

Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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ON THE ANTICHRIST AND CHRISMATION

By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos of Nafpaktos and Agios Vlasios, from "Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβασις" Nafpaktos, no. 122 (June 2006), pp. 1 and 8; "Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος," no. 1654 (4 August 2006), pp. 3 and 4.

Hence, the shepherds of the Church must not speak only about the Antichrist and his forerunners, but first and foremost they must help Christians to live in such a way that the Grace of Baptism and Chrismation is activated, by the keeping of Christ's commandments and doctrines, by experiencing these in one's life in an Orthodox manner, by repentance, and by inner noetic prayer of the heart; for in this way they will be able to distinguish between the energies of Christ and the energies of the Antichrist.

[Metr. Hierotheos Vlachos]

† † †

From time to time, we hear talk about the coming of the Antichrist and what he will bring about among people and in the world. Indeed, there are those who would even determine the specific time period in which he would appear. Many people ask us about this subject, but the answers are to be found in Holy Scriptures, and especially in the Epistles of St. John the Evangelist, the Apostle Paul, and the Revelation of St. John, and in all of the pastoral practice of the Church.

In what follows, I would simply like to make some suggestions, primarily on how one is to deal with this situation.

† † †

1. In his First Catholic Epistle, St. John the Evangelist speaks about the coming of the Antichrist, and also about the activity of antichrists; indeed, he writes to the Christians that the hour is at hand.

In particular, he writes: *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* (1 Jn 2:18).

According to the interpretation of St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, who uses texts by ecclesiastical writers, apart from the Antichrist, who will appear towards the end of the world and near the Second Coming of Christ, there are also many antichrists who are already implementing the work of the Antichrist, both in his age and in every age, and who are forerunners and heralds of the one who is intrinsically, primarily, and truly called the Antichrist.

Just as there were prophets before the coming of Christ, so also, before the coming of the Antichrist, his own forerunners, the false prophets, will appear. Thus, according to the interpretation of many, antichrists are called *the impious heresiarchs*, who uphold and defend *the profane doctrines of the Antichrist*.

This is the reason why St. John the Evangelist, in the following verse, writes: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us* (1 Jn 2:19). These were those Christians who had learned revealed truth and the angelic way of life, but, since they were enslaved to sensual pleasures, were unable to comprehend *the majesty of the heavenly good things, the beauty of the noetic world, and the bliss and truly ineffable joy of the ages to come*, according to St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite. They therefore returned to the life of apostasy, and did not desire to become true devotees of the pure life in Christ.

Consequently, before the coming of the Antichrist, the forerunners of the Antichrist manifest themselves: that is,

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the various heretics, but also those Christians who, instead of living the life in Christ with purity of heart and true faith of mind, live with passions and weaknesses, without inner prayer or true faith in God.

2. St. John the Evangelist, however, does not confine himself to speaking about the Antichrist and his forerunners, but also speaks about how we must deal with the Antichrist and his forerunners. This is why, immediately following the previous lines, he writes: *But ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* (1 Jn 2:20). In other words, Christians have received *anointing* from God and know how to distinguish between the energies of the Antichrist and antichrists and the energies of Christ. This does not come about by the reading of books, but by the *anointing* that exists in the heart and that teaches.

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, once again explaining what this *anointing* is, writes: *that is, you have received the Grace and energy of the Holy Spirit in your hearts from the Master Christ, the Holy of Holies.* And further on, referring to how one receives the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit, he writes: *Christians receive the Grace and energy of the Holy Spirit through Holy Baptism, and indeed through the anointing of the Holy Myrrh, and perhaps this is why the Grace of the Holy Spirit is called anointing and sealing, having the same name as the anointing and sealing of the Holy Myrrh; wherefore when the priest anoints Christians with it, he concludes with these words: "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

The *anointing* of the Holy Spirit is the seal of the Holy Spirit that takes place during the Mystery of Chrismation through the Holy Myrrh, on the day of our baptism.

In what follows, in the same chapter, St. John the Evangelist once again states that the holy *anointing* received by the

Christian at Holy Baptism teaches him to distinguish between truth and falsehood. He writes: *But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.* (1 Jn 2:27).

According to the interpretation of St. Nikodemos, who uses texts by the Fathers and writers of the Church, the *anointing* that man has received is the Grace of the Holy Spirit, which abides in the hearts of Christians, and according to the words of St. John the Evangelist, Christians are exhorted *to abide unchanging and unalterable forever in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love and faith.* And, as is his wont, St. Nikodemos writes: *how and in what manner does man remain unchanging with regard to the gift of the Holy Spirit? This happens when man abides steadfastly in the doctrines of Theology and of the Incarnate Economy, not just rationally, but also existentially.*

Thus, whoever speaks about the Antichrist and his forerunners should make reference to all of the passages in St. John the Evangelist, and should specify primarily what St. John says about the manner in which we must confront the Antichrist and his forerunners. Christians distinguish true prophets from false prophets and Christ from the Antichrist only by the activation of Chrismation, which they have received from God and which works in their hearts.

3. The Apostle Paul, also, speaks about the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit, which is also called a seal. To be precise, in his [Second] Epistle to the Corinthians, he writes: *Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.* (2 Cor 1:21-22).

It is most clearly apparent, here, that God is the One Who gives confirmation to Christians. He is the One that anoints us. Anointing is identified with sealing, and this is done by God, Who gives us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

If one examines other similar passages from the Apostle Paul to discover the meaning of the earnest of the Spirit and what it means for one to sing hymns and spiritual songs in his heart, then he will understand that this *anointing* and seal is noetic prayer of the heart, which is an expression of the love that man feels for God.

The Name of Christ has been written on the person that has received the seal of the Holy Spirit. St. John the Evangelist mentions this subject in his Revelation. *And I saw another Angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, 'Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.'* And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. (Rev 7:2-4).

It is unambiguous, here, that the Angel who had *the seal of the living God* sealed the servants of God on their foreheads. A similar passage is found in another chapter of Revelation: *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with Him a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.* (Rev 14:1). In other words, the saved, who stood with the Lamb—Christ—had the Name of Christ and His Father written on their foreheads. And as the text then says, they sang a *new song* before the throne of God, the content of which they alone knew.

Thus, the sealing of Christians with the Name of Christ and His Father is bound up with the *new song*; that is, noetic prayer, which is unknown to people who have no experience of this condition.

4. All of this means that, with the Mystery of Holy Chrismation, which is bound up with the Mystery of Holy Baptism, we received the gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, through the sealing of the parts of our body, when the Priest said: *the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

This *anointing* in the heart acts as illumination of the mind: as inspiration, as love for God, as prayer, as hope in eternal life, and as the earnest of the Spirit.

The confession of the Martyrs and the martyrdom that follows is the activation of Holy Chrismation, by means of which the Martyr beholds God; this is why the martyrdom of the Saints is not a simple matter of a rational process, sentimental excitement, or an impetuous action, but it is the fruit of the *vision of God and deification.*

When we commit some sin, however, then the *anointing* in the depths of our hearts is activated through repentance. In other words, repentance that is expressed as an inclination

to change one's life, as love for God, and as prayer, is the activation of the Grace of Holy Chrismation. This *anointing*, moreover, is activated by *noetic prayer of the heart*, which is the *new song* that is sung by those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

When a person, however, denies Christ, departs from the Orthodox Church, and adopts heretical confessions and religions, he then loses this gift. And when he returns to the Orthodox Church, he must once again receive the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit through the Mystery of Chrismation.

Hence, the shepherds of the Church must not speak only about the Antichrist and his forerunners, but first and foremost they must help Christians to live in such a way that the Grace of Baptism and Chrismation is activated, by the keeping of Christ's commandments and doctrines, by experiencing these in one's life in an orthodox manner, by repentance, and by inner *noetic prayer of the heart*, for in this way they will be able to distinguish between the energies of Christ and the energies of the Antichrist.

Otherwise, they will confuse uncreated with created energies and, what is worse, they will regard the energies of the Antichrist as the energies of Christ, and vice versa.

This discretion constitutes orthodox pastoral care. And its essence is what is called the Hesychastic Tradition.



All of those who are vouchsafed in the *anointing* of their hearts by the Holy Spirit—that is, the writing of the Name of the Lamb of the Revelation and of His Father in their hearts—will escape from being sealed by the Beast of the Apocalypse and his father, just as they will escape his forerunners. This is the essence of Orthodox pastoral care, which is bound up with the Hesychastic Tradition of the Church. **This is why the preservation of Orthodox monasticism is of great importance.** Every alteration to the Hesychastic spirit of Orthodox monasticism helps the forerunners of the Antichrist to do their job well and deceive the people.



You don't excuse others but you excuse yourself? Then, tomorrow Christ will not excuse you. Your heart can become hard as a rock in an instant if you are not careful, and it can equally quickly become tender. You must acquire a maternal heart. You see, a mother will forgive all things, and sometimes will pretend not to see certain mischief. Be patient with others and excuse them; tolerate others so that Christ will tolerate you.

St. Paisios of Holy Mountain

THE SUBTLE EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ECUMENISM AND MODERNISM ON ORTHODOX WORSHIP AND LITURGICAL PIETY

By Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, hierarch of the Orthodox Church of Greece, Holy Synod in Resistance.

I constantly emphasize to people that we are not, like some hapless religious bigots—and they unfortunately exist—opposed to ecumenism because we believe or—God forbid—hope that all of those outside Orthodoxy are going to be lost and condemned; rather, we stand in opposition to anything that, drawing on the dangerous spirit of religious and confessional relativism, impugns our conviction that the Orthodox Church contains and continues the fullness of the Church which, in the words of St. Athanasios the Great, *the Lord delivered, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers preserved*. It being our duty to pass on that which we know to be capable of transforming man and the world, we protect our Faith not solely or primarily for ourselves, but, in the Evangelical spirit of love, for our fellow men and women.

If ecumenism has rendered Orthodoxy just one among many religions and bereft of claims to the powers of spiritual and historical primacy—and dubbed us Orthodox traditionalists, according to the standards of “ecumenical love,” ignorant troglodytes—the Orthodox ecumenists bear much of the responsibility for what this has done to the integrity of Orthodoxy and for the distortion of its witness in the contemporary ecumenical world. In this same way, each of us Orthodox today also bears no small responsibility for overlooking, much to our shame, the effects of religious syncretism (and our own laxity in practice) on Orthodox worship and liturgical piety. Here, too, we have thus compromised our witness to the world.

When Russia was converted to Orthodox Christianity, according to pious accounts, it was because Prince Vladimir’s representatives, who had gone throughout the world looking for a religion for his people, returned to the Prince and told him that they had, in the Great Church of St. Sophia, in Constantinople, experienced the beauty of a form of worship so lofty and exalted that they did not know whether they were in Heaven or on earth. Whatever the historical accuracy of this story, it captures perfectly the power of Orthodox worship and liturgical piety to effect contrition and true belief in those who avail themselves of its sacred dimensions. In our worship of God, we Orthodox bring Heaven and earth into communion; we enter into communion with God and bring the soul into intimate contact with its Creator.

How do we do this? First, we worship in an ascetic spirit: we stand while we worship, offering God our minds and bodies in prayer. We fast before Liturgy. We separate ourselves

from the world, to whatever extent possible, in preparation for entering into the ethereal House of God, clad in the best of clothes, with the best of intentions, setting aside enmity with our enemies, and ready to stand spiritually clean before God through the Mystery of confession. The Church, in turn, is adorned in an other-worldly fashion, containing nothing of the daily world and reflecting—even in its iconographic style—another realm: a sacred world transformed and imbued with a new fragrance, a new language, and a new vision, as represented by the incense which we offer up to God, by the exalted poetry of the services, and by the subtle light and uplifting atmosphere of the sacred space which is the Church itself. And in this place, an eschatological New World present in some way even in this fallen domain, we come into direct communion with Christ, taking into ourselves—through the Mystery of the Eucharist, which is the central focus, aim, and purpose of our liturgical worship—His very Body and Blood and being united by Grace with Him, becoming “small Jesus Christs” within Jesus Christ and sons of God by adoption.

The power of the worship and liturgical piety of Orthodoxy, which has drawn even the most aggressive atheist to belief in God by way of a true encounter with Him in the Divine Liturgy, is one of the key Evangelical tools of the Orthodox Church. Yet, while we Orthodox anti-ecumenists may defend our Faith against the theological and ideological assaults of ecumenism and religious syncretism, we have been far too negligent—and *often sinfully and willfully so*, as I said above—in preserving the purity and integrity of this wondrous gift of our liturgical (in essence, our *Eucharistic*) traditions.

I remember my grandfather’s explanation of how the abuse of pews first entered into the Orthodox Church. He traced this generally to European influence and the desire of Orthodox to imitate what they considered the more “civilized” practices of the Latins and Protestants. However, the personal motivations behind this innovation he attributed to pride, since many Orthodox (especially in America) were insulted when non-Orthodox asked them if they were unable to afford pews; to spiritual laxity, since, after the calendar reform and the emergence of modernist ideas, lukewarm believers came to resent the ascetic aspects of worship—which were always a part of the Orthodox ethos and even Orthodox theology, as Father Georges Florovsky observes; and ecumenism, since, as Orthodox began to look at their Church as something “between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism,” rather than a thing in and of itself, they came to believe that Orthodoxy could incorporate into its worship the “comforts” of heterodoxy (as they had the “convenience” of the New Calendar) without negative effects.

My grandfather’s trenchant observations, precisely on the mark, had prophetic dimensions. Now, eight decades after he first saw a decline in the integrity of Orthodox worship and liturgical piety in the Church, and only a little more

than forty years after he spoke to me about these trends, we see a complete distortion of Orthodox worship. Even if one goes to historical Churches in Greece, while they may have Byzantine Icons of a traditional kind, they are often filled with pews (or with fancy carved chairs arranged as pews), completely spoiling the open space of the Church, which represents the worshipping world. Prostrations and similar signs of humble piety are fast disappearing, if simply because they are made impossible by these impediments. In this country, accustomed as they are to sitting at all times in Church, the faithful actually balk and protest at any attempt to encourage them to worship standing, as Orthodox tradition dictates. As a result, they sit, as though in a theatre, watching the “performance” of what they think is a “ritual” disconnected from them, separated, as they are, from participation in the *leitourgia* (literally “the work”) of the people of God.

In the past, Orthodox Churches had benches or choir stalls (*stasidia*) around the perimeter of the sacred space of the Church, so that the old and infirm could sit and where, during long services, those who were standing could rest for a few minutes, before standing again. Today, even in some so-called Old Calendar Churches (i.e., traditionalist Orthodox communities) in this country, naves and narthexes are crowded with pews or rows of ugly chairs, and all sorts of “comfortable” devices are not uncommon. Convenience and comfort have produced churches modelled on the halls and gathering places of the heterodox, if not the meeting places of secular clubs. Bright lights—rather than natural light, subtle oil lamps, and candles—distract the senses; worldly, quotidian artifacts clutter the Church; and familiar and profane adornments and even art (as though Byzantine iconography were just a style to be featured among many other kinds of artistic expression) are scattered about the place where one once encountered God in mystery.

Altar rails, Latin-style votive lights, and other non-Orthodox religious trappings of every kind can be found today in many Orthodox Churches—and, as I have observed, even in Old Calendarist Churches. The theatre has set the standard for our Churches. Chanting, rather than humbly offered as a melodious tribute to God, is frequently theatrical, dramatic, and operatic. In the few instances that the worshippers rise from their chairs, the thought of a bow or a prostration (which is, again, impossible to execute) is the last thing in the minds of any worshipper. If the believers are well-dressed, it is rarely with the thought in mind of meeting, in the Church, the Divine Master and the King of Kings; if anything, it is to impress others with one’s expensive clothes or one’s supposed taste.

The consequences of all of this are devastating. Once the faithful have lost a sense of asceticism in worship, they expect the Church to cater to their needs. One no longer

sees an old and lame worshipper apologizing—unnecessarily—for his or her inability to stand through a service; rather, even healthy believers *expect* the Church to serve their needs and look to their comfort. Such an attitude impedes communion with God, which has already become difficult in an ecclesiastical atmosphere which has lost its ability to foster contrition, silence, and mystery, and which has, once more, become more like the theatre. Moreover, it subtly creates, by way of the influence of forms of worship foreign to Orthodoxy, a disrespect for the other ascetic elements of our Faith: fasting, self-sacrifice, self-abasement, and long-suffering patience.

And what is the final outcome of this deterioration in the traditional worship and liturgical piety of the Church? Ironically enough, it leads to the very thing that—though it may be opposed in theory and word—has been allowed to impact so negatively the inner life, the worship, of the Church; that is, it leads to ecumenism itself. The subtle effects of ecumenism and a spirit of modernism on the worship and liturgical piety of the Church, eating away at the heart of the Eucharistic and ascetic traditions of the Church, ultimately affect, not just the faith of the Orthodox ecumenists, but that of the un-careful anti-ecumenists. Thus it is that, denying to their children the unique experience of Orthodoxy, which so overwhelmed St. Vladimir’s emissaries in Constantinople, and the spiritual fruit that Orthodoxy produces when cultivated in the refined soil of traditional piety, here in the West our Old Calendar Churches have fewer and fewer young people. As the youth see a faith that proclaims itself unique, yet which draws on the ethos and thinking of the ecumenists, with their “comfortable” pews and salvation without ascetic sacrifice, they reject traditional Orthodoxy as “*just another religion.*”

As well, when Orthodox traditionalism succumbs to preaching in word and not in action, it becomes ecumenical in a way that most people do not understand. Bereft of practice and an external manifestation of its beauty and power, Orthodox resistance—and *especially* when it is preached with the fanatic fervor of those unwise in spirit—loses its quality of love. If Orthodox worship draws others by its externals, it is only because these externals are formed by, and endowed and redolent with, love. For true spiritual beauty cannot be separated from the Evangelical love that streams forth from our worship, which is based upon, drawn from, and fully revealed in the love of Christ which the Sacrifice of the Eucharist truly is. When we compromise that witness, then we become, whatever our confession, and no matter how loud or bombastic our pronouncements against religious syncretism, the essence of what ecumenists are: We are one with those who preach a false love.

Our anti-ecumenical efforts, therefore, have only just begun. They must continue, as well, in the restoration of the right worship central to right belief and True Faith.

WILL THE HETERODOX BE SAVED?

By Saint Philaret, Metropolitan of New York, the New Confessor (+1985), from "Orthodox Life," Volume 34, No. 6 (Nov.-Dec., 1984), pp. 33-36.



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

Answer: *For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that*

runneth [struggleth], but of God that showeth mercy. (Rom 9:15-16). In the Orthodox Church we have the path of salvation indicated to us and we are given the means by which a person maybe morally purified and have a direct promise of salvation. In this sense St. Cyprian of Carthage says that *outside the Church there is no salvation.*

In the Church is given that of which Apostle Peter writes to Christians (and only Christians): *According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (2 Pet 1:3-8).

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

the power of one, outside the Orthodox Church, without the help of grace which is concealed within it.

The question: Can the heterodox, i.e., those who do not belong to Orthodoxy—the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—be saved, has become particularly painful and acute in our days.

In attempting to answer this question, it is necessary, first of all, to recall that in His Gospel the Lord Jesus Christ Himself mentions but one state of the human soul which unfailingly leads to perdition—i.e., *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.* (Mt 12:1-32). The Holy Spirit is, above all, the Spirit of Truth, as the Savior loved to refer to Him. Accordingly, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against the Truth, conscious and persistent opposition to it. The same text makes it clear that even blasphemy against the Son of Man—i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God Himself may be forgiven, as it may be uttered in error or in ignorance and, subsequently may be covered by conversion and repentance (an example of such a converted and repentant blasphemer is the Apostle Paul. (See Acts 26:11 and I Tim 1:13.) If, however, a man opposes the Truth which he clearly apprehends by his reason and conscience, he becomes blind and commits spiritual suicide, for he thereby likens himself to the devil, who believes in God and dreads Him, yet hates, blasphemers, and opposes Him.

Thus, man's refusal to accept the Divine Truth and his opposition thereto makes him a son of damnation. Accordingly, in sending His disciples to preach, the Lord told them: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.* (Mk 16:16), for the latter heard the Lord's Truth and was called upon to accept it, yet refused, thereby inheriting the damnation of those who *believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* (2 Thes 2:12).

The Holy Orthodox Church is the repository of the divinely revealed Truth in all its fullness and fidelity to apostolic Tradition. Hence, he who leaves the Church, who intentionally and consciously falls away from it, joins the ranks of its opponents and becomes a renegade as regards apostolic Tradition. The Church dreadfully anathematized such renegades, in accordance with the words of the Savior Himself (Mt 18:17) and of the Apostle Paul (Gal 1:8-9), threatening them with eternal damnation and calling them to return to the Orthodox fold. It is self-evident, however, that sincere Christians who are Roman Catholics, or Lutherans, or members, of other non-Orthodox confessions, cannot be termed renegades or intentional heretics—i.e. those who knowingly pervert the truth...* They have been born and raised and are living according to the creed which they have inherited, just as do the majority of you who are Orthodox; in their lives there has not been a moment of

personal and conscious renunciation of Orthodoxy. The Lord, *Who will have all men to be saved* (I Tim. 2:4) and *Who enlightens every man born into the world* (Jn 1:43), undoubtedly is leading them also towards salvation in His own way.

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

We believe the foregoing answer by the saintly ascetic to be the best that can be given in this matter.

† † †

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



Elder Joseph always taught his monks that Christ-like obedience was more important than anything else. He would allow his spiritual children in the world to practice mental prayer, but always under the guidance of those who were experienced, for he had seen much delusion among men and had become fearful of it. He would often tell us, “If you see a person not asking for advice, or not heeding advice given, wait, and you will soon see him deluded.”

...

This heavenly man was a master at curing his disciples from their passions, if they managed to stay with him in obedience. Though many came to him to learn by his side, few stayed. It was not easy to live with him. Some might find it hard to believe how sternly he would rebuke me as an expression of his paternal love and care for my soul. For example, in those twelve years that I lived with him, it was very rare to hear my name from his mouth. To call me or to address me, he would use all kinds of insults with a corresponding adjective. But the driving force behind that verbal abuse was true paternal affection and a sincere interest in the cleansing of my soul—and how grateful my soul is now for that paternal affection.

Elder Ephraim of Philotheou and Arizona

ON REFUGE FROM SINFUL THOUGHTS

From The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It. A parable by St. John the Dwarf adapted by St. Theophan the Recluse.

There was in a certain place a beautiful woman of questionable behavior. The ruler of this country took pity on her, that such beauty would perish, and, when he found the opportunity, he said to her, “Give up your immoral ways, and I will take you to my house and you will become my wife and the mistress of many treasures. Just watch that you are faithful, or else there will be such trouble for you as you cannot even imagine.”

She agreed to this, and was taken to the ruler’s house. Her former friends, seeing that she had disappeared, began searching for her, and found out that she was with the ruler.

Although the ruler was a terror, they did not despair of enticing the beautiful woman back to themselves once again, knowing her weakness. “We have only to go up behind the house and whistle; she will know who it is and immediately run out to us.”

That is just what they did.

They went behind the house and whistled. The beautiful woman, hearing the whistle, startled. Something from her previous life stirred inside of her. But she had already come to her senses, and instead of running out of the house, she rushed into the inner chambers to the ruler himself, and immediately calmed down; she did not even hear the whistling that continued outside.

Her friends whistled a few more times and went off with nothing.

The meaning of the parable is clear. The beautiful woman represents the fallen soul that has turned to the Lord in repentance and made a contract to belong to and serve Him alone. The former friends are the passions. Their whistling is the impulses of passionate thoughts, feeling, and desires. Escape into the inner chambers is shelter in the depths of the heart, there to stand before the Lord.

When this is accomplished within, the passion that has troubled the soul leaves of its own accord as if it had never existed, and the soul calms down.



We know that prayer in and of itself cannot save us, but carrying it out before God can. For when the Lord’s eyes are upon us He sanctifies us, as the sun warms everything upon which it shines.

St. Gregory Palamas

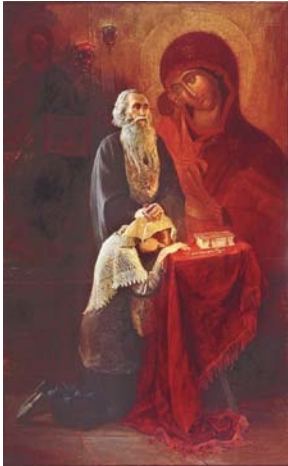
ON IDLE TALK AND GOSSIP

Source: "Letters to a Beginner: On Giving One's Life to God," St. Xenia Skete Press, Platina, CA (1993), pp. 70-75.

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

[Mt 12:36]

† † †



You complain, sister, about the trials which are overtaking you, which are arising, according to your words, from certain misunderstandings, suspicion, and indiscretion in conversations. The last, I think, is the effective and chief cause of all your trials and the source of all the evil. On this subject I want to write you a few words about the harm arising from the idle talk and gossip so common among you. This is something you yourself don't even

notice; you speak too much, without discerning whether it is necessary or unnecessary, profitable or harmful, provided only that something is spoken. It is as if you are afraid of silence, which in fact is a nun's first obligation, the chief condition of her success and the adornment of her whole life.

Deeply rooted in people is the love of idle talk, i.e., empty, unnecessary conversations, and it has become a beloved pastime among them. It seems we don't know and don't believe that idle talk is a sin, and a serious sin, which gives birth to a multitude of other sins: quarrels, conflicts, gossip, slander, condemnation, calumny, and the like. Indeed, all the various confusions which fill human life to overflowing, all the disturbances of the inner quiet of the soul, have as their source this same idle talk, which has crept into all of everyday life, as though it were its indispensable property and requirement. If any sin or any passion knows how to clothe itself in an attractive form, it is precisely—idle talk.

It begins under the pretext of conversing, of discussing some business, but then we proceed imperceptibly to an altogether unnecessary, empty, and sinful conversation. Like a deeply-rooted infection, this sickness does not easily submit to healing. It has penetrated all layers of social and private life; it is active in people of every age and gender, every class and social position, and has not even spared monasteries.

One deeply thinking pastor, contemporary to us, writes the following on idle talk, among other things: "How heedlessly, how carelessly we use our words, which should be highly valued as a great gift from God! But on the contrary, what do we least esteem, if not the spoken word? In what are we fickle, if not in the spoken word? What do we throw out every

minute, as though it were dirt, if not the spoken word? O Christian! Value your words, be attentive to them!"

In our words, which we regard so carelessly, so thoughtlessly, will be either our justification or condemnation, as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says: *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* (Mt 12:37); *I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.* (Mt 12:36). If even one idle, i.e., empty, unnecessary word will be subject to accounting in the day of judgment, then to what condemnation and punishment will we be subject, who talk idly continually and constantly, restrained neither by place nor time, nor by the presence of outsiders, who, perhaps even against their will, we make participants in our empty conversations, and in such a manner draw them into sin. So, drawing them into sin, we are subject to a double condemnation—both for idle talk and for being a cause of temptation, for *woe*, it is said, *to that man by whom the offence cometh.* (Mt 18:7). We don't think about this, we don't take care at all! We misuse our natural faculty of speech, which was given to us for this purpose above all: that we might praise our Creator, thank and glorify Him with words, as is proper to a rational creature. Even mute nature glorifies Him with its grandeur and harmony, not deviating in the least from the laws appointed to it by the Creator: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands.* (Pss 18:1).

The gift of speech was also given to us that we might understand one another, not through instinct, like the dumb animals, but through intellect. Thus, we verbally express our ideas, which are abundantly and clearly opened to us by our God-enlightened mind, the source of thought and word, in order that we might conduct intelligent, mutual, brotherly conversation on the aim of daily life and its regulation, for mutual edification and benefit, in support and consolation of each other, and the like. It was not given to us that we might talk idly; or judge, slander, and condemn our neighbors, pronouncing judgments on them like unmerciful judges and torturers rather than considering ourselves as their brothers, weak and sinful as they, if not still worse. *Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest,* says the Apostle, *for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?* (Rom 2:1, 3) *He that ... judgeth his brother,* says another Apostle, *... judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.* (Jas 4:11).

What great evil results from empty and idle conversations and gossip! Sometimes one heedlessly spoken word causes a whole storm of unpleasantness and fills the heart of the one referred to with indignation and hatred. So even a word

that was not ill-intentioned, one we counted as nothing, can strike a mortal sin, just as a small spark often turns into a great fire burning whole villages. *How great a matter a little fire kindleth*, says the Apostle James. *Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things* (cf. Jas 3:5); *it is a fire, a world of iniquity:... it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell* (Jas 3:6). *The tongue is an untamable evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God and therewith curse we men, which are after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be! Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?* (Jas 3:8-11) *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge ... let him show this out of his works, through good conduct, and not by condemning others. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth* (i.e., don't consider yourself wise). *This is not the wisdom that descends from above, but is earthly ... devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work* (cf. Jas 3:13-16).

Behold the harm from all our idle talk and gossip! And if they are improper to Christians in general, are they not even less pardonable for nuns, who have voluntarily renounced the world with all its worldly sinful ways, who have retired within their monastic gates for a more unhindered attention to their salvation? The enemy of everyone's salvation, knowing the infirmity of men, who notwithstanding their readiness towards a life of pleasing God, are ever inclined to seek indulgences and consolations, is not slow even here to sow his tares amid the wheat of God. You nuns by your departure from the world have also left all its consolations and pleasures permitted to lay people.

The only true consolation for you should consist in your close fellowship and heart to heart talks. Your superiors, as wise and kind guides, don't restrain you, don't forbid you these innocent consolations: you are permitted to visit one another, to go for walks together in your free time, and when you gather for common monastery obediences, you may converse with one another unhindered. But you abuse this liberty, you derive from it not profit and true spiritual consolation, but the opposite: harm, quarrels, gossip, and discord, which like a spark kindles a great fire, which burns away all your monastic labors and struggles. In such a manner you lose your salvation.

Do you not know the apostolic saying: *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God* (Rom 14:12) *Who is ready to judge* (1 Pet 4:5)? Oh, if only you would gather together, like the ancient nuns, for spiritual edification and mutual instruction, you would not converse about irrelevant things and affairs which don't concern you, but only about this, how each of you will *work out your own salvation* (Phil 2:12); what sort of cell rule to have and how to perform it, what

struggles to undertake. Thus you would edify and support one another on your slippery path, stretching out a helping hand to each other, and the words of the all-wise Solomon would be realized in you: *A brother helped by a brother is as a strong city*. (Prov 18:19). And your assembly would be like the assembly of the angels, who in spite of their great multitude have one common holy will, one striving—how to fulfill the will of the Creator.

O Sister, not for nothing is our monastic order called the angelic order!... Surely each of us who has gathered in the holy monastery in the name of the Lord has one and the same will, one striving common to us all: *how he may please the Lord*. (1 Cor 7:32). We have no earthly fetters binding us to the world, there are no anxieties and worldly cares to entangle our wings and hinder our flight to our Heavenly Bridegroom! We are free, like the birds of the air, *which sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; but our heavenly Father feedeth us* (cf. Matt. 6:26). Let us then remember our angelic calling, and *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:1-3), as the holy Apostle teaches.



A MORNING PRAYER

By St. Philaret of Moscow.

Oh Lord,
 Grant me to greet the coming day in peace,
 Help me in all things to rely upon Thy Will.
 In every hour of the day, reveal Thy Will to me.
 Bless my dealing with all that surround me.
 Teach me to treat all that come to me throughout the day
 with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Thy Will
 concerns all.
 In all my deeds and words, guide my thoughts and feelings.
 In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by
 Thee.
 Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and
 embarrassing others.
 Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with
 all that it shall bring.
 Direct my will.
 Teach me to pray.
 Pray Thou Thyself in me.
 Amen.

HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF WHEN PEOPLE SPEAK EVIL OF US?

Source: "Orthodox Life," vol. 48, no. 2, March-April 1998, pp. 17-18.

Our good name is very important for us in life. *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches*, says the wise Solomon (Prov 22:1). A good name brings us the respect and trust of others, and we have great need of it in life, because no one wants to have dealings with a dishonest person. Therefore we cannot look indifferently on the opinions of others about us. The dishonest person can expect neither heartfelt compassion nor help from others. If we are entrusted with any kind of leadership role, it is almost impossible to control subordinates while lacking the respect of others.

So, what should we do when other people, slander and deprive us of our good name?

1. First of all, no matter how bad and how injurious the evil talk spread about us may be, we must guard ourselves from anger, verbal abuse, and revenge, but remain as placid as possible in spirit, because we all must be of one spirit with Christ, and Christ, in the face of all the accusations from the Jews, remained peaceful, not in the least bit vengeful. *Christ, when he was reviled, reviled not again... but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously*, the holy Apostle Peter says (1 Pet 2:23).

2. When you hear that others are speaking poorly of you and ascribing to you vices of various sorts, bad intentions, and so forth, then immediately subject yourself to the strictest examination to see whether the vices they ascribe to you are really there. Perhaps they say you are proud, a liar, an idler, a spendthrift, a drunkard, a sluggard a debaucher, or whatever else. Examine yourself very closely: do these vices actually lurk within you, if only to a small degree? Is there not pride, falsehood, and so on? Other people's eyes often see our conduct much better and more reliably than our own do, because every person has a certain amount of pride, and pride always conceals us from ourselves. Thus, we can rarely see ourselves accurately, and some people, even quite depraved ones, consider themselves faultless. If impartial examination of yourself shows you that others reproach you justly, that one or another vice indeed exists in you, then quickly offer repentance, fervently pray to the Lord God to deliver you from that vice, try zealously to correct yourself of it, and then everywhere show the most sincere friendly disposition and gratitude towards the one who spoke evil of you, regardless of his intentions for doing so, because without his reproach you perhaps would never have seen your vices, would have died without repentance and correction, and would have perished forever.

3. If, after the most attentive, impartial examination of yourself, you find that the vices ascribed to you do not exist, you may legitimately defend yourself and refute the slander leveled at you, but only when this is necessary not because of your self-love or pride but because of your position in society. But defend yourself calmly, without anger or indignation. Jesus Christ Himself acted thus when they said of Him that He was driving out devils with the help of Beelzebub the prince of devils (Lk 11:15-26).

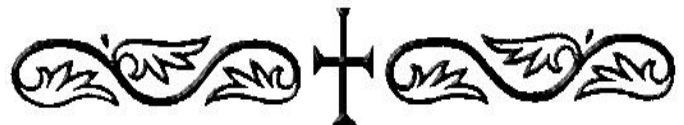
4. If you see that defending yourself will not do you any good, then:

(a) Try to bear patiently the slander leveled at you, no matter how serious, and console yourself with the thoughts, "God sees my innocence, so what should I grieve about? He Himself cares for me, and, if my vindication will be beneficial for me, then He Himself will vindicate me. He will declare my innocence at the Dread Judgement at least, and all the people and all the angels of God will vindicate me with Him."

(b) Console yourself even more with this thought: "They let forth a great stream of abuse on our Savior when he lived on earth, yet He never justified Himself in any court. Some of the abuse was very serious, but He endured everything with equanimity. That is how I should act. *The disciple is not above his master and it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master.* (Mt 10:24-25).

(c) Double your efforts to conduct yourself as irreproachably as possible in all circumstances of your life. Endeavor not only to avoid giving others occasion for spiteful talk by any of your words or deeds, but also endeavor to avert any occasion to be even suspected of any vices, and therefore avoid even permissible behavior if it somehow can give cause for slander. Behave this way, and then do not pay attention to the slander spread about you. May your conscience and God be the witnesses to your innocence.

(d) If the evil talk spread about you does not cease, or even multiplies, then resort to nothing but fervent prayer that the Lord God may have the kindness to enlighten and correct your slanderers. Act this way because Jesus Christ Himself acted this way even towards his executioners. (Lk 23:34).



Let us then not be pleased if we are successful in anything, let us not be proud of our activities, let our material good and glory not exalt us. If we swell up with pride about any good things that come our way we are displeasing to God. The psalmist says of the humble: *The Lord protects the little ones.* He was calling the humble *little ones*. After this saying he added something else. As if we were asking him what he would do in such a case, he added: *I was made humble, and He set me free.*

St. Gregory the Great

ON FORGIVING OTHERS

By St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, from "Orthodox Christian Journey," *Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry, Hollywood, CA (1997)*, pp. 47-53.

Sometimes in life we offend each other. This happens because the devil hates love among us, and cleverly ensnares or incites us to offend our neighbor—from our own personal weakness, from carelessness or from habit. Reconciliation is absolutely necessary in order to preserve peace and harmony.

At times, we brush off the offense and go on as if nothing happened. The Bible teaches that when we sin against our neighbor we also sin against God, and when we offend our neighbor, we offend God Himself. Love toward our neighbor is intertwined with love for God. When love toward our neighbor is destroyed, so too is love toward God. It follows that if we want to be reconciled to God and have peace with Him, we must first be reconciled with our neighbor, and then ask God for mercy.

If we approach God in prayer without reconciling with our neighbor, our prayer is vain and empty. The Lord says, *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.* (Mt 5:23-26).

Until peace and love are restored, God will not accept repentance, nor prayers, nor anything else from us. Humbly ask forgiveness without delay, whether the offense is in word or deed.

Death stalks invisibly behind us and seizes us unawares. What will become of us if we are taken without reconciliation? We will appear before the judgment of Christ as we leave this world. What is forgiven now will not appear there. It is important to be reconciled while there is time. If we were able to offend our neighbor, we should also be able to be reconciled without delay. God promises His mercy to all who repent, but He does not promise tomorrow, nor even the next breath.

We must break down the idol of pride and bow down with humility before the offended one. When we bend our knee, we must bow our heart; when we beg forgiveness with our lips, we must beg with our heart. When we repent with our tongue, we must repent and be sorry in our heart. When we kiss each other with the lips, the kiss must come from the heart. For the outward without the inward means nothing. God judges according to the inward disposition.

"Why should I ask forgiveness?" we may ask. "Look who I am!"

We are all created equal in God's sight. He is just and we shall all stand before Him to be judged. And who is to say who is the better person? The Lord examines the righteous man and the ungodly: *The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he*

shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright. (Pss 11:5). Not the good beginning, but the good end is worthy of praise.

"Perhaps my neighbor won't accept my apology—what then?" Humility has such power it touches even the hardest heart. God, the lover of humility, works through the humble. If we humble our heart before our neighbor, we shall see the power of humility as we are embraced with love and joy. If we are unwilling to try, we are responsible for our sin.

"But my neighbor will gloat over my humility."

Luke tells us that everyone who exalts himself will be humbled: *For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* (Lk 18:14). We are not responsible for our neighbors actions. Our responsibility is to obey our Lord.

The offended one must forgive the offender. To be forgiven by God pray with sincerity and hope, Father...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors... For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father also will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Mt 6:12,14-15).

How terrible it is when we do not forgive our neighbor's trespasses! If we forgive our neighbor, God will also forgive us. If we do not forgive, God will not forgive us. How, then, can we stand before God? And how much is our prayer worth? Almost nothing. For how can we stand before God with anger in our heart? And we must take all the blame, for the sin is ours.

Though we were sinned against, we are all sinners and must forgive. Our neighbor is our debtor and asks forgiveness of us, but we are God's debtor and must ask forgiveness of God. If forgiveness is from the heart, we can pray from the heart, honestly and openly. If the prayer of forgiveness is not from the heart, it is only words and becomes sin. All wrath and anger must be set aside and forgiveness must be sincere before we can honestly pray, "Father, forgive us..." and forgiveness be granted.

As we treat our neighbors, so also does God treat us. Forgiveness or unforgiveness of our sins, and therefore also our salvation or destruction, depends on each of us, individually. Without forgiveness of sins there is no salvation. We are all sinners equally. Do we know who we are and Who God is, against Whom we have sinned, and sin still? All the world is nothing before God (Isa 40). If all the world is as nothing before God, what, then, are we individually, however great our position before others? And what is the sin of our neighbor who offended us? It is as a penny against thousands of pieces of gold or ten thousand talents. Or, even better, it is as nothing against our sins toward God.

If we will not forgive anything, no matter how small, can we hope to receive forgiveness for a great thing? Will we be forgiven by God, Who is eternal justice and incredible majesty? If we do not have mercy on another, what mercy do we expect of God? It is dangerous not to forgive!

“I am in no way at fault I was offended without cause.”

One person sometimes offends another unjustly. When this happens, God is not at fault for He is a just God and there is no injustice in Him. Nevertheless, in frustration and anger we sometimes sin against Him irrationally and without shame by refusing to forgive an unjust offense. Before we can obtain forgiveness of God, we must first forgive the one who sinned against us. Then with a repentant heart pray, “Lord, have mercy.” Unworthy as we are, in His mercy God will forgive us. Glory to His love for us all! Glory to His immeasurable graciousness!

“Though I did a good deed, evil was returned to me.”

True, it is difficult to suffer evil for good. And who does more good than God? Yet we continually sin against Him. Say from the heart, “I have sinned, O Lord, have mercy on me. I forgive my neighbor, forgive also me, Your unworthy servant, who sinned against You, my Creator and Benefactor.”

“I was very patient with the one who offended me.”

We have sinned against God exceeding and the Lord was patient. What if God had given us what we deserve? We would have been in hell long ago. Then, just as God is long-suffering and merciful with us, so we ought also be to our neighbor.

“I know God deals mercifully with me. I am weak and cannot do likewise.”

Cannot, or will not? We cannot walk on water, but what is the difficulty of forgiving? Are we seeking revenge? This is not weakness, but hatred. As Christians, we are commanded, *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.* (Eph 5:1).

“If I forgive my neighbor, evil may be done to me.”

We do not know this. But even if evil is done to us, we must do what God commanded because it is necessary for our salvation. Each of us is responsible for our own deeds and actions. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.* (Rev 22:11).

“I have been grievously offended.”

There can be no more grievous an offense than that done to Christ our Savior, Who was not only blasphemed, reviled, mocked, spat upon, derided, struck and bound, but ultimately crowned with thorns and nailed to the Cross. As they passed by they cursed Him Who was nailed, and put Him to death—the Son of God and the Lord of Glory. Who are we compared to so great a One, and what is this offense against us compared to His sacrifice? It is as nothing.

Christ the Lord endured all these things with great meekness and long-suffering. For whom? For me and for you, His unworthy servants. And not only did He endure all this, He also prayed for His enemies, *Father, forgive them.* (Lk 23:34). Reflect on this as in a mirror and it will no doubt be easier to forgive.

“If I forgive, people will mock me.”

To the impious and those who love this world, the Christian life and morality of the Gospel are foolishness, but it is wisdom before God. We must obey its teachings. Let the mockers mock, for afterward they will weep bitterly.

We speak of either eternal salvation or eternal destruction. If we do not forgive our neighbors their transgressions, therein is hidden the wickedness and unrighteousness of the human heart.

We wish to receive the forgiveness and mercy of God, but do not wish to show mercy and forgiveness to others. Without Christ’s love, how wicked and unrighteous is our heart.

Our Lord told us, *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).

It is not enough to love those who love us. The Lord says, *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?* (Mt 5:46-47). As Christians, we must show love and mercy, striving for perfection. Because we are begotten through holy baptism and renewed unto life eternal and a holy life, we must love not only our friends, but also our enemies.

Willingness to forgive is one mark of a true Christian. Our Heavenly Father makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (cf. Mt 5:45). As Christians, we should imitate Him the way children do their father, according to the exhortation of the Apostle, *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.* (Eph 5:1).

“It is impossible to love my enemies and do good to them.”

Not true. It was possible for David, who wept for his enemies, Saul and Absalom, who perished (2 Kings 1; 2 Sam 18). Mourning over the destruction of enemies is a sign of love for enemies. It was possible for St. Stephen, who prayed for his enemies as they stoned him, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* (Acts 7:60). It was possible for all the saints. And it is possible for us. We all have the same weaknesses.

When children learn to read books, they first learn the letters, then spelling, and after that, how to read. As Christians, first we learn to return good for good, which is gratitude; then not to return evil for evil, insult for insult, offense for offense, and not to take revenge, either in word or deed; after this, to love our enemies and do good to those that hate us and to return good for evil.

This is the ladder by which Christians ascend toward perfection, that is toward love of enemies. When we are commanded to love our enemies and do good to those that hate us—commanded by Him Who created us and redeemed the lost by His blood and death, and Who holds our death and life in His hand—will we forgive those who offended us?

If an earthly king commanded us not only to forgive our neighbor the offense, but also to serve our neighbor or be put to death, which would we choose? To die, or to forgive and serve? Our Heavenly King commands us not only to forgive, but also to love our enemies and do good to those that hate us. Otherwise, eternal death will follow. *Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven.* (Mt 7:21).

Ἡ Νοερά Προσευχή

Ρωμανίδης: «*Εκείνο πού χρειάζεται κανείς για να αποκτήσει νοερά προσευχή είναι να έχει Πνευματικό Πατέρα με νοερά προσευχή*».

Από τὸ βιβλίο: «Εμπειρική Δογματική τῆς Ὁρθόδοξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας κατὰ τὶς προφορικές παραδόσεις τοῦ π. Ἰωάννου Ρωμανίδου» τόμος Β', τοῦ Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου Γεροθέου.

Προκειμένου να αποκτήσει κανείς τον φωτισμό του νοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀδιάλειπτη νοερά προσευχή, πού εἶναι ἐπίσκεψη τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, εἶναι ἀπαραίτητη ἡ παρουσία Πνευματικοῦ Πατρός, πού γνωρίζει τὰ θέματα αὐτὰ ἐμπειρικῶς καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ καθοδηγήσει πνευματικὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο.

«*Εκείνο πού χρειάζεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος για νὰ ἀποκτήσει νοερά προσευχή εἶναι νὰ ἔχει Πνευματικό Πατέρα πού ἔχει νοερά προσευχή. Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ πιὸ βασικό. Διότι εἶναι ἀδύνατο ἢ τουλάχιστον σχεδὸν ἀδύνατον νὰ μάθει κανείς τὴν νοερά προσευχή, διαβάζοντας περὶ νοερᾶς προσευχῆς. Μὲ τὴν ἀνάγνωση δὲν βγαίνει τίποτε. Πρέπει νὰ ἔχει Πνευματικό Πατέρα. Αὐτὸ εἶναι σαφές*».

Ὁ Πνευματικὸς Πατέρας λέγεται Κατηχητής, πού καθοδηγεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπο, μὲ τὴν ἐνέργεια τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, νὰ περάσει ἀπὸ τὴν κάθαρση στὸν φωτισμό, καὶ ἀκόμη λέγεται διδάσκαλος. Μὲ αὐτὴν τὴν ἔννοια μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι κανείς Πνευματικὸς καθοδηγὸς ἔστω καὶ ἂν δὲν εἶναι Κληρικός. Δὲν πρόκειται, δηλαδή, για τὸ Μυστήριο τῆς Ἐξομολογήσεως, ἀλλὰ για τὴν πνευματικὴ καθοδήγηση, προκειμένου νὰ φθάσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος στὴν νοερά προσευχή.

«*Καὶ ὅταν εἶναι κάποιος στὴν φώτιση, εἶναι Πνευματικὸς Πατέρας καὶ ἂς μὴν ἔχει χειροτονηθεῖ. Μπορεῖ νὰ ἔχει σκοτώσει ἄνθρώπους, ἅμα καθαρῶς ὅμως στὴν καρδιά του καὶ φωτισθεῖ, αὐτὸς ὁ φωτισμὸς τὸν κάνει ἴσον μὲ ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους*».

Καὶ τὸ ὅτι εἶναι πνευματικὰ ἴσος, δὲν σημαίνει ὅτι ἐξάπαντος θὰ χειροτονηθεῖ. Μπορεῖ νὰ μὴ χειροτονηθεῖ ποτέ, διότι ἔχει κωλύματα, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ χειροτονηθεῖ. Παρὰ ταῦτα ὅμως, μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι μέγας ἅγιος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Δὲν εἶναι μονοπώλιο τῶν Κληρικῶν αὐτὴ ἡ θεραπεία. Ἡ θεραπεία μπορεῖ νὰ γίνῃ ἀπὸ τὸν ὅποιονδήποτε πού ἔχει τὴν νοερά προσευχή, ἐνῶ ὁ Κληρικὸς εἶναι ὁ ἱερουργὸς τῶν Μυστηρίων. Ἄλλο τὸ ἓνα, ἄλλο τὸ ἄλλο. Γι' αὐτό, πάντα στὴν Ὁρθοδοξία διαχωρίζονταν αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα. Τελετουργικὰ εἶναι ὁ λειτουργός. Ἀλλὰ Πνευματικὸς Πατέρας θὰ εἶναι αὐτὸς πού ἔφτασε στὸν φωτισμό».

Αὐτὴ εἶναι μία ζωντανὴ παράδοση στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία. Πάντοτε ὑπάρχουν ζωντανὸι πνευματικοὶ ὀργανισμοί, τοὺς ὁποίους ὁ ἄνθρωπος, πού ἐπιδιώκει αὐτὴν τὴν ζωὴ πρέπει νὰ ἀναζητήσει.

«*Ένας, ὅμως, πού δὲν καταλαβαίνει περὶ φωτισμοῦ καὶ Θεώσεως καὶ ἂς εἶναι ἓνας θεολόγος, καθηγητῆς Πανεπιστημίου, καὶ διαβάσει, θὰ πει: "Τώρα ἄστα, μὲ αὐτὰ ἀσχολεῖσαι, εἶναι δεισιδαιμονίες, μυθιστορήματα" κλπ. Ἄν εἶναι ἔτσι, τότε πάει καὶ ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή περίπατο καὶ ὁ Μωυσῆς δὲν ἔχει καμιὰ ἀξία, κ.ο.κ.*

Ἀλλὰ ἔχουμε τοὺς ἴδιους τοὺς ζωντανούς ὁμοίους ἄνθρώπους. Ὑπάρχουν τέτοιοι ἄνθρωποι πού εἶναι ζωντανοί, μὲ νοερά προσευχή, πού φθάνουν στὴν θεοπτία καὶ αὐτὲς οἱ ἐμπειρίες εἶναι πραγματικότητες. Ἀλλὰ για νὰ ξέρει κανείς ὅτι εἶναι πραγματικότητες, πρέπει νὰ πάει νὰ ψάξει νὰ βρεῖ αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἄνθρώπους. Ἄν δὲν ὑπάρχουν αὐτοὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἐκλείπει αὐτὴ ἡ παράδοση, αὐτὸ σημαίνει ὅτι ἐξέλιπε μία ἐπιστήμη.

Δηλαδή, ἐὰν σήμερα ἐκλείπουν οἱ γιατροὶ καὶ μείνουν μόνο τὰ βιβλία τους καὶ τὰ διαβάζουμε καὶ δὲν ἔχουμε τὴν ζωντανὴ παράδοση τῆς ἰατρικῆς, δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ ἀναστήσουμε πάλι τὴν ἰατρικὴ ὅπως εἶναι σήμερα. Τὸ ἴδιο καὶ για ὅλες τὶς ἐπιστήμες, ἂν ἐκλείπει ἡ ζωντανὴ παράδοση. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ για τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, ἂν ἐκλείπει ἡ ζωντανὴ παράδοση, θὰ ξεχασθεῖ. Ὅπως στὴν Δύση ἐξέλιπε, ξεχάστηκε».

Τὰ περὶ νοερῶς προσευχῆς περιγράφονται θαυμάσια στὸ βιβλίο «*Περιπέτειες Ἐνὸς Προσκυνητοῦ*».

«*Ἄν θέλετε νὰ ἔχετε ἔτσι μία συνοπτικὴ καὶ πολὺ γρήγορη ἀντίληψη περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πράγματος, σᾶς παρακαλῶ πολὺ νὰ διαβάσετε, μπορῶ νὰ σᾶς τὸ ἐπιβάλω κιόλας, ὡς μέρος τοῦ μαθήματος, ἂν θέλω δηλαδή, ἀπειλώντας ὅτι θὰ σᾶς δώσω κανένα ἐρώτημα, δηλαδή, ἐπάνω στὸ βιβλίο, εἶναι μικροῦτσικο βιβλίο καὶ λέγεται: "Περιπέτειες Ἐνὸς Προσκυνητοῦ". Λοιπὸν αὐτὸ τὸ βιβλίο, παρακαλῶ, τουλάχιστον τὸ πρῶτο βιβλίο, δὲν ξέρω ἐὰν στὰ Ἑλληνικὰ εἶναι καὶ τὰ δύο, διότι εἶναι δύο βιβλία πού ἔχουν μεταφρασθεῖ καὶ δὲν εἶναι βέβαιο ἐὰν εἶναι ἀπὸ τὸν ἴδιο συγγραφέα. Καὶ ἦταν ἓνας Ρώσος περιηγητῆς, ἓνας αὐτὸ πού θὰ λέγαμε σήμερα ἀγροῖκος καὶ ἀγράμματος, σήμερα ἔτσι θὰ λέγαμε ὅτι ἦταν ἀγράμματος, ἐνῶ πολλὲς φορὲς οἱ ἀγράμματοι εἶναι πιὸ γραμματισμένοι ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐγγράμματους. Καὶ βρῆκε αὐτὸς ἓναν Πνευματικὸ Πατέρα καὶ ἔμαθε τὴν νοερά προσευχή, καὶ περιγράφει πῶς τὴν ἀπέκτησε*».

Αὐτὸς ὁ ἀπλοῖκος ἄνθρωπος εἶχε τέτοια παράδοση, πού διάβαζε τὴν «Φιλοκαλία», ἡ ὁποία κυκλοφόρησε πρὸ τῆς ἐπαναστάσεως τοῦ 1821 στὴν περιοχὴ τῆς Ὁθωμανικῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας καὶ διαδόθηκε καὶ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλλάδα «στὰ ἄλλα μέρη τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης, Ἡπειρο, Μακεδονία, Θεσσαλία, Θράκη, Πόντο, Καππαδοκία, Μικρὰ Ἀσία, στὰ νησιά, στὴν Κρήτη, σ' ὅλη τὴν Μέση Ἀνατολή, μέχρι τὸν Δούναβη, μέχρι τὴν Βεσσαραβία τῆς Ρωσίας».

«*Καὶ μετὰ ὑπάρχει καὶ ἓνα ἄλλο βιβλίο, τὸ ὁποῖο δημοσιεύθηκε στὰ Ἑλληνικά, τοῦ πατρὸς Σιλουανοῦ.*

Και αυτό είναι πάρα πολύ σπουδαίο, διότι είναι γεμάτο από πατερική θεολογία, είναι όλο πατερικό, δηλαδή, έχει τα πιό βαθειά γνωσιολογικά προβλήματα εκεί μέσα, χωρίς ο ίδιος να το καταλάβει. Ο ίδιος, επειδή δεν ήξερε φιλοσοφία και ιστορία φιλοσοφίας και ψυχολογία, ψυχιατρική κ.ο.κ. δεν τα ξέρει αυτά τα πράγματα, γι' αυτό και ο ίδιος δεν είναι σε θέση να αξιολογήσει αυτά που είπε. Αλλά αυτά που λέει και γράφει έχουν καταπληκτική σημασία για την ιστορία της φιλοσοφίας και της γνωσιολογίας κ.ο.κ. Καταπληκτική σημασία!

Και φοβάμαι πολύ ότι εδώ στην Ελλάδα, όσοι διαβάζουν τις “Περιπέτειες Ένός Προσκυνητού”, τον π. Σιλουανό, τα διαβάζουν εύσεβιστικά και συναισθηματικά. Το μεγαλύτερο λάθος είναι αυτά τα βιβλία να διαβάζονται συναισθηματικά και εύσεβιστικά, διότι ούτε για συναισθήματα είναι αυτά τα βιβλία ούτε για εύσεβισμό. Ούτε το ένα ούτε το άλλο. Είναι πάρα πολύ σοβαρά βιβλία έξέπωσης ψυχιατρικής, ψυχολογίας και φιλοσοφίας κ.ο.κ., που πρέπει με σοβαρότητα να διαβάζονται και όχι να διασκεδάζεται ή φαντασία των εύσεβων.

Αυτό γίνεται εδώ στην Ελλάδα. Διαβάζουν εύσεβεις και μπορούν να διαβάσουν και κανένα Κίργκεγκαρ, ή κανένα Φραντσέζο, ύστερα διαβάζουν έναν Έγγλέζο, διαβάζουν έναν Γερμανό περί προσευχής, μπορεί να διαβάσουν την ζωή του Χριστού ενός Ιταλού και να διαβάζουν και τις “Περιπέτειες Ένός Προσκυνητού” και τον π. Σιλουανό και να μην καταλαβαίνουν ότι υπάρχει διαφορά και τα κάνουν όλα ένα. Όλα τα ανακατεύουν, Όλα μαζί.

Μπορεί να πάρουν και ένα βιβλίο που γράφτηκε περί εύσεβείας από τον ίδιο τον διάβολο και να μην το έχουν καταλάβει. Γι' αυτό χρειάζεται πάρα πολλή προσοχή, προσοχή και πάρα πολλή προσευχή. Λοιπόν, ή ακριβεία της προσευχής έχει πάρα πολύ μεγάλη σημασία».



Να Κόψουμε τὰ Πάθη!

Αββᾶς Δωρόθεος.

Τρεις είναι οί καταστάσεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ὁ ἕνας ἀφήνει ἐλεύθερο τὸ πάθος του νὰ ἐκδηλώνεται, ὁ ἄλλος δὲν τὸ ἀφήνει νὰ ἐκδηλωθεῖ καὶ ὁ τρίτος τὸ ξεριζώνει.

Αὐτὸς ποὺ τὸ ἀφήνει νὰ ἐκδηλωθεῖ, ἐνεργεῖ ὅπως τοῦ ὑπαγορεύει τὸ πάθος, σὰν αὐτὸ νὰ ἦταν δικαίωμά του. Αὐτὸς ποὺ δὲν ἐπιτρέπει στὸ πάθος νὰ ἐκδηλωθεῖ, οὔτε τὸ ἀφήνει ἐλεύθερο οὔτε καὶ τὸ κόβει ἀντίθετα τὸ ἐξετάζει καὶ τὸ ξεπερνάει τὴ δύσκολη στιγμή, ἀλλὰ δὲν παύει νὰ τὸ ἔχει. Καὶ αὐτὸς ποὺ ξεριζώνει τὸ πάθος εἶναι ὁποῖος ἀγωνίζεται καὶ κάνει τὰ ἀντίθετα ἀπὸ αὐτὰ ποὺ τοῦ ὑπαγορεύει τὸ πάθος του.

Ἀπὸ ἔπαρση δὲ σηκώνει κανεὶς μία κουβέντα ἀπὸ τὸν ἀδελφό του. Μπορεῖ κάποιος νὰ ἀκούσει μία κουβέντα καὶ νὰ ταραχθεῖ καὶ νὰ πεῖ πέντε κουβέντες ἢ καὶ δέκα γιὰ τὴ μία ποὺ ἄκουσε. Μετὰ μαλώνει καὶ ταραίζει τὸν ἄλλο. Καί, ὅταν τελειώσει ὁ καυγᾶς, συνεχίζει νὰ κάνει κακὲς σκέψεις γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ποὺ τοῦ εἶπε αὐτὴ τὴν κουβέντα καὶ τὴ θυμᾶται μὲ ἐμπάθεια καὶ λυπᾶται ποὺ δὲν τοῦ εἶπε ἀκόμα περισσότερα. Ἐτοιμάζει μάλιστα μέσα τοῦ λόγια ἀκόμα χειρότερα νὰ πεῖ στὸν ἄλλο, καὶ ὅλο σκέφτεται: «Γιατί νὰ μὴν τοῦ πῶ αὐτό; Μπορῶ νὰ τοῦ πῶ καὶ τὸ ἄλλο». Καὶ εἶναι συνέχεια θυμωμένος.

Νὰ μία κατάσταση. Ἐδῶ τὸ κακὸ ἔχει γίνει συνήθεια. Ὁ Θεὸς νὰ μᾶς φυλάξει ἀπὸ τέτοια κατάσταση. Αὐτὴ ἡ κατάσταση ὀδηγεῖ στὴν κόλαση. Γιατί κάθε ἁμαρτία ποὺ δὲν διορθώνεται, μᾶς ὀδηγεῖ στὸν ἐσωτερικὸ θάνατο. Ἀλλὰ κι ἂν ἀκόμα θελήσει ἕνας τέτοιος ἄνθρωπος νὰ μετανοήσει, δὲν μπορεῖ μόνος του νὰ νικήσει τὸ πάθος του, παρὰ μόνον ἂν ἔχει τὴ βοήθεια πνευματικῶν ὀδηγῶν, ὅπως εἶπαν οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Γι' αὐτὸ σας λέω πάντα, **νὰ φροντίσετε νὰ κόψετε τὰ πάθη σας πρὶν σᾶς γίνουν συνήθεια.**



Οἱ φάκελλοι τῶν κεκοιμημένων πιστῶν καὶ ἀπίστων, μένουν ἀνοιχτοὶ μέχρι τῆς Δευτέρας Παρουσίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ δέχονται ἀλλοιώσεις. Κατ' ἀναλογία τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν προσπαθειῶν τῆς στρατευομένης Ἐκκλησίας, ἐπηρεάζονται οἱ φάκελλοι. Γιὰ παράδειγμα, τὰ μνημόσυνα καὶ τὰ σαρανταλείτουργα, ποὺ γίνονται γιὰ τοὺς κεκοιμημένους, βοηθοῦν πολύ.

Ἐπίσης ὑπάρχουν ἄνθρωποι ποὺ πέθαναν μὲ 100% κόλαση καὶ ἕως ὅτου γίνη ἡ Δευτέρα Παρουσία, θὰ βρεθοῦν μὲ 1000% κόλαση. Μὰ θὰ πῆ κάποιος: Αὐτὸς πέθανε, πῶς ἁμαρτάνει; Νὰ πᾶς νὰ ρωτήσης τὸν Καζαντζάκη, νὰ σοῦ πῆ πῶς ἁμαρτάνει. Ἐπηρεάζεται ὁ φάκελλός του, κατ' ἀναλογία τῆς ἀπιστίας του. Ὁ Καζαντζάκης ἔγραψε βιβλία, ὅπου ἐξέφραζε τὴν ἀπιστία του καὶ πολλοὶ διαβάζοντάς τα βλάπτονται καὶ ἔτσι ὁ Καζαντζάκης ἁμαρτάνει. Ἀντίθετα ὁ Ἱερὸς Χρυσόστομος μὲ τὸ συγγραφικὸ ἔργο του, ποὺ μᾶς ἄφησε παρακαταθήκη, φαντάζεστε πόσο ὑψηλὰ φτάσανε οἱ μετοχές του! Ἔτσι πολλῶν οἱ ἁμαρτίες ἢ οἱ ἀγαθοεργίες, τοὺς ἀκολουθοῦν πέραν τοῦ τάφου. Μὲ βάση τὰ παραπάνω, κανένας δὲν ξέρει πῶς θὰ βρεθῆ στὴν τελικὴ κρίση.

Μακαριστὸς Ἱεροκλήρκας Δημήτριος Παναγόπουλος (+1982)

Ὁ Ἐναγκαλισμὸς τῶν Ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου

Πηγή: «Ρωμαϊκὸ Ὀδοιπορικόν» 29, Ἰουνίου, 2012.



Ομήνας Ἰουνίος καταυγάζεται ἀπὸ τῆ μεγάλης ἑορτῆ τῶν πρωτοκορυφαίων ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου (στὶς 29 Ἰουνίου). Δὲν πρόκειται περὶ μίας ἀπλῆς ἑορτῆς, ὅπως συνήθως ἐορτάζουμε τίς ὑπόλοιπες ἑορτὲς τῶν ἁγίων μας: νὰ

θυμηθοῦμε τὴν κατὰ Χριστὸν πολιτεία τους καὶ στὸ μέτρο τῶν δυνατοτήτων μας νὰ τοὺς μιμηθοῦμε. Στὸν ἑναγκαλισμὸ τῶν δύο ἀποστόλων, ὅπως τὸν βλέπουμε στὴ γνωστὴ εἰκόνα τους, ἡ Ἐκκλησία μᾶς πρόβαλε τὴ σύζευξη τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῶν ἔργων, μὲ ἄλλα λόγια εἶδε τοὺς ἀποστόλους αὐτοὺς ὡς σύμβολο καὶ τύπο τῆς παραδόσεώς της.

Ἵπῃρξε, καὶ ὑπάρχει ἀκόμη σὲ ὀρισμένους αἰρετικούς, ἡ ἄποψη ὅτι οἱ πρωτοκορυφαῖοι ἀπόστολοι ἀκολουθοῦν διαφορετικὲς παραδόσεις καὶ ἐκφράζουν διαφορετικὲς θεολογίες: ὁ ἀπόστολος Πέτρος, λένε, τονίζει τὰ ἔργα ὡς δρόμο σωτηρίας, γεγονός πού τὸν σχετίζει περισσότερο μὲ τὴν Ἰουδαϊκὴ παράδοση, καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος τονίζει κυρίως τὴν πίστη, ἄρα εἶναι ὁ ρηξικέλευθος καὶ ὁ ἀληθινὸς Χριστιανός. Τὸν Πέτρο εἶδαν πολλοὶ ὡς πρότυπο τῆς θεολογίας τοῦ Ρωμαιοκαθολικισμοῦ, ἡ ὁποία πράγματι ὑπερτονίζει τὰ καλὰ ἔργα εἰς βάρος συχνὰ τῆς πίστεως, καὶ τὸν Παῦλο ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη σχέτισαν μὲ τὸν Προτεσταντισμὸ, ὁ ὁποῖος ὑποβαθμίζει τὰ ἔργα ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως.

Γιὰ ἐμᾶς τοὺς Ὀρθοδόξους ὅμως μία τέτοια διασπασμένη κατανόηση τῆς θεολογίας τῶν ἀποστόλων αὐτῶν ἀποτελεῖ μεγάλη πλάνη. Καὶ τοῦτο γιατί καὶ οἱ δύο ἀπόστολοι ἐκφράζουν τὴν ἴδια τελικῶς θεώρηση τῆς πίστεως. Δὲν προβάλλει ἄλλον Χριστὸ ὁ Πέτρος καὶ ἄλλον ὁ Παῦλος. Καὶ οἱ δύο καταθέτουν τὴν ἴδια ἐμπειρία, τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σωτηρία, γιὰ τὴν ὁποία καὶ οἱ δύο ἔδωσαν μὲ μαρτυρικὸ τρόπο τὴ ζωὴ τους. Τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄλλωστε πού τοὺς φώτιζε, ἦταν καὶ εἶναι πάντοτε τὸ ἴδιο. Ὅταν ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος, γιὰ παράδειγμα, τονίζει τὴν πίστη ὡς προϋπόθεση τῆς σωτηρίας, ἐξαγγέλλει τὴν κοινὴ μαρτυρία καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀποστόλων, ποεξάρχοντος τοῦ Πέτρου (βλ. π.χ. Α΄ Πέτρο. 1:5, 9:21, κ.ά.), κατὰ τὴν ὁποία, ναί μὲν ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται (Ρωμ. 1:17), ἀλλὰ ἡ

πίστη αὐτὴ ἐκφράζεται μὲ τὰ ἔργα τῆς πίστεως, μὲ τὴ μετάνοια δηλαδὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ μὲ τὸν καρπὸ τῆς πίστεως, τὴν ἀγάπη. Πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη (Γαλ. 5:6) κατὰ τὴ συνοπτικὴ διατύπωσή του, πού σημαίνει ὅτι τότε ἡ Χριστιανικὴ πίστη ζωντανεύει καὶ ἐνεργοποιεῖται, ὅταν ἀκολουθεῖ τὸν δρόμο τῆς ἀγάπης. Πρόκειται γιὰ διαφορετικὴ διατύπωση τῆς διδασκαλίας καὶ τοῦ ἀποστόλου Ἰακώβου, κατὰ τὴν ὁποία ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων νεκρὰ ἐστὶ (Ἰακ. 2:19). Διαφορετικά, ἡ πίστη μόνη μπορεῖ νὰ θεωρηθεῖ καὶ ὡς δαιμονικὴ, ἀφοῦ καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίττουσι. (Ἰακ. 2:19).

Ἔτσι πίστη καὶ ἔργα (πίστεως) συμπορεύονται στὴ Χριστιανικὴ παράδοση, ἐνῶ ὁποιαδήποτε διάσπαση τῆς πίστεως ἀπὸ τὰ ἔργα ἐρμηνεύεται ὡς τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα τῆς συγχύσεως τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ διασπασμένου νοῦ τῶν αἰρετικῶν. Ἡ ἐσωτερικὴ δηλαδὴ διάσπαση, τὴν ὁποία ζοῦν οἱ αἰρετικοί, λόγω τῆς ἐνεργούσας μέσα τους ἀμαρτίας, τοὺς ὀδηγεῖ καὶ στὸ νὰ βλέπουν διασπασμένη τὴ θεολογία τῶν ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου. Μὲ ἄλλα λόγια καὶ στὸ σημεῖο αὐτὸ ἐπιβεβαιώνεται ἡ ψυχολογικὴ ἀρχή, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ὁποία ὁ κάθε ἄνθρωπος γιὰ τὴν κατανόηση τοῦ κόσμου προβάλλει στὴν πραγματικότητα τὸν ἴδιο του τὸν ἑαυτὸ· αὐτὸ πού ζεῖ, τὸ προεκτείνει καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἔξω.

Στὴν πιθανὴ ἔνσταση ὅτι ἱστορικὰ ὑπῆρξε κάποια σύγκρουση τῶν πρωτοκορυφαίων—ὅταν ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος τότε πού ἦρθε ὁ Πέτρος στὴν Ἀντιόχεια, τοῦ ἀντιμίλησε κατὰ πρόσωπο, γιατί ἦταν ἀξιοκατάκριτος. Γιατί πρὶν ἔρθουν μερικοὶ ἄνθρωποι τοῦ Ἰακώβου, ἔτρωγε στὰ κοινὰ δεῖπνα μαζί μὲ τοὺς ἐθνικούς. Σάν ἦρθαν ὅμως, ὑποχωροῦσε καὶ διαχώριζε τὴ θέση του, ἐπειδὴ φοβόταν τοὺς Ἰουδαίους. (πρβλ. Γαλ. 2:11). Ἡ ἀπάντηση δὲν εἶναι διαφορετικὴ: ἡ διαφωνία ἦταν γιὰ τὴν τακτικὴ τοῦ Πέτρου ἀπέναντι στοὺς ἐθνικούς καὶ ὄχι γιὰ τὴν πίστη καὶ τὴν ἀλήθεια πού ζοῦσε. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας, εἶπαμε, πρόβαλε καὶ προβάλλει συνεχῶς τὴν ἐνότητά τους μέσα καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς ἑορτῆς τους, ὅπου τοὺς τοποθετεῖ σὲ ἑναγκαλισμὸ.

Ἡ μεγάλη λοιπὸν ἑορτὴ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου, πού ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας τὴ συνοδεύει καὶ μὲ νηστεία (γι' αὐτοὺς γίνεται ἡ νηστεία καὶ ὄχι γιὰ τὴν ἐπομένη, τῆς σύναξης τῶν ἀποστόλων), καὶ μᾶς ὑπενθυμίζει τὴ βασικὴ ἀλήθεια τῆς πίστεώς μας. Ὅτι δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ σωθοῦμε καὶ νὰ σχετιστοῦμε μὲ τὸν Χριστό, ἂν μαζί μὲ τὴν πίστη μας σὲ Ἐκεῖνον δὲν κινητοποιηθεῖ καὶ ὅλη ἡ ζωὴ μας. Μὲ ἀπλᾶ λόγια, ἡ ἀγάπη μας γιὰ τὸν συνάνθρωπο (αὐτὸ σημαίνει κυρίως κινητοποίηση τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μας) ἀποτελεῖ καὶ τὴ σπουδαιότερη ἐπιβεβαίωση τῆς πραγματικῆς πίστεώς μας.

Μὲ Κάθε Τρόπο ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς Πολεμεῖ τὴ Θεότητα τοῦ Χριστοῦ

Μητροπολίτης Αἰτωλίας καὶ Ἀκαρνανίας Κοσμάς.

«Κράτει ὃ ἔχεις, ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανόν σου...»

[Ἄποκ. 3:11].

† † †

Η προτροπή αὐτή, εἶναι προτροπή τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος πρὸς τὸν Ἐπίσκοπο τῆς Φιλαδελφείας καὶ περιέχεται στὸ τρίτο κεφάλαιο τοῦ Ἱεροῦ βιβλίου τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως. Προτρέπει, τὸ Πανάγιο Πνεῦμα, τὸν Ἐπίσκοπο νὰ διαφυλάξῃ θερμῆ, ἀκεραία καὶ ἀμόλυντη τὴν πίστι του. Κράτα καλὰ τὴν πίστι πὸν ἔχεις, γιὰ νὰ μὴν πάρῃ κανεὶς τὸ στεφάνι σου καὶ τὴν ἀνταμοιβὴ τῶν ἀγῶνων σου.

Σήμερα, ἡ προτροπή αὐτὴ εἶναι κατ'ἐξοχὴν ἐπίκαιρη, ἀξιοπρόσεκτη καὶ σωτήρια γιὰ ὄλους μας, κληρικούς καὶ λαϊκούς. Μιλᾷ καὶ στὸν καθένα μας τὸ Πανάγιο Πνεῦμα: Χριστιανὲ τῆς συγχρόνου ἐποχῆς, «κράτει ὃ ἔχεις...». Μένε στίς ἐπάξεις τοῦ Ὁρθοδόξου ἀγῶνος σου. Κράτησε καλὰ, δυναμικὰ στὸ νοῦ καὶ τὴν καρδιά σου, τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη ἀλήθεια καὶ πίστι, κράτησέ τὴν καθαρῆ, ἀμόλυντη, ἀκαινοτόμητη καὶ ζέουσα. Φύλαξέ τὴν ὡς κόρη ὀφθαλμοῦ, γιατί ὑπάρχει κίνδυνος μέγας, νὰ σοῦ τὴν μολύνουν, νὰ τὴν ἀλλοιώσουν, νὰ τὴν παραχαράξουν καὶ σὺ νὰ χάσης τὴ σωστὴ πορεία γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία σου.

Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη ἀλήθεια, ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία μας, ἀγαπητοί, εἶναι μοναδικὸς θησαυρὸς, οὐράνιος, θεῖος. Δὲν τὴν ἐφεῦρε οὔτε ἄνθρωπος, οὔτε ἄγγελος. Τὴν ἀπεκάλυψε Ἀὐτὸς ὁ Σαρκοθεῖς Κύριος καὶ Θεὸς μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ Ἕνας τῆς Ἁγ. Τριάδος, τὴν ἐδίδαξε στὸν κόσμον καὶ τὴν ἐπικύρωσε μὲ τὸ Πανάγιο Αἷμα τῆς σταυρικῆς Του θυσίας, γιὰ νὰ ἔχει αἰώνιο, ἀπόσβλητο καὶ ἀκατάλυτο κῦρος. Αὐτὴ τὴν ἀλήθεια, ὅπως τὴν προσέφερε ὁ Κύριος, τὴν ἐκήρυξαν οἱ θεοκήρυκες Ἀπόστολοι, τὴν κατηγγάϊσαν οἱ Ἅγιοι Πατέρες καὶ οἱ Ὁμολογητὲς μὲ τὴ μαρτυρικὴ τους ὁμολογία, τὴν ἐστερέωσαν οἱ μάρτυρες καὶ νεομάρτυρες μὲ τὸ ἀγιασμένο αἷμα τους.

Ὅλοι τους, μὲ τὴν ὑπακοή, τὸ σεβασμὸ καὶ τὴν πιστότητα στὸ λόγο τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς, χωρὶς ἐγωϊσμοὺς καὶ παρεμβάσεις, διετήρησαν μέσα στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μας καὶ παρέδωσαν σὲ μᾶς, τὴν ἀποκαλυφθεῖσα, τὴν σώζουσα ἀλήθεια, ἀκριβῆ, τελεία, καθαρῆ, ἀγνή, ἀνόθευτη, ἀκαινοτόμητη, ἀπηλλαγμένη ἀπὸ πλάνες καὶ αἰρετικὲς δοξασίες. Οἱ Ἅγιοι Πατέρες τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μας μὲ πολὺ φόβο, ταπεινῶσι καὶ προσευχή, καὶ ὄχι μὲ τίς πυγολαμπίδες τῆς ἐγωϊστικῆς φιλοσοφικῆς καὶ κοσμικῆς σκέψεως, διαχειρίστηκαν τὴν ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοπνεύστου Εὐαγγελίου. Ἀπόδειξις ἡ ὁμολογία τῆς

Ζ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου: «Ἡμεῖς κατὰ πάντα τῶν θεοφόρων Πατέρων ἡμῶν τὰ δόγματα καὶ πράγματα κρατοῦντες, κηρύσσομεν ἐν ἐνὶ στόματι καὶ μία καρδιά, μηδὲν προστιθέντες, μηδὲν ἀφαιροῦντες τῶν ἐξ αὐτῶν παραδοθέντων ἡμῖν». Αὐτὸ ἐγίνε καὶ γίνεται πάντοτε στὴν μόνῃ ἐν κόσμῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο Ἐκκλησία μας.

Ὁ Ἅγ. Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος ὁμολογεῖ: «Ἡ πίστις μου εἶναι αὐτὴ τὴν ὁποία ἤκουσα ἀπὸ τὰ θεῖα λόγια, τὴν ὁποία ἐδιδάχθην παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων... τὴν πίστι αὐτὴ δὲν θὰ παύσω νὰ διδάσκω. Μαζί της ἐγεννήθηκα καὶ μὲ αὐτὴν “συναπέροχομαι” τῆς παρούσης ζωῆς...».

Καὶ ὁ π. Γεώργιος Φλωρόφσκυ ὑπογραμμίζει: «Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία εἶναι αὐτὴ μὲ τὴν Ἐκκλησία ὄλων των ἐποχῶν καὶ μάλιστα μὲ τὴν πρώτην Ἐκκλησίαν...».

Κάθε θησαυρὸς, ὅμως, ἔχει ἐχθροὺς φοβερούς, διατρέχει κινδύνους μεγάλους ἀπὸ ἄρπαγες, κλέπτες, ληστὲς. Μελετώντας τὴν αἱματοβαμμένη πορεία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μας, βλέπουμε τοὺς ἐκάστοτε «λύκους βαρεῖς», τοὺς ἀσπόνδους ἐχθροὺς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἀληθείας, διὰ τῆς ὁποίας ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου θέλει νὰ ματαιώσῃ τὴ σωτηρία μας.

Ἰουδαῖοι, Ἀρειανοί, Πνευματομάχοι, Μονοφυσίτες, Εἰκονομάχοι, Μάρτυρες τοῦ Ἰεχωβά, Χιλιαστὲς, Παπικοί, Οὐνίτες, Προτεστάντες, Πεντηκοστιανοί, Εὐαγγελικοί, καὶ τόσοι ἄλλοι, «ὡς λέοντες ὠρυόμενοι», πάντοτε καὶ σήμερα, διακονοῦντες τὸν ἀρχέκακο δράκοντα, ροκανίζουν νύκτα καὶ ἡμέρα τὸ ἅγιο δένδρο τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας μας.

Σ' αὐτοὺς ὄλους νὰ προσθέσουμε τὸν νεοεποχίτικο ἐχθρὸ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἀληθείας καὶ πίστεως, τὴν παναίρεσι τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ. Μὲ κάθε τρόπο ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς σήμερα, μὲ σκοτεινὲς δυνάμεις, ὑπουλα καὶ φανερά, μὲ ἀλλοίωσι τῶν θεσμῶν, τῶν αἰωνίων ἀληθειῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ διωγμοὺς ἀκόμη, πολεμεῖ τὴ θεότητα τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας καὶ θέλει νὰ θέσῃ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Ἀναστάντος Κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ μας ἀνάμεσα στὰ ὀνόματα τῶν ψευτοθεῶν τοῦ κόσμου. Ἀπόδειξις ἡ ἀλλοίωσι τοῦ μαθήματος τῶν θρησκευτικῶν στὰ σχολεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἑλλάδος μας.

Ἀγαπητοὶ ἀδελφοί, τὴ φωνὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἅς τὴν ἀκούσουμε καλὰ σήμερα, πὸν γιορτάζει ἡ μεγάλη μας μητέρα, ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία μας. «Κράτει ὃ ἔχεις, ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανόν σου...».

Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος γράφοντας στὸν μαθητὴ τοῦ Ἀπόστολο Τιμόθεο, πὸν ἦταν Ἐπίσκοπος Ἐφέσου, τὸν προτρέπει: «Ὡ Τιμόθεε, τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον, ἐκτρεπόμενος τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως...». «Παιδί μου Τιμόθεε, φύλαξε καλὰ τὴν ἀλήθεια τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, πὸν μᾶς ἐμπιστεύθηκε ὁ Κύριος ὡς πολύτιμο θησαυρὸ καὶ

ἀπόφυγε τοὺς κούφιους καὶ ματαίους λόγους, πὸν βεβηλώνουν καὶ νοθεύουν τὴν ἀλήθεια». (Α΄ Τιμ. 6:20).

Τὴ φωνὴ τῆς μητέρας μᾶς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας ἄς ἀκούσουμε σήμερα καὶ μεῖς. Τὴν μεταφέρουν σὲ μᾶς οἱ Ἅγιοι Ἀπόστολοι, οἱ Πατέρες, οἱ ὁμολογητές, οἱ μάρτυρες, οἱ νεομάρτυρες.

Ἕλληνες Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί, σταθῆτε ἄγρυπνοι στὶς ἐπάλλξεις. Κρατᾶτε, φυλάξτε αὐτὸ πὸν ἔχετε, τὸ θησαυρὸ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἀληθείας. Μόνο μὲ τὴν ἀδαμαντίνη Ὁρθόδοξο ἀλήθεια, θὰ ἐπιτύχουμε τὴ σωτηρία μας. Ἐφρῦαξαν οἱ πολέμιοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας. Ἐφρῦαξαν τὰ χωρὶς Χριστὸ ἔθνη. Θέλουν νὰ ξεριζώσουν τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία ἀπὸ τὶς καρδιές μας. Θέλουν νὰ κάνουν ἄθρησκη τὴν Ἑλλάδα μας. Τὴν Ἑλλάδα τῶν Πατέρων, τῶν ὁσίων, τῶν μαρτύρων, τῶν νεομαρτύρων, τῶν ἡρώων των θαυμάτων.

Κρατεῖστε τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία ζωντανὴ καὶ καθαρὴ, ἄμειπτη στὴν ψυχὴ σας καὶ τὴ ζωὴ σας. Μὴν προδώσετε τὸ Χριστὸ μας. «**Ἄν δὲν Τὸν ἀρνηθοῦμε δὲν μποροῦν νὰ μᾶς Τὸν πάρουν**», λέει ὁ Ἅγ. Κοσμάς ὁ Αἰτωλός.

Νὰ εὐχηθοῦμε, ἀγαπητοὶ ὅλοι μας, κληρικοὶ καὶ λαϊκοί, νὰ κρατήσουμε σφικτὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη ἀλήθεια στὴ ζωὴ μας, γιὰ νὰ λάβουμε καὶ μεῖς τὸν ἀμαράντινο τῆς οὐρανοῦ δόξης στέφανο. Ἀμήν.

Μετά πατρικῶν ἐορτῶν εὐχῶν,

+ Ὁ Αἰτωλίας καὶ Ἀκαρνανίας Κοσμάς



Ἡ διδασκαλία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Θεανθρώπου Χριστοῦ, διατυπωθεῖσα ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων, ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων, ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων Συνόδων, περὶ τῶν αἰρετικῶν εἶναι ἡ ἐξῆς: **αἱ αἱρέσεις δὲν εἶναι Ἐκκλησία, οὔτε δύνανται νὰ εἶναι Ἐκκλησία**. Διὰ τοῦτο δὲν δύνανται αὐταὶ νὰ ἔχουν ἅγια Μυστήρια.

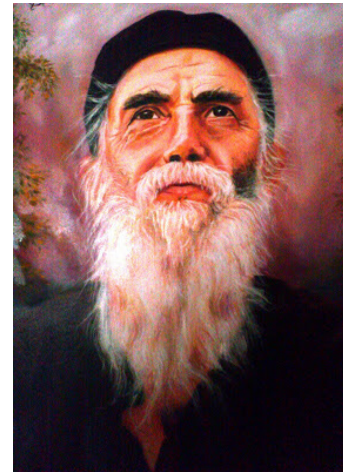
Ἐνεκα τούτου, συμφώνως πρὸς τὸ φρόνημα τῆς Καθολικῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας καὶ συμφώνως πρὸς ὁλόκληρον τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Παράδοσιν, **ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία δὲν παραδέχεται τὴν ὑπαρξίν ἄλλων μυστηρίων ἔξω ἀπ' αὐτὴν**, οὔτε θεωρεῖ αὐτὰ ὡς μυστήρια, ἕως ὅτου προσέλθῃ τις διὰ τῆς μετανοίας ἐκ τῆς αἰρετικῆς «ἐκκλησίας», δηλαδὴ ψευδοεκκλησίας, εἰς τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Μέχρις ὅτου δὲ μένει τις ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἠνωμένος μετ' αὐτῆς διὰ τῆς μετανοίας, μέχρι τότε εἶναι οὗτος διὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν αἰρετικὸς καὶ ἀναποφεύκτως εὐρίσκειται ἐκτὸς τῆς σωτηριώδους Κοινωνίας = Communio. Διότι «**τίς γὰρ μετοχὴ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνομίας; ἢ τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος**». (Β΄ Κορ. 6:14).

Ἅγιος Ἰουστίνος Πόποβιτς

Ἐπὶ Συμπροσευχῶν

Ὁ Ἅγιος Παῖσιος εἶχε μεγάλη Ὁρθόδοξη εὐαισθησία, γι' αὐτὸ δὲν δεχόταν συμπροσευχὲς καὶ κοινωνία μὲ πρόσωπα μὴ Ὁρθόδοξα.

Ἱερομονάχου Ἰσαὰκ «Βίος Ὀσίου Παΐσιου τοῦ Ἀγορείτου», Ἱερὸν Ἡσυχαστήριον «Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Πρόδρομος» Μεταμόρφωσις Χαλκιδικῆς.



Ο Γέροντας ἦταν μοναχὸς μὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὸ φρόνημα καὶ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ συνείδηση. Οἱ ἐκκλησιολογικὲς του ἀπόψεις ἦταν πλήρως Ὁρθοδοξότατες. Πίστευε ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία κατέχει τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς ἀποκαλυφθείσης Ἀλήθειας. Ἔλεγε: «Ὅ,τι ἔχει ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι λαμπικαρισμένο». Ἡ σωτηρία τῶν ἀνθρώπων

κατορθώνεται στὴν Ἐκκλησία. Αἰσθανόταν ὅτι ἀποτελεῖ μέλος τῆς. Ὑπέτασσε τὸ θέλημά του καὶ θυσιαζόταν γιὰ τὸ καλὸ τῆς. Ἀκόμη καὶ ἡ ἄσκησή του εἶχε ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἀναφορά. Πίστευε ὅτι, «ὅταν διορθώσω τὸν ἑαυτό μου, διορθώνεται ἓνα κομμάτι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας». Ἡ ἀγάπη του γιὰ αὐτὴν ἦταν πολὺ μεγάλη. Γιὰ τὴν εὐστάθειά της ὑπέμεινε κόπους καὶ θυσιές, γιὰ τὴν δόξα τῆς προσευχόταν συνεχῶς. Γιὰ τὴν ἐνότητά της ἀγωνίστηκε πολυτρόπως. Ἐγγραφε: «Δὲν εἶμαι ἀπὸ ἐκείνους πὸν ἔχουν κάνει τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν κόμμα. Ἀγαπῶ τοὺς καλοὺς ἐργάτας τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βοηθῶ ὅσο μπορῶ».

Βοήθησε πολλοὺς νέους νὰ γίνουν καλοὶ κληρικοὶ, ἐργάτες στὸν ἀμπελώνα τοῦ Κυρίου. Τοὺς συμβούλευε: «Ἐργασθεῖτε ταπεινὰ μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ ὁ Κύριος θὰ σᾶς προδώσει (ἀναδείξει, φανερώσει) στὰ μάτια τῶν ἀνθρώπων». Κάποιοι ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς σήμερα κοσμοῦν τὴν Ἱεραρχία.

Ἦθελε οἱ κληρικοὶ νὰ ἐτοιμάζουν τὸν λαὸ μὲ τὴν μετάνοια, γιὰ νὰ ἀποφύγουμε τὴν δικαία ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ διακονία τους νὰ ἀποβλέπῃ στὴν σωτηρία τῶν πιστῶν καὶ στὴν δόξα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὄχι στὴν αὐτοπροβολή. Ἔλεγε γιὰ κληρικὸ πὸν ἐπετέλεσε ἔργο ἀξιόλογο, ὅτι «θὰ εἶχε... ἀξία τὸ ἔργο του, ἂν δὲν ἦταν κάτι τὸ προσωπικόν».

Ὁ ἴδιος ἀθόρυβα ἀπὸ τὸ ἀσκητήριό του παρακολουθοῦσε τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴ κατάστασι μὲ ἐνδιαφέρον. Προσευχόταν, μιλοῦσε, ἔγραφε καὶ, ὅταν τὸ ἔκρινε ἀναγκαῖο, ἐξερχόταν στὸν κόσμον γιὰ κάποια ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ὑπόθεσι.

Πονούσε πολύ, όταν υπήρχαν σκάνδαλα και εκκλησιαστικές κρίσεις. Τότε προσευχόταν περισσότερο. «Σὰς ἔγραψα τὸ βαθὺ νόμο μου», ἔγραφε σὲ ἐπιστολή του σὲ μία τέτοια περὸδο (12-4-75), καὶ ἐξηγοῦσε γιατί συμβαίνουν αὐτά: «Λεῖπει ἡ πατερικὴ πνευματικὴ ἀρχοντιὰ καὶ ἐπόμενο ἐῖναι νὰ μαλώνουμε σὰν τοὺς γύφτους».

Τηροῦσε τοὺς ἱεροὺς κανόνες καὶ τὴν τάξη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Σεβόταν τὶς ἀρχές καὶ τὰ θέσμιμα τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους. Χωρὶς γραπτὴ ἄδεια ἐξόδου δὲν ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ τὸ Ὅρος.

Εἶχε εὐλάβεια στοὺς ἐπισκόπους. Ἰδιαίτερος σεβόταν τὸν Οἰκουμενικὸ θρόνο. Ἀναγνώριζε τὴν πανορθόδοξη ἀποστολή του καὶ κατανοῦσε τὴν δύσκολη θέση ποὺ βρίσκεται. Προσευχόταν πολὺ καὶ τὸν ὑπερασπίστηκε δημόσια σὲ πολλὲς περιπτώσεις.

Ἀπὸ τὸ Στόμιο εἶδαμε τὸν Γέροντα σφοδρὸ πολέμιο τῶν αἱρέσεων. Στὰ θέματα τῆς πίστεως ἦταν ἀκριβῆς καὶ ἀσυγκατάβατος.

Εἶχε μεγάλη Ὁρθόδοξη εὐαισθησία, γι' αὐτὸ δὲν δεχόταν συμπροσευχές καὶ κοινωνία μὲ πρόσωπα μὴ Ὁρθόδοξα. Τόνιζε: «Γιὰ νὰ συμπροσευχηθοῦμε μὲ κάποιον, πρέπει νὰ συμφωνοῦμε στὴν πίστη». Διέκοπτε τὶς σχέσεις του ἢ ἀπέφευγε νὰ δῆ κληρικοὺς ποὺ συμμετείχαν σὲ κοινὲς προσευχὲς μὲ ἑτεροδόξους. Τὰ «μυστήρια» τῶν ἑτεροδόξων δὲν τὰ ἀναγνώριζε καὶ συμβούλευε οἱ προσερχόμενοι στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία, νὰ κατηχοῦνται καλὰ πρὶν βαπτισθοῦν.

Καταπολέμησε τὸν οἰκουμενισμὸ καὶ μιλοῦσε γιὰ τὸ μεγαλεῖο καὶ τὴν μοναδικότητα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, τὴν πληροφορία του ἀρμόμενος ἀπὸ τὴν ἐν καρδίᾳ του θεία χάρι. Ὁ βίος του ἀποδείκνυε τὴν ὑπεροχὴ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας.

Γιὰ ἓνα διάστημα εἶχε διακόψει μαζὶ μὲ ὄλο σχεδὸν τὸ ὑπόλοιπο Ἅγιον Ὅρος, τὸ μνημόσυνο τοῦ πατριάρχου Ἀθηναγόρα γιὰ τὰ ἐπικίνδυνα ἀνοίγματα του πρὸς τοὺς Ρωμαιοκαθολικούς. Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔκανε μὲ πόνο: «Κάνω προσευχή», εἶπε σὲ κάποιον, «γιὰ νὰ κόβῃ ὁ Θεὸς μέρες ἀπὸ μένα καὶ νὰ τὶς δίνῃ στὸν πατριάρχη Ἀθηναγόρα, γιὰ νὰ ὀλοκληρώσῃ τὴν μετάνοιά του».

Γιὰ τοὺς Ἀντιχαλκηδονίους (Μονοφυσίτες) εἶπε: «Αὐτοὶ δὲν λένε ὅτι δὲν κατάλαβαν τοὺς ἁγίους Πατέρες, ἀλλ' ὅτι οἱ ἅγιοι Πατέρες δὲν τοὺς κατάλαβαν. Δηλαδή σὰν νὰ ἔχουν αὐτοὶ δίκαιο καὶ τοὺς παρεξηγήσανε».

Χαρακτήρισε ὡς βλασφημία κατὰ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων τὴν προτεινόμενη κάθαρση τῶν Λειτουργικῶν βιβλίων ἀπὸ τὸν χαρακτηρισμὸ τοῦ αἱρετικοῦ γιὰ τὸν Διόσκορο καὶ Σεβήρο. Εἶπε: «Τόσοι ἅγιοι Πατέρες ποὺ εἶχαν θεῖο φωτισμὸ καὶ ἦταν σύγχρονοι δὲν τοὺς κατάλαβαν καὶ τοὺς παρεξήγησαν καὶ ἐρχόμαστε ἐμεῖς μετὰ ἀπὸ τόσους αἰῶνες νὰ διορθώσουμε τοὺς ἁγίους

Πατέρες; Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θαῦμα τῆς ἁγίας Εὐφημίας δὲν τὸ ὑπολογίζου; Καὶ αὐτὴ παρεξήγησε τὸν τόμο τῶν αἱρετικῶν».

Χωρὶς νὰ ἐπιδιώκει νὰ φαίνεται ὁμολογητῆς, μὲ τὸν τρόπο του, ἀντιδροῦσε, μιλοῦσε καὶ ἔγραφε σὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὰ πρόσωπα. Ἦ «Ἐκκλησία», ἔλεγε, «δὲν εἶναι καρὰβι τοῦ κάθε ἐπισκόπου νὰ κάνῃ ὅ,τι θέλει». Οἱ ἀντιδράσεις τοὺς αὐτὲς συνωδεύονταν ἀπὸ πολλὴ προσευχὴ καὶ ἀγάπη γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία, ἀλλὰ καὶ γιὰ τοὺς παρεκτρεπομένους, καὶ προϋπέθεταν ἀπάθεια, διάκριση καὶ ἄνωθεν φωτισμὸ.

Ἐνα ἄλλο θέμα ποὺ ἀπασχόλησε τὸν Γέροντα ἦταν τὸ θέμα τοῦ ἡμερολογίου. Πονούσε γιὰ τὸν χωρισμὸ καὶ προσευχόταν. Λυπόταν γιὰ τὶς παρατάξεις τῶν παλαιοημερολογιτῶν ποὺ εἶναι ξεκομμένες σὰν τὰ κλήματα ἀπὸ τὴν Ἄμπελο, καὶ δὲν ἔχουν κοινωνία μὲ τὰ Ὁρθόδοξα Πατριαρχεῖα καὶ τὶς κατὰ τόπους αὐτοκέφαλες Ὁρθόδοξες Ἐκκλησίες. Μερικὲς τέτοιες ἐνορίες στὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ στὴν Θεσσαλονίκη ἐνώθησαν καθ' ὑπόδειξή του μὲ τὴν Ἐκκλησία, κρατώντας τὸ παλαιὸ ἡμερολόγιο.

Ἐλεγε: «Καλὸ ἦταν νὰ μὴν ὑπῆρχε αὐτὴ ἡ ἐορτολογικὴ διαφορὰ, ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι θέμα πίστεως». Στὶς ἐνστάσεις ὅτι τὸ νέο ἡμερολόγιο τὸ ἔκανε Πάπας, ἀπαντοῦσε: «Τὸ νέο ἡμερολόγιο τὸ ἔκανε Πάπας καὶ τὸ παλιὸ εἰδωλολάτρης», ἐννοώντας τὸν Ἰούλιο Καίσαρα.

Μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη, τὴν προσευχὴ καὶ τὴν διακρισὴ του, γνώριζε πότε νὰ μιλά, πῶς νὰ ἐνεργῇ καὶ νὰ βοηθᾷ ἀθόρυβα τὴν μητέρα Ἐκκλησία, ἀποφεύγοντας τὰ ἄκρα καὶ θεραπεύοντας πληγὲς ποὺ τλαιπωροῦν τὸ σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ σκανδαλίζου τοὺς πιστοὺς.



Τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ σχίσματος αὐτοὶ (οἱ Λατῖνοι) τὴν ἔδωσαν, βάζοντας τὴν προσθήκη (Φιλιόκβε) ὀλοφάνερα, ἐνῶ πρὶν τὴν ἔλεγαν ἐν κρυπτῷ μέσα ἀπὸ τὰ δόντια τους. Ἐμεῖς λοιπὸν ἤλθαμε σὲ σχίσμα μὲ αὐτοὺς πρωτύτερα, ἢ πιὸ σωστὰ αὐτοὺς τοὺς σχίσσαμε καὶ τοὺς ἀποκόψαμε ἀπὸ τὸ κοινὸ σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Γιατί; Πές μου ποῖο ἀπὸ τὰ δύο ἰσχύει, ὅτι εἶχαν ὀρθὴ διδασκαλία, ἢ ὅτι ὀρθῶς ἔκαναν τὴν προσθήκη; Καὶ ποῖος θὰ μπορούσε νὰ πεί αὐτό, ἐὰν δὲν εἶναι σφόδρα σαλεμένος στὸ μυαλό; Ἀλλὰ θεωροῦμε ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἔχουν ἄτοπα καὶ δυσσεβῆ φρονήματα καὶ ἔκαναν αὐτὴν τὴν παράλογη προσθήκη. Ἐπομένως ὡς αἱρετικοὺς τοὺς ἀποστραφήκαμε καὶ γι' αὐτὸ χωρισθήκαμε ἀπὸ αὐτούς.

Ἅγιος Μᾶρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός

Μὲ Ἄθεους, μὲ Ἐκκλησιομάχους, μὲ Καταδιεφθαρμένους Πολιτικούς «Τὸ Ἔθνος δὲν Στέκη»

Γράφει ὁ Δημήτρης Νατσιός, δάσκαλος-Κιλκίς.

Στὸν δεύτερο τόμο τῶν «Ἀπομνημονευμάτων τοῦ Κολοκοτρώνη»—(ἐκδ. Γ. Βαλέτα, σελ. 323)—ἐντόπισα ἓνα πολὺ ὠραῖο καὶ διδακτικὸ ἐπεισόδιο, ποὺ διαδραματίζεται κατὰ τὴν Ἁγιασμένη Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ '21. Τὸ διηγείται ὁ Γεώργιος Τερτσέτης—τί σπουδαῖος ἄνθρωπος—σὲ λόγῳ του στὶς 25 Μαρτίου τοῦ 1855, στὴν τότε Βουλὴ τῶν Ἑλλήνων. Τὸ μεταφέρω, ὡς ἔχει:

«Κύριοι ἀκροαταί, εἰς τὰ 1822, πολεμιστὴς, στρατιωτὴς περίφημος, ἐπῆγε εἰς σεβάσιμον πνευματικὸν νὰ ξομολογηθεῖ, καὶ νὰ μεταλάβει.

Ἐξομολογήθη, ὁ πνευματικὸς του εὐχήθη, τὸν ἐχαίδευσεν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ εἶπε:

- Δὲν ἤμπορῶ νὰ σὲ δώσω μεταλαβιά.

- Διατί;

- Χύνεις αἷμα ἀνθρώπινο...!

Ἵρξισθη ὁ στρατιώτης καὶ ἔτρεξε παραπονούμενος εἰς τὸν ἐπίσκοπον Μεθώνης. Τοῦ εἶπε ὅσα λέγει ὁ πνευματικὸς, ὁ στρατιώτης ἦτο θυμώδης. Τὸν ἤκουσεν ὁ ἐπίσκοπος. Τὴν Κυριακὴν, τοῦ λέγει, ἤσου (=νὰ εἶσαι) εἰς τὴν Λειτουργίαν, ἤσου πλησίον μου.

Ἦλθε ἡ Κυριακὴ, ψάλλεται ἡ Λειτουργία. Ὁ Δεσπότης εἰς τὴν μεσινὴ θύρα, εἰς τὴν ὥρα τῆς μεταλαβιάς, κρατώντας τὸ δισκοπότηρο, φωνάζει τὸν στρατιώτη.

- Ἔλα, τοῦ λέγει, πάρε, κράτει τὸ δισκοπότηρο, μετάλαβε μὲ τὰ ἴδια σου τὰ χέρια, τὰ χέρια σου εἶναι πλέον ἄθθα, πλέον εὐεργετικὰ εἰς τὴν πατρίδα ἀπὸ τὰ ἐδικὰ μας. Ἡμεῖς οἱ ἱερεῖς δεόμεθα τὸν Ὑψιστο μὲ τὴ φωνή· ἐσύ, σταίνοντας τὰ... στήθη σου, εἰς τὰ βόλια τοῦ ἐχθροῦ».

Κείμενο ποὺ μοσχοβολάει εὐωδία λευτεριάς, τὰ ἄνθη τὰ μυρίνοια τῆς ἀρχοντικῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας μας. Λόγια ὅμως ποὺ διδάσκουν καὶ σήμερα, τὴν γενιὰ τὴν δικιά μας ποὺ εἶναι γιὰ τὰ... πανηγύρια. (Στὰ μέρη μου, στὴν ἀλίπληκτο Πιερία, λέμε μιὰ «νόστιμη» παροιμία: «Ἡ ψείρα μας στὸν Ἑλυμπο καὶ μεῖς στὰ πανηγύρια». Δηλαδή ἡ φτώχεια καὶ ἡ δυστυχία μᾶς ἔχει ἀφανίσει καὶ μεῖς ἀσχολούμαστε μὲ τὶς προστυχιᾶς καὶ τὶς παλαβομάρες τῶν «καντιποτένιων», ὅπως τοὺς

ὀνόμαζε τοὺς πολιτικάντηδες, ὁ πατριδοφύλακας στρατηγὸς Μακρυγιάννης).

Στὸ ἐπεισόδιο τοῦ «Ἱεροῦ Ἀγῶνος» ποὺ μᾶς διέσωσε ὁ Τερτσέτης, διαβάζουμε γιὰ τὸ πῶς σώθηκε τὸ δοῦλον Γένος κατὰ τὴν μακραίωνη αἰχμαλωσία στοὺς Σαρακηνοὺς. (Ἀναζητώντας κάποτε τὴν ἐτυμολογία τῆς λέξεως Σαρακηνός, βρῆκα στὸ βιβλίο τοῦ Ν. Βασιλειάδη «Ἰσλάμ-Ὁρθοδοξία», σελ. 85, τὸ ἐξῆς ἀξιοσημείωτο. Ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνὸς ἔγραφε ὅτι «Σαρακηνοὺς τοὺς Ἰσραηλίτας καλοῦσιν, ὡς ἐκ τῆς Σάρρας κενούς διὰ τὸ εἶρησθαι ὑπὸ τῆς Ἄγαρ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ: Σάρρα κενὴν μὲ ἀπέλυσε»).

Σκοτάδι ψηλαφητὸ ἔπεσε καὶ σήμερα πάνω στὴν πατρίδα μας, τὰ ἐντάλματα τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου ἀνατρέπονται καὶ ποδοπατοῦνται, τὰ παιδιὰ μας, μὲσω τῆς ἐλλεινῆς ἐκπαίδευσης, τὰ ξεμυρώνουν καὶ τὰ ξεβαπτίζουν, μᾶς κυβεροῦν ἄνθρωποι χειρότεροι καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους. Κι ἂν αὐτὸ φαίνεται ὑπερβολικὸ διαβάσω τὰ λόγια τοῦ Παπουλάκου: «Εἶναι ντροπὴ μας, ἓνα Γένος ποὺ μὲ τὸ αἷμα του πύργωσε τὴ λευτεριά του, ποὺ πορπάτησε τὴ δύσκολη ἀνηφορία, νὰ παραδεχτεῖ πῶς δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ πορπατήσῃ στὸν ἴσιο δρόμο ἅμα εἰρήνεψε κι ὅτι δὲν ξέρουμε μεῖς νὰ σιγυρίσουμε τὸ σπίτι, ποὺ μὲ τὸ αἷμα μας

λευτερώσαμε, ἀλλὰ ξέρουν νὰ τὸ σιγυρίσουν ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ δὲν πολέμησαν, ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ δὲν πίστεψαν στὸν ἄγωνα, ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ πᾶνε νὰ μᾶς ἀποκόψουν ἀπὸ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ πασχίζουν νὰ μᾶς ριξοῦνε στὴ σκλαβιά ἄλλων ἀφεντάδων ποὺ εἶναι πιὸ διαμονισμένοι ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους. Γιατί καὶ κεῖνα ποὺ σεβάστηκε ὁ Τούρκος, τ' ἄθεα γράμματα τὰ πετᾶνε καὶ πᾶνε νὰ τὰ ξεριζώσουνε... Τ' ἄθεα γράμματα ὑφαίνουνε τὸ σάβανο τοῦ Γένους. Αὐτὰ λοιπὸν τὰ γράμματα θὰ μάθουμε στὰ παιδιὰ μας» (Κ. Μπαστιά, ὁ Παπουλάκος, Ἐκδοτικὴ Ἀθηνῶν, 1997, σελ. 145-146).

Ἦρθε ἡ ὥρα, τὰ ἄθεα γράμματα, μᾶς ἔριξαν στὴν σκλαβιά ἄλλων ἀφεντάδων πιὸ δαμονισμένων ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους. Ψηφίζονται νόμοι ποὺ μᾶς ἀποκόπτουν ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστό, ποὺ ξεριζώνουν ὅσια καὶ ἱερά, ποὺ ὑφαίνουν—φοβεροὶ λόγοι—τὸ σάβανο τοῦ πάλαι ποτὲ Ὁρθόδοξου Γένους τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ποὺ ἀκυρώνουν τὴν ἐπανάσταση τοῦ '21. Διακόσια χρόνια μετὰ βαδίζουμε ὀλοταχῶς γιὰ ἱστορικὴ εὐθανασία... ἐκτὸς ἄν...



Ἐκτὸς ἂν μιμηθοῦμε τοὺς ἡρωϊκοὺς προγόνους μας. Τί μᾶς διδάσκει τὸ κείμενο τοῦ προλόγου μετὸν περίφημο πολεμιστὴ καὶ τὸν ἅγιο Ἐπίσκοπο Μεθώνης;

Ὁ ἀγωνιστὴς εἶχε πνευματικὸ καὶ ἐξομολογεῖτο γιὰ νὰ μεταλάβει.

Ἐν μέσῳ ἐπανάστασης, μετὸν Τούρκους νὰ θερίζουν, νὰ τηγανίζουν τὸ Ρωμαϊκὸ, μετὰ σφαγῆς, ἀρπαγῆς καὶ γενοκτονίας, ἡ μετάνοια δὲν ἔλειπε.

**«Γιὰ τῆς πατρίδος τὴν ἐλευθερίαν
γιὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν πίστιν τὴν ἁγίαν
γι' αὐτὰ τὰ δύο πολέμῳ...».**

Πολεμοῦσαν καὶ μετανουοῦσαν, γι' αὐτὸ ἦταν Ἁγιασμένη ἡ Ἐπανάσταση. Τί προκοπὴ νὰ περιμένει κανεὶς σήμερα ὅταν ἄθεα ἀπολειψάδια νομοθετοῦν καὶ ψηφίζουν, μετὰ χέρια καὶ ποδάρια, νόμους ποὺ μόνο σὲ πολιτεῖες Σοδόμων καὶ Γομμόρων ἀρμόζουν;

Μετὰ τὴν νίκη στὸ Βαλτέτσι ὁ μεγάλος Κολοκοτρώνης, θὰ πεῖ στὰ παλλικάρια του: (Ἦταν Παρασκευὴ 13 Μαΐου 1821).

«Πρέπει νὰ νηστεύσωμεν ὅλοι διὰ δοξολογίαν ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ νὰ δοξάζεται αἰώνας αἰώνων ἕως οὐ στέκη τὸ ἔθνος, διότι ἦτον ἡ ἐλευθερία τῆς πατρίδος». Τέτοιοι ἄνθρωποι ποὺ μοσχοβολοῦν σὰν τὸ Τίμιο Ξύλο μᾶς ἔσωσαν.

Μὲ ἄθεους, μασόνους, μετὰ καταδιεφθαρμένους πολιτικούς «το ἔθνος δὲν στέκη». «Ἐπλήσθη ἡ γῆ ἀδικίας ἀπ' αὐτῶν...». (Γεν. 6,13).

Τί σπουδαία μορφή καὶ ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος!!! «Ἡμεῖς οἱ ἱερεῖς δεόμεθα τὸν Ὑψιστο μετὰ τὴν φωνή». Καὶ προσευχὴ γιὰ τὴν σωτηρίαν τοῦ Γένους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν ἦταν ἀνάγκη, ἐπίαναν τὰ στουρναροντούφεκα καὶ γίνονταν καπετάνιοι. Οἱ ἱερεῖς, ὁ κληρὸς εἶναι ἡ τελευταία γραμμὴ ἄμυνας τοῦ ἔθνους.

Ἄν ὑποταχθεῖ στὰ θηρία, ἡ Ἑλλάδα τέλειωσε. Τὸ σχολεῖο πλέον ἀλώθηκε, δὲν θὰ μείνει τίποτε ὄρθιο «ἀπὸ τὰ παλιά, δικὰ μας πλούτη». (Παλαμᾶς). Εἴμαστε σὲ δουλεία, σὲ ὑπουλιή σκλαβιὰ χειρότερη καὶ ἀπ' τῶν Τούρκων καὶ ἀπ' τῶν Φράγκων. Τὸ ρᾶσο εἶναι ἡ ἀφανὴς ἐθνικὴ σημαία τοῦ Γένους. Νὰ θυμηθεῖ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅτι πάντοτε εἶναι Ἑλληνοσώτριά. Ὡς πότε μιὰ χούφτα ἀφεντάδων πιδ δαιμονισμένων ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους θὰ μᾶς καταστρέφουν;

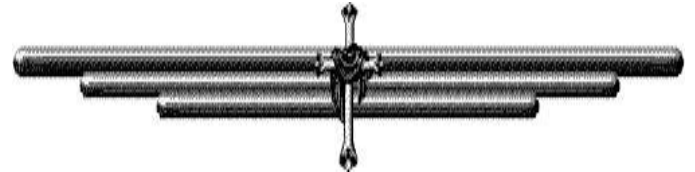
Νὰ κλείσω μετὰ κάτι ποὺ διάβασα στὸ βιβλίον «Μονοτονικὸ, ἐμπειρία 24 ἐτῶν», ἔκδοση τῆς Ι.Σ. τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Διαβάζουμε γιὰ ἓνα γεγονός ποὺ τὸ ἄκουσε καὶ τὸ εἶδε ὁ Κ. Βάρναλης. Μιλᾶ γιὰ τὸν Ψυχάρη, ποὺ ἤθελε νὰ διαλύσει τὴν γλώσσα μας μετὰ τὴν ἰδεοληψίαν του.

«Ὁ Ψυχάρης ἦρθε στὴν Ἑλλάδα πολλὰς φορές. Στὰ 1925 ἦρθε γιὰ τελευταία φορά. Ἐδωσε στὸ θέατρο «Ἀπόλλων» πολλὰς διαλέξεις. Κανένας δὲν

φανταζόταν πόσος κόσμος θὰ γέμιζε ἀσφυκτικὰ τὴν πλατεία καὶ τοὺς ἐξώστες. Ὁ Ψυχάρης βγήκε στὴ σκηνὴ μετὰ φράκο καὶ γεμάτος παράσημα. Ἐρριξε μιὰ ματιὰ στὸ ἀκροατήριον καὶ ἄρχισε τὴν διάλεξίν του μὲ αὐτὴν τὴν κουβέντα:

«Βλέπω δασκάλους, βλέπω φοιτητὲς, βλέπω κυρίες, βλέπω ἀξιωματικούς, μὰ δὲν βλέπω κανέναν παπά. Δεῖχτε μου ἓνα παπᾶ νὰ κατεβῶ νὰ τοῦ φιλήσω τὸ χέρι. Αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια δὲν ἦταν δημοσκοπία. Πραγματικὰ ὁ Ψυχάρης πίστευε πὼς δὲν θὰ μπορούσε νὰ κερδίσει τὸ ἔθνος, ἂν δὲν κέρδιζε πρῶτο τὸ σχολεῖον καὶ ὕστερα τὴν ἐκκλησίαν».

Τὸ σχολεῖον τὸ κέρδισαν... Γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν μᾶς κανοναρχεῖ ὁ ἅγιος Χρυσόστομος: **«Τοιοῦτον ἔχει μέγεθος ἡ Ἐκκλησία: πολεμουμένη νικᾷ. Ἐπιβουλενομένη περιγίνεται ὑβριζομένη, λαμπρότερα καθίσταται δέχεται τραύματα, καὶ οὐ καταπίπτει ὑπὸ τῶν ἐλκῶν. Κλυδωνίζεται ἀλλ' οὐ καταποντίζεται· χεμαίνεται, ἀλλὰ νανάγει οὐχ ὑπομένει. Παλαίει, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡττᾶται πικτεῖται, ἀλλ' οὐ νικᾶται».**



Ἀνακοίνωσις

«Ρωμαϊκὸ Ὀδοπορικόν», 6 Ἰουνίου 2019.

Ἐγούμενοι Ἱερῶν Μονῶν τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους, σύμφωνα μετὰ τὸ Τμήμα Πληροφοριῶν τῆς Οὐκρανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας, ζητοῦν ἀπὸ τοὺς Οὐκρανοὺς προσκυνητὲς νὰ φέρουν ἐπίσημο ἔγγραφο ὅτι ὑπάγονται στὴν **Οὐκρανικὴ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία, ὑπὸ τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Ὀνουφρίου.**

Ὅλοι οἱ προσκυνητὲς ἀπὸ τὴν Οὐκρανία ποὺ ἐπισκέπτονται τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος θὰ πρέπει νὰ φέρουν μαζί τους, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὰ συνηθισμένα ἔγγραφα (διαβατήριον καὶ διαμονητήριον), καὶ ἓνα πιστοποιητικὸ ποὺ θὰ ἐπιβεβαιώνει **τὴν ὑπαγωγή τους στὴν Οὐκρανικὴ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας.**

Ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ σχετικὴ ἐγκύκλιος ποὺ ἐστάλη σὲ ὅλους τοὺς Ἐπισκόπους τῶν Ἐπαρχιῶν τῆς Ὀρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Οὐκρανίας τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας: «Τὸ Γραφεῖο τῆς Μητροπόλεως Κιέβου τῆς Οὐκρανικῆς Ὀρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας, μετὰ τὴν εὐλογία τοῦ Μακαριωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Κιέβου καὶ πάσης Οὐκρανίας Ὀνουφρίου, σᾶς ἐνημερώνει ὅτι κατόπιν αἰτήματος Ἱγουμενῶν τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους, κληρικοί, μοναχοὶ καὶ λαϊκοὶ τῆς Οὐκρανικῆς Ὀρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας ποὺ ἐπισκέπτονται τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος θὰ πρέπει νὰ φέρουν μαζί τους βεβαίωση ὅτι ἀνήκουν στὴν Οὐκρανικὴ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία».

THE UNBROKEN CONTINUITY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

By Gregory Heers (published with permission). NOTE: Footnotes' text and references hesitantly omitted to reduce the article's length, albeit they significantly add to the quality of the article. The original article can be made available by the author to any student of the history of Romania.

Livy, the Roman historian that lived around the time of Christ, wrote, "I do honestly believe that no country has ever been greater or purer than ours, or richer in good citizens and noble deeds." It is therefore lamentable that in the common mind this most glorious empire should be endowed with an end so ignoble and unworthy of mention.

According to any typical history-book, the Roman Empire ended by being divided into two halves: the Western Roman Empire was weakened internally and overrun by barbarian tribes, while the Eastern Empire was somehow transfigured into the "Byzantine Empire" through a gradual process and, although it "survived for another thousand years," apparently deserves no further attention. Thus anyone with an elementary historical education will believe that the Roman Empire, that mighty force that subdued the entire Mediterranean world, silently evaporated, vanished into thin air, at some point in the fifth or sixth century.

This, however, is a lie. There never was a Byzantine Empire. What many now call the "Byzantine Empire" is nothing other than the Roman Empire continuing through the ages. The Roman Empire did not fall in the fifth century. The Roman Empire fell in the fifteenth century AD. Everyone knew this at the time, but the rewriting of history for political purposes has obscured it for the eyes of the contemporary world.

There is, however, yet another threat lying in wait for the Roman Empire. Although acknowledging that historically the Roman Empire was never called "Byzantine," many claim that such an appellation is fitting for its latter phase because in that phase the Empire was substantially different: although it was called the Roman Empire, it was not really Roman but had a different character. It is this slyer attack that the present dissertation wishes to ward off, namely by demonstrating that the continuity of the Roman Empire was never broken. In so doing it will examine various aspects of Roman society through the ages and ask two questions: "Did this aspect change?" and "If it changed, did this change negate the Roman identity?"

Of all the institutions of the **Roman government**, continuity is most obvious in the emperors. Like the rolling years, emperors succeeded one another without interruption from Augustus to Constantine XI. In stark contrast with the custom in other contemporary kingdoms, the imperial office in the Roman Empire was never officially hereditary, since in theory the emperor had to be selected by the Sen-

ate, the people, and the army together. The Roman Empire thus always retained its republican character.

The aforementioned Senate presents another example of the continuity of the Roman Empire, since it also existed to the very last day of the empire. Although it is true that its actual power gradually decreased to the point of non-existence, this was no novel phenomenon of the sixth or seventh century. From the very beginning of the empire, from the reign of Augustus, the emperor had seized the real power for himself, leaving to the Senate only a semblance of authority. As the memory of the republic faded, there was increasingly less need for that semblance of senatorial power and the Senate became an imperial counselor. Nevertheless, even in this the Senate was actually returning to its original state: the *senatus* ("assembly of elders") of the early days of Rome had been precisely an advisor to Rome's first kings.

However hardworking he might be, the emperor needed assistants, governors and prefects over different regions. Immediately after the emperor in rank was the Prefect of the City who was responsible for all the affairs of the capital (e.g. trade, employment, justice, food supply), of New Rome, just as he had been of Old Rome. The provinces had their own governors. In ruling the empire's far-stretching domain, the fourth-century emperors Diocletian and St. Constantine the Great had divorced the military and civilian functions of a province's governor. In the mid-seventh century, however, the political and military rule of the provinces, henceforth called themes, was reunited in the same person. Once again, far from being a deviation, this was actually a return to Roman custom, since "traditionally the governor of a Roman province had also been its military commander." Thus, if anything, **the empire was more Roman in the seventh century than it had been in the fourth.**

Roman law is another domain wherein continuity is grandly displayed. The laws of the Roman Empire took form between the approximate years of 150 BC and 150 AD and drew from five sources: the will of the citizens, the Senate, the Praetors (a type of magistrate), the Emperor, and the jurists. These laws were systemized, clarified and reformed on the orders of Emperor Justinian in his *Codex Justinianus* (AD 529). In addition to this, Justinian also produced the *Digesta* or *Pandectae* which, according to the twentieth-century historian Will Durant, was "[A] gather[ing] into a system [of] those responsa or opinions of the great Roman Jurists which still seemed worthy to have the force of Law" and the *Institutiones*, which "reproduced, amended and brought up to date the Commentaries of Gaius, who in the second century had ... summarized the civil law of his time."

Thus Justinian's law-code was nothing new; it was entirely based on the pre-existing corpus. Durant concludes, "And

this, with some interruptions, remained the law of the Byzantine [sic] Empire till 1453,” and further on, “[The Code] soon ceased to be obeyed except in a narrowing realm. The Eastern nationalistic heretics [i.e. the Monophysites] whom it flayed opened their arms to the Moslems.... Italy under the Lombards, Gaul under the Franks, England under the Anglo-Saxons, Spain under the Visigoths, ignored the edicts of Justinian. ... It continued to the end the code of the Byzantine [sic] Empire.” Thus, the “Byzantine” Empire alone created and used this code because it alone was, not simply the successor of the Roman Empire, but the Roman Empire itself.

The **social structure and taxation** of the empire also entered the Code of Justinian, and these, just like other aspects of

not their size. Thus, the institutions of the later empire are nothing other than a continuation of what was laid down in the early days.

In speaking of institutions one cannot overlook **education**, yet another splendid example of the continuity of the Roman Empire. There was absolutely no change in the education of the empire through its history. This cannot be oversimplified. A paragraph from H. I. Marrou’s “History of Education in Antiquity” will suffice to demonstrate this and also serve as a summary of the past four paragraphs: “Surprising as it may seem, there is to begin with a whole area where, strictly speaking, the old classical school never came to an end in the Greek East; for Byzantine [sic] education was a direct continuation of classical education. This



the law, were structures erected upon foundations laid long ago. In the Code, the two basic classes of citizens were the *honestiores* (the aristocracy, senators, and magistrates) and the *humiliores* (the commoners). This distinction, however, had already developed in the second century AD, and, as a part of the Code, remained in force for the rest of the empire’s history. Likewise, a system of taxation developed by Emperor Diocletian was also used throughout the subsequent years of the empire. In his book on the ancient Mediterranean Charles Freeman states: “Diocletian developed a system under which each individual was assessed on the production potential of his land rather than its extent,” while George Kyrmeles, in his book on the history of the Roman Empire after St. Constantine, mentions that “The fields, the γαῖες, were divided into three categories depending on their quality and production,”

is in fact simply one particular aspect of the fundamental fact that there was no gap, no difference, even, between the civilization of the Late Roman Empire and the early Byzantine [sic] Middle Ages.”

A major objection raised against the Romanity of the later empire is the change of the **empire’s official language** from Latin to Greek. Although at least half of the empire’s population had always spoken Greek, Latin was the official language up until the seventh century. At this point, several questions must be asked. First, is Latin an indispensable, inseparable part of the Roman identity? Also, is Greek definitely a non-Roman language? Ultimately, is language essential to national identity?

A reply to the last question would be that it depends on the context. Although language is tremendously important for

any sort of identity, especially a cultural identity, its change alone does not necessitate a change in a people's national identity, especially in vast multicultural empires such as the Roman Empire or contemporary America. Certainly the original Americans were English-speaking Protestant Englishmen, yet no one would argue on that basis that the Catholic Irishmen or the African-Americans or the Spanish-speaking Floridians or anyone else, of whatever race or religion, is not a true American.

Furthermore, supposing that one day Spanish should become the official language of the United States, would those States no longer be America? Surely not. If then this is the case today regarding Spanish, which, one must admit, has not played a major role in the history of the United States, how much less of a problem should Greek be to the Roman identity when the Greek-speakers of southern

Italy had been neighbors of Rome from the very beginning and contributors to Rome's cultural formation? How is the Greek language unromanly when, according to Vergil's Aeneid, a Greek settlement on the Palatine Hill predated Rome? When finally the city of Rome itself is named after the Greek word ῥώμη, "strength"? Seeing that the language of ancient Rome is called precisely Latin and not

Roman, what further proof is necessary to show that the Latin language, or any one language for that matter, is not an integral part of the Roman identity?

Likewise, it is equally ridiculous to maintain that there is such a thing as a Roman race by blood, taking into account that when Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, wanted to populate his newly-established city, he declared it a haven and attracted the outlaws, debtors, and political exiles of the entire surrounding region. Rome was thus an ecumenical city from its very birth. When in AD 212 Emperor Caracalla granted Roman citizenship to all freeborn inhabitants of the empire, he was simply repeating on a grand scale what Romulus had done in his nascent town. Given these thoughts, the replacement of Latin by any language and certainly by Greek does not signify a divergence from Roman identity at all.



If not language, what about religion? Can Romans still be themselves after relinquishing their ancestral gods? In other words, **is religion essential to national identity?** One would think that to the modern, secular ear the answer to this question would seem obvious, yet this argument is often used, paired up with the argument of language, against the continuity of the empire. It is true that in several circumstances religion and nation have been conflated throughout history. The most obvious example is the Jews, whose name denotes at one and the same time a people and a religion. Similarly, the Assyrians consider as their countryman only him who belongs to the Assyrian Church of the East.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, however, such religious nationalities did not exist. On the one hand, polytheism can hardly be called an organized religion,

since gods of other traditions such as Isis or Cybele could easily be integrated into the Greco-Roman pantheon and worshipped alongside Zeus or Aphrodite. On the other hand everyone in the empire, with the exception of the Christians and the Jews, worshipped a set of gods that were to a certain degree equivalent with each other: he whom the Romans called Jupiter was known as

Zeus among the Greeks, as Ammon among the Egyptians, as Taranis among the Celts. Even within a specific tradition some especially honored Apollo while others worshipped Dionysus, to give a simple example.

In this loose kind of religion a Roman could even worship an Asian goddess without raising the least doubt concerning his identity. Therefore it is unreasonable to claim that by being baptized the Romans ceased being Roman. One might as well say that all those formerly pagan peoples entirely vanished upon entering the baptismal font, that we cannot speak of a Christian Greek or a Christian Syrian or for that matter of a Christian Russian, since obviously no nation was Christian before it was baptized.

The fate of the Roman name, however, is strangely intertwined with the **Christian Faith** and has persevered in close connection with it down to the present day. Far from

considering it paradoxical to be Christian and Roman at the same time, the Romans of the eighth century and thereafter considered those two names virtually synonymous. This mentality was shared most notably by the Franks, whose king, Louis II, clearly expressed it in his letter to Emperor Basil I in AD 871: “[J]ust as we are the seed of Abraham through the faith of Christ, and the Jews ceased to be the sons of Abraham because of their treachery, so we took up the rule of the Roman empire on account of our good belief and orthodoxy; while the Greeks ceased to be emperors of the Romans because of their cacodoxy, that is their bad belief.” In other words, it is impossible to be a heretical Roman.

Ironically, Louis’s own argument speaks against him and his own words condemn him, since it was the Franks, not the “Greeks,” that introduced the Filioque into the Nicene Creed. This identification of “Roman” and “Orthodox Christian” penetrated deeply and left its mark even on language: Pontic Greek contains the verb ῥωμανίζω (“romanizo”) with the definition, “I become a Christian, a Roman.” Moreover, in the Ottoman Empire, all Orthodox Christians were legally grouped together in the Rum Millet (millet-i Rum), the Roman race. Even today the followers of the Pope of Rome use the Roman name, probably without realizing it themselves, to denote what they perceive as the true faith, namely Roman Catholicism, while in the Middle East canonical Orthodox Christians are called Rum Orthodox, “Roman Orthodox,” to be distinguished from the other Christians groups of that region. **The Roman name has had a long association with the Orthodox Christian Faith; that the Roman Empire was not really Roman because it was Christian should be the last conceivable argument of any knowledgeable person.** It can only stand on a basis of ignorance.

The continuity of the Roman Empire in its several aspects was never interrupted or broken. Whether in the city of the countryside, the laws or the taxes, the language or the religion, things either ancient or recent, what radical break has there been with the past? What sudden turn did the empire ever take? What took place except gradual and organic change? If England is still called England after having been overtaken by a people of different blood, tongue, and faith, why is not Romania given her rightful name?

Political motivations, rivalry, and men’s own interests have purposefully slandered her for more than a millennium. Too long has the Roman Empire been deprived of a thousand years of its history. Breaking habits is always difficult, but **for the sake of truth this habit of using the word “Byzantine” must be broken!** The only Byzantines that ever existed were the inhabitants of that small Greek colony on the banks of the Bosphorus. An invention and vehicle of Frankish and

German propaganda, **Byzantine terminology distorts and obscures the truth of things.**

Even if one accepts that the empire was technically not Byzantine, if he persists in calling it by that name his perception of history shall inevitably and subconsciously be influenced. Unless a man understands history deeply and truly, his gaze penetrating beneath the surface, he will not fully realize his own place in history and consequently what his own path should be. Of all the empires that have ever existed, the Roman Empire, with its 1480-year-long history, has had arguably more impact on mankind than any other.

Let every lover of truth understand: the Roman Empire is one and the same, from its beginning to its very end in the fifteenth century.



The very existence of the primitive Greek Romans has been completely abolished by historians who continue to support Charlemagne’s Lie of 794 which inaugurated the historical dogma that the Roman language was and is Latin. This has remained so in spite of the Roman sources which describe Greek as the first language of the Romans. It seems that Charlemagne’s Lie of 794 was based on hearsay and the need to cut off West Romans enslaved to the Franco-Latins from the free East Romans. Frankish Emperor Louis II (855-875) clearly supports Charlemagne’s Lie of 794 with the following words: In 871 he writes to Emperor of the Romans Basil I (867-885) that “we have received the government of the Roman Empire for our orthodoxy . The Greeks have ceased to be emperors of the Romans for their cacodoxy. Not only have they deserted the city (of Rome) and the capital of the Empire, but they have also abandoned Roman nationality and even the Latin language. They have migrated to another capital city and taken up a completely different nationality and language.”

Between 330 and 1453 Constantinople New Rome was the Capital of the Roman Empire. She was **not the capital of any Byzantine Empire which never existed.** Those who say and write such nonsense are either intentional liars with a hidden agenda or else brainwashed by the creators of this Byzantine Empire which never existed. Those who hide the Roman reality of this Empire are either agents of the Frankish propaganda of Charlemagne who decided in 794 that the Roman Empire is a “Greek” Empire in order to hide it from West Romans enslaved to the Franco-Latins. Then this so-called “Greek” Empire had to become a “Byzantine” Empire in order not to confuse the Modern Greek State with the Greek Empire invented by Charlemagne in 794.

Fr. John S. Romanides
“Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine”

PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW IS A THREAT FOR THE ORTHODOX EAST!

By Demetrios Anagnostou. This article from a recent issue of the Greek Orthodox weekly newspaper "Orthodox Typos." The author, Demetrios Anagnostou, is a well-known theologian and publicist. [Editor's Note: With the "election" of a new Archbishop for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, a known ecumenist and avid follower, believer, supporter and co-architect of Constantinople's papal ambitions, the inclusion of this article in our current issue is deemed necessary.]

The practice of Church Tradition in the fight with heresies and schismatics that threaten the unity of the Church is never just a protest and a canonical fight with cunning theories and schismatic (anti-canonical) actions; at the same time, it is also the condemnation of those Church actors who support them and act accordingly.

Of course, today, we find ourselves in the reality of an entire century of ecumenist propaganda; this propaganda begun with the release of the infamous Patriarchal encyclical of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1920 "To the Churches of Christ Everywhere" (where heretical communities are called the "Church of Christ"!). This encyclical became what is nowadays considered to be the charter for ecumenism, led by the Ecumenical Patriarch. Thus, we have reached the point where for us "conciliarity" and "pan-Orthodox" have imposed the intentional abolition of the terms "heresy" and "heretics" in the Church-Synodal lexicon; concurrently, any document condemning delusions and confirming the existence of other churches beyond the bounds of the Orthodox Church are considered unnecessary! (Refer to the decisions of the dreadful Crete "Council").

It is significant that in Church history it often happens that corresponding heresies and schisms are fixed under a name not only from the content of the relevant theories (for example: Monophysites, Theopaschites, iconoclasts, papists, etc.), but also from the names of their inspirers, leaders, and creators (for example: Arianism, Nestorianism, Paulicians, etc.).

In the twentieth century, for the first time in Church history, this traditional practice was successfully artificially neutralized in respect to the emergence and development of the modern heresy of ecumenism, which, according to the great Serbian dogmatician St. Justin (Popović), is a pan-heresy. It happened and continues to happen mainly because this heresy (undeclared, despite the obviousness of it) is still allowed (if not protected) by the majority of the Local Orthodox Churches. Moreover, it is connected with the fact that in several cases, the bearers and supporters of this particular heresy are themselves the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches.

The most significant of these cases and the most serious and dangerous precedent is the example of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who is not only a bearer of the modern pan-heresy, but also its leader, main patron, and guide. This is not a subjective assessment and not a private opinion, but a common conviction that is proven and unconditionally confirmed on the basis of the official and public actions, statements, and texts of this patriarch—the primate of the once glorious and Orthodox See of Constantinople.

Thanks to his office, Patriarch Bartholomew has managed to remain untouchable for a long time, avoiding canonical confrontation and accusations, although he often provokes the feelings of all the Orthodox faithful (pastors and flocks) by his clearly anti-Orthodox and anti-canonical actions and purely heretical beliefs.

He is himself (according to his own statement) a faithful continuer of the line of his predecessor—the Mason, Patriarch Athenagoras, who was dedicated to syncretism and pan-religion. This line is treasonous to Orthodoxy. Day by day it becomes clearer and more obvious that Patriarch Bartholomew is striving for the proclamation of and his actual appointment as the second (Eastern) Pope, and for the transformation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople into a super-Patriarchate recognized on the international political and Church level—the new Eastern Vatican (of course, in the worst case scenario)!

Recently, this open leader and defender of the Church-fighting pan-heresy of ecumenism, after the traumatic (for him) experience of attempting to subjugate world Orthodoxy by the sadly infamous "Holy and Great Council" organized by him and convened two years ago on Crete, chose a "new way" for the spreading and strengthening of his power, and, accordingly, his theories about an "Eastern Pope."

Bartholomew now follows the tried and tested method of "divide and conquer" (including causing a schism in the body of the Church), such that he himself and his plans are weakened in the short term but in the long term undermine the power and influence of those who dared to hamper the realization of his great dream, the convening of the first Ecumenical (ecumenistic) Council, the purpose of which was to synodically legitimize the pan-heresy of ecumenism in a pan-Orthodox fashion.

In particular, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, known for his vindictive character (as the Greek Church has learned from bitter experience), has carried out his plan for an indirect schism in the flock and the ecclesiastical (jurisdictional) dissection of his Church "opponents"—those who oppose his ambitions to become a super-Patriarch and to make the Patriarchate of Constantinople the Eastern "Vatican." These opponents, besides the Moscow Patriarchate, are the ancient Antiochian and Serbian Patriarchates.

For the sake of his own interests and in connection with his obligations and service to the well-known political superpower (the U.S.), the ambitious Patriarch could (as we will probably see in the near future) “lead” two more dioceses of other Patriarchates (after Ukraine) to “autocephaly” and turn them into Phanar satellites.

Here we are talking about Montenegro (a metropolia of the Serbian Patriarchate) and the dioceses beyond the borders of Syria (in neighboring states), which belong to the jurisdiction of the Antiochian Patriarchate! After the political events connected with the so-called “Macedonian” issue, the candidate for “victim” in the Phanariot’s plans is also the so-called “Macedonian Church” (canonically referred to as the Ohrid Archdiocese), which is also the canonical territory of the Serbian Patriarchate and has for many years been in a state of schism, isolated and not recognized by the Orthodox world.

Positioning himself as a faithful keeper and scrupulous defender of the historical rights of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (as he fancies himself), he completely ignores the rights of the rest of his brothers, and is prepared, putting on the guise of defender of the autonomy and fighter for the independence of Local Church administration and structures, to miraculously restore schismatics, to unconditionally recognize them, and to sow ecclesiastical controversies and schisms (clearly violating Orthodox ecclesiology and introducing, despite his own assurance to the contrary, ethnic and secular-state criteria in the sphere of Church decisions).

In view of the above, given the “tomois of autocephaly” recently presented to the schismatic formation of the new “church” of Ukraine (circumventing the one and only canonical Orthodox Church that exists there, against the will of the Moscow Patriarchate, which has canonical authority there), the thesis that Patriarch Bartholomew has become a real threat to the Orthodox East is confirmed.

We should not forget that this threat continues to corrode Orthodoxy and undercut the unity of the Orthodox Church, and it ultimately serves to prepare the majority to recognize the pseudo-council of Crete, which is the completion of a fruitless theological dialogue with papists and the restoration of full communion with those who have from of old deliberately fought against our faith and our family!

This threat, aimed directly at the Orthodox faith and the unity of the Eastern Orthodox Church, should be canonically neutralized as quickly as possible by Orthodox hierarchs around the world located in the lands of those who preserve the right faith, esteeming themselves as pastors of the Church, who have vowed to pass on the inviolable covenants and to observe the sacred rules and statutes of the holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

May God grant it!

ARE WE PREACHING THE SAVING TRUTH OR HIDING IT?

By Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis.

The terms “neo-patristic,” “post-patristic” and “contextual” theology have, I believe, basically the same meaning. They were invented by non-Orthodox theologians involved in ecumenical dialogues among them and between them and non-Christians. They were foolishly adopted by their Orthodox colleagues of the same mind. While post-patristic theology suits the purposes of the syncretistically-minded non-Orthodox and non-Christians, its adaptation by theologians who call themselves Orthodox constitutes a betrayal of the Faith and Tradition of the Church.

According to such theologians, we should not merely repeat the scriptural and patristic texts, but rather we should try to convey the “spirit” of these texts into our present-day cultural environment. As a result, a number of academic theologians and high-ranking Orthodox clerics try to reinterpret the holy Scripture, the holy Canons and the writings of the Holy Fathers in order to be able to approach the non-Orthodox and non-Christians.

Approach them to **what purpose?** Not to preach to them the saving truth, but rather to hide it from them, saying truth is relative, and whatever anyone believes is truth to them, because the real purpose is to peacefully co-exist, to promote peace and not discord, “unity in diversity.”

If the Orthodox Church is corrupted and ceases to be the bearer of the only Truth, what will She have to offer to those outside Her? Is it possible that doing so in an effort to save those outside, the result will be the loss of Church members? Fortunately, the authenticity of the Truth of the Church is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit and not by people, so God will always send the suitable persons who will defend the Truth with their lives and their words.

The claim that “the Church engaged in dialogue with Judaism and Hellenism” is preposterous. In whatever “dialogue” the Fathers of the Church engaged in with non-Christians, it was not “in order to live in peace with them,” but to lead them away from their deception and lead them to the truth and salvation. The contemporary inter-religious dialogue the ecumenists have been engaged in with other faiths has **nothing to do with the contacts the Fathers have had with non-Orthodox and non-Christians.**

The purpose of Orthodox Conferences is “the inter-religious understanding and cooperation, and through these to the elimination of fanaticism from every side, and thus to reconciliation of peoples and the prevalence of the ideas of freedom and peace in the world, to serve modern man, irrespective of race and religion.”

I wonder: is the purpose of the Orthodox Church “to achieve the truly credible furtherance of God’s will that peace, social justice and respect for fundamental human rights will prevail,” as the “Athens Declaration” concludes?

Or, are “the humanitarian principles of the religions, such as freedom, human dignity and the true love of the others... the new way of discussion and understanding”?

Or, is the purpose of Trinitarian theology, as another contextual Orthodox theologian, Prof. Petros Vasiliadis, states, to give “us the opportunity to understand the other as a co-walker of the discovery of the truth”?

Post-modernist, post-patristic, contextual Orthodox theologians must have lost their heads if they believe that Orthodoxy must embrace the unorthodox applications of their newly discovered essential tool, contextuality, for bringing the gospel of salvation to the world. How do they think the whole world was Christianized? The irony is that the people of other cultures and religions of the world accepted the new Faith, while the people of the same culture and religion (Jewish) rejected it. What explanation do they offer?

Christianity spread with remarkable speed to the entire world, and did well by spreading the gospel of salvation through witness (*martyria*) and through martyrdom (*martyrio*). The Apostles and those appointed in their place were able, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, to reach peoples of all backgrounds and make them disciples of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. The people received the gospel of salvation and lived their lives according to it, expressing it correctly under the guidance of their pastors who were faithful to it and remaining in communion with the Church established by Christ and His Apostles.

Living in the Spirit and guided by Him, the Church continues to bring the salvific message to those who are receptive to receive it, no matter where they are, even in our “post-modern and globalized modern world.” She is always relevant, because She is the living Body of the Lord, in Whom all the graces indwell. It is a pseudo-argument that She remains enclosed within forms and shapes of the past, which are incomprehensible to people of different cultures and religions. We have the luminaries of our faith to guide us securely to Christ, *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. (Jn 14:6) We are in no need of the post-patristic contextual theology of the syncretist* ecumenism.

Orthodox theology is in no need to run after inventions of the heretical Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Orthodox theology is in no need to “reclaim” the western “discovery” of its lost “contextual character,” because she is always guided to the truth. The purpose of the Church is not to maintain a perennial “dialogue” with other religions, for the purpose of mutual acceptance and respect;

the purpose of the Church is instead to preach the gospel of salvation to the ends of the world, that Christ rose from the dead, and lives in the bodily form He assumed when He was incarnated, in which He also resurrected, and with which He shall come again to take with Him those who remained faithful to Him and bring them to the Father and live forever His life.



**Syncretism* is the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths. Syncretism constitutes an essential characteristic of the heresy of ecumenism. [From the Editor].



Let us put away from us our spiritual short-sightedness, and let us cease concentrating all our attention upon temporal, earthly things; let us foresee with our mental vision the future, everlasting life, and rise in our hearts to our heavenly country. Indeed, it is incredible short-sightedness for the immortal soul only to look upon the present, visible things, generally relating to the senses, and flattering our carnal nature, and not contemplate the life of the world to come—the blessings which *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, but which the Most Merciful and Most Wise God has prepared for those who love Him. (1 Cor 2:9). Of what do we not deprive ourselves through this voluntary short-sightedness?!

Our life is incomplex: because our life is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the most incomplex eternal Being, having no beginning. *God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*. (1 Jn 5:11). Why, then, do we seek life in men, in enjoyments, in money, in honors, in dress, etc.? There is no life for the heart in these things, but only affliction, confinement, and spiritual death. Why do we forsake the Fountain of living waters? The Lord, and hew out ‘cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water’ (Jer. 2:13)? Why do we toss about and trouble about trifles? Why are we so greedy after enjoyments, money, honors, dress and various other things? All these are dead, perishable, transitory.

St. John of Kronstadt

THE ORTHODOX FAMILY

By Archbishop Chrysostomos, from "Orthodox Tradition," vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 34-36.

The Orthodox Church exalts the family. The Church itself is often characterized by the Fathers in images drawn from the family. In the family, as in the Church, basic values are formed, the soul is shaped and established, and the path of salvation is set forth. The family is that warm place where the leaven of the Faith is nurtured, where we first begin to rise to full life in Christ. It is for this reason that every Bishop, every Priest, every monastic, and all pious laymen remember, in their daily prayers, their mothers and fathers, that their *days may be long on the earth*. It is for this reason that, even after their repose, we remember our fathers and mothers and family members, praying for them fervently and, in our prayers, reaching across the chasm of death to be with them even in the afterlife, in the spiritual world. So special is the family that we remember those in error and heresy and sin even more dearly than those upright and unwavering in the Faith. This is the wonder of the family.

The Orthodox family, however, is always understood in its spiritual context. It is a spiritual unit. The selfish, social family, which triumphs the rights or privileges of blood ties, is for us Orthodox not a true family. An economic unit that uses family relationships to attain worldly possessions or wealth; the social unit turned in on itself, making the family responsible only for itself, that family which is a "god," the single most important thing in life, that thing most worth fighting for... All these, too, are not families for the Orthodox believer.

As exalted and sacred as the family might be, our first loyalty as true Christians is to God. Anything which comes before Christ, to paraphrase Holy Scripture, is not worthy of Christ. Anyone who places the priorities of the family before the Church and the commandments is a cultist, betraying both the Church and the authentic family. A true family is not worldly. A true family is an Icon of the Church and the brotherhood of all mankind. A true family does not confine its love to those within its boundaries,

but extends to its neighbors (and even its enemies) the love which has been developed, cultivated, and refined within the family.

In contemporary America the social family, the family created without spiritual goals, is turning ugly. On Christmas and holidays, for example, we gather in our homes, ignore the poor, resent the "intrusion" of friends and acquaintances into our food- and drink-filled festivities, and pay homage to Christ or the theme of the holiday in perfunctory services or commemorations designed around the family activities—if any homage is paid at all. We have abandoned, to a great extent, the custom of visiting the infirm and needy on holidays. Rather, we have turned to a social selfishness that extends out from these holidays to the whole year, poisoning and killing society itself, making people cold, alien, and insensitive to others. And even the family itself suffers. Family members embrace, relate to one another in empty and inane exchanges of words, and often hide their need for real

love and affection—for the true love and affection known only to the spiritual family, to that family which reaches beyond itself.

Thus the model American family which so shocks us Christians, but which predominates in the society around us: a family beset by drug abuse, alcohol, the killing comforts of wealth and material gain, divorce, and even suicide!

So far has the American family strayed from

the spiritual image that, if a young man or woman is to go away today and enter the monastic life, dedicating himself to prayer for the family and others, this is an occasion for shame and embarrassment. The family unit may even explode in hatred, decrying the personal separation that such a life might entail.

Deep love, that love which survives separation (and even death), is disappearing from our families. We delight in those who succeed in the emptiness of material life and remove even the privileges of the family from those who seek the spiritual life. How far we have come from the traditional Christian family, based as it was in the past—especially in our Orthodox societies—on spiritual values, in which a monastic or Priestly vocation was the cause of merriment and rejoicing. To such families, a monastic or Priestly vocation



represents a total fulfillment of family goals, a realization of the Christian life, and a reification (*regarding a concept as a concrete thing, Ed.*) of Christian ideals. If we reflect on the contrast between the true family and the social unit qua family created in modern materialistic society, we can precisely glimpse what the true Orthodox family is.

Just as an army trains soldiers to battle the enemy for the sake of the homeland, so the true family, the Orthodox family, endows its children with the spiritual armor by which they can overcome temptation, battle sin, live exemplary and moral lives, gain union here on earth with God, fulfill the divine potential within man, and pass into the next life with the spiritual power to pray for family members left behind. A true Orthodox family teaches love to its members—that intuitive, spontaneous love natural to blood relations, and encourages them to go out into the world sharing this love with others and perfecting it to whatever degree possible.

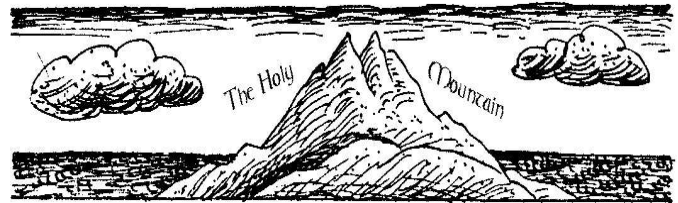
A true family moves out beyond itself. If family members should gain wealth or fame, these are secondary things. These accomplishments are measured only by the primary contribution that they make to the Church, to society in general, and to the fulfillment of Christian ideals. And if a family member should embrace monasticism, it is for this individual that the Church reserves the greatest praise: for one who can, without the reinforcement of family ties and the comfort of marital affection, show and give love unselfishly; for one who can, living in poverty, produce richness in his soul and heart; for one who can, in the face of the world's ridicule and scorn, maintain inner dignity; for one who can, though separated from his family, show more real love, in his prayers and example, than those present to it.

Though only part of my family is Orthodox, my own experience in entering the monastic life has not been as difficult as it might have been. But I have seen terrible cases of ill treatment, in which monastics have been hurt deeply by the attitudes of their own families—usually in the case of converts who enter monasticism from non-Orthodox families. Some families, lacking a spiritual understanding of the family itself, consider such monastics outcasts, betrayers of the family, and destroyers of the family unit. Every foul and vulgar motivation is attributed to the monastic. Hatred, resentment, and antipathy are engendered among family members for the monastic.

We must reflect on these instances with sobriety, since they reflect an attitude which is now invading even the Orthodox family in this country, where the larger Orthodox jurisdictions have either no monastic institutions or—with very few exceptions—monastic institutions wholly foreign to anything in Orthodox tradition. Where are those mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers who would rejoice in offering up a family member to intense service

to God, a service in which limited family love is lifted up to expansive spiritual love? Where are those who would give up the best, the strongest, and most beloved to a life of purity?

There could be nothing more pristine than the true Orthodox family. It is, after all, the crucible in which the elements of whole persons are formed. We should exalt such a family and pray that God will make us worthy to lead and to establish such families. At the same time, we must be careful not to accept as a true family that which is false! We must guard against mere social views of the family. And those families wrongly formed and wrongly operating we must call—by the power of love that even they have in their midst—back to the Christian image of the family that we see in the lives of Christ, the Theotokos, the Apostles, and the Martyrs and Saints.



Sophronius and I went to the same Abba Palladios with this request, “Of your charity, tell us, father, where you came from, and how it came about that you embraced the monastic life.”

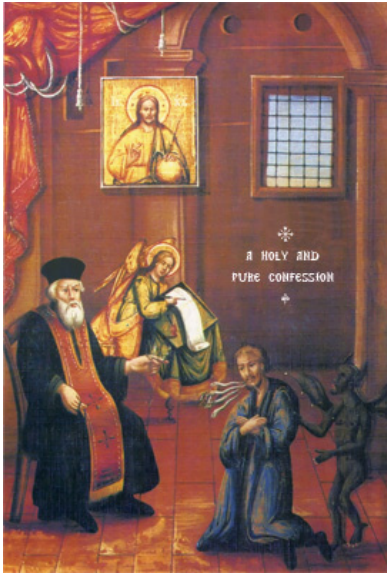
He was from Thessalonica, he said, and then he told us this: “In my home country, about three stades beyond the city wall, there was a recluse, a native of Mesopotamia, whose name was David. He was a man of outstanding virtue, merciful and continent. He spent about twenty years in his place of confinement. Now at this time, because of the barbarians, the walls of the city were patrolled at night by soldiers. One night those who were on guard duty at that stretch of the city walls nearest to where the elder’s place of confinement was located, saw fire pouring from the windows of the recluse’s cell.

“The soldiers thought the barbarians must have set the elder’s cell on fire, but when they went out in the morning, to their amazement, they found the elder unharmed and his cell unburned. Again the following night they saw fire, the same way as before, in the elder’s cell - and this went on for a long time. The occurrence became known to all the city and throughout the countryside. Many people would come and keep vigil on the wall all night long in order to see the fire, which continued to appear until the elder died. As this phenomenon did not merely appear once or twice but was often seen, I said to myself, “If God so glorifies his servants in this world, how much more so in the world to come when He shines upon their faces like the sun? This, my family, is why I embraced the monastic life.”

From “The Spiritual Meadow” of John Moschos

CONFESSION FOR CHILDREN

By Elder Cleopa of Romania (translated by NS and KS).



I confess to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Most-Holy Theotokos, all the Saints, to the Holy Angel, the guardian of my life, and to your holiness, Father, all of my sins from my last Confession until today:

I make the Sign of the Holy Cross bad and crooked, upsetting God.

I do not make the Sign of the Holy Cross in the evenings when I go to bed, neither in the

mornings when I wake up, nor when I sit at the table for a meal, nor when I arise from the table after a meal, nor when I go to school or when I pass in front of the holy churches.

I do not know how to say the Lord's Prayer or the Creed, nor other prayers for children.

I do not say the Lord's Prayer or other prayers for children when I go to bed, neither when I arise, nor when I sit at the table.

I do not do bows or prostrations in the evenings or mornings, as my mother and priest have taught me.

I do not read prayers from the Prayer Book, for the praise of God, or the Mother of God, or all of the Saints.

I do not wear a Cross permanently on my chest, neither when I go to school or to the church, nor when I go to sleep in my bed.

I do not know how to say the beginning prayers, that is to say *O Heavenly King, Holy God, All Holy Trinity and Our Father*, neither the Creed or Psalm 50 or *It Is Truly Meet*, nor the prayers which are said at the table.

I have eaten without praying beforehand and have risen from the table without saying the prayers of thanksgiving.

I do not listen sometimes to my parents, especially my mother, but I do my own will instead.

I do not listen to my grandparents, God-parents, the priest, or my school-teacher.

I have stolen money from my house, from my parents, from my grandparents, or from my classmates.

I did not tell my parents that I stole money or other things from them, nor how much I took, nor what I did with the money or the things that I stole.

I have eaten non-fasting foods secretly on Wednesdays, Fridays, or during the fasts, without my parents' permission.

I have grieved my mother and my father and they spanked me, but I did not ask for their forgiveness, nor did I promise that I will listen to them.

I have argued and fought with my siblings, with my classmates, and with the children at play, I swore at them, I cursed them to the Evil One, I punched and kicked them, threw rocks at them, hit them with a stick, and I did not ask forgiveness from them.

I do not kiss the hand of my mother, father, or grandparents in the evening, at bedtime, in the mornings, or when I come home from school, nor do I ask forgiveness when I grieve them.

I do not give thanks daily to God or to my parents that they gave me life, that they take care of me, that they give me food, that they nourish me, that they have sent me to school and teach me the right faith and fear of God.

On Sundays and feast days I get up late, I do not pray to God, I do not do prostrations, neither do I go with my parents to the Divine Liturgy in the church, but I eat in the morning, I watch television, and afterwards I go to play with children.

Sometimes I go to sleep without worshipping or praying, neither when I rise from sleep.

When I go with my parents to the church, I do not have patience at the holy services, nor do I pray in my mind, but I go outside to play with the children.

I go to church after eating and take the Holy Bread after having eaten, forgetting that this is a sin and grieving God.

During the fast, my mother gives me fasting food, but in secret or at school I eat non-fasting foods: chocolate, ice-cream, eggs, meat and cheese, without telling the priest or my parents about this sin.

I only confess to the priest because my mother made me, and I commune the Body and Blood of the Lord without prayer and fasting.

After Holy Communion, I fight with children, spit on the floor, and speak bad words, forgetting the Lord and the advice of my priest and parents.

I do not help my parents with tasks at home or in the field, and I lie to them that I have to study, while instead I go out to play with friends.

I leave for school or friends' houses, in the village or city, without asking permission from my parents, neither do I tell them sincerely where I was or what I did.

I run home from school, I do not do my lessons, I make bad grades, and I do not tell my parents all that I am doing from fear or from carelessness.

I have gotten used to the television, with cartoons and bad films, watching television in the evening without permission from my parents and afterwards going to bed without prayer.

I quarrel with boys and girls, speaking much, telling lies, and encouraging the children to do bad things.

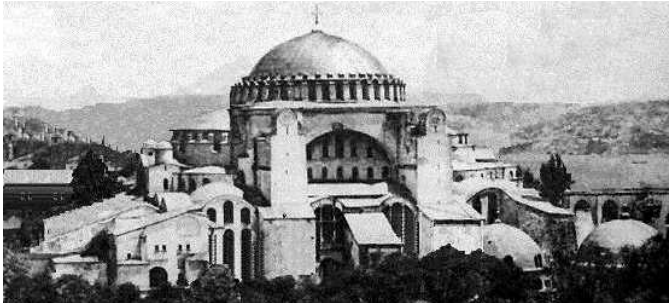
I have seen my father drunk, smoking, cursing, and quarreling with my mother, and I have also tried to do what he does.

I have begun to smoke secretly, to steal, to curse, and to be absent from church, telling lies afterwards, speaking ugly words, and no longer listening to my parents or teacher.

I have become friends with bad children and acquaintances, who taught me to run away from home, to do ugly deeds, and to no longer listen to anyone.

I do not show respect as is due to my parents, priest, teachers, relatives or God-parents, neither do I kiss their hand.

These and many more sins than these have I done, and I beseech you, Father, to forgive me, to loose me, and to pray to God for me, the sinner, but I promise with the help of God to not do these sins any longer, to do penance for them, and to make a good beginning.



THE FEARFUL PROMISES MADE BY A BISHOP AT HIS CONSECRATION

Much is written these days regarding the "Canonical Orthodox" Churches and how to find them. Many assert [for example] that if a local Church is not in communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople [etc.] that local Church is "uncanonical." This contradicts the record of Church history. There were not a few Patriarchs of Constantinople that were condemned for heresy. During the reigns of these heretical Patriarchs, the saints broke communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and were later praised for this by the Church. In fact, each of the five great Patriarchates, including Rome, was under the sway of heresy at one time or another during the first thousand years of the Church. If this is so, then by what criteria can we use to distinguish a genuinely Orthodox bishop from a false shepherd? The answer is simple. Look into the man's life and see if he has kept the promises he made at his consecration.

The text of the promises made by a bishop at his Third Confession of Faith:

"In this my confession of the holy Faith, I promise to observe the Canons of the holy Apostles, and of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and of the holy Local Councils, the traditions of the Church, and the decrees, orders and rulings of the Holy Fathers. And all things whatsoever they have accepted I also accept; and whatsoever things they have rejected those also do I reject.

I promise also to preserve the peace of the Church, and firmly and zealously to teach the people entrusted to me, and not to devise anything whatsoever which is contrary to the Orthodox Catholic Christian Faith all the days of my life; and that I will, in all things, follow and always obey the Most Holy Synod; and to be, in all things, of one mind with my fellow Hierarchs and conjointly with them submissive to the divine law, and the sacred rules of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers; and with all sincerity to cherish towards my fellow Hierarchs spiritual affection, and to regard them as brethren.

And I promise to rule the flock committed unto me with the fear of God and in devoutness of life; and with all diligence to guard it against all heresies of doctrine.

And I also confess, in this my written profession of faith, that neither by the promise, nor by the gift of gold, or of silver am I come to this ministry; but, on the contrary, I have received it by the election of the Most Holy Synod.

And herewith I promise also to do nothing under constraint, whether coerced by powerful persons, or by a multitude of the people, even though they should command me, under pain of death, to do something contrary to the divine and holy laws: nor to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in another diocese than my own, nor to exercise any other episcopal function without the permission of the Bishop of that diocese; and that I will not ordain either a Priest, or a Deacon, or any other ecclesiastic in another's diocese, nor receive such into my diocese without letters of dismissal from their own Bishops.

I will deal with the opponents of the Holy Church with reasonableness, uprightness and gentleness, according to the words of the Apostle Paul: *And the servant of the Lord must not dispute, but be gentle unto all, and a teacher, and forbearing, in meekness instructing those who set themselves in opposition, if perchance God might give them repentance unto the acknowledging of the truth.*

I promise to visit and watch over the flock now confided to me, after the manner of the Apostles, to discern whether they remain true to the Faith, and in the exercise of good works, more especially the Priests; and to inspect with diligence, and to exhort and inhibit, that there may be no schisms, superstitions and impious veneration, and that no customs contrary to Christian piety and good morals may injure Christian conduct.

And all those things, my bounden duty, which I have this day promised in word, I also promise to perform in deed unto my uttermost breath, for the sake of the covenanted good things to come. And may God, Who seeth the heart, be the witness to my vow. And may our Saviour Himself by my helper, in my sincere and zealous governing and my performance thereof; and unto Him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and dominion, honour and worship, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen."

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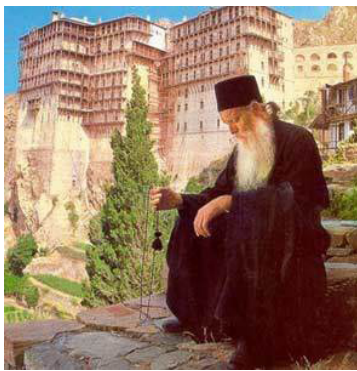
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THE CONFUSION BETWEEN RATIONAL AND NOETIC PRAYER

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from "Empirical Dogmatics," vol. 2.



Some people confuse rational and noetic prayer. Prayer with the prayer-rope is not noetic prayer.

I have heard nuns saying, "Now I shall pray noetic prayer." They sit down, take the prayer-rope and think that is noetic prayer. If they use the prayer-rope they have noetic prayer. They do not

understand that the prayer ought to be in the heart, not only in the prayer-rope and the brain. They do not know the difference between rational and noetic worship. They are not the same thing. They are different.

In the beginning one starts by repeating the prayer, *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me* with the mouth and the rational faculty, and at some point the prayer enters the heart.

Because the beginner cannot manage this, as he has not yet distinguished between the nous and the rational faculty, he sits and prays as much as he can with the rational faculty, under the guidance of his spiritual father. He prays continually until

the day when, instead of praying this prayer with his rational faculty, he begins to pray it with his nous in his heart.

The amazing thing is that, when the nous enters the heart and prays, the rational faculty is outside observing the movement of the nous.

What the Fathers say is clearly observable: when the nous prays and when it enters and leaves the heart, the innate reason, that is to say, the rational faculty, sits and watches it. Someone who practises asceticism reaches the point where his rational faculty can see the nous entering and leaving the heart, because he is now in control. Whenever he wants, he concentrates, takes his nous and puts it into his heart, with his rational faculty watching.

When the nous itself prays without ceasing, this happens biologically, physiologically, here in the region of the heart. It takes place within the heart; this thing literally happens in man's heart, and man's innate reason actually sits and enjoys it. The reason may not be praying and only the heart may pray. When someone goes to church his heart prays and his reason prays as well, each more or less independently of the other. The reason sits and watches the heart and the nous, and listens.

These things are to be found scattered here and there in the Fathers of the Church and you will find them marvellously described in the book *The Way of a Pilgrim*. Wherever that pilgrim went he was praying in his heart. He carried prayer about with him in his heart. It's an amazing phenomenon.