

# Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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## THE VICTOR OVER DEATH

*By St. Nikolai Velimirovic, from "Homilies, vol. 1," Lazarica Press, Birmingham (1996), pp. 205-211.*

The frozen gather round the fire; the famished gather round the table; those who have endured great suffering through the long night rejoice at the sunrise; those exhausted by fierce battles cheer an unexpected victory. O risen Lord, Thou hast, by Thy Resurrection, become all things to all men! O most rich King, Thou hast, with one gift, filled all the empty hands stretched heavenward! Rejoice, O ye heavens, and O ye earth, rejoice! Rejoice, O ye heavens, as a mother rejoices when she feeds her hungry children; rejoice O ye earth, as children rejoice on receiving nourishment from their mother's hands!

Christ's victory is the only victory in which all humanity can rejoice, from the first-created to the last. Every other victory on earth has divided, and still divides, men from one another. When an earthly king gains the victory over another king, one of them rejoices and the other laments. When a man is victorious over his neighbor, there is singing under one roof and weeping under the other. There is no joyful victory on earth that is not poisoned by malice: the ordinary, earthly victor rejoices both in his laughter and in the tears of his conquered enemy. He does not even notice how evil cuts through joy.

When Tamerlaine was victorious over Sultan Bayazit, he put the latter in an iron cage and held a victory feast in front of it. His malice was his whole joy; his wickedness was food for his mirth. Oh, my brethren, how brief a joy is malice! Oh, how poisonous a food for mirth is evil! When King Stefan of Decani was victorious over the Bulgarian king, he

would not enter Bulgarian lands, nor take the Bulgarian people prisoner, but in deep distress went off to a hermitage to fast and pray. This latter victor was more noble than the former. But this victory, as every victory, was not without its barb for the conquered. And even the most exalted human history is like some sun, the rays of which are half bright, half dark.

Christ's victory alone is like a sun that sheds bright rays on all that are beneath it. Christ's victory alone fills all the souls of men with invincible joy. It alone is without malice or evil.

A mysterious victory, you will say? It is; but it is at the same time revealed to the whole human race, the living and the dead.

A generous victory, you will say? It is, and more than generous. Is not a mother more than generous when she, not just once or twice, saves her children from snakes but, in order to save them for all time, goes bravely into the snakes' very nest and burns them out?

A healing victory, you will say? It is, healing and saving forever and ever. This gentle victory saves men from every evil and makes them sinless and immortal. Immortality without sinlessness would mean only the extending of evil's reign, and of that of malice and wickedness, but immortality with sinlessness gives birth to unconfined joy, and makes men the brethren of God's resplendent angels.

Who would not rejoice in the victory of Christ the Lord? He was not victorious for His own sake, but for ours. His victory did not make Him greater, or more alive, or richer, but it did us. His victory is not selfishness, but love, not grabbing but giving. Earthly conquerors take the victory; Christ is the only Conqueror who brings it. No single earthly conqueror, king or commander desires

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that his victory be taken from him and given to another; only the risen Lord offers His victory with both hands to each one of us, and is not angered but rather rejoices when we, by His victory, become victors—that is: greater, more alive and richer than we were.

Earthly victories look better when viewed from afar, but uglier and more repulsive when seen close at hand; while, as for Christ’s victory, one could not say whence it looks better, from afar or from close at hand. Looking at this victory from afar, we marvel at it as unique in its brightness, purity and saving grace. Looking at it from close at hand, we marvel at it because of the terrible enemies who are overcome by it, and also because of the vast numbers of slaves who have been freed by it. Today is the day above all other days in the year consecrated to the celebration of this victory of Christ’s, and so it is fitting to look at this victory from close at hand, both for our better knowledge and for our greater joy.

Let us, then, draw near to our risen and victorious Lord, and ask ourselves: Firstly, over whom was He victorious by His Resurrection? Secondly, whom has He freed by His victory?

### I

By His Resurrection, the Lord overcame the two fiercest enemies of human life and dignity: death and sin. These two enemies of the human race were born when the first man sundered himself from God, treading underfoot the commandments about obedience to his Creator. In Paradise, man knew neither death nor sin, neither fear nor shame. For, cleaving to the living God, man could know nothing of death, and, living in perfect obedience to God, could know nothing of sin. Where death is unknown, there is no fear; and where sin is unknown, there is no shame born of sin. As soon as man sinned against his saving obedience to God, both fear

and shame came with the sin: man felt himself infinitely far from God, and had a premonition of death’s sickle over him. Therefore, when God called to Adam, and asked: *Where art thou?*, he said: *I heard Thy voice in the garden and was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.* (Gen 3:9-10). Up till then, God’s voice had encouraged, gladdened and vivified Adam, but then, when the sin had been committed, this same voice weakened, terrified and deadened him. Up till then, Adam knew himself to be clad in the immortal vesture of the angels, but he then knew himself deflowered by sin, looted, debased to the level of the animals and reduced to the size of a pygmy.

So, my brethren, you see how terrible is the least sin of disobedience to God. Becoming afraid of God, Adam hid himself amongst the trees of the garden—like a domestic cat that, when it goes wild, makes for the hills and begins to hide from its owner and the hand that fed it! From irrational animals, over which Adam had till then had full authority, he began to seek protection aside from his Protector. One sin, with lightning-like speed, attracted a second, third, hundredth, thousandth, until man finally became of the beasts, beastly, and of the earth, earthly, in both body and soul. The sinful path on which Adam set out led him to the earth and into it. And so God said: *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return* (Gen 3:19), expressing not only God’s judgement but also a further process in man’s earthboundness and fragmentation, only just begun but making quick progress.

Adam’s descendants, generation after generation, became more and more earthbound and fragmented, sinning with shame and dying with fear and horror. Men hid from God amongst trees, rocks, gold and dust; but the more they hid themselves, the more separated they became from the true

God, and the more they forgot Him. Nature, that had once lain before men's feet, gradually grew up above his head, so that in the end it completely concealed God's face from him and took His place. And man began to make a god of nature: listening to it, behaving in accordance with it, praying to it and bringing it sacrifices. But the deifying of nature was not able to save either it or man from death and corruption. The terrible path that mankind was following was the path of sin; and this disastrous path led unrelentingly to one gloomy city, and one alone: the city of the dead. Kings of the earth ruled over men; sin and death ruled over both men and kings. The further it went, the greater the burden of sin grew, like a snowball when it rolls downhill. The human race had reached the depths of despair when the heavenly Hero appeared to save it.

This Hero was the Lord Jesus. Eternally sinless and eternally immortal, He passed through the graveyard of the human race, scattering the flowers of immortality as He went. The stench of sin fled from His breath, and the dead were revived at His word. But He, in His love for mankind, took the mountain of sin on Himself, in the same way that He, in His love for mankind, clothed Himself in mortal, human flesh. But human sin was so heavy and terrible that, under its weight, the Son of God Himself went down to the grave.

Blessed an hundredfold be that grave from which a river of immortality for the whole human race burst forth! The Hero went down beneath the grave to Hades, where He toppled Satan's throne and destroyed the breeding-ground of all the wicked plots against the human race. From this grave the Hero rose to the highest heavens, opening up a new path—to the city of the living. He destroyed hell in His might and, in His might, glorified His body and rose from the grave—in His own might, that is indivisible from that of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Meek as a lamb, the gentle Lord went to suffering and death, and mighty as God He endured the suffering and conquered death. His Resurrection is a real event, and is at the same time the prophecy and the image of our resurrection—for *the trumpet shalt sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible*. (1 Cor 15:52).

There are some who will ask: how can it be said that the risen Lord has conquered death, when men still die? They who come into this world through their mother's womb will leave it through death and the grave. This is the rule. Only, death for us who die in Christ is no longer a dark abyss, but

is birth into new life and a return to our homeland. The grave is, for us, no longer an eternal darkness but a gateway at which God's resplendent angels await us. For all who are filled with love for the beautiful and loving Lord, the grave has become only the last obstacle to His presence - and this obstacle is as weak as a spider's web. And so the glorious Apostle Paul cries: *For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain!* (Phil 1:21).

How has the Lord not conquered death, when death is no more visible in His presence? The grave is no more a deep abyss, because He has filled it with Himself; neither is the grave dark anymore, because He has illumined it; neither is it fear and horror any more, for it marks, not the end but the beginning; neither is it our eternal homeland, but only the door to that homeland. The difference between death before Christ's Resurrection and after it is like the difference between a terrible conflagration and the flame of a candle. Christ's victory is fundamental, and therefore, through Him, *death is swallowed up in victory*. (1 Cor 15:54).

There are others who will ask: how can it be said that the risen Lord has conquered sin, when men still sin? The Lord has indeed conquered sin. He conquered it by His sinless conception and birth; then by His pure and sinless life on earth; then by His suffering on the Cross, being righteous; and finally He crowned this conquest by His glorious Resurrection. He became the medicine,

the appropriate and infallible medicine, against sin. He who is infected by sin can only be healed by Christ. He who wants not to sin can only with Christ's help make this desire a reality. When men found a cure for smallpox, they said: we have conquered this disease! They said the same thing when they found a cure for tonsillitis, toothache, gout and other similar illnesses: we have overcome them! The finding of a cure for an illness, then, means the conquering of it. Christ is by far the greatest Physician in human history, for He brought men the cure for the sickness beyond all sicknesses—for sin, from which all other sicknesses and all man's other sufferings, both physical and spiritual, are born. This medicine is He Himself, the risen and living Lord. He is the one and only effective Medicine for sin. If men, even today, sin and, by sinning, come to ruin, this does not mean that Christ did not conquer sin, but only that the men in question have not taken the one and only medicine against their mortal sickness; it means either that they do not sufficiently know Christ as the medicine or, if they know the Lord, they do not make use





of Him for one reason or another. But history testifies, with thousand upon thousand of voices, that those who make use of this medicine for their souls and take it into their bodies, are healed and made whole.

Knowing the weakness of our being, the Lord Christ intended it for the faithful, for them to take Him as food and drink under the visible forms of bread and wine. This the Lover of Mankind did out of His immeasurable love for men, simply in order to facilitate their approach to the life-giving medicine for sin and for the corruption brought about by sin. *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him and he shall live by Me.* (Jn 6:56-7). Those who sin feed on sin, and the life that is in them is gradually lost through sin. Those, though, who feed on the living Lord feed on life, and the life within them increases more and more, and death decreases. And as much as life is increased, so much is sin decreased. The insipid and gloomy sweetness of sin is replaced in them by the joyful and life-giving sweetness of Christ the Victor.

Blessed are they who have tested and experienced this mystery in their lives. They can be called the sons of light and children of grace. When they pass from this life, they will, as it were, leave hospital, being no longer sick men.

## II

**W**e ask ourselves now: whom has the risen Lord freed by His victory over sin and death? People of only one nation, or one race? People of one class or social position? No; in no way. Such a freeing would, in its essentials, be the malicious victory of earthly conquerors. The Lord is not called “Lover of the Jews”, or “Lover of the Greeks”, or “Lover of the poor”, or “Lover of the aristocrats”, but Lover of mankind. He intended His victory to be for all men, with no consideration of the differences that men make among themselves. He won His victory for the good and the help of all created men, and has offered it to them all. To those who accept this victory and make it their own, He has promised eternal life and co-inheritance in the heavenly Kingdom. He imposes this victory on no-one, even though it cost so dearly, but leaves men free to make it their own or not. As man in Paradise freely chose the fall, death and sin at the hands of Satan, so he is now free to choose life and salvation at the hands of God the Victor.

Christ’s victory is a balm, a life-giving balm, for all men, all having become leprous from sin and death. This balm makes the sick well, and the well even healthier. This balm raises the dead and gives fuller life to the living. This balm makes a man wise, it ennobles and divinises him; it increases his strength an hundred-fold, a thousand-fold, and it raises his dignity far above all other nature, in its weakened state, even to the resplendence and beauty of God’s angels and archangels.

O most lovely and life-giving balm! What hand would not take you? What heart would not apply you to its wounds?

What throat would not sing your praises? What pen would not record the wonders you have wrought? What abacus would not count up all your healings of the sick and raisings of the dead up till now? What tears would not be shed in gratitude to you?

Come then, all you my brethren who fear death. Come closer to Christ the Risen and the Raiser, and He will free you from death and the fear of death. Come, all of you who live under the shame of your open and secret sins. Draw nearer to the living Fount that washes and cleanses, and that can make the blackest vessel whiter than snow. Come, all of you who seek health, strength, beauty and joy. Lo, the risen Christ is the rich Source of them all. He awaits you with compassion and yearning, desiring that no-one be lost.

Bow down before Him, in body and soul. Unite yourself with Him with all your mind and thoughts. Embrace Him with all your heart. Do not worship the enslaver, but the Liberator; do not unite yourself to the destroyer but to the Savior; do not embrace the stranger but your closest Kinsman and your dearest Friend.

The risen Lord is the Wonder of wonders, but He is, while being the Wonder of wonders, of the same nature as you are—of real human nature, the primal nature that was Adam’s in Paradise. True human nature was not created to be enslaved to the irrational nature that surrounds it, but to govern nature by its power. Neither does man’s true nature consist in worthlessness, sickness, mortality and sinfulness, but in glory and health, in immortality and sinlessness.

The risen Lord has torn down the curtain that divided true Godhead from true humanity, and has shown us in Himself the greatness and beauty of the one and the other. No man can know the true God except through the risen Lord Jesus; neither can any man know true man except through Him alone.

Christ is risen, my brethren!

By His Resurrection, Christ conquered sin and death, destroyed Satan’s dark kingdom, freed the enslaved human race and broke the seal on the greatest mysteries of God and man. To Him be glory and praise, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Trinity consubstantial and undivided, now and forever, through all time and all eternity. Amen.



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

St. Gregory the Theologian

## THE SOUL'S PATH AFTER DEATH

Source: "Stories, Sermons, and Prayers of St. Nephon: An Ascetic Bishop," translated from Greek by J. E. Gentithes and Fr. I. Apostolopoulos, *Light and Life Publishing Company, Minneapolis, MN* (1989), pp. 78-87.

A pious Christian related to me the following amazing incident: He told me that one Saturday night, when he was praying in the narthex of Saint Anastasius during the usual resurrectional vigil, the servant of God Nephon also came, because he always observed vigils every Saturday night in the churches of the saints

"Well," my companion said, "I see a large number of white-clad men traveling with him, some in front of him and others behind him, rejoicing that that they were surrounding him. But even more dread a cross as tall as he and glittering as if made of pure gold was rising in front of him. Similar glittering crosses were on the right and left, in back and over the saint's head. They were entwined

and built a wall around him. When a temptation came during that moment of the battle, the Lord, wanting to test him, permitted the crosses to part. Thus they left a small opening amongst them through which the enemies were able to throw their arrows. A great number of angels and demons watched the battle. The saint would raise his hands toward the Most-High God and with his pure mind would ascend to Him. He would remain up there praying. Seeing him and fearing the wrath of God, Satan would tremble and say to his army: 'Let's go, boys, away from this Nephon, because he has ascended to heaven and is praying against us to the Great One. Let's disappear then before His wrath comes down and tortures us.'

"And immediately they would vanish. Then that blessed one would come down to earth after the prayer, come to himself and, not finding any enemy, he would thank the good Lord Who shielded him.

"Then the angels also departed happy, while the precious crosses came together again closing the entrance and guarding the righteous one.

"Many times," that good Christian continued, "the devil would come with a large number of demons to throw him in a passion but couldn't, because, surrounded by the power of the cross, he would ridicule them and spit on them. Thus the dark demons, thoroughly ashamed, would disappear, while he glorified God even more for granting him such power against the invisible enemies."



Once when he was praying and had his gaze turned to Heaven, a divine light shone in front of him. At the same time a white-clad angel, dressed as a deacon, appeared. He was holding a gold censer and censed first in the direction of Heaven and then Nephon. Suddenly the gates of Heaven opened and the angels of God ascended and descended like bees, transporting the souls of people who had died. The evil spirits of the air were struggling to grab them and throw them down, but the angels resisted violently, whipping them and saving the souls.

Astonished the saint saw a soul being taken up to heaven. But as soon as they approached the toll booth of immortality, its leader started to shake and become wild. "With what right," he was shouting, "do you take that soul which belongs to us?"

And the angels answered him: "Prove to us what authority you have over this man."

"Up until his death," the demon said, "he was wallowing voluntarily in all kinds of indecencies. And not only this, but

he also judged others. What crimes more horrible than these do you want "

"Yes," the angels admitted, "he was a slave to these passions, but he cut them before he died."

"No! It's not the way you're telling me," the demon squealed. "He died unrepented. To his last breath he violated the law without ever confessing his sins. He was and still is mine."

Then one of the angels said: "We are not about to believe you, who are entirely wallowing in falsehood. Let's call his angel. He will tell us the whole truth."

They called him, because he was still guarding the body until its interment. As soon as he came, they asked him: "Tell us, brother, did this soul repent for its sins or did it die with them? Tell us the whole truth."

Then the angel answered: "I am neither human nor an impudent spirit to tell lies, but before God I assure you: from the time he became ill, even before he took a turn for the worse, he thought of death. Then he began to cry and confess his sins to God. Continually he would raise his hands toward the Most High asking for mercy. If God wills, He will forgive him. If not, glory to His righteous judgment!"

As soon as the angels heard this, they laughed at the devil. Thus the humble soul was liberated from the snares of its enemies.

In a little while the saint saw another soul being carried up. It belonged to a blasphemous and hard man. The demons were accusing him and reminding him one-by-one of the

improper words and grave curses he used to say to the people when he was alive.

The angels said in rebuttal that he had a few rights to salvation. Many times, for example, even though he was thinking of doing something bad he would immediately repent, reproaching and degrading himself. Often he would sigh bitterly and sometimes he would tear. Once in a while he would even give a little charity to the poor. Having this in mind, the angels of light claimed that God would have mercy on that soul. Angered then the demons said: "From his youth he did things that were not right for a Christian: He polluted himself with different sins and, indeed sodomitic ones. Where shall we place his curses and anger? And the worst, he even committed murder. If therefore he must be saved, then take the whole world and all the sinners of the earth and save them gratis; because we are laboring and getting upset in vain!"

"Keep in mind, wretches, that he cut all his youthful sins and God forgave him. And if sometimes he did something bad, he cleansed it with repentance. What do you want then, wild beasts? That this soul be condemned? Impossible, since God forgives the sins people confess tearfully and humbly and do not repeat. *Anything that becomes visible is light.* (Eph 5:13). The righteous Judge punishes only those sins they take with them."

Thus the angels defeated the spirits of wickedness and entered into the gate of Heaven. Therefore, that creature of God was also liberated from the claws of the demons, and He Who saves freely granted him salvation.

Again the blessed one saw them lifting still another soul that was very devout and God-fearing. She spent all her life in purity, modesty, and a great deal of charity. She showed love toward all. The dragons of the air threatened her, gnashing their teeth. And that poor thing, terrified by their wildness, shriveled up in the bosom of the angels of God, while the angels descending to take other souls kissed her with love.

When that holy soul ascended into heaven, a large number of good spirits gathered around her, embracing and kissing her tenderly, and saying joyfully: "Glory to God Who delivered this soul from the dreadful dragon!"

It was a delight to see them. The heavenly powers always do this: they rejoice and celebrate for each Christian who is saved. When they reached the throne of Grace, they brought her to the feet of the Lord Jesus, and He permitted her to worship His Father and to be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Later He turned her over to Michael, the lord of the covenant, to guide her to eternal rest, as indeed it happened.

Down further, however, the servant of God saw the demons dragging a soul to the infernal regions. It was the soul of some servant who had hung himself. Behind him followed his guardian angel weeping bitterly for his loss. In the midst of his tears he was saying: "Ah, the foxy demons who make people do such evil! There, this servant's master, obeying the demons, would become angry, hit him terribly, and let him starve to death. And this poor soul became desperate, took the rope and hung himself, offering his life wholly a sacrifice to Satan. Ah, alas! The Almighty gave him to me to guard after his baptism, and the filthy dragon snatched him from me suddenly and devoured him! How will I appear to my Lord in this grieving and bitter state? But also, how will I face my Maker sorrowful for the loss of this soul?"

While he was painfully saying this, another angel appeared from heaven. "Our Father, the Lord of hosts," he told him, "commands it go to Rome, where this very moment the son of a soldier is baptized. Take charge of him and guard him through the Holy Spirit given to him at baptism. And I shall punish the master of this servant and teach him not to become angry nor hit his servants nor let them starve to death.

The angel said this on behalf of God and ascended into heaven, while the former set out for Rome according to the divine command.

That instant Nephon saw them bringing up a soul with a lot of commotion. Multitudes of demons were making noise and were attempting to snatch the unfortunate soul. It was the soul of a clergyman who had spent his life in immorality. He even committed murders! He would lie in wait in the street at night and kill the passers-by. Then he would take their clothes and sell them to feed his jesters!

Therefore, as that wretched soul was ascending, it didn't make it through the fourth station: the dragon stretched out his hands with impudence, snatched it from the angels and cast it down to earth. The demons took it then, lowered it into the abyss and turned it over to the prince of darkness, so that it might remain captive there along with similar sinful souls, until the day of the common resurrection.

As the dark demons were returning again, they were puffed up and put on airs saying amongst themselves: "Look, we even beat the clergy of the Nazarene and trample them under foot!"

Then one of them sadly whispered: "Why are we bragging that we destroyed one unfortunate soul? I can show you a





large number of priests who shine with virtue; we can't even touch them."

"If they didn't have the mark of Jesus," the others answered, "and His help all around them, then you'd see our power!"

"And why should we fear the wood on which the Nazarene was nailed? This is an example of complete decadence!"

"It's not the wood, but the terrible lightning which pours forth from it. The bad part is that the lightning which burns us doesn't come only from the wood, but the same thing happens when the Christians sign themselves with this symbol."

Then to trap him the others said to him: "And when did you experience all this?"

"In Constantinople there is a relentless enemy of ours named Nephon. I and others of us threw ourselves at him from his youth. We used to send him provocative temptations all day. We inflamed him so terribly that in the end he fell into sin. And while we registered his defeat with a lot of pride, he repented at the same instant and started reproaching himself and weeping: 'Oh! For this body that the worms will eat, I yielded to my evil desire. Woe to me, it is this that will throw me into the fire.' And saying this he became like a maniac. We laughed at his expense. But he who was very foxy and knew our tricks shouted to us: 'Now I'll show you, corrupt demons!' He got up at once, and with his hand he traced the sign of the Nazarene on us. Oh! It was as if fire passed through our hearts immediately. Terrorized we dispersed instantly. Only one of us dared to stand far off, to see what he was going to do. He saw him enter the church quickly. He prostrated himself to God three times and said: 'Lord, I am a sinful man, young in age, still struggling with my passions and the fire of the flesh. Therefore, do not count this fall of mine as a sin. You are Lord and have authority to forgive my offenses with only Your word.'

"As soon as he said these words, an angel crowned him for his repentance and contrition. In spite of all this," the demon continued, "furious with his flesh, he began to strike his face with all the strength he had. Later, he lifted his hands again to heaven and beseeched God, saying: 'You, the fearful God, Who gave birth to the fearful Son, and rule everywhere with Your fearful Spirit, hear me, the filthy one. And torture those abominations who roar with laughter at my expense. *For against Thee only have I sinned* (Pss 50:4), I, the filthy and corrupt one.'

"At once the angel who had crowned him threw a rope and tied us all together. Then taking us out one by one, he gave us each a thousand blows. With our cries and woes we raised the roof. As he was hitting us he was saying: 'So that you may never be the reason again for the servants of God to hit their bodies!' And after that compassionless angel tortured us greatly, we barely got away. From that

time on whenever I see that Nephon I vanish, because I fear the beatings!..."

When the demon finished his tale, the others started making fun of him and calling him wretched, unfortunate and a coward.

In the meantime in his vision Nephon was following everything the evil spirits were saying about him and laughed at them.

After a little while he saw an angel descending toward Constantinople, the seven-hilled city. He was holding a terrible flaming sword. Someone, tormented pitifully, was dying at that hour. He was a compassionless usurer. In addition, he used to gossip scandalously about Nephon: he called him a heretic, a hypocrite, etc. "Why is he this and that? Why does he do this or that?" The miserable one didn't look at himself but concerned himself with others.

Well, the angel of fire came and stood by his bed looking toward heaven, as if waiting for something. Indeed a voice was heard: "Quickly, punish the antichrist severely and cut the prodigal soul from the bonds of the body. While he lived, this good-for-nothing never did My will. And not only that, but he also judged My servant Nephon. Hit him fiercely! May he never again choke the poor by lending them gold."

As soon as the punishing angel heard the voice, he heartily struck the miserable usurer with all the strength he had, and he gave up the spirit at once, gnashing his teeth and groaning from the depths of his soul. The angel took his soul which was terribly tormented and turned toward the abyss...

Then St. Nephon came to himself. Dumbfounded and sad for all he had seen, he thought and said: "Ah, how much misery we, humble and sinful, hide! And then Judgment and the terrible fire come wherever we go for all eternity. We must aim for salvation at all costs, forcing ourselves to do good. Only in this way we will please God and not violate His commandments." And immediately he prayed:

"O Lord, my God, I've placed my hope in You: deliver me from those who pursue me and save me. The treacherous prince of darkness, like a roaring lion, will snatch my miserable soul, if You, my Christ, do not deliver it and save it by Your Holy Spirit... Blessed is he who obeys You, Who became poor and destitute for our salvation; because at the time of his death You will redeem him from the corrupt spirits of wickedness who, like evil censors, shameless accusers, compassionless overseers, stand and seek to devour his poor soul. O fearful and Almighty Master, Who shake everything and they tremble, deliver the race of Christians from those tyrants. Have mercy on all those who have placed their hopes in You, O Holy One, and forgive them who grievously transgress Your law and ceaselessly embitter Your compassion."

He was still tearful from the thought of that poor usurer whose soul was taken by the avenging angel with the flaming sword. He was thinking how bitter his death was

without any pity from God—even though he occasionally gave something to the poor from the interest he collected!... Because, as Nephon said, at the time his miserable soul was being tormented, he cried out: “Remember, O Lord, the alms I gave to the poor.” But a voice was heard saying: “Yes, wretch! You drank the blood of the poor and watered other poor men with it!... Shall I be merciful to you for that, or because you slandered the one I love? Night and day he prays for the sinners. He wouldn’t stop beseeching even for you. Then, why did you speak evil of him? Learn now that you should not have judged anyone...”

Nephon related all this to his acquaintances and advised them. “Be careful, my children, not to judge anyone, especially if he is a man of God. I beg you, guard yourselves from this sin. Look after yourselves and be conscious of your own faults. With this consciousness we will be able to repent. Some of the servants of God show and some hide their virtue. Certain people criticize those who have the courage to be seen. However, these will be punished harshly on Judgment Day. For God has placed before all men those who scorn human glory, so that they may confess their faith with courage, and thus benefit many. *Let your light so shine before men, He commanded them, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* (Mt 5:16). And conversely, to those who lean toward conceit He says: *Those who do the works of righteousness openly to be pleasing to people and not to Me, truly, truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.* (Mt 6:1) For he who willfully is vain will not receive mercy. Keeping this in mind, then, my children, let us not judge anyone, and let us not pay attention to the slanderers, whether they criticize a righteous person or anyone else. *Judge not, that ye be not judged* (Mt 7:1), the Lord commands. You who sit on the throne do not scorn your servant, for he may hide within him the Spirit of God and, without realizing it, you find yourself the enemy of God.”

The saint said this to them and begged them once more to look to themselves and not judge anyone. But also they should not lend money with interest, for how does it profit a man to say he is a Christian when he has stored up gold and lends it out with interest? First of all, he does not have his hope in God. Second, he is an idolater. Third, he suffers of avarice and drowns night and day in cares. He doesn’t even get enough sleep! Finally, death comes, too. Oh, what foolishness!...



A man in this world must solve a problem: to be with Christ, or to be against Him. And every man decides this, whether he wants to or not. He will either be a lover of Christ or a fighter of Christ. There is no third option.

**St. Justin Popovich (+1979)**

## ON HOLY SCRIPTURES

Source: “*The Truth of Our Faith, Discourses from Holy Scripture on the Tenets of Christian Orthodoxy*,” by Elder Cleopa of Romania, translated from Greek by Fr. Peter A. Heers, Uncut Mountain Press, Thessaloniki, Greece (2000), pp. 45-51.



**INQUIRER:** What do we mean by the term *Holy Scripture*?

**ELDER CIEOPA:** The term *Holy Scripture* denotes the sum of holy books that were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit within a time period of close to 1,500 years, namely, from Moses (some 1,400 years before Christ), until the writer of the Apocalypse (Revelations, *Ed.*), nearly 100 years after Christ.

**INQ:** Why don’t the bishops and priests sanction Christians, who are members of the Church, to interpret and preach publicly the word of God from the Scriptures?

**EC:** Each Christian has the need to read Holy Scripture, yet each Christian does not also have the authority or ability to teach and interpret the words of Scripture. This privileged authority is reserved for the Church via its devout holy clergy and Orthodox theologians, men who are instructed in and knowledgeable of the true faith. When we consider how our Savior gave the grace of teaching to His Holy Apostles and not to the masses it is easy for us to see that the prerogative to teach is held only by the devout bishops, priests and theologians of our Church. It was the Apostles who were sent by Christ to teach and to celebrate the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments).

Our holy Apostle Paul says: *How shall they preach, except they be sent?* (Rom 10:15). Accordingly, the bishops are the lawful successors to the Apostles and those sent for the preaching to the people. Paul entrusts the heavy burden of the instruction of the people to Timothy and not to the faithful. He speaks of this elsewhere: *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?* (1 Cor 12:29). Again he says to Timothy that the clergy must be *apt to teach* others (2 Tim 2:24). He does not, however, say the same thing for the faithful. He makes a distinction between shepherd and sheep, between teacher and those taught. Still, the teachers cannot teach whatever they would like, but that which the Church teaches universally. They teach in the name of the Church and of Christ.

Not everyone has the intellectual ability and the requisite divine grace necessary to expound Holy Scripture correctly.



The Apostle Peter also says this in his second epistle, referring to the epistles of the Apostle Paul. He says the following: *There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.* (2 Pet 3:16).

**INQ:** Some say that it is not right that members of the Church don't have the right to interpret and expound upon Scripture. As this excerpt says, each Christian knows how to render Holy Scripture: *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things* (1 Jn 2:20), and *the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you.* (1 Jn 2:27).

**EC:** Holy Scripture is like a very deep well wherein is comprised the infinite wisdom of God. If someone thirsty dives into this well to drink of all its water, he will be drowned within. If, however, he will fetch the water with a bucket and from there will drink with a cup, then there is no fear of being engulfed. What man is so crazed as to wish to plunge into such an abyss of water without knowing how to swim?

Holy Scripture, according to the Fathers, is *bone* and no one will venture with teeth fit for milk to break the strong bones of Holy Scripture—for those teeth will be crushed.

Have you read in Scripture about the eunuch of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians? He was reading the Prophet Isaiah when the Apostle Philip asked him if he understood that which he read, to which he replied: *How can I, except some man should guide me?* (Acts 8:31).

You realize also that the word *unction*, or *anointing* that you mentioned above means the effusion of the Holy Spirit in the Mystery of Holy Chrism, directly after Baptism.

The phrase *you know all things* signifies everything that contains Christian truth and salvation, as well as everything that is related to the antichrist and his adherents, to whom the subsequent verse of the epistle of the holy John the Theologian refers. One must not, therefore, teach according to one's own understanding and perception, for one will surely be deceived.

**INQ:** All the same, it is said that each Christian has the right and obligation to read Holy Scripture on his own, as the Savior admonishes us: *You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness of me.* (Jn 5:39).

**EC:** Be careful, because many heretics of earlier eras made bold to immerse themselves in the fathomless sea of Scrip-

ture and drowned spiritually, thus perishing together with as many as followed them. They don't have all the same spiritual maturity. They aren't all able to understand the mystery of Holy Scripture.

Holy Scripture is understood and explained in three ways: (1) according to its literal meaning, namely the nominal, grammatical, verbal and historical, (2) allegorically or metaphorically, which is superior to the former, and (3) spiritually.

According to the Holy Orthodox Fathers, the simplest of senses to alight upon is the first meaning, according to the letter of Scripture; to penetrate with discretion to the nature of Scripture requires modest learning, while to explain the depth of the meanings of Scripture is of the highest spiritual advancement and in need of the most divine grace. The perfect wisdom of Scripture belongs, according to Saint Paul, to the perfect: *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them*

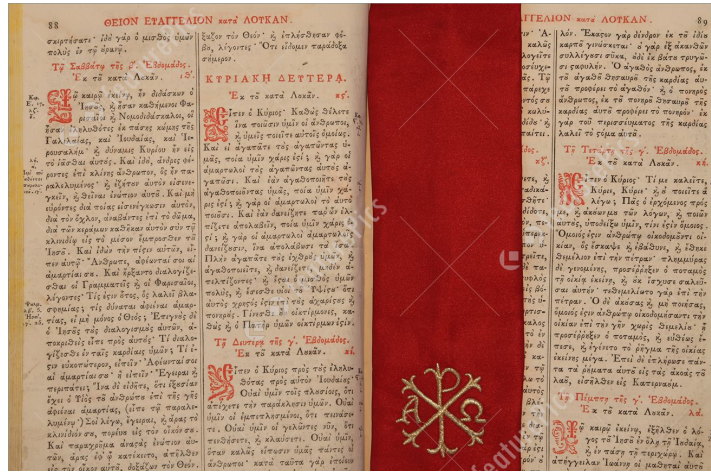
*that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.* (2 Cor 2:6-7).

**INQ:** There are those who contend that it is not necessary for someone to have much learning to be able to understand the teachings of

Scripture, since to the unlearned He revealed the wisdom of these teachings, just as the Savior says: *I thank Thee, O Father, . . . because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* (Mt 11:25).

**EC:** Yes, God revealed His wisdom to those that were known to be babes in wickedness but not in mind<sup>[1]</sup> and judgement. In other words, He revealed His wisdom to those who, with respect to good works, were perfect and had attained to the innocence of infants. That's why Paul counsels the Corinthians as follows: *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men.* (1 Cor 14:20).

**INQ:** Yet, God rebuked the wisdom and knowledge of men, as this passage indicates: *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.* (Isa 29:14). Saint Paul also says: *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* (1 Cor 1:20). Might it not be that God is not able to give the wisdom of understanding the Scriptures to certain people who are worldly-wise, as the Orthodox maintain?



**EC:** You should know that God does not condemn just any wisdom and knowledge, but that which kills man spiritually. If He were to censure every wisdom, He would have to reject also the wisdom of Solomon, the wisdom of Joshua, son of Sirach, the wisdom of Christ the Savior, of the Prophets and Apostles, to those whom He gave commandment to be *wise as serpents, and harmless doves*. (Mt 10:16). Yet it isn't like this to the least. Hence, take care not to resemble those to whom the Savior said: *You do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*. (Mt 22:29).

**INQ:** Is Holy Scripture sufficient in order to guide man to salvation?

**EC:** No, it is not sufficient to guide man to salvation,<sup>[2]</sup> inasmuch as, firstly, it wasn't given to man from the beginning and, secondly, when it was given it wasn't the only authentic text, with regard to the salvation of human souls, because before it there was the Holy Tradition. Many years before Moses began writing the first books of the Old Testament, there was sacred piety in the community of the people of Israel. Similarly, the books of the New Testament began to be written ten years after the formal foundation of the Church, which took place on the day of Pentecost. The Church chose and sealed as inspired by God the books of the two Testaments over one hundred years later.<sup>[3]</sup> These then comprised the declared Canon of the books of Holy Scripture. Thereafter the Church maintained this Canon of Truth, inasmuch as it is the very *pillar and ground of truth*. The Holy Spirit operates within all of this for the preservation of the truth about salvation. *Where the Church is, says Saint Jerome, there also is the Spirit of God and where the Spirit of God is, there also is the Church and all grace—since the Spirit is truth.*



[1] νοῦς, νοός, νοί, νοῦν: mind, thought, reason; attitude, intention, purpose; understanding, discernment: The English word that best conveys the meaning of the Greek word is probably the word mind, however, it also has other meanings as well. The Holy Fathers refer to the *nous* as the soul (the “*spiritual nature*” of a man, St. Isaac the Syrian) and the heart (or the “*essence of the soul*”). More particularly, it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart (St. Diadochos). Yet, it is also referred to as the “*eye of the soul*” (St. John of Damascus) or the “*organ of theoria*” (St. Macarius of Egypt) which is “*engaged in pure prayer*” (St. Isaac the Syrian). In this book the words mind and intellect have been used most often when rendering the Greek word νοῦς.

[2] “We cannot assert that Scripture is self-sufficient; and this is not because it is incomplete, or inexact, or has any defects, but because Scripture in its very essence does not lay claim to self-sufficiency... If we declare Scripture to be self-sufficient, we only expose it to subjective, arbitrary

interpretation, thus cutting it away from its sacred source. Scripture is given to us in tradition. It is the vital, crystalizing center. The Church, as the Body of Christ, stands mystically first and is fuller than Scripture. This does not limit Scripture, or cast shadows on it. But truth is revealed to us not only historically. Christ appeared and still appears before us not only in the Scriptures; He unchangeably and unceasingly reveals Himself in the Church, in His own Body. In the times of the early Christians the Gospels were not yet written and could not be the sole source of knowledge. The Church acted according to the spirit of the Gospel, and, what is more, the Gospel came to life in the Church, in the Holy Eucharist. In the Christ of the Holy Eucharist Christians learned to know the Christ of the Gospels, and so His image became vivid to them.”

[3] By the end of the first century... the Church possessed the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Although they were not perhaps as yet collected into one volume, each had been accepted by the group of churches for which it was written. Very soon afterward they were combined in one quadripartite Gospel, and in the middle of the second century the Christian apologist Tatian composed the first harmony, or code, of the Gospels. . . The appearance of the New Testament in the Church as a book, as Scripture, was therefore not a new factor, but a record of the founding tradition. Just because it **was identical** with the original Tradition as the Church already knew it, there appeared at first no need of a canon, or precisely fixed list of accepted records of Scripture. In fact, for the western Church it was not until 419 AD at the Council of the 217 Blessed Fathers assembled at Catharge that the entire New Testament as we know it today was irrevocably canonized (Canon XXIV).



**H**ow mistaken are those people who seek happiness outside of themselves, in foreign lands and journeys, in riches and glory, in great possessions and pleasures, in diversions and vain things, which have a bitter end! It is the same thing to construct the tower of happiness outside of ourselves as it is to build a house in a place that is consistently shaken by earthquakes. Happiness is found within ourselves, and blessed is the man who has understood this. Happiness is a pure heart, for such a heart becomes the throne of God. Thus says Christ of those who have pure hearts: *I will visit them, and will walk in them, and I will be a God to them, and they will be my people*. (2 Cor 6:16) What can be lacking to them? Nothing, nothing at all! For they have the greatest good in their hearts: God Himself!

**St. Nektarios of Aegina**



## PRAXIS AND THEORIA

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from "Orthodox Spirituality," translated from Greek by Efi Mavromichali, *Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, Levadia, Greece (1994), pp. 60-65*.

In the teachings of the Holy Fathers, the three stages of the spiritual life are characterized by use of the terms "*praxis*" and "*theoria*." I think we should dwell upon this subject also, in order, on the one hand, to understand more clearly what is meant by repentance and purification of heart; and, on the other hand, to ascertain the misinterpretation of the terms *praxis* and *theoria* by contemporary individuals. I would like to begin with an analysis of the latter.

When reading texts from the Holy Fathers, many people behold these terms without being aware of their deeper meaning. They interpret them within the perspective of Western thought: *Theoria* is termed as speculative, is based on theory not on practice, in other words, dealing simply with logic theoretically. Whereas *praxis* is the teaching and application of these intellectual concepts. Still others see *theoria* as the reflection on things divine, and *praxis* as its missionary thrust, i.e., the teaching of these rational concepts.

However, in the Patristic tradition other meanings are attached to the terms *praxis* and *theoria*, which shall be referred to briefly in the following passages.

St. Gregory the Theologian says that *theoria* and *praxis* are beneficial, because *theoria* elevates man's *nous* above earthly things; it guides him to the holy of holies and restores him to his original nature; whereas *praxis* receives and serves Christ and tests love with actions. Clearly, *theoria* is the vision of God—the *nous*' restoration and return to God; *praxis* is whatever deeds it takes to lead to this love.

In another text, St. Gregory the Theologian, in making reference to the last and the most dreadful of the seven plagues of the Egyptians—i.e., the death of their first-born children—states that in order for a person to escape the angel of death, he must anoint the guardians of his *nous*—*praxis* and *theoria*—with the blood of Christ. Thus *praxis* and *theoria* are linked with the *nous*. They are *nous*' guardians and are cured by the blood of Christ. And this, for certain, is our identification with and participation in Christ's crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension.

Within the whole of patristic tradition it is clear that *praxis* is the purification of the heart's passions and *theoria* is both the illumination of the *nous* and the vision of the uncreated glory of God. According to St. Gregory the Theologian, *praxis*

is the cause of *theoria*. According to Elias the Elder, *praxis* is fasting and all-night vigil; psalm-singing and prayer; and silence which is more precious than words; also *praxis* is whatever is done patiently without complaint. St. Isaac the Syrian says that *theoria* is the vision of the *nous*. It must be noted, of course, that there is no *praxis* independent of *theoria*, neither does *theoria* exist independently of *praxis*. This means that man is led to the *theoria* of God through purification; and when *theoria* ceases, then *praxis* begins again.

St. Gregory Palamas is more analytical on the subject of *praxis* and *theoria*. He teaches that *theoria* of God is nothing else but the vision of God. Therefore *theoria* is not speculation on what is said or what is seen, but it is the vision of God. If this is in fact *theoria*, then it follows that *praxis* is nothing less than the cleansing of the heart, and repentance, the complete hesychastic way of life, instruction on *hesychia*. Thus, according to St. Gregory Palamas, *praxis* is equated with *hesychasm*, a method of prayer (holy silence) which necessitates



stillness of the *nous*; the halting of the world, and the forgetting of earthly things. It is an initiation into the things from above and the putting aside of all concepts of goodness. Through *praxis*—sacred hesychia—“we are liberated from what is worldly and direct ourselves toward God”. This is the path and manner of ascent towards God which the Most Holy Mother of God followed; she attained to *theosis* thus and became the mother of the Word of God.

*Praxis*, therefore, is the purification of the heart; this constitutes genuine repentance, as proclaimed by St. John the Baptist, Christ Himself and, of course, by all of His Apostles, because repentance is the indispensable prerequisite for one to experience the Kingdom of God.

Thus, purification of the heart, i.e., of our inner world, is the first stage of the spiritual life, through which we must pass in order to attain to salvation. In the following, the meaning attached to “purification of heart” by the Holy Fathers must be ascertained. They intend primarily three things.

Firstly, purification of the heart is the cure of the soul's faculty, so as to function in accordance with nature and above nature—not contrary to nature. Man's soul is both unified and manifold. She has primarily three faculties: the intelligent, the appetitive and the incentive. All three faculties, when functioning normally, are directed towards God. The intellect seeks God; the desire longs for God, and the will must do everything to achieve this communion and union with God.

Secondly, purification is man's deliverance from pleasure and pain, in other words a person's liberation from the oppression



exerted by pleasure and pain. When man is cleansed, he is freed from their domination. It is the spiritual pleasures which primarily are cultivated within him; and he does not become distressed or afflicted when diverse people or problems and adversities in life cause him pain.

Thirdly, purification is the cleansing of the heart from the various thoughts—*logismoi* existing therein. They are called *logismoi* because they must dwell in the reason and not within the heart. What does this mean? When a “*logismos*” comes and a person is not sufficiently attentive, it then becomes a desire which wants to be fulfilled, i.e., realized. This means that the *logismos* proceeds from the intelligent faculty of the soul to the passible faculty, that is the faculties of the appetitive and the incentive. Being realized and developing into a passion the *logismos* enters, in fact, into the heart and remains all powerful there.

The Fathers say that the heart can be cleansed of *logismoi* through repentance and by means of the ascetic method of the Church. And this ascetic method is inspired by divine grace. A simple thought may enter the reason but not find its way within the heart. When all *logismoi* are dismissed and the heart is cleansed, only one word-prayer prevails. For this reason the prayer *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me* is called the one-word-prayer (μονολόγιστη). Thus, the simple remembrance within the heart helps retain the unceasing prayer while reason accommodates the simple *logismoi*—the plain concept of a thing disengaged from passion.

These three states are what the Fathers call purification of the heart. When a person's heart is cleansed he becomes more sociable, more balanced. He behaves properly within society, because his selfishness has given way to love for God and love for man. Selfish love is transformed into unselfish love. Formerly, he would love selfishly, with a love which seeks its own. Now, however, he loves with a pure love. He loves others without expecting anything in return. He loves independently of whether others love him. There is no self-seeking in his actions. Thus, when selfish love is changed into unselfish love, one speaks of the person as having become a real human being. And it is this transformation which is considered the cure of man.

In patristic tradition *praxis* is also called ethics. St. Gregory Palamas speaks of ethics in his texts, he is actually developing the theme of purification of heart. Therein the entire way of man's cure is described. In Orthodox tradition ethics is not an abstract condition, neither is it a pharisaical outward behavior; rather it is asceticism. Therefore, when the Fathers speak of ethics, they mean asceticism. And since asceticism is a person's passage from impurity of the *nous* to its cleansing and on to its illumination, orthodox ethics, therefore, is man's purification.

If *praxis* is the purification of heart in patristic tradition, *theoria* is on the one hand the illumination of the *nous* and

on the other the vision of the uncreated Light. Thus, in the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas, it appears that *theoria* of God is man's union with God. It is effected through divinization (*theosis*) and bestows upon him the knowledge of God. *Theoria*, union, *theosis*, and knowledge of God are synonymous terms in patristic tradition.

This is the path leading to a person's cure. Just as every science has a specific way of guiding a person to knowledge, so also does the Church have a method to lead man to God. And this method consists of purification of the heart, illumination of the *nous* and divinization (*theosis*)—also called *praxis* and *theoria*.



Fasting, prayer, alms, and every other good Christian deed is good in itself, but the purpose of the Christian life consists not only in the fulfillment of one or another of them. The true purpose of our Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. But fasting, prayer, alms and every good deed done for the sake of Christ is a means to the attainment of the Holy Spirit. Note that only good deeds done for the sake of Christ bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Everything else that is not done for the sake of Christ, even if it is good, does not bring us a reward in the life to come, not does it bring the grace of God in this life. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ said, *Whoever gathereth not with me scattereth.* (Mt 12:30).

**St. Seraphim of Sarov**

All that you lose in the name of God, you keep. All that you keep for your own sake, you lose. All that you give in the name of God, you will receive with interest. All that you give for the sake of your own glory and pride, you throw into the water. All that you receive from people as from God will bring you joy. All that you receive from people as from people will bring you worries.

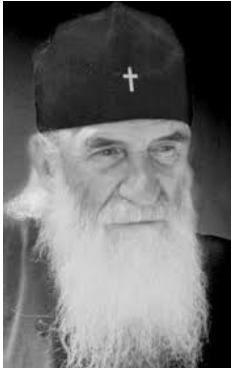
**St. Nicholas of Serbia**



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

## Ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἡ Ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ Ζωὴ

Ἅγιος Ἰουστίνος Πόποβιτς.



Ἐὰν ὑπάρχει μιὰ ἀλήθεια στὴν ὁποία θὰ μπορούσαν νὰ συνοψισθοῦν ὅλες οἱ εὐαγγελικὲς ἀλήθειες, ἡ ἀλήθεια αὐτὴ θὰ ἦταν ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Καὶ ἀκόμη, ἐὰν ὑπάρχει μιὰ πραγματικότητα στὴν ὁποία θὰ μπορούσαν νὰ συνοψισθοῦν ὅλες οἱ καινοδιαθηκικὲς πραγματικότητες, ἡ πραγματικότητα αὐτὴ θὰ ἦταν ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Μόνο στὴν ἀνάστασις τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐξηγοῦνται ὅλα τὰ θαύματά Του, ὅλες οἱ ἀλήθειές Του, ὅλα τὰ λόγια Του, ὅλα τὰ γεγονότα τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης.

Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ὁ Κύριος δίδασκε γιὰ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ ἴδιος ὄντως εἶναι ἡ αἰώνια ζωὴ. Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του δίδασκε γιὰ τὴν ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ ἴδιος εἶναι πράγματι ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν. Μέχρι τὴν ἀνάστασή Του δίδασκε ὅτι ἡ πίστις σ' Αὐτὸν μεταφέρει ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του ἔδειξε ὅτι ὁ ἴδιος νίκησε τὸ θάνατο καὶ ἔτσι ἐξασφάλισε στοὺς θανατωμένους ἀνθρώπους τὴ μετάβαση ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου στὴν ἀνάστασις.

Μὲ τὴν ἁμαρτία ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐγίνε θνητὸς καὶ πεπερασμένος μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασις τοῦ Θεανθρώπου γίνεται ἀθάνατος καὶ αἰώνιος. Σ' αὐτὸ δὲ ἀκριβῶς ἐγκρίεται ἡ δύναμις καὶ τὸ κράτος καὶ ἡ παντοδυναμία τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀναστάσεως. Καὶ γιὰ αὐτὸ χωρὶς τὴν ἀνάστασις τοῦ Χριστοῦ δὲν θὰ ὑπῆρχε κἄν ὁ Χριστιανισμὸς. Μεταξὺ τῶν θαυμάτων ἡ ἀνάστασις τοῦ Κυρίου εἶναι τὸ μεγαλύτερο θαῦμα. Ὅλα τὰ ἄλλα θαύματα πηγάζουν ἀπὸ αὐτὸ καὶ συνοψίζονται σ' αὐτό. Ἀπ' αὐτὸ πηγάζουν ἡ πίστις καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ ἐλπίδα καὶ ἡ προσευχὴ καὶ ἡ θεοσέβεια. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο καμιά ἄλλη θρησκεία δὲν ἔχει· αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο ἀνυψώνει τὸν Κύριο ὑπεράνω ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν θεῶν. Αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκεῖνο τὸ ὁποῖο κατὰ τρόπο μοναδικὸ καὶ ἀναμφισβήτητο δείχνει καὶ ἀποδεικνύει ὅτι ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἶναι ὁ μόνος ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ Κύριος σὲ ὅλους τοὺς ὄρατους καὶ ἀόρατους κόσμους.

Τὸ ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος πιστεύει ἀληθινὰ στὸν Ἀναστάντα Κύριο τὸ ἀποδεικνύει μὲ τὸ νὰ ἀγωνίζεται κατὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τῶν παθῶν καὶ ἐὰν μὲν ἀγωνίζεται, πρέπει νὰ γνωρίζει ὅτι ἀγωνίζεται γιὰ τὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ. Ἐὰν ὅμως δὲν ἀγωνίζεται, τότε μάταιη ἡ πίστις του! Διότι, ἐὰν ἡ πίστις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου δὲν εἶναι ἀγώνιας γιὰ τὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν αἰωνιότητα, τότε τί

εἶναι; Ἐὰν μὲ τὴν πίστις στὸ Χριστὸ δὲν φθάνει κανεὶς στὴν ἀθανασία καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ θανάτου νίκη, τότε πρὸς τί ἡ πίστις μας; Ἐὰν ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἀναστήθηκε, τοῦτο σημαίνει ὅτι ἡ ἁμαρτία καὶ ὁ θάνατος δὲν ἔχουν νικηθεῖ. Ἐὰν δὲ δὲν ἔχουν αὐτὰ τὰ δύο νικηθεῖ, τότε γιατί νὰ πιστεύει κανεὶς στὸ Χριστό; Ἐκεῖνος ὅμως ὁ ὁποῖος μὲ τὴν πίστις στὸν Ἀναστάντα Χριστὸ ἀγωνίζεται ἐναντίον κάθε ἁμαρτίας του, αὐτὸς ἐνισχύει σιγὰ-σιγὰ μέσα του τὴν αἴσθησις ὅτι ὁ Κύριος πραγματικὰ ἀναστήθηκε, ἄμβλυσε τὸ κέντρο τοῦ θανάτου, νίκησε τὸ θάνατο σὲ ὅλα τὰ μέτωπα τῆς μάχης.

Χωρὶς τὴν ἀνάστασις δὲν ὑπάρχει οὔτε στὸν οὐρανὸ οὔτε κάτω ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸ τίποτε πρὸς παράλογο ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμον αὐτὸ οὔτε μεγαλύτερη ἀπελπισία ἀπὸ τὴν ζωὴ αὐτὴ, δίχως ἀθανασία. Σ' ὅλους τοὺς κόσμους δὲν ὑπάρχει περισσότερο δυστυχισμένη ὑπαρξὴ ἀπὸ τὸν ἄνθρωπο, ποὺ δὲν πιστεύει στὴν ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν. Γι' αὐτό, γιὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη ὑπαρξὴ, ὁ Ἀναστημένος Κύριος εἶναι τὰ «**πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν**» σ' ὅλους τοὺς κόσμους: ὅ,τι τὸ Ὠραῖο, τὸ Καλό, τὸ Ἀληθινό, τὸ Προσφιλέ, τὸ Χαρμόσυνο, τὸ Θεῖο, τὸ Σοφό, τὸ Αἰώνιο. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὅλη ἡ Ἀγάπη μας, ὅλη ἡ Ἀληθεία μας, ὅλη ἡ Χαρά μας, ὅλο τὸ Ἀγαθὸ μας, ὅλη ἡ Ζωὴ μας, ἡ Αἰωνία Ζωὴ σὲ ὅλες τὶς αἰωνιότητες καὶ ἀπεραντοσύνες.



Μὴ λές ὅτι τὸ σῶμα εἶναι αἰτία τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Γιατί, ἂν τὸ σῶμα εἶναι αἰτία τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τότε γιατί ὁ νεκρὸς δὲν ἁμαρτάνει; Βάλε στὸ δεξιὸ χέρι κάποιου νεκροῦ, ποὺ μόλις πέθανε, ἓνα ξίφος. Φόνος δὲν θὰ γίνε. Ἄς περάσουν πλάι ἀπὸ νεκρὸ νέο, μόλις πεθάνει, χίλιες καλλονές. Δὲν πρόκειται νὰ τοῦ δημιουργηθεῖ καμιά ἐπιθυμία πορνείας. Γιατί; Ἐπειδὴ τὸ σῶμα δὲν ἁμαρτάνει ἀπὸ μόνο του, ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτάνει ἡ ψυχὴ, ἐνεργώντας μὲ τὸ σῶμα. Τὸ σῶμα εἶναι ἐργαλεῖο καὶ μοιάζει μὲ ροῦχο καὶ στολὴ τῆς ψυχῆς. Κι ἂν παραδοθεῖ ἀπὸ αὐτὴ στὴν πορνεία, γίνεται ἀκάθαρτο. Ἄν ὅμως συζηήσει μὲ ἅγια ψυχὴ, γίνεται ναὸς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος.

Δὲν τὰ λέω ἐγὼ αὐτά, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἔχει πεῖ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος: «**Δὲν ξέρετε ὅτι τὰ σώματά σας εἶναι ναὸς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ποὺ βρίσκεται μέσα σας;**» (Α΄ Κορ. 6:19). Νὰ φροντίζεις λοιπὸν τὸ σῶμα σὰν νὰ εἶναι ναὸς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Μὴ φθείρεις μὲ πορνείες τὴν σὰρκα σου. Μὴ μολύνεις τὴν ὁμορφὴ αὐτὴ στολὴ σου. Κι ἂν ἔτυχε καὶ τὴ μόλυνες, πλύνε τὴν τώρα μὲ τὴ μετάνοια, ἐπειδὴ τώρα εἶναι καιρὸς λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας.

**Ἅγιου Κυρίλλου Ἱεροσολύμων**

## Χαρακτηρισμοί Αίρετικών

*Τοῦ μακαριστοῦ καὶ κορυφαίου Ὁρθόδοξου θεολόγου, ἱεροκήρυκος καὶ συγγραφέα, τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ κ. Νικ. Ἰω. Σωτηροπούλου (+2014).*

Τὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο γράφεται γιὰ τοὺς αἰρετικούς γενικῶς, καὶ γιὰ τοὺς Οἰκουμενιστὰς εἰδικῶς. Οἱ διδάσκαλοι καὶ οἱ ὄπαδοι τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ εἶναι οἱ χειρότεροι ἀποστάτες ἀπὸ τὴν Πίστι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, διότι ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς δὲν εἶναι μία μόνον αἵρεσι, ἀλλ' εἶναι παναίρεσι, προχωρεῖ δὲ πέρα ἀπὸ τὴν αἵρέσει καὶ γίνεται καὶ πανθηρησκεία. Ἀρχαιοκουμενιστὴς μὲ πολὺ μεγάλα ράσα δήλωσε ὅτι καὶ οἱ ἄλλες Θρησκείες εἶναι σεβαστὲς καὶ σεβάσιμες καὶ δρόμοι σωτηρίας!

Θέμα τοῦ παρόντος ἄρθρου εἶναι τὸ πῶς ἡ Καινὴ Διαθήκη, τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, χαρακτηρίζει τοὺς αἰρετικούς, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς παναιρετικούς καὶ πανθηρησκειακοὺς Οἰκουμενιστὰς.

Ἄν οἱ Οἰκουμενισταὶ ἔχουν τὴν αἴσθησι, μᾶλλον ψευδαίσθησι, ὅτι πιστεύουν στὴν Καινὴ Διαθήκη, ἄς διαβάσουν τὸ ἄρθρο, γιὰ νὰ ἴδουν πόσο πλανῶνται, καὶ μὲ πόσους καὶ πόσο βαρεῖς χαρακτηρισμοὺς τοὺς χαρακτηρίζει τὸ θεόπνευστο κείμενο, καὶ ἄς ἀνησυχήσουν γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία τους μὲ τὴ μεγαλύτερη ὄλων τῶν ἀνησυχῶν, καὶ ἄς ἀλλάξουν φρονήματα, ἄς γίνουν ὄντως πιστοί, γιὰ νὰ τύχουν ἐλέους καὶ σωτηρίας παρὰ τοῦ Ἀρχηγοῦ τῆς Πίστεως, τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ καὶ Σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Στὴν ἀρχὴ τῆς δημοσίας δράσεώς του ὁ Χριστὸς κήρυξε: «Μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦτε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ». (Μάρκ. 1:15). Καὶ πρὸς τὸ τέλος, μετὰ τὴν Ἀνάστασί Του, εἶπε στοὺς μαθητὰς Του: «Κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάση τῇ κτίσει. Ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ἀπιστήσας κατακριθήσεται». (Μάρκ. 16:15-16). Ἡ πίστι στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο τοῦ Χριστοῦ σώζει, ἡ ἀπιστία καταδικάζει.

Ἡ αἵρεσι εἶναι «ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον», διαστροφή τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Γαλ. 1:6,7) καὶ δὲν σώζει, ἀλλὰ καταδικάζει. Οἱ διδάσκοντες κάτι διαφορετικὸ ἀπὸ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, ἀπὸ τὴ διδασκαλία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀναθεματίζονται (Γαλ. 1:8-9).

Ἄν οἱ Οἰκουμενισταὶ εἶναι ἐνσυνειδήτως ἄπιστοι, ἄν, μὲ ἄλλες λέξεις, δὲν πιστεύουν στὸ Χριστὸ καὶ στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, δὲν χρειάζεται νὰ διαβάσουν τὸ παρὸν ἄρθρο. Ἄς τὸ διαβάσουν ὅμως οἱ πιστοί, γιὰ νὰ αἰσθανθοῦν πόσο τρομερὸ καὶ βδελυκτὸ εἶναι τὸ φαινόμενο τῆς ἐποχῆς μας, ποὺ ὀνομάζεται Οἰκουμενισμὸς, καὶ νὰ τηροῦν ἀποστάσεις ἀπὸ τοὺς χειρότερους ἀποστάτες ἀπὸ τὴν Πίστι, τοὺς Οἰκουμενιστὰς, καὶ νὰ τοὺς ἐλέγχουν καὶ νὰ διαμαρτύρωνται κατ' αὐτῶν, μάλιστα ἂν αὐτοὶ κατέχουν ἐκκλησιαστικὲς θέσεις ἢ ἔχουν θεολογικοὺς

τίτλους. Εἶναι ἔλλειψι στοιχειώδους τιμιότητος νὰ παρουσιάζονται Οἰκουμενισταὶ ὡς ἐκπρόσωποι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἢ τῆς Ὁρθόδοξης Θεολογίας.

Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶπε στοὺς ἰδικούς του: «Προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν ψευδοπροφητῶν, οἵτινες ἔρχονται πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ἐνδύμασι προβάτων, ἔσωθεν δὲ εἰσι λύκοι ἄρπαγες». (Ματθ. 7:15). Συμφώνως πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ λόγο οἱ αἰρετικοὶ χαρακτηρίζονται «ψευδοπροφῆται». Στὴν Ἁγία Γραφὴ «προφῆται» μὲ τὴν ἀληθινὴ ἐννοια τῆς λέξεως εἶναι ἐκεῖνοι, οἱ ὁποῖοι διδάσκουν μὲ ἔμπνευσι τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οἱ δὲ αἰρετικοὶ χαρακτηρίζονται «ψευδοπροφῆται», διότι δὲν διδάσκουν τὰ λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλ' ἰδικὰ τους λόγια, ἢ μᾶλλον λόγια τοῦ Διαβόλου, καὶ ἰσχυρίζονται ψευδῶς ὅτι διδάσκουν τὰ λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Οἱ αἰρετικοὶ χαρακτηρίζονται ἐπίσης «λύκοι ἄρπαγες» «ἐν ἐνδύμασι προβάτων». Ἄπ' ἔξω ἐμφανίζονται ὡς πρόβατα, φρόνιμοι, γλυκεῖς καὶ μελιστάλακτοι. Καὶ ἀπὸ μέσα εἶναι αἰμοβόροι λύκοι, ἔτοιμοι ν' ἀρπάξουν καὶ νὰ κατασπαράξουν τὰ λογικὰ πρόβατα τῆς ποιμνῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὁ Χριστὸς ἐφιστᾷ τὴν προσοχή μας νὰ φυλασσώμεθα ἀπὸ τοὺς ψευδοπροφῆτες καὶ προβατοσχήμους λύκους, οἱ ὁποῖοι στὸν ἐπόμενο στίχ. 16 χαρακτηρίζονται «ἀκανθαὶ» καὶ «τριβόλοι», ἀγκάθια καὶ τριβόλια, ἀπὸ τὰ ὁποῖα δὲν περιμένουμε ἐκλεκτοὺς καρπούς.

Στὸ Ματθ. 24:11 ὁ Χριστὸς προλέγει ὅτι θὰ ἐμφανισθοῦν «πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται», καὶ ὅτι «πλανήσουσι πολλούς». Καὶ στὸ Ματθ. 24:24 λέγει ὅτι θὰ ἐμφανισθοῦν «ψευδοπροφῆται», οἱ ὁποῖοι θὰ κάνουν «σημεῖα μεγάλα καὶ τέρατα, ὥστε πλανήσαι, εἰ δυνατόν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς». (Βλέπε καὶ Μάρκ. 13:22).

Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Πέτρος στὸ Β' Πέτρ. 2:1-2 γράφει: «Ἐγένοντο δὲ καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐν τῷ λαῷ, ὡς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσονται ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι, οἵτινες παρεισάξουσιν αἰρέσεις ἀπωλείας». Ἐδῶ προλέγεται ἡ ἐμφάνισι αἰρετικῶν, οἱ ὁποῖοι χαρακτηρίζονται «ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι» συνωνύμως πρὸς τὸ «ψευδοπροφῆται». Οἱ δὲ αἰρέσεις τους χαρακτηρίζονται «αἰρέσεις ἀπωλείας». Οἱ αἰρέσεις ὀδηγοῦν σὲ ἀπώλεια, καταστροφή, κόλασι. Ὁ δὲ Ἀπόστολος Ἰωάννης στὸ Α' Ἰωάν. 4:1 γράφει, ὅτι «πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον». Καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν Ἰωάννη λοιπὸν οἱ αἰρετικοὶ χαρακτηρίζονται «ψευδοπροφῆται».

Στὴν Ἀποκάλυψι ἀναφέρεται «ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης» (Ἀποκ. ἰστ' 13, ιθ' 20, κ' 10), ὁ ὑπασπιστὴς τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου, ὁ ὁποῖος περιγράφεται ὡς «θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς», ἔχει «κέρατα δύο ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ» καὶ ὁμιλεῖ «ὡς δράκων». (Ἀποκ. ιγ' 11). Θεωροῦμε εὐστοχη τὴν ἐρμηνεία, ὅτι μὲ τὸ χαρακτηρισμὸ



«ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης», ἐνάρθρως, ὁ κατ' ἐξοχὴν ψευδοπροφήτης, χαρακτηρίζεται ὁ μεγαλύτερος τῶν αἰρεσιαρχῶν, ὁ Πάπας. Τὰ δύο κέρατά του σημαίνουν τὶς δύο ἐξουσίες του, τὴ θρησκευτικὴ καὶ τὴν πολιτικὴ. Καὶ ἡ ὁμοίότης του πρὸς τὸ ἄρνιον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸν δράκοντα, σημαίνει τὴ μεγάλη ὑποκρισία του. Φαίνεται ὡς χριστιανὸς ἡγέτης, ἀλλ' εἶναι σατανικός.

Στὶς ἡμέρες μας ὁ Πάπας συγκαλεῖ συνέδρια ὄχι μόνο διαχριστιανικὰ καὶ παναιρετικὰ, ἀλλὰ καὶ διαθρησκειακὰ καὶ σατανιστικά, καὶ συμπροσεύχονται γιὰ τὴν εἰρήνῃ τοῦ κόσμου! Συμμετέχουν δὲ σὲ τέτοια συνέδρια καὶ λεγόμενοι Ὁρθόδοξοι! Ὁ δὲ Πάπας, ἀφοῦ καὶ συγκαλεῖ τὰ συνέδρια καὶ κατέχει τὴν πρώτη θέσι σ' αὐτά, ἤδη ἀναγνωρίζεται ἀπὸ τοὺς ἡμετέρους Οἰκουμενιστὰς ὡς ἔχων τὸ περιβόητο πρωτεῖο, καίτοι στὴν πραγματικότητα, ἀφοῦ εἶναι αἰρετικός, δὲν ἔχει ἱερωσύνη, δὲν εἶναι ἐπίσκοπος.

Τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου «ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης», ὁ Πάπας, ἐπειδὴ ὁ Ἀντίχριστος θὰ εἶναι ἰσχυρότερος ἀπ' αὐτὸν καὶ δὲν θὰ δύναται νὰ διεκδικήσῃ πρωτεῖο, κοσμικῶς καὶ διπλωματικῶς σκεπτόμενος θὰ γίνῃ ὑπάσπιστῆς τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου, γιὰ νὰ ἔχῃ τὰ δευτερεῖα τῆς ἐξουσίας. Νὰ τὸν χαίρωνται οἱ Οἰκουμενισταί, οἱ σφόδρα φιλοπαπικοί.

Ὁμοίως πρὸς τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος χαρακτηρίσε τοὺς αἰρετικούς «λύκους βαρεῖς μὴ φειδομένους τοῦ ποιμνίου» λύκους φοβερούς, ποὺ δὲν λυποῦνται τὸ ποῖμνιο. Προφήτευσε δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς ποιμένες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας θὰ προέλθουν αἰρετικοί, τοὺς ὁποίους ἐπίσης χαρακτηρίσε «ἄνδρας λαλοῦντας διεστραμμένα». (Πράξ. κ' 29, 30). Ἀνέφερε δὲ καὶ πρόρρησι τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος γιὰ τὴν ἐμφάνισι ἀποστατῶν ἀπὸ τὴν Πίστι, τῶν γνωστῶν ἀπὸ τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν ἱστορίαν αἰρετικῶν Ἐγκρατιτῶν. Οἱ διδάσκαλοι τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτῆς ἐμπόδιζαν τὸ γάμο καὶ κήρυτταν ἀποχὴ ἀπὸ τροφῆς ὡς διήθεν ἀκάθαρτα πράγματα. Χαρακτηρίζονται δὲ «πνεύματα πλάνα» μὲ δαιμονικὰς διδασκαλίαις, «ἐν ὑποκρίσει ψευδολόγοι» καὶ «κεκαυτηριασμένοι τὴν ἰδίαν συνείδησιν». (Α' Τιμ. 4:1-3).

Ὁ ἀδελφόςθεος Ἰούδας στὴν Καθολικὴ Ἐπιστολὴ του, τὸ δυνατώτερο ἀντιαιρετικὸ κείμενο τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης, αἰρετικούς τῆς ἀποστολικῆς ἐποχῆς, τοὺς Νικολαίτες, χαρακτηρίζει μὲ τοὺς ἐξῆς ἐκτὸς ἄλλων χαρακτηρισμοὺς: «Σπιλάδες», δηλαδὴ κηλίδες, δημωδῶς λέρες: «ἐαυτοὺς πομαίνοντες», ἰδιοτελεῖς, ποὺ βόσκουν καὶ τρέφουν τοὺς ἐαυτοὺς των «νεφέλαι ἄνυδροι ὑπὸ ἀνέμων παραφερόμενοι», σύννεφα ἄνυδρα, ποὺ παρασύρονται ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνέμους: «δένδρα φθινοπωρινά, ἄκαρπα, δις ἀποθανόντα, ἐκρὶζωθέντα», δένδρα φθινοπωρινά, χωρὶς καρπούς,

δύο φορὲς ξεραμμένα, ξερριζωμένα: «κύματα ἄγρια θαλάσσης ἐπαφρίζοντα τὰς ἐαυτῶν αἰσχύννας», κύματα ἄγρια τῆς θάλασσας, ποὺ ἀφρίζουν καὶ φέρουν στὴν ἐπιφάνεια τὶς ἀσχημίες τους: «ἀστέρες πλανῆται, οἷς ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκοτοῦς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετήρηται», ἄστρα σκοτεινά, στὰ ὁποῖα τὸ βαθὺ σκοτάδι διατηρεῖται παντοτινὸ (Ἰούδ. 12-13): «ἐμπαίχται κατὰ τὰς ἐαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίας πορευόμενοι τῶν ἀσεβειῶν», ἐμπαίχτες βαδίζοντες συμφώνως μὲ τὶς ἀσεβεῖς ἐπιθυμίες τους: «ἀποδιορίζοντες», διακρίνοντες τοὺς ἐαυτοὺς των ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ παρουσιαζόμενοι ὡς ἀνώτεροι: «ψυχικοί, Πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες», ἄνθρωποι ποὺ κυριαρχοῦνται ἀπὸ φυσικὰ ἔνστικτα, ποὺ στεροῦνται Πνεύματος Ἁγίου (Ἰούδ. 18-19).

Δύο ἀκόμη χαρακτηρισμοὶ τῶν αἰρετικῶν, φοβερότεροι τῶν προηγουμένων. «Κατάρας τέκνα!», λέγει μὲ πολὺ μεγάλη ἔμφασι ὁ Ἀπόστολος Πέτρος. Καταραμένοι ἄνθρωποι! (Β' Πέτρ. 2:14). Καὶ ὁ Ἀπόστολος Ἰωάννης λέγει, «Ἡκούσατε ὅτι ὁ Ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασι». Ἀκούσατε ὅτι ὁ Ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ τὴν ὥρα πολλοὶ ἀντίχριστοι ἔχουν ἔλθει (Α' Ἰωάν. 2:18). Ὁ ἀναμενόμενος Ἀντίχριστος εἶναι ὁ χειρότερος καὶ ὁ ἀπαισιώτερος ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Μὲ τὸ ὄνομα δὲ ἐκείνου ὁ Ἀπόστολος ὀνομάζει τοὺς αἰρετικούς τῆς ἐποχῆς του, καὶ ὅλων βεβαίως τῶν ἐποχῶν. Καὶ «ἀντίχριστοι» λοιπὸν χαρακτηρίζονται οἱ αἰρετικοί. Naί, ἀντίχριστοι, διότι φρονοῦν καὶ πράττουν ἀντίθετα πρὸς τὸ Χριστό, καὶ προετοιμάζουν τὸ ἔδαφος γιὰ τὸν κατ' ἐξοχὴν Ἀντίχριστο.

Γιὰ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς ἡ Καινὴ Διαθήκη ἐκφράζεται μὲ συμπάθεια. Ἀλλὰ γιὰ τοὺς αἰρετικούς ἐκφράζεται μὲ τὰ φοβερότερα λόγια, λόγια θεόπνευστα καὶ ἀρμόζοντα σ' αὐτοὺς, καὶ μάλιστα στοὺς παναιρετικούς καὶ πανθρησκειακοὺς Οἰκουμενιστὰς. Δὲν φοβοῦνται αὐτοὶ ἀπὸ τὰ φοβερὰ καὶ θεόπνευστα λόγια, ἔστω καὶ ἂν φοροῦν μεγάλα ράσα καὶ ἐγκόλπια καὶ ἔχουν τὶς μεγαλύτερες εὐθύνες.

Οἱ πιστοί, οἱ συνειδητοὶ Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοὶ φοβοῦνται καὶ ἀγωνίζονται καὶ θὰ ἀγωνίζονται μέχρι τέλος γιὰ «τὴν ἅπαξ παραδοθεῖσαν τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστιν». (Ἰούδ. 3). Εἶναι βεβαίως πάντοτε ὀλίγοι οἱ ἀγωνισταί, ἀλλὰ τελικῶς αὐτοὶ νικοῦν, διότι Ἀρχηγός τους εἶναι ὁ Χριστός, ὁ ὁποῖος διακήρυξε: «Ἐγὼ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον» (Ἰωάν. ιστ' 33). Ἡ Ἱστορία ἀποδεικνύει τοῦ λόγου τὸ ἀληθές. Παρὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν αἰρέσεων καὶ τὴν ὅλη πολεμικὴ τοῦ Σατανᾶ, τοῦ μεγάλου ἐχθροῦ τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς σωτηρίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἡ ὀρθὴ πίστι ἐφθάσε μέχρι σήμερα. Καὶ θὰ φθάσῃ μέχρι τὴ συντέλεια τοῦ κόσμου. Διότι αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ θέλησι τοῦ Χριστοῦ γιὰ τὴ σωτηρίαν τῶν πιστῶν.

Ὁ ἔχων ὄψα ἀκούειν, ἀκουέτω. (Ματθ. 11:15).

## Τὸ Γραικεύω Εἶναι Σχεδὸν Ταυτὸν μὲ τὸ Φραγκεύω

Σημαίνει σήμερον ἀμερικανεύω, ρωσεύω, φραντσεύω, γερμανεύω—δηλαδή γίνομαι πνευματικὸς δοῦλος τῶν ἔξω τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης...

Γράφει ὁ π. Ἰωάννης Σ. Ρωμανίδης, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίου του «Ρωμηοσύνη», Ἀριστοτέλειον Πανεπιστήμιον Θεσσαλονίκης, 14<sup>η</sup> Σεπτεμβρίου 1974.



Κατὰ παράκληση φίλων ἠτοίμασα δι' ἐκτύπωσιν τὸ παρὸν δοκίμιον χάριν ἐκείνων ποὺ συγκινοῦνται μὲ τὴν Ρωμηοσύνην μας, παρ' ὅλην τὴν ὀργανωμένην καὶ ἔντονον πλύσιν ἐγκεφάλου ποὺ ὑφιστάμεθα, διὰ νὰ τὴν ἐγκαταλείψωμεν καὶ τὴν ἀντικαταστήσωμε μὲ τὸν Γραικισμόν, τὸν ὁποῖον

προσπαθοῦν οἱ Εὐρωπαῖοι νὰ μᾶς ἐπιβάλλουν ἀπὸ τὸν Θ' αἰῶνα καὶ οἱ Ρῶσοι μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν, ὡς περιγράφομεν ἐν τῷ δοκιμίῳ τούτῳ. Τὸ πόνημα οὗτο εἶναι περίληψις τῶν ὄσων διδάσκω περὶ τῶν ἱστορικῶν καὶ ἰδεολογικῶν πλαισίων καὶ θεμελίων τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς ὑποστάσεως τοῦ Γένους.

Ὁ ἀναγνώστης θὰ διαπιστώσει ὅτι πολλὰ ἐκ τῶν ἐπιθέμενων ἐνταῦθα, ἐρμηνευτικά ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱστορικά, ἀπουσιάζουν ἀπὸ τὰ ἐν χρήσει ἐγχειρίδια τῶν ἐκπαιδευτικῶν ἐν Ἑλλάδι ἰδρυμάτων ὡς καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐπίσημον ἐμφάνισιν τοῦ Ἔθνους καὶ τῆς Ἑλλαδικῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Τὰ ἐν λόγῳ ἐρμηνευτικά καὶ ἱστορικά στοιχεῖα ὡς ἐμφανίζονται ἐν Ἑλλάδι εἶναι πιστὴ παραλλαγή τῆς εὐρωπαϊκῆς, ρωσικῆς καὶ ἀμερικανικῆς περὶ τῶν... ἐν προκειμένῳ θεμάτων ἐπιστήμης. Τὰ περισσότερα ἐν τῷ δοκιμίῳ τούτῳ ἀναφερόμενα γεγονότα ὡς γεγονότα δὲν δημοσιεύονται διὰ πρώτην φοράν. Ἔχουν σχεδὸν ὅλα δημοσιευθῆ καὶ ὑπάρχουν κατεσπαρμένα εἰς παλαιὰ καὶ νέα βιβλία, ξένα καὶ Ἑλληνικά.

Ἡ προσφορὰ τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου εἶναι ἡ Ρωμαϊκὴ σύνθεσις καὶ ἐρμηνεία τῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον γνωστῶν στοιχείων. Ἀκριβῶς εἰς τὸ σημεῖον τοῦτο ἡ μελέτη αὐτὴ εἶναι ἀντίθεσις καὶ διαμαρτυρία κατὰ τῆς εὐρωπαϊκῆς, ρωσικῆς, καὶ ἀμερικανικῆς συνθέσεως καὶ ἐρμηνείας, εἰς τὴν ὁποῖαν ὑπεδουλώθη ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη μὲσω τοῦ ἐν Ἑλλάδι ἐπικρατοῦντος Νεογραικισμοῦ.

Μὲ Γραικισμόν καὶ Νεογραικισμόν ἐννοοῦμεν ὄχι τὸν Νεοελληνισμόν, ἀλλὰ μόνον τὸ μὴ Ρωμαϊκόν

μέρος τοῦ Νεοελληνισμοῦ. Ὁ Νεογραικισμὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ πρὸ τῆς Ἀλώσεως Γραικισμὸς εἶναι ἐκ τῆς φύσεώς των δουλεῖα χειροτέρα τῆς Φραγκοκρατίας καὶ τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας.

Ἡ Φραγκοκρατία καὶ ἡ Τουρκοκρατία ἦσαν ὑποδούλωσις τοῦ σώματος. Ὁ Γραικισμὸς καὶ Νεογραικισμὸς εἶναι ὑποδούλωσις τοῦ πνεύματος. Οἱ Ρωμηοὶ τῆς Φραγκοκρατίας καὶ τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας εἶναι ὅσοι δὲν ἠκολούθησαν τὸ παράδειγμα ἐκείνων ποὺ ἐφράγκευσαν καὶ ἐτούρκευσαν. Οἱ σημερινοὶ ἀπομεινάντες Ρωμηοὶ ἀσφαλῶς δὲν τουρκεύουν ἀλλ' οὔτε φραγκεύουν οὔτε γραικεύουν.

Ὅπως οἱ Γραικοὶ πρὸ τῆς Ἀλώσεως εἶναι ἐκείνοι ποὺ ἐφράγκευσαν, οὕτω καὶ οἱ Νεογραικοὶ ἐγραικεύσαν γενόμενοι οἱ σημερινοὶ Γραικύλοι τῶν Εὐρωπαϊῶν καὶ Ρώσων καὶ τῶρα τῶν Ἀμερικανῶν, τῶν ἐξαδέλφων τῶν Εὐρωπαϊῶν. Τὸ γραικεύω εἶναι σχεδὸν ταυτὸν μὲ τὸ φραγκεύω. Σημαίνει σήμερον ἀμερικανεύω, ρωσεύω, φραντσεύω, γερμανεύω, δηλαδή γίνομαι πνευματικὸς δοῦλος τῶν ἔξω τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης. Ὁ Ρωμηὸς γνωρίζει σαφῶς ὅτι ὑπάρχει μεγάλη διαφορὰ μεταξὺ συμμαχίας καὶ δουλείας. Γίνεται σύμμαχος μὲ ὁποινδήποτε, ἐφ' ὅσον συμφέρει εἰς τὸ Ἔθνος, ἀλλὰ ποτε δούλος τῶν συμμάχων.

Ὁ Γραικύλος ὅμως νομίζει ὅτι συμμαχία σημαίνει πνευματικὴ δουλείαν, δηλαδή συγχώνευσιν πολιτισμῶν καὶ σύγχυσιν ἰδεολογικῶν. Ὁ Γραικύλος δὲν γίνεται μόνον σύμμαχος, ἀλλὰ γίνεται καὶ θέλει νὰ γίνῃ ἓνα πράγμα μὲ τὸν σύμμαχον. Νομίζει ὅτι συμμαχία εἶναι τὸ νὰ προσφέρεται δι' ἔρωτα ὡς δούλη πρὸς κύριον ἵνα ἀποκτήσῃ ἰσχυρὸν προστατήν, ὁ ὁποῖος θὰ σώσῃ τὴν Ἑλλαδίτσαν του. Ὁ Νεογραικύλος εἶναι συνεχιστὴς τῆς παραδόσεως τῶν Γραικύλων πρὸ τῆς Ἀλώσεως, οἱ ὁποῖοι μᾶς ἐκήρυττον τὴν ἀνάγκην τῆς φραγκεύσεως τοῦ πνεύματος, διὰ νὰ σωθῶμεν ἀπὸ τὴν δουλείαν τοῦ σώματος. Μὲ ἄλλα λόγια, ὁ Γραικύλος φοβεῖται καὶ ἄρα οὔτε εἶναι οὔτε μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι Ρωμηὸς, ἐφόσον φοβεῖται. Φοβεῖται τὴν πνευματικὴν ἀνεξαρτησίαν καὶ ἐλευθερίαν. Θέλει ἐλευθερίαν τοῦ σώματος μόνον. Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο δὲν ἠμπορεῖ καν νὰ φαντασθῇ ὅτι ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη ὄχι μόνον δὲν ὑποδουλώνεται πνευματικῶς, ἀλλὰ εἶναι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ πολιτιστικὴ δύναμις ἡγετική. Πῶς ἠμπορεῖ ὁ Γραικύλος νὰ ἔχῃ αἰσθήματα καὶ πεποίθησιν ἡγέτου, ὅταν εἶναι δούλος;

Ὁ Ρωμηὸς ἔχει ἡγετικὰ αἰσθήματα ἀπὸ τὴν Ρωμηοσύνην του. Ὁ Γραικύλος τὸν ἡγέτην κάμνει μόνον ἐντὸς τῆς Ἑλλαδίτσας του, ἀφοῦ τὰ ἡγετικά του αἰσθήματα καὶ τὴν πολιτικὴν του δύναμιν ἀντλεῖ ἀπὸ πηγὴν ἔξω τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης καὶ ἐκτὸς τῆς Ἑλλαδίτσας του. Ὁ Ρωμηὸς εἶναι ἀπὸ τὴν Ρωμηοσύνην



του αετός. Οί Ρωμηοί είναι πρὸς ἀλλήλους αἰετοὶ καὶ πρὸς ξένους αἰετοί. Ὁ Γραικύλος κάμνει τὸ λεοντάρι εἰς τοὺς Ρωμηοὺς μὲ τὴν βοήθεια τῶν ξένων, ἀλλὰ εἶναι φρόνιμον ποντικάκι εἰς τοὺς ξένους.

Δὲν ἐνδιαφέρει τὸν Ρωμηὸν τί λέγουν οἱ ξένοι δι' αὐτόν, διότι τὰ κριτήρια του εἶναι ρωμαϊκά. Ὁ Γραικύλος ἀγωνίζεται νὰ βρεθῆ εἰς θέσιν νὰ διατυμπανίζει τί καλὰ λέγουν οἱ ξένοι δι' αὐτόν, διὰ νὰ ἀποδείξη τὴν ἀξίαν του, διότι τὰ κριτήριά του δὲν εἶναι ρωμαϊκά ἀλλὰ εὐρωπαϊκά, ρώσικα καὶ ἀμερικάνικα.

Ὁ Ρωμηὸς εἶναι σκληρὸς καὶ ἐλεύθερος καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀφελής. Καὶ ὅταν τὸ σῶμα του ἢ τὰ συμφέροντά του σκλαβωθοῦν, κάμνει ἐλιγμούς καὶ ὑποκρίνεται ἀναλόγως τῶν περιστάσεων, διὰ νὰ παραμείνῃ μὲ τὴν εὐφυΐαν του ὅσον τὸ δυνατὸν πλέον ἐλευθέρῃ ἢ Ρωμηοσύνη του. Μὲ ὑπερηφάνειαν τὸν Καραγκιόζη κάμνει καὶ πάντοτε ἀδούλωτος αἰετὸς τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης παραμένει.

Ὁ Νεογραιοκισμὸς ἀρκετὰ ἐξημίωσε τὸ Ρωμαϊκὸν μὲ τὴν γεγόμενην ξενομανίαν του, ἢ ὅποια εἶναι εἰς τὴν πραγματικότητα δουλοπρέπεια εἰς τὰ ἀφεντικά του. Ἀκριβῶς ἐπειδὴ οἱ Νεογραιοκοὶ εἶναι διηρμένοι μεταξὺ τῶν ἀφεντικῶν των, συμπεριφέρονται ὁ ἕνας Γραικύλος πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον Γραικύλον ὡσάν



τὰ ἀφεντικά των. Οἱ Γραικύλοι τῶν Ρώσων φέρονται πρὸς τοὺς Γραικύλους τῶν Ἀμερικανῶν ὡς οἱ Ρῶσοι πρὸς Ἀμερικανοὺς καὶ τανάπαλιν. Τὸ ἴδιον κάμνουν οἱ Γραικύλοι τῶν Φρατσέζων, Ἀγγλῶν, Γερμανῶν, κλπ. Δια τοῦτο παρατηρεῖται τὸ περίεργον φαινόμενον νὰ ἐρωτεύεται ὁ Γραικύλος τὸν Ρῶσον φίλον του καὶ νὰ μισῇ τὸν Γραικύλον τῶν Ἀμερικανῶν καὶ τανάπαλιν. Τὸ παράδοξον εἶναι ὅτι ἕκαστος θεωρεῖ τὸν ἄλλον Γραικύλον ἐχθρὸν καὶ προδότην τοῦ Ἔθνους. Ἐξ ἀπόψεως ὅμως Ρωμηοσύνης οἱ Γραικύλοι εἶναι ὅλοι προδόται.

Τοῦτο ὅμως δὲν σημαίνει πάλιν ὅτι δέχεται ὅτιδήποτε τὸ ἀκλὸν καὶ τὸ κάμνει ρωμαϊκόν. Ὅπως γίνεται σύμμαχος μὲ ὅποιον συμφέρει ἐθνικῶς, κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον τρόπον ἀποκτᾷ ὅλα ὅσα χρειάζονται ἀπὸ τὴν σοφίαν τῶν ἐπιστημόνων τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλὰ τὰ προσαγάγει εἰς τὸν ρωμαϊκὸν πολιτισμὸν του. Οὐδέποτε συγγέει τὰς θετικὰς ἐπιστήμας μὲ τὸν πολιτισμὸν, ἀφοῦ γνωρίζει ὅτι καὶ ὁ βάρβαρος δύναται νὰ ἔχη ἢ νὰ ἀποκτήσῃ καὶ νὰ προαγάγῃ τὰς θετικὰς ἐπιστήμας, διὰ νὰ χρησιμοποιοῦσιν αὐτὰς εἰς ὑποδούλωσιν καὶ καταστροφὴν ἀνθρώπων.

Διὰ τοῦτο ὁ Ρωμηὸς γνωρίζει ὅτι εἶναι πνευματικὸς ἡγέτης καὶ εἰς αὐτοὺς ποὺ εἶναι ὡς τεχνοκράται καὶ ὡς οἰκονομικὴ δύναμις ἡγεῖται. Ἀλλὰ οἱ Νεογραιοκοὶ ἔχουν τόσον πολὺ συνηθίσει νὰ συγγέουν τὸ τεχνοκρατικὸν καὶ οἰκονομικὸν στοιχεῖον μὲ τὴν πνευματικὴν ἡγεσίαν, ὥστε δὲν ἀντολαμβάνονται πλέον τὸ γεγονὸς ὅτι ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη εἶναι σήμερον πολιτιστικὸς ἡγέτης ἑκατομμυρίων ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς τῆς Ἑλλάδος των.

Ὁ Γραικύλος νομίζει ὅτι τοιαύτη ἡγεσίαν εἶχον μόνον οἱ ἀρχαῖοι Ἕλληνες καὶ φαντάζεται τὸν ἑαυτὸν του ὡς τὸν φύλακα τῶν ἐρειπίων αὐτῶν. Θεωρεῖ συνεχιστὰς καὶ ἡγέτας τοῦ πολιτιστικοῦ ἔργου τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἑλλήνων τοὺς Εὐρωπαίους. Δὲν εἶναι εἰς θέσιν νὰ καταλάβῃ ὅτι μόνον ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη εἶναι συνεχιστὴς καὶ ἡγέτης τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ πολιτισμοῦ. Διὰ τοῦτο ὁ Γραικύλος εἶναι ὁ κύριος συντελεστὴς εἰς τὴν καλλιέργειαν τοῦ δουλοπρεποῦς φρονήματος τοῦ νεογραιοκισμοῦ ἐν Ἑλλάδι πνεύματος. Ὁ Γραικύλος ἔχει ἐμπιστοσύνην

ὄχι εἰς τὸν ἑαυτὸν του ἀλλὰ μόνον εἰς τὰ ξένα ἀφεντικά του.

Ναὶ μὲν Ρωμηὸς ἔχει ἀπόλυτον πεποιθήσιν εἰς τὴν Ρωμηοσύνην του, ἀλλὰ οὔτε φανατικὸς οὔτε μισαλλόδαξος εἶναι καὶ οὔτε ἔχει καμμίαν ξενοφοβίαν. Ἀντιθέτως ἀγαπᾷ τοὺς ξένους οὐχ

ὅμως ἀφελῶς. Τοῦτο διότι γνωρίζει ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἀγαπᾷ ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ὅλας τὰς φυλάς καὶ ὅλα τὰ ἔθνη χωρὶς διάκρισιν καὶ χωρὶς προτίμησιν. Ὁ Ρωμηὸς γνωρίζει ὅτι ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη του κατέχει τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ εἶναι ἡ ὑψηλὴ μορφή τῶν πολιτισμῶν. Ἀλλὰ κατανοεῖ ἄριστα τὸ γεγονὸς ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἀγαπᾷ τὸν Ρωμηὸν ὄχι ὅμως περισσότερον ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους. Ὁ Θεὸς ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κάτοχον τῆς ἀλήθειας ἀλλ' ἐξ ἴσου ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κήρυκα τοῦ ψεύδους. Ἀγαπᾷ τὸν Ἅγιον ἀλλ' ἀγαπᾷ ἐξ ἴσου ἀκόμη καὶ τὸν διάβολον. Διὰ τοῦτο ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη εἶναι αὐτοπεποιθήσις, ἰταμότης καὶ ἐγωϊσμός. Ὁ ἡρωϊσμός τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης εἶναι ἀληθῆς καὶ διαρκῆς κατάστασις τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ ὄχι ἀγριότης, βαρβαρότης καὶ ἀρπακτικότης.

Οἱ μεγαλύτεροι ἥρωες τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης συγκαταλέγονται μεταξὺ τῶν Ἁγίων. Ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη διαφέρει τῶν ἄλλων πολιτισμῶν, διότι ἔχει τὸ ἴδιον θεμέλιον διὰ τὸν ἡρωϊσμόν της ὡς καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀγιοσύνην της, δηλαδὴ τὸ ρωμαϊκὸν φιλότιμον τὸ ὅποιον δὲν ὑπάρχει εἰς τὸν εὐρωπαϊκὸν πολιτισμὸν. Παρὰ ταῦτα οἱ Γραικύλοι ἀπὸ τὸ 1821 μέχρι σήμερον προπαγανδίζουν ὅτι ὀφειλόμενον



νά ἐγκαταλείψωμεν τὴν Ρωμοσύνην καὶ νά γίνωμεν Εὐρωπαῖοι, διότι δῆθεν ὁ εὐρωπαϊκὸς πολιτισμὸς εἶναι ἀνώτερος ἀπὸ τὴν Ρωμοσύνην. Τὸ δοκίμιον τοῦτο δὲν προσπαθεῖ νά ἀποδείξῃ τίποτε. Ἡ Ρωμοσύνη δὲν ἀποδεικνύεται. Περιγράφεται. Δὲν χρειάζεται ἀπολογία. Εἶναι ἀπλῶς αὐτὸ ποῦ εἶναι. Τὸ δέχεται κανεὶς ἢ τὸ ἀπορρίπτει. Διὰ τοῦτο τὰ παιδιά τῶν Ρωμῶν ἢ παραμένουν πιστοὶ καὶ σκληροὶ Ρωμηοὶ ἢ ἐφράγκευον ἢ ἐτούρκευον.

Καὶ σήμερον ἄλλοι παραμένουν Ρωμηοί, ἄλλοι ὅμως ἀμερικανεύουν, ρωσεύουν, φραντσεύουν, ἀγγλεύουν, δηλαδὴ Γραικεύουν.

Εἰς τὸ παρελθὸν οἱ Ρωμηοὶ εἶχον τὴν ἡγεσίαν καὶ ἦσαν ὀργανωμένοι μὲ ρωμαϊκὴν ἐπιστήμην καὶ παιδείαν καὶ ἐπικρατοῦσαν εἰς τὸ Ρωμαϊκόν. Μετὰ τὴν ἴδρυσιν τῆς Ἑλλαδίτσας τῶν ἐλλαδιστῶν ὅμως οἱ Ρωμηοὶ ἐξετοπίσθησαν ἀπὸ τὴν ἡγεσίαν καὶ ἀνέλαβον αὐτὴν οἱ Γραικύλοι τῶν Μεγάλων Δυνάμεων καὶ ἴδρυσαν τὸν Νεογραικισμὸν μὲ ἐπίσημον πρόγραμμα νά μὴ εἴμεθα πλέον Ρωμηοὶ ἀλλὰ τὰ ταπεινὰ καὶ φρόνιμα γραικύλα παιδιά τῶν Εὐρωπαίων καὶ Ρώσων.

Ἦξι μόνον ἔγινε τοῦτο ἀλλὰ οὔτε προεσπάθησαν οἱ Νεογραικύλοι νά τὸ ἀποκρύψουν. Ἦσαν ὑπερήφανοι διὰ τὴν ὑποδοῦλωσίν των εἰς τὸν πολιτισμὸν τῶν Εὐρωπαίων καὶ Ρώσων καὶ τὴν διευτυπᾶνίζαν εἰς ὅλας τὰς πολιτιστικὰς ἐκδειλώσεις, τὴν μουσικὴν, τοὺς χορούς, τὴν ἀρχιτεκτονικὴν, τὰς ἐνδυμασίας κ.λ.π.

Τὰ πρῶτα κόμματα τῆς «ἐλευθέρας» Ἑλλάδος δὲν ἦσαν τὸ φραντσεξικὸν κόμμα, τὸ ἀγγλικὸν κόμμα καὶ τὸ ρώσικον κόμμα; Καὶ ἕως σήμερον ποῦ τὰ ὑπουργεῖα παιδείας καὶ ἐξωτερικῶν ἀποτελοῦν μέρος τῆς κομματικῆς πολιτικῆς, δὲν συνεχίζετο ἡ ἴδια κατάστασις;

Ἡ παιδεία καὶ ἡ ἐξωτερικὴ πολιτικὴ πρέπει νά εἶναι τὸ ἴδιον δι' ὅλους τοὺς Ρωμηοὺς καὶ ἐκτὸς κομματικῶν διαμαχῶν. Τοῦτο ὅμως δύναται νά ἐπιτευχθῇ μόνον ὅταν ἡ ἔχουσα σχέσιν μὲ θέματα πολιτισμοῦ ἐπιστήμης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐπανεύρῃ τὰ Ρωμαϊκὰ κριτήρια καὶ βάση αὐτῶν ἀναδημιουργήσῃ ἢ ἀναστήσῃ τὴν ἀδέσμευτον ἀπὸ τὰς περὶ Ρωμοσύνης πλαστογραφίας τῶν ξένων ἐπιστήμην.

Ἐνώπιόν τοῦ μεγέθους τοῦ ἐν προκειμένῳ θέματος τὸ παρὸν μελέτημα εἶναι μία προσπάθεια ὅχι λύσεως ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς ἀποκαλύψεως σημαντικῶν προβλημάτων ἢ θεμάτων τὰ ὁποῖα ἐμποδίζουν εἰς τὴν ἀνάπτυξιν μίας ρωμαϊκῆς θεωρήσεως τῆς ἱστορικῆς πραγματικότητος τοῦ Γένους.

Οὐσιαστικῶς τὸ πόνημα τοῦτο εἶναι προσκλητήριο εἰς τοὺς Ρωμηοὺς καὶ τὰς Ρωμαίγισσας (ὡς τὶς ὀνομάζει ὁ Μακρυγιάννης) νά ἀναλάβουν τὸν ἐπιστημονικὸν ἀγῶνα, νά ἀναστήσουν τὴν Ρωμοσύνην ἀπὸ τὸν ἐπιστημονικὸν θάνατον, τὸν ὁποῖον ἐπεξεργάσθησαν

δι' αὐτὴν (1) οἱ Φράγκοι ἀπὸ τὸν 9ον αἰῶνα, (2) οἱ Ρῶσοι μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν, (3) οἱ Γραικοὶ πρὸ τῆς Ἀλώσεως καὶ (4) οἱ Νεογραικοὶ τῆς δούλης εἰς τοὺς Εὐρωπαίους καὶ Ρώσους Ἑλλαδίτσας τοῦ 19<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνος, οἱ ὁποῖοι μετέτρεψαν τὴν ρωμαϊκὴν Ἐπανάστασιν τοῦ 1821 εἰς ἥτταν τῆς Ρωμοσύνης καὶ θρίαμβον τοῦ Γραικισμοῦ τοῦ Καρλομάγνου καὶ τοῦ Νεογραικισμοῦ τῶν «Φιλλελήνων» τῶν Μεγάλων Δυνάμεων.

Τὰ χρώματα τοῦ ἐξώφυλλου εἶναι τὰ χρώματα τῆς Ρωμοσύνης ποῦ διασώζονται μέχρι σήμερον εἰς τὰ λάβαρα τῶν Πατριαρχείων Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ Ἱεροσολύμων. Ὁ χρυσοῦς ἀετὸς εἶναι ἡ Ρωμοσύνη τῶν ρωμαϊκῶν τραγουδιῶν καὶ ἡ καρδιὰ τοῦ ἀετοῦ εἶναι ὁ χρυσοῦς σταυρὸς. **Ἡ σημαία τῆς Ρωμοσύνης εἶναι ὁ χρυσοῦς σταυρὸς ἐπάνω εἰς κόκκινον πανί.**

Κάποτε οἱ Ρωμαῖσες ἔβαφαν τὰ μαλλιά των κόκκινα καὶ ἐφοροῦσαν φουστάνια μὲ τὰ ἐθνικὰ χρώματα. Διὰ τοὺς Ρωμηοὺς τὰ ἐθνικὰ χρώματα καὶ σύμβολα δὲν εἶναι συζητήσιμα. Εἶναι ρωμαϊκά. Οἱ Γραικύλοι οὐδέποτε θὰ τὰ ἐπαναφέρουν χωρὶς τὴν ἄδειαν τῶν ἀφεντάδων των. Ὁ Ρωμηὸς ἀφεντάδες δὲν ἔχει καὶ θὰ τὰ ἐπαναφέρῃ μαζί μὲ τὸ προγονικόν τοῦ Γένους σύνθημα: **«Ἡ Ρωμανία Νικᾷ»!**



**Ν**ὰ ξέρουμε ὅμως ἐμεῖς, οἱ εὐσεβεῖς, ὅτι ὅσο βρισκόμαστε στὴν ἁμαρτία, δηλαδὴ στὴν παράβαση τῶν θεῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀκόμη καὶ ἂν διαβάζουμε ὅλες τὶς προσευχὰς τῶν ὁσίων, τὰ τροπάρια, τὰ κοντάκια καὶ τοὺς κανόνες κάθε μέρα καὶ κάθε ὥρα, δὲν θὰ καταφέρουμε μὲ αὐτὸ τίποτα. Ἐπειδὴ ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Κύριος, ὁ Χριστός, σὰν μὲ μομφὴ καὶ παράπονο, λέγει σέ μᾶς: **«Τί δὲ μὲ καλεῖτε Κύριε, Κύριε, καὶ οὐ ποιεῖτε ἃ λέγω;»**, δηλαδὴ ὅσο ζεῖτε παραβαίνοντας τὶς ἐντολὰς μου, μέχρι τότε μάταια μὲ καλεῖτε μὲ πολλὰ καὶ πολὺ ὄρετες προσευχὰς. Μία μόνον ὑπάρχει εὐχάριστη σ' Αὐτὸν προσευχή: εἶναι ἡ ἔμπρακτὴ προσευχή, ποῦ συνίσταται στὸ νά ἀπομακρυνθοῦμε μὲ ὅλη τὴ ψυχὴ μας διὰ παντὸς ἀπὸ κάθε παράβαση τῶν ἀγίων ἐντολῶν Του καὶ νά στερεωθοῦμε μὲ αὐτὸ στὸ φόβο Του ἐκτελώνοντας κάθε δίκαιο ἔργο μὲ πνευματικὴ χαρὰ καὶ εἰλικρινῆ ἀγάπη.

**Ἁγίου Μαξίμου τοῦ Γραικοῦ**

## «Ἀνελήφθης ἐν Δόξῃ Ὁ τά Σύμπαντα Πληρῶν...»

Αρχ. Παύλου Δημητρακοπούλου, πρ. Ιεροῦ Ναοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ Πειραιῶς.

**Ἡ** ἐν δόξῃ ἀνάληψις τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ ἡ ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς καθέδρα εἶναι τὸ τελευταῖο γεγονός στὴν ἐπὶ γῆς ζωὴ καὶ δράση Του, εἶναι τὸ τέρας τῆς συγκαταβάσεώς Του καὶ τῆς ἐνσάρκου Του θείας οἰκονομίας. Ἀποτελεῖ ὁμως ταυτόχρονα καὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴ τῆς ἀνυψώσεώς Του, τῆς ἀνυψώσεως τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεώς Του σὲ Θεία ἐξουσία καὶ δόξα καὶ βασιλεία.

Ἐὰν ἡ ἐξ' οὐρανοῦ κατάβασίς Του ἦταν κένωσις καὶ πτώχευσις καὶ ἄκρα ταπεινώσις, ἡ ἀνάληψις Του στοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἐσήμανε τὴν ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς καθέδρα καὶ σ' αὐτὴν βρίσκουν τὴν πλήρη πραγματοποίησή τους οἱ λόγοι τοῦ Κυρίου, τοὺς ὁποίους εἶπε κατὰ τὴν ἀρχιερατικὴ Του προσευχὴ ὀλίγον πρὸ τοῦ πάθους: «Καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ πάτερ παρὰ σεαυτῶ τῇ δόξῃ ἣ εἶχον πρὸ τοῦ τὸν κόσμον εἶναι παρὰ σοί.» (Ἰω. 17:5).

Τὴν ἐνδοξὴ αὐτὴ ἀνοδο τοῦ Κυρίου προφητικῶς προανήγγειλε ὁ προφήτης Δαυὶδ στοὺς ψαλμοὺς του: «Ἀνέβη ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἀλαλαγῶ, Κύριος ἐν φωνῇ σάλπιγγος». (Ψαλμ. 46:6). Ὁ Κύριος, μετὰ τὴν ἐνδοξὴ νίκη Του κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ διαβόλου ἀνέβη στοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἐν μέσῳ ἀλαλαγῶν χαρᾶς καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσεως ἐκ μέρους τῶν ἀγγελικῶν δυνάμεων, ὑμνούμενος καὶ δοξαζόμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν. Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος σχολιάζοντας τὸν παρὰ πάνω στίχο, παρατηρεῖ, ὅτι «οὐκ εἶπεν ἀνεβιβάσθη, ἀλλ' ἀνέβη, δεικνύς, ὅτι οὐχ ἑτέρου τινὸς χειραγωγούμενος ἀνέβη, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ταύτην ὁδεύων τὴν ὁδόν». Ὁ Ἰησοῦς δὲν ἀνέβη στοὺς οὐρανοὺς χειραγωγούμενος ἀπὸ κάποιον ἄλλον, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὴν ἰδική Του Θεϊκὴ δύναμη καὶ ἐξουσία, ἀποδεικνύοντας ἔτσι, ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ ἴδιος ὑπῆρξε ὁ αὐτουργὸς τῆς ἀναβάσεως.

Τὴν χαρὰ καὶ ἀγαλλίαση τῶν ἀγγελικῶν δυνάμεων ἐπὶ τῇ ἐνδόξῳ ἀναλήψει τοῦ Κυρίου ἐκφράζει ὁ Δαυὶδ σὲ ἄλλο ψαλμὸ σαφέστερα: «Ἄρατε πύλας οἱ ἄρχοντες ὑμῶν καὶ ἐπάρθητε πύλαι αἰώνιοι καὶ εἰσελεύσεται ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης. Τίς ἐστὶν οὗτος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης; Κύριος κραταῖος καὶ δυνατὸς Κύριος δυνατὸς

ἐν πολέμῳ.» (Ψαλμ. 23:7-8). Ὅπως ἐρμηνεύει ὁ ἅγιος Ἀθανάσιος, οἱ ἐπὶ γῆς ἄγγελοι, διακονοῦντες τὸν Κύριον, προτρέπουν τὶς ἀνώτερες ἀγγελικὲς δυνάμεις, ποὺ βρίσκονται στοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καθὼς Αὐτὸς ἀναλαμβάνεται, νὰ ἀνοίξουν τὶς ἐπουράνιες πύλας γιὰ νὰ εἰσέλθῃ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης. Στὴ συνέχεια ἐρωτοῦν αἱ ἄνω δυνάμεις, «τὸ παράδοξόν τῆς οἰκονομίας ἐκπληττόμεναι», ποῖος εἶναι αὐτὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης; Καὶ ἀπαντοῦν οἱ ἐπὶ γῆς ἄγγελοι: Δὲν εἶναι κάποιος συνηθισμένος ἄρχων, ἀλλὰ ὁ παντοδύναμος καὶ πανίσχυρος Θεός, ὁποῖος ἐπέτυχε ἐνδοξὴ νίκη στὸν πόλεμόν του πρὸς τοὺς ἐχθροὺς του, δηλαδὴ πρὸς τὸν διάβολο καὶ τὸν θάνατο.

Περὶ αὐτῆς τῆς ἀνόδου ὁμιλῶν καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος, καθὼς ἐρμηνεύει τὸν ψαλμικὸ στίχο «ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν» (Ψαλμ. 67:19), στὴν πρὸς Ἐφεσίους ἐπιστολὴν του, λέγει: «ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν καὶ ἔδωκε δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.» (Ἐφ. 4:8). Ὅταν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέβη μὲ τὴν ἀνάληψίν του στοὺς οὐρανοὺς, ἔδωσε αἰχμαλώτους τοὺς ἐχθροὺς του, δηλαδὴ τὸν σατανᾶ καὶ τὸν θάνατο καὶ ἔδωσε χαρίσματα στοὺς ἀνθρώπους, δηλαδὴ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὴν ἡμέρα τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς.

Ὡς Θεὸς ὁ Κύριός μας, ὡς ἄναρχος Λόγος καὶ Υἱὸς Μονογενῆς καὶ Ὁμοούσιος πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα, ἦταν πάντοτε συνθρόνος καὶ ὁμότιμος πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ προτοῦ νὰ σαρκωθῆ. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν ἐσαρκώθη καὶ ἐγίνε ἀνθρωπος, οὐδέποτε ἐχωρίσθη ἀπὸ τὸν Πατέρα. Ὅπως λέγει ὁ ὑμνογράφος, «Ὁλος ἦν ἐν τοῖς κάτω, καὶ τῶν ἄνω οὐδόλως ἀπὴν ὁ ἀπερίγραπτος Λόγος». Καὶ τοῦτο διότι «συγκατάβασις γὰρ Θεϊκὴ, οὐ μετάβασις τοπικὴ γέγονε». Ἀνελήφθη καὶ ἐκάθισε στὰ δεξιὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς ὡς αἰώνιος ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ μεσίτης πάντων ἡμῶν, σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν λόγον τοῦ Παύλου στὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐπιστολὴ του: «Τοιοῦτον ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα, ὃς ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. (Ἑβρ. 8:1). Καὶ ὅπως οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης εἰσήρχοντο στὰ ἅγια τῶν ἀγίων τοῦ ναοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέρα τοῦ ἐξίλασμοῦ μὲ αἷμα τράγων καὶ μόσχων, ἔτσι καὶ ὁ ἀληθινὸς καὶ μέγας ἀρχιερεὺς μας ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, «ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν», ὅπως τὸν ὀνομάζει ὁ Παῦλος,





είσηλθε στα ἀληθινὰ ἅγια των ἁγίων, δηλαδή στὸν οὐρανό, μιὰ φορὰ γιὰ πάντα, ὄχι πλέον μὲ αἷμα τράγων καὶ μόσχων, ποὺ δὲν μποροῦν νὰ ἐξαλείψουν ἁμαρτίες, ἀλλὰ μὲ τὸ ἰδικὸ Του πολῦτιμο καὶ πανάγιο αἷμα, τὸ ὁποῖον ἔχυσε πάνω στὸ σταυρό. Διότι ὅπως λέγει ὁ Παῦλος στὴν ἴδια ἐπιστολὴ του «οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα ἅγια εἰσηλθεν ὁ Χριστὸς ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν, ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανὸν νῦν ἐφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν» (Ἐβρ. 9:24). Ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν εἰσηλθε σὲ χειροποίητα ἅγια ἁγίων, ποὺ εἶναι ἀπομίμηση καὶ εἰκόνα τῶν ἀληθινῶν ἁγίων, ἀλλὰ σ' αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν, γιὰ νὰ παρουσιασθῆ τώρα εἰς τὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ νὰ πρεσβεύει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.

Ἡ εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ὁμῶς ἄνοδος τοῦ Κυρίου δὲν ἦταν μόνον δόξα τῆς ἰδικῆς Του ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἰδικῆς μας. Διότι ὅπως λέγει ὁ ἀπόστολος στὴν πρὸς Ἐφεσίους ἐπιστολὴν του, «συνήγειρε καὶ συνεκάθισε ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ» (Ἐφ. 2:6), δηλαδή ὅλους ἐμᾶς, ποὺ πιστεύομε σ' αὐτὸν καὶ διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου βαπτίσματος γίναμε μέλη τοῦ σώματός Του, συνανέστησε ἀπὸ τὰ μνήματα τῆς ἁμαρτίας μὲ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του καὶ μᾶς ἔβαλε, νὰ καθίσουμε μαζί του στὰ ἐπουράνια μὲ τὴν ἀνάληψή Του. Καὶ τοῦτο εἶναι πολὺ φυσικό, διότι ἐφ' ὅσον ἀνυψώθη αὐτός, ποὺ εἶναι ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῦ σώματος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἐπόμενο εἶναι, νὰ ἀνυψωθῆ καὶ τὸ σῶμα. Ἐφ' ὅσον ἐδοξάσθη ἡ κεφαλὴ, θὰ δοξασθῆ καὶ τὸ σῶμα. Τοῦτο δὲ θὰ πραγματοποιηθῆ κατὰ τὴν Δευτέρα Παρουσία Του, ὁπότε σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν λόγο τοῦ Παύλου, ὅλοι ἐμεῖς «ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ Κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα καὶ οὕτω πάντοτε σὺν Κυρίῳ ἐσόμεθα» (Α' Θεσ. 4:17). Τὴν ἀλήθεια αὐτὴ ἐπισημαίνει καὶ ὁ ἱερὸς ὑμνογράφος σ' ἓνα τροπάριο: «Ἀνέβη ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἀλαλαγμῷ, Κύριος ἐν φωνῇ σάλπιγγος, τοῦ ἀνυψῶσαι τὴν πεσοῦσαν εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἀδάμ». Ἄλλοι δὲ πάλιν λέγει, «κατελθὼν οὐρανόθεν εἰς τὰ ἐπίγεια καὶ τὴν κάτω κειμένην ἐν τῇ τοῦ ἄδου φρουρὰ συναναστήσας ὡς Θεὸς ἀδαμιαίαν μορφήν τῇ ἀναλήψει σου Χριστέ εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀναγαγὼν τῷ θρόνῳ τῷ πατρικῷ σου συγκάθεδρον ἀπειργάσω ὡς ἐλεήμων καὶ φιλόανθρωπος».

Ἡ ἀνάληψις τοῦ Κυρίου ἦταν καὶ μιὰ ἀναγκαιότητα. Ἦταν ἡ ἀναγκαία προϋπόθεσις, γιὰ νὰ ἔρθῃ ὁ Παράκλητος στὴν Ἐκκλησία. Τὸ ἐτόνισε ὁ Κύριος ὀλίγον πρὸ τοῦ Πάθους Του πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὲς του: «Συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω, ἐὰν γὰρ ἐγὼ μὴ ἀπέλθω ὁ Παράκλητος οὐκ ἐλεύσεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς. Ἐὰν δὲ πορευθῶ, πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.» (Ἰω. 16:7). Ἐπρεπε δηλαδή νὰ προηγηθῆ ἡ ἄνοδος Του πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα, προκειμένου νὰ μεσιτεύσῃ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ὥστε νὰ στείλῃ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα. Ἐπειδὴ δηλαδή οἱ μαθητὲς

ἐλυποῦντο, διότι θὰ ἔστεροῦντο τὸν ἀγαπημένο τους διδάσκαλο, μόλις ἔμαθαν, ὅτι θὰ ἀποχωρισθῆ ἀπὸ αὐτούς, ἔρχεται τώρα ὁ Κύριος, νὰ τοὺς παρηγορήσῃ μὲ τὴν ὑπόσχεση τῆς ἐλεύσεως τοῦ Παρακλήτου, στὴν παρουσία τοῦ ὁποίου θὰ αἰσθάνονται μέσα τους τὸν ἴδιο τὸν Χριστό.

Κατανοοῦντες λοιπὸν καὶ ἐμεῖς τὸ μέγεθος τῆς συγκαταβάσεως καὶ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς φιλανθρωπίας τοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν παθόντος καὶ ταφέντος καὶ ἀναστάντος καὶ εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀναληφθέντος Κυρίου μας, ἅς ἀνυψώσωμεν τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν καρδίαν μας πρὸς τὰ ἄνω, ἐκεῖ ὅπου τώρα βρίσκεται ὁ Χριστός, καθήμενος στὰ δεξιὰ του Πατρὸς. «Τὰ τῆς γῆς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καταλιπόντες, τὰ τῆς τέφρας τῷ χοί παραχωροῦντες δευτε ἀνανήψομεν καὶ εἰς ὕψος ἐπάρομεν ὄμματα καὶ νοήματα», ἔτσι ὥστε ἡ ἔορτὴ αὐτὴ νὰ γίνῃ ἀφορμὴ πνευματικῆς ἀνανεώσεως καὶ ἀνανήψεως, ἀφορμὴ ἀπαγγιστρώσεώς μας ἀπὸ τὴν ἐμπαθῆ προσκόλλησι στὰ μάταια καὶ πρόσκαιρα καὶ φθαρτὰ πράγματα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου καὶ ἀδιάληπτης εὐχαριστίας καὶ δοξολογίας πρὸς τὸν Κύριον. Ἀμήν.



Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι σωτήρας, ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι ὁδοστρωτήρας. Δὲν ἰσοπεδώνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, δὲν ἰσοπεδώνει τὴν ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ἡ ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, εἶναι δῶρο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀλλὰ αὐτὴ ἡ ἐλευθερία εἶναι καὶ πτῆση πρὸς τὰ πάνω καὶ πτώση πρὸς τὰ κάτω.

Γι' ἄλλους ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι ἡ μεγάλη ἀγάπη, γι' ἄλλους εἶναι τὸ μῖσος. Ἄλλοι τὸν προσκυνᾶνε κι ἄλλοι τὸν βρίζουν. Κι ὁ Ἰούδας ἄκουσε τὸν ἴδιο λόγο ποὺ ἄκουσε κι ὁ Ἀπόστολος Πέτρος. Ἐκεῖνος ὁμῶς κρεμάστηκε καὶ χάθηκε. Ἐνῶ ὁ Πέτρος ἔκλαψε γιὰ τὴν πτώση του κι ἔγινε ὁ κορυφαῖος Ἀπόστολος.

Γιὰ τοὺς πιστοὺς ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι διάλογος. Γιὰ τοὺς ἀπίστους εἶναι ἀντίλογος. Γιὰ τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ὁ Λόγος εἶναι ὁμολογία καὶ ἀπολογία. Γιὰ τοὺς ἀπίστους ὁμῶς ὁ Λόγος εἶναι ἀντιλογία. Ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπευθύνεται καὶ στὶς μέρες μας. Εἶναι ὁ Λόγος τῆς ἀλήθειας, εἶναι ὁ Λόγος ὁ αἰώνιος, ὁ Λόγος ὁ ἀλάθητος.

Ἀλλά, ... δὲν συμφέρει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὁ Χριστός. Χριστὸς σημαίνει ἀγάπη, σημαίνει ἀγκάλιασμα, κοινωνία, ἐντιμότητα, καθαρότητα. Κι ὅλα αὐτὰ δὲν συμφέρουν αὐτοὺς ποὺ θέλουν μιὰ διεφθαρμένη κοινωνία.

**Ἀρχιμ. Δανιὴλ Ἀεράκης**  
**Ἱερός Ναὸς Εὐαγγελίστριας, Πειραιᾶς**



## THE POWER OF THE CROSS THE DEMONIC HOSTS TREMBLE WHEN THEY SEE THE CROSS...

By St. John Maximovitch.

In the prophet Ezekiel (9:6) 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 so, even then was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise, the power of the Cross was indicated by many other events in the Old Testament. Moses, 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 (Exodus, Chapters 14, 17).

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." (Genesis, Ch. 48).

By the Cross, the Son of God having become man, accomplished our salvation. *He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.* (Phil 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Saviour 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 so as to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the Cross, Christ opened the doors of Paradise which had 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, and it itself was then 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, for by the Cross the kingdom of hell was destroyed. 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 they appeared to Saint 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; it disappeared and 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 separate examples of the manifestation of the power of the Cross in various incidents. Invisibly and unceasingly there gushes from it the Divine grace that 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, not 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 reign and will reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness (Saint John Chrysostom, *Commentary on 2 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 from eternal perdition all who conquered temptations by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed their 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.* (Monday Matins). Amen.

## A TRUE PRIEST OF GOD: ELDER EPIPHANIOS (+1989)

Source: "Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit: The Lives and Counsels of Contemporary Elders of Greece," by H. Middleton, Protection Veil Press (2003), pp.63-71.

On December 27, 1930, in the small town of Vournazion in the southwestern Peloponnese, the blessed Elder Epiphanius (Theodoropoulos) was born into the world. His pious parents John and Georgia gave the name Eteoklis to this their first of six children. Despite all the attention he received as the first-born child, Eteoklis spurned worldly attention from an early age. He focused his attention on Christ, following the pious example of his mother and particularly of his aunt. (His aunt, Alexandra, had an especially important influence on his life, a fact that Fr. Epiphanius referred to many times. In addition to playing an important role in his early education and upbringing, she also helped him during his years as an *archimandrite* (in Athens).

As a child of two he would tell people of his desire to become a priest, and donning a sheet, would play priest. From the tender age of five he attended all the services of the local church, fasting and preparing for Holy Communion in the same way as the Church prescribes for adults. One Sunday, in fact, concerned for the boy's health (he was particularly thin at the time), his aunt tried to get him to drink a glass of milk before leaving for the liturgy. The boy was visibly upset and responded, "Shall we go to church with a full stomach? How will we pray? How will we take *antidoron*?" Are we going just to listen to the service?"

Eteoklis would arrive early for church, often before the priest. Early one Sunday morning, the village priest went to prepare things for the liturgy. On arriving at the church, he could just make out a pair of eyes looking at him in the darkness from the doorway of the church. Afraid that the person might be dangerous, he went to Eteoklis' house to see if he had left for church yet. On hearing the story his aunt Alexandra laughed, "Ah! My dear father, what are you afraid of?! It's Eteoklis waiting for you with lit charcoal for the censer."

One evening, on learning that his aunts would be going to an early morning liturgy in one of the many chapels that dot the countryside, Eteoklis begged them to take him with them. Despite their assurances that they would wake him, the young Eteoklis sensed that they would not follow through on their word, as they had done in the past. In his zeal for the Church's services, he decided to hide his aunts' shoes so that they would be forced to wake him, and take him with them!

When he was old enough, Eteoklis was sent to the school in the nearest large town, Kalamata. He was a good student and enjoyed his studies, except for mathematics. His remark to his aunt is characteristic: "What do I need math for? Am I

going to become a merchant? I'm going to become a priest!" From early on in his academic career he distinguished himself by his love for study and his fine character. Both his fellow students as well as his teachers recognized this, and he was thus sought after to serve in various positions of authority and responsibility.

Eteoklis did not spend his time and energies in many of the normal pursuits of young people, but rather in reading Holy Scripture as well as the works of the Fathers. He began his theological training on his own while he was in junior high school and thus developed his belief, oft-repeated, that it is not the university that creates the scholar, but rather one's commitment to a "study-chair," that is to say, his personal study. In addition to his academic studies, Eteoklis did not neglect his spiritual development and thus spent a great deal of time not only in the Church's services, but also visiting what he called the "aristocracy" of Orthodoxy, the monasteries. In particular he would often visit the Voulcanou Monastery, located near Kalamata.

In 1949 Eteoklis moved to Athens, having successfully completed his studies in Kalamata. He enrolled at the Theological School of the University of Athens, but, having a great appetite for knowledge, he didn't limit himself to the study of theology. Following the example of the Cappadocian Fathers and other great Fathers of the Church, Eteoklis threw himself into the study of Greek and foreign authors, philosophers, poets, historians, scholars, and apologists from ancient times to the present. In addition to his personal study, he would also attend lectures at the Schools of Law, Philosophy and Medicine, among others, so as to broaden his knowledge. Many of his professors, recognizing his intellectual gifts, encouraged him to continue his studies abroad so as to return and follow the path of university teaching. Eteoklis refused however, unwilling to sacrifice the grandeur of the priesthood for the lower path of scholarship. Instead of going abroad for graduate studies, he preferred to specialize in the "science" of the spiritual life at the "university" of the monastery. He believed that it is necessary for each candidate to the priesthood (and especially celibate priests) to spend time in monasteries so as to better prepare spiritually for pastoral service. During his years in Athens, Eteoklis frequently visited the Monastery of Longovarda on the island of Paros. The abbot of the monastery there, the blessed Elder Philotheos (Zervakos), was his spiritual father until his repose in 1980.

In the sphere of academics Eteoklis' greatest love was the study of Holy Scripture. He would study the whole of the Old and New Testament from the ancient text, three times each year. He referred to Scripture frequently, using it as his main source in speaking and writing. When asked what he would have studied had theological studies not been an option, he replied, medicine or law: medicine, as it is the most philanthropic science, and law, as the lawyer has the possibility

of greatly affecting society by championing the cause of the good and by protecting the innocent.

In November 1956, Eteoklis' childhood dream was realized when he was ordained to the diaconate by Metropolitan Ierotheos of Aitolia and Akarnania, and was given the new name Epiphanius. That same year he also published his first book, *Holy Scripture and the Evil Spirits*. The years of his diaconate were spent mostly in Kalamata where he had the opportunity to continue his study of the Fathers as well as to spend time with important ecclesiastical personalities of his day.

Elder Epiphanius had patiently waited until after his twenty-fifth birthday to be ordained to the diaconate, so as to remain faithful to the precision of the Church's canons regarding the age at which men may be ordained deacon. Though he never disregarded the need and use of Economy as regards the canons, and made use of it in his pastoral service, when it came to himself, he was very strict and insisted on keeping them precisely. He was accused, at various times, of having a pharisaical attachment to the holy canons. His answer, however, was that many people in the Church today, by seeking ways to reject them, are in fact rejecting gifts which the Holy Spirit has given the Church. His insistence on the keeping of the canons was inspired by his reverence and obedience toward the Holy Spirit Who inspired them and the Holy Fathers who wrote them.

In 1961 Elder Epiphanius was ordained to the priesthood by Metropolitan Ambrose of Eleftheroupolis. The Elder followed the example of the Apostle Paul in serving the Church without pay or benefits. In order to survive, he worked as an editor of the publications of the *Asir* publishing house. One of his spiritual children once suggested that he get on the Church's payroll, not to earn money, but to ensure insurance and pension. He refused, insisting that God, as a good and faithful "Employer" does not leave His "employees" without pay.

Elder Epiphanius' desire was to serve the Church in a quiet and invisible way. He was granted his wish with a position as priest of the little chapel of the Three Great Hierarchs, in downtown Athens. It was here that he zealously served the suffering people of God as confessor. Despite the strictness of his approach to spiritual counsel, crowds of people from all walks of life flocked to him for guidance and spiritual comfort. Although he suffered along with those who came to him, at the same time his work brought him the greatest peace.

In addition to his work as priest and confessor, he also served the Church through the twenty-two books and many articles he authored. His opinion was sought after by bishops, priests, monks and laymen, to help them answer many of the complex theological and ethical problems of the contemporary world. Because of the great respect the faithful had for him, he was asked many times to become bishop, an honor that he refused.

Although Elder Epiphanius lived most of his life in the heart of Athens, he managed to keep a strict rule of prayer. First

thing in the morning, having said morning prayers, he would read the service of Matins along with the canons from the *Menaion* and from the *Paraklitiki*. When his morning rule of prayer had ended he would spend time in study or writing and then begin his pastoral work, receiving guests, or visiting people, according to the needs of the day. His work would barely stop for lunch, during which he would meet with people or speak with them on the telephone. At about five o'clock in the afternoon he would begin the evening services with Vespers followed by a Supplicatory Canon. He would then leave for the chapel of the Three Great Hierarchs, where he would receive people for confession, after which he would visit the sick and suffering in the hospitals. On his return home there would usually be people waiting for him or telephone calls to receive. He would have a late dinner, read Small Compline and the *Akathist* to the Mother of God, and then attempt to sleep, as he suffered from insomnia.

The Elder's insomnia eventually grew so bad that he prayed for divine assistance. During one such sleepless night, he picked up the New Testament and looked for some understanding of his struggle. His eyes immediately fell upon St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, verse 12:7, "*there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*" Elder Epiphanius was grateful for God's answer to his prayer, that at least he knew his suffering was allowed by God. On two other occasions, having reached the limits of his strength, he asked God for His assistance and, opening the New Testament, immediately received the same response. Not so bold as to ask the same thing a fourth time, he simply suffered on.

In 1976, at the urging and with the help of his spiritual children, Elder Epiphanius founded the *Holy Hesychasterion* of the *Kecharitomeni* ("Most Graceful") Mother of God in Trizina, in the Peloponnese, a few hours from Athens. His hope of providing a place of monastic struggle for those of his spiritual sons who sought the monastic life was thus realized. He continued his service in the world as well, however, dividing his time between Athens and his monastery.

Not long after the foundation of the monastery, the Elder's health began to deteriorate. His demanding regime had taken its toll, and in December 1982 he was operated on in Athens. He had been suffering from stomach ailments and was diagnosed with *gastrorrhagia* (severe stomach ulcers), which in his case had the danger of developing into cancer. The operation was very taxing on him and the surgeon ended up removing three-quarters of his stomach. The Elder's health continued to plague him and eventually left him in such a state that he was completely confined to his bed, unable to sit up. Having arranged for his funeral and burial he prepared himself spiritually for his repose. At four o'clock on November 10, 1989, at the age of 58, he gave his soul into the hands of God.



## THE VISION OF ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT

Translated by priestmonk Orestes, Christ the Saviour Orthodox Seminary.



The Holy and Righteous John of Kronstadt recalled this vision which he had in January of 1901:

After evening prayers I laid down to rest a little in my dimly lit cell since I was fatigued. Hanging before the icon of the Mother of God was my lit *lampada*. Not more than a half-hour had passed when I heard a soft rustle. Someone touched my left shoulder, and in a tender voice said to me, “Arise servant of God John, and follow the will of God!”

I arose and saw near the window a glorious *Staretz* (elder) with frosty gray hair, wearing a black *mantia*, and holding a staff in his hand. He looked at me tenderly, and I could scarcely keep from falling because of my great fear. My hands and feet trembled, and I wanted to speak, but my tongue would not obey me. The *Staretz* made the sign of the cross over me, and calm and joy soon came over me. Then I made the sign of the cross myself. He then pointed to the western wall of my cell with his staff in order that I should notice a certain spot. The *Staretz* had inscribed on the wall the following numbers: 1913, 1914, 1917, 1922, 1924, and 1934. Suddenly the wall vanished, and I walked with the *Staretz* toward a green field and saw a mass of crosses—thousands of them—standing as gravemarkers. They were wooden, clay, or gold. I asked the *Staretz*, “What are these crosses for?” He softly answered, “They are for those who suffered and were murdered for their faith in Christ and for the Word of God and have become martyrs!” And so we continued to walk.

Suddenly I saw an entire river of blood and asked the *Staretz*, “What is the meaning of this blood? How much has been spilled?” The *Staretz* looked around and replied, “This is the blood of true Christians!” The *Staretz* then pointed to some clouds, and I saw a mass of burning white lamps. They began to fall to the ground one after another by the tens and by the hundreds. During their descent they grew dim and turned to ashes. The *Staretz* then said to me, “Look!” I saw on a cloud seven burning lamps. I asked, “What is the meaning of the burning lamps which fell to the ground?” He said, “Those are the churches of God which have fallen into heresy, but these seven lamps on the clouds are the seven Catholic and Apostolic Churches which will remain until the end of the world!”

The *Staretz* then pointed high into the air and I saw and heard angels singing, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth!* Then a large crowd of people with candles in their hands rushed by with joy on their shining faces. They were archbishops, monks, nuns, groups of laymen, young adults, and even children and babies. I asked the wonderworking *Staretz*, “What is the meaning of these people?” He responded, “These are all the people who suffered for the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church, for the holy icons at the hands of the wicked destroyers.” I then asked the great *Staretz* if I could sit down next to them. The *Staretz* said, “It is too early for you to suffer, so joining them would not be blessed by God!” Again I saw a large group of infants who had suffered for Christ under Herod and had received crowns from the Heavenly King.

We walked further and went into a large church. I wanted to make the sign of the cross, but the *Staretz* said, “It is not necessary to cross yourself because this is a place of abomination and desolation!” The church was very gloomy. On the altar was a star and a Gospel book with stars. Candles made of tar were burning and crackling like firewood. The chalice was standing there covered by a strong stench. There was *prospophora* with stars. A priest stood before the altar with a face like pitch and a woman was under the altar covered in red with a star on her lips and she screamed and laughed throughout the church saying, “I am free!” I thought “Oh, Lord, how awful!” The people, like madmen, began to run around the altar, scream, whistle, and clap their hands. Then they began to sing lecherous songs. Suddenly, lightning flashed, a frightening thunderbolt resounded, the earth trembled, and the church collapsed, sending the woman, the people, the priest, and the rest into the abyss. I thought “Oh Lord, how awful, save us!”

The *Staretz* saw what had happened as did I. I asked, “Father, tell me, what is the meaning of this frightening church?” He responded, “These are the earthly people, heretics who have abandoned the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church and recognized the newly innovated church which God has not blessed. In this church they do not fast, do not attend services, and do not receive Holy Communion!” I was frightened and said, “The Lord has pity on us, but curses those with death!” The *Staretz* interrupted me and said, “Do not mourn, but just pray!” Then I saw a throng of people, each of whom had a star on the lips and was terribly exhausted from thirst, walking here and there. They saw us and yelled loudly, “Holy Fathers, pray for us. It is very hard for us because we ourselves cannot. Our fathers and mothers did not teach us the Law of God. We do not even have the name of Christ, and we have received no peace. We rejected the Holy Spirit and the sign of the cross!” They began to cry.

I followed after the *Staretz*. “Look!” he said, pointing with his hand. I saw a mountain of human corpses stained in

blood. I was very frightened, and I asked the *Staretz*, “What is the meaning of these dead bodies?” He replied, “These are people who lived the monastic life, were rejected by the Antichrist, and did not receive his seal. They suffered for their faith in Christ and the Apostolic Church and received martyrs crowns dying for Christ. Pray for these servants of God!”

Without warning, the *Staretz* turned to the north and pointed with his hand. I saw an imperial palace, around which dogs were running. Wild beasts and scorpions were roaring and charging and baring their teeth. And I saw the Tsar sitting on a throne. His face was pale and masculine. He was reciting the Jesus Prayer. Suddenly he fell like a dead man. His crown fell. The wild beasts, dogs, and scorpions trampled on the anointed Sovereign. I was frightened and cried bitterly. The *Staretz* took me by my right shoulder. I saw a figure shrouded in white—it was Nicholas II. On his head was a wreath of green leaves, and his face was white and somewhat bloodied. He wore a gold cross around his neck and was quietly whispering a prayer. And then he said to me with tears, “Pray for me, Fr. John. Tell all Orthodox Christians that I, the Tsar-martyr, died manfully for my faith in Christ and the Orthodox Church. Tell the Holy Fathers that they should serve a *Panahida* for me, a sinner, but there will be no grave for me!”

Soon everything became hidden in the fog. I cried bitterly praying for the Tsar-martyr. My hands and feet trembled from fear. The *Staretz* said, “Look!” Then I saw a throng of people scattered about the land who had died from starvation while others were eating grass and vegetation. Dogs were devouring the bodies of the dead, and the stench was terrible. I thought, “Oh Lord, these people had no faith. From their lips they expelled blasphemy, and for this they received God’s anger.”

I also saw an entire mountain of books and among the books worms were crawling, emitting a terrible stench. I asked the *Staretz*, “What is the meaning of these books?” He said, “These books are the Godlessness and blasphemy which will infect all Christians with heretical teachings!” Then the *Staretz* touched his staff to some of the books, and they ignited into flames. The wind scattered the ashes.

Further on, I saw a church around which was a large pile of prayer intentions for the departed. I bent over and wanted

to read them, but the *Staretz* said, “These prayer requests for the dead have been lying here for many years, and the priests have forgotten about them. They are never going to read them, but the dead will ask someone to pray for them!” I asked, “Who will they get to pray for them?” The *Staretz* answered: “The angels will pray for them!”

We proceeded further, and the *Staretz* quickened the pace so that I could hardly keep up with him. “Look!” he said. I saw a large crowd of people being persecuted by demons, who were beating them with stakes, pitchforks, and hooks. I asked the *Staretz*, “What is the meaning of these people?” He answered, “These are the ones who renounced their faith and left the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church and accepted the new innovative church. This group represents priests, monks, nuns, and laymen who renounced their vows or marriage, and engaged in drinking and all sorts of blasphemy and slander. All of these have terrible faces and a terrible stench comes from their mouths. The demons beat them, driving them into the terrible abyss, from where hellfire comes forth.” I was terribly frightened. I made the sign of the cross while praying, “Lord deliver us from such a fate!”

I then saw a group of people, both old and young, all of whom were terribly dressed, and who were raising a large, five pointed star. On each corner were twelve demons and in the middle was satan himself with terrifying horns and a straw head. He emitted a noxious foam onto the people while pronouncing these words, “Arise you accursed ones with the seal of ...” Suddenly many demons appeared with branding irons and on all the people they placed the seal on their lips, above the elbow and on their right hands. I asked the *Staretz*, “What is the meaning of this?” He responded, “This is the mark of the Antichrist!” I made the sign of the cross and followed after the *Staretz*.

He suddenly stopped and pointed to the east with his hand. I saw a large gathering of people with joyous faces carrying crosses and candles in their hands. In their midst stood a large altar as white as snow. On the altar was the cross and the Holy Gospel and over the altar was the aer with a golden imperial crown on which was written in golden letters, “For the short term.” Patriarchs, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, and laymen stood around the altar. They were all singing, *Glory to God in the highest and peace*





on earth. Out of great joy I made the sign of the cross and praised God.

Suddenly the *Staretz* waved his cross upwards three times, and I saw mountain of corpses covered in human blood and above them angels were flying. They were taking the souls of those murdered for the Word of God to heaven while they sang *Alleluia!*

I observed all this and cried loudly. The *Staretz* took me by the hand and forbade me to cry. "What is pleasing to God is that Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and shed His precious blood for us. Such ones will become martyrs who do not accept the seal of the Antichrist, and all who shed their blood will receive heavenly crowns." The *Staretz* then prayed for these servants of God and pointed to the east as the words of the Prophet Daniel came true, *Abomination of desolation*.

Finally, I saw the cupola of Jerusalem. Above it was a star. Within the church millions of people thronged and still many more were trying to enter. I wanted to make the sign of the cross, but the *Staretz* grabbed my hand and said, "Here is the abomination of desolation!" So we entered into the church, and it was full of people.

I saw an altar on which tallow candles were burning. On the altar was a king in red, blazing, porphyry. On his head was a golden crown with a star. I asked the *Staretz*, "Who is this?" He replied, "The Antichrist!" He was very tall with eyes like fire, black eyebrows, a wedge-shaped beard, a ferocious, cunning, evil, and terrible face. He alone was on the altar and he reached his hands out to the people. He had claws as those of a tiger for hands and he shouted, "I am King. I am God. I am the Leader. He who does not have my seal will be put to death."

All the people fell down and worshipped him, and he began to place his seal on their lips and on their hands in order that they should receive some bread and not die from hunger and thirst. Around the Antichrist his servants were leading several people whose hands were bound as they had not bowed down to worship him. They said, "We are Christians, and we all believe in our Lord Jesus Christ!" The Antichrist ripped off their heads in a flash and Christian blood began to flow. A child was then led to the altar of the Antichrist to worship him, but he boldly proclaimed, "I am a Christian and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, but you are a minister, a servant of satan!" "Death to him!" exclaimed the Antichrist. Others who accepted the seal of the Antichrist fell down and worshipped him.

Suddenly, a roar of thunder resounded and a thousand lightning flashes began to sparkle. Arrows began to strike the servants of the Antichrist. Then a large flaming arrow flashed by and hit the Antichrist himself on the head. As he waved his hand, his crown fell and was crushed into the ground. Then millions of birds flew in and perched

on the servants of the Antichrist. I felt the *Staretz* take me by the hand.

We walked further on, and I again saw much Christian blood. It was here that I remembered the words of Saint John the Theologian in the book of Revelation that blood would *be up to the horse's bridle*. I thought, "Oh my God, save us!" At that time I saw angels flying and singing, *Holy, Holy, Holy. Lord of Sabbaoth!* The *Staretz* looked back and went on to say, "Do not grieve, for soon, very soon, will come the end of the world! Pray to the Lord. God be merciful to His servants!"

Time was drawing near to a close. He pointed to the east, fell to his knees and began to pray so I prayed with him. Then the *Staretz* began to quickly depart from the earth to the heights of heaven. As he did so, I remembered that I did not know his name, so I cried out loudly, "Father, what is your name?" He tenderly replied, "Seraphim of Sarov!"

That is what I saw, and this is what I have recorded for Orthodox Christians.

A large bell rang above my head, and I heard the sound and arose from bed. "Lord, bless and help me through the prayers of the great *Staretz!* You have enlightened me, the sinful servant, the priest John of Kronstadt."



There is a huge difference between Buddhist and Orthodox asceticism. In Buddhism they try to make a disclaimer and they reach *nirvana*. They confuse a reflection with mystical vision. They see created light with their mind. This was best done with Plotinus, in Neo-Platonism. The Fathers know this, and we can call it the "cloud of unknowing," but they went beyond this and reached the **vision of the uncreated Light**. Then they experience that the Light comes from a Person and not from an idea, and they feel a personal relationship with God and, at the same time, there develops a great love for God and the whole world until martyrdom and "self-hatred."

Some say that meditation brings them a certain peace. Externally this appears good, but these people are possessed by conceit and this results in carnal warfare. Even if they leave Buddhism, they again have carnal warfare. This shows the satanism of this method.

Others say that Buddhism has nothing to do with demonism. However, those who speak thus know Buddhism only from books and speak theoretically. Action is different.

**Elder Sophrony of Essex (+1993)**



## THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTED STATE:

Source: "Marriage and Virginitly according to St. John Chrysostom," by Archpriest Josiah B. Trenham, *St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood* (2013), pp. 233-242. NOTE: Footnote text and references hesitantly omitted to reduce the article's length, albeit they significantly add to the quality of the message; readers are encouraged to acquire the original book for a study of the subject in detail—it is a must for every Orthodox family's library.

### The Continuity of the Resurrected State

If the Resurrection of Christ Himself is the main clue to discerning the nature of glorified humanity, what conclusion about that future state can we draw from Christ's Resurrection? Much of St. John's teaching on the future resurrected body occurs in his commentary on chapter 15 of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. St. John devoted five extended homilies to expounding the Holy Apostle's teaching in this chapter. In these homilies St. John labored to emphasize the reality that the resurrected body maintains *both* a continuity with our present fallen bodies and a discontinuity. The Resurrection is a transfiguration of our earthly and mortal bodies, not an eradication thereof nor an entirely new creation.

St. John's whole approach to explaining the nature of the resurrected body is a careful theological exposition designed to avoid two heretical poles that plagued the early Christian communities. On the one hand, Chrysostom sought to distance himself from a *Gnostic* conception of the resurrected state. It was widely believed that the influential Origen had taught that the *spiritual body* vouchsafed to mankind in the coming Kingdom was entirely immaterial and was *not* the continuation of the earthly body in a transfigured state. Origen taught that *the original embodiment* of man took place as a result of the fall of pure souls. The body is thus thought to be given for the perfection of the soul. Once the body has accomplished its purpose and the soul is perfected, there no longer remains a need for this material body at all. What Origen actually taught concerning this matter is not at all clear.

This theology of Origen is expressed in his interpretation of the "garments of skin" given to Adam and Eve as *bodies themselves*. This interpretation was not accepted by the Fathers of the Church and Origen found a vigorous opponent and instrument of censure in St. Methodius of Olympus. In his *On the Resurrection*, St. Methodius attacked many aspects of the original *Origenism*. The hierarch of Olympus opens his discourse on the Resurrection by stating: "Now the question has already been raised, and answered that the 'garments of skin' are not bodies. Nevertheless, let us speak of it again, for it is not enough to have mentioned it once." Chrysostom demonstrates in his homilies his profound awareness of the diverse heretical teachings surrounding notions of the

resurrected body. Commenting on St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where is found the verse *For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan ... not for that we would be unclothed. but that we would lie clothed upon* (2 Cor 5:4), Chrysostom says: "Here again he has utterly and manifestly stopped the mouths of the heretics, showing that he is not speaking absolutely of a body differing in identity, but of corruption and incorruption."

In articulating an Orthodox position on the subject, Chrysostom relied heavily upon St. Methodius of Olympus. In a number of homilies touching on the Resurrection, St. John frequently quotes *verbatim* or *near verbatim* from St. Methodius. The human *essence* remains the same in the Resurrection, but the attributes are changed. Human nature remains human nature in the Resurrection.

On the other hand, Chrysostom in his teaching on the future resurrected state labored against a *Jewish* conception, which conceived of a sensual heaven and Resurrection. For Chrysostom, the next life is not simply a continuation of this life without its unfortunate negatives such as sickness, pain, and sorrow. Instead, it will encompass another mode of life altogether: "In the kingdom there will be no more marriage, no more labor pains, or pleasure or intercourse, or plenty of money, or management of possessions, food or clothing, or agriculture and sailing, or arts and architecture, or cities or houses, but some other condition and way of life. All these things will pass away."

The continuity of the resurrected body with the earthly body is demonstrated in the Resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ. In these appearances Jesus clearly bears the nail prints from His Crucifixion. This reality served to prove that the resurrected body of Jesus was the very same body that was crucified.

Chrysostom notes that the heretical teaching of radical discontinuity between the resurrected body and the fallen earthly body is also untenable since St. Paul says we want not to *take off the body* but to put on the heavenly body and to have the mortal swallowed up by life (cf. 2 Cor 5:4). If God leaves the original body in the grave and creates another new body, then corruption is not swallowed up by life, but remains with the old body. In this case there would be no victory over death. And again, in another place (in his *Homilies on First Corinthians*, no. 39), St. John says: "The nature that was cast down must itself also gain the victory."

### The Discontinuity of the Resurrected State

While St. John labors the importance of the continuity of the resurrected body with our present fallen bodies, he does not fail to elucidate the great transformation that shall take place. Our future bodies are *the same* and *not the same* (καὶ γὰρ αὐτός ἐστι, καὶ οὐκ αὐτός). Commenting on 1 Cor 15:37-38 (...and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may

*chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body...*), Chrysostom teaches that the sameness is a sameness of essence, but that essence will be more glorious, beautiful, and improved. God would not destroy and raise our bodies if He did not intend to raise them better and more glorious. The future body possesses a great superiority over our present one. That body is as superior to this one as the heavenly is to the earthly, and as a permanent house is to a temporary tabernacle. The *habitation which is from heaven* (2 Cor. 5:2) is the incorruptible body. At the heart of this discontinuity and greater glory is the body's reception of imperishability and immortality.

In this glorified condition, resurrected man will throw off earthly gifts such as prophecy and tongues, gifts given by God for earthly effect, and the atmosphere of mankind in the next life will be one of intense love comparable to nothing on this earth. "For here, there are many things that weaken our love; wealth, business, passions of the body, disorders of the soul; but there, none of these." Again commenting on the next life, St. John states that grief, concern, desire, stumbling, anger, lust for possessions, poverty, wealth, and dishonor will not exist, but "everything will be joy, everything peace, everything love, everything happiness, everything that is true, unalloyed and stable."

When he speaks about man's knowledge, Chrysostom speaks of resurrected man in a manner reminiscent of Adam in the Garden. Commenting on the teaching of St. Paul that, *when that which is perfect is come... knowledge shall vanish away* (1 Cor 13:10, 8), St John explains: "What then? Are we to live in ignorance? Far from it. Nay, then especially it is probable that our knowledge is made intense. Wherefore also he said, *Then shall I know, even as I also am known* (1 Cor 13:12) ... It is not therefore knowledge that is done away with, but the circumstance that our knowledge is in part. For we shall know not only as much, but even a great deal more."

Contrary to the teaching of the *Anomoean* heretics, who filled Chrysostom's church when he began his public preaching as a priest, this passage does not teach that man can or will ever see and know God's *essence*. [The *Anomoeans* were a sect that upheld an extreme form of Arianism, that Jesus Christ was not of the same nature (*consubstantial*) as God the Father nor was of like nature (*homoiousian*), Ed.].

"Where are those who say they have attained and possess the fullness of knowledge? The fact is that they have really fallen into the deepest ignorance... I urge you, then, to flee from the madness of these men. They are obstinately striving to know what God is in His essence ... the prophets know neither His essence nor His wisdom, and His wisdom comes from His essence... Let us, therefore, listen to the angels so that you may know—and know abundantly—that

not even in heaven does any created power know God in His essence."

Glorified man will perceive God as do the angels, who have to cover their eyes and who behold not the essence of God itself but a fitting condescension (*συγκατάβασις*). When St. John the Theologian writes that *no one has ever seen God*, this means that no one has ever had or ever will have an exact grasp (*ἀκριβῆ κατάληψιν*) or perfect comprehension (*τετρανωμένην γνώσιν*) of God.

To illustrate the fundamental ontological distance between God and man, Chrysostom puts before his listeners the question: "For what distance do you suppose there is between God and man? As great as between men and worms? Or as great as between angels and worms? But when I have mentioned a distance even thus great, I have not at all expressed it."

To express the real distance between God and man is, in fact, impossible. Driving home his point, Chrysostom asks his hearers if they would be at all interested in having a great reputation among worms! If humans, who love glory in their pride, are not interested in the praise of worms, how much less is God, Who is far above the passion of pride, in need of or interested in any human praise. **Only in His great condescension toward man does God say that He desires man's praise, and this is solely to promote man's salvation.** This teaching on the *unknowability of God's essence* should not disturb any reasonable person, for it is clear that we humans do not even know *our own essences*, let alone God's!...

Though not seeing God's essence, resurrected man will perceive all things with greater clarity (*σαφέστερον*) and perspicuity (*τρανότερον*). So great will be the advancement and transformation of human perception that it can only be compared to the difference between a child and an adult, or between seeing darkly through a glass versus seeing face to face. To illustrate the nature of this immersing clarity, St. John uses the development of sacred rites in redemptive history. Examining the Holy Passover, Chrysostom shows that the Jews celebrated their rite "as in a mirror and darkly" (*ὡς ἐν ἑσόπτρῳ καὶ ἐν αἰνίγματι*). They could not see Christ clearly in the slaughtered lamb, in the Sprinkled blood, and in the door posts.

These Old Testament sacramental types became clear when the antitype appeared. The same will occur at the Resurrection. In this light the future state of man, as radical an alteration as it is, is nevertheless a *natural process* of increasing clarity. Not being capable of beholding the essence of God does not mean that glorified man will not see God. Glorified man will not only see God, but he will *gaze* intently upon Him and in perfect silence will *continually commune* (*διὰ παντὸς δὲ τῷ Θεῷ διαλεγομένην*) with Him. These realities, in fact, are what constitute the unspeakable pleasure of heaven.

## COME UNTO ME...

*By St. John of Kronstadt, from "My Life in Christ," extracts from the diary of the saint, translated by E. E. Goulaeff, Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY (1994), pp. 60-67.*

The greatest gift of God, which we mostly need and which we very often obtain from God, through our prayers, is peace or rest of heart. As the Lord Himself says: *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* (Mt 11:28). Therefore, having obtained this rest, rejoice, and consider yourself as rich and possessing all things.

Let everybody remember constantly that he is God's—soul and body—and that he depends on God for all his spiritual and bodily wants every moment of his life; and therefore let him turn to God every time that he feels a want of anything (either for the soul or for the body): when, for instance, he is oppressed in body or soul—that is, when he is stricken by sorrows (spiritual sickness) or by passions (bodily sickness); also when he is threatened by the inconstancy of the elements (of fire, water, air, storm); likewise when he is about to undertake anything. Let him then remember the Author of all things, Who created everything from nothing, and Who has bestowed various powers upon His creatures, so that they may accomplish many and various works.

Every good thought presupposes the existence within us of a good and higher origin, instructing our soul in holiness. This is evident, because it seems as if everything good were somehow hidden in us, and that we endeavor in vain to introduce into our heart that which was its former inheritance. How true are the words of the Apostle: *What hast thou that thou didst not receive [every good thought, all natural gifts]? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* (1 Cor 4:7).

We notice in ourselves the struggle between faith and unbelief, between the good power and the evil one; and in the world, between the spirit of the Church and the spirit of the world. There, through the spirit, you will distinguish two clearly antagonistic sides: the side of light and the side of darkness; of good and evil; the spirit of the Church and of religion, and the spirit of worldliness and unbelief. Do you know why it is so? It is owing to the struggle of two antagonistic forces: of the power of God and the power of the Devil. The Lord works in the sons who are obedient to Him, and the Devil in the sons of disobedience [*the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* (1 Eph 2:2)]. And I, too, often feel within me the struggle of the same two antagonistic forces. When I stand up to pray, the evil force sometimes painfully oppresses and weighs down my heart, so that it cannot raise itself to God.

The surer and stronger are the means that unite us to God (prayer and repentance), the more destructive are the actions brought to bear against them by God's opponent and ours, who makes use of every means to attain this end: our body, so inclined to laziness; the weakness of our soul, its attach-

ment to earthly goods and cares; doubt, so near to everyone; incredulity, unbelief; impure, evil, and blasphemous thoughts; the oppression of the heart, the darkening of the mind—all these are brought to bear against the inattentive, through the action of the enemy, in order to put a stumbling-block in the way of their prayer, on the ladder that leads us up to God. This is the reason why so few pray sincerely and heartily; this is the reason why Christians so very seldom prepare themselves for Holy Communion—so seldom confess and receive the Sacrament.

Our strength, our soul, is invisible; the strength of animals is also invisible; in plants also, their strength, their life, is invisible; the whole material world exists and is moved by an invisible power (by the laws of nature). In the higher regions there are the heavenly powers, pure and free from everything material. Everything heavenly and earthly, the highest and the lowest, lead up to a single Almighty Power, which has produced every power in heaven and on earth. Thus, let every power praise the Only One Power in Three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And let all earth-born creatures praise It, especially through the all-binding power of love, everywhere diffusing life and blessedness.

For a long time I did not clearly understand how necessary it is that our soul should be strengthened by the Holy Ghost. But now, the Most Gracious Lord has granted me to know how indispensable this is. Yes, it is necessary every moment of our life, just as breathing is; it is necessary during prayer and throughout the whole of our life. Unless He strengthens our soul, it is constantly inclined to every sin, and, therefore, to spiritual death; it becomes enfeebled, loses all power, through the evil that enters into the heart, and incapable of any good. Without the strengthening of the Holy Ghost, one feels how the heart is undermined by various evils, and is ready to sink every moment into their abyss.

It is then that our heart must stand firm as upon a rock. And this rock is the Holy Ghost. He strengthens our powers; and when a man prays, He strengthens his heart by faith and by the hope of receiving that which he prays for. He inflames the soul with love to God; He fills the soul with bright, good thoughts, strengthening the mind and heart. If the man has any work to accomplish, He strengthens his heart by the conviction of the importance and the necessity of his labor, and by an invincible patience which overcomes all difficulties. He inspires in man, in his intercourse with people of various positions and both sexes, a respect for the human person, who is made after God's image—whoever it may be—and is redeemed by the Blood of Christ the Lord; and makes him disregard the sometimes very unsightly outer appearance of another man's body and dress, as well as his roughness of speech and manners. It is the Holy Ghost who unites us all through love, as the children of the same Heavenly Father, and in Jesus Christ teaches us to pray: *Our Father which art in Heaven...*



Imagine that you see the inaccessible Light from which the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars proceeded; that you see the infinite Love which sent into the world its only-begotten Son to save the world from eternal torment; that you see the Primeval Beauty from which are derived all the variety and beauty existing in the world—the variety and beauty of plants, stones, shells, fishes, birds, beasts, and all human beauty! Imagine that you see the Creator of heaven and earth, loving, resplendent with the inaccessible light of His perfections. What will you then feel? And the Christian faith prepares us all for this vision. Observe the plants: in them are evident (1) the wonderful Wisdom, appearing in every part of the plant; (2) the Life-giving Power, strengthening and maintaining every part of the plant in its proper condition, and (3) the Omnipotence, by which the Eternal Wisdom changes the aspect of formless matter so easily, making it answer His everlasting intentions and purposes. “*But Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.* (Pss 92:8). *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.* (Pss 139:6).

In the same manner as objects situated at a great distance off on the earth, though they may be large, are quite invisible from afar if the sun is not reflected in them, whilst even small ones are visible a long way off if the sun is reflected in them, so it is also amongst men: those in whom the Eternal Sun of Righteousness, God, is not reflected in His perfections, are only noticeable when quite near by a very few; but if the Sun of Righteousness is reflected in them, then they are seen by all from a very great distance, they are glorified by all; they are people of all places and of all times (the saints); some of them shine like the sun, others like the moon, and others like the stars.

Gazing upon God’s creatures and seeing their infinite variety, I see myself exalted above all their multitudes by the likeness and image of God, by the understanding and by freedom, by the capability of being able to examine all of them by means of my intellect, and to wonder at the wisdom and graciousness of the Creator as manifested in them. O, how I ought to reverence my Creator! O, how I ought to honor the authors of my being—my father and my mother! They have given me existence for a time—for a time and for eternity; they have led me, in accordance with the will of God, Who created me in my mother’s womb, into the magnificent palace of the world, so that in due time the Creator may admit me into the palace of heaven.

The state or any society is a body. As in the body God has put all the members together, and each one separately in their proper places, so likewise is the social body. God has set each one in his proper place, the deeds of each one being the reason of his occupying this or that particular place.

Everyone sees that light is shed upon the earth from heaven, because the sun, the moon, and the stars light us from the heavenly circle. This shows that the uncreated wise Light, the Lord our God, dwells pre-eminently in the heavens; and from Him every light descends upon us, both material and spiritual—the

light of the intellect and of the heart. *That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* (Jn 1:9) *God is love.* (Jn 4:16). All thoughts, feelings, every disposition of the heart tending to destroy love and create enmity, proceed from the Devil. Let this be engraved in your heart, and hold fast in every way to love. *Follow after charity.* (1 Cor 14:1). Bear in mind: do that which is in opposition to the old carnal, sinful man; go all your life against the Devil’s will. This is the object of your life, and also your glory in Jesus Christ. *They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* (Gal 5:24). Establish in your heart the following truth: one thing alone is worthy of all our hatred, that is, sin or vice; and towards men, nourish exclusively love. The royal law is plain: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* (Mt 22:39).

When, during prayer, your heart is overwhelmed with despondency and melancholy, be sure that these proceed from the Devil endeavoring by every means to hinder you in your prayer. Be firm, take courage, and by the remembrance of God drive away the deadly feeling. Observe: if not in your thoughts, then in your heart, the enemy often endeavors to blaspheme the name of Almighty God. What constitutes blasphemy of the heart against God? Doubt, unbelief, despondency, impatience under God’s chastisements, murmuring, and all the passions. By unbelief in God’s truth and mercy, the enemy utters blasphemy against the truth, mercy, and omnipotence of God; by despondency, he blasphemes God’s goodness; in general, by the outburst of human passions, he blasphemes God’s all-merciful providence and truth.

Establish in your mind and heart this truth: that the invisible plays the first part in the whole world, in every being; and that when the invisible leaves a certain being, the latter loses life and is destroyed: so that the visible in beings, without the invisible, forms but a mass of earth. I and all men live through an invisible first cause—God.

Men are enveloped in the darkness of ignorance of God, of themselves, and of the enemies of their salvation, who can therefore easily rob the mental house of our soul—its mental wealth.

When it is said to the inner man: *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead* (Eph 5:14), the real sleep of the soul, very like the ordinary bodily sleep, is meant. Also, when it is said: *My heart, awake; why sleepest thou?* the real sleep of the heart is meant, and it is not said merely allegorically. When the body sleeps, it is weakened in every part and becomes insensible; so likewise the soul, sleeping the sleep of sin, becomes weakened in its powers, and insensible to everything that concerns faith, hope, and love. Tell it, for instance, that the Son of God came down upon earth for it and became man to save it from everlasting death; speak to it of His saving teaching, His miracles, His sufferings and death upon the Cross, His Resurrection, Ascension, and His second coming. The soul cannot understand or contain all this; it is unable to feel God’s benefits, but is asleep, perfectly asleep, to faith, hope, and love. It does not

fear the righteous Judge, future torments, the worm that never rests, the unquenchable fire. It sleeps—it neither hears, nor sees, nor feels. It is remarkable that bodily sleep begins with the heart; first of all the heart falls asleep, and afterwards the body. The sleeper's eyes are closed and do not see, neither do his ears hear; and it is the same with the soul that sleeps the sleep of sin. But the soul ought always to see through the eyes of the heart, even during sleep, as it is written: *I sleep, but my soul waketh.* (Songs 5:2).

You cannot have failed to notice that all our strength lies in the heart. When the heart is light, the whole man feels at ease and happy; whilst when the heart is heavy, he feels wretched. But this relief you can only find in faith, and therefore especially in the Church, as the place where faith predominates; here God touches your hearts through His cleansing grace, and gives you His easy yoke to bear. This is a great mystery, which is worth everyone's knowing. When the heart is light, the man is ready to run and leap. This is why David *danced when he played before the ark.* (1 Chr 13:8; 2 Sam 6:14).

When you are slandered, and therefore grow disturbed and sick at heart, it shows that pride is in you, and that it must be wounded and driven out by outward dishonor. Therefore do not be irritated by derision, and do not bear malice against those who hate you and slander you, but love them as your physicians, whom God has sent you to instruct you and to teach you humility, and pray to God for them.

*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you.* (Mt 5:44). Say to yourself, "It is not me that they slander, but my evil passions; not me that they strike, but that viper which nestles in my heart, and smarts when anybody speaks ill of it. I will comfort myself with the thought that, perhaps, these good people will drive it from my heart by their caustic words, and my heart will then cease to ache." Therefore, thank God for outward dishonor; those who endure dishonor here will not be subjected to it in the next world. *She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.* (Isa 40:2). Lord, Thou wilt ordain peace for us; for Thou also hast wrought all our works for us. (Isa 26:12).

When you pray that your sins may be forgiven, strengthen yourself always by faith, and trust in God's mercy, Who is ever ready to forgive our sins after sincere prayer, and fear lest despair should fall on your heart—that despair which declares itself by deep despondency and forced tears. What are your sins in comparison to God's mercy, whatever they be, if only you truly repent of them? But it often happens that when a man prays, he does not, in his heart, inwardly hope that his sins will be forgiven, counting them as though they were above God's mercy. Therefore, he certainly will not obtain forgiveness, even should he shed fountains of involuntary tears; and with a sorrowful, straitened heart he will depart from the Gracious God: which is only what he deserves. *Believe that ye receive them,* says the Lord, *and ye shall have them.* (Mk 11:24). Not to be sure of receiving what you ask God for, is a blasphemy against God.

When there is unbelief in anything true and sacred, the mind is generally darkened, the unbelieving heart is oppressed with fear; whilst when there is sincere faith, it experiences joy, tranquility, breadth or expansion of life within it, so that the mind becomes bright and far-seeing. Is it not evident that truth triumphs over the heart's madness? Is not the deceitfulness of the heart manifest? Yes; the sufferings of the heart at the time of its unbelief in anything true and sacred are a sign of the truth of that in which it does not believe. The heart itself dies when it subjects the truth to doubt and attempts to destroy that which cannot be destroyed; whilst the expansion of the heart when it sincerely believes is also a true sign of the truth of that in which it believes, because the object in which we believe communicates life to our heart, and renews and strengthens this life. Our heart, corrupted by sin, is but a poor receptacle of life, for sin is death and not life, and the fullness of life is outside us. But as this spiritual life is invisible, and is communicated to us according to our faith in the invisible personal life in God, therefore it is our lively sincere faith in God that brings life into our heart. Without faith, the heart must naturally feel oppression and sorrow, as the result of the curtailing and diminution of life. But, besides faith, there must also be an accord of our spiritual activity with the object of our faith, for man is a moral being.

*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* (Rom 8:6). Who will not agree with these words of the Apostle? The carnal mind is indeed death. Draw nigh, you who are mercenary, covetous, envious, selfish, proud, ambitious, and let us look upon you, upon your actions and your life! Disclose to us, if you will, the thoughts of your heart! We shall be convinced by you—a living example—that the carnal mind is death. You do not live the true life; you are spiritually dead; you that have freedom are inwardly bound; you that have intelligence are as the foolish, because *the light that is in thee is darkness.* (Mt 6:23). You have received from God a heart capable of delighting in everything that is true, holy, good, and beautiful; but by the carnal mind you have stifled in it all noble feelings, all noble impulses; you have become a corpse; ye have no life in you. (Jn 6:53). But *to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Let any Christian man, leading the life of faith, destroying the passions within him, and thinking "*whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise*" (Phil 4:8), come to us, and tell us what he feels in his soul from the mind of the Spirit. He will say: *I feel in my heart continual peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom 14:17), my heart expands, I feel an abundance of life. I mock at everything carnal; I wonder how it can have such a great power over the hearts of carnal men, and I give myself up to the continual contemplation of the heavenly, spiritual, invisible blessings prepared for those who love God. Amen.

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## “I’M GONNA TELL GOD EVERYTHING”

By His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou. From *Ekklesiastiki Paremvasi*, “Θὰ Σὰς Μαρτυρήσω Ὅλους στὸν Θεό...,” February 2014. Translated by John Sanidopoulos.

Christ had great communication with children; He loved them, hugged them and encouraged His disciples to let them come near Him, teaching His listeners to become like children in order to be saved. He also worked many miracles for them, among other things. He saw in children the purity of their hearts, their immaculate sensitivity, the sincerity of their words, their search for truth, the manifestation of their love.

And they reciprocated this love to Christ, so that when He entered Jerusalem they cheered Him in the Temple, crying: *Hosanna to the son of David!* And to the indignation of the high priests and scribes Christ recalled the Psalm: *Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise.* (Mt 21:16).

These things I remembered when I read online the words of a three-year-old child from Syria, shortly before he died. He was fatally injured and a few minutes before his last breath he said with tears in his eyes, in the hospital where they cared for him: *“I will testify all of you to God ... I will tell Him everything ...”*

What awesome, true and frank words! It breaks hearts, it is a whipping against our cruel and callous society. He lived only three years on the earth, which God created to be “very good,” and he felt it to be inhospitable. The earth is not to blame, inanimate nature, but man, who rebelled against God and infects it

constantly. This child did not have time to rejoice in the creation of God, to create something in this world from which he came.

Truly, how soon did he see the hatred and evil of man? Unfortunately, in the short period of his life he witnessed the great passions of man concentrated, which take no account of anything and destroy everything. One moment is enough to know the eternal love of God and the eternal hatred of the evil one, through his instruments.

And as soon as this little child died, of course he testified everyone to God, their names and addresses, for the devastation they wreaked. And he told God everything about how much pain he went through in his short life, the pain of his body and soul. And the sighs of this small child united with the sighs of all those who suffer unjustly, as the Apocalypse says: *How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until You judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?* (Rev 6:10).

My child, “testify” them, reveal all of them to God, those who infect over all His creation, say it all to God. Otherwise, he knows their plans, the methods they use to implement them, and the crimes they carry. But you also tell Him, because He loves children and receives their pain.

If we listened to the hurting voice of this three-year-old child in Syria, as well as all the other children who are abused, tortured, raped and killed, we would be better people. One day, however, all will be revealed and we will understand that God knew about everything, and he listened to the pain of those who suffered unjustly, and the children in pain.