

# 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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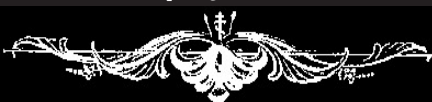
Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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## ON THEOPHANY

By St. Philaret of New York.

On the feast day of the Theophany, the Baptism of the Lord, every Orthodox Christian would do well to remember another baptism, the one performed over each one of us Orthodox Christians, the baptism in which each of us, through the mouths of our godparents, gave God an oath that we would always renounce Satan and his works and would always join with, *unite with* Christ.

I repeat, this is especially fitting for this day. Now we will begin the ceremonious rite of the great blessing of the water. Its center, one might say its main part, is the grand prayer in which the Lord is glorified and the grace of the Holy Spirit is invoked upon the water which is being blessed. This prayer begins with the wonderful words: *Great art Thou, O Lord, and wonderful are Thy works, and no word doeth justice to the praise of Thy wonders.* Those who have attended the rite of baptism and listened carefully know that this prayer for the blessing of the water in which a person is to be baptized begins with the same words, and the first part of this prayer is performed in the same way as during the great blessing of the water. Only later, in the last part, does the prayer change at the completion of the Mystery of baptism, which is especially composed for this Sacrament, as a new human soul is to be baptized.

It would be worth remembering the promises made during baptism on be-

half of each one of us. When a person is baptized as an adult, which happens these days sometimes but happened much more often in ancient days, he makes these oaths himself, but if he is baptized as a child, his godfather or godmother make these promises—they are the “adopters,” as the Church calls them. And these promises, in which the Christian makes a promise to God to renounce Satan and all his works, and joins with, unites with Christ, are not only forgotten by people, but many do not even know about them or that they were spoken, and that they must think about how these promises are to be fulfilled.

What if on the last day of the history of mankind, the Day of Judgment, it turns out that a person made some promises (or that promises were made on his behalf by his godparents), but he does not know what these promises were? What will happen with such a person? Think, brethren, what it means to renounce Satan and all his works and to unite with Christ.

The time has come when mankind has been consumed with activities which displease God, in which the Enemy of mankind reigns, and, as they said in old days, this Enemy makes everyone dance to his flute. This fuss and bother, which envelops our daily lives, is distasteful to God, and God is absent from it, and the Enemy of God is master and ruler of it. If we gave the promise to renounce Satan and all his works, then we must fulfill it, and try not to crush our souls with daily cares, remembering what the

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Church teaches: *There is one thing needful*, only one thing necessary—to remember that we must unite ourselves with Christ, that is, not only fulfill His commandments but to try to unite with Him.

Think about this, Christian soul, on this bright and great feast day, think about it and, as you pray that the Lord sends you staunch faith and the decisiveness to fulfill these promises, do not drown in the daily cares of this world and thereby lose your bond with the Lord, with Whom you promised to be united forever.

Today’s holiday [i.e., *holy day!*] is called the Baptism of the Lord, or the Theophany, but those who know the Church rule well, know that it is also called *The feast of the holy Theophanies* in the plural.

Why? Because of course, the central commemoration of this feast day is what the choir chanted through the words *God the Word shone forth in the flesh to the human race*. The Incarnate Son of God, of Whose birth only a few knew at the time, *shone forth to the human race*, for His baptism is as His ceremonial appearance in His service, which He performed until His death and resurrection.

But at the same time, today’s holiday is also noteworthy, as is sung in the troparion, because it is during this very holiday that *the worship of the Trinity was made manifest*. All three Persons of the Holy Trinity for the first time appeared in Their

distinctness, which is why this is called *The feast of the holy Theophanies*. People heard the voice of God the Father *This is my Son, the Beloved, with Whom I am well pleased*, the Son of God received baptism from John (meanwhile, we know from



the Gospel that John the Baptist, distraught when the Savior of the world came to him, tried to refuse), and the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove descended from the Father to the Son. In this way, *the worship of the Trinity was made manifest*, and that is why the Church sings this in the troparion, and calls this holiday *The feast of the holy Theophanies*.

Christ the Savior appeared in order to commence His salvific service. Not long ago, we celebrated another great feast day here, the Nativity of Christ, when we spoke about how the Lord in His birth in a poor cave, condescending to lie in a manger for beasts, emphasized His rejection of any earthly glory or vanity and pomp, for He did not appear in a royal palace or mansion, but amid

such humble surroundings. He showed right away that He was bringing to earth a new beginning, the beginning of humility.

Note how He was, in a way, true to Himself, how today, on this great feast day, He also brings humility to us clearly and without a doubt. For where did He go? To Jordan. Why? To receive baptism from John. But sinners were the ones who

came to John, confessing their sins and receiving baptism. Yet He was without sin, *untouched by sin*, absolutely free of it and pure, and yet he humbly took his place among the sinners, as though He were in need of cleansing by water. We know, however, that it was not water that cleansed Him, Most-Holy and sinless, but that He sanctified water by consenting to be washed by it, as we sang today during the blessing of the water: *Today the nature of water is sanctified*. So Christ brought to earth the beginning of humility, and was devoted to it throughout His earthly life. But there is more. He also left us the commandment: *Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*"

Remember yet another bright, joyous springtime holiday—the Annunciation.

Here the Most-Blessed Virgin Mary hears from the Archangel the good news that through her, the Incarnation of God is to be manifested. What does her most-holy, most-pure and sinless soul say when she comes to visit her relative Elizabeth in order to share her joy? She says only: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior*. This humility was the beauty of her soul. From the account of the Annunciation we know that the Archangel appeared to her at the very moment when she, having read the prophesy of Isaiah about the Incarnation of God from a virgin, did not think to associate this to Herself, but only thought within the depths of her humility: *How joyous I would be if I were the last of servants of this blessed Virgin*, and suddenly Archangel Gabriel appears before Her with his Annunciation. The Lord beheld her humility, Who Himself was meek and humble.

He gave us the commandment of humility, in opposition to pride and self-love, which mankind today flounders in.

See how many conflicts we have, even within the church and within our parishes? Because everywhere the stoked passions of human pride cause strife, and if we only had humility, towards which the Lord calls us, we would have none of this.

Let us learn, brethren, from our Savior, Who like the last of sinners went to John in order to be baptized by him, let us learn from this God-loving and aromatic good, without which, as the Holy Fathers said, no other good deed can be performed. Amen.



**W**e think we know a lot, but what we know is very little. Even all those who have striven all their life to bring progress to mankind—learned scientists and highly educated people—all realize in the end that all their knowledge is but a grain of sand on the seashore. All our achievements are insufficient.

Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica (+2003)

## ENTERING THE ARENA OF SPIRITUAL COMBAT

*Holy Elder Joseph the Cave-Dweller and Hesychast.*

**R**ejoice in the Lord, beloved child, whom the grace of my Jesus has enlightened and delivered from the world; who has flown to the wilderness and dwelt in a monastery with a holy *synodia*, and now glorifies and thanks God with all his soul.

Divine grace, my child, is like bait which enters the soul and without coercion attracts a person toward higher and superior things. It knows how to catch us rational fish and to pull us out of the sea of the world. But then what?

Once God takes the monastic aspirant out of the world and brings him to the wilderness, He doesn't immediately show him his passions and the temptations, until he becomes a monk and Christ binds him with His fear. Then the trial, the struggle, and the fight begin.

If a novice exerts himself from the beginning and lights his torch of asceticism with his struggles before it is too late, it will not go out when grace withdraws and temptations come. Otherwise, when grace does withdraw, he will return to his previous state. Then, corresponding to the passions he had in the world, temptations will arise and will revive his former habits which used to enslave him because he used to cater to them.

First of all, my child, know that there are great differences from man to man and monk to monk. There are souls with a soft character that are very easily persuaded. There are also souls with a tough character that are not subordinated so easily. They are as different as cotton is from iron. Cotton needs only to be rubbed with words, but iron requires fire and a furnace of temptations to be worked. Such a soul must be patient during temptations to be purified. When a monk does not have patience, he is like a lamp without oil: soon it will burn out.

So, when a person with a nature harder than iron comes to be a monk, as soon as he enters the arena, he rebels against obedience. Immediately he breaks his promises and gives up the battle. Then you see that as soon as grace withdraws a little to test his intentions and patience, at once he throws away his weapons and starts regretting that he came to be a monk. Then he passes his days full of disobedience and bitterness, always talking back arrogantly.

Then, through the prayers of his elder, grace disperses the clouds of temptations somewhat so that he comes to his senses a little and mends his ways. But soon afterwards he returns once more to his own will, to disobedience, agitation, and annoyance.

You write about the brother you see there and are amazed that although he works so hard at his *diakonema* (work



assigned to a monk or a nun by the abbot or abbess of the monastery, *Ed.*), his ego within still overcomes him. But do you think it is easy for man to conquer a passion?

Good deeds and almsgiving and all other external good things do not subdue the haughtiness of one's heart. But mental work, the pain of repentance, contrition, and humility are what humble the un-submissive spirit. An insubordinate person is unbearable and toilsome to deal with. Only with utter patience can he be handled. Only with utter patience on behalf of the elders and with the forbearance and love of the brethren can stiff-necked disciples come to their senses. But behold: many times they, too, are as useful as your right hand. Almost always such people, who are in some way more gifted than the others humble themselves with difficulty. They think highly of themselves and look down upon others.

So a great deal of hard work and patience are needed until this old foundation of pride is dug up, and another foundation is set with Christ's humility and obedience. But the Lord, seeing their efforts and good intentions, allows another trial to come upon them which counteracts their passion, and by His mercy, He *Who will have all men to be saved* saves them too. As for you, emulate whomever you want.

It would be wonderful if everyone had a good character, humility, and obedience. But if one's nature happens to be tougher than iron, he should not despair. He needs to struggle, and by the grace of God he can win. God is not unjust in His expectations. He seeks repayment according to the gifts He has given.

For from the beginning of creation He separated men into three classes: He gave five talents to one, two to another, and one to the other. The first one has the highest gifts: he has greater mental capacity and is called *taught by God*, because he receives teachings from God without a teacher, just like St. Anthony the Great, St. Onouphrios, St. Mary of Egypt, Cyril Philoteos, Luke of Steirion, and thousands of others in the old days who became perfect without a guide. The second type of person has to be taught what is good in order to do it. And the third one, even if he hears, even if he learns, he hides it in the ground: he doesn't do anything.

So that is why there is such a big difference among the people and monks that you see. And that is why first and foremost you must *know thyself*. That is, know who you really are in truth, and not what you imagine you are. With this knowledge you become the wisest man. With this kind

of awareness, you reach humility and receive grace from the Lord. However, if you don't obtain self-knowledge, but consider only your toil, know that you will always remain far from the path. The prophet does not say, "Behold, O Lord, my toil," but says, *Behold my humility and my toil*. Toil is for the body, and humility is for the soul. Moreover, the two together, toil and humility, are for the whole man.

Who has conquered the devil? He who knows his own weaknesses, passions, and shortcomings. Whoever is afraid of knowing himself remains far from knowledge, and he doesn't love anything else except seeing faults in others and judging them. He doesn't see gifts in other people, but only shortcomings. And he doesn't see his own shortcomings, but only his gifts. This is truly the sickness that plagues us men of the eighth millennium: we fail to recognize each other's gifts. One person may lack many things, but many people together have everything. What one person lacks, another person has. If we acknowledged this, we would have a great deal of humility, because God, Who adorned men in many

ways and showed inequality in all of his creations, is honored and glorified; not as the unbelievers say, who toil trying to bring equality by overturning the divine creation. God made all things in wisdom.

Therefore, my child, now that it is still the beginning, see to it that you know yourself well, so that you set humility as a firm foundation. See to it that you learn obe-

dience and acquire the prayer.

*May Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me* be your breath. Do not leave your mind idle, so that you aren't taught evil things. Do not let yourself look at the faults of others, because without knowing it, you will become the evil one's partner without any progress in virtue. Do not, out of ignorance, ally yourself with the enemy of your soul.

The cunning enemy knows very well how to hide behind passions and weaknesses. So in order to strike him, you must fight and mortify yourself—all your passions, that is. When the "old man" dies, the strength of your hostile enemy is abolished.

We are not battling with a man, whom you can kill in many ways, but with the powers and rulers of darkness. They are not fought with sweets and marshmallows, but with streams of tears, with pain of soul until death, with utter humility, and with great patience. Blood must flow from over-exhaustion in saying the prayer. You have to collapse from exhaustion for weeks as if gravely ill. And you



must not give up the fight, until the demons are beaten and withdraw. Then you will receive freedom from the passions.

And so, my child, force yourself from the beginning to enter the narrow gate, because only it leads to the spaciousness of paradise. Cut off your own will every day and hour, and seek no other path besides this one. This is the path that the feet of the Holy Fathers trod. Reveal your path unto the Lord and He will guide you, too. Reveal your thoughts to your elder, and he will heal you. Never hide a thought, because the devil conceals his cunning within it: as soon as you confess it he disappears. Do not reveal another person's fault to justify yourself, because at once grace, which had covered you until that point, will reveal your own faults. The more you cover your brother with love, the more grace warms you and guards you from the false accusation of men.

As for the other brother you mentioned, it seems that he has some un-confessed sins, because he is ashamed to tell them to the elder. And this is why that temptation takes place. But he must correct this improper behavior, for without frank confession, one cannot be purified. It is a shame to be ridiculed by the demons. Deep down his ego is hiding. May the Lord enlighten him to come to his senses. And you should pray and love him as well as everyone; yet guard yourself from all.

In any case, now that you have entered the arena, you will undergo many kinds of temptations, so prepare yourself to be patient. Say the prayer constantly, and the Lord will help you with His grace. Temptations are never stronger than grace.



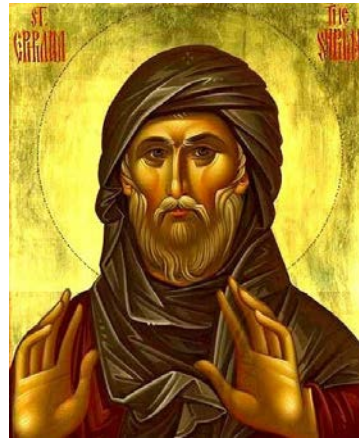
When only the outer man is educated, education proves to be harmful; because it gives rise to an inflated idea of self. This idea then becomes a barrier that prevents the Grace of God from coming close to us. But when we put away our false self-importance, then God—Who is a benevolent and generous Father—will enrich us with His divine and luminous ideas. By contrast, those who are not willing to give up their sense of self-importance certainly have a brain and body, but they lack the Grace of God, the Holy Spirit.

In other words, there is danger that too much knowledge may inflate the head and turn it into an air balloon that may either explode in mid air (from schizophrenia) or break up into pieces (because of pride). This is the reason why knowledge should proceed with fear of God and in alignment with action; it should be balanced. When these elements or missing, knowledge will only cause harm.

**St. Paisios the Athonite**

## IF HE WAS NOT FLESH... AND IF HE WAS NOT GOD...

*St. Ephraim the Syrian, an excerpt from his sermon on our Lord's Transfiguration.*



The facts themselves bear witness and his divine acts of power teach those who doubt that He is true God, and his sufferings show that He is true man. And if those who are feeble in understanding are not fully assured, they will pay the penalty on His dread day.

If He was not flesh, why was Mary introduced at all? And if He was not God, whom was Gabriel calling Lord?

If He was not flesh, who was lying in the manger? And if He was not God, whom did the Angels come down and glorify?

If He was not flesh, who was wrapped in swaddling clothes? And if He was not God, whom did the shepherds worship?

If He was not flesh, whom did Joseph circumcise? And if He was not God, in whose honour did the star speed through the heavens?

If He was not flesh, whom did Mary suckle? And if He was not God, to whom did the Magi offer gifts?

If He was not flesh, whom did Symeon carry in his arms? And if He was not God, to whom did He say, *Let me depart in peace?*

If He was not flesh, whom did Joseph take and flee into Egypt? And if He was not God, in whom were words *Out of Egypt I have called my Son* fulfilled?

If He was not flesh, whom did John baptise? And if He was not God, to whom did the Father from heaven say, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased?*

If He was not flesh, who fasted and hungered in the desert? And if He was not God, whom did the Angels come down and serve?

If He was not flesh, who was invited to the wedding in Cana of Galilee? And if He was not God, who turned the water into wine?

If He was not flesh, in whose hands were the loaves? And if He was not God, who satisfied crowds and thousands in the desert, not counting women and children, from five loaves and two fishes?

If He was not flesh, who fell asleep in the boat? And if He was not God, who rebuked the winds and the sea?



If He was not flesh, with whom did Simon the Pharisee eat? And if He was not God, who pardoned the offences of the sinful woman?

If He was not flesh, who sat by the well, worn out by the journey? And if He was not God, who gave living water to the woman of Samaria and reprimanded her because she had had five husbands?

If He was not flesh, who wore human garments? And if He was not God, who did acts of power and wonders?

If He was not flesh, who spat on the ground and made clay? And if He was not God, who through the clay compelled the eyes to see?

If He was not flesh, who wept at Lazarus' grave? And if He was not God, who by His command brought out one four days dead?

If He was not flesh, who sat on the foal? And if He was not God, whom did the crowds go out to meet with glory?

If He was not flesh, whom did the Jews arrest? And if He was not God, who gave an order to the earth and threw them onto their faces.

If He was not flesh, who was struck with a blow? And if He was not God, who cured the ear that had been cut off by Peter and restored it to its place?

If He was not flesh, who received spittings on his face? And if He was not God, who breathed the Holy Spirit into the faces of His Apostles?

If He was not flesh, who stood before Pilate at the judgment seat? And if He was not God, who made Pilate's wife afraid by a dream?

If He was not flesh, whose garments did the soldiers strip off and divide? And if He was not God, how was the sun darkened at the cross?

If He was not flesh, who was hung on the cross? And if He was not God, who shook the earth from its foundations?

If He was not flesh, whose hands and feet were transfixed by nails? And if He was not God, how was the veil of the temple rent, the rocks broken and the graves opened?

If He was not flesh, who cried out, *My God, my God, why have you abandoned Me?* And if He was not God, who said *Father, forgive them?*

If He was not flesh, who was hung on a cross with the thieves? And if He was not God, how did He say to the thief, *Today you will be with me in Paradise?*

If He was not flesh, to whom did they offer vinegar and gall? And if He was not God, on hearing whose voice did Hades tremble?

If He was not flesh, whom did the Apostles see in the upper room? And if He was not God, how did He enter when the doors were shut?

If He was not flesh, the marks of the nails and the lance in whose hands and side did Thomas handle? And if He was not God, to whom did He cry out, *My Lord and my God?*

If He was not flesh, whose side did the lance pierce, and blood and water came out? And if He was not God, who smashed the gates of Hades and tear apart its bonds? And at whose command did the imprisoned dead come out?

If He was not flesh, who ate by the sea of Tiberias? And if He was not God, at whose command was the net filled?

If He was not flesh, whom did the Apostles and Angels see being taken up into heaven? And if He was not God, to whom was heaven opened, whom did the Powers worship in fear and whom did the Father invite to *Sit at my right hand?* As David said, *The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand*, etc.

If He was not God and man, our salvation is a lie, and the words of the Prophets are lies. But the Prophets spoke the truth, and their testimonies were not lies. The Holy Spirit spoke through them what they had been commanded.



God does not want those whom He will save, who seek His mercy, to be ignoramuses, unmanly, cowardly, or spiritually untested. It is a matter of divine inheritance stored up for experienced Christians. So He places temptations before us so that our obedience to His commandments may be demonstrated. His illumination is within us; knowledge of His will is taught by the Scriptures; furthermore, our conscience guides us like a compass. All of the above enlighten us in the face of temptations. But when evil prevails over our will, we do not obey His commandments.

We were created with free will, and free will cannot be controlled by others. As such, if we feared God, we would not fall into temptation. If we did not love ourselves more than God, we would not tend towards sin. But His goodness did not leave our falls without a rectifying remedy, whereby we return once again and a victory occurs in spite of our fall.

All who compel themselves to be saved, the Scriptures call righteous, justified by faith. God will not let them fall, for they are struggling properly. He will not let them be tempted beyond their strength when they are making every effort to be patient. But when we are cowardly and lukewarm, when we have a slothful will, this constitutes an occasion for a temptation beyond our strength.

Your grumbling is sinful; it is a result of self-love and unmanliness. Have patience in everything; thank God; blame your lukewarmness, and not God, Who was crucified for you and, consequently, must love you. Since He loves you, how can He let you fall into temptation? Seek forgiveness from Him, and secure yourself with patience.

**Elder Ephraim of Filotheou and Arizona**  
From "*Counsels from the Holy Mountain*"

## THE WAY AND THE TRUTH OF CHRIST & THE “COUNCIL” OF CRETE

*An interview with Protopresbyter Peter Heers, from the Journal of the Holy Monastery of Samtavro, Mtskheta, Georgia. This interview was conducted in August of 2016 and published in the August-September edition of the Monastery's Journal. Fr. Peter Heers is the Rector of the Parish of the Prophet Elias, Petrokerasa, Greece, Diocese of Ierissou and Agion Oros (Orthodox Church of Greece).*

**Please give us your assessment of the Cretan council.**

Sadly, the council in Crete is a false council which produced unorthodox texts which now must be rejected by the Orthodox *pleroma* (entire Body).

Christ is the Way and the Truth and on both counts the “Cretan Council” departed from rightly representing Christ. Both in terms of methodology (how it was prepared, organized and conducted) and in terms of essence (the final texts were heavily tainted by the non-orthodox ecumenist mentality) the “Cretan Council” departed from the Way and Truth of the Holy Fathers and Oecumenical Councils. A foreign spirit, alien to the Holy Fathers but at home in this world, animated the proceedings, proclaiming foreign teachings and not those *strange words, strange doctrines, strange teachings of the Holy Trinity* (Praises of Orthros of the Feast of Pentecost) which have been spoken in the past at every true Oecumenical Council.

In spite of the excessive claims to the contrary, both the preparatory process and the organization and governing rules did not reflect the Orthodox Way of conciliarity (*συνοδικότητα*). Major decisions regarding the Council, including the final decision to hold the Council, were consistently made without the knowledge, let alone the participation, of the Synods of the Local Churches. In practice, then, a new form of Papalism was practiced and promoted, wherein the Primates of the Local Churches operated not as *first among equals* but as “first without equals” and as “popes” over their bishops. This was most evident in the unprecedented and unorthodox practice of limiting voting to the Primates of the Local Churches. As one bishop noted,

without the possibility of voting, the only difference between the Orthodox Bishops in attendance and the observers of the various heterodox confessions was that the former (the Orthodox bishops) could speak publicly, even if only for a limited time.

The Truth of Christ, that “sign spoken against,” “divisive” and revealing of hearts’ desires, was also absent or skewed in Crete. The well-known criteria of all Orthodox Councils is that they were called to confront doctrinal and, by extension, pastoral challenges to the Church’s unity and thus chiefly addressed matters of Faith (and thus heresy) and only secondarily related matters of canonical order. In Crete, this relation of Faith and Order, Dogma and Ethos, was set aside, with any reference to schism and heresy, let alone living heretics, completely absent. In this most heretical of all ages, in which syncretism and the New Age reigns and the devil “walks naked through history,” the Cretan Council referred even to those well-known heresies condemned by past Oecumenical Councils and the consensus of Church

Fathers, as “churches.”

Unfortunately, it is also clear that the Council was neither “great” nor “holy.” It was a minor gathering which will be remembered at best as an episcopal conference without pan-Orthodox authority both on account of the small number of bishops invited and the rather secondary issues it addressed. Moreover, however, it was also not “holy” on account of a glaring departure from Holy Tradition and the promotion of syncretistic ecumenism with, among other things, the nonchalant endorsement of unorthodox



**The delegation of theologians from Greece meeting with the Hierarchs of the Church of Georgia at the Patriarchate to discuss the “Council” of Crete and the post-council path**

texts issued in the dialogue with the Papacy (e.g., Balamand) and in the so-called “World Council of Churches” (e.g., Pusan and Porte Alegre). This tragic departure from Holy Tradition is also apparent in the text approved by the Council, “The Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments,” which directly overturns the 72<sup>nd</sup> canon of the Penthekte Oecumenical Council (“in Trullo”). In allowing for intermarriages with the heterodox this document subtly but clearly expresses the so-called “baptismal theology” and the new ecumenist ecclesiology of “partial churches” outside of the One Church. Both it and the document “Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World,” which recognizes the existence of “heterodox churches,” are

unorthodox texts which must be rejected by the Orthodox Church.

In conclusion, the overwhelming majority of the faithful in Greece were greatly disappointed with the “Cretan Council” and are looking forward to its clear rejection by the hierarchies of the Local Churches which did not attend, first of all which is the venerable Church of Georgia, but also from the Church of Greece’s own hierarchy, the pre-council decisions of which were un-canonically set aside by the Archbishop of Greece when he and his retinue accepted the “historical name” of “heterodox churches.”

### What was the resonance of the position of the Georgian Church in Greece?

The Church of Georgia stands, at this moment in history, as light unto the faithful everywhere and their hope for the unity of the Church and a future victory of Orthodoxy over the new heretical ecclesiology of syncretistic ecumenism. In particular, the pre-synodical stance of the Holy Synod and His Beatitude, Patriarch Ilia II, with regard to the unorthodox texts on marriage and on the heterodox, as well as the Patriarch’s epistle sent to the Patriarch of Constantinople during the Council itself, explaining the reasons for not attending, gave great joy to the faithful everywhere and especially in Greece.

The faithful in Greece are now looking to the Georgian Church to stay the course and remain strong, standing fearlessly on the firm rock of the confession of faith in the One and Only Body of Christ, which is the Orthodox Church, the salvation of the world. We ourselves are engaged in a terrible struggle against anti-Christian forces in our country, which are openly working for the uprooting of the Christian faith from Greece. Syncretistic ecumenism is a part of this anti-Christian agenda. Thus, the witness of the Georgian Church is immensely important.

### What was your impression of meeting with the Patriarch of Georgia?

Our meeting with His Beatitude was the highlight of our visit and a great blessing. His words and graciousness were an encouragement to us in our struggle for the saving Faith and against the new ecclesiology of ecumenism. It was clear to us that the Patriarch and Hierarchy are committed to Orthodox unity and will not be swayed to entertain any of the divisive innovations introduced in Crete.

His Beatitude showed us that he understands that only on the basis of the Orthodox confession of faith in the One Church and rejection of the new ecclesiology can *the unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit* be built and remain steadfast. His Beatitude assured us that for the Church of Georgia “there are not many churches, but only one Church, the Orthodox Church,” and that he and the Holy Synod will “work for the unity of all the

Orthodox,” which can only be assured on the basis of the Faith once delivered.

We will be forever grateful to His Beatitude Ilia II, the reverend metropolitans and pious clergy and faithful of the Church of Georgia for the exceptional hospitality and loving-kindness they showed to us during our visit. It is our prayer that our short visit will be the beginning of a close and fruitful cooperation between the faithful of Georgia and Greece on the all-important matters of the Faith which binds us together in Christ and His Church. May it be blessed!



### ON PRAYER

By St. Ignatii Brianchaninov (+1867).

The sign of purity is to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep; to be in pain with the sick and in anguish with the sinners; to rejoice with the repentant and to participate in the agony of those who suffer; to criticize no man and, in the purity of one’s own mind, to see all men as good and holy.

In teaching us how to pray, the Lord compares a praying soul to a widow—wronged by a rival—who pesters a just and impartial Judge (Luke 18:1-8). [Note: In the beginning of the parable, the widow is pestering an unjust judge, but in this teaching St. Ignatii has journeyed to the very end of the parable; where we stand before the One Righteous Judge Who loves us.]

Do not let the disposition of your soul differ from this model. Let your prayer be, so to speak, a constant complaint against sin, which does violence to you. Look into yourself, reveal yourself by attentive prayer; and you will see that you are precisely a widow in regard to Christ, on account of the sin that dwells in you, which is hostile to you and which causes inner conflict and suffering, and which estranges you from God.

So, I repeat to you that the sign of purity is to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep; to be in pain with the sick and in anguish with the sinners; to rejoice with the repentant and to participate in the agony of those who suffer; to criticize no man and, in the purity of one’s own mind, to see all men as good and holy.



## ON THE NEW YEAR

By St. Theophan the Recluse, his 1864 New Year homily; translation by Nun Cornelia (Rees).

What is renewal? When will the new heaven and new earth we hope for come? The explanation is in the Apostle's words, *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* (2 Cor 5:17).

† † †



Happy New Year, we greet each other now. But has anyone given any thought as to how new this coming year is? And where or, rather, how would we get anything new from it? In what way does the present day differ from yesterday, or from the first day of the past year? And in the future, will there not be the same interchange of days and nights,

the same turn of months and seasons as there was before? Will the course of events not be new?

But Divine Wisdom also rejects this, saying: *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, see, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.* (Eccl 1:9–10).

So, does this mean our New Year greetings are pointless?

It could not be that such a widespread custom sanctified by antiquity should have no meaning—and deep meaning at that. No matter how much we doubt the sincerity of these good wishes, we nonetheless cannot reproach them as unnecessary or pointless. There should be something truly new for the soul to believe in, regardless of the agedness of everything around us, something for which it assuredly searches and yearns; and it is ready to embrace it in everything that seems new. What could this “new” thing be?

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, says the Lord. (2 Pet. 3:13). This is the first true newness! It will be revealed in all its glory at the end of the world, when all will be purified by fire. But preparation for it ensued almost from the beginning of heaven's and earth's existence, and has been at work since that time—invisibly to the physical eye, but visibly to the eye of faith. The restorative powers placed in the cycle of the temporal passing of created things are so effective and true that, at the thought of them the Apostle

calls out: *Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* (2 Cor. 5:17).

And looking mentally over all creation, having tasted the seeds of renewal, he heard its complaint that the time will not soon come when it shall cast off its present garment of decrepitude and decay and put on a new one full of life's radiance. *For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.* (Rom 8:19–22).

Establish your thought in this teaching and you will see that in our present condition, one thing is seen from without, while another is working within, both in us and outside us. The present state—both ours and of the whole world—is a transient state, like the state of a sick man covered with bandages, or of a tree frozen for the winter, or a house under renovation and encompassed with scaffolding. When the time comes, they will take the bandages off the sick man, and he will appear healed and healthy in a renewed life; the renovation will end, they will take away the scaffolding, and everyone will see the new house in all its beauty; the spring of a new age will come and the tree of the world's existence, now bare, will put forth its leaves, flowers, and fruits.

In the beginning, when God looked upon the universe He had just created, everything in it was very good. (Gen 1:31). When man fell, everything went bad, like a chain when the first link is broken. *Unto the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.'* And unto Adam He said, *'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'* (Gen. 3:16, 18–19). Thus, all was clothed in mourning, or a penance was laid upon everything. Everything took on a decrepit and decaying state.

It would have remained thus forever if not for the ever creative wisdom of God that, through His love, goodness, and power, began to bring to pass a mysterious means of correction and restoration of everything to its better, former, and perfect form. The seed of a woman, it was said, *will crush the head of the snake* and destroy the evil that was poured

into man and through him into all creation. And it was at that exact moment that this divine promise began to work.

The most wise divine economy, however, was not immediately manifest in full strength. The full effect of its power in creation was destined to be revealed through human flesh, which is always limited by conditions of time and place. The Seed of salvation, although it appeared in the flesh, It had everything in itself: the heavenly and the earthly, the past, the present, and the future. Through this it was able to penetrate all things with its restorative powers, without cancelling the mystery of their action. The outward state remains—the painful, disconsolate, decaying, corrupting state.

Enter, brothers, with the faith of your mind into the contemplation of this order of God's economy on the meaning of time, establish yourself in it and stand there. For the sake of your faith, the Lord will give you the strength to withstand the calumny of the father of lies, who by corrupting those minds that believe his suggestions steals from them the ability to see renewal working amidst decay. They deceive themselves and lead others into deception, thinking that the seeming disorder around us is the natural (normal) state of things, and they allow themselves to make overly bold judgments against the creation of the Most Wise

and the providence of the All-Good. Stand therefore in faith, brothers, and confirm yourselves in it!

This is the first newness, which could be called universal. But for each one of us there is a similar newness, which enters us and manifests its power in us, when we become partakers of the restorative powers brought to earth. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* (2 Cor. 5:17). You already know that all the powers needed for new life are entrusted to the Holy Church, and all of us as true sons of the Church are undoubtedly fulfilled by them and obtain renewal through them.

Our renewal begins with holy Baptism, in which we put off the old man and clothe ourselves in the new, or are reborn to a new life. The power of inner renewal does not cease to work in those who preserve the grace of Baptism. It ceases in those who fall into mortal sins after Baptism. But it begins to work once more, when they again partake in a godly life in Christ Jesus through the sacrament of Confession. Whether one receives the grace of renewal in Baptism or in Repentance (Holy Confession), if he preserves it and acts according to its demands, the seed of new life no longer dies

in him, but grows even more. And in this manner, the secret man of the heart grows and strengthens even more, becoming full of wisdom, spiritual reason, moral beauty, strength of character, and inner joy in the Holy Spirit—though he may be outwardly poor and naked. Inner beauty matures under an unsightly covering, like a beautiful butterfly in its unsightly cocoon. Reaching maturity, the butterfly breaks open its encasement and begins rejoicing in life on God's earth. Once our hidden man has matured in his weak body, and when God judges it time, he throws off this encasement, rises to the heights, and begins to live a fully renewed life at the very source of life.

This, brothers, is our predestination. Therefore, the image of this renewal is brought into the soul, and an awareness of it is revealed in the soul's presentiments and secret desires, even when the soul is a stranger to those renewing powers. This is the reason why we so love the new, and try so hard to find it!

You can see from what we have said how this longing can be satisfied. Nevertheless, I will cite to you several lessons from the Apostolic epistles. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* (1 Pet 2:2). *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.* (1 Cor 5:7). *Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* (Eph. 4:22-24). You must become new within yourself, and then your thirst for the new will be satisfied, and satisfied perpetually. For new spiritual life in Christ Jesus is continually new in its essence. The perpetual newness present within us will quench our thirst for the new. May the Lord vouchsafe this to all of you. I could not wish you anything better for this New Year.

I was ready to end my sermon here, but the thought comes to me to give you a little word of caution, just in case. It is not surprising that you meet individuals who think otherwise concerning newness, and consider that which is in fact renewal to be dilapidation, and what is dilapidation to be renewal; what the Apostle exhorted us to put on as the new, they advise us to cast off as the old. You can understand what is going on here. I will offer two or three cases as instruction to you, so that you might correctly judge concerning this.

Before Christ the Savior's coming to the world, outside of the people of God, ancient paganism colored all areas of





life—intellectual, moral, aesthetic, family, and civil. After Christ the Savior and the spread of Christianity, the power of God’s word and the grace of the Holy Spirit expelled the pagan principles and Christian principles began to reign everywhere and in all spheres—the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, family, and political. These principles continued to be at work uninterrupted in the Holy Orthodox Church in the East. In the West the pope, who separated from the Church, first accepted the root of pagan life: pride. Around this center, all the other elements of paganism were not slow to collect.

By the fifteenth century, they became rather strong, lifted their head and vocally entered again into contest with Christianity. A circle of people formed who were filled with a pagan spirit, and made it their task to introduce pagan principles once again, in all spheres—the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, family, and civil. The time when this was happening is called the Western Renaissance. Remind yourselves, that the Western Renaissance is the restoration of paganism in opposition to Christianity. Such is the significance of the Renaissance.

But as the seed, so the fruit. All the current developments in the West in all their forms are the sum of that movement given impetus by the Renaissance. It is its fruit. Therefore, both in spirit and body, in the main and in its parts it is entirely penetrated with pagan principles that are hostile to Christianity. Anyone who comes into contact with it and makes friends with it in any way becomes more or less an enemy of Christ. Experience shows this to be true.<sup>[1]</sup>

But what do we care about the West? Let it do as it sees fit. We once lived simply under the influence of the life-giving principles of Christianity and never knew what was going on in the West, and we never would have known had not the need arisen to enter into relations with it. Having entered into relations, we began to adopt from it not only what is useful, but also its spirit of pagan education, which also produced here what they have; that is, whoever comes into contact with it immediately rises up against Christ the Savior and His Holy Church.

A class of people has grown here also who insist that Christian religion is something old that should be cast off, and European education is renewal, which should be assimilated. Knowing now what European education is, you can well understand what they are advising us to do. Here is what it is. The Apostle Paul says that God sent the holy Apostles, clothed in the grace of the Holy Spirit, to the world in order to bring everyone out of darkness into light, from Satan’s realm to God; and these people advise us to go from light back into darkness, and away from God to the realm of Satan, where there is not renewal of life, but death that kills all sprouting of true life.

See what benefactors they are! Entire books should be written in order to explain this in detail. I have offered you this truth in brief postulates, only just in case. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, . . . Henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.* (Eph. 5:15;4:14–15). Amen.

† † †

[1] At the time of St. Theophan’s writing, various socialist movements were gathering strength in Russia. The Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution, both of which persecuted Catholicism, were already history. The final result in Russia was the overthrow of the entire order and establishment of a militant atheistic regime. Thus, St. Theophan’s words came ever so bitterly true in his own country.



A priest from the region of Samosota came a great distance to visit St. Symeon Stylites. He told him about a spring in his village which irrigated all their fields and from which by the Lord’s design their lives were sustained. All of a sudden it failed and dried up, and they were exhausted from thirst and hunger. They had brought workmen. They had dug and labored and spent a good deal of money and they did not find one drop of water in it.

When the priest came and told the whole matter just as it was, the saint said, “I trust in the Lord Jesus that when you start to leave this enclosure our Lord will make it return to normal. But go, keep vigil, and celebrate the Eucharist and give thanks to our Lord.”

The priest noted the time the saint spoke to him and our Lord did a favor. The priest went and found that the spring had gushed forth and overflowed and irrigated all the fields of the village. When he asked the villagers they told him that on such and such a day it suddenly gave a violent sound and gushed forth and watered all the fields of the village double what it used to. He took out the note he had written and saw that the spring had gushed forth into its canal at the very moment the saint blessed him. Then the priest led all his congregation and they came and ministered before the saint for three days. Then they returned rejoicing and praising God.

From “The Life of St. Symeon Stylites”

## ON THE FIRE OF ZEAL

*By St. Theophan the Recluse.*

What success can one expect when there is no enthusiastic zeal for a Christian pleasing of God? If there is something that involves no labor, one is ready to do it; but as soon as one is required to do a little extra labor, or some kind of self-sacrifice, immediately one refuses, because one is unable to accomplish it oneself. For then there will be nothing to rely on that can move one to good deeds: self-pity will undermine all the foundations. And if any other motive besides the one mentioned becomes involved, it will make the good deed into a bad deed.

The martyrs willingly went to death because they were kindled by an inward fire. A true zealot does not do only what is according to the law, but also what has been advised and every good suggestion that has been secretly imprinted on the soul; he does not only what has been given, but he is also an acquirer of good things; he is entirely concerned with the one good thing which is solid, true, and eternal.

St. John Chrysostom says that everywhere we must have fervor and much fire of the soul, prepared to be armed against death itself. For otherwise it is impossible to receive the kingdom. The work of piety and communion with God is a work of much labor and much pain, especially in the beginning. Where can we find the power to undertake all these labors? With the help of God's grace, we can find it in heartfelt zeal.

A merchant, a soldier, a judge, or a scholar has work which is full of cares and difficulties. How do they sustain themselves in the midst of their labors? By enthusiasm and love for their work. One cannot sustain oneself by anything else on the path of piety. Without this we will be serving God in a state of sluggishness, boredom, and lack of interest. An animal like the sloth also moves, but with difficulty, while for the swift gazelle or the nimble squirrel movement and getting about are a delight. Zealous pleasing of God is the path to God which is full of consolation and gives wings to the spirit. Without it one can ruin everything.

One must do everything for the glory of God in defiance of the sin which dwells in us. Without this we will do everything only out of habit, because it seems "proper," because this is the way it has always been done, or the way others do it. We must do all we can, otherwise we will do some things and neglect others, and this without any contrition or even knowledge of what we have omitted. One must do everything with heedfulness and care, as our chief task; otherwise we will do everything just as it comes.

And so, it is clear that without zeal a Christian is a poor Christian. He is drowsy, feeble, lifeless, neither hot nor cold—and this kind of life is not life at all. Knowing this, let us strive to manifest ourselves as true zealots of good deeds, so that

we might truly be pleasing to God, having neither stain nor spot, nor any of these things.

Therefore, a true witness of Christian life is the fire of active zeal for the pleasing of God. Now the question arises, how is this fire ignited? Who produces it? Such zeal is produced by the action of grace. However, it does not occur without the participation of our free will. Christian life is not "natural life." This should be the way it begins or is first aroused: as in a seed, growth is aroused when moisture and warmth penetrate to the sprout which is hidden within, and through these, the all-restoring power of life comes. So also in us, the divine life is aroused when the Spirit of God penetrates into the heart and places there the beginning of life according to the Spirit, and cleanses and gathers into one the darkened and broken features of the image of God. A desire and free seeking are aroused (by an action from without); then grace descends (through the Mysteries) and, uniting with our freedom, produces a mighty zeal. But let no one think that he himself can give birth to such a power of life; one must pray for this and be ready to receive it. The fire of zeal with power—this is the grace of the Lord. The Spirit of God, descending into the heart, begins to act in it with a zeal that is both devouring and all-active.

To some the thought arises: should there be this action of grace? Can we ourselves really not do good deeds? After all, we have done this or that good deed, and, if we live longer, we will do some more. Perhaps it is a rare person who does not ask this question. Others say that of ourselves we can do nothing good. But here the question is not only of separate good deeds, but of giving rebirth to our whole life, to a new life, to life in its entirety—to such a life as can lead one to salvation.

As a matter of fact, it is not difficult to do something which is even quite good, as the pagans also did. But let someone intentionally define a course for himself of a continuous doing of good, and define the order of it according to what is indicated in the word of God—and this not for one month or for a year, but for one's whole life—and place as a rule to remain in this order unwaveringly; and then, when he remains faithful to this, let him boast of his own power. But without this it is better to close one's mouth. How many cases there have been in the past and in the present of a self-trusting beginning and building of a Christian life. And they have all ended and continue to end in nothing.

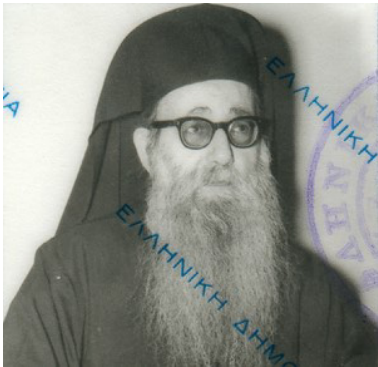
A man builds a little in his new order of life—and then throws it away. How can it be otherwise? There is no strength. It is characteristic only of the eternal power of God to support us unchanging in our disposition in the midst of the unceasing waves of temporal changes. Therefore one must be filled abundantly with this power; one must ask for and receive it in order—and it will raise us up and draw us out of the great agitation of temporal life.



## Ὁ Χρόνος καὶ ἡ Αἰωνιότης

### Νέο Ἔτος Ἀνατέλλει στὸν Ὁρίζοντα τῆς Ἀνθρωπότητος

Ὁμιλία τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Φλωρίνης στὸν ἱερό ναὸ τοῦ Ἁγίου Παντελεήμονος Φλωρίνης 31-12-1974, κατὰ τὴν ἀλλαγὴ τοῦ ἔτους τὸ μεσονύκτιο.



**Τ**ι εἶναι ἓνα ἔτος ἐν συγκρίσει μὲ τὰ χρόνια ποὺ πέρασαν καὶ τὰ χρόνια ποῦ θὰ περάσουν; Εἶναι μία σταγόνα τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ. Ἔνας σοφὸς συγγραφεὺς, γιὰ νὰ δώσει μία ιδέα τοῦ χρόνου ἐν συγκρίσει μὲ τὴν αἰωνιότητα, ἔπλασε

τὴν ἐξῆς εἰκόνα. Φανταστήτε, λέει, ἓναν ἀπέραντο ὠκεανὸ καὶ πάνω ἀπὸ τὰ νερά του νὰ πετάει ἓνα πουλί. Τὸ πουλί, ἀφοῦ διαγράφει κύκλους, κατεβαίνει, παίρνει μὲ τὸ ράμφος του μία σταγόνα ἀπὸ τὴν ἐπιφάνεια τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ, καὶ μετὰ φεύγει κ' ἐξαφανίζεται. Ἀφοῦ περάσουν χίλια χρόνια, τὸ πουλί ξαναεμφανίζεται, γιὰ νὰ πάρει πάλι μόνο μία σταγόνα ἀπὸ τὸν ὠκεανό. Φανταστήτε λοιπὸν νὰ γίνεται αὐτὸ συνεχῶς δηλαδή, μία φορὰ στὰ χίλια χρόνια τὸ πουλί νὰ παίρνει μία σταγόνα. Σὰς ἐρωτῶ· πόσες χιλιάδες; Τι λέω;... Πόσα ἑκατομμύρια; Τι λέω;... Πόσα δισεκατομμύρια ἔτη, τὴν ἰλλιγγιώδη ἀριθμὸς ἐτῶν θὰ πρέπει νὰ περάσουν, ἕως ὅτου τὸ πουλί πάρει καὶ τὴν τελευταία σταγόνα τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ;

Φαίνεται ἀδύνατο αὐτό; Ὁχι, δὲν εἶναι. Ἐὰν ρωτήσετε τοὺς μαθηματικούς, θὰ σὰς ποῦν ὅτι, ἂν ὁ ὠκεανὸς παραμένει σταθερὸς καὶ δὲν τροφοδοτῆται καὶ δὲν ἀνανεώνεται μὲ νέα νερά (βροχῆς, χεμιάρρων, ποταμῶν), ἀσφαλῶς θὰ ἔρθει μία στιγμή, κατὰ τὴν ὁποία τὸ πουλί θὰ πάρει καὶ τὴν τελευταία σταγόνα του.

Ὁ ὠκεανὸς λοιπὸν μπορεῖ νὰ ἐξαντληθεῖ, ἡ αἰωνιότης ὅμως δὲν ἐξαντλεῖται ποτέ. Ὡ αἰωνιότης!

Ὁ χρόνος ἀντιθέτως ἐξαντλεῖται, ἔστω καὶ ἂν φαίνεται σὰν ἓνας ἀπέραντος ὠκεανός. Πόσο διάστημα ἔχει περάσει ἀφ' ὅτου δημιουργήθηκε ὁ κόσμος; Διότι εἶναι ἐπιστημονικῶς ἀποδεδειγμένο, ὅτι κάποτε κόσμος δὲν ὑπῆρχε· δὲν ὑπάρχει κανεὶς ἐπιστήμων ποῦ ν' ἀμφιβάλλει γι' αὐτό. Ἡ ὕλη δὲν εἶναι αἰωνία. Κάποτε ἐμφανίστηκε. Κάποτε ἐμφανίστηκαν οἱ ἀστέρες, κάποτε ἐμφανίστηκε ὁ ἄνθρωπος, κάποτε ἐμφανίστηκε ὁ ὅλος αὐτὸς ὁ ὠραιότατος κόσμος.

Ἀπὸ τότε λοιπὸν ποῦ δημιουργήθηκε ὁ κόσμος μέχρι σήμερα πόσα χρόνια πέρασαν; Κατὰ τὴν ἁγία Γραφή πέρασαν 7.500 περίπου χρόνια (5.500 μέχρι τὴ γέννησι

τοῦ Χριστοῦ + 2.000 μέχρι σήμερα). Ὁ Χριστὸς μὲ τὴ γέννησί του χώρισε τὸ χρόνο σὲ «πρὸ Χριστοῦ» καὶ «μετὰ Χριστόν».

Ἀπὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ ποῦ ἦρθε ὁ Χριστὸς μέχρι σήμερα ἔχουν περάσει 2.000 περίπου χρόνια. Καὶ πόσα ἄραγε νὰ ὑπολείπονται μέχρι τῆς συντελείας τοῦ κόσμου; Τὸ σκεφτήκατε; Μπορεῖ κι ἀπόψε νὰ σημειωθεῖ τὸ τέλος τοῦ κόσμου! Πῶς; Ἄγνωστη ἡ ὥρα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἄλλ' ἀκόμα καὶ ἡ δαμονικὴ ἐπιστήμη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀπειλεῖ νὰ φέρει τὴ συντέλεια. Ἐὰν αὐτὲς οἱ βόμβες ποῦ ἔχουν συγκεντρώσει τόσο οἱ Ἀμερικάνοι ὅσο καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐκτραγοῦν ὅλες μαζὶ ταυτοχρόνως, μόνο ὁ Θεὸς ξέρει τι μπορεῖ νὰ συμβεῖ. Ἀλλὰ καὶ κατ' ἄλλο τρόπο κινδυνεύει ὁ κόσμος. Γιατὶ ἡ γῆ, ὅπως ξέρουμε, μέσα στὰ ἔγκατά της ἔχει ὀλόκληρο ἠφαίστειο. Ἐὰν τὸ ἠφαίστειο αὐτὸ ἐκτραγεῖ, τι θὰ μένει ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; Πάνε καὶ οἱ Παρθενῶνες καὶ τὰ μέγαρα καὶ τὰ πάντα, ὅλοι οἱ πολιτισμοὶ ἐξαφανίζονται.

Πότε λοιπὸν θὰ ἔρθει τὸ τέλος τοῦ κόσμου; Ἄγνωστο. Ἐνα ὅμως εἶναι γεγονὸς ἀναμφισβήτητο· ὅτι θὰ ἔρθει ὅπωςδήποτε. Αὐτὸ πάλι ἐπιστημονικῶς ἀποδεικνύεται. Διότι ὅλα ἔχουν ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος· ἐπομένως κάποτε θὰ σημειωθεῖ καὶ τὸ τέλος τοῦ κόσμου.

Τὸ «πῶς» κατὰ τὰς Γραφὰς εἶναι σαφές, κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστήμη εἶναι ἀμφιβαλλόμενο.

Ἐν πάσει περιπτώσει τὸ τέλος θὰ ἔρθει, καὶ θ' ἀρχίσει τότε νέα περίοδος, ἡ αἰωνιότης. Ἡ πρώτη περίοδος εἶναι πρὸ Χριστοῦ. Ἡ δευτέρα περίοδος εἶναι μετὰ Χριστόν. Καὶ κατόπιν, κατὰ τὴ Γραφή, «καινοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκώμεν» (Β' Πέτρο, 3:13).

Τότε, ἀγαπητοί μου, ἡ αἰωνιότης θὰ χωρισθεῖ σὲ δύο μεγάλες καταστάσεις. Ἡ μία ὀνομάζεται αἰώνιος κόλασις, καὶ ἡ ἄλλη παράδεισος, αἰώνιος ζωὴ.

Μπά, παραμύθια λές, θὰ πεῖ κάποιος.

Καὶ ὅμως αὐτὸ δὲν εἶναι παραμύθι σὰν ἐκεῖνα ποῦ ἀκούγαμε ἀπὸ τὶς γιαγιάδες στὸ παραγώνι κοντὰ στὴ φωτιά. Εἶναι πραγματικότης.

Μακάρι, λέει ὁ ἱερὸς Χρυσόστομος, νὰ μὴν ὑπῆρχε κόλασις· γιατί κ' ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἁμαρτωλὸς καὶ φοβᾶμαι τὴν κόλασις. Ἄλλ' ὅμως, ὅσο εἶναι γεγονὸς ὅτι ὑπάρχει ἡμέρα καὶ νύχτα, καὶ ὅσο εἶναι γεγονὸς ὅτι ὁ ἥλιος ἀνατέλλει καὶ δύει, τόσο εἶναι γεγονὸς ὅτι ἡ αἰωνιότης εἶναι μία σκληρὰ πραγματικότης. Διότι χωρίζεται ἀφ' ἐνὸς μὲν σὲ νύχτα ἀπέραντη, ποῦ ὀνομάζεται αἰώνιος κόλασις, ἀφ' ἑτέρου δὲ σὲ λαμπρὰ καὶ φωτοβόλο ἡμέρα, ποῦ ὀνομάζεται αἰώνιος ζωὴ καὶ μακαριότης.

Αὐτὸ ποιὸς μας τὸ βεβαιώνει; Ἐκεῖνος ποῦ ποτὲ δὲν εἶπε ψέματα. Ὅλοι ψεύδονται, Ἔνας ὄχι· εἴκοσι αἰῶνες διέρρευσαν καὶ κανεὶς ποτὲ δὲν τὸν διέψευσε. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. Αὐτὸς τὸ βεβαιώνει.

Πηγαίνετε στο σπίτι, πιάστε και διαβάστε το Ευαγγέλιο, πού είναι η ύψιστη αλήθεια.

Το 1942 ήμουν στη Φλώρινα και είχα μία ομάδα εκατό νέων παιδιών, στα όποια έδίδασκα τὰ λόγια του Θεού. Αυτὰ ἐργάζοντο τιμίως μέσα στην πόλι και, ἐνώ πέφτανε οί βόμβες αὐτοὶ φώναζαν «Ζήτω ἡ Ἑλλάς!». Τότε ἕνα ἀπὸ τὰ παιδιά ἐκεῖνα, ἕνα τίμιο λουστράκι, ἔγραψε στὸ κασσελάκι του τὴ φράσι: «Τὸ Ευαγγέλιο εἶναι ἡ ὑψιστή φιλοσοφία τῆς ζωῆς». Τὸν ἐπλησίασα, και μοῦ λέει: Εἶμαι ἀγράμματος, ἀλλὰ ἀφ' ὄτου ἔπιασα στὰ χέρια μου τὸ Ευαγγέλιο και τὸ διάβασα, δὲν φαντάζομαι νὰ ὑπάρχει στὸν κόσμο ἄλλο τέτοιο βιβλίο.

Διάβασε λοιπὸν κ' ἐσὺ τὸ Ευαγγέλιο. Ἄνοιξε τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην και διάβασε στὸ 5<sup>ο</sup> κεφάλαιο τοῦς στίχους 25 ἕως 29, κ' ἐκεῖ θὰ δεῖς τὰ τρομερὰ λόγια του Χριστοῦ. Εἶναι τὰ λόγια ποῦ ἀκοῦμε στην ἐκκλησία ὅταν γίνεται κηδεῖα ἀγαπητῶν μας προσώπων, ἀλλὰ ποιὸς τὰ προσέχει; Αὐτὰ θ' ἀκουστοῦν και γιὰ μᾶς ὅταν θὰ μᾶς κηδεύσουν. Τὶ λέει ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκεῖ: «Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν...». Τὶ σημαίνει «ἀμὴν ἀμὴν»; Εἶναι ἑβραϊκὴ φράσι. Μ' αὐτὴν ὁ Χριστὸς βεβαιώνει κατηγορηματικῶς, ὅτι «ἔρχεται ὥρα ἐν ἣ πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ἀκούσονται τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ (του υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ), και ἐκπορεύονται οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς, οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως». (Ἰωάν. 5:28-29).

Πρὸς τὰ ἐκεῖ λοιπὸν βαδίζουμε, ἀγαπητοί μου. Ὅπως τὰ ποτάμια τρέχουν και πέφτουν στὴ θάλασσα, ἔτσι και ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ καθενὸς μας θὰ πέσει μέσα στην πλατεῖα θάλασσα ποῦ λέγεται αἰωνιότης. Τὸ βεβαιώνει ὁ Χριστὸς.

Θέλεις κι ἄλλη ἀπόδειξι; Νά, ἡ φωνὴ τῆς συνειδήσεως. Ὅταν κάνεις τὸ καλὸ τι αἰσθάνεσαι; Χαρὰ και ἀγαλλίασι, και ἄς τρῶς κρεμμύδι και ἐλιά. Παράδεισο ἔχεις μέσα στην ψυχὴ σου, βασιλιάς εἶσαι. Αὐτὸ ποῦ σὲ κάνει νὰ νιώθεις χαρὰ εἶναι μία ἠγὼ τοῦ παραδείσου. Κι ὅταν κάνεις τὸ κακὸ μέσα σου αἰσθάνεσαι λύπη, κόλασι ἔχεις, ἄς εἶσαι και βασιλιάς και αὐτοκράτορας. Διαβάστε και Σαῖξπηρ· θὰ δῆτε ἐκεῖ κάποιον ποῦ διέπραξε τὸ κακὸ, και ἐν μέσω ἐκθαμβωτικοῦ συμποσίου παρέλυσαν τὰ χέρια του κ' ἔπεσαν τὰ πιρουνία κάτω, γιατί ἡ σκιά τοῦ ἐγκλήματος ἐτάραξε τὴ ζωὴ του. Κάνεις, δηλαδή, τὸ κακὸ και αἰσθάνεσαι μέσα σου λύπη. Τὶ εἶναι αὐτό; Κόλασις. Ἀπὸ ἐδῶ λοιπὸν, ἀπὸ τὴν παροῦσα ζωὴ, ὁ ἄνθρωπος προγεύεται ἢ τὸν παράδεισο ἢ τὴν κόλασι.

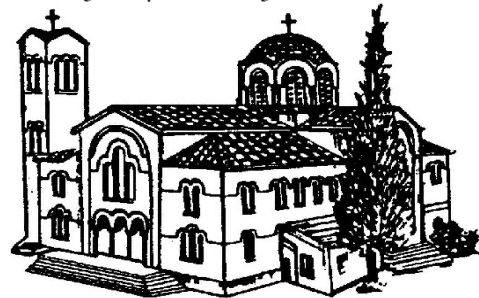
Πρὸς τὴν αἰωνιότητα βαδίζουμε, ἀδελφοί. Και νά, ἕνα ἔτος πέρασε. Νέο ἔτος χαιρετίζουμε. Τὶ θὰ μᾶς φέρει; Ἄγνωστον.

Κοντόφθαλμοι ἐμεῖς, δὲν ξέρουμε ἂν θὰ ζοῦμε αὐτοῦ. Πάντοτε πρέπει νὰ περιμένουμε τὴν ἀναχώρησί μας, ἰδίως ἐμεῖς οἱ γέροντες ποῦ φθάσαμε στην δύσι τοῦ βίου. Ἀλλὰ και οἱ νέοι. δὲν γνωρίζουμε «τὶ τέξεται ἡ

ἐπιούσα». Ἄραγε τοῦ χρόνου τέτοια μέρα πόσοι θὰ εἴμεθα στὴ ζωὴ; Ἄραγε στὸ νέο ἔτος τὶ περιπέτειες περιμένουν τὸ ἔθνος μας; Και τὶ θὰ γίνεῖ στὰ Βαλκάνια και στὴ Μεσόγειο και στὸν κόσμο; Κ' ἐσὺ μὲν πλάθεις ὄνειρα και φαντάζεσαι τὸν βίον ἀτελεύτητον· ἀλλὰ ἡ αἰωνιότης ἐγγίζει, ἡ μεγάλη ὥρα ἔρχεται.

Τὶ νὰ εὐχηθοῦμε, ἀγαπητοί μου; Πλοῦτη; Δόξες; Τιμές; Ἀπολαύσεις; Ἥδονες;... Μηδὲν εἶναι ὅλα. «Ματαιότηης ματαιότητων, τὰ πάντα ματαιότηης» (Ἐκκλ. 1:2). Ἔνα μένει. Νὰ πιστέψεις στὸ Χριστό. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἄλλο ὄνομα ποῦ μπορεῖ νὰ μᾶς δώσει χαρὰ και ἐλπίδα κατὰ τὸ ἔτος αὐτό. Μόνο τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· ὦν, παῖδες, ὑμνεῖτε και ὑπερῦψοῦτε εἰς πάντας τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.

† Ἐπίσκοπος Ἀυγουστίνος



### Τὸ Βλέμμα τῆς Γαλήνης!

Ποιὸς δὲν θὰ ἤθελε νὰ ἀντικρύσει, ἔστω και γιὰ μία στιγμή, αὐτὸ τὸ γλυκὸ βλέμμα ποῦ μυρίζει οὐρανὸ!

-Αὐτὸ τὸ βλέμμα ποῦ πηγάζει ἡ γαλήνη!

-Αὐτὸ τὸ βλέμμα ποῦ σου ἀνοίγει διάπλατα τὴν καρδιά!

-Αὐτὸ τὸ βλέμμα ποῦ δάκρυσε μπροστὰ στὸν Σταυρό!

Τὸ βλέμμα τῆς Παναγίας μας, τὸ γεμάτο στοργὴ και παρηγοριά!

Ἡ Παναγία, ὡς στοργικὴ μάνα, θὰ μᾶς κοιτάει μὲ αὐτὸ τὸ βλέμμα τῆς. Ἄς ἀναρωτηθοῦμε ὁμως:

Ἐμεῖς θὰ μποροῦμε νὰ τὴν ἀντικρύσουμε κατὰματα; Τὸ βλέμμα τὸ δικὸ μας θὰ εἶναι καθαρὸ ἢ θὰ εἶναι γεμάτο ἐνοχές, ὥστε νὰ μὴ γευθοῦμε τῆς χαρᾶς και τῆς ἀγαλλίασης, ποῦ σκορπίζει τὸ βλέμμα τῆς Παναγίας.

Ποτὲ δὲν εἶναι ἀργὰ νὰ ἀλλάξουμε πορεία, νὰ κάνουμε μία ἐπανεκκίνηση στὴν ζωὴ μας! Ἡ νέα ἀρχὴ γίνεται ξεκινώντας τὴν προσπάθεια καταπολέμησης τοῦ ἐγωισμοῦ μας, τῆς μιξερίας και τῆς λύπης, στὰ ὅποια μᾶς ἔχει ὀδηγήσει ὁ ἐγωισμὸς μας, ξεφεύγοντας ἀπὸ τὰ δίχτυα τῆς ἀπελπισίας. Ἔτσι, μὲ θάρρος και ἐλπίδα, μὲ βλέμμα πλέον καθάριο νὰ ἀξιωθοῦμε νὰ ἀντικρύσουμε μὲ εὐθύτητα τὸ γλυκὸ και οὐράνιο βλέμμα τῆς Παναγίας, μέσα ἀπὸ τὸ ὅποιο θὰ διακρίνουμε ξεκάθαρα και φωτεινὰ τὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας. Ἀμήν!

† Ἀρχ. Βαρθολομαῖος  
Καθηγούμενος Ἰ. Μ. Ἐσφιγμένου



## Τὸ Μεγαλύτερο Ρελιζίκι...

Τοῦ κυρ-Φώτη Κόντογλου.

### Ἡ Ἀγάπη γιὰ τὴν Ἄνθρωπότητα Εἶναι Ὑποκρισία

Ἐὰν εἶχε πάψει νὰ ὑφίσταται ἡ ἀδικία, τὸ μῖσος καὶ τὸ ψέμμα, τότε ἡ εἰρήνη θὰ ἦταν τὸ ἐπιστέγασμα τῆς ἀνθρώπινης εὐδαιμονίας. Ἡ ἐνότης θὰ ἦταν ἓνα φυσικὸ καὶ ὄχι τεχνητὸ ἀποτέλεσμα. Ὅμως παρατηρεῖται κάτι τὸ τελείως διαφορετικὸ. Σήμερα ποὺ ὅλοι μιλοῦν γιὰ εἰρήνη καὶ γιὰ ἐνότητα, ἡ φιλαυτία καὶ τὰ μίση, ἡ ἀδικία καὶ τὸ ψέμα, ἡ φιλοδοξία καὶ ἡ πλεονεξία μεσουρανοῦν. Ὅλοι, ὁ καθένας μὲ τὸν τρόπο του, μιλοῦν γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπο, γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη πρὸς τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα. Δὲν ὑπῆρξε ὅμως ποτὲ μεγαλύτερη ὑποκρισία ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν δῆθεν ἀγάπη. Γιατὶ ἡ ἀγάπη πρὸς κάτι τὸ θεωρητικὸ, πρὸς κάτι τὸ φανταστικὸ, ὅπως εἶναι ἡ ἔννοια «ἀνθρωπότης» εἶναι ἐξ' ἴσου θεωρητικὴ καὶ φανταστικὴ. Δὲν ἔχει καμμία σχέσι μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν συγκεκριμένον ἄνθρωπο ποὺ ἔχουμε μπροστὰ μας. Αὐτὴ ἡ ἀγάπη πρὸς ἓνα συγκεκριμένον πρόσωπο, ὅταν ὑπάρχει, εἶναι ἡ μόνη πραγματικὴ. Εἶναι ἡ ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν πλησίον μας ποὺ ἐζήτησε ὁ Χριστός.

Αὐτὸς ὁ συγκεκριμένος ἄνθρωπος μὲ τὶς ἀτέλειες καὶ τὶς ἀδυναμίες του, ἀντὶ νὰ ἀγαπηθῆ, μισήθηκε στὶς ἡμέρες μας περισσότερο ἀπὸ κάθε ἄλλη φορὰ. Καὶ ὄχι μόνον μισήθηκε, ἀλλὰ περιφρονήθηκε καὶ ἐξευτελίσθηκε, θεωρήθηκε ἓνα «πρᾶγμα», χωρὶς ἰδιαίτερη ἀξία, μέσον γιὰ τὴν ἐπίτευξι «ὑψηλῶν» σκοπῶν, ἓνα μόριο τῆς μάζας. Αὐτοὶ ποὺ μιλοῦν περισσότερο γιὰ τὴν ἀγάπη πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα, γιὰ τὴν εἰρήνη καὶ τὴν ἐνότητα, εἶναι ἀκριβῶς ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ μισοῦν περισσότερο τὸν πλησίον τους, τὸν γνωστό τους. Τὸ ὅτι τάχα ἀγαποῦν τὸν ἄνθρωπο εἶναι πλάσμα τῆς φαντασίας τους. Δὲν ἀγαποῦν τὸν ἄνθρωπο: αὐτὸ εἶναι ἡ πραγματικότητα. Αὐτὴ ἡ λατρεία τοῦ εἰδώλου «ἀνθρωπος» εἶναι στὴν πραγματικότητα ναρκισσιμὸς, εἶναι ἡ λατρεία τοῦ «ἐγώ».

Θὰ ἦταν λοιπὸν ἀφέλεια νὰ πιστέψη κανεὶς ὅτι ἡ φιλειρηνικὴ διάθεσις ποὺ χαρακτηρίζει τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα σήμερα προέρχεται ἀπὸ ἀγάπη. Ὅχι! Τὰ περὶ ἀγάπης εἶναι ὑποκρισία ἢ αὐταπάτη. Ὁ πόθος τῆς εἰρήνης προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὸ χάσιμο τῶν ἰδανικῶν, ἀπὸ τὸν φόβο καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη τῆς καλοπέρασης. Εἶναι ὁ πόθος νὰ μᾶς ἀφήσουν ἡσυχους νὰ ἀπολαύσουμε τὰ ἀγαθὰ τῆς γῆς. Εἶναι ἡ κατὰ συνθήκην συνεργασία γιὰ τὴν ἀπόκτησι τῶν ἀγαθῶν ποὺ χωριστὰ ὁ καθένας δὲν θὰ μποροῦσε νὰ ἀποκτήσῃ. Εἶναι ἡ παγκόσμιος συνεννόησις πάνω σε κάτι ποὺ ἔγινε τὸ πάθος ὀλοκλήρου τῆς γῆς: τὴν φιληδονία καὶ τὴν φιλοῦλία. Εἶναι προῖόν τῆς ἀνάγκης.

Ἡ εἰρήνη γιὰ τὴν ὁποία μιλάει σήμερα ὁ «Κόσμος» εἶναι ἡ ἄνευ ὄρων συνθηκολόγησις κάθε καλοῦ καὶ μεγάλου καὶ ἡ ἐπικράτησις τῆς μικρότητος, τῆς μετριότητος καὶ τῆς χλιαρότητος. Εἶναι ἡ ἐξάλειψις τῆς προσωπικότητος τῶν ἀτόμων καὶ τῶν λαῶν. Εἶναι μία μαρμελάδα συμβιβασμῶν καὶ ὑπολογισμῶν, μία θάλασσα ὑποκρισίας, ἡ ἀδιαφορία γιὰ τὴν ἀλήθεια, ἡ προδοσία κάθε ἱεροῦ καὶ ὁσίου.

Ὁ πόλεμος εἶναι κάτι τὸ φοβερό, ἀποτέλεσμα τῆς πτώσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ κανεὶς δὲν πρόκειται νὰ τὸν ἐξυμνήσῃ. Ὅμως ἡ εἰρήνη ποὺ παζαρεῖται ὁ σύγχρονος κόσμος εἶναι κάτι ἀπείρως φοβερώτερο. Ὁ πυρετὸς εἶναι κάτι τὸ πολὺν δυσάρεστο, δείχνει ὅμως τουλάχιστον ὅτι ὁ ὀργανισμὸς ἀντιδρᾷ στὸ κακὸ ποὺ τὸν βρῆκε. Ἡ εἰρήνη ποὺ θέλουν νὰ φέρουν δὲν εἶναι δυστυχῶς ἐκεῖνη ποὺ ἔρχεται ἀπὸ τὴν κατανίκησι τοῦ κακοῦ, ἀλλὰ ἐκεῖνη ποὺ ἔρχεται ἀπὸ τὴν ἡττα. Εἶναι ἡ ἀπυρεξία τοῦ πτώματος.

### Ὑπάρχει Ἐνας Ὁκεανὸς Σχίσματος

Στὴν προσπάθεια τοῦ κόσμου γιὰ εἰρήνευσι, οἱ λεγόμενοι Χριστιανοὶ παίζουν σημαντικὸ ρόλο. Μὲ τὸ σύνθημα «Χριστιανοὶ ἐνωθήτε» ξεκινοῦν γιὰ τὸ παζάρι ὅπου θὰ πουληθῆ ἡ ἀλήθεια.

Κάποτε οἱ Χριστιανοὶ πίστευαν καὶ ἦταν ἔτοιμοι νὰ πεθάνουν γιὰ τὴν πίστι τους. Σήμερα ὁ ζῆλος τους γιὰ τὴν ἀλήθεια ἔχει κρυώσει. Ἄρχισαν νὰ τὴν θεωροῦν σὰν κάτι τὸ δευτερεῖον. Βρίσκουν τὶς διαφορὰς τῶν «Ἐκκλησιῶν» (γιὰ τὶς ὁποῖες ἄλλοτε πρόθυμα θυσιαζόντουσαν οἱ μάρτυρες, ἐξωρίζοντο οἱ Πατέρες, ἀκρωτηριάζονταν οἱ πιστοὶ) σὰν ἀσήμαντες καὶ ἀνάξιες λόγου.

Οἱ περισσότεροι ἀπ' αὐτοὺς εἶναι κατὰ τὸ πλεῖστον νοσηροὶ καὶ ἀδιόρθωτοι αἰσθηματῆται, ποὺ νομίζουν ὅτι ἡ θρησκεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι μία δεοντολογία ποὺ ἀφορᾷ στὶς ἀνθρώπινες σχέσεις. Οἱ ἄλλοι ἐπιδιώκουν πολιτικούς σκοποὺς καὶ σκοτεινὰ συμφέροντα. Ὅλοι μαζὶ κτίζουν τὴν πόλι τοῦ ἀντιχριστοῦ. Ζητοῦν τὴν ἐνωσι ἀδιαφορώντας γιὰ τὴν ἀλήθεια, ζητοῦν τὸ ἐξωτερικὸ πλησίασμα ἀδιαφορώντας γιὰ τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ διάστασι, ζητοῦν τὸ γράμμα ἀδιαφορώντας γιὰ τὸ πνεῦμα.

Πῶς εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ ἐλπίζουν ὅτι αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀπέτυχε τοὺς πρώτους αἰῶνες τοῦ σχίσματος, θὰ ἐπιτευχθῆ τώρα ποὺ οἱ δογματικὲς διαφορὰς καὶ οἱ διαφορὰς τῆς νοοτροπίας ἔγιναν, μὲ τὸ πέρασμα τῶν αἰῶνων, ἀπὸ χάσματα ὠκεανοί;

### Ἡ Ἐνωσι τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν Εἶναι ὁ Καλύτερος Τρόπος Ἐξουδετερώσεως τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ

Πῶς ὅμως θὰ διδαχθοῦν οἱ Δυτικοὶ ὅτι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία εἶναι ἡ Μία καὶ Ἀληθινὴ ὅταν τὴν βλέπουν νὰ συναναστρέφεται μὲ τὶς ψεύτικες «Ἐκκλησίες» σὰν ἴσος πρὸς ἴσον; Δὲν θὰ νομίσουν

μάλλον έτσι πώς ή Ὁρθοδοξία εἶναι σάν καί τῖς ἄλλες, σχετική καί μερική;

Κολακεύουν μόνον τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους, καί αὐτὸ γιὰ νὰ τοὺς προσελκύσουν πρὸς τὸ μέρος τους. Ἄν εἶχαν πραγματική νοσταλγία γιὰ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία καί ἤθελαν νὰ τὴν γνωρίσουν, δὲν θὰ εἶχαν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ τὰ συμβούλια καί τῖς συνεδριάσεις. Θὰ πήγαιναν νὰ πιοῦν ἀπὸ τῖς πηγές της, ἀπὸ τοὺς Πατέρας καί τοὺς ἁγίους της.

Ἀλλὰ γιὰτί συγκινοῦνται τόσο εὐκόλα οἱ Χριστιανοί μας ἀπὸ τὰ κηρύγματα περὶ ἐνώσεως τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καί ἀντὶ νὰ γεμίζουν μὲ ζήλο γιὰ τὴν μετάγγισι τῆς ἀληθείας σ' αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμο ποὺ τόσο πολὺ τὴν στερήθηκε, πιπιλιζοῦν συνεχῶς τὴν καραμέλα τῆς εἰρήνης, ζυγίζοντας νὰ δοῦν ἂν εἶναι περισσότερα αὐτὰ ποῦ χωρίζουν ἢ αὐτὰ ποῦ ἐνώνουν τοὺς Χριστιανούς;

Γιὰτί στερηθήκαν οἱ ἴδιοι τὴν γνώσι τῆς ἀλήθειας. Μέλη οἱ περισσότεροι κοινωνικο-χριστιανικῶν ὀργανώσεων καί ἀδελφοτήτων, κατηχήθηκαν ἀπὸ τὰ νεανικὰ τους χρόνια σὲ ἓνα ἠθικο-φιλοσοφικὸ σύστημα μὲ ἐπίχρισμα χριστιανικὸ, ποὺ ἄφηνε νὰ ἐννοηθῇ ὅτι σκοπὸς τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ εἶναι νὰ ἐπιτύχη τὴν εἰρηνικὴ καί ἀγαπημένη συμβίωσι μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἡ αἰωνιότης καί ἡ θεωρία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἦταν πράγματα τόσο μακρινὰ γιὰ τοὺς Χριστιανούς αὐτοὺς καί συχνὰ τόσο ἀδιάφορα. Οἱ περισσότεροι, ὄντες ἐξωστρεφεῖς, ἄνθρωποι τῆς δράσεως, ἦλθαν στὸν Χριστιανισμὸ γιὰ νὰ βροῦν ἓναν ὀργανωμένον καί καθωδηγημένον *modus vivendi* (συμβιβασμός), ἓναν τρόπο γιὰ νὰ ζήσουν ὡς καλοὶ καί τίμιοι πολῖται ἐπάνω σὲ τούτη τὴ γῆ. Ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι γιὰ τοὺς τέτοιους ἀνθρώπους ὁ Μέγας Ὑπερέτης τῶν προσωπικῶν συμφερόντων τους, ἢ δὲ αἰώνιος ζωὴ μιὰ καλὴ ἀλλὰ εὐτυχῶς μακρινὴ ἐλπίς ἀποκαταστάσεως.

Ἀλλὰ ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἔγινε ἄνθρωπος γιὰ νὰ σώσῃ τὸν ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κείμενον κόσμον, ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ σώσῃ τοὺς δικούς του ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμον, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς τραβήξῃ ἀπὸ τὴν παράταξι τοῦ πονηροῦ, νὰ τοὺς ἐνώσῃ μαζί του καί νὰ τοὺς θεώσῃ κατὰ χάριν, καί μαζί μ' αὐτοὺς νὰ σώσῃ ὁλόκληρο τὴν στενάζουσα κτίσι. Ὁ κόσμος βαδίζει τὸν δρόμον τοῦ θανάτου. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ἡ παράταξι τοῦ

ἄρχοντος τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, ἡ παράταξις τοῦ ἐχθροῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. «Οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ, ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι». (Ἰωάν. 17:9).

Αὐτοὶ ὅμως ἐρωτοῦν περὶ τοῦ κόσμου, καί θυσιάζουν, (γιὰ τὸ χατίρι τῆς διαβολικῆς αὐτῆς παρατάξεως ποὺ ποτὲ δὲν πρόκειται νὰ σωθῇ) τὰ διαμάντια τῆς χριστιανικῆς πίστεως καί βιοτῆς. Γιὰτί περὶ αὐτοῦ πρόκειται. Δὲν τὴν ζητᾷ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν λεγόμενη «ἔνωσι τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν», ἀλλὰ ὁ κόσμος. **Δὲν ζητᾷ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐνωσι τῆς ψευτιᾶς μὲ τὴν ἀλήθεια, ἀλλὰ ὁ κόσμος, ποὺ ζητᾷ νὰ νοθεύσῃ τὴν ἀλήθεια, νὰ τὴν κἀνῃ σχετικὴ καί μερική.** Γι' αὐτὸ ὅταν ἡ συζήτησις ἔλθῃ γιὰ τὴν ἐνωσι «τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν», βλέπει κανεὶς νὰ τὴν ὑποστηρίζουν μὲ ἐνθουσιασμὸ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ ποτὲ

ἄλλοτε δὲν ἐνδιαφέρθηκαν γιὰ τὰ τῆς θρησκείας. Ἡ ἐνωσις εἶναι ὁ καλύτερος τρόπος ἐξουδετερώσεως τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ, ποὺ ἀνεκάλυψε ἡ παράταξις τοῦ διαβόλου, ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ ξεφτίσματος του καί ἡ ὑποταγὴ του στὰ θελήματα τῆς πολιτικῆς, ἢ μετατροπῆς του σὲ ὑπηρετὴ τῶν συμφερόντων τοῦ κόσμου.

Μὲ τὴν ἐνωσι ὁ Χριστιανισμὸς ἴσως νὰ ἀποκτήσῃ μεγαλύτερη κοσμικὴ ἰσχύ, θὰ χάσῃ ὅμως ὅλη τὴν πνευματικὴ του δύναμι, αὐτὴν ἀκριβῶς ποὺ ἐνοχλεῖ τὸν κόσμον. Μήπως δὲν ἔγινε ἤδη ἀκριβῶς αὐτὸ μέσα στὴν Ῥωμαιοκαθολικὴ «Ἐκκλησία»; Ἡ δίψα τῶν Παπικῶν γιὰ κοσμικὴ ἰσχύ τοὺς ἔκανε νὰ κατεβοῦν

στὸν στίβον τῶν πολιτικῶν ἐλιγμῶν, ἀπ' ὅπου βγήκαν ὑπηρετὰι τῶν μεγάλων πολιτικῶν ρευμάτων.

### Ἡ Μαρτυρία τοῦ Μακρυγιάννη

Τῖς πρώτες ἐνωτικὲς τάσεις τῶν Βυζαντινῶν ἀρχόντων μὲ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴ πλάνη ἀνέκοψε, εὐτυχῶς, ἡ στάσις τοῦ λαοῦ καί ἡ ὑποδούλωσις τοῦ Βυζαντίου στὸν Τούρκου. Μόλις ὅμως τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Ἔθνος βρήκε τὴν ἐλευθερία του, ὁ παλαιὸς πειρασμὸς ξανακτύπησε τὴν πόρτα του.

Οἱ γνήσιοι Ἕλληνες, ἄνθρωποι τοῦ λαοῦ καί τῶν παραδόσεων, ἀντιστάθηκαν στὴν ἀρχὴ στὸ ρεῦμα τοῦ ἐξευρωπαϊσμοῦ. Ἦσαν ὅμως ἀγράμματοι καί παρ' ὅλον ὅτι αὐτοὶ εἶχαν δώσει τὸ αἷμα τους γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία αὐτῆς τῆς χώρας, γρήγορα παραγκωνίστηκαν ἀπὸ τοὺς ξενόφροτους γραμματισμένους, ποὺ μαζί μὲ τὴν οἴσι





που δίνει ή ήμιμάθεια, είχαν και την δύναμι της Αύλης του Ὁθωνος.

«Αὐτῆνοι κατάντησαν τὴν πατρίδα καὶ τὴν θρησκείαν καὶ κλονίζεται ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄθρησκους. Εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τῆς Τουρκίας μίαν πέτρα δὲν πείραζαν ἀπὸ τὰ παλιοκκλήσια, κι αὐτῆνοι οἱ ἀπατεῶνες σύνδεσαν τὰ συμφέροντά τους μὲ τοὺς μολεμένους Φαναριῶτες κι ἄλλους τοιούτους, ὁπού ἦταν εἰς τὴν Εὐρώπη μόλεμα, καὶ μᾶς χάλασαν τὰ μοναστήρια καὶ τὶς ἐκκλησίες μας—μαγαρίζουν μέσα, κι ἄλλες ἔγιναν ἀχούρια. Ἀπὸ τοὺς τοιούτους γερωμένους πολλοὺς πάθαμεν αὐτά, κι ἀπὸ τοὺς τοιούτους λαϊκούς, στρατιωτικούς καὶ πολιτικούς, ἀφοῦ χύσαμεν ποταμοὺς αἵματα, κιντυνεύομεν νὰ χάσωμεν καὶ τὴν πατρίδα μας καὶ τὴν θρησκεία μας». (Μακρυγιάννη: Ἀπομνημονεύματα, σελ. 398).

Αὐτοὶ οἱ ήμιμαθεῖς μορφωμένοι περιφρόνησαν τὸν Ἑλληνικὸ λαὸ μὲ τὸ πάθος κάθε πεμπτοφαλαγγίτου. Περιφρόνησαν τὴν γλώσσα του, τὰ ἦθη καὶ τὰ ἔθιμά του, τὴν νοοτροπία του. Ἔβαλαν ὅλα τους τὰ δυνατὰ νὰ νοθεύσουν τὴν ἀλήθεια τῆς πίστεως του, νὰ ἀλλοιώσουν τὶς παραδόσεις τῆς Ἐκκλησίας του, νὰ μπολιάσουν τὸ κοσμικὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸν ὀρθολογισμὸ ἐπάνω στὸ ἀγιασμένο δέντρο τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, ποὺ τόσους αἰῶνες εἶχε μείνει ἀμόλυντο κάτω ἀπ' τὸν βάρβαρο κατακτητή. Γιὰ νὰ κτυπήσουν τὴν Ἐκκλησία κατάκαρδα, κτύπησαν τὰ μοναστήρια της. Ἄλλα ἔκλεισαν, ἄλλων τὴν περιουσία ἐστέρησαν, σὲ ἄλλα ἔστειλαν ἠγουμένους «προοδευτικούς» οἱ ὁποῖοι τὰ διέλυσαν εὐκολώτερα ἀπὸ κάθε δίστομο κρατικὴ μάχαιρα.

### **Ἐπέκταση τῆς Διαφθορᾶς: Ἡ Πίστη τοῦ Ἐργαστηρίου**

**Ἡ** Βυζαντινὴ μουσικὴ ἄρχισε νὰ μεταποιῆται πρὸς τὸ εὐρωπαϊκώτερο γιὰ νὰ μεταπέση στὴν θεατρικὴ τετραφωνία. Οἱ εἰκόνες ἄρχισαν νὰ φαίνονται πολὺ ἀύστηρες καὶ ἄσχημες στὰ μάτια τῶν γυναικαριῶν τῶν «ἀνωτέρων» τάξεων, ποὺ ζητοῦσαν «γλυκεῖς Ἰησοῦς» γεμάτους συγκατάβασι γιὰ τὶς ἀνομίες τους καὶ ἀνίκανους νὰ προκαλοῦν τὸ δέος καὶ τὸν σεβασμὸ. Τὰ γένεια καὶ τὰ μαλλιά τῶν ἱερωμένων ἄρχισαν νὰ ἐνοχλοῦν, καὶ αὐτοί, ἀνταποκρινόμενοι στὶς ἀπαιτήσεις τοῦ σύγχρονου κοινοῦ, ἄρχισαν νὰ καλλωπίζονται. Οἱ θεολόγοι καὶ οἱ μέλλοντες ἱερεῖς καὶ ἀρχιερεῖς δὲν ἐκκολάπτοντο μέσα στοὺς κόλπους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τῆς φυσικῆς τους μητέρας, ἀλλὰ μέσα στοὺς κόλπους ἑνὸς κρατικοῦ Πανεπιστημίου, γεμάτου ἀπὸ ὀρθολογιστικὴ δυσωδία καὶ πνευματικὴ ρηχότητα, χωρὶς καμμία δυνατότητα νὰ γευθοῦν στὴν πράξι τὴν μυστικὴ ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ τῆς ἀγιότητος, ποὺ μόνη ἀναδεικνύει πραγματικούς θεολόγους. Φύτρωσαν ἔτσι σὰν ζιζάνια μέσα στὴν

Ἐκκλησία θεολόγοι ποὺ εἶχαν τὰ μυαλὰ γεμισμένα μὲ πολλὰς φιλοσοφικὰς θεωρίες προτεσταντικῆς ἢ ρωμαϊκῆς προελεύσεως, ἀλλὰ τὶς καρδιὰς κενὰς ἀπὸ τὸ βίωμα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας.

Οἱ ἄνθρωποι αὐτοὶ ἦταν ἀνίκανοι νὰ δοῦν τὸ χάσμα ποὺ χωρίζει τὴν Ἀνατολικὴ ἀπὸ τὶς Δυτικὰς «Ἐκκλησίες». Τὸ θεωροῦσαν ζήτημα δογματικῶν διατυπώσεων, ἀλλὰ ὄχι ζήτημα ζωῆς καὶ οὐσίας. Γι' αὐτοὺς ἢ ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ ἦταν σειρὰ συναισθηματικῶν καταστάσεων καὶ ἠθικῶν πράξεων. Τὸ ἴδιο ὅμως εἶναι ἢ ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ καὶ γιὰ τοὺς Δυτικούς. Ἡ θεωρία τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸ βίωμα τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τῆς ἐπιφοιτήσεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ἢ κατοίκησις δηλαδὴ τῆς ἀληθείας μέσα στὴν καρδιά τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τοὺς ἦταν ἄγνωστη. Αὐτοὶ ὅταν μιλοῦν γιὰ ἀλήθεια ἐννοοῦν τὸ ξηρὸ δόγμα. Τὸ δόγμα ὅμως, τόσο γι' αὐτοὺς ὅσο καὶ γιὰ τοὺς Δυτικούς, ἦταν ἕνας ξεχωριστὸς κόσμος ἐγκεφαλικῶν διατυπώσεων, ἀρκετὰ ἐνοχλητικὸς, τὴν ἀξία τοῦ ὁποῖου, ὕστερα ἀπ' αὐτὴν τὴν διάσπασι τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τῆς πίστεως, ἦταν ἀδύνατον νὰ ἐκτιμήσουν.

Τὰ θεμέλια λοιπὸν ἐπάνω στὰ ὁποῖα θὰ ἔκτιζαν γιὰ νὰ ὑπερασπισθοῦν τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία τους, ἀκόμη καὶ οἱ πιὸ καλοπροαίρετοι ἀπὸ τοὺς θεολόγους μας, ἦταν σαθρότατα. Εἶναι φοβερό, ὅταν ἀναλογισθῆ κανεῖς, ὅτι ἐπάνω σ' αὐτὰ τὰ σαθρὰ θεμέλια ἔχει κτισθῆ ὀλόκληρη ἢ σύγχρονη Ἑλληνικὴ θρησκευτικότης. Γιατί, ἐνῶ κάποτε ἢ θρησκευτικότης τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπήγαζε ἀπὸ τὶς Μονὰς καὶ αὐτὲς εἶχε γιὰ πνευματικὸ ἀποκούμπι καὶ καθοδήγησι, στὸ Ἑλληνικὸ βασίλειο ἢ θρησκευτικότης θεμελιώθηκε ἐπάνω στὸν θεολόγο ποὺ περιγράψαμε, ἱερωμένο ἢ λαϊκό.

Ὁ θεολόγος αὐτός, μιμούμενος τὰ δυτικὰ πρότυπα, ὠργάνωσε ἀδελφότητες καὶ χριστιανικὰς ἐνώσεις καὶ πῆρε στὰ χέρια του τὸ κήρυγμα καὶ τὴν κατήχησι. Καὶ ἐνῶ πρὶν ἢ θρησκευτικότης ἑνὸς τόπου εἶχε σὰν κέντρο τῆς τὸ μοναστήρι τῆς περιοχῆς καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ δὲν διέφερε σὲ τίποτε ὁ Χριστιανὸς τοῦ Α' τόπου ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστιανὸ τοῦ Β' τόπου, γιὰτὶ ὅλοι ἦταν τὸ ἴδιο παιδιὰ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, τώρα ὁ θεολόγος ὠργάνωσε τὴν φατρία, καὶ ἔτσι σ' ἕναν καὶ τὸν αὐτὸ τόπο ὑπάρχουν Χριστιανοὶ τῆς Α' φατρίας καὶ Χριστιανοὶ τῆς Β' φατρίας, πάντοτε ἀντίδικοι καὶ ὑποβλεπόμενοι, χωρισμένο—χωρὶς οἱ ἴδιοι νὰ καταλαβαίνουν ποιὲς εἶναι οἱ διαφορὲς τους.

Καὶ ὅμως, μ' ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ μίση καὶ τὰ μεταξὺ των σχίσματα, οἱ φατρίες εἶναι σύμφωνες πὼς ὅσον ἀφορᾶ τοὺς Δυτικούς «περισσότερα εἶναι ἐκεῖνα ποὺ μᾶς ἐνώνουν παρὰ ἐκεῖνα ποὺ μᾶς χωρίζουν» καὶ «πρέπει νὰ βλέπουμε αὐτὰ ποὺ μᾶς ἐνώνουν καὶ νὰ παραβλέπουμε αὐτὰ ποὺ μᾶς χωρίζουν». Βλέπουν

δηλαδή πιδ εύκολη τήν ένωση και τήν άγάπη με τους Δυτικούς «άδελφούς» τους που ούτε τους είδαν ούτε τους γνώρισαν ποτέ, παρὰ με τους Όρθοδόξους συμπολίτες και γείτονες, που και βλέπουν καθημερινώς και γνωρίζουν. Άλλά είπαμε: οί άνθρωποι σήμερα κόπτονται για τήν άγάπη του ανθρώπου, για τήν άφρημένη άγάπη τής ανθρωπότητας, τήν στιγμή που είναι άνίκανοι να αγαπήσουν τον πλησίον τους.

### Τι Ένωση Ζητάει ο Χριστός;

Άλλά ως καταλάβουν όσοι με τόση έλαφρότητα μιλούν για ένωση των Έκκλησιών, πως η ένότης τής Έκκλησίας είναι δώρον μυστικόν τής Θείας Παρουσίας. Δέν είναι κάτι που αποφασίζεται σε συνέδρια, αλλά κάτι που υπάρχει ή δέν υπάρχει. Καμμία απόφασις των ανθρώπων δέν μπορεί να έξαναγκάση τον Θεό.

Άσφαλώς τύποις ή ένωσις μπορεί να γίνη και να αρχίσουν όλοι να δηλώνουν, Προτεστάνται, Καθολικοί και Όρθόδοξοι, πώς τώρα πιδ είμαστε μιὰ Έκκλησία και να μνημονεύουμε έμεις τον Πάπα Ρώμης και ο Πάπας Ρώμης τον Πατριάρχη Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Έάν συμφωνήσουν όλοι επάνω σε ένα «ελάχιστο άληθείας», επάνω σε ένα «πιστεύω» άπλουστευμένο, και κανονισθούν και μερικά άλλα ζητήματα, μπορεί να γίνη ή ένωσις. Θα γίνη ένα σύστημα νομικώς και τυπικώς ισχύον, ένα σύστημα όμως που δέν θα έχη καμμία σχέση με τήν Έκκλησία του Χριστού, έστω και αν όλα τα έξωτερικά φαινόμενα τδ κάνουν να μοιάζη με τήν Έκκλησία. Ό «Θεός ού μυκτηρίζεται». Όταν δέν υπάρχουν στους ανθρώπους οί προϋποθέσεις τής Παρουσίας Του, ο Θεός δέν έρχεται στους ανθρώπους.

Η Έκκλησία του Χριστού δέν ήταν ποτέ ένα σύστημα ανθρώπινο. Η Έκκλησία γεννήθηκε, δέν κατασκευάσθηκε. Οί συζητήσεις των ανθρώπων μπορούν να κατασκευάσουν κάτι και να του δώσουν τδ όνομα «Έκκλησία». Αυτό όμως τδ κατασκευάσμα θα είναι κάτι χωρίς ζωή. Η ζωντανή Έκκλησία δέν θα έχη καμμία σχέση μ' αυτό.

### Δέν Χάθηκε Κάθε Έλπίδα

Εύτυχώς, μέχρι σήμερα, όλες οί παρεκκλίσεις από τήν Παράδοσι που περιγράψαμε δέν έχουν αποκόψει τις Όρθόδοξες Έκκλησίες από τήν ρίζα τους. Τδ δέντρο παραμένει ζωντανό και άκμαίο, παρ' όλα τα φτιασίδια που του έχουν προσθέσει. Οί Όρθόδοξες Έκκλησίες δέν έχουν ξεραθί, όπως έγινε με τις «Έκκλησίες» τής Δύσεως. Λίγο αν τινάξης τή σκόνη που έρριξε τδ κοσμικό πνεύμα επάνω τους θα βρής τδ δροσερά φύλλα τής γνήσιας Παραδόσεως. Η Παράδοσις δέν έπαψε ποτέ να ζή και να ισχύη μέσα στον περίβολο τής Όρθοδοξίας.

Υπάρχουν ακόμη μοναχοί που ζούν τον Όρθόδοξο Μοναχισμό. Υπάρχουν ακόμη γνήσιοι θεολόγοι που

δέν έχουν νοθεύσει τήν άλήθεια, αλλά τήν κρατούν λαμπερή και όλοκάθαρη, μακριά από κάθε ξένη πρόσμιξι. Υπάρχουν ακόμη Βυζαντινοί ψαλλάδες και γνήσιοι συνεχιστάι τής Όρθοδόξου είκονογραφικής παραδόσεως. Υπάρχουν ακόμη ιερείς σαν τους παλιούς, άφοσιωμένοι στο ιερό τους λειτούργημα, που ή συνεχής έπαφή τους με τον Θεό, δέν τους αφήνει τδ στενοχωρηθούν από τὰ μακριά γένεια και τὰ μαύρα ράσα, αλλά τὰ κάνει να άκτινοβολούν άγιότητα. Υπάρχει ακόμη άπλως λαός που άξιώνεται να δη θαύματα φοβερά.

Η γνήσια Παραδοσις λοιπόν—ή ζωή, τὰ βιώματα και ή διδασκαλία των Άποστόλων και των άγιων Πατέρων όλων των εποχών, τὰ ίχνη αυτά των βημάτων του Άγίου Πνεύματος μέσα στις καρδιές των Χριστιανών—υπάρχει και συνεχίζεται, ζωντανή ανάμεσα σε ζωντανούς, χωρίς καμμία διακοπή από τους Άποστολικούς χρόνους. Υπάρχει μία συνεχής άρμονία σ' όλες τις εκδηλώσεις των Όρθοδόξων όλων των εποχών μέχρι σήμερα, γραπτές και άγραφες, και αυτός είναι ο χρυσός κανών επάνω στον όποιο πρέπει ο καθένας να μετράη τις σκέψεις και τὰ έργα του για να βλέπη αν βρίσκεται μέσα ή έξω από τον χώρο τής Όρθοδοξίας. Μπορεί τὰ φαινόμενα να δίνουν τήν εντύπωσι ότι έχη χαλάσει, ότι έχη διακοπή ή συνέχεια, όμως λίγο αν σκάψη κανείς, τήν βλέπει να αναβλύζει και να δροσίζει αυτούς που τήν άποζητούν...



Τρία τα τελειωτικά μέσα δια των όποιων ο άνθρωπος γίνεται τέλειος Χριστιανός και είκων Θεού: (1) **Μόρφωσις του νοϋ**. Δια τής εύσεβοϋς διδασκαλίας, δια τής προσοχής και χαλινώσεως του νοϋ από κακας και πονηρας σκέψεις, δια τής καλής συναναστροφής και δια τής μνήμης του θανάτου. (2) **Μόρφωσις τής καρδιάς**. Δια τής αναγνώσεως θρησκευτικών και ήθικων βιβλίων, δια τής ψαλμωδίας εκκλησιαστικών και σεμνοθητικοθρησκευτικών ασμάτων και ποιημάτων, και εν γένει φυλάττοντας τήν καρδιάν καθαρὰν από αισχροϋς λογισμούς, βοώντας ως ο Δαυιδ προς τον Θεον «*καρδιάν καθαρὰν κτίσον εν έμοι ο Θεός*» έχοντας υπ' όψιν τον Μακαρισμον «*Μακάριοι οί καθαροί τή καρδιάν*». (3) **Βούλησις άγαθή**. Δια τής άγαθής βουλήσεως (θελήσεως) να σκεπτώμεθα και εκτελώμεν παν άγαθον προς ωφέλειαν ήμων αυτών και του πλησίον. Μη αφήνοντες τον νοϋν ήμων να περιφέρηται εις μάταια και ψυχοβλαβή πράγματα.

**Μοναχός Σάββας Φιλοθείτης (+1970)**



## Τότε οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, Σήμερα οἱ Ἕλληνες... «Ἀπιστία νοσήσαντες, θεϊκῆς ἐξέπεσον χάριτος...»

Γράφει ὁ Ἡλιάδης Σάββας, δάσκαλος.

*«Νῦν εἰς σημεῖον τοῖς πᾶσιν, ἐμφανῶς αἰ  
γλῶσσαι γεγόνασιν Ἰουδαῖοι γάρ, ἐξ ὧν κατὰ  
σάρκα Χριστός, ἀπιστία νοσήσαντες, θεϊκῆς  
ἐξέπεσον χάριτος, καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ φωτὸς οἱ ἐξ  
ἐθνῶν ἠξιώθημεν, στηριχθέντες τοῖς λόγοις τῶν  
Μαθητῶν, φθεγγομένων τὴν δόξαν τοῦ εὐεργέτου  
τῶν ὄλων Θεοῦ, μεθ' ὧν τὰς καρδίας σὺν τοῖς γόνασι  
κλίναντες, ἐν πίστει προσκυνήσωμεν, τῷ ἁγίῳ  
Πνεύματι στηριχθέντες, Σωτῆρι τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.»*

[Ἰδιόμελο τῶν ἀποστίχων τοῦ Ἑσπερινοῦ  
τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος]

† † †

Τὴν ἡμέρα τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι δὲν θέλησαν νὰ δεχτοῦν «*πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*», ποὺ ἀποκαλύφθηκε διὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος στοὺς Ἀποστόλους, παρέμειναν στὴν ἀπιστία καὶ ἐξέπεσαν τῆς Θείας Χάριτος. Ἔτσι, ἀρρώστησαν βαρῶς ἀπὸ τὴν ἀσθένεια αὐτῆ. Διότι εἶναι βαρῶς ψυχοσωματικὴ ἀσθένεια ἡ ἀπιστία. Εἶναι ἀσθένεια ψυχοπαθολογική.

Ἀφορὰ ἄμεσα ἡ στάση αὐτῆ τῶν Ἰουδαίων καὶ ἐμᾶς, τοὺς Ἕλληνες Ὁρθόδοξους τοῦ εἰκοστοῦ πρώτου αἰώνα, καθὼς ἀπιστία δὲν εἶναι μόνον ἡ ἔχθρα πρὸς τὸ Χριστὸ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἀδιαφορία πρὸς τὸ πρόσωπό Του καὶ τὴ δυνατότητα σωτηρίας διὰ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Του. Καὶ αὐτὸ συμβαίνει κυρίως μὲ τοὺς Ἕλληνες σήμερα. Διότι παρόλο ποὺ γιὰ αἰῶνες πολλοὺς «*τοῦ θεοῦ φωτὸς οἱ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἠξιώθημεν, στηριχθέντες τοῖς λόγοις τῶν Μαθητῶν*», τώρα ἀκολουθοῦμε τὰ ἴχνη τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Βάλλεται καὶ προσβάλλεται ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ ἡ πίστη Του, ὑβρίζονται τὰ Θεῖα, καὶ ὁ Ἕλληνας, μὲ τὴ στάση του ὁμολογεῖ ὅτι δὲν συμβαίνει καὶ τίποτε τὸ τραγικόν. Μὲ τὴν ἀναδιάρταξη καὶ πλήρη ἀνατροπὴ τῶν ἀξιῶν, ὅλα αὐτὰ φαίνονται πῶς δὲν τὸν ἀγγίζουν.

Διὰ τῆς προσωπικῆς του ἐπιλογῆς, ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀρνεῖται τὴν συνέργεια τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ἀρνεῖται τὴν παρουσία τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴ ζωὴ του καὶ ἐμπιστεύεται τὸν ἑαυτό του. Ἔτσι, μένει μόνος μὲ τὰ πάθη του, μὲ τὸν ἐγωισμό καὶ τὴν ὑπερηφάνειά του, μὲ τὸν σκοτεινὸ πλεόν ἑαυτό του, προσβλέποντας στὰ γήινα καὶ πρόσκαιρα καὶ μένοντας σὲ παρὰ φύση κατάσταση.

Αὐτὴ ἡ «μοναξιά» ὁμως, δὲν εἶναι ἡ ἴδια μὲ τὴ μοναξιά ποὺ βιώνει μὲ τὴν ἀπουσία τῶν ἄλλων προσώπων. Πάσχει μοναξιά ὀντολογικοῦ περιεχομένου ὁ ἀπιστος, ποὺ πλήττει τὰ τριῖσθατα τῆς ὑπαρξῆς καὶ τὰ μετατρέπει σὲ κόλαση. Κι αὐτὴν τὴν κόλαση τὴν ἀποπνέει στὸ περιβάλλον ποὺ ζεῖ. Τὴν ἐκφράζει μὲ φόβο, μὲ ἄγχος, μὲ ἀγωνία, ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ μῖσος, μὲ ἐπιθετικότητα ἢ ἀκόμη καὶ μὲ ὑποκριτικὴ ἀγάπη, ζητώντας νὰ τὴν μοιραστεῖ μὲ

τοὺς ἄλλους, καθὼς σὰν φωτιὰ τοῦ καίει τὴν καρδιά. Γιὰ νὰ μὴν ὑποφέρει μόνος. Νὰ πάρει μαζί του ὅσους περισσότερους μπορεῖ

Αὐτὰ ἐνεργοῦν σήμερα οἱ ἀγαπολόγοι, οἱ εἰρηνολόγοι, οἱ ὑποκριτῆς τοῦ κρατούντος φρονήματος τῆς ἄρνησης. Εἶναι περισσότερο ἀκραῖοι καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς πλεόν ἀκραίους. Οἱ χειρότεροι δικτάτορες καὶ τύραννοι, ἀσχετῶς μὲ τὸ πῶς αὐτοαποκαλοῦνται καὶ αὐτοχαρακτηρίζονται. Ναί, διότι γίνονται θηρία, ὅταν ἀκοῦνε γιὰ πίστη καὶ Χριστό. Δὲν τὰ ἀνέχονται!

Θέλοντας λοιπὸν ὁ ἄπιστος ἄνθρωπος νὰ ἀναπληρώσει καὶ νὰ καλύψει τὴν ἀπουσία τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ καὶ Πατέρα, ἀναζητᾷ νὰ ἀκουμπήσει σὲ μύθους, σὲ παραμύθια γιὰ παρηγοριά. Στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ἀναφέρονται ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀποστόλους Παῦλο καὶ Πέτρο τριῶν εἰδῶν τέτοιοι μῦθοι: Οἱ γραῶδεις, οἱ βέβηλοι καὶ οἱ σεσοφισμένοι.

Στὴν Α' πρὸς Τιμόθεον ἐπιστολῇ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος γράφει: «*Τοὺς δὲ βεβήλους καὶ γραῶδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ, γύμναζε δὲ σεαυτὸν πρὸς εὐσέβειαν*». (Α' Τιμ. 4:7). Ὅταν ὁ ἄνθρωπος χάσει τὴν πίστη του, χάνει ἅμα καὶ τὴν εὐσέβειά του πρὸς τὰ ἅγια. Βρίθει ἢ ἐποχὴ μας ἀπὸ μύθους. Προσφέρονται μύρια ὅσα ἐλκυστικὰ παραμύθια, γιὰ νὰ «*πληρωθεῖ*» τὸ κενόν.

Πρῶτα τοὺς βέβηλους μύθους. Τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς καὶ βλάσφημους, τοὺς ὑποτιμητικούς καὶ ἀκάθαρτους, «*ὡς ἀναξίους ὑγιοῦς ἀκοῆς καὶ καθαρῶς ὄντας*» (Ζιγαβηνός). Τοὺς προσβλητικούς καὶ ὑβριστικούς γιὰ τὴν Πίστη καὶ τὰ Θεῖα. Αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἀπαξιῶνουν τὰ Μυστήρια τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, δείχνουν ἀσέβεια στὸ χῶρο τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ σὲ κάθε ἱερὸ χῶρο. Ἀπαξιῶνουν τὸν κλῆρο. Ἀλλοιώνουν τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Παράδοση, μὲ ἐπεισαγωγὴ ξένων καὶ ρυπαρῶν στοιχείων, «*ἀνάρμοστων*» στὴν ψυχοσύνθεση καὶ τὸ «*ἦθος*» τοῦ Ῥωμοῦ, προερχόμενων ἀπὸ τὸν «*πολιτισμένο κόσμον*».

Βέβηλοι μῦθοι εἶναι καὶ ἡ διοργάνωση ἀσεβῶν ἐκδηλώσεων, ποὺ προσβάλλουν τὴ σεμνότητα, τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὴν αἰδῶ. Τὰ «*αἰσχρὸν ἐστὶν καὶ λέγειν*» καλλιτεχνικὰ δημιουργήματα διαφόρων θεωρούμενων καλλιτεχνῶν ἀπὸ τὸν σημερινὸ ἐκπεσόντα ἄθεο κόσμον. Πολιτιστικὲς ἐκδηλώσεις εἰδωλολατρικῆς προέλευσης, καρνάβαλος, Santa Claus κ.λ.π. καὶ οἰουδήποτε ἄλλου, μὴ συνεργοῦντος στὴν εὐσέβεια.

Ἐπίσης τοὺς γραῶδεις μύθους. Ἱστορίες, θὰ λέγαμε, ποὺ ἔλεγαν κάποτε οἱ γριές, γιὰ νὰ τρομάξουν ἢ νὰ ἐντυπωσιάσουν τὰ μικρὰ παιδιά. Δεισιδαίμονες πράξεις καὶ δεισιδαίμονες ἱστορίες, χωρὶς ἔρεισμα πνευματικόν, χωρὶς βάση λογικὴ καὶ φυσικὰ χωρὶς πνευματικὸ περιεχόμενον, ὅπως τὰ αἰσχρὰ καὶ εὐτράπελα ἀνέκδοτα, ποὺ προσβάλλουν τὴ νοημοσύνη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τὸ φλιντζάνι, οἱ χαρτορίχτρες, οἱ ἀστρολόγοι καὶ οἱ κάθε εἶδους ἀγυρτίες. Λόγια



του άερα, που άποκοιμίζουν τη συνείδηση και την άποχαυνώνουν. «Γραυσί φιλομύθοις προσήκοντες» (Ζιγαβηνός). «Γραιδίων λεληρηκότων ρήματα» (Οικουμενιος). «Μύθους δια τας παραποιήσεις η δια τδ άκαιρον» (Χρυσόστομος). (Π. Τρεμπέλα, Ύπομνήματα εις την Καινήν Διαθήκην).

Δέν άφορούν αυτες οι συμβουλες του Άποστόλου μόνο στους παραληπτες της έπιστολής του αλλά και σε μās, όπως θα δοϋμε παρακάτω. Ο άπόστολος Πέτρος, αναφέρει και τους σεσοφισμένους μύθους, τα «ισχυρότερα όπλα της άπιστίας της εποχής μας». «Οϋ γάρ σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις έξακολουθήσαντες έγνωρίσαμεν υμίν την του Κυρίου ημών Ίησοϋ Χριστου δύναμιν και παρουσίαν, άλλ' έπόπται γενηθέντες της εκείνου μεγαλειότητος». (Β' Πέτρο. 1:16).

Σεσοφισμένοι είναι οι μύθοι που παρουσιάζονται με πονηρία, με τη μάσκα του έπιστημονισμού. Του προσανατολισμένου στις θεωρίες του υλισμου και της έξελίξεως, αλλά και λοιπών παρόμοιων αναφυόμενων κατά καιρους ψευδαλαζδώνων θεωριών.

Καθως η έπιστήμη σήμερα έχει προχωρήσει και έχει κάνει μεγάλα και έπιτυχή άλματα σε όλους τους τομείς, προήχθη σε θεότητα, προς αντικατάσταση του Θεου της αλήθειας. Με όπλο την άδυναμία και την όλιγοπιστία των ανθρώπων, αυτών που αναφέραμε στην αρχή, αυτών που έπέλεξαν αυτεξουσίως και αυτοπροαιρέτως την άποτίναξη του Θεου από τδ σβέρκο τους. Αυτών, που δεν είχαν οι ίδιοι έμπειρίες, αλλά δεν πίστεψαν και στις άγιοπνευματικές έμπειρίες των άγιων. Που δεν άγωνίστηκαν στον εύλογομένο στίβο της Παραδόσεως της Πίστεως, για την άπόκτηση του Άγιου Πνεύματος και δεν είχαν την ύπομονη και την έμπιστοσύνη στην άγάπη του Θεου, να παραμείνουν άγωνιζόμενοι. Έτσι άφησαν τις έλπίδες τους στις ύποσχέσεις της ματαιότητος.

Έξάλλου, ο άπόστολος Πέτρος τα λέει αυτά, διότι υπήρξε μάρτυρας άμεσης παρατήρησης και πείρας, καθότι βρέθηκε μαζί με τον Ίάκωβο και τον Ίωάννη στο όρος Θαβώρ και ειδη τη δόξα του Θεου «καθως ηδύνατο», δηλαδή, όσο άντεχε η ανθρώπινη φύση του. Δεν πίστεψε σ' ό,τι έλεγαν οι άπιστοι και οι αίρετικοί αλλά στην έμπειρία. Έρμηνεύει ο Ζιγαβηνός στο: «Κύριε, καλόν έστιν ημās ωδε είναι». (Ματθ. 17:4), τδ όποιο ειπε ο Πέτρος στο Χριστό κατά την Μεταμόρφωση: «Είπε (ο Πέτρος) καλόν είναι να συνεχίσουν να βρίσκονται σε εκείνο τδ όρος, ώστε αυτός και οι άλλοι που ηταν μαζί του να εύφραίνονται, θεωρουντες την Μεταμόρφωση του Ίησοϋ και τδ πρόσωπό του, που έλαμπε σαν τον ήλιο και τα λευκά σαν τδ φως ιμάτιά του και μαζί μ' αυτά να βλέπουν συνεχώς και τον Μωυση και τον Ηλία, οι όποιοι μία φορά μόνο φάνηκαν μέσα στη δόξα του Θεου.

Να εύφραίνονται δε άκόμη με όσα θα ακούσουν να συνομιλουν οι δύο τους με τον Ίησοϋ και ο Ίησοϋς με αυτους». Αυτή ηταν η έμπειρία του Άποστόλου. Πως να πιστέψει σε ότιδ ήποτε άλλο;

Στδ κυνήγι του εύδαμονισμού και της πρόσκαιρης άπόλαυσης της ήδονής, πρότυπα καθαρά άντορθόδοξα, άντιπαραδοσιακά και άντιευαγγελικά, ο Έλληνας, ο άπόγονος των ήρώων και των άγιων μαρτύρων, δε θέλησε να ανασύρει από την παράδοσή του όπλα άμυντικά και έπιθετικά, για να άντισταθει στο κακό, τδ όποιο εισορμούσε στη ζωή του παντοιοτρόπως επί δεκαετίες. Δεν είχε τα προσόντα αλλά και τους κατάλληλους οδηγούς, να άντισταθει στους δαμονικούς μύθους, τους βέβηλους, τους γραώδεις και τους σεσοφισμένους, που τον μάγεψαν και τον αίχμαλώτισαν.

Έτσι, μη διαθέτοντας άντιστάσεις πνευματικές, έμεινε στην πλειοψηφία του να παρακολουθει ένεος τα τεκταινόμενα από τους άσεβεις, άπλως παρατηρητής. Μετά τον πνευματικό θάνατο, όλα έπιτρέπονται. Όλα γίνονται άποδεκτά και εύκολοχώννευτα, κι ως είναι και σκουπίδια και κόπροι. Έτσι φτάσαμε στην κατάσταση των κατοίκων των Σοδόμων και των Γομόρων και χειρότερη.

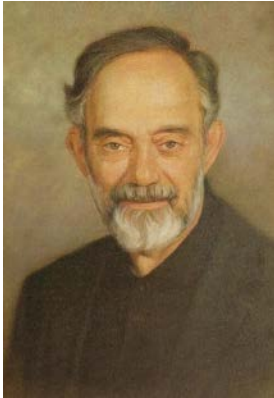
Νοσήσαμε στην άπιστία και εκπέσαμε της Θείας Χάριτος. Διαταράχτηκε όλη η ύπαρξή μας από τδ χωρισμό αυτό, με άποτέλεσμα την έκπτωση από τη Θεϊκή Χάρη και την βαριά ασθένεια της ψυχής και του σώματος. Τι βλέπουν σήμερα τα μάτια μας! Άλλά τι έχουν άκόμη να δοϋν! Τδ δε χειρότερο πάντων, πως δεν ύπάρχει διάθεση, έπιθυμία έπιστροφής. Δεν ύπάρχει τδ κατάλληλο συνειδός, για να αναγγείλει την έγερση και την κίνηση για θεραπεία, για μετάνοια. Διότι, άκόμη και μόνο με αυτήν, την μετάνοια, μπορούν να αλλάξουν άρδην τα πάντα και να ξεκινήσει η νέα αρχή. Και βέβαια μαζί με τα πνευματικά και τα ύπόλοιπα, που ταλανίζουν τη ζωή μας.



**Παρακαλούμε τους αναγνώστες μας να μη λησμονούν την παραβολή της έτήσιας συνδρομής προς κάλυψη των σχετικών έξόδων για την έκδοση του παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Έπίσης, όσοι έχουν την οικονομική εύχέρεια, ως συνδράμουν, αν θέλουν, στην ταπεινή προσπάθειά μας άποστέλλοντας κάτι περισσότερο από την έτήσια συνδρομή των 24 δολλαρίων προς ένίσχυση της άδελφότητος «Όσιος Ποιμήν».**

## THE CREATED, THE UNCREATED AND THE INCARNATION

By Protopresbyter John S. Romanides (+2001).



There is no similarity whatsoever between this 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.

When we Orthodox say that we know the energy of God, this does not imply that our knowledge of God's energy is like our knowledge of the energy of created things. For example, our knowledge of God's glory is not like the knowledge of nature's energies (nuclear energy, thermal energy, solar energy, kinetic energy, the force of gravity, and so forth) studied by biologists, physicists, astronomers, archaeologists, and others, 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? 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.

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 Church's Holy Fathers, however, do not observe this law of Aristotle if they are speaking about God. Although this law is invalid in Patristic theology, the heretics both accepted it and used it. Why is it that the Fathers do not observe Aristotle's law of contradiction, this axiom from

Aristotle's logic? Because 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. 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 ( $E=mc^2$ ), which shows that energy and mass are equivalent physical concepts, differing only by the choice of their units. 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. (It should be noted that Christ is the one bridge between the created and the uncreated.) This is why the Fathers went so far as to say, *presence of the vision of God*.



*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. (Vladimir Lossky, "The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church").*

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.*

*Thus, when we make affirmations and negations about things which are inferior to it, we affirm and deny nothing about the Cause itself, which, being wholly apart from all things is above all affirmation, as the supremacy of Him Who, being in His simplicity freed from all things and beyond everything is above all denial. Vladimir Lossky quoting St. Dionysios the Areopagite, in "The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church").*

This is so because 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 as St. Augustine mistakenly thought. 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. Augustine called

God "Love that loves itself" and used this subject-object relationship in order to construct a theology of the Holy Trinity. (Augustine, "On the Trinity"). But 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 of Russian descent 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. In fact, God is not even God as most, if not all, perceive. 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 communion 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 in no possible or conceivable way 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 exclusively 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.** This relationship did not exist before the Incarnation, because we did not have a relationship with God as we do with other people before the Incarnation.

Being uncreated, God is accordingly not a human being. That is, in His uncreatedness God neither is a human being nor resembles 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 there is an interchange of properties. [*Communicatio idiomatum* (Latin) or *apodosis idiomaton* (Greek) is the theological consequence of the union of the two natures in the Person of Christ. When the Word became flesh, the flesh also became Word. In the person of Christ, human nature remains human, but is penetrated by divine nature]. Thus, the very humanity of Christ is also 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.

To explain this in a literal manner, 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, i.e., 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. The Incarnation revealed that man had indeed been created in the image of Christ, his chronologically subsequent prototype, 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, not by grace.

When the Word became flesh, He became human by nature. The Word did not become human by grace. The Incarnation does not imply a mere adoption of human nature, 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.

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. Hence, John from Damascus celebrates the feast with the following words: *the flesh is simultaneously glorified by being brought from non-being into being, while the glory of the Divinity becomes the glory of the humanity, for both are one in Christ Who is consubstantial with the Father and of one nature with the*



*human race.*

It is not that He transfigured what He had not assumed or transformed, but what appeared to His familiar disciples was transfigured. What did the human nature of the Lord enjoy on account of this divine work? By communion, His human nature directly enjoyed the advantages and the magnificence of the divinity, so that His human nature became life-giving, all-powerful, all-knowing.

St. Nicodemos further explains: *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 pas-*

sions 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. (St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, "The Way of the Feasts.").

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.



All who have lived according to God still live unto God, although they have departed this life. For this reason, God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, since He is the God, not of the dead, but of the living.

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him.

We needed an Incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live. We were put to death together with Him, that we might be cleansed; we rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him; we were glorified with Him, because we rose again with Him.

It is better to choose a commendable war than peace which separates from God. The faith which I was taught by the Holy Fathers which I taught at all times without adjusting according to the times, this faith I will never stop teaching; I was born with it and I live by it.

As a fish cannot swim without water, and as a bird cannot fly without air, so a Christian cannot advance a single step without Christ.

St. Gregory the Theologian

## EDUCATION IN GOD

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos. A lecture to Athens University students in the Hall of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece on the 2nd Sunday of the Lent 1989 (9th of April 1989).

Education is a widely discussed issue in our days. The problem is that we have very much distorted views on this important subject. We hear various things that are at least unorthodox. By this we do not mean humanists, that is, those who have a humanist education based mostly on the intellect and rationality, but rather we mean those Christians who identify man-centered education with Christian education. The identification and equality of these two wisdoms, these two types of knowledge is a heretical position and has been denounced by all Holy Fathers.

The subject is very serious. In this article we intend to elaborate on the great subject of education in God. Before proceeding to a precise analysis of education in God, I think it is worthwhile to see the differences between the two educations, in accordance to the teaching of a great Father of the Church, St. Gregory Palamas. St. Gregory lived in the 14<sup>th</sup> century when there was a strong humanist trend out of which humanist renaissance was born. The 14<sup>th</sup> century has many common features with our own era, so the reference to the debate between St. Gregory and Barlaam is very constructive.

### The Two Types of Education

Barlaam, being a bearer of a humanistic spirit, taught that there exists one and single truth. In other words, truth is single and was given by God to mankind by the prophets and the philosophers. Naturally, St. Gregory refutes this position. After presenting his whole teaching which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, which we will quote below, he ends with a question: "How is the truth one?" More specifically, Barlaam argued that what happens in philosophy is similar to what happens in health. There is no difference between the health offered by God and the health offered by medical care, and the same holds true of wisdom. "God gave it to the prophets and the apostles, and He gave it to us through the words of the divine workers (*theourgoi*) and the lessons of philosophy, by which we seek and find wisdom."

Barlaam's teaching is revealed clearly in the question posed by Akindynos to St. Gregory Palamas. As is well known, Akindynos expresses Barlaam's view. He (Akindynos) says that he has heard some people saying that monks, too, should seek worldly wisdom, because one cannot be delivered from ignorance and false beliefs, nor attain perfect dispassion, nor achieve sanctity "unless he collects knowledge from everywhere, especially from Greek education." In other words, Barlaam argued that ancient Greek philosophy is God's gift given to philosophers by revelation, similar to the way it was given to the Apostles and the Prophets, and,



therefore, this education provides the knowledge of beings as well as the knowledge of God. So Barlaam and many others like him argued about the singleness of truth and this was done to the detriment of Revelation and in favor of philosophy. It was truly a great danger for the Orthodox Church.

St. Gregory Palamas detected the risk of the secularization of the Orthodox theology and this is why he addressed this falsehood. I do not intend to include all arguments and the whole teaching by St. Gregory. I will mention only the central points which will illustrate his differentiation from Barlaam the philosopher.

First of all, in his writings the saint had to make a distinction between the two wisdoms and the two types of knowledge. There can be no confusion between these two wisdoms. A strong support for this teaching, apart from his own personal experience, is derived from the experience and teaching of St. Paul. Our saint uses the words of the Apostle repeatedly: *For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.* (1 Cor 1:21).

He also uses another quote by the Apostle: *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* (1 Cor 2:4-8). He also refers to the passage by St. James the Lord's Brother who says on divine wisdom: *Such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* (Jas 3:15). He also mentions other passages from the Bible to show the difference between the two wisdoms and types of knowledge, but I am not going to cite them all. I think that what has been mentioned is sufficient to show that the teaching about the distinction of the two types of knowledge, the mental and the spiritual, is the Church's teaching and an experience of all saints.

Analyzing the apostolic passage from the epistle to the Corinthians we mentioned above, St. Gregory states that there is abyssal difference between the wisdom of the philosophers

and the wisdom of the Prophets and Apostles. He writes characteristically: *The mind of the worldly philosophers is God-given, having by nature intellectual wisdom, but has been diverted by the evil one's suggestions to foolish and wicked and senseless [wisdom], and transformed wisdom to dominating such ideas.* Like sensual pleasure for child-bearing in lawful marriages cannot be called God's gift, but rather of the flesh and of nature, even if nature was created by God, we can say the same about worldly knowledge. Even if man uses it well, it is *a natural not a spiritual gift.* If we add that there is a worldly education which is against God, then we can say that this wisdom is mental and demonic. This is why St. Gregory asks: *What is the relationship between a God-inspired teaching and vanity? And what does divine wisdom care about the truths of the stars?*

But very often humanistic wisdom is not simply different from divine wisdom. It is also opposite to it. Human wisdom is *contrary to the true and spiritual knowledge.* In fact, St. Gregory argues that all human heresies have sprung out of human wisdom, whose center is rationality and human thinking. *And if you examine, you will see that all or most of the heresies have their origin here.*



**St. Gregory Palamas (+1359)**

The saint's observation is remarkable. If we examine Church history carefully we will find out that all heretics originated from human thinking and a man-centered view of life. They always tried to explore and analyze the Church's truth through their reason. On the contrary, the Holy Fathers were based on the method of orthodox piety, which is the *purification* of the heart and the *illumination* of the *nous*. After these two stages of spiritual life, they attained the knowledge of God and theologized inspired by God and unerringly within the Church.

But St. Gregory Palamas does not limit himself to this general point. He goes deeper. He stresses that there is a huge difference between the Prophets-Apostles and the philosophers. If it is true that human wisdom and knowledge brings sanctity to man and guides him to the knowledge of God, then those who have this education would be "more God-like" and "more God-seers" than the Fathers and the Prophets during the times of the Law of Moses. He brings the example of John the Forerunner, who reached a very high level of grace, without ever studying human wisdom. As is well known, St. John the Forerunner lived in the desert since his early childhood. St. Gregory asks: *Where in the desert are the schools of this futile philosophy, which they call redeeming?* He stresses the difference between the principle



of the philosophers “know yourself” and the teaching of the saints *watch yourself*.

If one looks carefully at the philosophers’ command “know yourself,” he will realize that it contains a lot of false belief. It is closely related to the teaching of reincarnation. The philosophers teach that one can obtain perfect knowledge if he examines thoroughly himself and find out where he lived in the past, in what body he was attached, what he did and how he was called. Naturally, by doing this search to himself, in reality he becomes the devil’s obedient instrument who whispers various interpretations to him. For this reason, according to St. Gregory Palamas, there is no relationship and no similarity whatsoever between the saints and the philosophers, nor, of course, between the teaching of the Apostles-Prophets and the teaching of the philosophers. If it seems that there is agreement in certain words and terms, it is an agreement only on external words, while in the depth there is a difference. He writes: *If a Father happens to say the same things as those in the world, the similarity is only in the words; in the meanings there is a lot of distance; because the first have, according to Paul, the mind of Christ, while the second speak out of human intellect, if not something worse*. The Holy Fathers have the mind of Christ, while the philosophers and the worldly wise men speak out of their own thinking and sometimes are instruments of the devil.

This position is not an exclusive teaching of St. Gregory Palamas. It is the teaching of the Church, which is expressed by her genuine children, namely the Holy Fathers. The saint cites passages from the teaching of St. Basil the Great who, speaking on hesychasm as a basic requirement for the acquisition of the knowledge of God, writes: *This is the good and beneficial school for someone devoted to learning; while the school of the Athenians is wicked, for they do nothing but saying and hearing what is new, even though now there are some who imitate the way of life, being a friend of evil spirits*. St. Basil the Great also presents part of St. Basil’s letter to Eustathios, where it is clearly shown that St. Basil regretted for his occupation with human education: *I have wasted a lot of time in useless things and ruined almost all my youth in futility, by spending time in attending lessons of a wisdom made fool by God, and then, like waking up from a deep sleep, I realized the uselessness of the wisdom of the rulers of an age which will be abolished, and I cried a lot for my wretched life, wishing to find some guidance*. In addition to St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Palamas cites a passage by St. Gregory of Nyssa on philosophy. According to this passage, philosophy is *barren and fruitless, giving product to no one, nor leading to the light of the knowledge of God, while the wisdom of the Spirit is most fertile and gives birth to many children*, has given rebirth to thousands of people right away and led them from dreadful darkness to the marvelous light of God.

St. Gregory Palamas defines also the true philosopher. A true philosopher is *he who seeks and does the will of God, he who has active word and wise act*. This passage reminds us the truth that when Patristic texts mention that a Christian is a true philosopher they do not mean one who possesses worldly wisdom and education, who has an advanced intellect, but rather one who has the Grace of God in him. I point this out because, based on such patristic passages, there are some who claim that the Fathers of the Church were philosophers and cultivated philosophy. But as we have seen before, there is a great difference between theologians and philosophers.

There is also a great difference between worldly education and education in God. St. Gregory teaches that education in God starts with the fear of God, which then brings continuous prayer to God in compunction and the keeping of the gospel commandments. When through these ways man experiences reconciliation with God, fear is transformed to love and the pain of prayer is converted to joy, and then the flower of *illumination* blossoms, and by *illumination* man is offered the knowledge of the mysteries of God. This is true education.

On the other hand, an education which starts not from fear of God, as is done with worldly education and wisdom, does not lead to the knowledge of God. Therefore, education in God is offered to a man whose soul is imbued with the fear of God, compunction, unceasing prayer. He who follows and studies this wisdom reaches the knowledge of the mysteries of God, that is, salvation.

Since I would not like to remain on a theoretical level, in what follows I will analyze in more detail the progression of the education in God. It will be shown that education in God is something specific. Only those who follow this course can become true theologians and, therefore, move from the image to the likeness, that is, to deification. It will be shown that human education is intellectual, rational, while education in God is of the heart. Therefore, there exists an abyssal difference between the two.

### Education in God

Education in God consists of the coming and hiding of the Grace, of all the knowledge about God and the eternal life offered to man who receives these comings and hidings of uncreated Grace. This education in God is a mystery, because everything acted within the Church is a mystery. We are based very much on the teaching of Holy Fathers, who are *initiated by experience* and have received God’s revelation about these realities.

There are several passages about education in God in the Old and the New Testament. We do not intend to cite them extensively. We may refer only to St. Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews. By way of introduction we may state that Christians who originated from the Jews, to whom St. Paul

addresses his epistle, received Christ's Grace and right after that were persecuted by their compatriots. They were a little shaken, so the Apostle writes this epistle stressing some truths including that persecution and, generally, temptation is inextricably linked to the children of God. The whole twelfth Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is devoted to this mystery of education.

But this temptation was not only external. It was internal, too. The first Christians faced the problem of the lifting of God's Grace from their heart and could not comprehend this abandonment by God. They were completely unable to interpret this phenomenon of spiritual life, that is, the participation in the Cross of Christ. St. Paul aims at this objective. We may say, according to the testimony of our saints, that the Apostle mostly refers to this kind of education. Because God works in a way incomprehensible to human reason.

In the works of the Holy Fathers, spiritual life is presented as having several stages. They mostly distinguish three, the *purification* of the heart, the *illumination* of the nous and *deification*. St. Maximos calls them *practical philosophy, natural theoria and mystical theology*. This distinction originates with Aristotle and continues to the Holy Fathers with a different content, though. Professor Panagiotis Christou elaborating on the "method of religious experience" describes the distinction of the three phases in religious life. Aristotle divides the phases of religious life in ethical, natural and theological. "Origen in his beloved metaphorical method says that a Christian acquires Christ through the practical one as a host, through the natural one as a King, and through theology as God."

The steps of spiritual life are three, according to Christ's saying *I am the way (ethical) and the truth (natural) and the life (theology)*" (Jn 14:6). Evagrius defines Christianity as *doctrine of our Savior Jesus Christ constituted of practical and natural and theological*. The same distinction is observed in St. Diadochos of Fotiki, in St. Symeon the New Theologian (who divided his chapters in *practical, gnostic, theological*) and even in St. Gregory Palamas who used the same distinction in his chapters (ethical, natural, theological).

However, when studying the works of the Holy Fathers, especially the so-called neptic ones, we encounter another gradation of spiritual life. This gradation is deeper without abolishing the former stages of spiritual life. Because, according to the experience of many Holy Fathers, the transition from one stage to another is achieved by the working of the Grace of God and the pain from the deprivation of Grace until its new coming. So, according to this, we can distinguish three stages in spiritual life: the coming of Grace, the hiding of Grace from man, and its new coming to man's heart.

St. Makarios the Egyptian refers to this fact in his spiritual sermons. He writes: *He who hears a word reaches compunc-*

*tion and, after this, grace is lowered by divine providence to man's benefit, and he enters war exercises and education, and struggles and competes against Satan, and after a long road and struggle he is awarded victory and becomes a Christian.*

This is a remarkable observation. It manifests what was said before, namely that education is the fight during the lifting of Grace, and also shows clearly that the stages of spiritual life are identified with the coming, the lowering, and the new coming of the Grace of God. Indeed, he remarks characteristically that a person becomes a Christian not with the compunction caused by the coming of Grace, but rather with the struggle that will follow. Then he acquires the experience and knowledge of God, as will be expressed below.

St. Siluan the Athonite expresses the same experience: *The Elder had an empirical knowledge of spiritual progression. He showed three essential stages of it: first, the receiving of grace; second, its lifting and, third, its re-acquisition by a struggle of humility. There have been many who received the grace, not only within the Church but outside it too—because there is no favoritism in the Lord—but there is no one who has kept the first grace and only a few have re-acquired it. Someone who ignores the period of the second coming, someone who has not passed through the struggle for its return, essentially has an incomplete spiritual experience.*

*Elder Siluan was rich through his personal experience and also well trained theoretically in the ascetic writings of the Fathers of the Church; by God's gift he was not only faithful to the tradition of the Church but also the experience of the great Fathers was repeated in him.*



**B**efore the transgression, Adam shared in divine illumination and brilliance. He was clothed in the true robe of glory and was not naked, nor was he ugly in his nakedness, but was truly unspeakably better adorned than those who wear diadems embellished with much gold and precious stones. When our human nature was stripped of this divine illumination and radiance as a result of the ugly transgression, the Word of God had mercy on this nature and in His compassion took it upon Himself.

On Mount Tabor He showed it clothed once more to His chosen disciples, proving to all what we had once been, and what those of us who believed in Him and attained to perfection in Him would be through Him in the age to come. You will find that the earnest of this perfection of those who live according to Christ is openly given here and now to God's saints. They reap, so to speak, the good of the age to come.

**St. Gregory Palamas**



## THE ATHEIST STUDENT THAT VISITED THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

By Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki.

Several years ago I was approached by a young student. With great reluctance, but with the intensity of a demanding seeker, he said he was an atheist, yet would love to believe, but could not. For years he tried and searched, but to no avail.

He spoke with professors and the educated, but his thirst for something serious was not satisfied. He heard of me and decided to share with me his existential need. He asked me for scientific proof for the existence of God.

“Do you know integrals or differential equations?” I asked.

“Unfortunately no,” he replied. “I am a philosopher.”

“Too bad! Because I knew one such proof,” I said, obviously joking.

He felt uncomfortable and was quiet for a bit.

“Look,” I said, “I’m sorry I hurt you a bit. But God is not an equation or a mathematical proof. If it were so, then all the educated would believe in Him. You should know, there are other ways to approach God. Have you ever been to Mount Athos? Have you ever met an ascetic?”

“No, Father, but I’m thinking of going, having heard so much. If you tell me, I can go even tomorrow. Do you know anyone educated to go and meet with?”

“What do you prefer? Someone educated that can make you dizzy, or a saint who can wake you up?”

“I prefer the educated. I fear saints.”

“Faith is a matter of the heart. Why don’t you try a saint. What is your name?” I asked.

“Gabriel,” he answered.

I sent him to an ascetic. I described for him the way to access him and gave him the necessary instructions. I even sketched for him a map.

“You will go,” I said, “and ask him the same thing. I am an atheist, you will tell him, and I want to believe. I want a proof of the existence of God.”

“I am afraid, embarrassed,” he told me.

“Why are you embarrassed and afraid of the saint but not embarrassed and afraid of me?” I asked.

After a few days he went and found the ascetic conversing with a young man in his yard. On the opposite side four others were sitting on some logs waiting. Among them Gabriel found a tentative seat. No more than ten minutes later the Elder finished his conversation with the young man.

“How’s it going, guys?” he asked. “Have you taken a loukoumaki? Did you drink some water?”

“We thank you, Elder,” they replied, with conventional secular nobility.

“Come here,” he said addressing Gabriel, distinguishing him from the others. “I will take the water, and you take

the box with loukoumia, and come closer so I can tell you a secret: It is fine for someone to be an atheist, but to have the name of an angel and be an atheist? This is the first time I have seen such a thing.”

Our friend nearly suffered a heart attack after this revealing surprise. How did he know his name? Who revealed to him his problem? What, finally, did the Elder want to tell him?

“Father, can I speak with you for a bit?” he asked, barely able to mumble.

“Look, now it is getting dark. Take the loukoumi, drink some water, and go to the most nearby monastery to spend the night.”

“My Father, I want to speak with you, is it not possible?”

“What will we say, my lad? For what reason did you come?”

“To this question I felt my breathing open immediately,” he told me. “My heart was flooded with faith. My inside world was heated. My doubts were solved without any logical argument, without any discussion, without the existence of a clear answer. All the ‘if’s, why’s and but’s’ were automatically destroyed, and all that remained was ‘how’ and ‘what from this time forward’.”

What the educated could not give his thoughts, was given to him with the gentle hint of a saint, who was a graduate of only the fourth grade of elementary school. The saints have much discernment. They make a surgery on you, and you feel no pain. They do a transplant without opening your stomach. They raise you to inaccessible peaks without ladders or worldly logic. They plant faith in your heart, without tiring your mind...



If on hearing about the kingdom of heaven we are brought to tears, do not let us be content with these tears, or think that we hear well with our ears or see well with our eyes, and that we need nothing further. For there are other ears, other eyes, other tears, just as there is another mind and another soul. I am referring to the divine and heavenly Spirit, that hears and weeps, prays and knows, and that carries out God’s will. When the Lord promised the great gift of the Spirit to the apostles, He said: *I still have much to tell you, but its burden is more than you can bear now. When, however, He Who is the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.* (Jn 16:12-13). He, therefore, will pray, and He will weep. For, as St. Paul says, *we do not know what to pray for as we should; but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with cries that cannot be uttered.* (Rom 8:26).

St. Makarios of Egypt

## ON THE PASSIONS OF AVARICE, ANGER, SORROW AND SLOTH

By Blessed Nil Sorsky (+1508).

### Avarice

The passion for the acquisition of wealth, said the Fathers, is not part of human nature and is due to a lack of faith and people's sick way of thinking. This is why it requires no small effort to combat this passion, if, with the necessary vigilance over ourselves, we wish to achieve real salvation and the fear of God in our lives. If this passion takes root in us it becomes the most tyrannical of all. And if we become subject to its encouragement and habits, then we have lost everything, because St. Paul says: *For the love of money is the root of all evil.* (1 Tim 6:10), that is of anger, sorrow and everything else.

Indeed, the Fathers also called it idolatry, because, through avarice, many people have fallen away, not only from the Christian life, but have been damaged in body and soul, as Holy Scripture tells us. And the Fathers tell us that people who hoard gold and silver and trust in themselves, do not believe in God, Who is actually looking after them.

So let us guard ourselves against this passion, which brings the soul to perdition and destruction, and let us pray to God to expel far from us this evil spirit of avarice. And may we guard against not only gold and silver, but against every external and necessary object, since these lead to greed, when we ask for more than we need. Such as, for example, the acquisition of lots of clothes, shoes, residences, gadgets and so on. Everything we need for our lives should not be luxurious and expensive, because then we fall into worldly habits. The real rejection of avarice, of ownership of lots of things and the desire for them is not that we should not have any possessions at all, but that we should not attach ourselves to the transient and vain things of this present life. Emancipation from the things of this world assists us in the purification of our souls.

### Anger

If we are troubled by anger and it urges us to consider an injury and to return with interest the damage that someone has inflicted on us, then we should think upon the words of the Lord, Who said: *But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Mt 6:15). It follows, therefore, that people who want their sins to be forgiven are obliged first and foremost to forgive others

with all their heart. Because this is how God has taught us to seek forgiveness for our own transgressions. And if we do not forgive, it is obvious that our sins will not be forgiven. It is in this sense that we should understand the saying of the Fathers that the prayer of angry people is not accepted, even if such people have the power to raise the dead.

The Fathers said this not to indicate that irate people cannot raise the dead, but to show the extent to which their prayer is repulsive to God. This is why we should never become angry, nor do any harm to our fellow human beings, not only with words and deeds, but even by changing the way we look at them. Because we can disdain others merely by a look, according to the Fathers. The perfect victory over thoughts of anger is to pray for the person who has provoked them, as Abba Dorotheos advises when he says: *God, help my brother, and through his prayers have mercy upon me, sinner that I am. Because to pray for other people means love and affection, and to ask for their prayers means humility.* We should even do them good, as far as we can,



because then we will be carrying out the commandment of God that says: *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* (Mt 5:44).

To those who live by this, the Lord has promised not only the Kingdom of Heaven, some sort of rest or a gift such as those we have in the present, but the very inheritance of adoption, because He says: *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.* (Mt 5:45). And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who instituted this commandment and promised this great recompense, carried out everything He taught, giving us Himself as an example, so that we might imitate Him, insofar as we can. How many punishments did He endure from the Jews for us sinners, and not only did He refrain from anger, but prayed for them to His heavenly Father saying: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* (Lk 23:34). In the same way, all the saints walked this path and acquired divine grace, returning good to their persecutors instead of evil. They also prayed for them and covered the sins they saw them committing and taught them with sincerity and affection.

### Sorrow

We have a great struggle to wage against the evil spirit of sorrow, which brings the soul into despair and perdition. If the sorrow is occasioned by other people, we have to suffer it with joy, and pray for those who have saddened



us, as I said before, bearing in mind that whatever befalls us does so with God's sanction. Whatever the Lord sends us, He does only for the benefit and salvation of our soul. It may be that, in the beginning, it does not seem to bring us any benefit, but later we will realize that what God has allowed us to go through has been better for us than what we ourselves would have wanted to happen.

So we should not think in human terms, but should believe with certainty that the un-sleeping eye of God sees all things and that nothing happens without His will. It is from the wealth of His mercy that these situations and temptations happen to us, so that we can earn our heavenly reward through our patience. Because without temptations, no one has ever been crowned. This is why we should offer glory to God for everything, because He is our Dispenser and Saviour, as Saint Isaac the Syrian says: *The mouth that glorifies God is acceptable to God, and grace dwells in the heart which thanks God from its depths.*

Besides, we should avoid complaints and judgments against those who have saddened us and should pray for them, as the same saint says: *God puts up with all the weaknesses that people have, but those who continually censure other people will not go without correction. Though we must have the soul-saving sorrow over the sins we commit, with hope in our repentance to God and in the knowledge that there is no sin which defeats God's love for us, since He forgives everyone who repents sincerely and prays to Him.*

This sorrow is linked to joy (joyful sadness) and kindles in people the desire for everything spiritual and gives them patience in their trials. *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death,* says St. Paul (2 Cor 7:10). So we should seek godly sorrow, because it brings internal repose, whereas the grief that proceeds from Satan should be expelled from our hearts, together with all the other passions, through prayer, the study of sacred texts and the receiving of Holy Communion. Grief which is not from God and for the love of God is the cause of all evils, and, unless we free ourselves from it, despair will overcome us and our soul will be devoid of grace, overwhelmed with sloth and will not even want to pray or read our sacred books.

### Sloth

If sloth is the passion that has a greater hold on us than the others, we face a stern struggle. This evil spirit is terrible.

It is closely related to the spirit of sorrow and particularly defeats those who are living alone. When the enormous waves of thoughts and passions rise up against the soul, people feel at that moment that they will never be redeemed from them. The spiritual enemy visits upon them all sorts of thoughts and reflections such as that, if things are like this today, they are only going to get worse tomorrow and the day after.

So the thought buzzes around their head that God has abandoned them, that this is happening because God is not looking after them, that this has happened only to them and never to anyone else. But things really are not like this at all. Because it is not only to us that these things occur, but also to His saints, who, throughout the centuries have pleased God and have recognized that

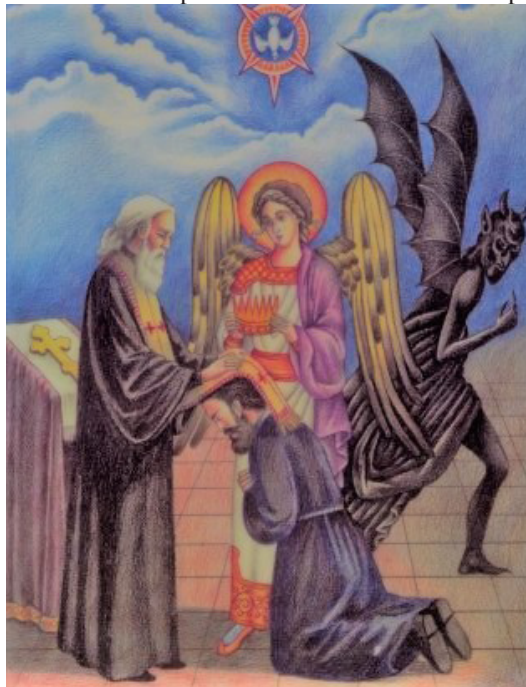
He is a loving God and Father and that He chastises us with His spiritual rod out of love and so that we will acquire virtues. But after that, there quickly comes an alteration, a restoration of the soul and the mercy of God.

At the most difficult moment, people have the impression that they cannot overcome the pandemonium of their thoughts and passions. All the virtues seem unattainable and hateful, because of the machinations of Satan, but then comes a divine change. Everything seems pleasant and the grievous situations are nothing compared to the peace and blessedness of the visitation of divine grace. Besides, they become more open to the virtues, they are

astonished by this spiritual adjustment and take the decision not to deviate from the path of the virtues under any circumstances. People also realize that, in His great mercy, God has disposed these things for their benefit and testing.

Thus it is that they feel surrounded by the love of God, that He is always close to faithful Christians and will never allow them to be tried beyond their bent, because without God's permission, the spiritual enemy cannot do us any harm whatsoever. It is not up to the will of our soul whether we are tempted a little or a great deal; it is God's will and His decision.

With these experiences, striving Christians become wise through temptations and, when they see these alternations of grace in their soul, persevere resolutely in their various trials. With these, a monk expresses his love for God, when he bears them and gradually makes spiritual progress. Because, as John of the Ladder says, *nothing brings the monk so many*



*crowns as the struggle against sloth, provided it is undertaken without any loss of time.*

During the period of relentless warfare, we must arm ourselves against the spirit of ingratitude and blasphemy, because it is with those weapons that the enemy attacks us at that moment. Satan defeats people with doubt and fear and directs wicked thoughts at them like arrows: that God will not have mercy on them; that they will never be forgiven; never be redeemed and saved from the tortures of eternal perdition. Indeed, they are also under fire from other thoughts which I cannot write about, and are not able to work or read because the temptation will not allow them. This is why, at moments like this, we should forcefully cast despair away from us, and should not be indifferent to our prayer life.

We should fall down in prayer, with our faces to the ground, because this attitude of the body is very beneficial in assisting us to pray, as St. Barsanuphius the Great says: *Lord, help me, sinner that I am. Lord, behold my grief and have mercy on me.* As we are taught by St. Symeon the New Theologian: *Lord do not allow me to be tempted beyond my strength. Not with grief nor with pain of the soul. But redeem me and give me strength so that I can withstand everything with gratitude.* Or, as we raise our eyes and hands to heaven, let us pray over these passions, sloth and immorality, as the blessed Gregory the Sinaite teaches us, because he considered them to be the worst of all. In this way we shall strive to force ourselves, insofar as we can, to read and to do our handiwork, both of which are of great assistance in the time of warfare. It sometimes happens that Christians engaged in the struggle do not allow even a single passion to get near their soul. Then there is a great need and opportunity to devote themselves entirely to prayer, with all the strength they have.

In order to defeat the spirit of ingratitude and blasphemy we say: **Get behind me, Satan. I worship my Lord and God and I serve Him alone. I accept all pain and sorrows gratefully, because they are sent from Him, in order to relieve me of my sins. The Prophet Micah says: *I will bear the wrath of the Lord, for I have sinned against Him.* But ingratitude and blasphemy will come back to haunt you, as you will find out soon enough. So get away from me. May the God Who made me in His image and likeness destroy you.**

If he continues to bother you, even after those words, busy yourself with something external, material or spiritual work, that will strengthen your patience and hope, because that is what your soul has to cling onto, if it wants to please God, as St. Makarios says. But you need to be careful in your choice of outside work, because the devil often uses it to entrap us in his snares, to bring us into sloth and to distance our soul from hope in God.

God never allows a soul that hopes in Him to be tested beyond its powers, since He knows what we are capable of achieving. People know what a mule or a donkey or a camel can carry and so they load each one accordingly. A potter is in something of a similar position: he knows the temperature at which to fire each of his clay vessels, because too fierce a heat would shatter them; equally, he knows not to take them out of the oven too quickly, because that would render them useless. If people have this much awareness, how much greater and immeasurable is the wisdom of God, Who knows exactly what temptations and how much of each every soul needs to overcome in order to be made worthy of the Kingdom of God. Not only will we be worthy of enjoying the good things to come, but here, too, we will receive the comfort of the Most Holy Spirit.

When we know all of this well, we can be steadfast with courage and silence in our cell. Though sometimes people benefit more from conversation with others, as St. Basil says: *Often, when we are slothful, a blameless visit to our fellow brethren, at an appropriate time, and conversation with them can, up to a point, dispel the passion of sloth.* And so, people who strive, if they are gradually strengthened by divine grace, and their personal experience, devote themselves with even more desire to the good fight for the virtues. But the Holy Fathers, who know this from their personal struggle, say that patience in quietude is more beneficial.



Let everybody know this. He shall be assigned to the place and to the service to which he gave and devoted himself in this life and he can be sure that in eternity he will have as his lot the service and the companionship which he preferred in this life.

Saint John Cassian, “*Conferences*”

God showed Saint Peter the Apostle that he should not consider anyone as common or unclean. Since his heart was sanctified, everyone has been sanctified. For the person whose heart lies in the passions, however, no one has been sanctified, but rather that person considers everyone as in accordance with the passions in his own heart. Even if someone were to say that such and such is a good person, he would immediately become angry in his heart. Therefore, guard yourselves against blaming anyone either by word or in your heart.

Abba Isaias of Scetis, “*Ascetical Discourses*”



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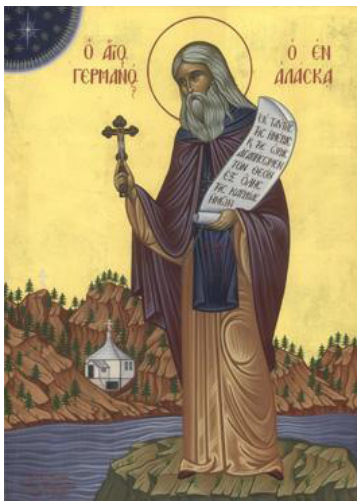


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## LOVE OF GOD

From "Life of Monk Herman of Valaam" by Yanovsky, 1868.



Once the Elder (St. Herman of Alaska) was invited on board a frigate that had come from St. Petersburg. The captain of the frigate was a man quite learned, highly educated; he had been sent to America by Imperial command to inspect all the colonies. With the captain were some 25 officers, likewise educated men.

In this company there sat a desert-dwelling monk of small stature, in an old garment, who by his wise conversation brought all his

listeners to such a state that they did not know how to answer him. The captain himself related: "We were speechless fools before him!"

Father Herman gave them all one common question: "What do you, gentlemen, love above all, and what would each of you wish for his happiness?" Diverse answers followed. One desired wealth, one glory, one a beautiful wife, one a fine ship which he should command, and so on in this fashion.

"Is it not true," said Father Herman at this, "that all your various desires can be reduced to one—that each of you desires that

which, in his understanding, he considers best and most worthy of love?" "Yes, it is so," they all replied. "Well, then, tell me," he continued, "can there be anything better, higher above everything, more surpassing everything and in general more worthy of love, than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who created us, perfectly adorned us, gave life to all, supports all, nourishes and loves all, who Himself is love and more excellent than all men? Should not a person then love God high above all and desire and seek Him more than all else?" All began to say: "Well, yes! That is understood! That speaks for itself!"

"And do you love God?" The Elder then asked. All replied: "Of course, we love God. How can one not love God?" "And I, sinful one, for more than forty years have been striving to love God, and cannot say that I perfectly love Him," answered Father Herman; then he began to show how a person should love God.

"If we love someone," he said, "we always think of him, strive to please him, day and night our heart is occupied with this subject. Is it thus that you, gentlemen, love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always think of Him, do you always pray to Him, and fulfill His holy commandments?" It had to be acknowledged that they did not! "For our good, for our happiness," concluded the Elder, "at least let us make a promise to ourselves, that from this day, from this hour, from this very moment we shall strive to love God above all, and fulfill His holy will!" Behold what an intelligent, superb conversation Father Herman conducted in society; without doubt this conversation must have imprinted itself on the hearts of his listeners for their whole life!