

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]

Vol. 14, Issue 09-10

September-October 2016

Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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Publisher: St. POIMEN Greek Orthodox Brotherhood

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SERMON ON THE EXALTATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS OF THE LORD

By St. John Maximovitch (Shanghai, "Exaltation of the Cross," 1947).

THE CROSS PRESERVES THE UNIVERSE



In the Prophet Ezekiel (9:4-6), it is said that when the Angel of the Lord was sent to punish and destroy the sinning people, it was told him not to strike those

on whom the "mark" had been made. In the original text this mark is called "tau," the Hebrew letter corresponding to the letter "T," which is how in ancient times the cross was made, which then was an instrument of punishment. [And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; **but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary.**]

So, even then, it was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise, by many other events in the Old Testament the power of the Cross was indicated. Mo-

ses, who held his arms raised in the form of a cross during the battle, gave victory to the Israelites over the Amalekites. He also, dividing the Red Sea by a blow of his rod and by a transverse blow uniting the waters again, saved Israel from Pharaoh, who drowned in the water, while Israel crossed over on the dry bottom. [And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. (Exod 14:21). And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. (Exod 14:26-27).]

Through the laying on of his hands in the form of a cross on his grandsons, Jacob gave a blessing to his descendants, foretelling at the same time their future until the coming of the expectation of the nations, ... and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. (Gen 48:19).

By the Cross, the Son of God, having become man, accomplished our salvation. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross. (Phil 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Savior with them as it were embraced the world, and by His blood shed on it, like a king with red ink, He signed the forgiveness of the human race.

The Cross of the Lord was the instrument by which He saved the world after the fall into sin. Through the Cross, He descended with His soul into hell, to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the Cross Christ opened the doors of Paradise which had

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Orthodox Heritage is published monthly by the "Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen," a laity brotherhood.

All correspondence should be addressed to the Brotherhood at the Phoenix address or the e-mail address above.

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

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been closed after our first ancestors had been banished from it. The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world. Then it was filled with life-giving power. By the Cross on Golgotha *the prince of this world was cast out* (Jn 12:31) and an end was put to his authority. The weapon by which he was crushed became the sign of Christ's victory.

The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, because the kingdom of hell was destroyed by the Cross. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross.

The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons.

When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished.

When there appeared to St. Symeon the Stylite, who was standing on his pillar, what seemed to be a chariot to carry him to Heaven, the Saint, before mounting it, crossed himself and it disappeared. The enemy, who had hoped to cast down the ascetic from the height of his pillar, was put to shame.

One cannot enumerate all the various incidents of the manifestation of the power of the Cross. Invisibly and unceasingly, Divine grace that gushes from it saves the world.

The sign of the Cross is made at all the Mysteries and prayers of the Church. With the making of the sign of the Cross over the bread and wine, they become the Body and Blood of Christ. With the immersion of the Cross the waters are sanctified. The sign of the Cross loosens us from sins.

When we are guarded by the Cross, we oppose the enemy, without fearing his nets and barking. Just as the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim barred the entrance into paradise of old, so the Cross now acts invisibly in the world, guarding it from perdition.

The Cross is the unconquerable weapon of pious kings in the battle with enemies. Through the apparition of the Cross in the sky, the dominion of Emperor Constantine was confirmed and an end was put to the persecution against the Church. The apparition of the Cross in the sky in Jerusalem in the days of Constantius the Arian proclaimed the victory of Orthodoxy. *By the power of the Cross of the Lord, Christian kings will continue to reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness.* (St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on II Thes 2:6-7).

The *sign of the Son of Man* (Mt 24:30), that is, the Cross, will appear in the sky in order to proclaim the end of the present world and the coming of the eternal Kingdom of the Son of God. Then all the tribes of the earth shall weep, because they loved the present age and its lusts, but all who have endured persecution for righteousness and called on the name of the Lord shall rejoice and be glad. The Cross then will save all who conquered temptations, from eternal perdition by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed after Christ.

However, those who hated the Cross of the Lord and did not engrave the Cross in their soul will perish forever. For *the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons.* (*Octoechos: Exapostilarion, Monday Matins*).

THE APPEARANCE OF THE CROSS NEAR ATHENS IN 1925

From Orthodox Life, Vol. 22, No. 2 (March-April, 1972), pp. 18-20, published by Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.

From the Editor: The inclusion of this article within our publication is not intended to support or refute the cause of calendar polemics, of either side. We do consider that the differing calendars amongst the 14 Local Orthodox Churches is a tragic anomaly that has brought more harm and (likely) no benefit whatsoever. While Local Churches which follow the traditional calendar, such as the Churches of Russia and Serbia (and the Holy Mountain), continue to be in communion with those who have adopted the Gregorian calendar, such as the Church of Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, that is not universal and as we all know, divisions have occurred and persist to our day. The calendar-based division(s) amongst the Orthodox faithful, along with the intensifying push towards ecumenism, constitute the greatest harm of our days. These divisions have perpetuated and at times intensified, and continue to divide families, communities, cities, etc. We do consider the traditional, calendar to be the one that all Orthodox churches should return/follow, and we pray that, along with the condemnation of the pan-heresy of ecumenism, a declaration along these lines becomes the foundation of a renewed unity among all Orthodox, world-wide.

† † †

In the early 1900's, and especially in the 1920's, there were strong anti-Church and secularist forces in power in Greece and in the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Among the actions of these forces, there was introduced, by force, the Gregorian calendar. The Gregorian calendar is adequate for the functions of business, the stock-exchange, and other worldly, secular activities. Liturgically, however, it is practically useless, even harmful. It is in no way possible to reconcile the Gregorian calendar with our canonical, Orthodox Christian Paschalion. Moreover, the introduction of a Church calendar change by a local church created an unacceptable liturgical disunity within the Church Itself.

Vast numbers of the people of Greece refused to accept these anti-canonical, anti-Church changes being forced upon them by state police power. Such people suffered imprisonment and deprivation at the hands of secular police powers. But the spiritual eyes of true Orthodox Christians saw clearly even if, at the time, they did not completely comprehend

the evil of the new calendar. It was a forerunner and a sign of the greatest heresy in the history of the world—Ecumenism. Many people, however, became confused. Some began to waver. Just as the Arians were in control of the worldly power in 351 and were able to force their heresy upon the empire, so now, the calendar renovationists controlled the worldly power of Greece. In such a troubled and dangerous time, the All-Merciful God heeded the needs of His people. Again, as in 351, God sent a wondrous apparition of the sign of the All-Honourable Cross to seal the truth and put the false teachers to shame.

The appearance of the sign of the Cross took place in this manner:

In 1925, on the eve, of the feast of the Exaltation of the All-Honourable and Life-giving Cross of our Saviour, 14 September according to the Orthodox Church calendar, the all-night vigil was served at the church of St. John the Theologian in suburban Athens. By 9 o'clock that evening, more than 2,000 of the true-Orthodox faithful had gathered in and around the church for the service, since very few true-Orthodox churches had been accidentally left open by the civil authorities. Such a large gathering of people could not, however, go unnoticed by the authorities. Around eleven P.M. the authorities dispatched a battalion of police to the church "to prevent any disorders which might arise from such a large gathering." The gathering was too large for the police to take any direct action or to arrest the priest at that time and so they joined the crowd of worshippers in the already over-flowing courtyard of the church.

Then, regardless of the true motives for their presence, against their own will, but according to the Will which exceeds all human power, they became participants in the miraculous experience of the crowd of believers.

At 11:30 p.m., there began to appear in the heavens above the church, in the direction of North-East, a bright, radiant Cross of light. The light not only illuminated the church and the faithful but, in its rays, the stars of the clear, cloudless sky became dim and the church-yard was filled with an almost tangible light. The form of the Cross itself was an especially dense light and it could be clearly seen as a Byzantine cross with an angular cross bar toward the bottom. This heavenly miracle lasted for half an hour, until midnight, and then the Cross began slowly to raise up vertically, as the cross in the hands of the priest does in the ceremony of the Elevation



Ἡ ἱερά ἐμφάνισις τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ τὴν 14ῃ Σεπτεμβρίου 1925 (Πατριῶν Ἐορτολογίον), ἀνοῦσεν τῆς ἑβδ. μὲν ἁγ. Ἰωάννου τοῦ Θεολογοῦ στὸν ὑμητιό.

of the Cross in church. Having come straight up, the Cross began gradually to fade away.

The human language is not adequate to convey what took place during the apparition. The entire crowd fell prostrate upon the ground with tears and began to sing prayers, praising the Lord with one heart and one mouth. The police were among those who wept, suddenly discovering, in the depths of their hearts, a childlike faith. The crowd of believers and the battalion of police were transformed into one, unified flock of faithful. All were seized with a holy ecstasy. The vigil continued until four A.M., when all this human torrent streamed back into the city, carrying the news of the miracle because of which they were still trembling and weeping.

Many of the unbelievers, sophists and renovationists, realizing their sin and guilt, but unwilling to repent, tried by every means to explain away or deny this miracle. The fact that the form of the cross had been so sharply and clearly that of the Byzantine Cross (sometimes called the Russian Cross), with three cross-bars, the bottom one at an angle, completely negated any arguments of accidental physical phenomenon.

The fact that such an apparition of the Cross had also occurred during the height of the first great heresy must strike the Orthodox with an especial sense of the magnitude of the importance of the calendar question and of all that is connected with it. No sensible person can discuss this issue lightly, with secular reasoning or with worldly arguments. Renovationists, like the Arians in 351, were thus left without extenuation or mitigation.



ON ANTICHRIST

By St. John of Damascus.

It should be known that the Antichrist is bound to come. Everyone, therefore, who confesses not that the Son of God came in the flesh and is perfect God and became perfect man, after being God, is Antichrist, for the denial of the perfect Divinity of Christ is an act of being as Antichrist, anti-Christ as it were. But in a peculiar and special sense he who comes at the consummation of the age is called Antichrist. First then, it is requisite that the Gospel should be *preached among all nations*, as the Lord said (Mt 24:14), and then he will come to refute the impious Jews. For the Lord said to them: *I am come in My Father's name and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.* (Jn 5:43). And the Apostle says, *Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a*

lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (II Thes 2:10-12) The Jews accordingly did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ Who was the Son of God and God, but (will) receive the imposter who calls himself God. For he will assume the name of God, the angel teaches Daniel, saying these words: *Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers.* (Dan 11:37). And the Apostle says: *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day of the Lord shall not come except there come the apostasy first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition: who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* (II Thes 2:3-4). In the temple of God he said; not our temple, but the old Jewish temple. For he will come not to us but to the Jews: not for Christ or the things of Christ: wherefore he is called Antichrist.

First, therefore, it is necessary that the Gospel should be *preached among all nations.* (Mt 24:14) *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.* (II Thes 2:8-10). The devil himself, therefore, does not become man in the way that the Lord was made man. God forbid! But he becomes man as the offspring of fornication and receives all the energy of Satan. For God, foreknowing the strangeness of the choice that he would make, allows the devil to take up his abode in him.

He is, therefore, as we have said, the offspring of fornication and is nurtured in secret and of a sudden he rises up and rebels and assumes rule. And in the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity. But when he becomes master he persecutes the Church of God and displays all his wickedness. But he will come *with signs and lying wonders* (II Thes 2:9), fictitious and not real, and he will deceive and lead away from the living God those whose mind rests on an unsound and unstable foundation, so that *even the elect* would, if it were possible, be made to trip. (Mt. 24:24).

But Enoch and Elias the Tishbite *shall be sent* and shall *turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,* (Mal 4:6; Rev 11:3) that is, the synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the Apostles: and they (Enoch and Elias) will be destroyed by him (Antichrist). And *the Lord shall come out of heaven* (II Thes 1:8), just as the holy Apostles beheld Him *going into heaven* (Acts 1:2), perfect God and perfect Man, with glory and power and will destroy the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, with the breath of His mouth.. **Let no man therefore, look for the Lord to come from the earth, but only out of heaven as He Himself has made certain.** (II Thes 1:8).

ON MUSIC

By Photios Kontoglou (+1965).



Photios Kontoglou of blessed memory (1895-1965) played a major role in the glorious return of traditional Byzantine iconography to the Greek Orthodox world in the twentieth century. He was also an accomplished chanter and a spiritual writer who inspired countless souls to embrace the unadulterated traditions of the Orthodox faith. This article consists of selections from his writings translated in the book “*Byzantine Sacred Art*” by Dr. Constantine Cavarinos, who was one of his disciples.

† † †

Music is of two kinds (as are the other arts also)—secular and ecclesiastical. Each of these has been developed by different feelings and different states of the soul. Secular music expresses worldly (i.e., carnal) feelings and desires. Although these feelings may be very refined (romantic, sentimental, idealistic, etc.), they do not cease being carnal. Nevertheless, many people believe that these feelings are spiritual. However, spiritual feelings are expressed only by ecclesiastical music. Only ecclesiastical music can truly express the secret movements of the heart, which are entirely different from those inspired and developed by secular music. That is, it expresses contrition, humility, suffering and godly grief, which, as Paul says, *worketh repentance to salvation*. (II Cor 7:10). Ecclesiastical music can also evoke feelings of praise, thanksgiving, and holy enthusiasm. Secular music, on the other hand—even the purest—expresses carnal emotions, even when it is inspired by suffering and affliction. This type of suffering, Paul calls “worldly grief,” which *worketh death*. (II Cor 7:10).

Thus, two kinds of music were formed, the secular, which arouses emotion—any kind of human emotion—and ecclesiastical music, which evokes contrition. St. John Chrysostom strongly condemned the various attempts that were made by some of his contemporaries to introduce into the Church secular music, the music of the theatre and the mimes.

Only the arts which were developed by devout motives since the early years of Christianity have given expression to the spiritual essence of the religion. These alone can be called liturgical, that is, spiritual, in the sense that religion gives to the term spiritual. The *spiritual odes* of which Paul speaks were works of such art. [Eph 5:19 (*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*) and Col 3:16 (*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*)]. All the liturgical arts express the same thing: architecture, hymnody, iconography, embroidery, and even writing, the manner of walking, and in general the movements and gestures of the priests, the chiming of the bells, and so forth.

That these arts are truly of unique spirituality has been realized by many non-Orthodox, especially clergymen, whose sense-organs have been exposed, from youth on, to formative influences different from those in which



Orthodox Christians have been brought up. Nevertheless, they confess that our icons and psalmody evoke in them contrition—of course, when executed by inspired and pious artists.

Thus, the value of the liturgical arts is not merely conventional, but real, extending beyond the limited conceptions that are due to nurture, habit, and taste, since even persons who are not of the Orthodox faith recognize that the arts of

the Orthodox Church reflect the spirit of the Gospels and for this reason lift the soul above the earthly realm. And how could it be otherwise, inasmuch as these arts have been developed by sanctified hearts, which felt deeply the liturgical element in speech and music? Liturgical music is the natural musical garb of liturgical speech. Both sprang up together; they are one and the same thing. Essence and expression here have an absolute correspondence, even more exact than that of an object and its reflection in a mirror, for the objects of which we speak here belong to the spiritual realm. The profound and apocalyptic spirit of Christian religion and its mysteries could not be expressed faithfully and worthily except by these arts, which are called liturgical and spiritual, and which were developed by that same profound spirit. Only this music, and none other, uniquely expresses the spirit of our religion, because

only this music has an absolute and most exact correspondence with it. This is testified to, I repeat, by certain men whose spiritual upbringing, religious training, phyletic and other heritage have no relation to that of the Orthodox. *The Spirit bloweth where it listeth*, (Jn 3:8) and is transmitted to souls by means of sounds which the same Spirit formed, by illuminating the souls of the holy writers of hymns.

The Fathers of the Church ordained that Christians use the voice alone in execution of hymns, chanting as did our Lord Himself and His disciples. St. John Chrysostom says: "Our Savior chanted hymns just as we do." The Apostolic Constitutions forbid the use of musical instruments in the church. From the time of the Apostles, psalmody was monophonic, or homophonic, as it is to this day in our churches [in Greece].

The Western Church, in order to gratify people and flatter their tastes, put instruments inside the churches, disobeying what was ordained by the Fathers. They did this because they had no idea what liturgical music was and what secular music was, just as they did not know the difference between liturgical painting and secular painting. But the Byzantines distinguished the one from the other, and this shows how much more spiritual they were in comparison with the Westerners and how much more truly they experienced the spirit of Christianity. Byzantine music is, in comparison with the music of the West, exactly as Orthodox iconography is in comparison with the religious painting of the West.

How divine, indeed, is the psalmody of the Orthodox Church! It seems sweeter and sweeter each year to the Christian—a new wine that fills the heart with joy and makes it soar to the ethereal region of immortal life.

Byzantine music is peaceful, sad but consoling, enthusiastic but reserved, humble but heroic, simple but profound. It has the same spiritual essence as the Gospels, the hymns, the psalms, the books of the lives of the saints, and the iconography of Byzantium. That is why Byzantine music is monotonous for one to whom the Gospels are monotonous, naive for one to whom the Gospels are naive, circumscribed for one to whom the Gospels are circumscribed, mournful for one to whom the Gospels are mournful, antiquated for one to whom the Gospels are antiquated. But it is joyful for one to whom the Gospels are joyful, filled with compunction for one to whom the Gospels are filled with compunction, enthusiastic but humble for one to whom the Gospels are enthusiastic but humble, and peaceful for one who experiences the peace of Christ.

Byzantine art is spiritual, and it is necessary that a man have spiritual depth in order to understand its mystical treasures. Byzantine music expresses "gladdening sorrow" (vid. *The Ladder*, Step 7:9), that is, that spiritual fragrance which only the spiritual senses are capable of experiencing.

Its melody is not unholy, ostentatious, despondent, shallow, tasteless, or aimless; it is meek, humble, sweet with a certain bitter-sweetness, and full of contrition and mercy. It bestows an unfading spiritual glory upon souls that have become worthy of the eternal mysteries and the compassion of God. It expresses thanksgiving; it causes the flow of tears of gratitude and spiritual joy. This music is the warmest, the most direct, and the most concise expression of the religious feeling of faithful Orthodox people.



Repentance is endless. All the virtues, by the grace of God, may be perfected by man, but no one can perfect repentance, since we need repentance until our last breath, for we err in the twinkling of an eye. Therefore, repentance is interminable. Oh, how good God is! Justly will my fellow sinners be punished, for they have ignored the infinite compassion of the heavenly Father. Although we err as humans, we are sluggish to say, "I have sinned!" But how can we say this, since we (and I, above all) are forgetful and lazy and proud, too—mighty obstacles on the road to humility! Christ showed this road to us through His Cross, but unfortunately we voluntarily turn a deaf ear to Him, to our great regret. Time flies, the years roll by, and we are drawing nearer and nearer to eternity. We see this, yet a mental numbness has bound us until we (and I, first) are thrown into hell! My God, Who has delivered the human race from the enemy's slavery, deliver us also from the future condemnation when You come to judge the world and render to each according to his works (*I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be*, Rev. 22:12). Through your prayers, may I find mercy when my wretched soul is judged, for I am afraid to meet the fearsome Judge because my conscience reproaches me.

Elder Ephraim of Arizona



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ANGELS, DEMONS & SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Source: "Empirical Dogmatics," Vol. 2, "According to the Spoken Teachings of Protopresbyter John S. Romanides," by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos.

The patristic teaching about the difference between time, the age and eternity is empirical: it is the result of the revelation-based *theoria* granted to the glorified saints.

The God-seers, who share in the illuminating and glorifying energies of God, see angels and departed saints in the glory of God and discern another dimension of time. They called this higher level of time *the age*, and differentiated it from the perceptible time of the creation in which they lived before the experience of seeing God, but also from the inapproachable Light in which God dwells, which they called *eternity*. St. Gregory the Theologian says that *the age is time that will stop moving, and time is the age that is measured while in motion*. What is clear is that the age is another level of time, and is distinct from eternity, which is exclusively ascribed to God.

Angels of Light

The angels, the noetic spirits created by God, live in the ages. Therefore, angels are themselves called *ages*. The holy Apostle Paul writes in a characteristic passage: [God] *hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds* [in Greek τῶν αἰώνων, literally: *the ages*] (Heb 1:2). The time of the angels is in the ages without end, as angels are not restricted by matter. Thus angels move in intervals of time that do not resemble our own. Man, on the other hand, has a slight conception of what time is, but he understands almost nothing about the ages, unless he reaches glorification and has spiritual insight, and sees an angel himself. Then he has the experience of an angel.

As angels are creations of God and came from non-being into being, they have a beginning and are created. The Old Testament speaks in parallel of the uncreated Angel, the Angel of Great Counsel, who is the Word, and of the created angels, who are creations of God. There is an interpretative rule that St Basil the Great expresses very clearly: *Wherever the Angel in the Old Testament is called God—because there are different kinds of angels, there are created angels as well—wherever the Angel who appears to the Prophets is called God, He is Christ*.

St. Paul sets out the difference between the uncreated Word and created angels: *For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. ("Sceptre" or "scepter" is a symbolic ornamental staff or wand held in the hand by a ruling monarch as an item of royal or imperial insignia, Ed.), (Heb 1:5-9).

The Word of God sits on the right hand of the Father, whereas the angels are ministering spirits who serve: *But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* (Heb. 1:13-14). As creatures of God the angels are material beings, but they are of subtler matter than our own. They are not referred to as immaterial beings, as God is immaterial Spirit, but they are described as *ethereal beings*.

The Fathers of the Church not only say that the soul is corporeal—the soul is material—but so are the angels. Remember that well-known passage from St. John of Damascus that says that, compared with visible things, the angels are bodiless. Why do we call the angels bodiless? Because they are invisible. In comparison with God they are dense matter. Thus, the Fathers do not accept the existence of immaterial things. Only God is immaterial and immortal by nature; the angels and the soul are not.

Being created is linked with matter and mortality. Only God is uncreated, immaterial and immortal, whereas human beings and angels are by nature created, material and subject to death. The Fathers explain that only God is immortal by nature, and man and the angels are not immortal by nature. The teaching of the Fathers of the Church is, therefore, that the angels are material beings, at least in comparison with God. They are not purely immaterial spirits. This is based on the patristic distinction between *created* and *uncreated*. **Only what is uncreated is by nature immortal: God Himself, Who is uncreated.**

Thus the angels and human souls are *mortal by nature*, but *immortal by grace*. Because everything that has a beginning also has an end. This does not mean that at some time angels and human beings will cease to exist, as God has willed that they should remain immortal. The angels are also called *noetic beings*, because they have a noetic faculty (*energy*), but not a rational faculty (*logiki*). Man has both noetic and rational faculties (energies), whereas angels only have a noetic faculty. **Man is the summary of creation and God's most perfect creation.** For that reason, in order to save humankind and sanctify creation, the Word of God assumed human, not angelic, nature.

Apart from the rational faculty (*energy*), the Fathers speak about a noetic faculty (*energy*). They made a clear distinction, saying that the angels are noetic beings, whereas human beings have reason (*logos*). Man has reason and the angels have nous. So the noetic faculty is different from the rational faculty. The Fathers of the Church continuously make this

distinction. St. Dionysios the Areopagite, when speaking about human beings, every time he says *reason* (*logos*) also says *nous*, and every time he says *nous* also says *reason*. When he talks about angels, he usually calls them *noetic beings*. They are *noetic beings*, *noetic powers*. We are *rational beings* but also *noetic beings*, because we have both, whereas the angels are solely *noetic*.

Furthermore, it is a basic principle of patristic teaching that there are no immutable beings; all things are in motion. Even in the other life there will be no fixed state. St. Dionysios believes in eternal motion, that perfection is eternal motion. He rejects immobility. He believes in growth in perfection, that even the Cherubim, the Seraphim, the Powers and all the angels are always ascending from glory to glory in ceaseless upward progress, despite the fact that they are glorified and behold the glory of God.

In the Platonic tradition, by contrast, perfection is immobility and immutability. In the Greek philosophers we find immutability as the fulfilment of human perfection. Whereas in the Father of the Church who is allegedly the most Hellenizing and philosophical of them all, we find ceaseless motion as the foundation of glorification.

Thus, even the highest order of angels, despite their constant motion, can never attain to knowledge of the essence of God and can never become uncreated. *Not even angels know the essence of God.*

Demons of Darkness

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

The demons were originally angels, because God did not create evil, but through their pride they fell away from God's glory and became demons. Christ said: *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*. (Lk 10:18).

We shall draw attention to a few points that are relevant to the existence of the demons and their method of warfare.

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

As a noetic spirit the devil is not bound by time and place, but he is not present everywhere, as is God. He moves at great speed. The devil, for example, moves so quickly that he can bother a million people, so he will be here, there and in China,

though without being present everywhere. Because of his immense ability to move he can be both here and elsewhere. His speed of movement is not restricted by matter. So he is not restricted either by our human body or by our dimensions.

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

In the West they believe the opposite. The teaching that Christ loves the devil as well is something that Augustine cannot accept even in his dreams. It is so far from his thoughts.

Certainly this love does not lead to salvation, because it does not meet with a positive and free response. The Fathers have ample knowledge of the existence and energy of the demons from experience. Since they have been freed from the passions and their souls have become subtle, they see both angels and demons. The Fathers are not speculative thinkers. When they speak about *theoria* they speak with very great precision. They know exactly what they are saying about theology, dogmas and the wiles of the devil.

Our Spiritual Warfare

The glorified know the demons' thoughts and actions from experience. The Apostle Paul writes: *For we are not ignorant of his devices*. (II Cor 2:11). If someone becomes a specialist in the struggle against the devil he is very well aware of how the devil and the demons work. The devil knew God before the Fall and still sees the glory of God. However, as he is incurable, his nature is darkened and he sees fire. That is why iconographers depict him as dark or black. **The devil is the greatest "negative theologian," because he sees the glory of God as darkness and fire.**

The devil knows Holy Scripture and interprets it from his own perspective, as we clearly see in the temptations of Christ, when he used scriptural passages in accordance with his own opinions. For the Fathers illumination does not mean that someone has studied and knows the Old and New Testaments by heart. The devil also knows the Old and New Testaments by heart. It is not only Christians who know them. The devil can interpret Holy Scripture as much as he likes.

Thus, the devil becomes a catechist to those who accept him. Perhaps the best catechist and the greatest catechumen who existed then—when catechism was simply intellectual and not purification of the heart — was the devil himself.

The devil's warfare against human beings takes many different forms. When someone reads the Fathers of the Church

he finds there an excellent strategy, according to the devil. The devil knows nothing about immutable laws as criteria for legal ethics, truth and so on; he did not take account of any laws. He is not someone who wages war as we do today, so to speak. As you know, the Geneva Conventions say that when someone is taken prisoner he must be provided with medical care, that he should eat three times a day, that he should have clean sheets every two to three days and that he should have a pillowcase and not sleep on the floor. And all states have accepted these regulations internationally and war is now waged on the basis of legislation.

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

The best guide on this subject is St. Symeon the New Theologian, who gives detailed descriptions of these matters. He says that the devil's first concern is without doubt that we should not even hear the name of Christ or anything about the name of Christ. If, contrary to the devil's hopes, we hear something about Christ and it begins to attract our interest, he then changes tactics. Having lost that battle, he has other strongholds. He wages another type of war, because he has another strategy afterwards for someone who has become a catechumen. He teaches him, "Stop fasting now." Then he says, "Your spiritual father gave you this interpretation for that passage, but there is another better interpretation." The devil begins teaching him how to interpret Holy Scripture and how to teach about the Person of Christ, and he becomes a teacher of Christianity.

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

If someone reaches *illumination*, the devil has his technique at every level. Even if a monk arrives at *glorification* he will still try to destroy him then. The Fathers mention examples

of glorified people who were brought down. That is why the icon in the *Ladder* of St. John Climacus shows a monk at the very top with one foot in Paradise and the devil is dragging him down by the other foot.

I thus ask the students at the university now, "Which of you, when you finish your theology degree, will be that kind of theologian?" Because theology and the *troparia* of the Church draw a parallel between learning theology and strategy and sport. In sport, particularly in those days, when someone entered the contest, there were no rules of good behavior like those that we have now in competitions. Now we have the umpire with his whistle, who calls "foul," "out," and so on. In those days sport was like war, without rules of behavior and without an umpire. And the devil has no umpire, so the Christian is an athlete and a soldier.

When someone is going to become a theologian he really ought to take an interest in strategy and sport rather than philosophy. Generally speaking, he will learn more

about the struggle from how the generals wage war than he will learn from philosophers. From all this it is clear that no distinction exists in the Fathers between theologians and spiritual fathers. **Theologians are spiritual fathers and spiritual fathers are theologians.**

The devil also creates various inspirations and brings thoughts (*logismoi*) or even good feelings. There are

some people who think that, when they feel well disposed towards someone, for instance, when they see someone who is poor and they feel sympathy for him; these are human feelings. And [they think that] when someone has good feelings, we should say that they are inspired by God. Yes, but good feelings can also be inspired by the devil.

Inspirations come from many different sources. According to patristic tradition the only unerring feeling that can exist in man is when the Holy Spirit prays within him. And good feelings can proceed from the devil as well, not only from God.

Distinguishing Divine Gifts from Demonic Influences

We can distinguish the faith that is a gift of the Holy Spirit from the faith that comes from the devil. Faith saves. But which faith? The faith that the Holy Spirit gives us. Not the faith that we offer to God. Because we offer our own faith; we give God our works, everything. Then God comes and gives these same things back to us through the Holy Spirit, and from then on they become spiritual and not demonic. A faith that is not spiritual faith has to become spiritual.



A work that is not a spiritual work eventually becomes a demonic work. What was the work of the Pharisee? **If the Pharisee were alive today he could be the best Christian in our parishes**, the way our parishes have ended up.

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

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

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

Without a doubt the devil actively attacks people, but he can only produce negative results if they cooperate and respond to the devil's wiles. Someone becomes the devil's victim when he retains evil thoughts (*logismoi*) within himself.

In the extremely varied warfare waged by the devil, man needs to learn to distinguish simple thoughts from complex thoughts, God's energy from demonic energies, and the appearance of God's Light from the devil's light. Something that may be considered demonic from the Orthodox standpoint may be considered healthy from another point of view. What Orthodox theology regards as originating from the devil, the mass media may regard and identify it as good for people. The problem for Orthodox Christians is knowing what the criterion should be. The most important skill to be learnt is the ability to distinguish the energies of the devil, so that we can discern which energy influencing him is from God and which energy is from other created things and particularly from the devil. This ability to discern between created and uncreated energies is the basis of the spiritual gift of discerning spirits. One has to distinguish between the energies of the evil spirit and of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes the devil *transforms himself into an angel of light*. (II Cor. 11:14). Demonic light is different from the Light of God. The uncreated Light never comes from outside. It always comes from within. The demon is external and the light of the devil is external. When the devil reveals light to someone it comes from outside. When the devil appears to man, he appears in conjunction with him, never merged with him. The created light of the devil cannot merge with man. For that reason, when the devil appears he always appears with shape and color, and he is always outside man. It is a light that co-exists, say the Fathers. The devil's light exists alongside man. When it is the uncreated Light, however, it is without shape, form or color and amorphous, and it is seen through merging.

Thus, someone who is glorified is within the Light and everything around him is within the Light. And the Light shines from everywhere and the Light is pervasive. The devil's light is limited to one place and is also colored. Anyone who has the gift of discernment can immediately perceive delusion and is not deluded. That is why in patristic language the glorified are described as *un-erring*, which means that they do not go astray.

The Role of a Spiritual Father

Discerning spiritual fathers play an important role on this spiritual journey. In any case, **a spiritual father ought to be a theologian, in the charismatic sense of the term, as theology is knowledge of God and whoever acquires this knowledge can discern the spirits, whether they are of God.** (I Jn 4:1).

The fact that the spiritual father has noetic prayer signifies that he has the gift of discerning spirits and knows the wiles of the devil beyond all doubt. He knows the energies of the devil with amazing accuracy. He is a spiritual father. But this is Orthodox theology. Consequently, this means that the spiritual father is inevitably Orthodox; it is impossible for him not to be Orthodox.

Obviously the spiritual father ought to be a guide, not someone who speculates about these issues. He should have precise knowledge of these matters and guide his spiritual children with precision. If he speculates he is lost and his followers will be lost. This is inevitable. From the patristic point of view this is virtue. This is also why **heresy leads people to Hell**.

The Source of Death and Man's Salvation

The devil incited Adam and Eve to sin, to disobey God's will, with the result that death came about. This means that the devil, not God, is the creator of death. From that time onwards the devil has dominated man through death. St. Paul, referring to the purpose of Christ's incarnation, when He assumed a mortal body subject to suffering but free from sin, writes: *He Himself [Christ] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of*

death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb 2:14-15).

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

Christ was victorious over the devil, death and sin through His Cross and Resurrection. As death entered man's body at the instigation of the devil, victory over the devil and death cannot come about through speculations and rational thoughts, only through the Cross, Tomb and Resurrection of Christ.

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

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

The Struggle of the Church

The Christian's struggle is essentially against the devil: inwardly against thoughts (*logismoi*) and passions, and outwardly. This is also the struggle of the Church. The Church's struggle is not only inward, namely, that it strives against the devil and temptations to enable everybody to attain to illumination. The Tradition itself continuously comes into conflict with things outside the Church. But it is difficult to define what these things outside the Church are. An officer in the Emperor's army may not be baptized, and may have one foot inside the Church and the other foot outside.

The boundaries between the Church and the world are not clear for us Orthodox. We cannot accept as Orthodox the view that Augustine expresses in *The City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*), that there is the role of the devil and here is the role of grace. Until we depart to the Lord the devil is with us continuously and struggles to swallow us up.

The Christian must be set free from the energies of the demons. This used to happen during catechism, which is why the catechumen used to learn this art of war against the devil. The Fathers laid down the readings from the Gospel from this perspective. During the period of *purification*, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were read. In fact, the Gospel of Mark speaks about fighting demonic energies and its dominant theme is *purification*. This *purification* took place in the period of Great Lent, through the exorcisms, for candidates for baptism, the catechumens. After baptism, which took place on Great and Holy Saturday, the Gospel of John was read, which pays almost no attention to the devil.

Salvation for humankind and creation cannot come about by means of a simple act of forgiveness of any legalistic record of sins. Nor can it come about by rendering satisfaction to the devil or to God. Salvation can come about through the destruction of the devil and his power. Anyone who fights the devil by the power of Christ and overcomes him understands his wiles and becomes a real theologian. Orthodox theology is "polemical" and it is interpreted by means of "the art of war."

Being a theologian means first and foremost that someone is an expert in the wiles of the devil. *Illumination* and particularly *glorification* transmit the gift of discerning spirits so that the devil may be put to shame, especially when he resorts to teaching theology and spirituality to those who are beginning to slip out of his hands.

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

In any case, participation in the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God depends on warfare against the demons. Otherwise one cannot experience the glory and rule of God. The glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God reaches man through the expulsion of demons. We have *purification*, which is essentially the expulsion of demons. When the demons are driven out the glory and rule of God comes.

It follows that *every saint of the Church represents the triumph of faith over the powers of the devil.*

STRUGGLE & REPENTANCE

Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959).



I received your letter, my child, and I saw your anxiety. But don't be sad, my child. Don't worry so much. Even though you have fallen again, get up again. You have been called to a heavenly road. It is not surprising for someone running to stumble. It just takes patience and repentance at every moment.

Therefore, always do a *metanoia* when you are wrong and don't lose time, because the longer you wait to seek forgiveness, the more you allow the evil one to spread his roots within you. Don't let him make roots to your detriment.

Therefore, don't despair when you fall, but get up eagerly and do a *metanoia* saying, "Forgive me, my dear Christ. I am human and weak." The Lord has not abandoned you. But since you still have a great deal of worldly pride, a great deal of vainglory, our Christ lets you make mistakes and fall, so that you perceive and come to know your weakness every day, so that you become patient with others who make mistakes, and so that you do not judge the brethren when they make mistakes, but rather put up with them.

So every time you fall, get up again and at once seek forgiveness. Don't hide sorrow in your heart, because sorrow and despondency are the joy of the evil one. They fill one's soul with bitterness and give birth to many evils. Whereas the frame of mind of someone who repents says, "I have sinned! Forgive me Father!" and he expels the sorrow. He says, "Am I not a weak human? So what do I expect?" Truly, my child this is how it is. So take courage.

Only when the grace of God comes does a person stand on his feet. Otherwise, without grace, he always changes and always falls. So be a man and don't be afraid at all.

Do you see how that brother you wrote about endured the temptation? You, too, should do likewise. Acquire a brave spirit against the temptations that come. In any case, they will come. Forget about what your despondency and indolence tell you. Don't be afraid of them. Just as the previous temptations passed by the grace of God, these, too, will pass once they do their job.

Temptations are medicines and healing herbs that heal our visible passions and our invisible wounds. So have patience in order to profit every day, to store up wages, rest, and joy in the heavenly kingdom. For the night of death is com-

ing when no one will be able to work anymore. Therefore, hurry. Time is short.

You should know this too: A victorious life lasting only one day with trophies and crowns is better than a negligent life lasting many years. Because one man's struggle, with knowledge and spiritual perception that lasts one day, has the same value as another man's struggle, who struggles negligently without knowledge for fifty years.

Without a struggle and shedding your blood, don't expect freedom from the passions. Our earth produces thorns and thistles after the Fall. We have been ordered to clean it, but only with much pain, bloody hands, and many sighs are the thorns and thistles uprooted. So weep, shed streams of tears, and soften the earth of your heart. Once the ground is wet, you can easily uproot the thorns.



You may find yourself hampered by someone who sows tares of despondency. He tries to prevent you from climbing to such heights of holiness by discouraging you with various thoughts. For instance, he will tell you that it is impossible for you to be saved and to keep every single one of God's commandments while you live in this world. When this happens you should sit down in a solitary place by yourself, collect yourself, concentrate your thoughts and give good counsel to your soul, saying: *Why, my soul, are you dejected, and why do you trouble me? Put your hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; for my salvation lies not in my actions but in God.* (Pss 42:5). Who will be vindicated by actions done according to the law? (Gal 2:16). *No living person will be vindicated before God* (Pss 143:2). Yet by virtue of my faith in God I hope that in His ineffable mercy He will give me salvation. *Get behind me, Satan!* (Mt 16:23). *I worship the Lord my God* (Mt 4:10) and serve Him from my youth; for He is able to save me simply through His mercy. Go away from me. The God who created me in His image and likeness will reduce you to impotence.

St. Symeon the New Theologian



We ask those of our readers who wish to receive our publication via e-mail (in the form of a pdf file, of approximately 1.5-2.0 Mb size) to let us know. It allows us to make available printed issues of "Orthodox Heritage" to more of our fellow Orthodox who are unable to financially support our effort.

Ντροπή, Έλληνες!

Ένα συγκλονιστικό απόσπασμα από τὰ «Ἀπομνημονεύματα» ἑνὸς πραγματικοῦ Ἑλληνα, τοῦ Μακρυγιάννη. Τὸ παρουνισιάζουμε εἰς ἀναγνώριση τοῦ προσφάτου συμβάντος ὅταν ὁ Ἑλληνικὸς λαὸς, πέρα ἀπὸ κάθε διάκριση καὶ σύνεση, ψηφίσει στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Βουλὴ τὴν ἀνέγερση τζαμοῦ στὴν Ἀθήνα, καὶ μάλιστα μὲ χρήματα τοῦ Δημοσίου!

Τότε, ἐκεῖ πὸν καθόμουν εἰς τὸ περιβόλι μου καὶ ἔτρωγα ψωμί, πονώντας ἀπὸ τὶς πληγές ὅπου ἔλαβα εἰς τὸν ἀγῶνα, καὶ περισσότερο πονώντας διὰ τὶς μέσα πληγές ὅπου δέχομαι διὰ τὰ σημερινὰ δεινὰ τῆς Πατρίδος, ἦλθαν δύο ἐπιτήδριοι, ἄνθρωποι τῶν γραμμάτων, μισομαθεῖς καὶ ἄθρησκοι, καὶ μοῦ ξηγῶνται ἔτσι: «Πουλᾶς Ἑλλάδα, Μακρυγιάννη».

Ἐγώ, στὴν ἄθλια κατάσταση μου, τοὺς λέγω: «Ἀδελφοί, μὲ ἀδικεῖτε. Ἑλλάδα δὲν πουλάω, νοικοκυραῖγοι μου. Τέτοιον ἀγαθὸν πολυτίμητον δὲν ἔχω εἰς τὴν πραγματείαν μου. Μὰ καὶ νὰ τὸ ἔχα, δὲν τὸ ἔδινα κανενός. Κι ἂν πουλιέται Ἑλλάδα, δὲν ἀγοράζεται σήμερις, διότι κάνατε τὸν κόσμον ἐσεῖς, λογιώτατοι, νὰ μὴ θέλη νὰ ἀγοράσῃ κάτι τέτοιο».

Ἐφυγαν αὐτοί. Κ' ἔκατσα σὲ μίαν πέτραν μόνος καὶ ἔκλαιγα. Μισὸς ἄνθρωπος...

Καταστάθηκα ἀπὸ τὸ ντουφέκι τοῦ Τούρκου, τσακίστηκα εἰς τὶς περιστάσεις τοῦ ἀγῶνα καὶ κυνηγιέμαι καὶ σήμερον. Κυνηγῶνται καὶ ἄλλοι ἀγωνιστὲς πολὺ καλύτεροί μου, διότι ἐγὼ εἶμαι ὁ τελευταῖος καὶ ὁ χειρότερος. Καὶ οἱ πιδὸ καλύτεροι ὄλων ἀφανίστηκαν. Αὐτοὶ πὸν θυσιάσαν ἀρετὴ καὶ πατριωτισμόν, γιὰ νὰ εἰπωθῇ ἐλεύθερη ἡ Ἑλλάδα, κ' ἐχάθησαν φαμελιές ὀλωσδιόλου, εἶπαν νὰ ζητήσουν ἕνα ἀποδειχτικὸν πὸν νὰ λέγῃ ὅτι ἔτρεξαν κι αὐτοὶ εἰς τὴν ὑπηρεσίαν τῆς Πατρίδος καὶ Τούρκου δὲν ἄφηκαν ἀντουφέκιγο.

Πῆγε νὰ νεργήσῃ ἡ Κυβέρνηση, καὶ βγήκαν κάτι τσασιῖτες καὶ σπιγοῦνοι, πὸν δουλεύουν μῖσος καὶ ιδιοτέλεια, καὶ εἶπαν «ὄχι», καὶ εἶπαν καὶ βρισιῖες παλιῆς διὰ τοὺς ἀγωνιστὲς, γιὰ νὰ μὴν πάρουν τὸ ἀποδειχτικόν, ἕνα χαρτὶ πὸν δὲν κάνει τίποτε γροῖσια.

Πατρίδα, νὰ θυμάσαι ἐσὺ αὐτοὺς ὅπου, διὰ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν λευτερίαν σου, δὲν λογάρισαν θάνατο καὶ βάσανα. Κι ἂν ἐσὺ τοὺς λησμονήσῃς, θὰ τοὺς θυμηθοῦν οἱ πέτρες καὶ τὰ χώματα, ὅπου ἔχυσαν τὰ αἵματα καὶ τὰ δάκρυά τους.

Θεέ, συχώρεσε τοὺς παντίδους, πὸν θέλουν νὰ μᾶς πάρουν τὸν ἀγέρα πὸν ἀναπνέομεν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν πὸν μὲ ντουφέκι καὶ γιαταγάνι πήραμε. Ἐμεῖς τὸ χρέος, τὸ κατὰ δύναμιν, ἐπράξαμεν. Καὶ αὐτοὶ βγήκαν σήμερον νὰ προκόψουν τὴν Πατρίδα. Μᾶς γέμισαν φατρία καὶ διχόνοιαν. Καὶ τὴν Πατρίδα δὲν τὴν θέλουν μητέρα κοινή ἀμοροῦζα (=ἀγαπητικιά) εἰς τὰ κρεβάτια τους τὴν θέλουν. Γι' αὐτὸ περνοῦν κ' ἐρεθίζουν τὸν κόσμον μὲ τέχνες καὶ καμώματα. Καὶ καζαντίσαν αὐτοὶ πουγγιὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ, καὶ ἀφήκαν τοὺς ἀγωνιστὲς, τὶς χῆρες καὶ τὰ ὄρφανὰ εἰς τὴν ἄκρην. Αὐτοὶ εἶναι οἱ ἀνθρώπινοι λύκοι, πὸν φέραν δυστυχήματα καὶ κίντυνον εἰς τὸν τόπον. Ἄς ὄψωνται.

Τότε πὸν ἡ Τουρκία ἐκατέβαινε ἀπὸ τὰ ντερβένια καὶ ὀλίγοι ἔτρεχαν μὲ ὀλίγα ντουφέκια, μὲ τριχίς δεμένα, νὰ πολεμήσουν, θέλοντας λευτερίαν ἢ θάνατον, οἱ φρόνιοι ἀσφάλιζαν τὶς φαμελιές τους εἰς τὰ νησιὰ κι αὐτοὶ τρέχαν εἰς ρεματιές καὶ βουνά, μὴ βλέποντας ποτὲ Τούρκου πρόσωπον. Κι ὅταν ἀκούγαν τὰ ντισμπάρκα τῶν Τούρκων, τρέχαν μακρύτερα. Τώρα θέλουν δικὴν τους τὴν Πατρίδα καὶ κυνηγοῦν τοὺς ἀγωνιστὲς.

Ἐγίνανε θηρία πὸν θέλουν κριγιάτα (=κρέατα) ἀνθρωπινὰ νὰ χορτάσουν. Καὶ χωρίζουν τὸν κόσμον σὲ πατριώτες καὶ ἀντιπατριώτες. Αὐτοὶ γίναν οἱ σημαντικοὶ τῆς Πατρίδος καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι νὰ χαθοῦν. Δὲν ξηγιῶνται

γλυκότερα νὰ φυλάξωμεν Πατρίδα καὶ νὰ δοῦμεν λευτερίαν πραγματικὴν. Ρωμαίγιον δὲν φτειάχνεται χωρὶς οὔλοι νὰ θυσιάσουν ἀρετὴν καὶ πατριωτισμόν καὶ χωρὶς νὰ πάσῃ ἡ μέσα, ἡ δικὴ μας τυραγνία.

Καὶ βγήκαν τώρα κάτι δικοὶ μας κυβερνήτες, Ἑλληνες, σπορὰ τῆς ἐβραίουργιάς, πὸν εἶπαν νὰ μᾶς σβήσουν τὴν Ἁγία Πίστι, τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, διότι ἡ Φραγκιά δὲν μᾶς θέλει μὲ τέτοιο ντύμα Ὁρθόδοξον.

Καὶ ἐκάθησα καὶ ἔκλαιγα διὰ τὰ νέα παθήματα. Καὶ ἐπῆγα πάλιν εἰς τοὺς φίλους μου τοὺς Ἁγίους. Ἄναψα τὰ καντήλια καὶ ἐλιβάνισα λιβάνιν καλὸν ἀγιορεῖτικον. Καὶ σκουπίζοντας τὰ δάκρυά μου τοὺς εἶπα: «Δὲν βλέπετε πὸν θέλουν νὰ κάμουν τὴν Ἑλλάδα παλιόψαθα; Βοηθήστε, διότι μᾶς παίρνουν, αὐτοὶ οἱ μισοἔλληνες καὶ ἄθρησκοι, ὅ,τι πολυτίμητον τζιβαῖρικὸν ἔχομεν. **Φραγκεμένους μᾶς θέλουν τὰ τσογλάνια τοῦ τρισκατάρατου τοῦ Πάπα.** Μὴν ἀφήσετε, Ἁγιοί μου, αὐτὰ τὰ γκιντὶ πουλημένα κριγιάτα τῆς τυραγνίας νὰ μασκαρέψουν καὶ νὰ ἀφανίσουν



τοὺς Ἕλληνας, κάνοντας περισσότερα κακὰ ἀπὸ αὐτὰ ποὺ καταδέχθηκεν ὁ Τοῦρκος ὡς τίμιος ἐχθρὸς μας».

Ἔνας δικός μου ἀγωνιστὴς μοῦ ἔφερε καὶ μοῦ διάβασεν ἓνα παλαιὸν χαρτί, ποὺ ἔγραψεν ὁ κοντομερίτης μου Ἅγιος παπᾶς, ὁ Κοσμᾶς ὁ Αἰτωλός. Τὸν ἐκρέμασαν εἰς ἓνα δέντρον Τοῦρκοι καὶ Ἑβραῖοι, διότι ἔτρεχεν ὁ εὐλογημένος παντοῦ καὶ ἐδίδασκεν Ἑλλάδα, Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Γράμματα.

Ἐγραφεν ὁ μακάριος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι: «Ἔνας ἄνθρωπος νὰ μὲ ὑβρίση, νὰ φονεύση τὸν πατέρα μου, τὴν μητέρα μου, τὸν ἀδελφόν μου καὶ ὕστερα τὸ μάτι νὰ μοῦ βγάλη, ἔχω χρέος σὰν Χριστιανὸς νὰ τὸν συγχωρήσω. Τὸ νὰ ὑβρίση τὸν Χριστόν μου καὶ τὴν Παναγία μου, δὲν θέλω νὰ τὸν βλέπω».

Τὸ χαρτί τοῦ πατέρα Κοσμᾶ ἔβαλα καὶ μοῦ τὸ ἐκαθαρόγραψαν. Καὶ τὸ ἐκράτησα ὡς Ἅγιον Φυλαχτόν, ποὺ λέγει μεγάλην ἀλήθειαν. Θὰ πῶ νὰ μοῦ γράψουν καλλιγραφικὰ καὶ τὸν ἄλλον ἀθάνατον λόγον του, «τὸν Πάπαν νὰ καταρᾶσθε ὡς αἴτιον». Θέλω νὰ τὸ βλέπω κοντὰ στὰ κονίσματά μου, διότι τελευταίως κάποιοι δικοί μας ἀνάξιοι λέγουν ὅτι, ἂν τὰ φτειάζουμε μὲ τὸν δικέρατον Πάπαν, θὰ ὀλιγοστέψουν οἱ κίντυνοι, τὰ βάσανα καὶ ἡ φτώχεια μας, τρομάρα τους.

Καὶ εἶπαν οἱ ἄθρησκοι ποὺ ἐβάλαμεν εἰς τὸν σβέροκο μας νὰ μὴ μανθάνουν τὰ παιδιὰ μας Χριστὸν καὶ Παναγίαν, διότι θὰ μᾶς παρεξηγήσουν οἱ ἰσχυροί. Καὶ βγήκαν ἀκόμη νὰ ποτάξουν τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, διότι ἔχει πολλὴν δύναμη καὶ τὴν φοβοῦνται. Καὶ εἶπαν λόγια ἄπρεπα διὰ τοὺς παπᾶδες.

Ἐμεῖς, μὲ σκιάν μας τὸν Τίμιον Σταυρόν, ἐπολεμήσαμεν ὀλοῦθε, σὲ κάστρα, σὲ ντερβένια, σὲ μπογάζια καὶ σὲ ταμπούργια. Καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Σταυρὸς μᾶς ἔσωσε. Μᾶς ἔδωσε τὴν νίκη καὶ ἔχασε (=ὠδήγησε σὲ ἦττα) τὸν ἄπιστον Τοῦρκον. Τόση μικρότητα στὸν Σταυρό, τὸν σωτήρα μας!

Καὶ βρίζουν οἱ πουλημένοι εἰς τοὺς ξένους καὶ τοὺς παπᾶδες μας, τοὺς ζυγίζουν ἀναντροὺς καὶ ἀπόλεμους. Ἐμεῖς τοὺς παπᾶδες τοὺς εἶχαμε μαζὶ εἰς κάθε μετερίζι, εἰς κάθε πόνον καὶ δυστυχίαν. Ὅχι μόνον διὰ νὰ βλογᾶνε τὰ ὄπλα τὰ ἱερά, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ μὲ ντουφέκι καὶ γιαταγάνι, πολεμώντας σὰν λεοντάρια.

Ντροπή, Ἕλληνες!

Στρατηγὸς Μακρουγιάννης



Τὸ δικό μου καὶ τὸ δικό σου, ὁ ψυχρὸς αὐτὸς λόγος, ποὺ φέρνει στὴ ζωὴ μας ὅλες τὶς συμφορὰς καὶ προκαλεσε τοὺς ἀναρίθμητους πολέμους... Τὸ δικό σου καὶ τὸ δικό μου, αὐτὴ ἀκριβῶς εἶναι ἡ αἰτία, ποὺ ἀνατρέπει καὶ ἀναστατώνει τὰ πάντα.

Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος

Ἡ Ἀδυναμία τοῦ Σατανᾶ

Ὅλοι γνωρίζουμε τὸν μεγάλο πόλεμο, ποὺ κάνει ὁ σατανᾶς στὸν ἄνθρωπο. Ἐχει ὁμως δύναμη ὁ σατανᾶς; Μπορεῖ νὰ κἀν κακὸ στὸν ἄνθρωπο; Καὶ πότε μπορεῖ; Λέγει ὁ Ἀπ. Παῦλος: «Ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ τὰ πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι» (Ἐφ. 6:16).

Ἐλεγε κάποτε ὁ Μέγας Ἀντώνιος:

Ἀκοῦστε τί μοῦ συνέβη: Κάποτε κτύπησε κάποιος τὴν πόρτα τοῦ κελλιοῦ μου. Βγήκα καὶ ἄνοιξα. Ἀμέσως τότε εἶδα μπροστά μου ἓνα ὑψηλὸ κατὰ τὸ ἐξωτερικὸ φαινόμενο. Τοῦ λέγω:

- Ποιὸς εἶσαι;

Καὶ μοῦ ἀπαντᾶ:

- Ἐγὼ εἶμαι ὁ σατανᾶς.

- Τί ζητεῖς ἐδῶ;—Τὸν ρωτῶ.

- Γιατὶ—μοῦ ἀπαντᾶ—μὲ κατηγοροῦν ἄδικα οἱ Μοναχοὶ καὶ ὅλοι οἱ ἄλλοι Χριστιανοί; Γιατὶ μὲ καταριοῦνται κάθε ὥρα;

Τοῦ εἶπα τότε ἐγώ:

- Γιατὶ καὶ σὺ τοὺς ἐνοχλεῖς;

- Δὲν τοὺς ἐνοχλῶ ἐγώ—μοῦ ἀπαντᾶ—μόνοι τους ταράσσουνται. Ἐγὼ πλέον τελείως ἐξησθένησα. Δὲν διάβασαν αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀναφέρει ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή: «*Τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ἐτελείωσαν πλέον τὰ σπαθιά καὶ τὶς πόλεις κατεκρήμνισες*» (Ψαλμ. 9:7). Δὲν ἔχω πλέον τόπο, δὲν ἔχω βέλος, οὔτε πόλη. Παντοῦ εὐρίσκονται Χριστιανοὶ καὶ ἡ ἔρημος ἀκόμη γέμισε ἀπὸ Μοναχοὺς. Λοιπὸν, ἂς περιφρονοῦν τοὺς ἑαυτοὺς τους καὶ ἂς μὴ μὲ καταρῶνται ἄδικα.

Τότε ἐγώ, ποὺ ἄκουγα κατάπληκτος τὰ λόγια τοῦ διαβόλου, θαύμασα τὴν Χάρη τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ εἶπα πάλι:

- Πάντοτε εἶσαι ψεύτης. Τώρα ὁμως εἶπες τὴν ἀλήθεια, χωρὶς νὰ τὸ θέλῃς. Διότι ὁ Χριστὸς μετὰ τὸν θεῖο ἐρχομὸ Του στὸν κόσμον σὲ ἐξησθένησε καὶ σὲ ἀπογύμνωσε, ἀφοῦ σὲ κατετρόπωσε.

Μόλις ἄκουσε ὁ διάβολος τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ, ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἀπὸ αὐτὸ μόνον κατεκαίετο, ἐξηφανίσθη ἀμέσως.

Ἐφ ὅσον λοιπὸν—λέγει ὁ Μέγας Ἀντώνιος—καὶ ὁ ἴδιος ὁ διάβολος ὁμολογεῖ ὅτι τίποτα δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ κατορθώσῃ, ἐμεῖς ὀφείλουμε νὰ καταφρονήσουμε τελείως αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς δαίμονές του.

Αὐτὸ εἶναι μιὰ ἀπάντηση καὶ στὴν σημερινὴ ἐποχὴ σὲ ὅποιους τρέχουν, γιὰ νὰ λύσουν τὰ τυχὸν προβλήματά τους στὶς μάγισσες, στοὺς μάγους, στὰ μέντιουμ, στὶς ὀραματίστριες, στοὺς ὄνειροσκόπους, στοὺς χειρομάντιες καὶ γενικὰ σὲ αὐτούς, ποὺ παραδίδουν τὴν ψυχὴ τους στὸν διάβολο ποὺ τοὺς κοροϊδεύει. Μόνον ὅταν ὁ Θεὸς τὸ ἐπιτρέπη, ὅπως στὴν περίπτωση τοῦ Ἰώβ, μπορεῖ νὰ κἀν ὅ,τι τοῦ ἐπιτρέπει ὁ Θεός.

Ἀρχὴ τοῦ Χρόνου τῆς Ἀνατολῆς

Νινέττα Βολουδάκη, «Ενοριακὴ Εὐλογία», Τεύχος 168-169, Τερὸς Ναὸς Ἁγίου Νικολάου, Πευκακίων, Αθηνών.

Ὁ χρόνος! Ἐνα «πράγμα» ποὺ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ δοῦμε, δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ ἀγγίξουμε, δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ κλείσουμε σὲ ἓνα σωλῆνα καὶ νὰ τὸ βάλουμε κάτω ἀπὸ ἓνα μικροσκόπιο νὰ τὸ ἐξετάσουμε. Δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ ἀγοράσουμε καὶ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ πουλήσουμε, δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ ἀπειλήσουμε καὶ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ τὸ νικήσουμε. Δὲν ἔχει χρώμα, δὲν ἔχει ἄρωμα, δὲν ἔχει ὄγκο, δὲν ἔχει βάρος, δὲν ἔχει σκιά. Ὅμως βαραίνει πάνω μας, δεσπόζει στὴ ζωὴ μας καὶ τὴν καταδυναστεύει, ἀπὸ τὴ στιγμή ποὺ θὰ γεννηθοῦμε, μέχρι τὴ στιγμή ποὺ θὰ ἀφήσουμε αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμο πίσω μας.

Ἔτσι καὶ ἡ ἀνθρωπότητα στὸ σύνολό της, ἄρχισε ἀπὸ πολὺ νωρὶς νὰ ψάχνει τρόπους νὰ προσπαθεῖ νὰ καταλάβει καὶ νὰ ὑπολογίσει, αὐτὸ τὸ φευγαλέο καὶ ἄπιαστο στοιχείο. Καὶ εἶναι φυσικό, στὴ μέτρηση τοῦ χρόνου νὰ χρησιμοποιηθοῦν οἱ δύο σταθερές τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ζωῆς, τὸ φῶς καὶ τὸ σκοτάδι, ἡ μέρα καὶ ἡ νύχτα, ὁ ἥλιος καὶ ἡ σελήνη. Ἄλλοι λαοὶ στηρίχτηκαν στὸν ἥλιο, ἄλλοι στὴ σελήνη, ἄλλοι—οἱ περισσότεροι—καὶ στὰ δύο. Ἦδη ἀπὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ χαλκοῦ ἔχουν σωθεῖ ἡμερολόγια τῶν Αἰγυπτίων καὶ τῶν Σουμεριῶν ὅπως καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ σιδήρου, τῶν Βαβυλωνίων τὸ Ζωροαστρικὸ ἡμερολόγιο τῶν Περσῶν καί, βέβαια, τὸ Ἑβραϊκόν.

Οἱ ἀρχαῖοι Ἕλληνες διαμόρφωναν μὲ διάφορες παραλλαγές τὴ μέτρηση τοῦ χρόνου μέχρι τὴν κλασσικὴ περίοδο καί, μὲ τίς κατακτήσεις τοῦ Μ. Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ τὴν Ἑλληνιστικὴ περίοδο ποὺ ἀκολούθησε, οἱ γνώσεις τους στὸ θέμα ἐπηρέασαν καὶ τοὺς λαοὺς τῆς Ἀνατολῆς καὶ τοὺς Ρωμαίους. Ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ ἡμερολόγια, ἦταν προσαρμοσμένα στὴ λατρεία τῶν θεῶν κάθε λαοῦ, στὶς γιορτές τους, στὰ φαινόμενα ποὺ ἦταν σημαντικὰ γιὰ τὴ ζωὴ τους, ὅπως π.χ ὁ θεὸς Νεῖλος καθώριζε μὲ τίς πλημμύρες του τίς Αἰγυπτιακές ἐποχές.

Μέχρι ποὺ ὁ Ἰούλιος Καίσαρας ἦρθε νὰ δώσει ἓνα πιὸ κοσμικὸ χαρακτήρα στὴ μέτρηση τοῦ χρόνου, εἰσάγοντας ἀπὸ τὸν πρῶτο χρόνο τῆς διακυβέρνησής του τὴν Ἰνδικτο, ποὺ γι' αὐτὸ στὴν ἀρχὴ ὀνομάστηκε καὶ Καισαρική. Ἡ Ἰνδικτος ἦταν τὸ διάγγελμα, ἡ ἐντολή,

γιὰ τοὺς φόρους σὲ εἶδος—τρόφιμα καὶ ρουχιισμό—ποὺ πλήρωναν κάθε χρόνο οἱ πολῖτες γιὰ τὴ συντήρηση τοῦ Ρωμαϊκοῦ στρατοῦ καὶ ἔτσι ξεκίνησε γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ ἡ οἰκονομία καὶ ἡ φορολογία νὰ διαμορφώνει τὴ ζωὴ τῶν πολιτῶν, ἓνας πρόδρομος, δηλαδή, αὐτοῦ ποὺ ἐμεῖς ὀνομάζουμε οἰκονομικὸ ἔτος.

Ἀρχικά, ἡ πρωτοχρονιά ἦταν στὶς 24 Σεπτεμβρίου, δηλαδή τὴ μέρα τῆς φθινοπωρινῆς ἰσημερίας, καὶ διαχωριζόταν ἀπὸ τὴν πολιτικὴ πρωτοχρονιά, δηλαδή τίς Καλένδες τοῦ Ἰανουαρίου. Ἐπειδὴ ὅμως ὁ Ὀκταβιανός-Αὔγουστος (ὁ διάδοχος τοῦ Καίσαρα καὶ πρῶτος ποὺ ἀνακηρύχτηκε αὐτοκράτορας) εἶχε τὰ γενέθλιά του στὶς 23, ἡ πρωτοχρονιά μετατέθηκε γιὰ τὴν 23^η μέρα τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου. Οἱ μεταρρυθμίσεις τοῦ Διοκλητιανοῦ (284-305), ὁ ὁποῖος εἶχε νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσει τὴ μεγάλη οἰκονομικὴ κρίση τῆς παρηκμασμένης Ρώμης, προσάρμοσαν τὴ φορολογία στὴν πενταετῆ θητεία ποὺ ἦταν ὑποχρεωτικὴ στὸ στρατὸ καὶ ἔτσι ἀπὸ τὸ 287 θεσμοθετήθηκε ἡ Ἰνδικτιῶν, ποὺ μετροῦσε κύκλους πέντε χρόνων. Σὰν πρώτη μέρα τοῦ κύκλου τῆς Ἰνδικτιῶνος ὀρίστηκε ἡ πρώτη μέρα τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου χωρισμένη καὶ πάλι ἀπὸ τὴν πολιτικὴ (Ἰνδικτιῶν) πρωτοχρονιά τῆς πρώτης μέρας τοῦ Ἰανουαρίου. Μὲ τὰ χρόνια, ἡ στρατιωτικὴ θητεία ἔγινε ἀπὸ πέντε, δεκαπέντε χρόνια καὶ μὲ αὐτὸ τὸ διάστημα κατέληξε ὀριστικὰ νὰ ὑπολογίζεται ἡ Ἰνδικτιῶν.

Ὁ Μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος ὥρισε τὸ 312 σὰν πρώτη Ἰνδικτο τῆς πρώτης Ἰνδικτιῶνος τῆς βασιλείας του, ποὺ ὀνομάστηκε Κωνσταντίνειος Ἰνδικτιῶν. Ὁ Ἰουστινιανὸς εἰσήγαγε τὴ μέτρηση αὐτὴ σὲ ὅλα τὰ κρατικὰ καὶ δικαστικὰ ἔγγραφα καὶ ἡ **Ἀνατολικὴ Ρωμαϊκὴ αὐτοκρατορία κράτησε τὴν πρώτη μέρα τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου σὰν ἀρχὴ καὶ τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ καὶ τοῦ πολιτικοῦ ἔτους, μέχρι τὴν πτώση της, τὸ 1453.**

Στὴ Δύση, ἡ μέτρηση τῶν Ἰνδικτιῶνων τοὺς πρώτους αἰῶνες συμβάδιζε μὲ τὴ μέτρηση τῆς Ἀνατολῆς. Μόνον οἱ Ἀγγλο-Σάξονες κράτησαν τὴν 24^η Σεπτεμβρίου, μέρα τῆς φθινοπωρινῆς ἰσημερίας, σὰν πρώτη μέρα τῆς Ἰνδικτου, λόγω τοῦ ὅτι εἶχαν—καὶ ἔχουν—προσήλωση στὶς ἰσημερίες, σὰν κατάλοιπο τοῦ εἰδωλολατρικοῦ παρελθόντος τους. Ὁ Καρλομάγνος, τὸν 8^ο αἰῶνα, ἐγκατέστησε καὶ στὴ Γαλλία τὴ μέτρηση ποὺ ἔμεινε μέχρι τὸν 16^ο αἰῶνα.



Ἄν κανεῖς ἀκολουθήσει τὸν κύκλο τῶν ἐποχῶν, ἡ πρώτη Σεπτεμβρίου εἶναι ἡ ἰδανικὴ μέρα γιὰ νὰ ἀρχίσει ὁ νέος κύκλος τοῦ χρόνου. Ἰδίως τότε ποὺ οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀκολουθοῦσαν τὴ φυσικὴ συνέχεια τῶν ἐποχῶν καὶ τὸ καλοκαίρι ἦταν ἐποχὴ σκληρῆς δουλειᾶς—ὄχι ξάπλας στὴν παραλία—καὶ σκληρῶν πολέμων, ἀφοῦ οἱ ἐκστρατεῖες ἀρχίζαν τὴν ἀνοιξη. Ὁ θερισμός τέλειωνε, ὅπως τέλειωνε καὶ ἡ συγκομιδὴ τῶν καρπῶν, τὸ νέο κρασὶ ἔμπαινε στὰ βαρέλια, ἡ νέα σπορὰ ἐπεφτε στὴ γῆ γιὰ νὰ κοιμηθεῖ ὅλο τὸ χειμῶνα, μέχρι νὰ ἔρθει ἡ ἀνοιξη νὰ τὴν ξυπνήσει. Κι οἱ ἄνθρωποι προετοιμάζονταν κι αὐτοὶ σιγὰ σιγὰ, περιμένοντας τὶς βροχές, τὸ κρῦο, τὸ χιόνι, ποὺ θὰ τοὺς μάζευαν μέσα στὰ σπίτια τους καὶ γύρω ἀπὸ τὶς φωτιές τους. Ἀκόμα καὶ σήμερα, ποὺ ἡ ζωὴ μας ἔχει γίνεῖ τόσο διαφορετικὴ, τὸ καλοκαίρι ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ καταλήγει μὲ τὴν ἴδια ἡρεμία στὸ φθινόπωρο, ὅπως ἡ μέρα ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ κλίνει στὸ δειλινό.

Οἱ Πάπες ὅμως, γιὰ κάποιον ἀνεξήγητο λόγο, φάνηκαν νὰ προτιμοῦν ἤδη ἀπὸ τὸν 7^ο αἰῶνα τὴν πρώτη Ἰανουαρίου σὰν ἀρχὴ τῆς Ἰνδίκτου. Ἔτσι, μὲ τὸν καιρὸ, ὀρίστηκαν δύο εἶδη Ἰνδίκτου: ἡ **Καισαρική**, δηλαδή ἡ παλαιὰ Ρωμαϊκὴ μὲ ἀρχὴ τὴν πρώτη Σεπτεμβρίου καὶ ἡ **Παπική**, ἡ ὁποία ἀρχίζει πρῶτα τὴν 25^η Δεκεμβρίου καὶ μετὰ, τὴν πρώτη Ἰανουαρίου. **Ἡ Ἀνατολὴ κράτησε τὴν Καισαρική, ἡ Δύση υἱοθέτησε τὴν Παπική.**

Τελικά, σὲ ὅλο τὸν κόσμο, ἐπεκράτησε ἡ Παπικὴ προτίμηση καὶ σήμερα ὅλοι γιορτάζουμε τὴν πρωτοχρονιά στὶς Καλένδες τοῦ Ἰανουαρίου. Μόνον ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἔχει κρατήσει σὰν ἀρχὴ τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ ἔτους τὴν πρώτη Σεπτεμβρίου, διατηρῶντας τὴν ἀνάμνηση μιᾶς ἐποχῆς καὶ μιᾶς ζωῆς ποὺ πέρασε ὀριστικά.

Φαντάζομαι, πὼς ἂν ὁ Χρόνος εἶχε πρόσωπο, ὅπως ζωγραφίζεται σὲ κάποιες παλιές τοιχογραφίες, θὰ παρακολουθοῦσε ὅλες τὶς προσπάθειες τῶν ἀνθρώπων νὰ τὸν αἰχμαλωτίσουν καὶ νὰ τὸν μετρήσουν καὶ νὰ τὸν συγκεκριμενοποιήσουν, χαμογελῶντας εἰρωνικά. Γιατί, ὅποτε κι ἂν γιορτάζουμε τὴν πρωτοχρονιά, ὅσα ψηφιακὰ ρολόγια κι ἂν κατασκευάζουμε, ὅσο κι ἂν κυνηγάμε καὶ τὸ δευτερόλεπτο, ὁ χρόνος διαγράφει τὴν τροχιά του πάνω καὶ πέρα ἀπὸ τὴ δική μας κατανόηση.

Ἔστωσο, σὲ κάποιον ποὺ παρατηρεῖ τὰ ἴχνη τοῦ χρόνου πάνω στὴ ζωὴ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητας, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ μὴ γεννηθοῦν κάποια ἐρωτηματικά. Καὶ ἓνα ἀπὸ αὐτὰ εἶναι τὸ πῶς καὶ τὸ γιατί, ὅλος ὁ κόσμος, ὅλοι οἱ λαοὶ ἀκολούθησαν καὶ ἀκολουθοῦν τὴν Παπικὴ ἀπόφαση νὰ μετρηθεῖ ὁ χρόνος ἔτσι καὶ ὄχι ἀλλιῶς, ὅπως κι ἂν εἶναι αὐτὸ τὸ ἀλλιῶς. Ὑπάρχουν τόσοι λαοί, μὲ τὶς δικές τους πρωτοχρονιές, μὲ τὶς δικές τους μετρήσεις τοῦ χρόνου, λαοὶ ὅπως οἱ Κινέζοι, μὲ τέτοια

ἱστορία, τέτοιο πολιτισμὸς, τέτοια φιλοσοφία, ποὺ ποτέ τους δὲν ἐνδιαφέρθηκαν νὰ τὴν ἐπιβάλλουν στὸν ὑπόλοιπο κόσμο. Καὶ θὰ μπορούσαν, πολὺ εὐκόλα, νὰ ἐπιβληθοῦν, καὶ μόνο μὲ τὴν ἀριθμητικὴ ὑπεροχὴ τους. Αὐτοὶ ὅμως κράτησαν—καὶ κρατοῦν—τὴ ζωὴ τους κλειστή, τὴν πρωτοχρονιά τους γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτό τους καὶ τὸν τρόπο ζωῆς τους—καλὸ ἢ κακὸ—δικό τους.

Τὶ ἀκριβῶς ἔχει ὁ δυτικὸς κόσμος, ὁ δυτικὸς πολιτισμὸς, πού, ἐνῶ ἀποτελεῖ μειοψηφία στὸ σύνολο τῆς ἀνθρωπότητας, ἐπιβάλλεται καὶ «διαβρῶνει» καὶ παραμερίζει ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους πολιτισμοὺς καὶ διαμορφώνει, ὄχι μόνο τὴ μέτρηση τοῦ χρόνου, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὀλόκληρη τὴν ἐξέλιξη τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου εἴδους;

Ἴσως οἱ ἱστορικοὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος, ὅταν ἡ ἐποχὴ μας θὰ ἔχει παρέλθει, νὰ μπορέσουν νὰ δώσουν μιὰ ἐξήγηση στὸ φαινόμενο. Μέχρι τότε—καὶ ἐλπίζω γιὰ πάντα—ἡ Ἐκκλησία μαζεῦει ὅλους τοὺς νοσταλγοὺς, νὰ ξεκινήσουν τὴ νέα Ἰνδίκτο, συνταιριάζοντας τὸ χθές μὲ τὸ σήμερα, ἐνώνοντας τὸ χρόνο μὲ τὸ ἄχρονο, καλῶντας καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ποὺ δὲν ἦρθαν ἀκόμα ἀλλὰ θὰ ἔρθουν στὸ χρόνο, νὰ μὴ μᾶς ξεχάσουν, ὅπως δὲν ξεχνοῦμε κι ἐμεῖς οὔτε αὐτοὺς ποὺ προηγήθηκαν, οὔτε καὶ ὅσους θὰ ἀκολουθήσουν.



*Πρὸς τὸν Καθηγ. Ἰ. Μ. Γρηγορίου Ἁγίου Ὁρους
Ἀρχιμ. Βησσαρίωνα*

Ἐν Πάρῳ, 22^α Φεβρουαρίου 1971

Πιστεύω καὶ ἐλπίζω, ὅτι ὁ ἰδρυτὴς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὁ Ἀρχηγὸς τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν, ὁ κραταῖος καὶ δυνατὸς ἐν πολέμοις, πάντας τοὺς πολεμοῦντας τὴν Νύμφην Αὐτοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν, τὴν καθαρὰν καὶ ἄσπιλον, τὴν ὁποῖαν περιποιήσατο μὲ τὸ Τίμιον Αἷμα Του, θὰ τοὺς συντρέψῃ ὡς σκευὴ κεραμέως καὶ θὰ διαφυλάξῃ καὶ διασώσῃ Αὐτὴν καθαρὰν. Ὑμεῖς δὲ οἱ ἐναπολειφθέντες στήτε καλῶς, στήτε μετὰ φόβου, στήτε ἀνδρείως καὶ μὴ κλίνετε γόνυ εἰς τὸν ἀντίχριστον Πάπαν καὶ εἰς τοὺς ὀπαδοὺς αὐτοῦ φιλοπαπιστὰς οἰκουμενιστὰς, Ἀθηναγόραν, Ἀμερικῆς Ἰάκωβον, Χαλκηδόνο Μελίτων καὶ λοιποὺς δειλοὺς καὶ προδότας. Στήτε μέχρι τέλους, μέχρι θανάτου, ἵνα λάβητε τὸν ἄφθαρτον στέφανον ἐν Οὐρανοῖς...

Ἐν Ἱερομονάχοις ἐλάχιστος,
† **Ἀρχιμανδρίτης Φιλόθεος Ζερβάκος(+1980)**

Σχίζετε τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, Παναγιώτατε!

Ἐπιστολὴ Γέροντος Σάββα Λαυριώτη πρὸς τὸν Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριάρχην Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κ.κ. Βαρθολομαῖον, ἐδημοσιεύθη στίς 16 Σεπτεμβρίου, 2016.

Παναγιώτατε, ὡς πιστὸ τέκνο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ, σεβόμενος τοὺς θεσμοὺς καὶ τὴν τάξιν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ θέλοντας νὰ παραμείνω Ὁρθόδοξος μέχρι τὸ τέλος τῆς ζωῆς μου, σὰς καταθέτω τὰ ἑξῆς:

Μέχρι τώρα ἀπευθυνόμασταν καθηκόντως εἰς τὴν Ἱερά Κοινότητα καὶ στὰ Μοναστήρια ὅπου ἀνήκουμε, διὰ νὰ δηλώσουμε τὴν ἀντίθεσίν μας μὲ τὰ δικὰ σας οἰκουμενιστικὰ φρονήματα, τίς δηλώσεις σας καὶ τίς πράξεις σας.

Ἐξαντλήσαμε κάθε ἀνθρώπινη δυνατότητα μέσω γραμμάτων, ὁμιλιῶν καὶ παρεμβάσεων νὰ ἐπισημάνουμε τὸν ὀλισθηρὸ δρόμο πὸν ἀκολουθεῖτε ἐσεῖς καὶ ἡ ἀδιαφόρος χειραγωγούμενη, ἀπὸ ἐσᾶς, μοναστηριακὴ διοίκηση τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους, παρὰ καὶ τὴν προσφάτως δημοσίευση τῶν πρακτικῶν τῆς Διπλῆς Συνάξεως τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους τοῦ 1979, ὅπου σύσσωμοι τότε οἱ Ἁγιορεῖτες ἀπορρίπτουν συλλήβδην τὴν ὑπαρξὴ χάριτος στοὺς Παπικοὺς ἀπευθυνόμενοι πρὸς τὸ Πατριαρχεῖο. Καταδειξάμε ἐξαντλητικὰ τὸν ρόλο σας, ὡς πρωτεργάτη τῆς οἰκουμενιστικῆς ἀντίχριστης αἵρεσης. Ἀπειληθήκαμε, ἐκβιαστήκαμε καὶ ἐξοριστήκαμε, γιὰτὶ ἀντιστεκόμαστε στὴν πνευματικὴ χολέρα καὶ τὸν ψυχικὸ θάνατο πὸν ἐμβάλλετε στὸ ποίμνιο τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μέσω τῆς ἀντίθετης κακοδοξίας πὸν ἐπιμόνως ὑπηρετεῖτε.

Τὸ ἄηθες, ἀντιπατερικὸ καὶ ἀνίερο πνεῦμα πὸν διαπνέει ἐσᾶς καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῆς αὐλῆς σας καὶ πὸν κορυφώθηκε μὲ τὴν ψευδοσύνοδο τοῦ Κολυμπαρίου, δὲν σὰς ἐπιτρέπει οὔτε κἂν νὰ μᾶς περάσετε ἀπὸ Συνοδικὸ δικαστήριον, ὅπου θὰ διαφαινόταν τὸ πόσο ἀντιστρατεύεστε τὸν Χριστό, τοὺς ἁγίους καὶ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Παρακαταθήκην. Φοβᾶστε, Παναγιώτατε, ὅτι ἂν τὸ κάνατε, ὁ ὑπνωτισμένος λαὸς ἴσως ξυπνοῦσε καὶ σὰς πετοῦσε στὸν Βόσπορο, ὅπως ἔγινε καὶ μετὰ τὴν Φερράρα-Φλωρεντία. Ὡς εὐστόχως τὸ διετύπωσε κάποτε ὁ μακαριστὸς πατὴρ Ἐπιφάνιος Θεοδορώπουλος ἀπευθυνόμενος προσωπικῶς πρὸς τὸν ἐγκωμιαζόμενον ἀπὸ ἐσᾶς σήμερον ἀλλὰ τεκμηριωμένως γνωστὸ μασόνο Πατριάρχην Ἀθιναγόρα καὶ συνετάχθησαν σὲ αὐτὸ σήμερον ἀγωνιστὲς Ἱεράρχες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας: «Παναγιώτατε, μυριάκις προτιμότερον νὰ ἐκριζωθῇ ὁ ἱστορικὸς τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Θρόνος καὶ νὰ μεταφυτευθῇ εἰς ἔρημόν τινα νησίδα τοῦ πελάγους, ἀκόμη δὲ καὶ νὰ καταποντισθῇ εἰς τὰ βάθη τοῦ Βοσπόρου, ἢ νὰ ἐπιχειρηθῇ ἔστω καὶ ἡ ἐλαχίστη παρέκκλισις ἀπὸ τῆς

χρυσῆς τῶν Πατέρων γραμμῆς, ὁμοφώνως βοώντων: **Ὁὐ χωρεῖ συγκατάβασις εἰς τὰ τῆς Πίστεως».**

Σύρετε τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία στὰ ὑπόγεια τῶν ἀσεβῶν διαβουλιῶν πὸν πάντα τὴν μισοῦσαν. Σχίζετε τὴν Ἐκκλησία κατασκανδαλίζοντας τὸ Ὁρθόδοξο ποίμνιο. Μετατρέπετε τὸ Ἅγιο Ὄρος—διὰ τῆς τυφλῆς καὶ βίαιης ὑπακοῆς πὸν ἐπιβάλλετε—σὲ νεκρὸ ὄστρακο ἀπὸ τὸ ὁποῖο ἔχει φύγει ὁ Μαργαρίτης.

Δὲν γνωρίζετε, Παναγιώτατε, ὅτι ὅποιος σχίζει τὴν Ἐκκλησία, δὲν τὸν ξεπλένει ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν ἁμαρτία οὔτε τὸ αἷμα τοῦ μαρτυρίου, ὡς λέγει ὁ Χρυσορρήμων Πατὴρ, τοῦ ὁποίου τὸν θρόνον κατέχετε; Περιμέναμε ἀπὸ ἐσᾶς, Παναγιώτατε, νὰ ὀρθοτομήσετε τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας. Νὰ σταθεῖτε ἀντάξιος τοῦ ὑπουργήματός σας. Ἐσεῖς, ἀντὶ νὰ στηριξετε τοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους στὴν Πίστην μας, προτρέπετε τοὺς αἵρετικούς νὰ παραμείνουν στὴν πλάνη τους, ὀδηγώντας ἔτσι τοὺς μὲν στὸν βόρβορο τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ, τοὺς δὲ στὴν αἰώνια καταδίκη νὰ παραμείνουν ἀφώτιστοι καὶ ἔτσι νὰ ὀδηγηθοῦν ἀπὸ τὸν διάβολο στὴν αἰώνια κόλαση. Ἀμφοτέρων τὸ αἷμα τῶν ψυχῶν αὐτῶν θὰ ζητηθῇ ἀπὸ τὰ χέρια σας. Μετανοῆστε ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων, πρὶν αὐτὸ γίνῃ ἀναπόφευκτα ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ἔστω ἡ ἰκεσία σὰς ἀπευθύνουμε, νὰ γίνετε Πατὴρ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ ὄχι πατὴρ τῶν ἐχθρῶν της. **Ἀπολογηθεῖτε στὸ πλήρωμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἢ ἀπαρνηθεῖτε τίς «γυμνῇ τῇ κεφαλῇ» βλάσφημες κατὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος θέσεις σας:**

1. Ὅτι «ὄλες οἱ θρησκείες εἶναι ὁδοὶ σωτηρίας».
2. Ὅτι τὸ Κοράνιο (καὶ οἱ Γραφεὶς τῶν ἄλλων θρησκειῶν) εἶναι «ἴσο μὲ τὴν Ἁγία Γραφή καὶ ἱερὸ ὅπως αὐτὴ» καὶ ὅτι οἱ Μουσουλμάνοι μποροῦν νὰ πᾶνε στὸν παράδεισο χωρὶς νὰ πιστεύουν στὸν Χριστό.
3. Ὅτι πολλὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι προσωρινές.
4. Ὅτι εἶναι «εὐλογημένη» ἡ Συναγωγὴ τῶν Ἑβραίων, πὸν ἀπεκήρυξε ὁ ὑπ' αὐτῶν σταυρωθεὶς Κύριος.
5. Ὅτι ἡ βασικὴ ἀρχὴ τῆς Μασονίας, δηλαδὴ ἡ ἄποψη ὅτι: «ἕκαστος νὰ λατρεύῃ τὸν Ἕνα Θεὸν ὡς [=ὅπως] προτιμᾷ...». «Ὁ Θεὸς εὐαρεστεῖται εἰς τὴν εἰρηνικὴν συμβίωσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ μάλιστα, αὐτῶν οἱ ὁποῖοι τὸν λατρεύουν ἀνεξαρτήτως τῶν διαφορῶν, αἱ ὁποῖαι ὑπάρχουν εἰς τὴν πίστιν μεταξὺ τῶν τριῶν μεγάλων μονοθεϊστικῶν θρησκειῶν», εἶναι ἀποδεκτὴ.
6. Ὅτι οἱ Ἱ. Κανόνες εἶναι: «Τείχη τοῦ αἵσχους».
7. Ὅτι ἡ Ρωμαϊκὴ «ἐκκλησία» εἶναι κανονικὴ, τὰ μυστήριά της ἔγκυρα καὶ ὁ Πάπας κανονικὸς Ἐπίσκοπος. Ὅτι ὁ Πάπας γιὰ ἐσᾶς εἶναι: «Προφητικὸς ἀρχηγὸς ὄχι μόνο τῶν Χριστιανῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου» καὶ «πρότυπον» καὶ «ἀδαπάνητος θησαυρὸς καὶ ὁδοδείκτης».
8. Ὅτι οἱ συλλειτουργίαι καὶ συμπροσευχῆς μὲ τοὺς αἵρετικούς εἶναι «ἀγάπη». Κάτι πὸν, ὄχι μόνο δὲν

δίδαξε ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία, ἀλλὰ ἔπραξε τὸ ἀντίθετο μὲ στρατιῆς μαρτύρων.

9. Ὅτι οἱ καταδικασμένοι, ἀπὸ τὴν Δ΄ Οἰκουμενικῆ Σύνοδο, Μονοφυσίτες εἶναι «Ὁρθόδοξοι».

10. Ὅτι οἱ χειροτονίες τῶν Ἀγγλικανῶν εἶναι ἔγκυρες.

11. Ὅτι ἡ Οὐνία εἶναι ἀποδεκτή.

12. Ὅτι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία εἶναι μία, ἀνάμεσα στὶς 348 «ἐκκλησίες»—μέλη τοῦ Παγκοσμίου Συμβουλίου Ἐκκλησιῶν (Π. Σ. Ε.)—οἱ ὁποῖες διευθύνονται ἀπὸ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα.

13. Ὅτι: «Οἱ κληροδοτήσαντες εἰς ἡμᾶς τὴν διάσπασιν (τὸ Σχίσμα) προπάτορες ἡμῶν ὑπῆρξαν ἀτυχή θύματα τοῦ ἀρχεκάκου ὄφους καὶ εὐρίσκονται ἤδη εἰς χεῖρας τοῦ δικαιοκρίτου Θεοῦ!»

Ἀπὸ ἐσᾶς περιμένουμε:

(1) Νὰ καταδικάσετε τὸν Οἰκουμενισμό, ὡς τὴν χειρότερη αἵρεση ὄλων τῶν αἰώνων.

(2) Νὰ καταδικάσετε τὸ Π. Σ. Ε.



Περὶ Προσευχῆς

Ἁγίου Λουκά Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κριμαίας.

Πάντα μὲ πολλὴ παρρησία πρέπει νὰ πλησιάζουμε τὸν Θεό, νὰ Τὸν ἱκετεύουμε σὰν τὰ μικρὰ παιδιὰ ποὺ περιμένουν βοήθεια ἀπὸ τὴν μητέρα τους καὶ ἀπλώνουν πρὸς αὐτὴν τὰ μικρὰ χεράκια τους. Νὰ Τὸν ἱκετεύουμε σὰν ἕνα φτωχὸς ποὺ πεθαίνει τῆς πείνας καὶ ἤρθε νὰ παρακαλέσει τὸν Ἄνθρωπο ποὺ εἶναι γνωστὸς γιὰ τὴν εὐσπλαχνία Του νὰ τὸν βοηθήσει. Νὰ Τὸν ἱκετεύουμε σὰν τὴν Χαναναία γυναῖκα ποὺ μὲ ἐπιμονὴ παρακαλεῖ τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ σηκώνει σ' Αὐτὸν τὰ χέρια της. Τὸν ἱκετεύει μὲ παρρησία γιατί πιστεύει καὶ ξέρεي ὅτι θὰ λάβει αὐτὸ ποὺ ζητᾶ. Πιστεύει καὶ γι' αὐτὸ παίρνει βοήθεια.

Βλέπουμε λοιπὸν ὅτι δύο προϋποθέσεις ὑπάρχουν γιὰ νὰ γίνῃ δεκτὴ ἡ προσευχὴ μας ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Πρῶτ' ἀπ' ὅλα χρειάζεται βαθεῖα καὶ μεγάλη πίστη στὸν Κύριο, μὲ ὅλη μας τὴν καρδιά νὰ πιστεύουμε σ' Αὐτὸν ποὺ ἱκετεύουμε. Καὶ τὸ δεύτερο, νὰ μὴν ὑπάρχει οὔτε ἴχνος ἀμφιβολίας, κανένας δισταγμὸς στὴν καρδιά, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἡ πίστη, ἡ πίστη στό ἄπειρο ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Μόνον ἡ προσευχὴ ποὺ βγαίνει ἀπὸ καρδιά ποὺ εἶναι γεμάτη ἐλπίδα καὶ πίστη ἀκούγεται ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Ἐκτὸς ἀπ' αὐτὸ ἡ προσευχὴ θέλει ἐπιμονή. Πρέπει νὰ ξέρουμε ὅτι δὲν θὰ λάβουμε ἀμέσως αὐτὸ ποὺ ζητᾶμε.

Τι σημαίνει νὰ προσευχόμαστε ἀδιάκοπα; Δὲν ἔχουμε καὶ ἐμεῖς τὶς δικῆς μας βιοτικῆς φροντίδες; Εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ ἀσχολούμαστε μόνον μὲ τὴν προσευχή; Ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτὴ φαίνεται ἀπραγματοποίητη. Καὶ ὁμως

εἶναι ἐφικτὴ καὶ ἐφαρμόσιμη, διότι τίποτα τὸ ἀνέφικτο δὲν ζητᾶται ἀπὸ μᾶς ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.

Πῶς ὁμως μποροῦμε νὰ ἐφαρμόσουμε στὴ ζωὴ μας αὐτὴ τὴν ἐντολὴ ποὺ ἰσχύει γιὰ ὅλους τοὺς Χριστιανούς; Τὸ νὰ προσευχόμαστε ἀδιάκοπα δὲν σημαίνει μόνον νὰ διαβάζουμε τὶς εὐχῆς, νὰ κάνουμε γονυκλισίες καὶ νὰ πηγαίνουμε στὴν ἐκκλησία. Δὲν εἶναι ἔτσι τὰ πράγματα. Νὰ προσευχόμαστε ἀδιάκοπα μποροῦμε πάντα καὶ ὅπου καὶ ἂν βρισκόμαστε.

Τὸ μόνον ποὺ χρειάζομαστε εἶναι νὰ ἔχει ἡ καρδιά μας διάθεση γιὰ προσευχή. Νὰ εἶναι ταπεινὴ καὶ νὰ θρηνεῖ ἀδιάκοπα τὴν ἀναξιοτήτα καὶ τὴν ἀμαρτωλότητά της. Γεμάτη φόβο μπροστὰ στὴν μεγαλοσύνη τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν Ὅποιο προσβάλλουμε μὲ τὶς ἀμαρτίες μας. Σὲ κάθε μας ἔργο μποροῦμε νὰ προσευχόμαστε, μόνον νὰ ὑπάρχει διάθεση γιὰ προσευχή, νὰ ποθεῖ ἡ καρδιά μας τὸν Κύριο καὶ τότε ἡ ἐντολὴ ποὺ μᾶς ἔδωσε ὁ ἀπόστολος μπορεῖ εὐκόλα νὰ πραγματοποιηθεῖ.

Δὲν ἀκούει ὁ Θεὸς ἐκεῖνες τὶς προσευχῆς ποὺ δὲν τοῦ εἶναι εὐάρεστες. Δὲν δέχεται τὶς παρακλήσεις ποὺ στρέφονται κατὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Δὲν τὶς δέχεται ὅταν, γιὰ παράδειγμα, Τοῦ ζητᾶμε νὰ τιμωρήσει τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μας. Γιατί, πολλὲς φορὲς ἀσυνείδητα ζητᾶμε στὶς προσευχῆς μας κάτι βλαβερὸ γιὰ τὸν πλησίον. Τέτοιες εὐχῆς ὁ Θεὸς δὲν τὶς εἰσακούει.

Ἡ οὐσία τῆς προσευχῆς εἶναι, νὰ παραδινόμαστε ὀλοκληρωτικά, μὲ ὅλη τὴν καρδιά μας νὰ ἱκετεύουμε τὸν Θεὸ καὶ ἡ προσευχὴ νὰ εἶναι γεμάτη πίστη καὶ ἀκράδαντη ἐλπίδα. Ἔτσι ὁμως προσεύχεται ἡ πλειοψηφία τῶν ἀνθρώπων; Ἀσφαλῶς ὄχι. Ἡ δικὴ μας προσευχὴ εἶναι μόνον ἐπανάληψη κάποιων λέξεων, ποὺ ἔχουμε ἀποστηθίσει καὶ ἐνῶ τὰ διαβάζουμε, τὸ πνεῦμα μας δὲν προσεύχεται, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐπαναλαμβάνουμε μηχανικά, χωρὶς νὰ σκεφτόμαστε αὐτὰ ποὺ ζητᾶμε. Ἐμεῖς οἱ ἴδιοι δὲν ἀκοῦμε τὶς προσευχῆς μας καὶ ἂν δὲν τὶς ἀκοῦμε ἐμεῖς, τότε πῶς θέλουμε ὁ Θεὸς νὰ ἀκούσει αὐτὰ ποὺ ζητᾶμε;

Πρέπει νὰ ξέρουμε ὅτι, ὅταν ὁ Θεὸς στέλνει μιὰ συμφορὰ ποὺ πλήττει ὀλόκληρο τὸν λαό, τότε ὁλος ὁ λαὸς πρέπει νὰ Τὸν ἱκετεύει γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία του. Πρέπει ὅλοι νὰ κάνουν αὐτὸ ποὺ ἔκαναν κάποτε οἱ κάτοικοι τῆς Νινευί, ὅταν ἔμαθαν ἀπὸ τὸν προφήτη Ἰωνᾶ πῶς ἀποφάσισε ὁ Θεὸς νὰ καταστρέψει τὴν πόλη. Τὶ ἔκαναν αὐτοὶ τότε; Ὅλος ὁ λαὸς τρεῖς μέρες καὶ τρεῖς νύχτες προσευχόταν ὁμόψυχα. Καὶ ἐπειδὴ προσεύχονταν ὅλοι ὁ Θεὸς τοὺς ἔλεησε.

Λοιπὸν, νὰ προσευχόμαστε ἀδιάκοπα καὶ νὰ χτυπάμε ἀκούραστα τὴν θύρα τῆς Θεῖας εὐσπλαχνίας. Νὰ Τὸν ἱκετεύουμε ὄχι μόνον γιὰ μᾶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ γι' αὐτοὺς ποὺ δὲν προσεύχονται. Τότε, ἀσφαλῶς, θὰ εἰσακουστοῦν οἱ προσευχῆς μας καὶ ὁ Κύριος θὰ μᾶς ἀποδώσει κατὰ τὸ μέγα Του ἔλεος.

Ποιές Είναι οι Αιτίες του Μελλοντικού Πολέμου

Από το βιβλίο «Πόλεμος και Βίβλος», του Αγίου Νικολάου Βελμίροβιτς, εκδόσεις «Παρθένια».

Η κουλτούρα ως είδωλο ανήκει στις μέρες μας στα πιδ τυφλά είδωλα. Απορρίπτοντας τὸ Θεὸ πού εἶναι ὁ μοναδικὸς ἐμπνευστὴς καὶ ὑποκινητὴς τοῦ πλέον εὐγενοῦς πολιτισμοῦ τόσο τῆς ψυχῆς ὅσο καὶ τοῦ σώματος, οἱ ἀθεϊστὲς ἄρχισαν νὰ λατρεύουν τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὶς κατασκευές τους τὰ ὅποια ὀνομάζουν μὲ μία λέξη: κουλτούρα. Ὅμως τὸ νὰ λατρεύεις τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἔργα εἶναι τὸ πλέον μισητὸ πρᾶγμα ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀφοῦ ὁ Θεὸς στὶς ἐντολές Του ἀπαγόρευσε αὐστηρὰ στοὺς ἀνθρώπους νὰ λατρεύουν τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν κτίση Του, ἀπὸ τὰ ὅποια, καὶ τὸ πλέον ἀσημαντὸ, εἶναι τελειότερο ἀπὸ τὴν τελειότερη ἀνθρώπινη κουλτούρα. Καὶ ἐφόσον ὁ πολιτισμὸς τοποθετήθηκε σὲ ἐξάρτηση μὲ τὰ ὑπόλοιπα είδωλα πού ἀναφέραμε ἐδῶ, ἰδιαίτερα μὲ τὰ ὑλικά ἀγαθὰ, εἶναι ἐπειδὴ καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπηρετεῖ δυναμικὰ τὴν κουλτούρα τῶν πολεμικῶν μικροβίων πού πρὶν ἢ μετὰ ὀδηγοῦν... στὴ γέννηση τῆς πολεμικῆς ἀνάφλεξης.

Ἀπὸ αὐτὰ τὰ πέντε είδωλα τὰ δύο μποροῦν νὰ ὀνομαστοῦν ἀνόητα καὶ τὰ τρία ὑποκριτικά. Ἀνόητα εἶναι ὁ ἐθνικισμὸς καὶ ἡ κουλτούρα, ἐπειδὴ πολλοὶ φωνάζουν καὶ αὐτοδηλώνονται. Ὑποκριτικά είδωλα εἶναι ὁ ὕλισμὸς, ὁ ἱμπεριαλισμὸς καὶ ὁ ἐγωισμὸς, ἀφοῦ κρύβονται καὶ ψεύδονται παρουσιαζόμενοι κάτω ἀπὸ ἄλλα ὀνόματα. Ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ είδωλα θὰ μποροῦσαν νὰ ἀποκαλεστοῦν στὴ γλώσσα τοῦ Ντοστογιέφσκι ὡς μανιακά.

Φυσικά αὐτὰ καὶ τὰ πέντε κάποτε ἀποτελοῦσαν κάποτε πραγματικὲς ἀξίες, πού καὶ πάλι θὰ μποροῦσαν νὰ γίνουν ἔτσι. Αὐτὲς εἶναι πραγματικὲς ἀξίες, ὅταν φωτίζονται ἀπὸ τὴν πίστη στὸ Θεὸ, τὸν Ἔναν καὶ Ζῶντα καὶ ὅταν βρίσκονται ὑπὸ τὸ νόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ· μὲ μία λέξη, ὅταν τελοῦν στὴν ἀπόλυτη ὑπεξουσιότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὑπηρετοῦν τὴ δόξα τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ ὕλη προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ δόθηκε στοὺς ἀνθρώπους γιὰ νὰ τοὺς ὑπηρετεῖ καὶ ὄχι γιὰ νὰ κυριαρχεῖ στὶς ψυχές τους. Αὐτοκρατορίες παρέχει ὁ Θεὸς σὲ κάποιους χαρισματικοὺς λαοὺς πὸν ὡς δυνατότεροι ἀδελφοὶ ὑπηρετοῦν τοὺς πιδ ἀδύναμους καὶ λιγότερο χαρισματικοὺς λαοὺς, ὅπως ὁ δυνατότερος ἀδελφὸς τὸν ἀσθενέστερο. Τὸ ἔθνος μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι ἓνα περιορισμένο, ἀλλὰ ἐξαιρετικὰ ὁμορφο καὶ ὀρθὸ πεδίο ὑπηρεσίας πρὸς τὸ Θεὸ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

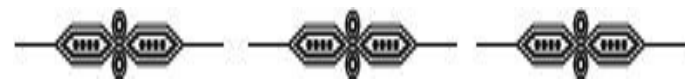
Τὸ πρόσωπο (τὸ ἐγὼ) εἶναι δηλαδὴ μία λογικὴ ψυχή, τὸ δώρισε ὁ Θεὸς σὲ κάθε ἄνθρωπο ὡστε μὲ τὴ διακονία καὶ τὴν ἀγάπη νὰ τὸ ὑψώσει στὸ καθ' ὁμοίωση μ' Αὐτόν, τὸ δημιουργό του. Τὴν κουλτούρα

ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ἐμπνέει, ὡστε μέσω αὐτῆς ἡ ἀνθρώπινη ψυχή νὰ ἐκφράσει τὴν κυριαρχία της πάνω στὸν ὕλικὸ κόσμον καὶ τὴν ὑποταγή της στὴν ὑπηρεσία τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ τὰ πέντε αὐτὰ λαμβάνουν ἀγγελικὸ πρόσωπο μέσω τῆς διακονίας καὶ τῆς ἀγάπης ὅπως διευθέτησε καὶ πρόσταξε ὁ Κύριος Χριστὸς. Ἀλλὰ ὅμως, ὅπως τὸ Σεραφεῖμ πού ἔπεσε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ, κάποτε ὀνομαζόταν Ἐωσφόρος καὶ μεταμορφώθηκε ἀκαριαία σὲ διάβολο, ἔτσι καὶ ὅλες αὐτὲς οἱ πέντε ἀξίες ἀποκοιμένες ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ καθίστανται είδωλα καὶ μανιές.

Προσέξτε τώρα πὼς ὁ σχετικὸς κορεσμὸς αὐτῶν τῶν πέντε είδῶλων ὀδηγεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὡς τὴν ὀκνηρία, τὴν ἀλλοίωση, τὴ σήψη καὶ τὴν ἀπέχθεια πρὸς ὅλα, τὴν ἀνοησία καὶ τὴν αὐτοκτονία (ὅπως καὶ λίγο πρὶν τὸ τέλος τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς αὐτοκρατορίας). Μὰ ὅμως αὐτὴ ἡ ἀδηφαγία ὀδηγεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους μέχρι τὰ ἔσχατα τῆς πικρίας, τῆς ζήλιας, τῆς μεμψιμοιρίας, τῆς ἀσυνειδησίας καὶ τῆς κάθε είδους βίας καὶ πάλι στὴν αὐτοκτονία. Καὶ στὶς δύο περιπτώσεις ὅλα τὰ είδωλα ἀποπνέουν μίσος καὶ περιφρόνηση γιὰ τὸν πρᾶο καὶ ἀγαθὸ Κύριο Χριστὸ καὶ συνεπῶς ὀδηγοῦν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους στὸν πόλεμο.

Καλύτερα νὰ μὴν εἰσέρθουμε στὴν ἀπαρίθμηση ὄλων τῶν βαριῶν τραυμάτων πού ἄνοιξε στὸν ὀργανισμὸ τῆς Εὐρώπης καὶ τῆς Ἀμερικῆς αὐτὴ ἡ πενταπλὴ είδωλολατρία, γιὰ τὴν θὰ ἐπαναλαμβάνουμε μέρα μὲ τὴ μέρα αὐτὸ πού ἐπαναλαμβάνεται στὶς στήλες ἐγκλημάτων καὶ ἐγκλημάτων, καθὼς καὶ σὲ ἄλλες στήλες πού θὰ μποροῦσαν νὰ ἀποκαλεστοῦν: **Ἀδιαφορία γιὰ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ τὶς ἐντολές Του.** Εἶναι σαφὲς ἀπὸ ὅσα μέχρι τώρα εἶπαμε, ὅτι οἱ Χριστιανικοὶ λαοὶ οἱ ὅποιοι βρίσκονταν σὲ πνευματικὸ γάμο μὲ τὸ Χριστὸ, ἀπίστησαν καὶ παραδόθηκαν σὲ χαμηλοὺς δεσμοὺς μὲ τὴ μηδαμινότητα, μὲ τὴ σκόνη, μὲ τὶς στάχτες καὶ τὶς σκιές.

Ὅμως καθέννας πού ἀπιστεῖ δὲ ζεῖ ἄραγε ὑπὸ συνεχῆ φόβο καὶ στὴν ἀνησυχία γιὰ τὴν ὑπεράσπιση καὶ τὴν ἐξασφάλιση τῆς ζωῆς του; Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ εἰκόνα καὶ ὁ καρπὸς τῆς σύγχρονης είδωλολατρίας, ὁ φόβος, καὶ λόγω τοῦ φόβου ὁ ἀκραῖος ἐγωισμὸς, ἡ σπασμωδικὴ προσκόλλησις στὴν ὄλη καὶ ἡ ἀρπαγὴ τῶν ὕλικῶν ἀγαθῶν. Καὶ ἐπειδὴ γιὰ τὸ ἓνα καὶ τὸ ἴδιο ὕλικὸ ἀνταγωνίζονται πολλοὶ λαοί, αὐτὸ ἀναπόφευκτα σημαίνει σύγκρουση καὶ πόλεμο.



Κάποιος ρώτησε τὸν ἀββᾶ Ποιμένα: «Τί εἶναι μετάνοια γιὰ τὴν ἁμαρτία;» Καὶ εἶπε ὁ γέροντας: «Τὸ νὰ μὴν τὴν ξανακάνεις πιά. Γι' αὐτὸ, ἄλλωστε, ὀνομάστηκαν ἄμωμοι οἱ δίκαιοι, γιὰ τὴν ἔπαψαν ν' ἁμαρτάνουν καὶ ἔγιναν δίκαιοι».

ON OUR PASSIONS

By Anthony of the Desert, from his pamphlet "On Depression." For more of this author's writings see <http://www.churchfathertheology.com/>.

A major constituent of passion is that as long as the soul is sick with passions—the word passion not only means an intense or overpowering emotion but also comes from the Latin *passionis*, meaning “to suffer”—not only are we more susceptible to the illness of depression but the soul can only learn about what is spiritual from secondary means (e.g., hearsay, reading, etc.). Thus, to both compel a return from depression's evil clutches and to pursue what is godly we must be healed from the disease of passion, a recovery that requires knowledge of God existing as our freedom from enslavement to passion as well as an exact understanding of passion's nature.

In order to apprehend passion's anatomy, we must recall how disobedience to God infected man with passion and initiated the expulsion from Paradise as well as the falling into a state contrary to nature (one that is subject to sin, ambition, love of worldly pleasure, etc.). This bespeaks of how humanity became mastered by and enslaved to passions, a circumstance wherein ignorance of God becomes the norm. It was the Lord Jesus Christ who rescued us from this depravity, who provided the capacity to restore our corrupted senses and defiled human nature to the condition intended by God—which was to deliver us from the power of the Evil One, a conservancy that includes liberation from the infernal poison that is depression. As such, the Lord has provided us with the potential for purification from passion (for a freedom from those tendencies that lead us toward evil and into depression).

Moreover, to understand the nature of passion, and the passion of depression in particular, we must realize that, while interrelated, sin is one thing and passion is quite another beast. That is, sin functions as the gratification of passions such as pride, anger, sexual desire, hatred, and greed. This discordant state of affairs (one wherein man is motivated by irrational desire rather than by love for, or pursuit of, God) exists as an acquiescence to passion that culminates in the turning of what is natural into passion; such as the perversion of child-bearing into fornication or anger against Satan into rage toward neighbors. Thus, passion exists as an exaggeration or distortion of something natural, as a transference of what God intended for our purification into that which belongs to fallen human nature.

Now, it must be said that this understanding of passion's nature intends to illustrate that in order to achieve a life that is free from depression we must first and foremost cultivate that part of the soul which discerns and discriminates. This can be accomplished as we gain an awareness of the three movements that lead to passions:

1. Natural movement, that which is inherent in the body and produces nothing sinful or burdening; hunger is an example.

2. Movement that has been excited by far too much food and drink, this stimulates the body to fight against the soul (urges us toward sin).

3. Movement prompted by evil spirits, those infernal beings who try to tempt us, to weaken us, and to lead us astray.

Thus, movement toward passion emanates from an innocent expression of the body's natural appetites, to involuntary thoughts that come from having overfilled the appetite, to acting upon the thought (a consent of the will that gives birth to passion). Once we mentally or bodily indulge in a passion then evil spirits seize upon our absence of vigilance to suggest even greater sins and to steer us into the darkness of depression.

Moreover, it must be understood that out of all the demons who work against us the three who stand at the forefront of the battle are lust, gluttony, and greed (of both love of money and human glory); other demons follow behind and continue the assault. Aiding these three passions are the demons of ignorance, forgetfulness, and laziness (indifference)—through these all of the other passions (including depression) grow and strengthen. Overall, the Holy Fathers generally agree that there exist the eight principle passions of: gluttony, fornication, covetousness (love of money), anger, dejection, despondency, vainglory, and pride. With this in mind, let us now embark upon a discussion of four of these passions and their antidotes (the understanding and curing of passions being our key to healing depression).

Gluttony: This is the door of passions; remember, the Evil One seduced Eve with food. As such, gluttony does not have to involve large quantities (viz., Eve and merely one piece of fruit), it often encompasses the temptation to have just a “little taste,” that which can succeed in enslaving us to the devil and lead to being captured by depression. This evidences how gluttony proceeds from the heart, poisons all senses, and makes the soul a den of evil.

Also of import is that there exists two kinds of gluttony: (1) the seeking of only pleasing food without desiring to eat too much (only consuming what pleases the appetite) and (2) being overcome by a compulsion to eat a lot, that is, wanting to eat and eat without any care for what food is being consumed. Either form of gluttony causes blindness to the things of God; as one panders to the belly so too, in the same measure, will he deprive himself of purification and become susceptible to the demon of depression.

Antidotes for gluttony include realizing that our objective with food must be to simply sustain life, pleasure ought not to be our end. Also, we must never omit thinking of God while eating, we must keep in mind that God provides food for sustaining nutritional needs and focus concentration on thanks to Him. To achieve these curatives it helps to choose

whatever food is easy to obtain and is cheap, and whenever a lust for food arises then we should confine ourselves to bread and water for a while (this will make us grateful for even a thin slice of bread).

Lust: One consequence of the Fall involved the perpetuation of the human race via physical means (sexual intercourse); meaning that sex is a function of fallen human nature, as is hunger (the precursor to gluttony). Neither sex nor hunger are evil when exercised as God intends, however, just as hunger can become gluttony so can sex become ungodly lust; interestingly, there exists a direct cause and effect relationship between gluttony and lust in that overeating can stimulate lust and lust can activate gluttony.

Consequently, the antidote to lust resides in keeping the stomach hungry so that shameful thoughts will not enter the heart. This foreclosure of licentious thinking occurs because the commonplace shameful urges and unseemly fantasies that accompany overeating have been cut off. Assuredly the antidote to a pandering of the flesh is fasting, lust is extinguished by hunger.

Vainglory: There exists a glory that comes from God (cf. Gen 22:15-18) and there is a “glory” that follows us diabolically (viz. Lk 6:26), one that most often manifests as hoping that others are watching our “good” actions (the passion of desiring recognition from others). This effort to have our deeds acknowledged by others is clothed in piety, is quite subtle and extremely hard to detect; that is, vainglory as a precursor to depression evidences how quickly we can become blindsided by its (depression’s) blackness.

Vainglory initially springs from a lack of faith and is then followed by envy, hatred, flattery, jealousy, quarrelling, hypocrisy, and other dark passions; all of which culminates in depression. The result can only be our detachment from heaven, our being chained to earth and unable to look up and see the True Light (the dark clouds of depression obstruct the mind’s ascent to God). This demonstrates how vainglory is intimately connected with countless other passions; for instance, as we puff ourselves up with vainglory we are led rapidly to the constant presence of carnal thoughts (lust), a quick temper (anger), and the desire to immediately possess everything that we crave (covetousness), all of which ends in a mind that has gone completely astray. Of course, once our desires remain unfulfilled we fall prey to additional passions, such as despondency and dejection, which results in deep depression. This sordid state of affairs cannot be destroyed in a short time, these infernal passions must undergo the

excruciatingly painful process of being torn out by the roots from the depths of the soul.

Antidotes to vainglory include looking straight up to God, rather than to seek the praise of created beings, as well as taking control of the mouth, calling to mind repeatedly the multitude of our sins, and maintaining a remembrance of death.

Anger: This passion results from a lack of self-control and is the quickest passion of them all, hardening the soul more and more. Some of anger’s results involve the nursing of grievances, an itching for vengeance, the constant pursuit of “repayment” from those who have offended us, and so on. Quite simply, nothing noble can be produced while the pernicious serpent of anger eats us inside and all too often an overwhelming depression is the result.

Furthermore, once anger has successfully banished our pursuit of God it then gains dominion over the soul and makes us completely bestial. The tongue becomes unbridled and speech is unguarded, physical violence likely results, and the one who is angry and/or the victims of such a person suffer untold injury. The angry person has been deeply wounded in his heart, argues bitterly, speaks with arrogance, and thusly provides the serpent with added strength to further infect inner space; one who has become enslaved by anger eventually lives for sin and becomes totally dead to the truth, the soul has been devoured.



It must be said that nothing is more ruinous and harmful than an uncontrolled tongue, and once our tongue has inflicted offense upon others at some point we experience regret and then begin to slip down the slope and into the pit of depression; obviously, this is wholly destructive and robs us of the soul’s treasure. Whatever one manages to build is destroyed by anger, whatever has been collected with great labor the soul dissipates through anger.

The antidote for anger requires taming and transforming it into gentleness (meekness) by courage and mercy. We achieve this virtue by counting our sins and by mourning and weeping over them (there can be no anger where there is mourning). We can also repress the violent and frenzied movements of the soul by emulating the examples of saints and by humbling the heart via prayer.

Further antidotes involve not thinking that we deserve any rewards or acclamations and not perceiving anyone else as inferior. This is to humble the heart when it howls with rage and compels the passions to honor humility (we curb anger by keeping it bridled to humility). Anger has been designed to help us in waging war with the devil and his demons and

to aid our struggle against sin so is beneficial when allied with humility; that is, as with other passions, the passion of anger serves a salvific and purifying purpose when employed for the reasons intended by God.

Having considered several specific passions, let us now turn to some Church Father teachings on warfare against passion. To begin with, our struggle against passion and depression will be furthered as we recognize that the Lord Jesus Christ (1) showed us by His life on earth how to be cleansed from passions, (2) provided examples of how to judge between what is edifying and what is hurtful, (3) awakened our consciousness from sleep, and (4) revealed the causes of sin. Moreover, as Christians we have been set free by Holy Baptism and have had our sins forgiven, that is, Christ Jesus has provided us with the medicine needed to be able to obey His commandments and to thusly become free from enslavement to passion. Truly, Christ Jesus is the Physician of Souls, He knows all and applies the correct remedy for every illness; for instance, for vainglory He prescribes humility, for love of pleasure He commands temperance, almsgiving is applied for avarice ... each disease has its proper remedy via a particular commandment of the Lord.

Also of great import to the struggle with passions is the Body and Blood of Christ, which when received with full confidence has the power to extinguish every disease. This weapon can then be combined with the careful hearing of Sacred Scripture and the giving of alms so that we can battle every passion.

Yet another weapon against the passions is acquiring zeal and this may be done through (1) fear of losing the blessings that we have gained, (2) concern about an ability to generate watchfulness in all directions, (3) diligently guarding against hostile attacks within and without, and (4) an intense longing for virtue. We can then labor toward applying sobriety in all things so that whatever we confront will not become a cause of harm and/or deception—an objective that requires trusting in the Lord and not in ourselves. To sobriety we then add patience because when we possess long-suffering then the darts of the enemy will not wound us. Along with these virtues comes remembrance of death as a way by which to generate the exclusion of all cares and vanities. In these ways we are able to nurture a guarding of the mind, ceaseless prayer, non-attachment to bodily desires, and an abject hatred of sin. This will lead to the practice of continence, to the complete avoidance of everything that tends toward the harmful pleasures or passions.

Please know full well that the struggle against passions and depression is the most difficult warfare that any one of us can experience and has been likened to the bearing of a cross; an ordeal that must involve both enduring bodily privation and meditating on God (an abiding in prayer)—bodily cross bearing purifies the passionate part of the soul while contempla-

tion brings light to it. However, be forewarned that the great temptation for beginners is to skip the bodily struggle, a pitfall that the Church Fathers sternly warn against by instructing that anyone who pursues contemplation without having first perfected training in bodily struggle is merely attracted to delights and is motivated by laziness.

Additionally, to avoid discouragement at the outset of our struggle against passions we must not allow memory of past sin to arise (this is because no passion can be born without a movement of thoughts). Also, please be advised that trials during our battles against passions will tempt us toward despondency and will inflict a sense of weariness; thus, we must ever remind ourselves that there exists a longing for an impure and shameful life, a condition that is born out of the demonic temptation to avoid repentance. We combat these disruptive tendencies by cultivating an orderly and thoughtful approach to our warfare against passions, one that must include not trusting in self but which instead seeks to learn from and to obey a spiritual father.

In more specific terms, and by way of example, one proven way to confront passions is by first endeavoring to not swear or speak evil and then by learning not to give in to a chosen passion (such as envy or lust) so that instead, things of the spirit can be pursued via the practice of continence, temperance, neglect of the belly, and righteousness—we join these one with another and thusly write them upon the soul. So initially practice something basic, such as not swearing, and then progress to passions and no matter how many setbacks never despair or give up; simply persevere!

The goal of warfare with passions, in addition to thwarting depression, is to foster dispassion (*apatheia*). Dispassion is pursued by first renouncing self-will so that we become lovers of God and participate, however imperfectly, in His passionlessness. This requires striving toward guiding thoughts far away from every passion at the very moment of provocation and toward contemplation of the Divine with greater clarity. However, it must be remembered that no matter how successful we become on this path we will always possess a fallen nature, one wherein temptation toward passion will ever remain as an integral part. That is, passionlessness does not mean never being attacked by demons but rather involves not being conquered whenever we are attacked.

In conclusion, dispassion exists when the mind no longer seeks to keep attention on passions and is instead filled with divine pursuits and contemplation. This is a state wherein whenever passions begin to move (are excited) the mind is immediately lifted away from them via the perception of the Divine. Thus, dispassion is the inner heaven of the mind—*the kingdom of God is within you* (Lk 17:21). The truly dispassionate person has raised his mind above created things and has subdued all senses, which is to keep the soul in God's presence; in such a state passion and depression cannot exist.

BEARING OUR CROSS

By St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov) of Caucasus (+1867). From "Writings of Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov, Ascetic Sermons," Vol. IV, published by Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York, 1984, pp. 90-96.



Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me, the Lord said to His disciples, calling them to Himself, as we heard in today's Gospel (Mk 8:34).

Beloved brethren! We too are disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, because we are Christians. And we have been called to stand in the presence of the Lord in this holy church in order to hear His teaching. We stand before the face of the Lord; His eyes are fastened on us. Our souls are laid bare before Him; our secret thoughts and hidden feelings are manifest to Him. He sees all our intentions. He sees the righteous and unrighteous things that we have done from our youth. He sees our entire life, both the past and the future; what we still have not done is already recorded in His book. He foresees the hour of our passing into the unfathomable eternity, and for our salvation He proclaims to us His all-holy commandment: *Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*

With the power of living faith, let us raise our mental eyes to the Lord, and we will see Him! We will see Him, Who is everywhere present, actually with us. Let us open our heart, rolling away from its entrance the heavy stone of bitterness; let us hearken to, let us consider, let us accept, and let us assimilate in ourselves the teachings of our Lord.

What does it mean, *to deny oneself*? To deny oneself means to leave one's sinful life. Sin, the means by which our fall was accomplished, as it embraced our whole nature and became almost natural for us. The renunciation of sin has become the renunciation of nature; the renunciation of nature is the renunciation of one's self. Eternal death, having penetrated our soul, has turned to us for sustenance. It requires its nourishment—sin; its enjoyment—sin. By means of such food and such enjoyment, eternal death strengthens and preserves its dominance over a man. But fallen man considers the strengthening and development of the mystery of sin in himself to be the progress and success of life. Thus he who is infected by a fatal disease is dominated by the forceful demands of that disease and seeks the food which strengthens the disease; he seeks it as

something most necessary, as an indispensable and most pleasant enjoyment.

In opposition to this eternal death which presents itself as life to mankind, ailing from the terrible fall, the Lord pronounces His sentence: *For whosoever will save his life, developing the life of fallen nature or eternal death, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, deadening within oneself sinful desires and rejecting sinful pleasures, the same shall save it.* (Mk 8:35). Indicating the entire world present before our eyes, with all its beauties and attractions, the Lord says, *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* (Mk 8:36). What profit is there for a man, what gain, if he acquires, not something of little importance, but even all the visible world? This visible world—merely a temporary guesthouse for man! There is not one thing on earth, no kind of property which we can call our own. Inexorable and inevitable death will take everything from us, and often even before death, unforeseen circumstances and calamities take them away. Our body itself we will lay down at the hidden threshold to eternity. Our possessions, our property and treasure—this is our soul, and only our soul. *What shall man give in exchange for his soul?* says the word of God. (Mk 8:37). Nothing will compensate for the loss of the soul, when eternal death kills it, seductively pretending to be life.

What does it mean to take up one's cross? The cross was the instrument of shameful punishment for common people and criminals deprived of civil rights. The proud world, the world hostile to Christ, deprives the disciples of Christ the rights by which the sons of the world enjoy. *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you... They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.* (Jn 15:19; 16:2:3). To *take up one's cross* means to magnanimously endure the ridicule and derision which the world showers on the followers of Christ, those sorrows and persecutions by which the sin-loving and blind world persecutes the followers of Christ. The holy Apostle Peter says: *For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. ... In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* (I Pet 2:19, 21; Jn 16:33).

To bear one's cross means to courageously endure severe unseen difficulty, unseen oppression and martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel, in the struggle with one's passions, with sin living within us, with evil spirits who with frenzy rise up against us and with cruelty oppose us when we endeavor to

throw off the yoke of sin and submit to the yoke of Christ, *for we wrestle not against flesh and blood*, says the Apostle Paul, *but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* (Eph 6:12). *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* (II Cor 10:4-5). Gaining victory in this unseen but arduous battle, the Apostle exclaimed: *But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* (Gal 6:14).

To take up one's cross means to submit with obedience and humility to those temporary sorrows and calamities which it pleases Divine Providence to allow for the cleansing of our sins. Then the cross serves as a ladder for man from earth to Heaven. The thief commemorated in the Gospel ascended on this ladder; he ascended from the midst of the most horrible crimes to the brightest dwelling of Paradise. From his cross he pronounced words filled with humility. Through humility he received knowledge of God and through the knowledge of God he obtained Heaven, *We receive the due reward of our deeds*, he declared. *Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.* (Luke 23:41-42). And we, beloved brethren, when sorrows surround us, let us repeat the words of the thief, words which purchased Paradise; or like Job, let us bless the Lord who is just as well as merciful. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, this sufferer asked, and shall we not receive evil? As it seemed good to the Lord, so it has come to pass; *blessed be the name of the Lord* (Job 1:21). May the unerring promise of God be fulfilled in us: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.* (Jas 1:12).

To take up one's cross means to voluntarily, and with fervor, submit to deprivation and struggles by which the irrational strivings of our flesh are bridled. The holy Apostle Paul referred to such a crucifixion of the flesh: *But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.* (I Cor 9:27). *They that are full in the flesh*, that is, those who do not bridle their flesh, but allow it to rule over the spirit, *cannot please God.* (Rom 8:8). And therefore,

while living in the flesh, we must not live for the flesh! *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die with death eternal; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live eternally, with a blessed life.* (Rom 8:13). The flesh essentially is bridled by the spirit; but the spirit can reign over the flesh and direct it only when the flesh has been prepared for submission by being crucified. The flesh is crucified by fasting, vigil, prostrations, and other bodily labors laid on it, in moderation and with understanding. Prudent and moderate bodily labors free the body from heaviness and obesity, refine its powers, and keep it constantly light and ready for action. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with affections and lusts.* (Gal. 5:24).

What does it mean to take up the cross, and specifically, his cross? This means that every Christian must patiently bear, namely, those insults and those persecutions from the world which befall him, and none other. This means that every Christian, with obedience, with submission to the will of God, with the belief in the justice and mercy of God, and with thanksgiving to God, must bear precisely those sorrows and deprivations which Divine Providence allows him, and not some others which are portrayed or suggested to him by proud imagining. This means that one should be content with those bodily labors which correspond to our physical strength, which are necessary to our body to stay healthy. In no way does



it mean to strive for intensive fasting, vigils, and excessive asceticism, being attracted by "vainglorious zeal," according to the expression of St. John of the Ladder, thereby destroying physical health and leading the spirit into conceit and self-deception.

All mankind labors and suffers on this earth; but how diverse is this suffering! How varied are the passions which war against us! How many are the sorrows and temptations which God sends us for our healing, for the cleansing of our sins! What a difference there is in the physical strength and health of people! Precisely, every man has his own cross. Every Christian is commanded to receive his cross with self-renunciation and to follow Christ. He who has taken up his cross and denied himself and has come to peace with himself, with his circumstances, with his position, outwardly and inwardly, only such a person can wisely and correctly follow Christ.

What does it mean, to follow Christ? It means to study the Gospel, to have the Gospel as the only guide for the actions

of the mind, the actions of the heart, and the actions of the body. It means to borrow one's manner of thought from the Gospel, to attune the feelings of the heart according to the Gospel and to serve as an expression of the Gospel in all one's actions, in all movements, seen and unseen. Capable of following after Christ in such a manner, we repeat, can be only such a *person who has fled from self-deception through voluntary humility* (Col. 2:18), and who has sought to acquire true humility where it truly abides—in obedience and submission to God. Having entered into obedience to God, into that obedience which is united with complete self-renunciation, he has taken up his cross, and acknowledged and confessed this cross to be his own.

My beloved brethren! While making prostrations before the Cross today, in accordance with the customs of the holy Church, let us also make a spiritual prostration! Let us honor the venerable Cross of Christ—the instrument of victory and banner of the glory of Christ—each one confessing from his cross, ***I have received the due reward for my deeds! Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom!*** With acknowledgement of our sinfulness, with gratitude to God, and submission to the will of God, let us make our cross, instead of an instrument of punishment and a sign of dishonor, an instrument of victory and a sign of glory, like the Cross of the Lord. With the Cross let us open Paradise for ourselves.

Let us not allow ourselves to complain maliciously, and let us especially give no place to soul-destroying criticism which is often heard from the mouth of the blind, embittered sinner, who is being tortured and flogged on his cross, vainly struggling to escape from his cross. With complaining and criticism, the cross becomes an unbearable burden, drawing down to hell the one crucified on it. “What have I done?” the thoughtless sinner cries out, as he reproaches the injustice and mercilessness of the just and merciful God. He blames and rejects the providence of God. Seeing the crucified Son of God, he mockingly and maliciously demands of him, *If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* (Mt 27:40).

But our Lord Jesus Christ *willingly was pleased to ascend the cross in the flesh and to endure death* in order to reconcile mankind with God, by death to save mankind from eternal death. At the appropriate time the Lord revealed to the Apostles that He would be betrayed into the hands of sinners, would suffer much, and would be killed and would rise again, thereby preparing the Holy Apostles for that great event which was to take place, the redemption of the human race through the suffering and shameful death of the God-man Incarnate. Such a prophecy seemed strange and impossible. Then the Lord summoned to Himself His disciples and said to them, ***Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*** Amen.

THE GRAMMAR OF FAMILY LIFE

By Archpriest Pavel Gumerov, translated by Jesse Dominick, from the webpages of <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/> (“Orthodox Christianity”), September 9th, 2016. Top of Form Fr. Paul speaks about what is most important in family life, which rules are necessary to obey to live long and happily, and what to follow and what to avoid.

I greet you, dear readers! Today we will be speaking directly on what is family life and how to fine-tune it, to paraphrase the famous words of St. Theophan the Recluse.

The purpose of the Christian life generally, and of family life in particular is to serve God and to serve your loved ones, and this is a task of paramount importance. All that we do, as the Apostle Paul writes, *whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Cor 10:31). And all can be considered from the point of view of the salvation of our souls and from the point of view of service to God and to our loved ones, and family life has the same main task.

Very often we observe that when people are unable to develop a family life, they dedicate all their unspent love and desire to serve other people towards various social projects; they take up volunteering, visiting hospices and cancer wards, helping the homeless at the railway stations ... It's all very good if your family life does not suffer from it, because you must first put your own home in order, help your family and loved ones, and then you will be able to help others. As St. Paul says in his letter to Timothy: *But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.* (1 Tim 5:8).

Today I would like to present a few principles which I employ in my personal family life and about which I advise people who come to me, as vital components for building a happy Christian marriage.

Here are the principles. First I will name them and then I will explain each one:

1. Never forget what is most important.
2. Your family is you.
3. Try to communicate more.
4. Discuss vital problems, communicate.
5. Respect one another.
6. Do not try to remake or re-educate your other half, but be able to see the good, bright side in your beloved and in your family life.
7. Give no place to anger and other negative emotions.
8. Do more to please your family.
9. Give help and mutual assistance.

Never Forget What Is Most Important

A person often strives for different goals in his life: career, creativity, a family... There are especially many issues that should be resolved in the first year of spousal life. The first year of marriage is quite difficult; we have to settle some material problems, develop relationships with relatives, find

an apartment, then follows the birth of your first child and so on and so on. Of course, at first people do not have experience with any of this, which comes with the years. And in this commotion it often happens, as they say, that we “throw the baby out with the bathwater,” that is, to forget about the most important thing: Why we united ourselves into a family. And why did we? To love one another, to rejoice, to serve one another. We should especially remember this in difficult circumstances. We joined into a family not at all in order to prove who is right, who is to blame, or to solve some problems immediately; we want it today, we want it now. Of course, we will not be able to solve everything immediately. And with any problem or family conflict we must always give room for the most important thing and pursue it.

Our Family Is Us

Whether we like it or not, our spiritual wellbeing, and physical as well, depends now on who is near us. I will speak about myself: At a certain point I stopped separating myself from my family, in general. I had the feeling that I had always had a wife and children, and they were even always of the same age as now. It was somehow forgotten that there was a period where I was unmarried, when I had no one near me that I cared for.

Being a family man, you must align the orientation of your soul and all your actions with other people—it is very important—to try so that everything is good not just for you, or not just for someone else. If something detrimental occurs, you will reconcile yourself to it, and continue to do so endlessly; if a resolution is not forthcoming, you will not be able to endure it and—you will explode; or you will habituate someone else to dependence, or maybe even to tyranny...

In family life we must forget the pronoun “I” and remember the pronoun “we.” This refers both to minor issues and to those more important. Everything must be spoken about and discussed.

Try to Communicate More

In one American university, if I am not mistaken, they did some research to determine why marriages fall apart, and it turns out that the majority of marriages break up not from infidelity, not because people have different personalities, not from economic problems, but from a lack of communication between the spouses! People do not find this unity which is so necessary in marriage. It probably was there at first, but then somehow got lost, or always, even before marriage, the partners barely spoke with one another... He and she begin

to live their own lives, and it's very grievous when people do not perceive their family as “we.”

It sometimes happens: Some kind of a “crack” in the relationship appears and begins to grow, but they do not want to get a divorce, and there are already children and they live under one roof essentially as two people, strangers to one another, to each his own life, one not interested in the other... Once a woman complained to me that she and her husband had nothing left in common (they were already middle-aged) except joint housing and children. I began to question her about what and how. She told me that her husband is unchurched, with his own secular interests, and she is a practicing Orthodox. I asked what kind of music he likes, which books, and in general what kinds of hobbies he has. “He listens to Boris Grebenshikov.” And I said: “Then you should go with him to a Grebenshikov concert. What's the big deal?” “How's that? No. Why would I go to a concert?!” You understand, this person does not want to make any steps towards the other! And it is all quite sad.



A common occurrence: Spouses spend their vacations separately—she goes to a resort with the kids, and he, for example, goes to their summer house or somewhere else. I know very many couples who began to live this way—every man for himself. They were united simply at some point to quickly start a family and have kids. It is even possible that they begin to live in separate apartments. Of

course, such a disconnection does not appear immediately, and, thank God, if the people realize it in time, they can recover their family unity—communicating with one another. But for this you must make an effort!

My grandfather and grandmother gave me an example of a nearly ideal family life. They were already quite old but they were strong for seventy. Visiting them in Ufa, my native city, I was always amazed that these people, who it would seem already exhausted every topic, whose children were grown, whose grandchildren were already married, were so interested in one another. Grandpa would return from the garden and begin to tell Grandma something. They spent hours talking about the day's events! I was amazed at how they could discuss something! Was it about the news that they saw on TV? Not at all. **They found one another more interesting.**

I recall one *batiushka* who was always very caring for his *matushka*, and even when he stayed to sleep in the church house in-between services, he always took the phone to call her and ask: “How are you? How are you feeling?” He gave

her such attention, such gentle care, the kind that we usually see in young people.

Neglecting communication is forbidden, because in communication is born community—that community which is binding and cementing in the beginning of marriage, for lack of which, as researchers say, marriages break up.

After a hard day, when the kids have already gone to bed, discuss the day's events with your spouse over a cup of tea. This is especially for wives, who, as a rule, sit at home with the kids, waiting for their husbands to share with him her experiences, joys, and fears that occurred that day.

Now many spend their leisure time surfing the web, hanging around on social media, playing computer games, and it is all very sad. We must not forget about simple human communication!

Discuss Vital Problems, Communicate

This is, properly speaking, an unfolding of the previous point: Spousal communication and dialogue over very serious issues helps to prevent conflicts I would even say. We would manage to avoid many problems if we had discussed them beforehand. For example, a husband bought his wife a trip to a resort, wanting to make her happy. He wants her to be able to go there to relax in some warm country. So he bought this ticket and he goes home quite content; but it turns out that his wife is allergic to the sun and she cannot travel to the south. Or, for example, he wanted to surprise her, having hung new wallpaper in the bedroom while she was at the country house, but it turns out he chose some color which his wife cannot tolerate due to some psychological trauma from her childhood. And so there will be conflict and resentment. Such resentments, however, could be avoided quite elementarily, if these things were thoroughly discussed beforehand. We must discuss stuff—from something small like the color of the wallpaper, to the most important things: How to live—with the wife's or husband's parents or to build your own home, how many kids to have, etc. This communication should already be there before marriage, and in marriage it is very important to consult with one another. The final word, of course, belongs to the husband, but he should understand that if he somehow "goes too far," always insisting on his way, then he will seriously ruin the relationship with his other half.

Family is always a search for a compromise. To discuss the important issues is a must. Love and concord is the foundation of a family.

Mutual respect is also imperative. A wife came to me once with a difficult family situation, and I advised her: "You should respect your husband if you want him to be the head of the family." And I heard from her: "But my husband really does not like this word—'respect.'" Apparently, it seems to him taken from the vocabulary of some alcoholics. Then I said: "But there are other words—'reverence,' 'esteem.'" They are very important words! And by the way, it is not

only the wife who is commanded to reverence her husband, but a husband should tenderly relate to his better half, with reverence and devotion. And children should see this esteem and reverence, because the example of how mama reveres and respects papa is how they themselves will build their relationship with their father.

Do not Try to Remake Your Spouse

You must, at all times, be able to see the good, bright side in your beloved and in your family life!

Do you know which marriages are the strongest, the most durable, the most, we can say, truly happy in the greater sense of the word? Not those with some idealistic situation, the spouses having common interests, compatible personalities, and so on. No! The most durable and strongest marriages are those where the people know how to value and see the good sides of their spouses and the good sides of their family lives, and can rejoice in these gifts which the Lord has given them. This is what happiness is.

Happiness is not some kind of state of earthly prosperity, not a "social package:" Country house, car, obedient children, and some other components. Happiness is precisely the ability to see and value that which the Lord gives us. To everyone He gives some kind of such happiness, according to their strength and possibility, and happiness is in our hands. "Look for the keys to happiness in your own hands," as our Russian familial proverb goes.

To re-educate or re-make your other half in some way is a completely empty task, good-for-nothing. We can "influence" another person only if we ourselves change our attitude towards him, if we change our behavior. Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher, said: If you cannot solve a problem, change your attitude towards it, and you will see that some kind of solution to the problem is found.

I strongly advise you wives who want to remake and reeducate their husbands, to read the book *The Charm of Femininity*. It's a wonderful book! It's an American *Domostroy* (a 16th century Russian set of household rules, instructions and advices pertaining to various religious, social, domestic, and family matters of Russian society). An American female psychologist wrote it, but with Protestant Christian views; although it is written by a non-Orthodox person there are no Protestant heresies in it. I read the whole thing from cover to cover; there are in it, of course, American obsessions and self-promotion, but the book is very good. It is about how to become the ideal wife, how to overcome all your inadequacies, right down to your external appearance and the preparation of food, to really please your husband and how, having changed your behavior, to influence his behavior, to encourage him to become the head of the family and to learn how to take responsibility to himself.

Be aware that seeking idealization examples, looking around at other families or our parents' families or to films or books,

never brought anything good. We must remember that nothing ideal exists, that every person has his strengths and weaknesses. You know, sometimes they give those getting married such advice: On one half of a piece of paper write down all of your spouse's strengths and on the other all of his weaknesses. Then cut the sheet and the half with the weaknesses either tear up or burn it, and the half with his strengths—re-read it more often, preferably every day.

I repeat: Every person has an abyss of good and also many shortcomings, and we all know perfectly well that it is better to see your own shortcomings. Nothing ideal exists. If it seems to you that your best friend's husband is so attentive and nice, think about that he most certainly has his own problems which are either concealed or we just do not know about them, and your family does not have such problems and your husband does not have such inadequacies. To make your husband give you flowers every day because your friend's husband does it is completely wrong. Every person has his strengths which we should discern in him.

Give No Place to Anger and Negative Emotions

Angry people are always wrong, because when a person is blinded by anger he can neither examine a conflict situation, nor correctly resolve it. And generally in anger a person is inept and in a state of some kind of passion.

How can we fight against anger? The habit of getting annoyed, and the habit of making comments and nagging another person are very bad habits. We very often see how a husband and wife already living in marriage for a long time literally torment one another, turning life—for both of them—into hell, often over wholly insignificant trifles and for completely unimportant reasons.

Anyone who wants to build a happy family life should take this rule: Rise in the morning, pray, supplicate God: *Lord, help me this day to live without anger, without irritation, without various empty comments.* And you will see how one, two, three... days pass. In this way, little by little you train your soul, attune it to a peaceful disposition, and the Lord will, naturally, grant you aid that the day might bring you joy.

Do More to Please Your Family

The word "joy," "to delight" is used 211 times in Holy Scripture! The Lord calls us to joy; He did not create us for suffering but for joy; usually we create suffering ourselves through our relationships, and even sorrow. We must follow the rule to rejoice as a counterweight to irritation, melancholy, resentment, and grievances.

Modern man is surrounded on all sides by negative information crushing him: The internet, television, radio, stress, traffic... So at least when someone gets home they should get something smart, good, eternal, and bright from family and loved ones. And it is truly not hard: Say kind words, compliment your wife, give her chocolates, flowers, please her with the small things. These are all easy things to do. It is also not

hard for the wife to give her husband words of encouragement, to compliment him, not to meet him at the doorstep with talk of your problems, but with a cup of hot tea at least if you cannot quickly make dinner. You can please someone with various, absolutely simple small things—for the path is not gifts, but loving attention. It is not the magnitude of things that someone does for us, but constant attention that is most necessary.

Give Help and Mutual Assistance

Of course every member of a family has his own range of responsibilities, but to lend one another a hand and to help out is the task of this body we call the family. We know, for example, that when someone has a seriously hurting right hand, he develops his left. It's the same in family life. It's very important, I repeat, having our own tasks to do at home, to always be ready to help someone else.

I think of my family life. When my wife and I got married I had already lived on my own in the seminary dorm, and knew how to cook some stuff, how to do things by hand, but my wife is the only child in her family and she was bad with this kind of stuff. It weighed on me that I was doing everything quickly, but I would give her a task: For example, tomorrow is my birthday—here is the groceries list, please prepare something—and she could not handle it. I became seriously annoyed by it, which was not good for our family life. But in one moment I realized: I just need to help her, and after a while she had learned how to do everything.

Now our family feasts are celebrated with joy. We prepare the table together. For example, I cut up one salad and she does the second; I prepare the main dish and she does dessert. Together it is quite easy, and it became even easier when we had kids because you can give your kids some tasks to do. It is important to distribute responsibilities, so the family feels like one team in one boat. We do common tasks and there is no bickering whatsoever.

In conclusion, it is important to always remember the first thing—why did we become a family? We became a family for happiness, joy, love, peace and to find joy together in mutual communication.

May God help you all! Take care of one another!



Anyone who does not have his own experience of the vision of God and does not rely on the experience of the God-seeing saints who represent authority within the Church, is deluded, because he is forced to philosophize and imagine God, with terrible consequences.

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos
From "*Empirical Dogmatics*"

ON SUICIDE

By Sister Barbara Khopovo, October 1943 (originally published in English in Orthodox Life vol. 59, no. 4, July-August 2008).

The near total ignorance of the sin of suicide among contemporary young people is shocking. “You mean it’s a sin to kill yourself? I can understand about killing someone else, but life now is so difficult and ugly.”

These are the thoughtless words of the young. One young woman who had been beset with grief recently admitted to me: “I wanted to poison myself. I have no one particularly near or dear to me on this earth. I just wanted to go be with my mother and my sister who died of tuberculosis at an early age. She was like an angel.” I replied: “After committing the terrible sin of suicide were you really expecting to meet your deeply religious mother who patiently bore her cross to the end of her life, and your meek, angelic sister in the next life and to be with them in that blessed place?”

“But I didn’t know that suicide was a great sin.”

“Didn’t they explain the gravity of that sin to you in school, in your catechism class?”

“Believe it or not, they didn’t. Or maybe they did explain it in passing, but if so they did it so unconvincingly that, as you see, I didn’t remember it.”

Others simply say: “Surely you don’t think that if a person cannot bear the pain of living and kills himself that God will punish him severely for that? You monastics imagine God as some kind of disciplinarian. The Lord is immeasurably kind.”

Such are the inexperienced thoughts of the young. One young woman, a believer, admitted to me that on several occasions she planned to kill herself without giving a thought to the fact that by killing her body, she would be handing her soul over to unspeakable torment.

One woman told me: “When I was eight years old, a young officer poisoned himself with morphine right before my eyes. First he made the sign of the Cross many times, then he began to take the doses of morphine powder very quickly, one after another. His behavior seemed very strange to me and so I asked him ‘Serge, what are you doing?’ ‘I have a terrible headache and I’m taking the powder for my migraine,’ answered the young officer.” The girl believed him and a few minutes later Serge fell asleep forever.

One young man was found shot to death by his own hand in front of an icon lamp he had just lit.

One officer shot himself over an open Gospel book. I knew him personally in Kuban in 1918. He was a modest, quiet, religious young man, twenty-one years of age.

It is somewhat possible to comprehend irreligious suicide, motivated by insanity or by haughty rejection of God. But many believing people commit suicide out of ignorance. They often say “If I killed myself, I wouldn’t be doing any harm

to anyone else. No one would mourn my passing.” But what about to yourself? To your eternal soul?

“How do you know? I believe in ‘the world to come,’ but no one knows how souls fare there or what state they are in. No one has ever been in the world to come.”

And so I am obliged to explain that I know, and know for certain, that it is extremely bad for the souls of suicides “over there.” Perhaps it was so that I could write these words for the benefit of young people and people in general who do not understand the gravity of the sin of suicide that the Lord revealed to me certain things, including the very grave spiritual condition of those souls.

I can relate the following: About ten years ago, a nun of our monastery, Mother A., told me about the tragic death of her relative, the daughter of her husband’s sister, who killed herself back in Saint Petersburg. Marina (that was her name) was mentally unstable and had a bad family history (her father was an alcoholic). Marina was given to fits of extreme melancholy. Marriage did not change this. About two weeks before killing herself, she came to visit her aunt, now Mother A. (at that time Mother A. was still living in the world). Her aunt was planning to leave for Moscow to visit her sister. Marina said to her “Auntie, when you return, I won’t be alive anymore.” “What do you mean?” said her aunt in amazement. “Are you seriously ill with some sickness?” “No, I am completely healthy, I’m just tired of living. I went to a fortune teller and she told me that I was going to live a long life. But I don’t want to live.”

Her aunt was shocked by Marina’s thoughtless, senseless words and said to her very seriously: “But you recently had Confession and Holy Communion from Father Alexander (a friend of Father John of Kronstadt); how can you even think about suicide? It is a terrible sin. Take pity, if not on yourself, then on your mother—you’ll kill her. She has devoted her entire life to you. She tried to bring you up in the faith. What are you going to do to her?” Marina thought for a moment and then quickly said “Yes, you’re right, you’re right. But I’m still tired of living and so don’t forget to bring lilies and roses and my poems to my grave.”

Two weeks after this conversation she asked her husband to go look for a dacha for their summer vacation. As they learned later, before committing suicide she bought a book of anatomy and thoroughly studied the region of the heart. While her husband was away, Marina threw a party and assembled a group of young people at her house. In the midst of the festivities she left her guests in the living room and went to her bedroom. A few minutes later, the lighthearted young people were shocked by the sound of a sudden gunshot. They rushed to Marina’s room. She was lying on the rug with a gunshot wound in her heart. Next to her on the floor lay her beloved dog Collie.

The mother of this unfortunate twenty-three year old woman who had cut short her young life suffered inexpressible

pain. The deeply religious mother naturally was painfully aware of the terrible seriousness of her daughter's sin: "It was my Golgotha, my crucifixion and with all my being, with my whole heart I felt the dreadful weight of my Marina's sin," said the grief-stricken mother. "I suffered the torments of her soul in the afterlife myself and day and night thought only of how to alleviate her suffering. I went to the Optina Hermitage and asked them to serve a *Panikhida* for my Marina in the monastery, but they refused to do so because of the strict Church rules forbidding prayers for suicides." This refusal by the monks crushed the already grief-stricken mother. She returned to Petersburg in despair: The Church had rejected her unfortunate daughter. But the Merciful Lord inspired her to go to the holy and great intercessor for the Russian land, Father John of Kronstadt.

The grace-filled elder, full of love for the suffering, listened to the whole tale of the mother's inexpressible grief with deep compassion. Upon hearing of Marina's bad family history, he said "The poor, poor girl, may the mercy of God be upon her. I will pray for her." And thus the poor mother received some consolation from the All-Merciful Lord through the great luminary of the Russian land. The last luminary of Russia took pity on the mother who was overwhelmed with grief and understood her grief in his all-embracing soul.

After hearing Mother A.'s story, I wrote Marina's name in my book of commemoration and began to pray "May God's will be done with the handmaid of God Marina."

And so several years passed. Once, before the Midnight Office, I had an unusual dream which I will never forget. I was sleeping in a cell made from a passageway, behind a curtain. Into my cell area came a young woman, blonde, with her hair piled high on her head and very sad gray eyes; her pretty face and her entire appearance showed great sorrow. I greeted her as if I had known her for a long time: "Hello, Marina, have a seat, although I don't know where I can find a place for you to sit. How about here, on the edge of the bed?" Marina remained standing, deep in grief and in thought. "How are you, Marina?" I asked. "Why are you asking me about that?" answered a voice full of bitterness. "Surely it can't be well with us." Marina emphasized the word "us" so that I would understand that it meant "all suicides." "You know very well how I took my own life; we are all held strictly

accountable for our deeds. We all experienced the preaching of the Holy Gospel. We can never be happy or joyous." I asked "What about when you are commemorated?" (By that I meant "When they pray for you at the Proskimedia.") "Then we have to look at the house" she said. "What house?" I asked. "I can't reveal that to you... You wouldn't understand now, but later (I believe that Marina meant after death) you will learn everything."

I looked at the deeply sorrowful young woman who was standing clearly before me and thought, "What nonsense am I dreaming? It's a dream, and nothing more. How could I be seeing Marina, whom I had never known in my life? It's all nonsense. It is not possible that Marina appeared to me." And while I was thinking this, I clearly heard a stern voice above me say *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* (Lk 16:31).

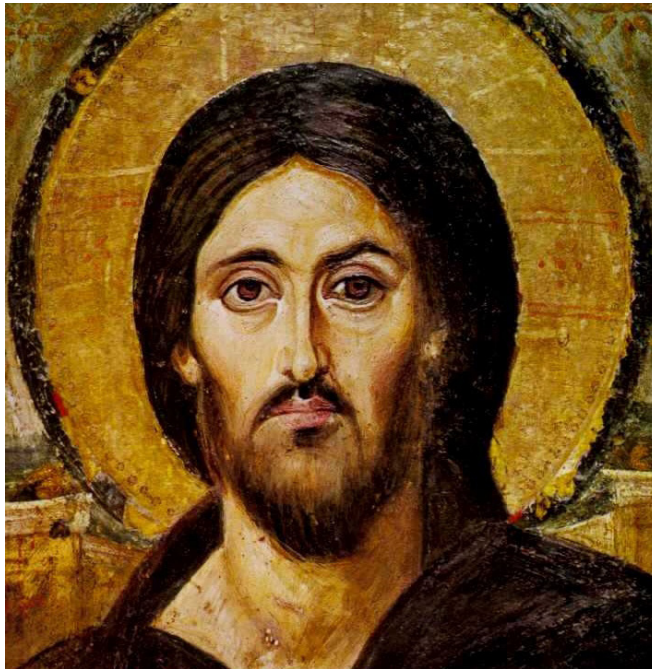
These words from the Gospel were spoken not in Church Slavonic, but in Russian, as if to better instruct me.

I became ashamed of my doubts and with complete faith that it was Marina standing before me I asked her "Surely it won't always be so bad with you?" I was pierced with a feeling of the hopelessness of eternal, spiritual suffering. "I don't know," came the sad answer. "Whatever God wills." Marina added fervently "Please remember, Mother B., that we are held especially strictly accountable for our deeds. We all (she pronounced the last words with emphasis) experienced the

preaching of the Holy Gospel, we know what the truth is. We all (I understood her to mean: suicides who knew the Good Tidings of Christ) are judged very severely."

At those last words of Marina's, I awoke. After the Midnight Office I went to Mother A. and asked, "Was Marina blonde, with her hair done up high on her head, with a pretty, round face?" "Yes, that's exactly what my unfortunate Marina looked like, but how did you know that?" she answered. And I told Mother Anastasia about my unusual dream.

We can only understand in part the dreadful spiritual torments those who commit suicide suffer. Marina was spiritually ill, but not to such an extent that she was completely unaware of what she was doing, and now she had to endure the lawful punishment for the dreadful sin of suicide. In killing the body which was fashioned in wisdom by the Great Eternal Author of life, the person who commits suicide condemns his



or her soul to inexpressible sorrow. **Suicides are condemned as transgressors of the Law of God.**

Once I learned of the death of a former officer, whom I had known. Right away I asked the priest of our monastery to commemorate the newly departed officer for forty days. A few days after I learned of his death, we nuns were to prepare for and receive Holy Communion. After we received Holy Communion and the service ended, an elderly nun gave me a book and asked "Read us a spiritual instruction from here. I'll tell you which one."

I was surprised, because after Holy Communion we never read any spiritual instruction in church, but each nun reads whatever instruction she felt she needed in her cell, or prayed instead. I took the book and began to read the instruction she had indicated: "My days have flown by like birds, they have wound up like a scroll, they have vanished like smoke. All my youth I spent forgetful of God, in unprofitable waste of time." As I read, I thought "And why did Mother I. chose such an inappropriate instruction for the sisters? All the communicants had come to the convent in their early youth and had spent their youth in hard labors for the Lord's sake. This instruction is appropriate for me alone."

I continued reading: "I stand before the face of the Dreaded Judge." I was looking at the book, of course, standing on the kliros, when I was struck by a vision, as if by lightning. I looked into the book and saw clearly as if with some other eyes: In the narthex, across from the commemoration table stood the newly departed officer, whom we were commemorating for forty days. He was standing with his head bowed low, bent over with his hands tied behind his back. He was standing like a criminal who had committed some terrible offense. I saw the newly departed for only an instant, like an ominous flash of lightning. I told my spiritual father about my vision of the soul of the newly departed one. "He has been condemned by God, as a transgressor of His law," my spiritual father answered sternly. "He must have committed some terrible sin," I had the sudden thought "Could he have committed suicide?" I made inquiries in a letter, trying to find out the cause of the death of the newly departed. I received the answer: "He poisoned himself with barbitol."

In his prime he had violently cut short his life, given to him according to the great mercy of the Author of the Universe. Was that officer an unbeliever? No, he both believed and did good deeds for others. He poisoned himself at a difficult moment in his life. Several years before his suicide, while sitting by the grave of his older brother, who had also committed suicide, he had said: "I sense his soul here. How could he have done such a thing? And can the Lord possibly forgive him for it?"

This was a clear acknowledgement of the sin of suicide. It is easy to fall into the power of Satan, who can darken the mind of a believing person, lead him into a state of delirium and, at a difficult, seemingly desperate moment, make him

cut short his precious life which was given to him by the Lord according to His great mercy

But of mercy and judgment will I sing to Thee O Lord. The Lord is merciful, but he is also the Righteous, Chastising Judge! Remember, young people: **Suicide is one of the most dreadful of sins, and unfortunately it is very widespread in our extremely difficult times.**

St. John of Kronstadt's Advice

I knew from Mother A.'s account that Father John of Kronstadt had great boldness before the Lord to intercede for certain suicides. And so I began to pray to the saint and ask on behalf of the unfortunate soul of the former officer of the White Army: "Righteous Father John, pray to God for the soul of this unfortunate suicide."

Once, I was reading the rule before Holy Communion for the children of our convent's orphanage on a Saturday, since the children were to receive Holy Communion the next day. During the reading of the Canon for the Departed, I prayed for my relatives and friends, and I called upon Father John of Kronstadt in prayer to ask him to pray for the unfortunate former officer of the White Army who had recently committed suicide.

I finished reading the prayer rule for the children and came out of the church when one of the nuns gave me a letter. I opened the envelope. It was from an acquaintance of mine, who wrote: "I recently became acquainted with a priest who knew our great intercessor, Father John of Kronstadt personally. This luminary of the Russian land said to my acquaintance: 'If anyone should see a departed person in a dream or while awake (the latter case is extremely rare), then he must read the Psalter or the Holy Gospel for the repose of this person for forty days. He must light at least the smallest wax candle for the repose of the soul of the departed and pray for him until the candle burns out. If a person is busy and cannot pray for long, then he may do so piecemeal, by day or by night.'"

I read these words and thought: "Great and holy was the last luminary of the Russian land, and he is near to all who call upon him."

Spiritual Suicide

There is another form of suicide: killing not of the body, but of the soul. A man who falls away from the truth of the Orthodox faith commits the dreadful sin of spiritual suicide. A soul that falls away from the eternal Truth, from the Great Light of the Orthodox faith is immediately covered in darkness and becomes dead, lifeless, becomes Satan's property and his servant. He who falls away from the Church becomes estranged from the Savior of mankind and is deprived of the grace to do God's will, and instead does Satan's will. Having fallen from the path of salvation, he reaches the abyss of arrogance. Outside of the true Church, the Ark of salvation, he drowns in the ruinous waves of the sea of life. And a man destroys his soul through sins he fails to repent of, by failing to correct his sinful life.

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WHAT IS THE SECOND COMING?

By Fr. Paul Papadopoulos, translated by the staff of "Orthodox Heritage."

Some 2,000 years ago humanity was blessed with the first appearance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on earth. And how did such an event take place? Quietly, humbly, under the starry sky in a small manger, within a cave, born of the Virgin Mary. The Second Coming, however, shall not take place in the same manner!

How will the Second Coming take place? Christ himself informs us: When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. (Mt 25:31). So, He shall arrive not quietly as before, but rather with all His glory; and not only that... While at the time of His first arrival only a few people witnessed and comprehended His coming, the three magis and a few shepherds, now His Second Coming shall draw before Him all nations.

If, my dear brethren in Christ, we were ignorant of any of the Church's teachings or the inspired writings of the Holy Orthodox Fathers and we wanted to exclusively learn about the Second Coming, we would likely arrive at an impression that the Second Coming is the "End of the World," that it very likely means the destruction of everything. Truth be told, one needs only do a simple internet search and will quickly arrive at a rather paradoxical conclusion: the writings of many (among them even Orthodox theologians) as well as the various films, pictures, a plethora of Orthodox writings and just

about everything related to this subject matter, all present the Second Coming of our Lord as something absolutely awful, the absolute end of all, the obliteration and complete destruction of humanity.

Yet it is not so. As intelligent beings created in His image, and as Orthodox Christians, we need to contemplate: Did God, after all, create this world so that He can destroy it? Of course not. God created this world "very much right and well." And after His salvific First Coming, His Crucifixion on behalf of man and His Holy Resurrection, He now returns to fulfill (so to speak) the perfection of His creation through its complete renewal. Thus, the day of His Second Coming, the exact moment of His return with all of His glory, does not continue an end but rather the true beginning of the world. It is the demise and destruction of all, but in essence the renewal of His creation, its evolution and the transformation of all that now must be perfected in and by Christ.

The hour and moment of this event is truly majestic yet concurrently fearful and terrible to some; for the day of the Second Coming shall be the time when all attains their true, their righteous meaning. Everything (and everyone) shall pass through Christ's Presence which shall renew or assign a place and a purpose to everyone and to everything.

And when shall such a great event take place? No one knows, not even the His angelic creation. Nobody! And this is good for us all, because if we did know when His Second Coming shall take place.... Woe to us all.