, conquer vanity and begin to live in eternity and heavenly joy while still here on earth.

May he who fights in the war for Faith and Fatherland cross himself and not fear, for God is his helper!

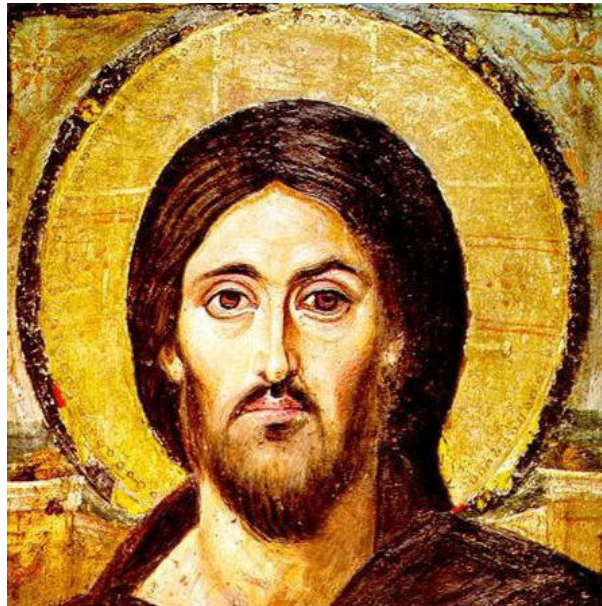
God Himself will decide whether he is to die or to live. One needs to trust God, not oneself.

† † †

Providence tells me that many events will happen: The Russians will take Turkey and Turkey will disappear from the world map because a third of the Turks will become Christians, another third will die in the war and another third will leave for Mesopotamia.

The Mid-East will become a theater of a war in which the Russians will take place. Much blood will be spilled. The Chinese, with an army of 200 million, will cross the Euphrates and go all the way to Jerusalem. The sign that this event is approaching will be the destruction of the Mosque of Omar, for its destruction will mark the beginning of work by the Jews to rebuild the Temple of Solomon, which was built on the same spot.

There will be a great war between Russians and Europeans, and much blood will be spilled. Greece won't play a leading role in that war, but they'll give her Constantinople. Not



because the Russians adore the Greeks, but because no better solution will be found. The city will be handed over before the army has a chance to get there.

The Jews, inasmuch as they'll have great power and the help of the European leadership, will become proud and insolent beyond measure and conduct themselves shamelessly. They'll try to rule Europe.

They'll play all sorts of tricks, but the resulting persecutions will lead Christians to unite completely. However, they won't unite in the way desired by those who are now engaging in various machinations to create a single church united under a single religious leadership. Christians will unite because the unfolding situation will naturally separate the sheep from the goats. Then the prophecy of *one flock and one shepherd* will actually come to pass.

† † †

Don't give in to panic. Cowards are of use to no one. God looks at a person's situation and helps him. We have to remain calm and use our brains. No matter what happens, we must continue to pray, think and act. It's best to always stand up to a difficult situation using spiritual means. However that spiritual boldness which is born of holiness and striving towards God is missing today, as is the natural boldness needed in order not to turn coward in the face of danger.

In order to hold back a great evil, great holiness is needed. A spiritual person can hold back evil and help others. In the spiritual life the biggest coward can attain great courage by entrusting himself to Christ and His divine help. He can go to the front lines, do battle with the enemy, and win! So therefore we will fear God alone, not people, no matter how evil they may be. The fear of God makes any coward into a hero! A person becomes fearless to the extent he unites with God.



In the second coming, the Holy Apostles and the Prophets will show the pains, the struggles of preaching, the persecutions, the exiles, the imprisonments, and the deaths they forbore for Christ. The Martyrs will show the blood they shed for Christ's love. The Monastic Saints will show their ascetical struggles, the prayers, the fasts, the deprivations and the tears of repentance. The just and charitable will show the righteousness and charities.

What will you show?...

Analogous to your love towards God and neighbor, analogous to the toils, sweats, struggles, fasts, vigils, prayers. Analogous to the contrition and the tears you will shed to purify your soul, and grace will be given to you from God.

Elder Philotheos Zervakos (+1980)

AN ANCIENT PRAYER TO THE THEOTOKOS

Source: The web pages of "Orthodox Matters," <http://orthodoxathemata.blogspot.com/>, December 2014 (translated by the staff of "Orthodox Heritage").



Egyptian archaeologists have discovered near the Alexandria area a 3rd century papyrus (scroll) with Coptic and Greek script. The scroll contains what is believed to possibly be the oldest written testimony of a Christian prayer to the Holy Virgin Mary.

Reading and translating the text of this ancient manuscript has been made possible; as the public announcement by the Patriarchate of Antioch indicates, it prayerfully invokes divine mercy for its reader and the protection of believers by the Holy Virgin.

Archaeologists stress that finding this manuscript constitutes an absolute refutation of the skeptics who bring into question the practice of praying to saints and the Virgin Mary in the early centuries of Christianity.



Great is our honor—though unworthy—to have been called by God to serve in the work of saving souls as His tools, bearing in mind that if others (Apostles, etc.) had not sacrificed their souls for our sake, we would not be children of God and heirs of heavenly blessings. Therefore, let us do whatever we can; the work will be completed by Him who has the power to perfect it.

Think about how the first Christians struggled during the times of the catacombs; with what self-sacrifice, with what love they sacrificed things dear to them when Christian duty called. And in the end, their sacrifices brought them eternal glory.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheou

[“Counsels from the Holy Mountain”]

ORTHODOX MODESTY IN DRESS AND GROOMING

From "Orthodox Tradition," vol. XVII (January, 2000), pp. 24-28. See also the sobering homily for women on Isaiah 3:24 by St. Nikolai Velimirovich in "The Prologue from Ochrid," Vol. III, pp. 183-185. This article is also posted in the web pages of the excellent site "Orthodox Christian Information Center," <http://orthodoxinfo.com/>.

Visiting a couple of your parishes, I noticed that the women cover their heads in church. I asked Father [name deleted] when I visited him. He explained that the women cover their heads in church, don't cut their hair short and don't wear pants or tight clothes even outside church...The men he said usually have moustaches and dress with long sleeves....I do not mean to be disrespectful, but what does this have to do with Orthodoxy? There aren't any church teachings about these matters of personal choice, as far as I know. I am a woman and have short hair and wear pants almost always (not in church). But this sounds a little fanatic and strange to me. My priest says that it is quaint and borrowed from Protestant fundamentalists, which surprised me. Perhaps you could say something about this in Orthodox Tradition. (M.I., CA)

† † †

This question is one which comes up very often in the Church. It is not easy to answer, since correct Christian behavior is predicated on the good intention of the Christian and his desire to adhere to and follow the precepts of the Fathers of the Church. Church rules never force a Christian to fulfill empty rules, but serve as guides to those who intuitively grasp the fullness of the Faith, which leads us to a way of life in which even the way that we eat, walk, speak, dress, and groom ourselves draws us and those around us to a loftier life, making us a peculiar people and *a people apart from the world* (Tit 2:14; Jn 15:19). Thus, for centuries Orthodox men and women have followed a style of dress and adornment that reflects the *ethos* of a Christianity lived *partly on earth and partly in Heaven*.

Women have traditionally avoided cutting their hair short, wearing male attire (pants and other clothes which emphasize the body),* or adorning themselves with excessive jewelry and make-up. Men, too, are called to dress modestly, to avoid wearing their hair in such a way as to appear effeminate, and to maintain at least a moustache, so as to avoid the same impression. Orthodox Christians have adhered to these traditions because they express a living Faith, not because faithfulness to such customs and traditions is demanded by the Church or because they constitute, as such, matters of confession. They are undertaken in that freedom which we all find in Christ, which is not a fetter which binds, but a light yoke which helps us move forward in rightly cultivating the seeds of the Christian life.

Having said this, there is, of course, a level at which the intentional defiance of Church customs and traditions sometimes reflects a wrong course in one's spiritual life and a worldly spirit that thwarts growth in Christ. This is especially true in an age when men and women, but especially women, purposely pit their personal preferences and perceived rights against ecclesiastical customs, somehow thinking that human rights (and especially those of women)—which the Church certainly respects and rightly defends—take precedence over submission to the Church and Her traditions. In voluntarily submitting to the Church, neither a man nor woman gives up his personal rights; rather, he brings them into focus in the realm of humility and obedience which the Church constitutes.

If human rights are sacred in the world, they are made sublime when they are freely relinquished in the ecclesiastical kingdom of humility. For our freedom in Christ makes submission victorious and self-elevating and self-assertion self-defeating. Moreover, when a turning-away from humility and modesty leads others into sin, as is often the case with immodest apparel and stylish dress (after all, "sex appeal" and style are not separate things, and most certainly so in the world of women's fashion), then, whatever one's intentions, he risks scandalizing others. Here intention becomes a secondary issue and the lack of discretion and prudence convict a violator of Church custom by the harm brought upon others.

If all of this seems to be simply a matter of hard-headed fanaticism on the part of traditionalist "fundamentalists," a popular accusation these days, let us point out that the Patristic and Canonical witness of the Church is unequivocal in setting forth rules that call both men and women to a strict standard of modesty, with special attention to women's attire, adornment, and grooming. And this witness would lead any prudent Christian to believe that the Church's proscription against immodest dress and grooming in women—whether in wearing pants, tight dresses, and otherwise revealing clothing, or in excessively cutting, styling, and adorning their hair—is anything but fundamentalistic.

Ecclesiastical teaching on this matter is wise, moderate, and commendable. Nor can one justly argue that the practice of a woman covering her head during prayer is demeaning or primitive. It is a part of tradition, binds her, once more, to the liberating submissiveness that is freedom in Christ, and brings her to a state of greater glory, to expand on the words of St. Paul (1 Cor 11:15), than even *the hair which adorns her head*. In this submission, she is one with the Christian man, who in his quiet obedience to the Church also learns from and draws on her exemplary witness. There follow, then, a few representative Patristic and Canonical passages on the matter of modesty in Christian dress and grooming, only several from the very many others that could be cited.

In his twenty-sixth Homily on I Corinthians (*Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXI, Cols. 219-220), St. John Chrysostomos, citing St. Paul's declaration, [*I*]f a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering (I Cor 11:15), pointedly notes that this understanding is *not unknown even to Barbarians*. He further observes that it is a shame for a woman to have cut hair or a shaved head. With regard to controversy arising from St. Paul's prescription that women cover their heads in Church, he writes: "And if...[her hair]...be given her for a covering," say you, "wherefore need she add another covering?" That not only nature, but also her own will may take part in her acknowledgment of subjection. In short, the Divine Chrysostomos, one of the greatest of the Church Fathers, supports St. Paul's desire that a Christian woman should not cut and shave her hair, while pointing out that the obedience of covering her head in prayer is an act of subjection to God and the Church. He further warns that to ignore these things is to *subvert the very laws of nature* and demonstrates a spirit of *most insolent rashness*.

In his eighth Homily on I Timothy (see *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. LXII, Cols. 540-542), St. John Chrysostomos also speaks to us about St. Paul's admonition that *women dress and adorn themselves modestly, avoiding excessive jewelry, decoration, and flamboyant dress* (I Timothy 2:9). Paul, however, requires something more of women.

He requires that "they adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided [coiffured] hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

Elaborating on this passage, he asks: *But what is this "modest apparel?" Such attire as covers them wholly and properly, not with superfluous ornaments, for the one is appropriate, while the other is not.* He directs to women who ignore these guidelines some sternly sobering words: *Do you approach God to pray with styled hair and gold jewelry? Have you come to a dance, a marriage, or some fancy parade? There such styling and costly clothing may be acceptable, but here [in Church] none of this is desirable. You come here to pray [and] to beg for the forgiveness of your sins... This is not the dress of a suppliant... She who weeps should not be wearing gold. This is nothing but acting and hypocrisy... Put away such hypocrisy! God is not mocked! This is the garb of actors and dancers... Nothing of this kind is appropriate to a modest woman, who should be adorned "with shamefacedness and sobriety."*



On these subjects the canonical witness of the Church is also not silent. The Ninety-Sixth Canon of the Synod in Trullo [*Penthekte*] reads: *Those who are by baptism clothed in Christ have professed that they will imitate His way of life in the flesh. Those, therefore, who style and trim the hairs of their head, to the ruin of onlookers, with inventive intertwinings, and thereby provide enticement for unstable souls, we paternally proffer an appropriate penance, so as to cure them, instructing and teaching them to live prudently, setting aside the deceit and vanity of materialism, that they might ever give over their minds to a blessed life without havoc, being fearful in their pure intercourse, thus approaching God to the extent possible through their purity of life; embellishing the inner man instead of the outer, so that, adorned with virtues and sweet and blameless ways, there might not be in them the remains of the coarseness of the adversary. But if any should act in opposition to the present Canon, let him be kept from communing.* (See *Pedalion, or The Rudder*,

Thessaloniki: B. Regopoulos, 1982, p. 305).

Commenting in his "Interpretation" of this Canon, St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite punctuates the fact that it provides excommunication (suspension from Holy Communion for a period of time, as specified by one's Confessor) for *those Christians who style the hair of their head, and comb it and wave it, and flaunt it as enticement to those souls who are of weak faith and easily led astray,*

pointing out that this admonition falls on both men and women. He emphasizes that Christians must conduct themselves in an innocent and pure manner, avoiding all vanity and falseness, adorning the soul with virtue and eschewing the marks of the Devil that the stylish adorning of the body entails. (*Ibid.*, pp. 304-306.)

The Canons of the Church are not meant to violate our freedom in Christ or to form our faith by dead rules that fail to acknowledge both the good intentions of those who at times err and the exceptions to rules that lie within the realm of pastoral discretion. St. Nicodemos' comments, nevertheless, should serve as a reminder to all of us that the customs and traditions of the Church are not things with which we are free to trifle; nor, indeed, should personal opinion, mere convenience, or an abuse of pastoral condescension lead us into a way of life that serves as a source of scandal to others and to violations of the standard of sobriety to which all Christians are called.

It goes without saying, of course, that, in upholding the traditional grooming customs and dress codes of the Church,

we should never judge or condemn anyone among the faithful who deviates from them. We should approach them with care and evaluate each individual by the quality of his or her Christian life. As for individuals who openly defy the customs and traditions in question out of tenacity, making *excuses in sins* (Pss 140, *Septuaginta*), and who refuse at the very least to acknowledge their weakness, let the Church leaders settle the matter. The faithful should not make such things a matter of rigid rules and division, lest they, too, become a source of scandal and act in a truly sectarian manner, rightly earning the condemnation improperly attributed to us traditionalists by overt innovators who would like to dismiss all that is difficult in the Faith as fundamentalistic.

† † †

(*) With regard to “cross-dressing,” or dress styles which downplay the distinction between men and women, the Old Testamental witness is worthy of mention here: *The apparel of a man shall not be on a woman, neither shall a man put on a woman’s dress; for every one that does these things is an abomination to the Lord thy God.* (Deut 22:5). This very proscription is also contained in the Canons of the Church; see Canon XIII of the Council of Gangra (340) and Canon LXII of the Sixth Œcumenical Synod (*Pedalion, op. cit.*, pp. 401, 275, respectively).



It is more to your advantage that, through means of movement of your thoughts and memory of the Divine, you raise your soul, deadened by sin, than it is to raise the dead. From history, we see that many have performed astonishing miracles—have raised the dead and have labored to return those who are erring to the straight path and the true Faith. They worked great miracles and, by their efforts, led many to knowledge of God. Later, however, those who gave life to others, fell into base passions and put themselves to death; and scandalized many when (from their daily behavior) their actions became known.”

This happened because they took no care for the health of their own souls, which were sick, but instead cast themselves into the sea of the world in order to heal the souls of others, while they themselves were still ailing. And they were lost, since they did not have—in their own souls—strong hope in God, in the aforementioned way. Their senses were still infirm and vulnerable, and, as such, they did not have the strength to deal with the flame of all those things that are wont to incite the passions, which are bridled with difficulty; nor were they able to bear the temptations (brought about by the passions).

Abba Isaac (from the Evergetinos)

ON THE FAIR VERDICT OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

From the Gerontikon.



The Blessed Archbishop Theophilos said: Indeed what fear and terror and what need the soul experiences when it departs from the body or, afterwards, when it has been completely separated from it. For then all of the principalities and powers

of darkness come upon it and make manifest all of the sins which it has committed, whether in knowledge or ignorance, from the time of a man’s birth until his last hours, when the soul is separated from the body. These powers brazenly draw near it and furiously accuse it.

Confronting these hostile powers of darkness are the holy powers, Angels, putting forth and calling attention to the good deeds that the departed soul occasioned to perform.

Think what agony and terror the soul will experience when it stands before such a tribunal and faces such a fearful and impartial judgment.

It is impossible for anyone to express in words or to conceive in his mind the fear that overtakes the soul up to the moment that the decision of the Judge is given and it is released from those who hold it. That moment precisely is the moment of the soul’s greatest torment, until it hears the verdict of the Righteous Judge.

If, then, by the verdict of the Righteous Judge, the soul is given its freedom, immediately the enemies scatter and the bright Angels seize the soul from them and, with no more obstructions, it is led by the Angels to that inexpressible joy and glory in which it will finally be restored.

If, however, the soul lived in carelessness, and is thus found unworthy of being freed, then it shall hear that most dreadful voice: *Let the ungodly be taken away, that he see not the glory of the Lord.* (Isa 26:10).

Henceforth begins for that soul the day of wrath, sorrow, and unceasing grief; it is given over to the outer darkness, hurled into Hell, and condemned to the eternal fire, in which it will remain damned unto the unfading ages.

What then do the luxuries and fanfare of this world benefit the soul? Where are the vainglory and the delights and the enjoyments of this vain and fleeting world? Where is the money? Of what benefit a high birth? Where are your father, mother, brothers and sisters, and friends?

What from all of this can free your wretched soul, as it is burned by the fire of Hell and tormented by indescribable punishment?

WILL THE HETERODOX BE SAVED?

By St. Philaret the New Confessor (+1985). This article originally published in "Orthodox Heritage," vol. 02, No. 10. It is being re-published due to the repeat questions that arise on the subject.



Question: If the Orthodox faith is the only true faith, can Christians of other confessions be saved? May a person who has led a perfectly righteous life on earth be saved on the strength of his ancestry, while not being baptized as Christian?

† † †

AnsWER: For he saith to AMoses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him

that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. (Rom 9:15-16). In the Orthodox Church we have the path of salvation indicated to us and we are given the means by which a person may be morally purified and have a direct promise of salvation.

In this sense St. Cyprian of Carthage says that outside the Church there is no salvation. In the Church is given that of which Apostle Peter writes to Christians (and only Christians): According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet 1:3-8).

And what should one say of those outside the Church, who do not belong to her? Another apostle provides us with an idea: For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. (1 Cor 5:12-13). God "will have mercy on whom He will have mercy" (Rom 9:18). It is necessary to mention only one thing: that to "lead a perfectly righteous life," as the questioner expressed it, means to live

according to the commandments of the Beatitudes—which is beyond the power of one outside the Orthodox Church without the help of grace which is concealed within it.

The question of whether the heterodox, i.e., those who do not belong to Orthodoxy—the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—can be saved, has become particularly painful and acute in our days. In attempting to answer this question, it is necessary, first of all, to recall that in His Gospel the Lord Jesus Christ Himself mentions but one state of the human soul which unfailingly leads to perdition—i.e., blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:1-32). The Holy Spirit is, above all, the Spirit of Truth, as the Saviour loved to refer to Him. Accordingly, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against the Truth, conscious and persistent opposition to it. The same text makes it clear that even blasphemy against the Son of Man—i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God Himself, may be forgiven, as it may be uttered in error or in ignorance and, subsequently may be covered by conversion and repentance (an example of such a converted and repentant blasphemer is the Apostle Paul—see Acts 26:11 and 1 Tim 1:13.) If, however, a man opposes the Truth which he clearly apprehends by his reason and conscience, he becomes blind and commits spiritual suicide, for he thereby likens himself to the devil, who believes in God and dreads Him, yet hates, blasphemes, and opposes Him.

Thus, man's refusal to accept the Divine Truth and his opposition thereto make him a son of damnation. Accordingly, in sending His disciples to preach, the Lord told them: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mk 16:16), for the latter heard the Lord's Truth and was called upon to accept it, yet refused, thereby inheriting the damnation of those who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thes 2:12). The Holy Orthodox Church is the repository of the divinely revealed Truth in all its fullness and fidelity to apostolic Tradition. Hence, he who leaves the Church, who intentionally and consciously falls away from it, joins the ranks of its opponents and becomes a renegade apostolic Tradition. The Church dreadfully anathematized such renegades, in accordance with the words of the Saviour Himself (Mt 18:17—but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican) and of the Holy Apostle Paul (Gal 1:8-9—But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.). These words clearly threaten them with eternal damnation and calling them to return to the Orthodox fold.

It is self evident, however, that sincere Christians who are Roman Catholics, or Lutherans, or members of other

non-Orthodox confessions, cannot be termed renegades or heretics—i.e., those who knowingly pervert the truth...(*) They have been born and raised and are living according to the creed which they have inherited, just as do the majority of you who are Orthodox; in their lives there has not been a moment of personal and conscious renunciation of Orthodoxy. The Lord, Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4) and Who lighteth every man that cometh into the world (Jn 1:43), undoubtedly is leading them also towards salvation In His own way.

With reference to the above question, it is particularly instructive to recall the answer once given to an inquirer by the Blessed Theophan the Recluse. The blessed one replied more or less thus: You ask, will the heterodox be saved... Why do you worry about them? They have a Saviour Who desires the salvation of every human being. He will take care of them. You and I should not be burdened with such a concern. Study yourself and your own sins... I will tell you one thing, however: should you, being Orthodox and possessing the Truth in its fullness, betray Orthodoxy, and enter a different faith, you will lose your soul forever. We firmly believe the foregoing answer by the saintly ascetic to be the best that can be given in this matter.

† † †

(*) The Greek word for “heresy” is derived from the word for “choice” and hence inherently implies conscious, willful rejection or opposition to the Divine Truth manifest in the Orthodox Church.



True knowledge of God is noetic, not cerebral or speculative. This is where the difference lies between the scholasticism of the Papists and the Orthodox neptic tradition. According to scholasticism, the knowledge of God results from intellectual processes and conjecture [contemplation], whereas the Orthodox tradition, which has its roots in Divine revelation, has knowledge of God closely connected with experiencing God through the *theoria* of uncreated Light. As is well known, and according to the theology of the Church as expressed by St. Gregory Palamas, the vision of uncreated light is man's [true] communion with God, and such knowledge surpasses human knowledge and experience.

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

EVEN AFTER DEATH THE SOUL RETAINS ACTIVITY

By St. Maximos the Confessor (his letter to “John the Presbyter”).

I was comforted to read that you are in good health; since after God, you, my master, are the cause of every good thing [in my life]. So much has the Holy Spirit of God united Himself to you, that even when you are absent I behold you with my mind's eye alone. I order my life and my reason using what strength I possess, because when I remember you, it is as if I am seeing God before me, and I am filled with reverence.

I was not a little disturbed to learn that the [heretical] doctrine concerning the soul is shamelessly being preached in your parts with the same support and boldness as it is here. In fact, I am filled with grief, and a weight has settled on my mind like a cloud, because this novel doctrine about [the state of the soul after] the resurrection is being advocated by almost everyone here, in particular by the supposedly most distinguished monks. One would not be far off if he supposed that this was the first sign of the coming of the Antichrist. Indeed, anyone who is able to reason should affirm this to be the case, since he has as a witness to the great evil the absurdity of the things they say.

These people shamelessly sharpen their tongues against everything, and do not consider anything irreverently said or done to be terrible. Thus they claim that after the resurrection bodies will continue to subsist by means of phlegm, blood, yellow and black bile, breathing, and tangible food. They say that in the resurrection, nothing will be different from this present life, except that no one will die again.

I do not know how they can stop their ears and close the eyes of their souls so as not to understand everything written in Holy Scripture about the soul and the resurrection through the prophets and apostles, through the Word of God Himself speaking in the flesh, and especially through the divine Paul when he expounds on the resurrection to the Corinthians. These passages are crystal-clear and very well known. They do not require an exegete. Moreover the nature of reality itself, no less than the divine oracles, teaches about the resurrection and leads even barbarians to the knowledge of the truth. Nevertheless, [the heretics] feel no shame in ignoring these self-evident proofs.

Is there anyone who is not completely bereft of reason and yet does not know that every nature is essentially distinguished by its own characteristics? For the characteristics show the mode of the nature's own existence, as well as the difference which separates it from other natures. When a nature loses the component characteristics of its essence, it either ceases to exist or becomes what it was not, assuming one could stand to speak about removing natural characteristics at all. For every subject is dissolved when its natural characteristics are dissolved.

WE ARE NOT IDOLATERS

By Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, "The Six Dawns."



We Orthodox Christians know that according to our nature we are nothing, a zero that God brought into being from non-being. And rather than let it fall into nonexistence again from whence it came, He elevated it and made it the throne of God and more honorable than Cherubim and more glorious than the Seraphim. The glory we acquired is God's, not our own. We are Orthodox

Christians, we are not idolaters!

It was idolatry that made creation into a god. Ignorance about the Creator caused men to make a god of creation and to assign to it the properties of God. They thought creation was everlasting and beginningless, incorruptible and immortal. They explained the corruptibility and death they saw before them daily as localized phenomena in nature's cyclical changes that had no universal effect on it. They proclaimed the incorruptibility and immortality of matter and the divinity of the universal soul, of which each human soul is a part.

Because they were ignorant of God, they said man is god and so is his soul in particular, which is the quintessential man. They gave to man's soul divine properties: beginningless existence and immortality. They said death is nothing but a change of bodies along the way of the soul from one transmigration to another. The soul, in the final analysis, is a personless fragment of the universal soul in an ocean of such emanations of souls. They are swept up in a stream that is ever flowing in an eternal and endless cycle.

Idolatry is a faith of pridefulness, a seed of Lucifer in the minds of people who do not know God. Idolatry can have many forms and variations of the basic teaching, but at its core it always has creation as its god, that is, man as god, since he is the head of creation; we humans are by our nature gods since our soul is divine and immortal. Therefore what need do we have of God? What need do we have of the resurrection He gave us?

"We shall hear you on this again," they said politely to the Apostle Paul when he preached on the resurrection of the dead to the deeply pagan city of Athens. "What are you telling us, Jew? The resurrection of the dead? What use is it to us? We are gods. We may change bodies, we may lose our memory, but our immortal soul enters into another

body and our immortal existence is perpetuated. And if we are perfect, we remain in the Elysian fields as spirits liberated from the body's burdensome matter that we had been entangled in because of some carelessness. Why are you speaking to us about the resurrection of the dead? We can do without your Jewish teachings. Don't you understand you are in Greece, the land of the spirit, of knowledge and wisdom? Don't you realize you are speaking to intelligent and cultivated people?"

That is how idolaters speak and think. They believe in an immortal, that is divine, soul and in incorruptible and eternal matter. They believe in the divinity of the universe. Their gods are merely shapers of eternal, beginningless, uncreated matter.

But we Christians know the Maker and Creator of all things. We know Him Who brought all things into existence from nonexistence, from nothing. We know that He alone is the "One Who Is" (Ex. 3:14). He alone is true being, and anything that exists receives its existence from Him, from His love. We know that He alone is immortal by His own nature, while all creatures, even the most perfect angelic powers, came into being from nonexistence. Properly, by their own nature, they should return again to nonexistence, but the grace of God, out of love alone, eternally sustains their existence and being.



For the method of godliness consists of these two things, pious doctrines, and virtuous practice: and neither are the doctrines acceptable to God apart from good works, nor does God accept the works which are not perfected with pious doctrines. For what profit is it, to know well the doctrines concerning God, and yet to be a vile fornicator? And again, what profit is it, to be nobly temperate, and an impious blasphemer?

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (+386)



We wish to remind our readers to not neglect sending us their annual contribution to help us cover the costs associated with our humble publication. In addition, we kindly request of those who have the financial ability, that they consider sending us an amount over the requested annual contribution of \$24 to assist us with our educational and philanthropic activities.

Ὡς Πότε θὰ «Ἀνήκομεν» εἰς τὴν Διεφ- θαρμένη Πόρνη «Δύσιν»;

Γράφει ὁ Δημήτριος Νατσιός, Δάσκαλος.

«Τὸ χαράτσι, τὰ παιδιὰ
μοναχὸς νὰ κρίνεις
ἄλλο νὰ στὰ παίρνουνε
κι ἄλλο νὰ τὰ δίνεις»

[Κώστας Βάρναλης, 1884-1974, Ἑλλην λογοτέχνης]

† † †

Γύρω στὸ 970μ.Χ., ἓνα παπικὸ κάθαρμα, ὀνόματι Λιουιπράνδος, «ἐπίσκοπος» Κρεμόνας, ἀποστέλλεται στὴν Πόλη ἀπὸ τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ὅθωνα Α΄ τῆς Γερμανίας. Εἶναι ἡ δευτέρα ἀποστολή του. Εἴκοσι χρόνια πρὶν, τὸ 949, ἐγκωμιάζε μὲ ἐνθουσιώδεις μεγαλοστομίες τοὺς Βυζαντινοὺς. «Ξεπερνοῦν ὅλα τα ἔθνη σὲ πλοῦτο καὶ παιδεία», ἔγραφε τότε. Τὴν δευτέρα φορὰ, εὐρισκόμενος προφανῶς σὲ διατεταγμένη ὑπηρεσία ἐνίσχυσης τῆς παπικῆς προπαγάνδας καὶ διασυρμοῦ τῆς Ῥωμανίας (τοῦ Βυζαντίου) στὴ Δύση, γράφει μὲ πρωτοφανῆ μίσος κατὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων. Διβελλογραφεῖ, χυδαιολογεῖ, συκοφαντεῖ τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Νικηφόρο Φωκά, ἐπιδίδεται σὲ ἀπύλωτο ὑβρεολόγιο. («Μοχθηρὸν καὶ κακόβουλον» τὸν χαρακτηρίζει ὁ Παπαρηγόπουλος, στὸν Ε΄ τόμο τῆς ἱστορίας του, σελ. 118-134). Ζήτησε, τὴν θυγατέρα τοῦ αὐτοκράτορα Ῥωμανοῦ καὶ τῆς Θεοφανοῦς νὰ δοθεῖ σύζυγος στὸ γιὸ τοῦ Ὅθωνα.

«Τί εἶναι αὐτὰ ποῦ λές;» τοῦ ἀπαντᾷ ὁ αὐτοκράτορας. «Μία πορφυρογέννητη, κόρη πορφυρογέννητου, νὰ παντρευτεῖ βάρβαρο; Ποτέ!!!».

Σκύλιασε ὁ ἀρχεῖος. Στὸ τραπέζει ποὺ παρέθεσε ὁ Φωκάς τὸν ἔβαλε νὰ καθίσει στὴν ταπεινὴ 15^η θέση. Οἱ ὑβρεῖς καὶ οἱ γελοῖοι γλευασμοί, τοῦ κοπρόνου Φράγκου, κατὰ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορα, στίς ἐπιστολές του στὸν πάπα καὶ τὸν Ὅθωνα, καταλαμβάνουν ὀλόκληρες σελίδες. Τὸ κακὸ ὅμως ἔγινε. Τὰ πλούτη τῆς Πόλης ἔγιναν γνωστὰ καὶ θάμπωσαν τοὺς Φράγκους. Ἡ ἐξαθλιωμένη, βάρβαρη καὶ σὲ δημογραφικὴ ἔκρηξη τελοῦσα Εὐρώπη ἐπινοεῖ τὴν λύση: Σταυροφορίες, ἡ μεγαλύτερη ἀπάτη τῆς παγκόσμιας ἱστορίας, ἡ πρώτη ἀποικιοκρατικὴ ἐξόρμηση τῆς Δύσης. Κλέφτες, λωποδύτες, πειναλέες μάζες, ἄγρια θηρία—οἱ Σταυροφόροι—ξεχύνονται στὴν Ῥωμανία καὶ μὲ ἀποκορύφωμα τὸ 1204,

ληλατοῦν, βιάζουν, φονεύουν καὶ κακουροῦν κατὰ τῶν «σχισματικῶν» Ἑλλήνων.

Ὁ Παπαρηγόπουλος γράφει ὅτι μαζί μὲ τοὺς Φράγκους «συνέπραττον εἰς τὴν δῆωσιν καὶ τὴν ἀνηλεὴ καὶ κτηνώδη βιαιοπραγίαν Πισᾶται, Γεννουαῖοι, Σικελοί, Ἄπουλοι, Οὐγγροί, Ἴσπανοί, Γερμανοί», ὅλη ἡ σημερινὴ Εὐρωπαϊκὴ Ἑνωσι. Συγχρόνως, ὅσα ἀπ' αὐτὰ τὰ τρισάθλια ὑποκείμενα, τοὺς Σταυροφόρους, ἤξεραν πέντε γράμματα, ἔγραφαν καὶ τοὺς «ἄθλους» τους, κείμενα ἀπύθμενου μίσους κατὰ τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ. (Τὸ ὁποῖο καλλιεργοῦσε καὶ ὑποδαύλιζε—ποιὸς ἄλλος;—τὸ θηρίο τῆς Ῥώμης, ὁ πάπας).

Μεταξὺ τῶν ἐμετικῶν κειμένων, στὰ ὁποῖα ξεχειλίζει ὁ φθόνος, ἡ κακία καὶ ἡ παλιανθρωπιὰ τῶν συντακτῶν τους κατὰ τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ καί, κυρίως, κατὰ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως, εἶναι καὶ κάποιου Γερμανοῦ «ιεραποστόλου» ὀνόματι Brocardus. Αὐτὸς ὑπέβαλε τὸ 1332 ὑπόμνημα—μνημόνιο στὸ Φίλιππο ΣΤ΄ τῆς Γαλλίας, στὸ ὁποῖο ἐξηγεῖ πῶς θὰ γίνε, ἡ τελειωτικὴ αὐτὴ τὴ φορὰ, διάλυση τῆς Ῥωμανίας (τοῦ Βυζαντίου) καὶ ὁ βίαιος ἐκλατινισμὸς τῶν Ἑλλήνων.

Ὁ ψευτοἱεραπόστολος προτείνει πέντε μέτρα, γιὰ νὰ παραμείνουν αἰώνια τα ἐδάφη τῆς Ῥωμηοσύνης στὴ Δύση καὶ γιὰ νὰ ὑποταχθοῦν ὀλοκληρωτικὰ οἱ Ἕλληνες. (Τὰ ἀποσπάσματα τὰ μετέφρασε ὁ Κυρ. Σιμόπουλος καὶ περιέχονται

στὸ βιβλίο του «Ξενοκρατία, Μισελληνισμὸς καὶ Ὑποτέλεια», σελ. 249-251).

Πρῶτον: Ἐκκαθάριση τοῦ «ἐσωτερικοῦ μετώπου». Ὅλοι οἱ Λατῖνοι ποὺ ἀπαρνήθηκαν τὴν «καθολικὴ πίστη» καὶ τὴν «ρωμαϊκὴ ἐκκλησία» μὲ λόγο ἢ ἔργο καὶ προσχώρησαν στὴ γραικικὴ ἀπιστία, θὰ καταγγέλονται ὡς αἰρετικοὶ καὶ ἢ θὰ θανατώνονται ἀπὸ τὴν ἱερὰ ἐξέταση ἢ θὰ ἐξορίζονται διὰ βίου.

Δεύτερον: Ὅλοι οἱ Ἕλληνες μοναχοί, οἱ ὀνομαζόμενοι καλόγεροι, θὰ ἐκδιωχθοῦν ἀπὸ τὰ κατακτημένα ἐδάφη καὶ θὰ διασκορπιστοῦν σὲ διάφορες χῶρες τῆς Δύσης, ἐκτὸς ἂν ἀποκηρύξουν δημόσια τὴν πλάνη τους καὶ δηλώσουν πίστη στὸν πάπα. Δοκάρει στὰ μάτια τῶν Δυτικῶν, καὶ τότε καὶ τώρα, ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος μοναχισμὸς.

Τρίτον: Γιὰ νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν ὅλοι οἱ «Γραικοί» (ἀπὸ τὸν λεγόμενο Καρλομάγνο καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἔτσι μᾶς ὀνομάζουν περιφρονητικὰ οἱ Φράγκοι), στὴν «ὀρθὴ πίστη», στὸν καθολισμὸ, καὶ νὰ κοπεῖ ὀριστικὰ ὁ



δρομός ἐπιστροφῆς στὴ δογματικὴ πλάνη, πρέπει νὰ ξεχάσουν τὴν γλῶσσα τους. Νὰ μὴν μιλάνε καὶ νὰ μὴν καταλαβαίνουν Ἑλληνικά. (Γι' αὐτὸ ἀγωνιζόμαστε κατὰ τῶν γλωσσοκτόνων βιβλίων τάχα καὶ «Γλῶσσας τοῦ Δημοτικοῦ». Χωρὶς τὴν γλῶσσα, φραγεύουμε μέσα σὲ μία γενεά). Γιὰ τὴν ριζικὴ αὐτὴ λύση, συνεχίζει ὁ Γερμανός, θὰ ἀπαγορευτεῖ ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα καὶ θὰ ἐπιβληθεῖ ἡ διδασκαλία ἀποκλειστικὰ τῶν λατινικῶν (σ.σ. σήμερα τῶν ἀγγλικῶν). «Τὰ παιδιὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων πρέπει νὰ μαθαίνουν μόνο τὴν δική μας γλῶσσα, ὥστε νὰ διαβάζουν τὰ δικὰ μας μόνο βιβλία, νὰ μαθαίνουν τὶς πλάνες τους καὶ νὰ ἐνστερνίζονται τὴν ἀγία μας πίστη καὶ τὸ σωστὸ δόγμα».

Τέταρτον: Ὅλα τα βιβλία ποὺ ὑπερασπίζονται τὸ ἀνατολικὸ Ὁρθόδοξο Χριστιανικὸ δόγμα, πρέπει νὰ καοῦν. (Ὁ ἀπόγονός του, ὁ Ἀδόλφος, υἱοθέτησε τὴν συμβουλή του). Οἱ Ἕλληνες ἔχουν βιβλία σύγχρονα καὶ παλαιότερα, ποὺ περιέχουν πλάνες σχετικὰ μὲ τὴ «Ρωμαϊκὴ Ἐκκλησία» καὶ πολλὲς βλασφημίες εἰς βάρος τῶν τέκνων της. Ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ βιβλία θὰ ἀναζητηθοῦν μὲ ζήλο καὶ ἐπιμονὴ ἀπὸ εἰδικευμένα γι' αὐτὸ τὸ ἔργο ἄτομα, θὰ συγκεντρωθοῦν καὶ θὰ ριχτοῦν στὴν πυρὰ. Γιὰ τὴν συλλογὴ τους θὰ χρησιμοποιηθοῦν ὅλα τὰ μέσα, ἀπὸ τὴν τρομοκρατία ὡς τὸν ἀφορισμό.

Πέμπτον: Εἰδικὰ στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη, θὰ συγκεντρωθεῖ βιαίως, στὴν Ἁγία Σοφία, ὁλόκληρος ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος κληρὸς καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν λαὸ ἓνα τουλάχιστον ἄτομο ἀπὸ κάθε οἰκογένεια. «Καὶ μετὰ τὸ κήρυγμα θὰ κληθοῦν ὅλοι νὰ δηλώσουν διὰ βοῆς ὅτι προσχωροῦν στὸ δικὸ μας δόγμα, ὅτι συμφωνοῦν γιὰ τὴν ἔνωση τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν, καὶ ὅτι ὑποτάσσονται στὴ ρωμαϊκὴ ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸν πατέρα μας, τὸν πάπα...».

Ἄς τὰ διαβάζουν αὐτὰ οἱ ἡμῶν τῆς προοδομανίας, οἱ δωδεκαθεῖστες καὶ λοιποὶ ἐκκλησιομάχοι. Ἄς βλέπουν τὴν κατάντια τῶν Οὐκρανῶν, ποὺ ἐκλιπαροῦν τοὺς Φράγκους, καὶ τὴν ἀγερωχία καὶ λεβεντιά τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ρώσων. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία εἶναι ὄχι μόνο ἡ ἐλπίδα μας γιὰ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Γένους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἀπαράθραυστος ἀσπίδα μας. Ἄν ὑποτασσομεθα τότε στὴν «λατινικὴν καλύπτραν»—πράγμα ποὺ καὶ σήμερα ἐπιχειρεῖται μὲ τὴν παναίρεση τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ καὶ μὲ τοὺς ἡμέτερους μεταπατερικὸς λακέδες ποὺ τὸν δορυφοροῦν—τὸ ὄνομα τῶν Ἑλλήνων θὰ ἦταν καταχωνιασμένο στὰ σκονισμένα ράφια τῶν βιβλιοθηκῶν.

Ὁ Γερμανὸς «ἰεραπόστολος» εἶναι ὁ πρῶτος στὴν παγκόσμια ἱστορία, ποὺ εἰσηγεῖται συστηματικὴ, καὶ «ἐπιστημονικὴ» Γενοκτονία. Εἶναι ὁ πρῶτος ποὺ σχεδιάζει πνευματικὴ ἐκμηδένιση, ἐθνικὸ καὶ φυλετικὸ ἀφανισμό. Τὸ σχέδιο του ἐφαρμόσθηκε στὴν ἀμερικανικὴ ἡπειρο, στὴ νότια μέσω τῶν Ἰσπανῶν «κονκισταδόρων» (=κατακτητῶν) καὶ στὸν βορρᾶν μὲ τοὺς τυχοδιώκτες κάου-μπόου.

Ἡ σφαγὴ καὶ ἡ πολιτιστικὴ καταστροφὴ τῶν ἰθαγενῶν της Ἀμερικῆς εἶναι ἓνα γεγονός ποὺ ἀποσιωπᾶται ἐπιμελῶς. Οἱ Ἰσπανοὶ καταχωνιάζουν τὰ ἐγκλήματά τους. Πέραν τῶν σφαγῶν, κατέφευγαν καὶ στὶς προγραμματισμένες διασταυρώσεις μὲ συστηματικὸ βιασμό τῶν ἰθαγενῶν γυναικῶν γιὰ τὴ δημιουργία μιᾶς φυλῆς μιγάδων, ποὺ ἐξαιτίας τῶν βιολογικῶν καὶ ἀνθρωπομορφικῶν της χαρακτηριστικῶν, ξέκοβε ἀπὸ τὶς ἐθνολογικὲς τῆς ρίζες καὶ δεχόταν τὴν ἐπιρροὴ τοῦ ξένου δυνάστη.

Οἱ ἐξ Εὐρώπης Ἀμερικανοί, ὄχι μόνο δὲν ἔνιωσαν τύψεις γιὰ τὴν Γενοκτονία, ἀλλὰ τὴν μεταμόρφωσαν σὲ πολιτιστικὸ κεφάλαιο, ἐντάσσοντάς τὴν στὶς ἡρωικὲς περιόδους τῆς ἱστορίας τῶν ΗΠΑ, ὅπως ἐκφράζεται στὰ γουέστερν. Τὰ ἴδια ἔκαναν οἱ Γάλλοι στὴν Ἀλγερία, οἱ Ἄγγλοι στὶς ἀποικίες τους ἀνὰ τὸν κόσμον, οἱ Ὀλλανδοί, Βέλγοι, Γερμανοὶ καὶ λοιποὶ «ἐταῖροι» μας στὴν Ἀφρική, ὁ Χίτλερ στὴν Ρωσία, στὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ στὶς χώρες τῶν μὴ Ἀρείων ποὺ κατακτοῦσε. Τὰ ἴδια κάνουν καὶ πάλι μὲ τὰ μνημόνια στὴν πατρίδα μας, χρησιμοποιώντας βεβαίως τοὺς χρήσιμους «Κουίσλικ».

Τὸ ἐρῶτημα ποὺ γεννιέται εἶναι: Τί δουλειὰ ἔχουμε ἡμεῖς οἱ Ἕλληνες στὴν Φραγκογερμανικὴ Ἐνωση; Γιατί παραμένουμε σ' αὐτὴν τὴν φειδοφωλιά; Ὡς πότε «θὰ ἀνήκομεν», δηλαδή θὰ σκύβουμε ταπεινωμένοι καὶ κατασυκοφαντημένοι τὸ κεφάλι, στὴν διεφθαρμένη πόρνη, «τὴν Δύσιν»;



Νὰ παρακαλᾷς τὸ Θεὸ νὰ συγχωρήσει τὶς ἁμαρτίες σου. Κι ὁ Θεός, ἐπειδὴ θὰ τὸν παρακαλᾷς πονεμένος καὶ ταπεινωμένος, θὰ σοῦ συγχωρήσει τὶς ἁμαρτίες σου καὶ θὰ σὲ κάνει καλὰ καὶ στὸ σῶμα. Ὅταν προσεύχεσαι, νὰ ξεχνᾷς τὴν σωματικὴ σου ἀρρώστια, νὰ τὴν ἀποδέχεσαι σὰν κανόνα, σὰν ἐπιτίμιο, γιὰ τὴν ἄφεση τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν σου. Γιὰ τὰ παραπέρα μὴν ἀνησυχεῖς, ἄφησέ τα στὸ Θεὸ κι ὁ Θεὸς ξέρει τὴ δουλειὰ Του. Οἱ ἀσθένειες μᾶς βγάζουν σὲ καλὸ, ὅταν τὶς ὑπομένομε ἀγόγγυστα, παρακαλώντας τὸ Θεὸ νὰ μᾶς συγχωρήσει τὶς ἁμαρτίες καὶ δοξάζοντας τὸ ὄνομά Του.

Ἡ μεγάλη λύπη καὶ ἡ στενοχώρια δὲν εἶναι ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, εἶναι παγίδα τοῦ διαβόλου. Νὰ γεμίσεις τὴν ψυχὴ σου μὲ Χριστό, μὲ θεῖο ἔρωτα, μὲ χαρὰ. Ἡ χαρὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θὰ σὲ γιαιτρέψει. Ὁ Θεὸς φροντίζει ἀκόμη καὶ γιὰ τὶς πιδὸ μικρὲς λεπτομέρειες τῆς ζωῆς μας. Δὲν ἀδιαφορεῖ γιὰ μᾶς, δὲν εἴμαστε μόνοι στὸν κόσμο. Ὁ Θεὸς μᾶς ἀγαπάει πολὺ, μᾶς ἔχει στὸ νοῦ Του κάθε στιγμὴ καὶ μᾶς προστατεύει. Πρέπει νὰ τὸ καταλάβουμε αὐτὸ καὶ νὰ μὴ φοβούμεστε τίποτε.

Ἅγιος Πορφύριος ὁ Κανσοκαλυβίτης (+1991)

Ὁ Ἅγιος Παΐσιος ὑπὲρ τοῦ Γένους καὶ τῆς Πατρίδος

Κωνσταντῖνος Χολέβας, Πολιτικός Ἐπιστήμων, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο του «Ἡ Ἑλληνορθόδοξη Πρόταση».

Τέτοια κληρονομιά ποὺ μᾶς ἔχει ἀφήσει ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἔχουμε δικαίωμα νὰ τὴν ἐξαφανίσουμε στὶς ἡμέρες μας.

† † †

Στις 13.1.2015 τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον ἀνέγραψε στὸ Ἁγιολόγιο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας τὸν Γέροντα Παΐσιο τὸν Ἁγιορείτη. Πιστεύω ὅτι ἡ ἀγιασμένη αὐτὴ μορφή με ὅσα ἔλεγε καὶ ὅσα ἔγραφε μπορεῖ νὰ βοηθήσει κάθε πιστὸ νὰ βρεῖ ἀπαντήσεις στὰ ἐρωτήματα: Ποιὰ ἡ στάση τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ ἀπέναντι στὴν Πατρίδα καὶ στὸν πατριωτισμὸ; Πρέπει ἐμεῖς οἱ Χριστιανοὶ Ὀρθόδοξοι νὰ ἀσχολούμαστε με τὰ Ἐθνικὰ Θέματα;

Ὁ Ἅγιος Παΐσιος συνήθιζε νὰ λέγει: **Καὶ ἡ Πατρίδα εἶναι μιὰ μεγάλη οἰκογένεια.** Ἐπανελάμβανε με τὰ δικά του λόγια τὴ σοφία τῶν Πατέρων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Θυμίζω ὅτι ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος στὴν 37^η Ἐπιστολή του ἔγραφε: **Μητέρα τιμῶν ὁσίων. Μήτηρ δὲ ἄλλη μὲν ἄλλου. Κοινὴ δὲ πάντων Πατρὶς.** Ἡ

Πατρίδα εἶναι ἡ κοινὴ μητέρα ὅλων μας γράφει ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος, ἄρα τὴν ἀγαποῦμε ὅπως τὴν μητέρα μας, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ δὲν σημαίνει ὅτι μισοῦμε τὶς μητέρες τῶν ἄλλων. Ἔτσι καὶ ὁ Ἅγιος Παΐσιος τόνιζε ὅτι ἀγαποῦμε τὴν Πατρίδα, ὅπως ἀγαποῦμε καὶ τὴν οἰκογένειά μας. Θὰ κάνουμε ὅ,τι μποροῦμε γιὰ νὰ τὴν βοηθήσουμε καὶ σὲ δύσκολες καὶ σὲ εὐχάριστες στιγμές. Ὅλοι οἱ Ἅγιοι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας καταφάσκουν τὸν ὑγιὴ πατριωτισμὸ, ἀλλὰ ἀπορρίπτουν τὸν ρατσισμὸ, τὸν ἐθνοφυλετισμὸ, τὴν ἐθνικὴ ἀλαζονεία.

Ἰδιαίτερη εὐαισθησία εἶχε ὁ Ἅγιος στὸ Μακεδονικὸ ζήτημα. Χάρηκε πολὺ ὅταν διάβασε τὸ βιβλίο τοῦ ἀεμινήστου Νικολάου Μάρτη γιὰ τὴν Ἑλληνικότητα τῆς Μακεδονίας καὶ ἔστειλε ἐπαινετικὸ ποιηματάκι στὸν συγγραφέα. Ἐπίσης, γιὰ νὰ δηλώσει τὴ σημασία ποὺ ἔδινε στὸ ζήτημα, εἶχε ἀναρτήσει στὸ κελλὶ του τὴν προφητεία τοῦ Δανιὴλ ἀπὸ τὴν Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη, ἡ ὁποία ἀναφέρει τὸν Μέγα Ἀλέξανδρο ὡς Βασιλέα τῶν Ἑλλήνων.

Γιὰ τὸ κράτος τῶν Σκοπίων προέβλεψε ὅτι θὰ διαλυθεῖ. Ἔλεγε ὅτι τὸ κράτος αὐτὸ εἶναι κτισμένο ἀπὸ

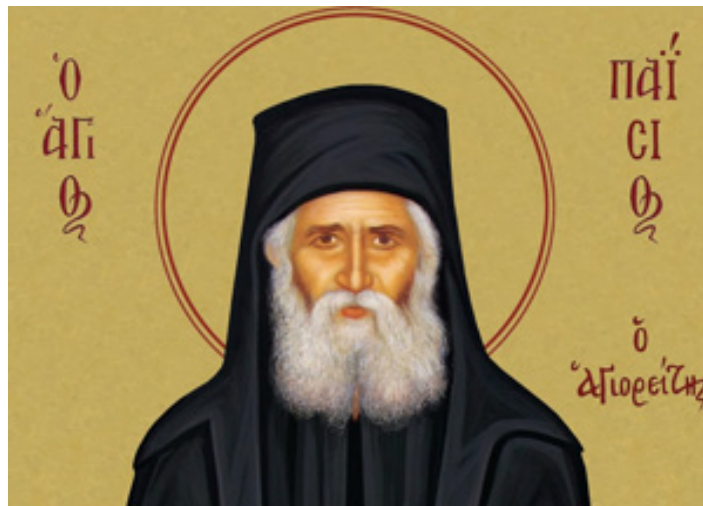
φαρσαλινούς χαλβᾶδες σὲ σχῆμα τούβλου καὶ ἀργὰ ἢ γρήγορα θὰ καταρρεύσει. Οἱ διπλωματικές ἐξελίξεις μέχρι σήμερα δικαιώνουν τὴν προφητεία του. Ἐπτὰ χρόνια μετὰ τὴν ὀσιακὴ κοίμησή του (12.7.1994) καὶ συγκεκριμένα τὸ 2001 ξέσπασε αἱματηρὴ σύγκρουση μεταξὺ τῶν Ἀλβανῶν, ποὺ ἀποτελοῦν τὸ 30% τοῦ κράτους τῶν ψευδομακεδόνων, καὶ τοῦ σλαβικοῦ πληθυσμοῦ. Ἡ ἐκεχειρία, ἡ ὁποία συνήφθη, εἶναι εὐθραυστη καὶ οἱ Ἀλβανοὶ πολιτικοὶ τῶν Σκοπίων δηλώνουν σαφῶς ὅτι ἀποτελοῦν κράτος ἐν κράτει καὶ ὅτι ὄνειρό τους εἶναι νὰ ἐνώσουν τὶς δυτικὲς ἐπαρχίες τοῦ κρατιδίου με τὸ Κοσσυφοπέδιο-Κόσσοβο γιὰ τὴ δημιουργία τῆς Μεγάλης Ἀλβανίας. Ἦδη πολλοὶ διεθνολόγοι παραδέχονται ὅτι τὸ κράτος τῶν Σκοπίων θὰ διαλυθεῖ μεταξὺ Βουλγάρων, Ἀλβανῶν καὶ Σέρβων. Κάτι ἤξερε, λοιπόν, ὁ Ἅγιος Παΐσιος! Φυσικὰ κατανοοῦμε ὅτι δὲν πρέπει νὰ παραδώσουμε τὸ ὄνομα καὶ τὴν κληρονομιά τῆς Μακεδονίας μας σὲ ἓνα θνησιγενὲς μόρφωμα, τὸ ὁποῖο σὲ λίγα χρόνια θὰ διαλυθεῖ!

Οἱ προφητείες του εἶναι πολλές, ἀλλὰ προτιμῶ νὰ μὴν τὶς σχολιάσω καὶ νὰ μὴν προβῶ σὲ ἐρμηνεία. Ὅταν μιλοῦν γιὰ μελλοντικὰ γεγονότα ἀγιασμένοι ἄνθρωποι, τότε μόνον οἱ ἄνθρωποι με ἀγιότητα καὶ πνεῦμα Θεοῦ μποροῦν νὰ τοὺς

ἐρμηνεύσουν σωστά. Ὁ Γέρον Παΐσιος εἶπε πολλὰ καὶ ἐνδιαφέροντα γιὰ τὸ μέλλον τῆς Τουρκίας. Ἀλλὰ ἄς ἀφήσουμε τὸν Θεὸ νὰ δώσει τὶς ἀπαντήσεις. Ὅσοι παραπέμπουν στὸν Ἅγιο γιὰ νὰ ἐρμηνεύσουν θέματα τῆς καθημερινότητος καὶ τῆς διεθνοῦς ἐπικαιρότητος, ἂν καὶ τὸ κάνουν καλοπροαίρετα, φοβοῦμαι ὅτι δὲν ὠφελοῦν τὸν λαὸν μας πνευματικά.

Ἀπὸ τοὺς λόγους του, τοὺς ὁποίους κατέγραψαν οἱ μοναχὲς στὴ Σουρωτὴ, στὴν Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολόγου καὶ Ἁγίου Ἀρσενίου τοῦ Καππαδόκου ὅπου εἶναι θαμμένος ὁ Ἅγιος, παραθέτω μερικὲς χαρακτηριστικὲς σκέψεις του γιὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ τὴν εὐθύνη ποὺ ἔχουμε ὡς Ἕλληνες:

• **Τέτοια κληρονομιά ποὺ μᾶς ἔχει ἀφήσει ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἔχουμε δικαίωμα νὰ τὴν ἐξαφανίσουμε στὶς ἡμέρες μας.** Θὰ δώσουμε λόγο στὸν Θεό. Ἐμεῖς, τὸ μικρὸ αὐτὸ ἔθνος, πιστέψαμε στὸν Μεσσία, μᾶς δόθηκε ἡ εὐλογία νὰ διαφωτίσουμε ὅλον τὸν κόσμον. Ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη μεταφράσθηκε στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα ἑκατὸ χρόνια πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν



έλευση τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Οἱ πρῶτοι Χριστιανοὶ τὴν τράβηξαν! Κινδύνευσαν συνέχεια ἢ ζωὴ τους. Τώρα τὴν ἀδιαφορία ὑπάρχει!... Ἐνῶ ἀνώδυνα σήμερα, χωρὶς νὰ κινδυνεύῃ ἡ ζωὴ μας, μπορούμε νὰ διαφωτίσουμε τὰ ἔθνη, νὰ γινόμαστε πρὸς ἀδιάφοροι; Ἄν σήμερα ἔχουμε λιγάκι εἰρήνη, ξέρεις τὴν ἔχουν τραβήξει οἱ παλιοί; Ξέρεις πόσοι θυσιάστηκαν; Τώρα τίποτε δὲν θὰ εἶχαμε ἂν δὲν θυσιάζονταν ἐκεῖνοι. Καὶ κάνω μία σύγκριση: Πῶς τότε, ἐνῶ κινδύνευσαν ἡ ζωὴ τους, κρατοῦσαν τὴν πίστη τους, καὶ πῶς τώρα, χωρὶς καμμία πίεση, ὅλα τὰ ἰσοπεδώνουν!

• Ὅσοι δὲν ἔχουν χάσει τὴν ἐθνικὴν τους ἐλευθερίαν, δὲν καταλαβαίνουν. Τοὺς λέω: «Ὁ Θεὸς νὰ φυλάξῃ νὰ μὴν ἔρθουν οἱ βάρβαροι καὶ μᾶς ἀτιμάσουν!» Καὶ μοῦ λένε: «Καὶ τὴν θὰ πάθουμε;». Ἀκοῦς κουβέντα; Ἄντε νὰ λείψετε, χαμένοι ἄνθρωποι! Τέτοιοι εἶναι οἱ ἄνθρωποι σήμερα. Δῶσε τους χρήματα, αὐτοκίνητα, καὶ δὲν νοιάζονται οὔτε γιὰ τὴν πίστη οὔτε γιὰ τὴν τιμὴ οὔτε γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν.

• Τὴν Ὀρθοδοξία μας σάν Ἕλληνες τὴν ὀφείλουμε στὸν Χριστὸ καὶ τοὺς Ἁγίους Μάρτυρες καὶ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Καὶ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν μας τὴν ὀφείλουμε στοὺς ἥρωες τῆς Πατρίδας μας, ποὺ ἔχυσαν τὸ αἷμα τους γιὰ μᾶς. Αὐτὴν τὴν ἀγία κληρονομία ὀφείλουμε νὰ τὴν τιμήσουμε καὶ νὰ τὴν διατηρήσουμε καὶ ὄχι νὰ τὴν ἐξαφανίσουμε στὶς ἡμέρες μας. Εἶναι κρίμα νὰ χαθῇ ἓνα τέτοιο ἔθνος! Καὶ βλέπουμε τώρα, ὅπως πρὶν ἀρχίσει ἓνας πόλεμος στέλνουν ἀτομικὲς προσκλήσεις, ἔτσι καὶ ὁ Θεὸς μὲ ἀτομικὲς προσκλήσεις μαζεύει ἄνθρώπους, γιὰ νὰ κρατηθῇ κάτι καὶ νὰ σωθῇ τὸ πλάσμα Του. Δὲν θὰ ἀφήσῃ ὁ Θεός, ἀλλὰ πρέπει καὶ ἐμεῖς νὰ κάνουμε ὅ,τι μπορούμε ἀνθρωπίνως καὶ γιὰ ὅ,τι δὲν μπορούμε νὰ κάνουμε ἀνθρωπίνως, νὰ κάνουμε προσευχὴ νὰ βοηθήσῃ ὁ Θεός.

Βεβαίως ὁ Γέρον Παισίος δίδασκε μὲ ἔμφαση ὅτι πρώτη προτεραιότητα πρέπει νὰ εἶναι ἡ πνευματικὴ μας προετοιμασία καὶ ἔτσι θὰ ἔχουμε μεγαλύτερη δύναμη γιὰ νὰ ἀγωνισθοῦμε ὑπὲρ τῆς Πατρίδος καὶ τῶν ἐθνικῶν θεμάτων. Ἡ διδαχὴ του πάντως εἶναι μιὰ σαφὴς ἀπάντηση σὲ ὀρισμένους παραπλανημένους Χριστιανούς, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἐν ὀνόματι μιᾶς παρερμηνευμένης οἰκουμενικότητος ἀρνοῦνται ἢ διστάζουν νὰ ἀγωνισθοῦν γιὰ τὴν Πατρίδα καὶ τὰ ἐθνικὰ θέματα.

Στὴν Ὀρθόδοξη Παράδοσή μας ἡ σωστὴ Οἰκουμενικότητα ἐναρμονίζεται καὶ δὲν συγκρούεται μὲ τὸν ὑγιὴ καὶ ἀφαντίστο πατριωτισμό. Ἄς ακούσουμε τὴ φωνὴ τοῦ Γέροντος Παισίου καὶ ἂς ἀπορρίψουμε διεθνισμοὺς καὶ πολυπολιτισμικότητες, δηλαδὴ ξενόφερτες ἰδεολογίες ποὺ ἐπιδιώκουν νὰ μᾶς ἀποκόψουν ἀπὸ τὶς ρίζες μας.

Οἰκουμενισμὸς καὶ Πανθησκεία

Ὁρθοδόξου Ἱεραποστολικοῦ Συνδέσμου Ἁγίων Κυρίλλου καὶ Μεθοδίου τῶν Θεσσαλονικέων.

Λέγουν μερικοὶ—ἴσως ἀπὸ ἄγνοια—πῶς δὲν ἔχει Ἰσημισία τὴν θρησκείαν πιστεύει κανεὶς, ἀρκεῖ μόνον νὰ πιστεύει καὶ ὅτι ὅλες οἱ θρησκείες εἶναι ἴδιες, ἦτοι: Ὁρθόδοξος Χριστιανισμὸς, αἰρέσεις, ἰνδουϊσμός, εἰδωλολατρία, μωαμεθανισμὸς, βουδισμός, διάφορες ἄλλες θρησκείες, ἀρκεῖ νὰ ὑπάρχει ἀγάπη. Δηλαδὴ πρεσβεύουν τὴν «πανθησκείαν», ποὺ στὶς ἡμέρες μας εἶναι τὸ ἐξευγενισμένο δόλωμα κατὰ τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας. Προβάλλεται μάλιστα καὶ ἐπισήμως ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀρχηγοὺς τῶν ψευδοθρησκειῶν, τῶν αἰρέσεων, ἀκόμα—δυστυχῶς—καὶ ἀπὸ ὀρισμένους Ὁρθοδόξους, ὑπὸ τὸ ὄνομα «οἰκουμενισμὸς».

Ὅμως μὲ τὸν «οἰκουμενισμὸς», μὲ τὴν «πανθησκείαν» αὐτὴν, ἀποχρωματίζεται ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία, ἡ Θεία αὐτὴ Ἀποκάλυψις, ἐνῶ οἱ τυχόν ὑποχωρήσεις μας πρὸς πλάνες θὰ ὀδηγήσουν στὴν ἄρνηση τῆς ἀξίας τοῦ ἔρχομοῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὴ γῆ, στὴν ἄρνηση τῆς Θείας διδασκαλίας Του, στὴν ἄρνηση τῆς ζωηφόρου Ἀναστάσεώς Του καὶ ἂς φωνάζει ὁ Ἅγιος Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος (Α΄ Κορ. 15:14): «Ἐὰν ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἀνεστήθῃ, εἶναι μάταια καὶ κούφια ἀπὸ περιεχόμενου ἢ πίστεως σας, εἶστε ἀκόμη βυθισμένοι στὶς ἁμαρτίες σας».

Θὰ ὀδηγήσουν στὴν ἄρνηση τῆς ἐκ τοῦ σταυροῦ Θείας χάριτος καὶ σωτηρίας, θὰ ὀδηγήσουν στὴν ἄρνηση τῆς Θεότητος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, στὴν ἄρνηση τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος. Καὶ γιὰ ὅλο αὐτὸ τὸ ἀνακάτεμα ὁ «οἰκουμενισμὸς» προβάλλει τὴν ἀγάπην.

Ἀγάπη! Λὲς καὶ τώρα πρωτοανακαλύφθηκε τὸ αἶσθημα αὐτό, ὥστε πλανῶντες καὶ πλανώμενοι νὰ χρησιμοποιοῦν κατὰ κόρον τὴν λέξιν αὐτή. Καὶ στὸ βάθος ἢ «ἀγάπην» τους αὐτὴ εἶναι ὑποκρισία. Μέσα στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο εἶναι διάχυτη ἢ πραγματικὴ ἀγάπη, ποὺ δίδαξε ὁ Χριστός, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος Χριστιανὸς ἔχει εἰλικρινὴ ἀγάπην πρὸς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον.

Ὁ Ἅγιος Βασίλειος στὸ νοσοκομεῖο του στὴν Βασιλειάδα γιάτρειε τὸν κάθε ἓνα ἀνεξαιρέτως Χριστιανόν, Ἰσραηλίτην, εἰδωλολάτρην... Καὶ ὅμως, ὁ Ἅγιος Βασίλειος οὐδέποτε δέχτηκε αἰρέσεις καὶ πλάνες, ἀπεναντίας μάλιστα ἐπάλαψε σκληρὰ καὶ ἄτεγκτα κατὰ τῶν αἰρέσεων καὶ κατὰ τῶν τότε ἰσχυρῶν, ὅταν αὐτοὶ πολεμοῦσαν τὴν ὀρθόδοξον χριστιανικὴν πίστιν.

Ἄς κρατηθεῖ στερεὰ ἡ Ὀρθοδοξία μας. Ὅπου κίνδυνος ἐκεῖ καὶ ἱερὸς ζῆλος. Φθάσαμε στὸ κρίσιμο σημεῖο νὰ κινδυνεύουμε ἀπὸ τὶς ἀόρατες σκοτεινὲς δυνάμεις, ποὺ ἐπιβουλεύονται τὴν ἀκεραιότητα Πατρίδος καὶ Πιστεως. Ἄς ἀγαπήσουμε τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Ἄς ἐπιστρέψουν οἱ πλανημένοι στὴν Ὀρθοδοξία, στὴ μόνην ἀληθινὴν πίστιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Καλὴ φώτιση σὲ ὅλο τὸν κόσμον.

Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία, τὸ Μεγάλο Ἰδανικό μας!

Ἐπισκόπου Φλωρίνης Αὐγουστίνου Καντιώτου (+2010), ἀποσπάσματα ἀπὸ τὰ βιβλία «Ἐθνικά Προβλήματα» (1961), καὶ σὲ μεταγλώττιση «Προφητικοὶ Λόγοι Ἀφηνίσεως γιὰ τὴν Ἀνόρθωση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ Κοινωνίας».

«Ὁὐκ ἀρνησόμεθά σε, φίλη Ὁρθοδοξία· οὐ ψευδόμεθά σοι, πατροπαράδοτον σέβας· ἐν σοὶ ἐγεννήθημεν, ἐν σοὶ ζῶμεν, καὶ ἐν σοὶ κοιμηθησόμεθα· εἰ δὲ καλέσοι καιρός, καὶ μυριάκις ὑπὲρ σοῦ τεθνηξόμεθα.»

[Ἰωσήφ Βρυέννιος, λόγιος μοναχὸς τοῦ 15ου αἰώνα]

† † †



Τὶ θὰ πῆ ἰδανικό; Μέσα σὲ κάθε ἄνθρωπο, ἀγαπητοί μου, καὶ στὸν πιὸ ἀτελή, ὑπάρχει κάποια εἰκόνα εὐτυχίας, ἓνα ὄραμα ζωῆς, ἓνας σκοπὸς πρὸς τὸν ὁποῖο συγκλίνουν ὅλες οἱ σκέψεις καὶ ἐνέργειές του· καὶ σκοπὸς εἶναι ἡ ἰδέα ἐκεῖνη ποὺ κυριαρχεῖ ἐπάνω σὲ ὅλες τὶς ἄλλες ιδέες καὶ συναισθήματα καὶ ἀποτελεῖ τρόπον τινὰ

τὸν κεντρικὸ ἄξονα γύρω ἀπ' τὸν ὁποῖο στρέφεται ἡ ζωὴ του. Καὶ ὅπως ἡ ἀξία μιᾶς λεπτεπίλεπτης μηχανῆς, π.χ. ἐνὸς ρολογιοῦ, ἐξαρτᾶται κυρίως ἀπὸ τὴν ἀντοχὴ τοῦ ἄξονά του, κάπως ἔτσι καὶ ἡ ἀξία τῆς ζωῆς ἐξαρτᾶται κυρίως ἀπὸ τὴν ἰδέα ἐκεῖνη ἡ ὁποία κυριαρχεῖ καὶ ὀρθομετρεῖ τὴν ζωὴν. Καὶ ὅπως ὑπάρχουν ἄξονες ἀπὸ φτηνὸ ὕλικὸ καὶ μὲ μικρὴ ἀντοχὴ, ποὺ εὐκόλα σπάζουν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄξονες ἀπὸ ἀνθεκτικὴ ὕλη, ἀδαμάντινοι, ἄθραυστοι, ἔτσι ὑπάρχουν καὶ ἰδανικά μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα, ἀδύνατα καὶ ἰσχυρά, εὐθραυστα καὶ ἄθραυστα, γήινα καὶ οὐράνια, θνητὰ καὶ ἀθάνατα.

Καὶ ποῖο εἶναι τὸ ἰδανικὸ τῆς Ἑλλάδος; Θὰ ρωτήση κάποιος. Στὰ τρεῖς χιλιάδες χρόνια τοῦ ἐθνικοῦ της βίου παρελαύνει μπροστὰ μας μεγάλη σειρά: Τρωϊκὸς πόλεμος, Περσικά, Μέγας Ἀλέξανδρος, Βυζάντιο καὶ ἀκρίτες, Παλιγγενεσία, Μακεδονικὸς ἀγῶνας, Βαλκανικοὶ πόλεμοι, Ἀλβανικὸ ἔπος. Πάνω ὅμως ἀπὸ τὰ ἐθνικά εἶναι τὰ πανανθρώπινα, καὶ πάνω ἀπὸ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα εἶναι τὰ θεῖα, καὶ πάνω ἀπὸ τὰ ἐγκόσμια εἶναι τὰ οὐράνια καὶ ἀθάνατα. Ἀπ' τὰ Ὀμηρικὰ χρόνια μέχρι τὴ Μεγάλῃ Ἰδέα, ποὺ ἐδόνησε καὶ τὴ γενεὰ τῶν πατέρων μας μὲ τὸ «Πάλι μὲ χρόνια μὲ καιροῦς, πάλι δικὰ μας θάνατοι», ἀναζητοῦμε τὸ τέλειο. Ποῦ λοιπὸν καταλήγουμε; Ἀπὸ ὅλα ὅσα προβάλλονται ὡς ἰδανικά, ἐκεῖνο ποὺ ἀξίζει νὰ γίνῃ

τὸ ἰδανικὸ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ὁ πολικὸς της ἀστέρας, εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία.

Αὕτῃ ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία, ποὺ τόσο ὑποτιμᾶται σήμερα ἀπὸ κάποιους «μορφωμένους», συγκεντρώνει ὅλα τὰ γνωρίσματα τοῦ ὑψίστου ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἀνταποκρίνεται στὰ βαθύτερα αἰτήματα τοῦ λαοῦ μας. Αὕτῃ ἔχει τὸ ἀληθινὸ νέκταρ καὶ τὴν ἀμβροσία. Αὕτῃ κρατᾶει τὸν Ἄρτο ποὺ μπορεῖ νὰ θρέψῃ καὶ νὰ χορτάσῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ὕλικά καὶ πνευματικά, σὲ ἀντίθεσι μὲ τὰ «κεράτια» (Λουκ. 15:16), μὲ τὰ ὁποῖα προσπαθοῦν ἄλλοι νὰ χορτάσουν τὴν πεινασμένη ἀνθρωπότητα. Αὕτῃ δείχνει τὸν οὐρανὸ ὡς τὴν αἰώνια πατρίδα καὶ αὕτῃ πάλι μὲ τὰ ὑπέροχα διδάγματα της γιὰ ἐλευθερία, ἀδελφότητα, ἀγάπη καὶ δικαιοσύνη μπορεῖ νὰ βοηθήσῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπο νὰ στήσῃ τὴν ἰδανικὴ πολιτεία. Στὴν πολιτεία αὕτῃ τὸ ἐλατήριον τῆς ἰδιοτελείας θ' ἀντικατασταθῇ μὲ τὸ ἐλατήριον τῆς ἀγάπης ποὺ θυσιάζεται γιὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, μὲ πρότυπο τὸν Θεάνθρωπο, ὁ ὁποῖος «οὐκ ἤλθε διακονηθῆναι, ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν» (Ματθ. 20:28).

Ζωηρὴ εἰκόνα τῆς πολιτείας αὐτῆς μᾶς ἔδωσαν οἱ πρῶτοι Χριστιανοί· μιᾶς πολιτείας στὴν ὁποία, ὅπως λέει ὁ ἀθάνατος Χρυσόστομος, ὁ ἰδιοτελής καὶ καταραμένος λόγος «αὐτὸ εἶναι δικό μου» καὶ «αὐτὸ δικό σου» εἶχε καταργηθῇ καὶ ἀντικατασταθῇ μὲ τὸ «ἅπαντα κοινά» (Πράξ. 4:32). Naί, μόνο ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία, ἡ ὁποία στὴν ἰδεώδη ζωὴ τῶν μοναχικῶν ἀδελφοτήτων τῶν πρώτων αἰώνων πραγματοποίησε τὸ κοινόβιο, τὸ ἐκούσιο κοινόβιο, καὶ ἐγκαθίδρυσε ἐπάνω στὴ γῆ ἀγγελικὸ πολίτευμα, αὕτῃ καὶ σήμερα, ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία ἡ «περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον» (Ἄπ. 12:1), ὡς πανανθρώπινο ἰδανικὸ, μπορεῖ νὰ συγκινήσῃ ὄχι μόνο τὸ δικό μας ἔθνος ἀλλὰ ὁλόκληρη τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, καὶ νὰ νικήσῃ καὶ νὰ θριαμβεύσῃ πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα τὰ λεγόμενα διεθνή καὶ οἰκουμενικά συνθήματα.

Ἀλλὰ νὰ ἐξηγούμεθα, Ἕλληνες ἀδελφοί. Ὅταν λέμε ὅτι ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία πρέπει νὰ γίνῃ τὸ ἰδανικὸ τοῦ ἔθνους μας, δὲν ἐννοοῦμε νὰ τὴν κάνουμε μέσο τὸ ὁποῖο νὰ χρησιμοποιήσουμε ἐμεῖς οἱ Ἕλληνες γιὰ ἐθνικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ ἐκμετάλλευσιν καὶ νὰ καταστήσουμε ὀρθοδοξοκάπηλοι ἀνάμεσα στὰ ἔθνη, ὅπως ἔγινε δυστυχῶς στὴν τσαρική Ῥωσία. Ἐχοντας ἐμεῖς οἱ Ἕλληνες ὡς ἰδανικὸ τοῦ ἔθνους τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, ὄχι ὡς μέσο ἀλλὰ ὡς σκοπὸ πρὸς τὸν ὁποῖο πρέπει νὰ συγκλίνουν ὅλες οἱ ἐνέργειές μας, πρέπει νὰ εἴμαστε ἀπέναντι στὰ ἄλλα ἔθνη εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀνιδιοτελεῖς ἀπόστολοι τοῦ Ὁρθοδόξου Χριστιανισμοῦ. Εἰλικρινεῖς καὶ ἀνιδιοτελεῖς, ὅπως ἦταν οἱ ἀπόστολοι τοῦ Κυρίου, ποὺ δὲν πῆγαν στὰ ἔθνη γιὰ νὰ κηρύξουν τὸ μεγαλεῖο τῆς πατρίδας τους, τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, ἀλλὰ πῆγαν γιὰ νὰ κηρύξουν «Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, καὶ τοῦτον

ἐσταυρωμένον» (Α΄ Κορ. 2:2) και με τὸ καθαρὸ και ἀμιγρὸς ἀπὸ κάθε ἐθνικιστικῆς ἰδέας κήρυγμα νὰ σώσουν ψυχές· διὰ τῆς σωτηρίας τῶν ψυχῶν προσέφεραν τὴν ὑψίστη ὑπηρεσία στὴν πάσχουσα ἀνθρωπότητα, μέσα στὴν ὁποία οἱ σφζόμενοι γίνονταν ἡ ζύμη τῆς ἀναμορφώσεως και ἀναπλάσεως τοῦ ἀρχαίου κόσμου.

Τὰ ἀμαρτωλὰ «ἐγὼ», ἀτομικὰ και ὁμαδικὰ, πρέπει, κατὰ τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου, νὰ νικῶνται και νὰ ἐξαφανίζονται μπροστὰ στὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, και αὐτὴ νὰ κυριαρχῆ στὶς σκέψεις και τὶς ἐνέργειές μας. Αὐτὴ και μόνη διὰ τῆς φωτεινῆς διδασκαλίας και τοῦ ὑποδειματικῆς βίου μας νὰ προβάλλεται στὰ μάτια ὄλων πρὸς δόξαν Θεοῦ. Καὶ ὅταν τέτοιες εἶναι οἱ διαθέσεις τῆς καρδιάς μας ὑπὲρ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, τότε θὰ χαιρώμαστε ὅταν και ἄλλα ἔθνη κηρύττουν με λόγια και με ἔργα τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία και σημειώνουν μεγαλύτερη κι ἀπὸ μᾶς ἐπίδοσι στὸ κήρυγμά της.

Γιατὶ ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία δὲν εἶναι εἶδος μονοπωλίου τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς φυλῆς· εἶναι οἰκουμενικὴ ἰδέα και ζωὴ, στὴν ὁποία καλοῦνται ὅλα τὰ ἔθνη νὰ συμμετάσχουν ἰσότημα γύρω ἀπὸ τὴν κοινὴ τράπεζα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ Πατρὸς. Στὸ μεγαλειώδες σχέδιο τῆς Θείας Προνοίας νὰ κηρυχθῆ ἡ Χριστιανικὴ πίστι σὲ ὅλο τὸν κόσμο ὅπως αὐτὴ διατηρήθηκε ἀναλλοίωτη μέσα στὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, ἡ πατρίδα μας μπορεῖ νὰ προσφέρῃ μεγάλες ὑπηρεσίες. Ὅχι μόνο γιατί τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο εἶναι γραμμένο στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα και ἀπ' αὐτὴν μεταφράστηκε σὲ χίλιες και πλέον γλῶσσες και διαλέκτους, ὄχι μόνο γιατί οἱ περισσότεροι ἀπὸ τοὺς μεγάλους πατέρες και διδασκάλους στὰ Ἑλληνικὰ ἔγραψαν τὰ ἀθάνατα συγγράμματά τους, ἀλλὰ και γιατί παιδιὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, στενοχωρούμενα ἀπὸ τὴ φτώχεια ποὺ συνοδεύει τὴν Ἑλλάδα, ἔχουν βγῆ ἀπὸ τὴν πατρίδα τους και βρίσκονται σκορπισμένα και στὶς πέντε ἡπείρους.

Ποῦ πάνω στὴ γῆ δὲν βρίσκεται Ἑλληνας; Γύρω στὰ δύο ἑκατομμύρια εἶναι οἱ Ἑλληνες τοῦ ἐξωτερικοῦ. Συμπαγεῖς Ἑλληνικὲς κοινότητες με ὠραίους ναοὺς βρίσκονται στὰ μεγαλύτερα ἀστικὰ κέντρα τοῦ νέου κόσμου. Ἑλληνες ὑπηρετοῦν στὰ ἱστορικὰ πατριαρχεῖα τῆς Ἀνατολῆς. Ἑλληνες και μέχρι τὴν Κορέα και τὴν Ἰαπωνία και τὴ Νότιο Ἀφρική και τὰ νησιά τῶν Φιλιππίνων. Ἄν στὶς καρδιές ὄλων αὐτῶν τῶν Ἑλλήνων τοῦ ἐξωτερικοῦ ἀνεξωγογεῖτο ἡ φλόγα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, τότε ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία θὰ διαδιδόταν και θὰ δοξαζόταν στὸν κόσμο διὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων και ἂν δοξαζόταν, θ' ἀντιδόξαζε αὐτοὺς ποὺ τὴν δόξασαν με μιὰ δόξα ἀφθαρτὴ και αἰώνια. Ποιὰ δόξα μεγαλύτερη ἀπ' αὐτὴν θὰ μποροῦσε νὰ φιλοδοξῆ ἡ φυλὴ μας; Ἀπὸ μακρινὲς χώρες, στὶς ὁποῖες οἱ κάτοικοι ζοῦν «ἐν χώρᾳ και σκιᾷ θανάτου» (Ἠσ. 9:2, Ματθ. 4:16,

Λουκ. 1:79), ἔρχονται συγκινητικὰ μηνύματα ποὺ μᾶς προσκαλοῦν σὲ πνευματικὴ βοήθεια. Διότι και μέχρι σ' αὐτοὺς φτάνει ἡ φήμη τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας.

Ἄλλὰ ἐδῶ εἶναι τὸ σπουδαιότερο ἐρώτημα. Εἴμαστε ἄραγε προετοιμασμένοι γιὰ μιὰ τέτοια παγκόσμια ἀποστολή; ἔχουμε κάνει τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία κανόνα τῆς ζωῆς μας, ἰδανικὸ τοῦ ἔθνους μας; Μποροῦμε νὰ προβάλουμε τὴν πατρίδα μας ὡς πρότυπο Ὁρθοδόξου κράτους, ἢ μήπως ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία μας ἐξαντλεῖται στὴν τήρησι μερικῶν ἐξωτερικῶν τύπων, σὲ ἐορτὲς και πανηγύρια κοσμικοῦ μᾶλλον παρὰ θρησκευτικοῦ χαρακτήρος;

Ἀδελφοὶ Ἑλληνες! Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία, νὰ ἢ ὄντως ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ἸΔΕΑ, ἀσυγκρίτως ἀνώτερη ἀπὸ τὴν ἐθνικὴ μας Μεγάλῃ Ἰδέα. Ἰδέα καθαριμένη ἀπὸ φθαρτὰ στοιχεῖα, ὑψηλὴ, καθολικὴ, αἰώνια, ποὺ εἶναι προωρισμένη νὰ βασιλεύσῃ. Αὐτῆς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας ἄς γίνουμε ταπεινοὶ ὑπηρετές, φρουροί, ἀγωνισταὶ και στρατιῶτες, γιὰ νὰ συμβασιλεύσουμε δι' αὐτῆς ὄντως και ἐμεῖς. Σύνθημά μας ἄς εἶναι οἱ ἐμπνευσμένοι λόγοι τοῦ ἥρωα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας σοφοῦ Ἰωσήφ Βρυεννίου: «Ὅτι ἀρνησόμεθά σε, φίλη Ὁρθοδοξία οὐ ψευσόμεθά σοι, πατροπαράδοτον σέβας ἐν σοὶ ἐγεννήθημεν, ἐν σοὶ ζῶμεν, και ἐν σοὶ κοιμηθησόμεθα εἰ δὲ καλέσοι καιρός, και μυριάκις ὑπὲρ σοῦ τεθνηξόμεθα.»

(†) Ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος



Ἀπὸ τὶς ἀρετὲς ποὺ ἐξαρτῶνται ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς, οἱ σύμφωνες με τὴν δύναμή μας εἶναι ἡ προσευχὴ και ἡ σιωπὴ. Ἀπὸ αὐτὲς ποὺ δὲν ἐξαρτῶνται ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς, ἀλλὰ κυρίως ἀπὸ τὴν κατάσταση τοῦ σώματος, εἶναι ἡ νηστεία και ἡ ἀγρυπνία. Ὅποιο ἀπὸ αὐτὰ τὰ ἔργα μπορεῖ νὰ κάνῃ εὐκολώτερα ὁ ἀγωνιστής, με ἐκεῖνο πρέπει νὰ καταπιάνεται.

Ἅγιος Ἡλίας ὁ Ἐκδικος



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

Τί είναι ή Νοερά Προσευχή και Πώς Πρέπει να Γίνεται;

Αγίου Νικοδήμου Αγιορείτη.

Η νοερά και καρδιακή προσευχή, σύμφωνα με τους Αγίους Πατέρες τους καλουμένους Νηπτικούς, είναι ή συγκέντρωσις του ανθρώπινου νοῦ στην καρδιά του κυρίως, και χωρίς να όμιλη με τὸ στόμα, με μόνο τον ενδιάθετο λόγο, ὁ ὁποῖος όμιλεῖται μέσα στην καρδιά, να λέγη αὐτή τή σύντομη και μονολόγιστη προσευχή· δηλαδή τὸ «Κύριε, Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέησόν με», κρατώντας λίγο και τὴν ἀναπνοή. Καταχρηστικά ὅμως και ευρύτερα νοερή προσευχή λέγεται και κάθε ἄλλη δέησις που δὲν θα γίνη με τὸ στόμα, ἀλλά με τὸν ενδιάθετο λόγο τῆς καρδιάς που ἀναφέρθηκε.

Ἄν, λοιπόν, ἀδελφέ, ἀγαπᾶς να εἰσακουσθῆς πιὸ εύκολα ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ και να λάβης ἐκεῖνο που τοῦ ζητᾶς, ἀγωνίζου ὅσο μπορείς σ' αὐτή τή νοερή προσευχή, παρακαλώντας τὸν Θεὸ με ὄλο σου τὸν νοῦ και τὴν καρδιά για να σε ἐλεήση και να σοῦ δώση ἐκεῖνα που εἶναι ἀπαραίτητα και σε συμφέρουν για τὴ σωτηρία σου. Διότι, ὅσο περισσότερο κόπο ἔχει αὐτή ή νοερή προσευχή, ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνη που λέγεται με τὸ στόμα προφορικά, τόσο περισσότερο τὴν ἀκούει ὁ Θεός, ὁ ὁποῖος ἀκούει καλύτερα τὴν νοερή βοή τῆς καρδιάς, παρὰ τις δυνατές φωνές τοῦ στόματος. Γι' αὐτὸ και ἔλεγε στὸν Μωυσῆ που μόνο νοερὰ και με τὴν καρδιά τὸν παρακαλοῦσε για τοὺς Ἰουδαίους: «Γιατὶ φωνάζεις δυνατὰ πρὸς ἐμένα.» (Ἐξοδ. 14:15).

Γνώριζε ἀκόμη ὅτι, ἐπειδὴ και τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ, εἶναι καθολικὸ ὄνομα και περιέχει ὅλες τις χάρες, που ζητᾶμε και ἐμεῖς ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ, και ὁ Θεὸς μᾶς τις δίνει, γι' αὐτὸ για κάθε ὑπόθεσι και χάρι που ζητᾶς ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ, μπορείς να χρησιμοποιῆς τὴν προσηρηθεῖσα σύντομη αὐτὴν προσευχή, τὸ «Κύριε, Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέησόν με». Γιατὶ και ὁ νοῦς συμμαζεύεται με αὐτὴν πιὸ εύκολα, ἐνῶ στὶς ἄλλες προσευχές, στὶς ἐκτενέστερες και πολλές, ὁ νοῦς διασκορπίζεται.

Ἐὰν ὅμως και ἐπιθυμῆς, κατὰ τις διάφορες ὑποθέσεις και χάριτες που ζητᾶς, να προσεύχεσαι, ἐδῶ σοῦ παραθέτω μερικὲς προσευχές, για να τις ἔχης ὡς παράδειγμα. Για παράδειγμα, ὅταν ζητᾶς κάποια ἀρετὴ και χάρι, μπορείς

να πῆς με τὴν καρδιά σου τὰ ἐξῆς: «Κύριε, ὁ Θεός μου, δός μου αὐτὴ τὴ χάρι και ἀρετὴ για δόξα και τιμὴ δική σου»· ή ἔτσι: «Κυρίε μου, ἐγὼ πιστεύω ὅτι σοῦ ἀρέσει και εἶναι δόξα δική σου τὸ να ζητήσω ἐγὼ και να λάβω αὐτὴ τὴν χάρι· ἐκπλήρωσέ μου λοιπὸν αὐτὴ τὴν ἐπιθυμία σύμφωνα με τὸ θέλημά σου».

Ὅταν ἐμπρακτα πολεμῆσαι ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐχθρούς, θα προσευχηθῆς ἔτσι: «Τρέξε γρήγορα, Θεέ μου, να με βοηθήσης, για να μὴ νικηθῶ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐχθρούς μου»· ή «Θεέ μου, καταφυγή μου, δύναμις τῆς ψυχῆς μου, βοήθησέ με γρήγορα, για να μὴν πέσω». Ὅταν ἀκολουθῆ ή μάχη, ἀκολούθησε και ἐσὺ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο τῆς προσευχῆς, ἀντιστεκόμενος γενναῖα σ' ἐκεῖνο που σε πολεμεῖ.

Ἐπειτα, ἀφοῦ τελειώση ή σκληρότητα τῆς μάχης, στρέψου πρὸς τὸν Θεὸ, παρουσίασε μπροστά του τὸν ἐχθρὸ που σε πολέμησε και τὴν ἀδυναμία σου να τοῦ ἀντισταθῆς λέγοντας: «Νά,

Κύριε, τὸ δημιούργημα τῶν χειρῶν τῆς ἀγαθότητός σου, τὸ ἐξαγορασμένο με τὸ Αἷμα σου. Νά ὁ ἐχθρός σου που ζητᾶ να τὸ ἐξαφανίση και να τὸ καταφάγη σε σένα προστρέχω σε σένα μόνον ἐλπίζω που εἶσαι ἀγαθός και παντοδύναμος και κύταξε τὴν ἀδυναμία μου και τὴν ταχύτητα (ἂν δὲν με βοηθήσης ἐσὺ) να ὑποταχθῶ ἐκούσια· βοήθησέ με λοιπόν, ἐσὺ που εἶσαι ή ἐλπίδα και ή δύναμις τῆς ψυχῆς μου».

Σοῦ ὑπενθυμίζω και τὸ ἐξῆς: Ὅταν κουρασθῆς να προσεύχεσαι νοερὰ και με τὴν καρδιά, μπορείς να λὲς και με τὸ στόμα και προφορικά τόσο τὴν εύχὴ «Κύριε, Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέησόν με», ὅπως λέγουν οἱ Πατέρες, ὅσο και τις ἄλλες προσευχές που θα θελήσης. Φρόντιζε ὅμως και να συμμαζεύης τὸν νοῦ σου τότε για να προσέχης στὰ λόγια τῆς προσευχῆς.

Μερικοὶ μάλιστα λέγουν ὅτι νοερὰ προσευχή λέγεται ἀκόμη και τὸ ἐξῆς: ὅταν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀφοῦ συμμαζέψη ὅλες τις νοερὲς δυνάμεις τῆς ψυχῆς του μέσα στην καρδιά, χωρίς να πῆ κανένα λόγο οὔτε προφορικὸ, οὔτε ενδιάθετο, με μόνο τὸ νοῦ του σκέπτεται και ἀμετάβατα ἀναλογίζεται ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι παρὼν ἐνώπιόν του. Και ὅτι αὐτὸς στέκεται μπροστά του πότε με φόβο και δέος σὰν ἕνας κατάδικος πότε με ζωντανὴ πίστι για να λάβη τὴν βοήθειά του· και πότε με ἀγάπη και χαρὰ για να τὸν ὑπηρετήση παντοτεινά. Και αὐτὸ



είναι εκείνο πού έλεγε ο Δαβίδ: «Έβλεπα πάντοτε τόν Κύριό μου ένώπιόν μου» (Ψαλμ. 15:8).

Μπορεί ή προσευχή αυτή νά γίνη και μόνο με ένα άμετάβατο βλέμμα του νοϋ προς τόν Θεό, πενθικό και παρακαλεστικό, τó όποιο βλέμμα είναι σαν μία σιωπηλή ύπενθύμησι εκείνης τής χάριτος, πού του είχαμε ζητήσει προηγουμένως με τόν λόγο και με την καρδιακή προσευχή. Γι' αυτό, έπειδή ή προσευχή αυτή μπορεί νά γίνη εύκολα σε κάθε τόπο και για κάθε άφορμή και περίστασι, κράτησέ την στα χέρια σου σαν ένα όπλο δυνατό και εύκολομεταχείριστο, και θα ώφεληθής και θα βοηθηθής πολύ.

Πολλά και μεγάλα είναι τα χαρίσματα πού προκαλεί αυτή ή ιερή και νοερή προσευχή, τα όποια άπαριθμούν οί άγιοι και θεοφόροι Πατέρες. Έγώ όμως άναφέρω έδω τó γενικώτερο και σπουδαιότερο από όλα τα άλλα. Ό άνθρωπος είναι και λέγεται κατ' εικόνα Θεού, έχοντας νοϋ, λόγο και ζωοοποιδ πνεϋμα του σώματος, δηλαδή φυσική θέλησι και άγάπη. Έπειδή όμως ό Θεός είναι τρία και ένα, και ό άνθρωπος πού είναι κατ' εικόνα Θεού νά γίνη και τρία και ένα, για νά μοιάζη με τó πρωτότυπό του και στη συνέχεια νά ένωθη με αυτό. Αυτή ή ένωσις και όμοιότητα με τόν Θεό δέν γίνεται με άλλον τρόπο παρά μόνο με την προσευχή αυτή.

Όταν λοιπόν ό νοϋς έχη όλη του την προσοχή στραμένη στον ένδιάθετο λόγο, πού είναι μέσα στην καρδιά, και ό ένδιάθετος λόγος λέγη τó «Κύριε, Ίησοϋ Χριστέ, Υιέ του Θεού, έλέησόν με», ένω τó Πνεϋμα και ή φυσική θέλησις με όλη της την δύναμι άγαπᾶ και άφιερώνεται στα λόγια αυτά τής προσευχής, τότε αυτές οί τρεις δυνάμεις, μένοντας τρεις γίνονται ένα. Και ό ένας άνθρωπος γίνεται τρία, μένοντας ένα. Και αυτό σημαίνει εκείνο πού λέγει άμυδρα ό μέγας τής Θεσσαλονίκης Γρηγόριος, ό μεγάλος εκείνος εργάτης και διδάσκαλος τής Νοερᾶς Προσευχής: «Όταν τó ένιαίο του νοϋ γίνεται τρία, μένοντας ένα, τότε ένώνεται με την Θεαρχική Τριαδική Μονάδα, αποκλείοντας κάθε είσοδο πλάνης, και βρίσκεται πάνω από κάθε καθεστώς σάρκας κόσμου και κοσμοκράτορος». Και στη συνέχεια λέγει ό άγιος ότι, κι αν αυτή ή ένωσις των τριών, με την προσευχή αυτή, είναι πιό κοπιαστική από κάθε άλλο κόπο άρετής, όμως δίνει τα άπόρρητα μυστήρια και τις άποκαλύψεις του Θεού, όταν κανείς ύπομένη πολύ χρόνο στην εργασία και ένωσι αυτή.

Και γιατί νά πολυλογᾶ; Με άλλον τρόπο δέν μπορεί ό άνθρωπος νά φυλάξη την πρώτη έντολή, δηλαδή, τó «νά αγαπήσης τόν Κύριο τó Θεό σου με όλη σου την ψυχή...», όπως προστάσει ό Κύριος (Λουκ. 10:27), παρά με τó μέσο τής Νοερᾶς αυτής Προσευχής.

Σημειώνω δέ και τα έξής σε όσους είναι άντίθετοι στον τρόπο τής προσευχής αυτής, την άπόφασι πού

έχει ό Συνοδικός Τόμος, κατά του Βαβλαάμ και Άκινδύνου, επί Βασιλέως Άνδρονίκου Παλαιολόγου, ένώπιον τής Συγκλήτου και των Ρωμαίων κριτών. Έχει δέ ως έξής: «Φάνηκε από αυτά και έλέγχθηκε ό Βαβλαάμ ότι βλασφημεί και όμιλεί κακόδοξα για τó Θαβώρειο Φώς, και για εκείνους τους Μοναχούς και για την ιερή ενϋχή πού προφέρουν αυτοί. Οί Μοναχοί άποδείχθηκαν άνώτεροι από την κατηγορία του, ως μένοντες στις έξηγήσεις και παραδόσεις των Άγίων Πατέρων... Γι' αυτό... ό ίδιος ό Βαβλαάμ... αλλά και όποιος άλλος άναφανή νά όμιλή βλάσφημα και κακόδοξα με βάσι εκείνα τα βλάσφημα πού είπε αυτός και στρέφονται κατά των Μοναχών, μάλλον κατά τής Έκκλησίας, ή όποιος φανή νά άσχολήται γενικά με τα παρόμοια, στην ίδια καταδικη από την δική μας Μετριότητα ύποβαλλόμενος, άποκηρυγμένος θα είναι και αυτός και άποκομμένος από την Καθολική Άνατολική Έκκλησία του Χριστού και του Όρθοδόξου συστήματος των Χριστιανών».

Τόσο ή χάρις, πού δίνει ό Θεός στην παρούσα ζωή, όσο και ή δόξα πού πρόκειται νά δώση στην άλλη, για τις όποιες είπε ό Δαβίδ «χάρι και δόξα θα δώση» (Ψαλμ. 83:12), και τα δυό όνομάζονται έλεος ή μὲν χάρις, γιατί όσοι χαριτώθηκαν από τόν Θεό, απλά κατά τόν άπόστολο Πέτρο όνομάζονται έλεημένοι «Έσείς πού κάποτε δέν ήσασταν λαός, τώρα γίνετε λαός του Θεού έσείς πού άλλοτε δέν είχατε έλεηθῆ, τώρα βρήκατε έλεος» (Α' Πέτρο. 2:10).

Και ό θεϊός Παϋλος, αυτός πού έλεήθηκε τόσο πολύ όνομάζει τόν εαυτό του έλεημένο: «Έκφράζω τη γνώμη μου σαν άνθρωπος πού έχει έλεηθῆ» (Α' Κορ. 7:25) και άλλου λέγει: «Άλλά έλεήθηκα διότι τó έκανα από άγνοια» (Α' Τιμ. 1:13). Παρόμοια και ή δόξα των άγιων στους ούρανοϋς και ό στέφανος λέγεται έλεος και από έλεος δίνεται, όπως λέγει ό ψαλμωδός: «Αυτόν πού σε στεφανώνει με έλεος και οϊκτιρμούς» (Ψαλμ. 102:4). Έρμηνεύοντας αυτό ό ιερός Χρυσόστομος λέγει: «Λοιπόν ό στέφανος είναι άποτέλεσμα χάριτος και φιλανθρωπίας».



Αυτοί οί τρεις κανόνες ζωής είναι χρήσιμοι, τó νά φοβᾶσαι τόν Θεόν, τó νά προσεύχεσαι άδιάλειπτα και τó νά κάνης τó καλόν στον πλησίον σου.

Άββᾶς Ποιμὴν ό Μέγας

ON CULTURE WARS

By Fr. John Whiteford, a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.



There are those in the Orthodox Church who say that we should have nothing to do with the culture wars that have been raging in our culture since the 60's. They accuse conservative converts of trying to bring those culture wars into the Orthodox Church. Ironically, those who talk like this are usually the very people who actually are bringing the culture wars into the Orthodox Church by their promotion of the acceptance of homosexuality, gay marriage, abortion, women's ordination, and various other liberal causes. It is not as if the Orthodox Church was full of people who thought gay marriage was a great idea until converts started showing up. In fact, the Orthodox in traditionally Orthodox countries are very conservative, and though, for example, there are not lots of Protestant converts to Orthodoxy in Russia, the Russian Church has taken a very strong and vocal position on these issues.

Patriarch Kirill of Moscow is not a convert from Protestantism, but he made these comments at the end of a recent concelebration with Metropolitan Tikhon of the OCA:

“The task of our Churches is to pray and work in order that the Lord would grant His mercy on the peoples of our countries, so that God's strength would make moral basics stronger, which originate in God's morals of the Bible, and so that the relations between our countries would strengthen based on common moral values.

That is why we endure the deviations from these God's moral standards so painfully. The deviations take place both in the United States and other Western countries at the present time. It is a great challenge for Christian Churches. Many of them, especially Protestant organizations, fail to overcome this challenge—they follow the path of the renunciation of their own identity, refuse from moral values of the Gospel in favor of political fashion.

But the Orthodox Churches cannot do this and therefore the Orthodox Churches encourage people to profess the faith. We have a right to speak about it like this, here at this cathedral, because our Church has gone through decades of suffering and profession, but it has not faltered or cheated on itself.

That is why we heartily wish that the Orthodox Church in America would preserve the fidelity to Christ, His Com-

mandments, and would be, if not very bright and strong, but still light for its people. We are aware that even the light of a small candle becomes a powerful point of reference and helps people find their way to salvation. (see “Orthodox Church is the Bridge that is Able to Unite Russian and American Peoples,” translated by Pravmir.ru).

This coming right on the heels of a controversy within the OCA, in which a senior priest has suggested that the Church needs to re-think its position on homosexuality, I can't help but suspect that these comments were made in reference to it.

It would be nice if we could ignore the culture wars, but the culture wars are coming after us, our Church, and our families. You can choose what you are prepared to defend, but you cannot choose who will attack what you wish to defend. Franklin Roosevelt was not “fixated” on militaristic fascism... but he spent quite a bit of his efforts and energy fighting it, because militaristic fascists were attacking the country that he, as president, was sworn to defend.

Today it is pro-abortionists, pro-homosexuals, and certain varieties of feminists that are attacking the Traditions of the Orthodox Church. We didn't pick them, they picked us. We have no choice but to defend the Church and its Tradition, or to raise the rainbow flag and surrender.

We do believe that the Orthodox Church is the True Church, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it, but that does not mean that large parts of it, including our own, cannot fall into heresy and error, if we are not vigilant. It has happened more than once in Church history, and there is no reason to think that we are somehow immune today.

The people of God are the guardians of piety, as the Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848 (in reply to Pope Pius the IX) states. It is therefore not only permissible, but obligatory for all of the faithful, and even more so for the clergy, to oppose these attempts to infect our Church with the same heresies that have wreaked such havoc in mainline Protestant Churches, and are in the process of doing the same in the Roman Catholic Church.



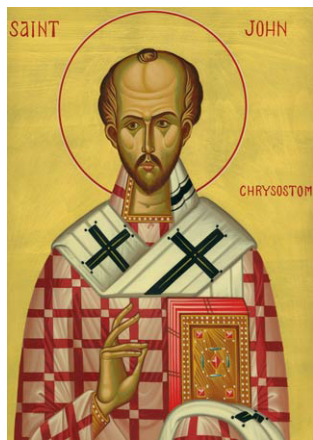
There is no other greater love than this: that a man lay down his soul for his neighbor. One is laying down his soul for his neighbor when he hears an evil word, a word that causes grief, and being able to say similar words he strives to say them not, or when injustice is made unto him and he endures and pays not back. A man like this is laying down his soul for his neighbor.

Abba Poimen the Great

RAISING CHILDREN ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

By Protopresbyter Theodoros Zisis, Professor Emeritus of the School of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

A Classic Pedagogical Work



The Holy Chrysostom, the fruit of Antioch who once glorified the Patriarchal throne of the capital of Byzantium, is rightfully included amongst the greatest pedagogues of all time. Witnessing to this claim is not only his recognition as such in studies of his life and works, but also his association with education within Orthodox tradition. He is one of the three hierarchs whom we celebrate in

our schools on the 30th of January as patrons of learning, as models for pedagogues and teachers, and as conveyors and proponents of Helleno-Christian educational ideals.

Chrysostom is the most prolific writer amongst the Church Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers. In the French monk Migne's well-known series, the *Patrologia Graeca*—a series composed of 161 massive volumes—Chrysostom's writings occupy eighteen of them. Pedagogical counsels are scattered throughout this rich material. If these counsels were gathered together, they would compose an unparalleled handbook of Christian pedagogy. Such a work would be worth the effort, providing us with a presentation of sound pedagogical principles to guide the education of our youth.

Beyond these counsels scattered throughout the whole of his work, fortunately one excellent pedagogical treatise has been preserved which, from beginning to end, has as its aim to set forth principles concerning the proper upbringing of youth. Although the work in question has two titles, it is indeed only one text. In the manuscript tradition, it is called *On Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring up their Children*. Generally, however, it is known by the more concise title, *On Vainglory and the Raising of Children*. Just how vainglory is related to the raising of children we will see further on in our analysis of this excellent work. Well-researched studies suggest that this work presents the ancient, full and perfect Christian teaching with regard to education. It is a systematic exposition of Christian education; one of the most enlightening fruits of the Greek Christian soul, based not only in the Holy Scriptures, but also in the psychological and pedagogical teachings of the ancient Greeks, as well as experience.

It was a great misfortune for the study of the teachings of Chrysostom, as well as for the Church's contribution to the formation of educational ideals and principles, that this book was not included in Migne's great work, and thus it remained

unused and unexploited. Although it had been published in 1656 in Paris by Combefis, who in the title of his edition described it as a "golden book" (*De educandis liberis, liber aureus*), questions surrounding the book's authenticity raised by other researchers caused Mountfaucon not to include it in his edition and so, later, neither did Migne. At the beginning of this century, however, the authenticity of the work was firmly re-established. Amongst the supporters of the work's authenticity we find the Greek academic, and professor of the University of Thessaloniki, Basilios Exarchos—one of the most dynamic and respected representatives of theological studies of our era. Exarchos supported his claim of the work's authenticity in an expert study, and he prepared a critical edition of the text which a German publishing house released in 1955. Earlier, in 1947, the Greek publisher "Astir" («Ἄστηρ») published a translation of the work in Modern Greek, also composed by Basilios Exarchos. In the prologue to this edition he writes the following:

As the attentive reader will notice at once, this book's contents have great worth pertaining to the raising of Greek Christian children. It was decided that in the Modern Greek Translation, it would be good and useful to extract all the critical apparatuses, so that the text might be published independently. This would allow Greek parents who want to raise their children as proper Greeks and proper Christians to be fed and taught from this book by the Great Teacher John Chrysostom. The whole book has its basis in a hidden experience, that is to say whatever Chrysostom experienced as an orphan in his upbringing by his mother Anthousa. Therefore the book reflects a lived reality, a successful trial, and proof of the power of a Christian upbringing. If it is taken into account that our era is an era of reconstruction for our Greek homeland, then the importance of the present book is even clearer. Whatever attempt is made at social and economic reconstruction is condemned to failure if it does not originate in ethical, spiritual restoration and reformation of the soul of the new generation. Parents and teachers ought to undertake this work with faith, and ask for advice and direction concerning its execution. The contents of the present book are just this advice and direction. And so, that this advice might be used by every genuine Greek Christian parent and educator of children, it is here in simple Modern Greek, so as to be more widely read.

The work has also circulated with a parallel French translation, extensive introduction and rich annotation in a critical edition of the highest level as part of the series *Sources Chrétiennes*, and with a parallel Modern Greek translation published in the well-known series *Ἑλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*.

We will identify transcendent precepts within this exceptional pedagogical treatise, written by a great Orthodox Father, which apply in our own era as foundational educational principles. It is on account of this that we characterize the work as *classical*: because it is equally addressed to, and able

to guide, today's man. Moreover, in the conscience of the Church the Fathers are generally the classical teachers—the classical pedagogues—because with their rich educational armament, their outstanding spiritual gifts, and above all their expert vision (which comes from divine illumination—communion with God) they are able to penetrate the depths of human existence, pierce the mysterious and unknown realm of the human soul, and to find man's dark and light side. Thus, the Fathers aid the dispersal of the evil elements, in the wiping out of darkness and in the strengthening and encouragement of the bright ones.

Raising Children: “Then” and “Now”

To persuasively argue that the pedagogical ideas within Chrysostom's work are timeless, it is necessary to briefly observe the spiritual atmosphere with which he is occupied—the spiritual atmosphere of Antioch in his era. In other words, we must note what educational ideals he set out for the youth of Antioch. If these provisions are similar to those which we give to our youth today, then also the critiques which this

Holy Father presents are critiques of our own era and of our own pedagogical work as teachers and as parents. We will glean our knowledge of the atmosphere of Chrysostom's Antioch

from the work which we consider here, as well as from other works of the same author.

Parents' attitudes toward the spiritual formation of the youth, of their ethical refinement, were marked by indifference. Their plans for their children's futures were confined to professional success and prosperity. These goals are practical, materially-minded, and individualistic. Within this framework, parents were concerned to secure all material conveniences for their children. They paid no attention to the expenses, the toil and the sacrifices to find the right schools and the best teachers so that their children could acquire those provisions which would help them in their worldly life and career. The obsession with acquiring and enjoying material goods was the strongest motivating factor in the care for children. The youth were unilaterally treated as if they were bodily beings only, as if they had no soul in need of care. Children breathed of, and grew up in, this atmosphere of obsession with riches and worldly glory.

When, Saint John Chrysostom says, one hears parents advise their children to pursue education, their argumentation is as follows: Such-and-such with the education he received, while he came from a poor and ill-reputed family, managed to become great and powerful, to attain lofty positions, to become

rich, to marry a rich woman, to build a beautiful house and the like. Another, with the languages that he learned, took the best position in the palace and he administered all affairs. Parents set forth the successful in life as examples, “the blessed of the earth.” In this manner these parents introduced into the malleable and receptive souls of the youth two great vices, two tyrannical loves: the love of money and the love of worldly glory or social status as we would say today. By this the youth were perverted and became materially-minded and vain. The perversion of youth is owed exclusively to the obsession for earthly goods, the great pedagogue observes. “The loss of children comes about through no other way than the obsession their parents have with earthly things.”

Parents, he says, cared only to secure riches, and clothing, and servants and property. The only thing they cared nothing about was spiritual cultivation, the cultivation of virtue and devotion. They thought virtues to be flaws and weakness. A complete inversion of values reigned. Vices took the names of virtues and virtues, vices. They called the love of glory,



Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. - Proverbs 22:6

magnanimity; of gain, freedom; insolence was called frankness; injustice, manliness. Conversely, prudence was considered rudeness; tolerance, fear; justice, cowardice; forgiving-

ness, weakness and humility, subservience.

Within this spiritual confusion nothing was clear and firm. The courts, the laws, nor even the schools were able to help. The rich bribed judges with money and teachers were only interested in their salaries. “There is no escape from this, neither with the judges, nor in the laws, not in teachers, or parents, nor in servants. Some can be bought off with money, while others care only for their salaries.” As many as were concerned about this state were either subdued by reassuring speeches, or they did not speak for fear of the power of the immoral.

According to Saint John Chrysostom, ethical wantonness and social unrest are owed to improper care for children, to neglect for their spiritual cultivation: “The downfall of society stems from this disregard for children. Many seek the preservation of their estates, but not the preservation of the souls of those in their care.” He does not hesitate to call this indifference toward the cultivation of virtue in the souls of children “criminal.” By their indifference, as many as infuse their children with tyrannizing passions, with vices which daily kill and their souls, commit infanticide—the murder of their own children.

Society does not suffer from a lack of shrewd businessmen or from a lack of the literate and educated. It suffers from a

lack of virtuous men. It suffers because it has been flooded by the shrewd, who want nothing other than to increase in riches and to live the comfortable life. It suffers because the power-hungry, in their attempt to ascend, overturn order. It suffers because the acquisition of extravagant homes and comforts has become the sole aim of men. To this the illness of society is owed, these things destroy the harmonic social life, not those who live in virtue and holiness. “Those things which are considered superfluous and unimportant are the very things required for the course of our life.” This necessary and cohesive “thing” is virtue, spiritual cultivation.

In addition to these two passions, another, equally or rather more dangerous for the easily-enflamed youth, dominated the educational climate. This is “sexual liberation” as we call it today, or in other words the excitement and gratification of the fleshly desires, the love of the flesh. The Holy Father hesitates to expound on this issue, on such a sacred element of human relations, which has been perverted, so perverted that fleshly relations between persons of the same sex were of fashion and yet did not provoke a reaction. Saint John, however, overcomes his wavering and his modesty to check and castigate the indifference of all responsible for education in the face of this reversal not only of ethical but also natural laws. Chrysostom wonders, together with many others, how God tolerates so much. He abides this degradation of man without having sent fire to burn the city of Antioch as once occurred in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Chrysostom places great responsibility for Antioch’s ethical wantonness in the hands of the theatre, whose programs and topics principally cover the matters of harlotry and adultery, pornographic themes. “For indeed both adulteries and stolen marriages are there, and there are women playing the harlot, men prostituting, youths corrupting themselves: all there is iniquity to the full, all sorcery, all shame,” he observes.

These three loves—of money, of glory and of the flesh—dominated the spiritual plane of Chrysostom’s era, and they shaped the principles by which the education of youth was approached. These elements are considered in the treatise *On Vainglory and the Raising of Children*, which gives direction for the correct way of education.

The Social Environment: Vainglory

In the first part of the work, concerning vainglory, Saint John shows that the education of youth is influenced deci-

sively from the prevailing manner of life, from the way of life and of thought of the members of the group, within which the youth developed. The youth breathed and developed within this group’s climate of life, and unavoidably, their ethical quality and spiritual existence are determined by it. Chrysostom localizes the sickness of vainglory in vanity; that is to say in erroneous perceptions concerning self-worth and in the related inclination for exhibitions of wealth, dress, homes, and furniture.

It is further exemplified in the continuous propensity which had prevailed amongst the wealthy to do displays of their economic power, financing theatrical performances or organizing games at the hippodrome. The motivation for these was applause, the acclaim of the people, of glory. This antagonism in displays of economic power had extended to such a degree that many of the upper class, purely so that they follow the “trend,” went as far as bankruptcy and all the way to poverty,

scattering their money incalculably on these displays, so that they are not out-paced by their peers. This, then, became a mob of men which resultantly died destitute and from hunger.

This inclination toward displays was not a feature of the few wealthy only. It had penetrated all levels of society. Even the poor cared to buy the best apparel, the best furniture and utensils, for the pure

purpose of exhibited wealth. They further extended their fallacious ways into employing even a servant in the house; they were truly led to believe that serving themselves detracted from their social status. Many, while they hungered, did not care for their nourishment above their social dignity, to show that that they are “something,” that they are well-to-do. The ideal social type, the successful, the admirable, was not the virtuous man, the prudent, the spiritually cultivated, but the rich, the economically settled.

Saint Chrysostom is angered by this situation. *All these things*, he says, *are external and of no benefit to the soul. These things do not define a person. The ideal man is measured by his virtue. Virtue is the source of human dignity, honor and glory.* He adds the need to *disregard of human values, embracing poverty and overcoming our nature by the virtue of our lives. It is these that constitute good status and reputation and honor.* The infusion of such vanity is what affects the children and is the cause of the continuation of this dreadful vice. It is at this point that Chrysostom, connecting vainglory with the raising of children, observes that the root of all vices lie in the fact



that children have grown up in an unhealthy environment and are influenced by it.

From the moment of his birth, parents are willing to do everything for their child. Sadly, this “everything” often only includes adorning him, dressing him up, and buying him trinkets; however, it does not include seeking out the proper way in which to raise him. Rather than extracting vices from the child’s soul, they introduce the love of money and the care for things that are completely unprofitable. The great shame in this is that it is the childhood years, the early years of development, which are the most suitable time to implant either virtue or vice. It should be concluded then that parents bear great responsibility when they neglect to form their children properly.

Timeliness and Education

Saint John says that the souls of children are soft and delicate like wax. If right teachings are impressed upon them from the beginning then, with time, these impressions harden as in the case of a waxen seal. None will be able to undo this good impression. Malleable things take the form of whatever they are impressed with because they have not yet taken a stable shape. They resemble boards prepared to receive paint, or material ready to be sculpted. Much attention is required on the part of the painter if he is to produce a beautiful painting. With great patience sculptors must pull away all that is superfluous and add what is needed in order to achieve the result they desire. There is no more wonderful material with which to work than the souls of children. Parents create ensouled icons of God, true living statues.

Further on in the treatise, Saint John likens the soul of the child to a newly-founded city and parents are likened to the ruler of this city. It is their task to put in place laws and to organize its citizens so that it is not destroyed by malevolent or anarchical factions. Many factions, both good and bad, struggle to gain foothold, securing their dominion over the child’s soul. The parental task is that of putting laws in place for the new city—an easy task in the childhood years because children are both inexperienced and submissive and therefore are made to conform much more easily. With age, however, the task of ordering, of forming his spiritual world, become much more difficult.

The Selection of Educational Influences

For the ordering of a child’s soul to be successful, it is important that particular care be taken to control what enters into it, what influences it is presented with. The selection of influences is vital. Chrysostom graphically represents this

control as follows: In the spiritual constitution of the child’s soul, the walls are the body and the gates are the five senses. All impressions and stimulants enter in from the outside world through the senses. If these gates are left unchecked, and all manner of impressions are allowed to pass through, havoc will be wrought because the child’s ability to resist is limited.

One might ask, then, how is it that each sense is to be guarded particularly? What should the child see, hear, say, taste and touch? This will be the topic of the remainder of this article. The presentation of all the possible recommendations would be an enormous task, so only a few will be presented here.

Strictness is an essential element of success in pedagogical work. It must, however, be measured and consistent so as not to end in sheer roughness but neither should it leave the impression that it is only an idle threat. Continual beating, then, is not the right way to impose punishment. The child gets used to being beaten, but is no wiser for it. The more appropriate method of imposing

punishment is to make use of the threat of punishment, occasionally putting it into practice, so that the child fears the punishment and does not think that the threat is empty words. Continual strictness cannot be permitted because man, by nature, needs forbearance and tolerance: *Yet when thou dost see that he has profited by fear, forbear, seeing that our*

human nature has need of some forbearance.

Particular care must be taken concerning what a child sees and hears. What Chrysostom says on this point is infinitely relevant in the raising of today’s children. All the mediums of communication and information—books, radio, and television—besiege the hearing and vision of children which are gates into the inner world of the child. These gates, left completely unchecked, will allow the entry of things of low quality or even ethically dangerous material.

As plants need more care when they are soft and delicate, says Chrysostom, so it is with children. We must be attentive to who they keep company with in order that we might control what is said in their presence and what they learn. We must not abandon them to just “anyone,” allowing that person to become the shaper of our children’s souls. They need not hear babbling and useless stories, for example, “This youth kissed that maiden. The king’s son and the younger daughter have done this.” There exist within the Holy Scriptures engaging narratives which, if offered in the correct way, will captivate a child’s interest and will teach him virtue. Saint Chrysostom himself offers examples of how one might properly offer these stories.



Sexual Education

What Saint John teaches about the youth's "sexual education" is also interesting, and is entirely at odds with today's liberal and unbridled philosophies regarding the matter. Fleshly desire begins to appear around the fifteenth year of age and it attacks forcefully. It is only restrained with great difficulty. Children must, therefore, be kept away from obscene sights and sounds, which serve to excite this desire. As a counterbalance, to replace the above types of entertainments, we must shift children's interests in other directions, toward trips and excursions, visits to cities and museums, and spending time with spiritual and saintly people.

In our era, the state of this problem is well out of control. If the shower of impressions and aggravations which our children are exposed to in the form of the prevailing shameless manner of dress, the provocative nudity of men and women which has developed into an institution, as well as the pornographic craze particularly of television channels, are not enough, the wise pedagogues of our times—the destroyers of youth, actually—introduced "sexual education" classes into schools. The wise pedagogical tradition of our Fathers advocates the control of irritants and impressions so that the youth, as calm and as undistracted as possible, can productively pursue their studies. This control also encourages that the enjoyment of the pleasures of this plane be left within the context of the blessed institution of marriage, which thus even on the natural plane remains a source of joy and delight.

Today's uneducated educators forsake their responsibility to instill stillness in children even in school, where temptations and provocations ought to be kept away so that education might function as a good outlet and a place of study and learning. How many amongst these educators are spiritually cultivated persons, so that they might undertake this work soberly and responsibly? And how many parents are willing to allow this, the most important, sacred and personal aspect of their children, to be abused and perverted by the lips and teaching of just any teacher, who approaches this theme with his own bad experiences and perversions? What will remain for young people to learn and to taste within marriage, when they learn and taste it outside? For this reason marriage and family have lost all allure and attraction in our days, after this holy, unique and personal bond between two heterosexual people has been reduced to one of many unions which they have already experienced. This new union may be comparatively considered as even worse than the others, once the married couple starts to experience the problems of "obligatory co-habitation" and the various worldly obligations and family stresses.

Children do not need to be taught about marriage by teachers or experience it ahead of time. Nature is a self-sufficient teacher. We do not need to learn how to eat, how to drink and how to sleep. All others are from the evil one. Generations

upon generations of men have married and made families, successful and stable ones at that, without "sexual education," which composes yet another torpedo to the foundation of education and the family. Finally, Saint John Chrysostom believes that marriage at a younger age is a very suitable medium not only for confronting the problems of sexual desire but also for success in marriage.

Conclusion

Gleaning only a few of the elements from Chrysostom's pedagogical treatise, which has no equal in its wonderfulness and usefulness, displays the great sensitivity of the Holy Father towards the theme of the education of youth and his deep knowledge of these problems. The influence of environment, the timeliness with which education is approached, the way punishment is laid down, the selection of what youth see and hear, and caution in his sexual education are themes which today's parents and teachers must also consider. The counsels of the illumined pedagogue are indeed useful for all of us.



It will be shown that God's holy Church, an image confirming to its Archetype, does God's work in us. The men, women, and children coming into the Church, reborn and recreated by her in the Spirit, are just about infinite in number; they are very different from each other in race and appearance, they are of all languages, life styles, and ages; there are great differences in their mentalities, customs, and interests, their social station, their skills and their professions; their fortunes, their characters, and their abilities are all very different, but the Church confers one and the same divine character and title equally on all: that they be, and be called, Christians; the Church bestows unity in that simple, indivisible relationship which comes from faith, and does not allow the many untold differences to stand out, even though they exist in every one.

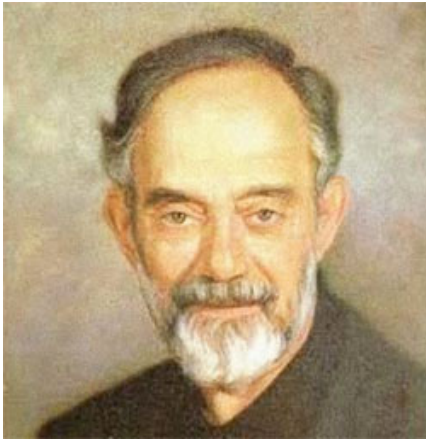
St. Maximos the Confessor

Wherefore, as children of light and truth, flee from division and wicked doctrines; but where the shepherd is, there do ye as sheep follow. For there are many wolves that appear worthy of credit, who, by means of a pernicious pleasure, carry captives those that are running towards God; but in your unity they shall have no place."

St. Ignatius of Antioch

THE CREATED, THE UNCREATED AND THE INCARNATION

Protopresbyter John S. Romanides (+2001), from his book "Patristic Theology," edited for length.



There is no similarity whatsoever between the uncreated glory of God and creation. The Fathers say that although we do not know God's essence, we do know some and only some of God's energies. When they say this, however, they are not

using the verb *to know* in the standard sense of the word; they are not making any analogy or contrast. In Orthodoxy, our knowledge of God's glory is not like the knowledge of nature's energies (for example, nuclear energy, thermal energy, solar energy, kinetic energy, the force of gravity, and so forth) studied by biologists, physicists, astronomers, archaeologists, and others; this is because when we say *we know* something in the sciences, it means that we have knowledge about some object or phenomenon that we can describe. The known object is describable; we know its description and are able to describe it. But what enables us to describe it? It is its resemblance to another object that we already know. A similarity exists between the object we want to describe and something else.

Another aspect of knowledge is difference. Similarity and difference form the basis of human created knowledge. When similarity and difference are present, an object can be described. Similarity and difference make an object susceptible to description and classification according to genus, species, etc. These categories of similarity and difference are the foundations of human knowledge.

But according to Aristotle's logic, the law of contradiction also applies in the sphere of human knowledge. This law states that it is impossible for a thing to be simultaneously its opposite. For example, it is impossible for an object to be totally white and totally black at the same time. It will either be white or it will be black. In a similar way, it is impossible for an object to be simultaneously big and small, heavy and light, existent and non-existent, good and bad, and so on.

The Holy Orthodox Fathers, however, do not observe this law of Aristotle when they speak about God. Although this law is invalid in Patristic theology, the heretics both accepted it and used it. But why don't the Fathers observe Aristotle's law of contradiction, this axiom from Aristotle's logic? Be-

cause there is no similarity whatsoever between the created and the Uncreated. And since no similarity whatsoever exists, no description of the Uncreated whatsoever can be made. Furthermore, since there is no similarity, there also cannot be any difference.

Created things are relatively similar and relatively different. But what makes up this similarity among created things? First of all, they are similar in substance. All created and material things are composed of the same essence or universal substance, including all visible and material substances such as the earth, clouds, mist, air, stars, stones, plants, animals, as well as the various forms of energy such as light, heat, and so forth. Einstein proved this with his law of mass-energy equivalence. In philosophy, the common name for this universal substance is matter. It is the dust, clay, and earth mentioned in theological texts. Secondly, material and visible things are similar in structure. All material bodies are made up of atoms and all atoms resemble each other to a certain degree. So from this point of view, all material things are relatively similar.

What makes material things different is the form of the universal substance and the structure of the atoms. That is, two objects may differ because one is in the form of energy and the other is in its condensed state as matter or because of differences in the composition of individual atoms and their collective arrangement within a lattice structure.

The same phenomenon is observed in the cells of living organisms. They are also relatively similar and relatively different. Irrational living organisms (plants and animals) and human beings are relatively similar insofar as they are structurally and materially made up of the same basic building blocks (that is, atoms and cells). They differ insofar as humans by nature have an immortal soul formed in the image of God and capable of noetic activity, while other living beings do not.

Angels and human beings are relatively similar in terms of immortality, the ability to reason, to be depicted, to be self-determining, and so forth. Yet they differ in terms of glory, immateriality, and the like. Angels and demons are relatively similar in nature, but differ in glory (angels are glorified by Grace, whereas demons are deprived of Divine Glory).

Now **God and creation have absolutely no similarity**. This means that when we say that the uncreated differs from the created, we are not using the concept of difference the way we would in science or philosophy (speaking about relative differences). We are talking about an absolute difference; and **Christ is the one and only bridge between the created and the uncreated**. In regard to the names which we apply to God, these reveal His energies which descend to us, *yet* do not draw us closer to his essence, which is *inaccessible*. For Saint Gregory of Nyssa, every concept relative to God is a *simulacrum*, a false likeness, an idol. The concepts, which we form in accordance with the judgment and understanding which are natural to us, basing ourselves on an intelligible

representation, create idols of God instead of revealing to us God Himself. There is only one name by which the divine nature can be expressed: the wonder which seizes the soul when it thinks of God.

St. Dionysios the Areopagite has written a very beautiful passage that is cited by the Fathers. It tells us that in the final analysis God is neither Unity nor Trinity; *It is not something, neither is it any kind of degree; it is not mind; it is not soul; it is not moved, nor again does it remain still; it is neither in space nor in time; it is in itself of one kind, or rather without kind being before all kind, before movement, before stillness, for all these things concern being and make it many.* God does not correspond to anything the human mind conceives or could possibly conceive. For example, we say that there is one God. Of course, when we say the word *one*, we visualize a number or a unit. We imagine that there is one God just like any isolated individual is one person. The same thing happens when we say that God is three Persons. But God is not three anything. He is not three subjects. He is not three objects. He is not one subject and He is not one object.

Whenever we think, we always think in terms of a subject and an object. The subject is what observes while the object is what is observed. But when we say that the Father loves the Son, we are not dealing with a subject-object relationship.

In this case, the Father is not the subject or the One Who loves and the Son is not the object or the One Who is loved. Since God is neither a subject nor an object, He cannot be construed as the subject of His love or the object of His love. So in God, there are not three Persons like three persons in a family.

Now there are certain Orthodox theologians who claim that God is a personal God. They claim that God is not the God of philosophy, a construction of human philosophical thought, but that He is a personal God. Western tradition makes similar statements. But in the Patristic tradition, God is not a personal God. God does not correspond to anything that we can conceive or would be able to conceive. The relationship between God and man is not a personal relationship and it is also not a subject-object relationship. So when we speak about a personal relationship between God and man, we are making a mistake. That kind of relationship between God and human beings does not exist. What we are talking about now has bearing on another error that some people make when they speak about a com-

munion of persons and try to develop a theology based on a communion of persons using the relations between the Persons in the Trinity as a model. The relations between God and man are not like the relations between fellow human beings. Why? Because we are not on the same level or in the same business with God.

What we have just said holds true until the Incarnation.

However, after the Incarnation of God the Word, we can have a personal relationship with God by means of and on account of the Incarnation. But this relationship is with God as the God-man (as the Son of God and the Son of man).

Since God became man, the Incarnation brought about a special relationship between God and man or Christ and man, a relationship that is nevertheless non-existent when we consider the Holy Trinity as a whole. We do not have a relationship with the Holy Trinity or with the uncreated

Divinity that is like our relationship with Christ. In other words, our relationship with the Father or with the Holy Spirit is not like our relationship with Christ. Only with Christ do we have a personal relationship. The Holy Trinity came into personal contact with man only through the Incarnation, only through Christ.

Being uncreated, God is accordingly not a human being. That is, in His uncreatedness God neither is nor does He

resemble a human being. So when God became man, He did not become something that He already resembled. Incarnation does not mean that God assumed a nature that was somehow similar to His own. There is absolutely no similarity whatsoever between human nature and divine nature.

This is the reason why the Fathers stress that man is not the image of God. Only the Word or Son is the exact image of God. The Word is the image of the Father. And since the Word is the image of the Father, Christ as the Word is also the image of the Father. But since there is an interchange of properties between the two natures in Christ the incarnate Word Who is also human, and as such, the very humanity of Christ is also the image of the Father. So **the human nature of Christ is the image of the Father on account of the Incarnation.**

Man is not the image of God. Although some people certainly refer to man as the image of God, it is improper to do so. Literally, *man is fashioned in the image of God*, but he is not the image of God. (Christ is the image of God and man is the image of Christ. In other words, man is the image of



the image, that of Christ.) Although the Bible relates that *in the image of God created He him*, precisely what is meant by this verse was fully revealed only in the Incarnation. In other words, in the Incarnation, it was finally revealed that man had been created in the image of Christ, his chronologically subsequent prototype. This is because from the very beginning, human destiny was to become like Christ, to become god by grace, and to attain the state of being *in the likeness*. A person actively becomes “in the image” when he becomes like Christ in compassion. So when someone manages to imitate Christ, he also begins to become an image of the Father by grace as he partakes of the glory of Christ. In this way, someone who attains to a state of *theosis*, in other words, a state of being “in the likeness” of Christ, becomes Christ by grace and god by grace. That is when he becomes like Christ and differs from Christ only in terms of nature.

Notwithstanding, Christ is God by nature and not by grace. When the Word became flesh, He became human by nature. The Incarnation does not imply a mere adoption of human nature. God the Father did not adopt a human being through the Incarnation in order to dwell within him and in so doing to make that human being God. Rather, through the Incarnation, the very Word and Son of God became human by nature.

In this way, divine and human natures were united in the person of Christ. The divine nature of the Word and human nature coexist in the person of Christ in a union without confusion, without alteration and without division. Christ is not merely a man. He is the God-man. He is simultaneously both God and man with the distinct properties of both natures. When we look upon Christ, we are gazing at the incarnate Son of God. After the Incarnation, the Word and Son of God is united once and for all with human nature in the person of Christ. (*He came forth then, as God, with that which He had assumed; one Person in two natures, flesh and Spirit, of which the latter deified the former*—St. Gregory the Theologian). Although the Apostles were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word, they did not recognize that the human nature He assumed was deified. And if they were scandalized by the human and blameless passions that they saw Him experience, how much more were most people unable to recognize this *theosis*.

St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite further explains: “When the Lord was transfigured, His countenance shone like the sun and His garments became as white as light. In this way, the inward *theosis* of His human nature by the hypostatic union of God the Word could be recognized by the outpouring of divine rays. Although His Holy Body always participated in and was made rich by the divine glory by virtue of the ultimate hypostatic union with the glory of the invisible Divinity, this glory was not obvious in the appearance of His body, for those who were not capable of beholding it.

It is not that He transfigured what He had not assumed or transformed, but what appeared to His familiar disciples was transfigured.

We must know that although the nature hypostatically united to God the Word was deified, it nevertheless remained unchanged and did not lose its natural characteristics—that is, being subject to suffering, corruption, mortality, and the other natural and so-called blameless passions. It continued to have these characteristics even after its *theosis* so that first of all they would make Christ’s Incarnation believable and people would not consider it to have been imaginary. Secondly, so that by these sufferings the Lord would heal what we suffer, irradiate the irrational passions by the natural ones, and, simply, so that He might be victorious as a man and grant the victory to us His relatives who share His human nature.”

Now when someone attains to a state of illumination, he becomes by grace *a temple of the Holy Spirit*. When he attains to a state of *theosis*, he becomes god by grace and like Christ by grace, but never by nature. This is why the union between all other human beings and God is not hypostatic, as it is in the case of Christ. There is only one hypostatic union between God and man and that takes place in the person of Christ through the union of the Son and Word of God with human nature.

Man is united only with the energy or grace of God. Man is never united with the essence of God or with the hypostasis of the Word. He is only united with the human nature of Christ during Holy Communion. In other words, man is united with the deified, resurrected, and glorified human nature of Christ and thereby he is united with the uncreated energy of the human nature of Christ or uncreated divine grace. **This grace from Christ’s humanity is what saves, resurrects and heals man, body and soul.**



The person advancing in the spiritual life studies three things: the commandments, doctrine, and faith in the Holy Trinity.”

St. Thalassios the Libyan (+662)

The pious confession of the believer is that, with a view to our salvation, the Creator of all things incorporated with Himself a rational soul and a sensible body from the all-holy Mary, ever-virgin, by an undefiled conception, without conversion, and was made man in nature, but separate from wickedness: the same was perfect God, and the same was perfect man; the same was in nature at once perfect God and man.

St. Hippolytus of Rome (+235)

BATTLING THE SENSES

St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (+1809).

Why One Must Struggle to Control One's Senses



According to St. Gregory the Theologian we must struggle to block our senses and to control them, for they are the easy ways toward evil and entrances of sin. Let us not give in to the

easy ways of evil and to the easy entrances of sin. I say to you then, put all your strength forward to protect your senses. I also say to you to be attentive, to struggle, and I insist on this, by using various synonymous words.

I wish to prove to you that the devil is always standing before us, observing and studying the condition of our senses. Just as soon as we open even one sense to him, he enters into our soul directly and brings death to us, as St. Isaac has noted: *The enemy is standing and observing day and night directly against our eyes to detect which entrance of our senses will be opened to him to enter. Once he enters through one of our senses because of our lack of vigilance, then this devious shameless dog attacks us further with his own arrows.*

We must also struggle to protect our senses because it is not only through curious eyes that we fall into the sin of desire and commit fornication and adultery of the heart, as the Lord noted. There is also the fornication and the adultery of the sense of hearing, the sense of smell, the sense of taste, the sense of touch, and of all the senses together. Therefore, St. Gregory the Theologian has written in his heroic counsel to the virgin: *Virgin, be truly a virgin in the ears, in the eyes and in the tongue! Every sense that wanders with ease sins.* St. Gregory of Nyssa also said: *The Lord has spoken, I believe, about all the senses, so that the one who touches and the one who uses every inner power in us to serve pleasure has actually committed the sin in his heart.*

Those Who Live in the World Must Protect Their Senses More than Those Ascetics in the Desert

You who are in the world, dear friend, must guard yourself even more than those who are in the desert. St. Basil wrote to someone living in the world the following advice: *Do not relax your efforts because you are in the world. In fact you are in need of greater efforts and more vigilance to achieve salvation. After all you have chosen to live in the midst of all the pitfalls and in the very stronghold of the sinful powers. You have before you constantly the instigations of sins and day and night all of your senses are being attacked by their evil desires.*

If we are overcome by the desire for food or drink, we do not experience such a strong attack. Being in a desolate place where one does not see or hear anything out of place or experience the other causes of sin, we are thus surrounded by

a protective wall that helps to win our battles without wars, as St. Isaac said: *When one does not receive a sense perception, then he can have a victory without a struggle.*

In other words, the monks who have removed themselves from the world are fighting behind trenches, but you are fighting an arm-to-arm combat against the enemies. The attacks are coming from all directions. And the causes of sin are all around you. While they stand afar off from the precipice, you are at its very edge. That great luminary of spiritual discretion, St. Poimen said: *Those who live far away from the world are like those who are far from a precipice and, whenever they are misled by the devil, before they reach the edge, they call upon God who comes to save them. Those who live in the world, however, are like those who are near the precipice and when the devil draws them toward it, they have no time to call upon God and be saved but fall directly into the abyss.*

Therefore, because you are so close to this abyss, you are in immediate danger just as soon as you neglect or open one of your senses. God forbid! This is the reason why you want to use all your energy to protect your senses from coming into contact with sin. As it is impossible for a house not to be darkened by smoke entering from the outside, it is similarly impossible for a man not to let them without restraint, allowing all manner of passionate images to enter the soul. The wise St. Syngletike said: *Even when we do not want it, the thieves will enter through the senses. For how is it possible for a house not to be darkened by the smoke entering from outside through the doors and windows that have been left opened?*

It is a Great Victory to Overcome Ourselves

Do not think for a moment that this victory is small and insignificant. In fact it is a greater victory to overcome one of your passions and a pleasure of your senses than to overcome one hundred of your enemies. It is a more glorious trophy of victory to shed willingly a few drops of perspiration and one drop of blood, for the love of God, in order to overcome one of your evil wills and to spite the devil, than to shed rivers of blood to subdue entire armies. Again it is a greater triumph to subdue your senses and your entire body to your hegemonious mind than to subdue large kingdoms.

Once, when King Alexander was praised for having conquered the whole ecumene, he responded with the prudent remark: *All of my victories will prove to be vain, if I do not succeed to conquer myself.* Many who have subdued their enemies, cities, and countries have later been subdued miserably by their own improper passions and have shamefully become slaves of their own passions. A certain Father was very correct when he said that *the first victory is the victory of self.* St. Isidore Pelousiotes also said: *The true victor is not he who subdues the foreign barbarians, but he who wages spiritual warfare against the evil passions. Many who have conquered barbarians have in turn been shamefully subdued by their own passions.*

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ON SUFFERING

By St. Nikolai Velimirovich.



Only the foolish think that suffering is evil. A sensible man knows that suffering is not evil but only the manifestation of evil and healing from evil. Only sin in a man is a real evil, and there is no evil outside sin. Everything else that men generally call evil is not, but is a bitter medicine to heal

from evil. The sicker the man, the more bitter the medicine that the doctor prescribes for him.

At times, even, it seems to a sick man that the medicine is worse and more bitter than the sickness itself! And so it seems at times to the sinner: the suffering is harder and more bitter than the sin committed. But this is only an illusion, a very strong self-delusion. There is no suffering in the world that could be anywhere near as hard and destructive as sin is. All the suffering borne by men and nations is none other than the abundant healing that eternal Mercy offers to men and nations to save them from eternal death. Every sin, however small, would inevitably bring death if Mercy were not to allow suffering in order to sober men up from the inebriation of sin; for the healing that comes

through suffering is brought about by the grace-filled power of the Holy and Life-giving Spirit.

It is natural for a sensible man always to seek the causes of his suffering first in himself, and for the foolish constantly to accuse others. The sensible man remembers all his sins from childhood onwards; he remembers them with the fear of God and with the expectation of suffering for his sins; and so, when suffering does fall on him, through either his friends or his enemies, from men or from evil spirits, either sooner or later, he at once knows the causes of his suffering, for he knows and remembers his sins. The foolish man, though, is forgetful, and forgets all his unrighteousness; so, when suffering falls on him, he writhes in torment and asks in amazement why he has a headache, why he should lose all his money or why his children should die. And, in his foolishness and fury, he will point his finger at every being on earth and in heaven, as at the one responsible for his suffering, before pointing the finger at himself, the one really responsible for it.

Blessed is the man who uses his sufferings, knowing that all suffering in this brief life is loosed on men by God in His love for mankind, for the benefit and assistance of men. In His mercy, God looses suffering on men because of their sins – by His mercy and not His justice. For, if it were by His justice, every sin would inevitably bring death, as the Apostle says: *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* (Jas 1:15). In place of death, God gives healing through suffering. Suffering is God's way of healing the soul of its sinful leprosy and its death.