

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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In This Issue:

- The 1955 Kristallnacht in Constantinople (p. 4)
- Natural Death and the Work of Perfection (p. 8)
- Imaginative Faculty, Fantasy and Imagination [Pt 2 of 2] (p. 21)
- Why Children Suffer (p. 26)
- The Neurobiological Sickness of Religion (p. 27)
- A Fisher of Men (p. 28)



- Ο Ἱεράρχης Χρῦσανθος, Ἀγωνιστῆς γιὰ τὰ Δίκαια τῶν Ἑλλήνων (σελ. 13)
- Ὁ Καποδίστριας ὡς Πρότυπο Χριστιανοῦ Ἠγέτη (σελ. 14)
- Γιὰ τὶς Ἀρρώστειες καὶ Συμφορὰς (σελ. 16)
- Μεταμοσχεύσεις (σελ. 17)
- Ἀνατολὴ καὶ Δύση (σελ. 18)
- Μὴ Γίνεσθε Σκλάβοι Ἀνθρώπων (σελ. 19)



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ON LOVE

By Elder Joseph the Hesychast, from "Monastic Wisdom: The Letters of Elder Joseph the Hesychast." An Epistle to a Hesychast Hermit. Chapter XII, pp. 384-389.

Since we have written about many and diverse things, my child, moved by your ardent faith and piety, I considered it good also to write a few things about love that I have learned from the Holy Fathers who lived before me and from reading the Scriptures. However, fearing the height of this supernatural grace, I am overcome by awe, lest I am unable to bring the discourse to an end. All the same, warmed by the hope of your holy prayers, I shall begin the discourse. For how can I, my child, with my own strength write about such a great charisma which exceeds my strength? And with what tongue can I tell of this heavenly delight and sustenance of the holy angels, prophets, apostles, righteous, martyrs, monks, and every category of those listed in the heavens?

Truly, my child, even if I had all the tongues of men since Adam to help me, it still seems impossible to me that I would be able to extol love worthily. What am I saying, "worthily"? A mortal tongue is entirely incapable of even remotely expressing something concerning love, unless God, Who is truth and love itself, gives us the power of speech, wisdom, and knowledge. And

through the human tongue, this God Himself, our sweet Jesus Christ is both called and praised as God. For love is nothing but the Father and the Savior Himself, our sweet Jesus, together with the Divine Spirit.

Of course, all the other divine gifts of the loving God, such as humility, meekness, abstinence, and so on, have divine sensation when they act upon us through divine grace. For without the action of divine grace all these in general are simply virtues that we keep to heal our passions because of the commandment of the Lord.

Before we receive grace, we undergo changes all the time: towards humility and towards pride; towards love and towards hatred; towards abstinence and towards gluttony; towards meekness and towards anger; towards forbearance and towards indignation, etc. However, once we are acted upon by divine grace,

these continuous changes and alterations of the soul cease. Although the body continues to have its elemental and natural changes (namely: cold, heat, weight, fatigue, hunger, thirst, illness, and so on), the soul, fed by the action of divine grace, remains unchangeable in the natural, divine gifts it has been given.

What I mean by unchangeable is this: due to the grace abiding in us, the soul does not change in the divine gifts it has been given by God. Not that it does not change when grace withdraws, but it changes with difficulty due to the



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

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soul’s firm resolution—it is not completely unchangeable, though.

For we have written also elsewhere in this epistle that as long as we carry about this earthen garment, no one should believe that there is an advanced spiritual state free from danger, except in the presence of divine grace. Then one senses well every divine gift, and unerringly comprehends them. However, when he reaches the sensation of divine love—which is God Himself, according to him who said, *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him* (1 Jn 4:16)—how can a tongue, which is mortal and has no divine action, suffice to converse about God and His holy gifts?

Today, many virtuous people who live good lives, who please God with their deeds and words, and who benefit their neighbor, think they have (and are thought of having) attained love through their insignificant work of mercy and compassion they show towards their neighbor. But this is not the truth. They are only fulfilling the commandment of love for the Lord, Who said, *love one another*. (Jn 13:34). He who keeps this commandment is worthy of praise as a keeper of the divine commandments—but this is not an action of divine love. It is a road towards the fountain, but not the fountain. It is stairs towards the palace, but not the gate of the palace. It is a royal garment, but not the King. It is a commandment of God, but not God.



Therefore, **he who wishes to speak about love, must have revelation of the mystery of love.** Only then, if the fountain of love, our sweet Jesus, permits, should he impart to others some of the fruit he received; then he shall surely benefit his neighbor. For there is a great danger for us to speak erroneously, to think turbidly, and to believe we know things that we do not.

So then, my beloved child, know this for certain: fulfilling the commandment of love through works done for mutual brotherly love is one thing, and the action of divine love is another. All men are able to fulfill the commandment of brotherly love if they want to and if they force themselves. Divine love, though, neither results from our works, nor does it depend on our will—if we want, when we want, and how we want. But it depends on the fountain of love, our sweetest Jesus, Who gives us if *He* wants, how *He* wants, and whenever *He* wants.

When we walk in simplicity, keep the commandments, and patiently and persistently seek divine love with tears and pain, guarding Jethro’s sheep like Moses (vid. Exo 3:1)—that is, guarding the good and spiritual movements and meditations of the nous during the heat of the day and the frost of the night of continuous battles and temptations, which we crush with our struggle and humility—then we are counted worthy of seeing God and the Bush in our hearts, burning

with the divine fire of love, burning but not consumed. And having approached it through noetic prayer, we hear the divine voice in a mystery of spiritual knowledge saying, Put off thy sandals from thy feet! (Exo 3:5). That is, put off from yourself every self-will and worry for this age as well as all childish thoughts, and be subject to the Holy Spirit and His divine will, *for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.* (Exo 3:5).

And once such a person puts off everything, he is entrusted with the responsibility to protect the people and inflicts wounds on Pharaoh—that is, he discerns and governs through divine gifts, and conquers the demons. Then he receives the divine laws—not on stone tablets, as Moses did, which wear out and break, but rather in divine engravings of the Holy Spirit which act in our hearts. And not only ten commandments, but as many as his nous, knowledge, and nature can contain. Afterwards, he enters into *that which is within the veil.* (Heb 6:19).

When the divine cloud descends in a pillar of fire of love, he becomes all fire as well. He is unable to endure any longer, and the divine action of love within him cries out to the fountain of love through human lips, *What shall separate me from Thy sweet love, O Jesus?* (Rom 8:39). And when the breeze blows even more—whether in the body or out of the body, God knows; whether within the hut or out in the open air, God knows—he who has experienced this knows only this: that he has totally become fire with the fire, and shedding tears of love, he cries out in amazement and astonishment, “Stop, O sweet love, the waters of Thy grace, for the joints of my body have come apart!” As he says this, and while the wind of the Spirit is blowing upon him with His marvelous and ineffable fragrance, his senses cease, not permitting any bodily action at all. And entirely captivated and enclosed in silence, he can only marvel at the riches of the glory of God until the divine cloud passes.

*He remains as one crazy, as from wine all ecstatic.
For neither his tongue nor his mind nor his heart
Permits him to speak any words except these:
I beg Thee, my Jesus, my love that is sweetest!
My Father and Savior, O sweetest pure eros!
My God and Creator and the All-holy Spirit,
O Trinity Holy in a heavenly Oneness!
O life of my soul and my heart's delectation,
My intellect's brightness, O love that is perfect!
O fountain of love and my hope and my faith,
Teach me how I must seek Thee in order to find Thee.
Yes, my love that is sweetest, my Jesus and Savior;
Just tell me the way, for I want nothing else.
I desire to find Thee and to fall at Thy feet
And to kiss with much sweetness Thy wounds and the nails;
To weep without ceasing out of pain that is heartfelt,*

*And wash Thy divine feet as Mary once did.
And let not any powers or dominions detach me,
Nor Belial the rival with his unholy angels,
Nor temporal pleasures of this age which is passing,
Nor all of the world with its fleeting enjoyments.
But just as I am now, come take my poor soul there
However Thou knowest, and Thy feet shall I wash then.
I yearn to behold Thee and worship forever
My God and Creator, my love and my Savior,
Together with all of the Righteous and Prophets,
Apostles and Martyrs, with the Monks and Saved Women,
And all hosts of the heavens: Archangels and Angels,
With the Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, and the Powers,
And our sweetest true Mother Panagia the Virgin,
The Lady of all, our most pure Theotokos.
Amen.*

So my child, blessed is the hour in which—if we are worthy—we present our soul clean to the Lord and rejoice together with all of those we mentioned, where for all, in all, and over all reigns Jesus Christ, the sweet Savior; God the Father; the Beloved, Holy, Good, Peaceful, Life-Giving, Life-creating Spirit—the Holy, Indivisible Trinity, now and ever, and unto the infinite ages of endless ages. Amen.



A devout elder lay on his death bed. His friends gathered around him and mourned him. With that, the elder laughed three times. The monks asked him: “What are you laughing at?” The elder replied: “I laughed the first time, because all of you are afraid of death; the second time, for none of you are prepared for death; the third time, because I am going from labor to rest.”

Behold, how a righteous man dies! He is not afraid of death. He is prepared for death. He sees, that through death, he passes from the difficult life to eternal rest.

When the nature of man imagines itself in its original state in Paradise, then death is unnatural, the same way that sin is unnatural. Death emanated from sin. Repented and cleansed from sin, man does not consider death annihilation, but the gate to life eternal.

If, at times, the righteous prayed to God to prolong their earthly life, that was not because of love for this life nor because of the fear of death but solely that they would gain more time for repentance and cleansing from sin in order that they may present themselves before God, more sinless and more pure. Even if they showed fear before death, that was not out of fear of death but the fear of God’s judgment. What kind of fear then must the unrepentant sinner have before death?

St. Nikolai Velimirovich

THE 1955 KRISTALLNACHT IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Source: September/October 2007 issue of the "Greek-America" Magazine.

Most Greek-Americans and most Americans generally are unaware of the fact that on the evening of September 6th, and in the early hours of September 7th, 1955, the Turkish government carried out the most destructive pogrom that had been enacted in Europe since the infamous Kristallnacht which Hitler and the Nazis inflicted upon the Jewish communities, businesses and synagogues on the eve of World War II. The Turkish government had unleashed the mobs on the Greek Orthodox community of Constantinople, on its churches, houses, businesses, schools, and newspapers; this resulted in the ultimate destruction of Turkey's oldest historical community, about 100,000 Greek Orthodox Christians who were the heirs of Byzantium.

Each September, selected members of the Greek press in Greece, America, Canada and Australia memorialized this great tragedy so that more than forty years after the events, Greeks, and humanity more generally, might not forget the victims and might recall that the forces restraining barbarians are to be kept at the ready at all times. This is an example wherein the press serves as mankind's historical and ethical teacher. Many Greeks and Greek-Americans have lost their sense of history, of whence they came, of who they are, and of what they are becoming. Is it possible today in America, where we constitute an affluent, politically powerful, and highly educated Hellenic diaspora, that we know so little about something so simple and yet so fatefully significant about the Turkish pogroms that destroyed this ancient Greek community in Constantinople in 1955? That we are unaware that on September 6th, 1955, the Turkish mobs and government organized and carried out the worst and most destructive pogrom in Europe since Hitler and the Nazis destroyed the synagogues and businesses of the Jewish community in Germany?

The chronology of the pogrom falls in a very difficult period, when the Cyprus problem had complicated the political relations of Greece, Turkey and Great Britain. The Turkish press, which was to play a crucial role in preparing the political atmosphere of the pogrom, received significant financial support from British sources. Specifically, the British gave financial assistance to two Turkish newspapers and to their owners/

editors: to Hikmet Bil (editor of the newspaper *Hurriyet* and leader of the political organization "Kibris Turktur—Cyprus is Turkish"), and Ahmet Emin Yalmas, owner of the older Constantinople paper *Vatan*.

In 1952, the Turkish government had mobilized two large student organizations. By July 1955, the Turkish press and these organizations activated intense pogroms and demonstrations aimed at the defenseless Greek minority in Constantinople.

The tripartite discussions, among Greece, Turkey and Great Britain commenced in London in August of 1955. On the 27th of that month, the Turkish press condemned the Patriarch, ostensibly for collecting funds for the Greek Cypriot movement for "Enosis—Union with Greece." Three days later, on August 30th, the anniversary of the day when the Kemalist forces smashed the Greek defense line in western Asia Minor, the Turkish press launched a particularly vile attack on the Patriarch. Previously, on the 27th, the Constantinople newspapers published false rumors that the Greeks of Cyprus were planning mass genocide of the Turkish Cypriots.



Patriarch Athenagoras prays before the overturned altar table of the destroyed Panaghia Church in Belgratkapi

Finally, on September 5th, one day prior to the pogrom, Turkish student organizations asked permission from the authorities to stage political demonstrations in Constantinople regarding Cyprus, to be staged on September 13. Also on September 5th, the Turkish prime minister's executive council, which included the minister of the interior in charge of security, the governor of Constantinople, and the chief of police, among others, met to

discuss the petition and the situation more generally.

It should be noted that prior to the tripartite meetings in London, it is generally accepted that the British government asked that the Turks stage a public demonstration on Cyprus, inasmuch; this would strengthen the Anglo-Turkish position against that of the Greeks during the tripartite meetings.

On the 6th of September, the Turkish press and other media announced the explosion of a bomb in the Turkish consular complex in Thessaloniki, within which is located the ancestral house of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. This news was announced quickly and simultaneously throughout Turkey, and the pre-arranged plan of the pogrom was applied and put into action, rhythmically, by its organizers, who were in effect the Turkish state.

As the examination by the Greek police of Thessaloniki demonstrated soon after the explosion, the bomb was not thrown into the compound from outside the walled compound, but was placed on the grounds by an individual from inside the

compound; a conclusion arrived at after a police examination of the actual form of the explosion, evidenced by the directions of the damage. This conclusion is confirmed by other independent evidence.

The damage inflicted by the bomb on buildings inside the walled compound of the Turkish consulate was purportedly revealed in the photographic evidence published by the Constantinople Express, which went to press in Constantinople on the same afternoon of the day of the explosion.

How was it possible to bring the photographs from Thessaloniki to Constantinople, develop them and publish them on the same afternoon, in a day and age when there were no airplane flights between Thessaloniki and Constantinople, and at a time when the bus would not have arrived in Constantinople until well into the night? The answer comes from the report of the investigation by the Thessaloniki police who reported the following incontrovertible facts:

First, the Turkish consul had left his post for Constantinople long before the event in question, leaving behind his wife to take care of “last minute details” before departing herself to join her husband. Among these “last minute details,” she was to telephone a photographic studio in Thessaloniki to hire a Greek photographer to photograph the inside of the walled complex of the Turkish consulate. A few days before the explosion of the bomb, she departed with the photographs for Constantinople. It was this photographic material which appeared in the afternoon edition of the Constantinople Express on September 6th. Thus, there had been ample time to bring the photographic films to Constantinople and have them developed before the bomb exploded. However, the original photographs had been tampered with and had been altered to show purported damage to the house of Ataturk—all this before the actual explosion of the bomb.

The Thessaloniki police could compare the photographic “evidence” published in the afternoon edition of the Constantinople Express on September 6th and identify it with the photos produced by the Greek photographer, and to show, on the basis of their investigation, that the Turkish version of the explosion had been falsified. Thus, the Turkish forgery had

been both detected and reported. It was recorded in a British consular report to the British Foreign Office. The Foreign Office official who received the report in London wrote on the margin of the report, “The Greeks will go to ridiculous extremes to deny their responsibility in the placing of the bomb in the Turkish consulate of Thessaloniki.”

The Greek police charged a Turkish student with having placed the bomb, with the willing complicity of the Turkish doorman of the consulate. His name was Oktay Engin. When Demirel was elected to power, he appointed Octay Engin as chief in charge of the affairs of the Turkish community in Greek Thrace, 37 years after the fact of the bomb...

The guilt of the Turkish government and of its consular official in Thessaloniki in placing the bomb on the grounds of the consulate was further confirmed by the Turkish court martial of Yassiada in 1960-61, which condemned Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and his Foreign Minister Zorlu for the organization and execution of the Pogrom of September 1955 and for the bomb exploded in the consular compound.

Let us now glimpse briefly at the pogrom itself, ostensibly set off by the announcement of the bomb explosion at the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki, but which in fact had been carefully planned by the Turkish government. At this point, we quote specific paragraphs from an official Greek document with the title: “A Note of Summation of the Consul General of Constantinople, Vyron Theodoropoulos, on the anti-Greek Events of September 6, 1955.” This official report was written by a diplomat who had served as consul general during the events in question, and who was

appointed by the Greek Foreign Office to make an investigation and report to the ministry. The document impresses with its wealth of information as well as by the objectivity of the analytical nature of its perceptions. In this official report we read the following, terse catalog of the events during the destructive night of the pogrom:

The execution of the plan [for the pogrom] reveals two basic characteristics: (1) A well-effected and harmonized time schedule of actions, and (2) effective coordination. The time schedule of events unfolds, generally, as follows:



Examples of destroyed icons and vestments from various churches

- 1:30 p.m., announcement on the radio of the bomb in the house of Atatürk in Thessaloniki.

- 4:00 p.m., a special supplement of the newspaper *Constantinople Express* circulates, publishing this 'news' and featuring an artificially altered photograph of the purported destruction of the house [of Atatürk].

- 4:30 p.m., groups of young people roam about the main streets of Pera, writing on the walls insulting slogans against the Greeks.

- 5:30 p.m., the first groups of demonstrators gather in Taksim Square.

- 6:00 p.m., the gathering in Taksim Square listens to various speakers who are making inflammatory speeches against the Greeks and Greece.

- 6:30 p.m., the assembly is transformed into a demonstration, in which one group reaches the General Consulate of Greece but is dispersed by the immediate appearance of police forces, who close off all access to the consulate.

- 7:00 p.m., there commences the smashing of display windows and iron doors of the Greek shops on Taksim Square and of the shops on Pera Street. Almost simultaneously, acts of violence begin to be manifested in the remaining neighborhoods and suburbs, so that, within two hours, the attack on and destruction of Greek property has become general and widespread through the enormous territorial triangle formed by the east tip of the Bosphoros-Sariyer and Yeni Mahalle and as far as the Propontis, St. Stephan and the Isles.

- 2:00 a.m., September 7th, or just a little thereafter, martial law is declared and the first military contingents make their appearance. After this, the situation becomes quiet.

The timing and coordination of the riots acquire even greater significance inasmuch as they were combined with a strategy of burning and destruction. One can distinguish, more or less, three waves of attackers:

- The first wave has as its goal to break down the doors and display windows of the stores and the iron doors of the (Greek) homes, thus to prepare the way for the actions of the second wave.

- The second wave was to pillage and carry off all that was capable of transport.

- The third wave had as its task the complete destruction of (all property) that remained.

However, the organizers of the events had accomplished other noteworthy deeds, for instance:

- In the center of the city, with very few exceptions, private houses were not looted. Looting of the houses was limited to the neighborhoods and the suburbs.

- Blood was shed; recent studies showed that some 28 Greeks were murdered, and original reports reveal extensive rape of women.

- The attack groups were fully equipped with the necessary instruments: crow bars, sledge hammers, iron rods, even with acetylene blow torches for breaking safes open.

- The equipping of the attackers with these tools obviously took place following a prearranged plan via trucks stationed in convenient sites throughout the city...

It is reported that vehicles belonging to the municipality (of Constantinople) were also seen carrying out these functions.

From these observations, the experienced Greek diplomat drew the following conclusions in his report:

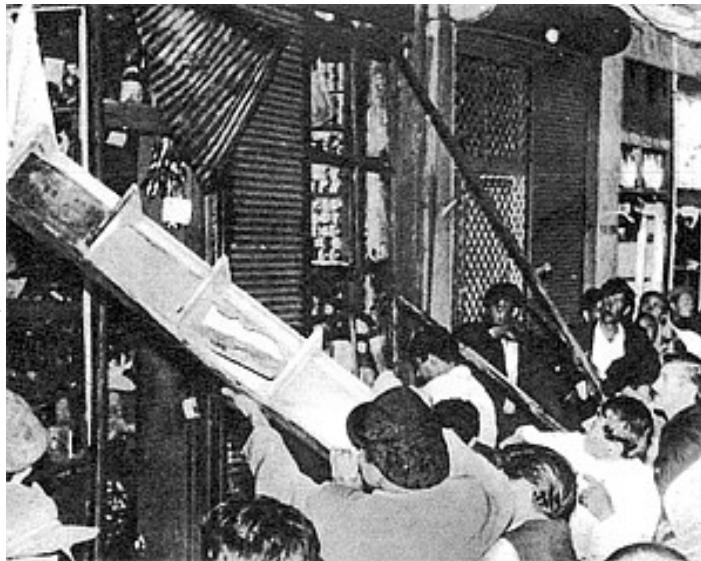
That which is certain, and which is addressed in the following chapter, is that there was a long period of methodical preparation so as to achieve such a perfect organization of the riots. Characteristic of this fact are the very statements and confessions of the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes to the Patriarchal committee, which visited him after the riots, to the effect that these riots had been started and planned over a five-year period.

It is significant to examine

the time schedule of the events attendant upon the pogrom so as to see how, actually, the Hellenism of Constantinople was physically destroyed between 7:00 p.m., September 6th, when the Turkish mobs began to smash the doors and windows of thousands of shops and houses, churches, schools, Greek newspaper establishments and then to loot the goods and possessions of the Greeks, and, finally, to destroy the physical establishments themselves, often with fire, until 2:00 a.m., September 7th, when the Turkish authorities established martial law in the city.

In other words, this historic Greek community which had lived and created in the city on the Bosphorus from its first foundation in 668 B.C. up to 1955, for some 2,623 years (some 104 generations), suffered a complete and destructive catastrophe in only seven hours.

No one moved even so much as one finger to save this most historic Greek diasporic community, neither Greek nor Christian, nor so-called civilized man or woman, and certainly not the Turkish government or the Turkish nation.



Mob battering the front door of a Greek shop

We shall cite to you from yet one more official document. This is the official report and description of the pogrom which the American Consulate in Constantinople forwarded to the American Secretary of State, Mr. John Foster Dulles, and the U.S. State Department on September 27th, just three weeks after the violent destructions of the pogrom, and which was kept secret through austere classification and reserved only for official use. This document was declassified many years later, but only for a brief period, since it has evidently been reclassified recently. Here are some of its noteworthy facts:

A survey of the damage inflicted on public establishments of the Greek Community of Constantinople during the rioting on the night of September 6-7 shows that the destruction caused has been extremely widespread. In fact, only a very small percentage of community property appears to have escaped molestation. Although there are as yet no figures available assessing the damage sustained, the number of establishments attacked and the nature of the destruction caused in the course of the night under reference convey a clear picture of the scope of the devastation.

In most cases the assault on these establishments involved a thorough wrecking of installations, furniture, equipment, desecration of holy shrines and relics, and looting. In certain instances serious damage was inflicted on the buildings themselves by fire.

Reports show that the dependencies of the religious edifices hit were also not spared and that very serious damage was inflicted on presbyteries and well-appointed community meeting quarters, libraries, and dispensaries attached to these establishments.

Reports on hand indicate that the rioting crowd hit with particular frenzy at two important Greek Orthodox community centers: the central cemetery at Sisli and the cemetery of the Patriarchs at Balikli. The former sustained particularly extensive destruction. Crosses and statues were knocked down, sepulchers and vaults opened and remains of the dead removed and dispersed. At Balikli, the sarcophagus of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchs were desecrated.

As for the Greek Orthodox clergy itself, considering the scale and severity of the acts of violence recorded, it appears that only a relatively few were exposed to the fury of rioters. According to information given by the Patriarchate only one aged Orthodox priest, monk Chrysanthos of Balikli, is believed to have been killed during the rioting. Since his body has not been recovered, he is listed as missing. It is supposed that he perished during the burning of his church.

Extensive damage also seems to have been suffered by the educational establishments of the Greek community. At least 36 of the 48 schools of the community are reported to have been more or less seriously damaged. The principal victims are the Zappeion Girls' College at Taksim and the Megali Scholi Boys' College of Phanar, both jewels of the community, the Theologi-

cal School at Heybeli, and the high schools at Haskoy, Edirne Kapu, Bakirkoy, Gelata, Taksim and Arnavutkoy.

The elaborate dispensary of the Taksim High School and several public soup kitchens operated in conjunction with these educational institutions were also demolished.

The lethal pogrom of September 6-7, 1955 delivered a fatal blow to the Hellenism of Constantinople in seven hours. Well planned (for some years), masterfully carried out in a well organized manner by the Turkish government, the Turks destroyed 71 churches, 41 schools, 4,008 stores, the offices and printing presses of eight newspapers, and approximately 2,100 dwellings, all the property of the Greeks and their communities.

The Turks killed 28 Greeks and also carried out the rapes of Greek women. They profaned and soiled the Greek Orthodox religious vessels; they smashed and dug up the graves in Greek cemeteries, throwing out the bones and remains of the dead; they effected circumcisions on some elderly priests on the streets.

The Turkish government, press, and nation "justified" this savagery on the false pretext that the Greeks had bombed the house of Ataturk in Thessaloniki. In reality the Greeks had not placed the bomb in the Turkish consular complex in that city on September 6th. It had been put there by a Turk, in collusion with the Turkish government, in order to provide the pretext for a carefully laid plan to destroy the houses, the businesses, the property, the churches, the schools, the newspapers of the Greeks in Constantinople.

It was a "logical" sequence (in Turkish minds) to the oppressive Valik Vergisi of 1942-1943, a Turkish confiscatory law which destroyed the economic bases of the Greek, Turkish and other minority communities. The pogrom of 1955 was a Turkish "success" as it finally destroyed the ancient Hellenism of Constantinople, both in physical and psychological dimensions.



He says, *Depart from me, you cursed*, (no longer of the Father; for not He laid the curse upon them, but their own works), into the everlasting fire, prepared, not for you, but for the devil and his angels. For concerning the Kingdom indeed, when He had said, *Come, inherit the kingdom*, He added, prepared for you before the foundation of the world; but concerning the fire, no longer so, but, prepared for the devil. I, says He, prepared the kingdom for you, but the fire no more for you, but for the devil and his angels; but since you cast yourselves therein, impute it to yourselves. And not in this way only, but by what follows also, like as though He were excusing Himself to them, He sets forth the causes.

St. John Chrysostom

NATURAL DEATH AND THE WORK OF PERFECTION

By Fr. Alexey Young, from "Christian Bioethics, Non-Ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality," 1998, vol. 4, No. 2.

Illness, Suffering, and the Work of Perfection

The contemporary debate concerning physician-assisted suicide is predicated, from the traditional Christian standpoint, first, on a belief that illness and suffering have no particular value or purpose and, second, that there is no life after death or, if there is, earthly life is not a necessary preparation or determinative for that life. Traditional Christianity, articulated in some detail by H. Tristram Englehardt in his article, "Physician-assisted suicide reconsidered: Dying as a Christian in a post-Christian age," can also be summarized in the following statement by St. John of Kronstadt:

In our eyes, illnesses appear only as painful, unpleasant, indeed terrible ... but in God's all-wise and most merciful providence, not a single illness remains without some profit to our soul... Not a single sickness sent to us shall return void... For man the earthly life, life in the body, serves only to prepare us for life eternal... Therefore we must, without delay, make use of this present life to prepare ourselves for that other life to come.

A latter-day father of the Church, St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, further explained that *earthly life—this brief period—is given to man by the mercy of the Creator in order that man may use it for his salvation, that is, for the restoration of himself from death to life.* This means that the focus of one's life is not primarily here, and therefore not political or sociological, but there, in the next world, in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is vividly illustrated by the final words of the righteous monk, Theodore of Svir (+1822) who, on his deathbed, said: *God be blessed! God be blessed! I have crossed the stormy sea of life and endured many troubles, but now the coast is in view.*

Given this otherworldly viewpoint, it then follows that "how long we live, what disease or illness accompanies our death—such things are not the proper concern of [traditional] Christians." Afflictions of all kinds, illness, and death came into the world by God's permission in order to frequently, if not constantly, remind us that we are only creatures and in need of spiritual refinement and purification before we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. This great mystery of suffering applies even to seemingly "innocent" children who sicken and, sometimes, die. The great Optina Elder, St. Ambrose, explained it thus:

We should not forget that in our age of "sophistication" even little children are spiritually harmed by what they see and hear. As a result, purification is required, and this is only accomplished through bodily suffering... You must understand that Paradisal bliss is granted to no one without suffering.

The process by which bodily afflictions act upon the soul is explained by St. John Chrysostom:

But if the body suffers only a little, we make every effort to be free of the illness and its pain. Therefore, God corrects the body for the sins of the soul, so that by chastising the body, the soul might also receive some healing... Christ did this with the Paralytic when He said: Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more...

In some Western Christian groups, radiant health and youthful vigor are seen as proof of the vitality and validity of one's faith (This is undoubtedly the most recent incarnation of the Puritan doctrine of predestination and a sign that one is among the "elect.") According to this view, illness is to be banished at all cost and death must be pushed away as far and as long as possible. In its most extreme form this theology is expressed by Christian Scientists (who say that pain and death have no reality) or other faith-healing denominations. This idea, however, is of relatively recent origin in the West and may actually have contributed to our culture's obsession with avoiding suffering and illness, particularly in connection with the dying process. Without its Calvinist underpinnings, however, this view easily lends itself to the desirability of suicide or physician-assisted suicide, for if one cannot completely avoid pain and suffering (these being among the very highest values of contemporary Western man), death should then be hastened in order to avoid that which is seen as "negative," "bad," or without any redeeming value. Death becomes "good" and causing a death may even be a "virtue."

Orthodox Christians, on the other hand, have always believed, and still do, that the highest way to serve God is not out of expectation of any kind of reward but simply out of love. The act of loving God is thus seen as a reward and a goal in itself. This does not mean that one cannot ask God for bodily (as well as mental and spiritual) health—Orthodox Christians, for instance, constantly pray for "health, salvation, and welfare" in our Divine services—but such well-being is not seen as an end in itself, nor is a lack of health seen as "bad" or a sign of spiritual weakness (unless, of course, one has ruined one's own health through poor stewardship of the body).

This reflects still another ancient Christian idea, preserved today primarily by Orthodox Christians: that suffering and sorrows, when carried in the shadow of the Cross, have value:

Church tradition relates that St. John the Merciful, after completing a Divine service, once noticed that a woman was crying bitterly in a corner of the church. He told his deacon: "Go and bring that woman, so that we can find out why she is so grieved: whether her husband has died, or her children are sick, or God has sent her some other misfortune."

The deacon brought the woman to the saint. When St. John asked her why she was crying so inconsolably, she said:

“How can I not cry, holy father! Three years have passed, and no sorrow has come to us. It seems that God has forgotten us completely. There is no sickness in the home, no ox has been lost, nor has a sheep died, and my family has begun to live carelessly. I am afraid that we will perish because of our easy life, and that is why I am crying.” The bishop-saint marveled at that answer and praised God.

In such a way the Christians of the past have considered sufferings to be sent from God and have grieved when they did not have sorrows...

Similarly, St. Ignatius Brianchaninov explains:

A sorrowless earthly life is a true sign that the Lord has turned His face from a man, and that he is displeasing to God, even though outwardly he may seem reverent and virtuous.

In this context one can already see that any attempt to induce or hasten death for the primary purpose of ending pain and suffering by any outside or artificial means, such as physician-assisted suicide, is not grounded in the traditional and ancient Christian way of seeing meaning and value in life’s afflictions. In fact, suicide (whether physician-assisted or not) is considered a symptom of despair—a deadly and soul-destroying sin—for such an act incorrectly assumes that joy or happiness are primarily the absence of suffering, and stands in stark contrast to St. Paul’s statement that we can be *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing* (2 Cor 6:10) and *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer* (2 Tim 3:12).

However, in our secular culture the idea of joy or contentment in the midst of sorrow and affliction is becoming increasingly politically incorrect. The traditional Christian sees that if the dying process were without pain and discomfort, very few would opt for suicide or physician-assisted suicide. It is the avoidance of pain which has become the imperative today, even though a good deal of life and living is naturally accompanied by afflictions and suffering of all kinds, and cannot be avoided—and not just bodily pain, but emotional, mental, and spiritual, as well.

Although the word euthanasia means “good death,” traditional Christians see this as a misnomer, for they have always defined death—when it is sought as an end in itself—as evil. According to Orthodox theology, man was originally created in order to live forever, and death, which came into the world by sin, is a violation of God’s plan for man. Therefore, although one need not—as we see in the lives of the saints below—artificially attempt to extend the dying process, we may not ourselves hasten the cessation of life, either. “This

holds equally true whether the decision for death is made by the person concerned or by his caregivers.” In the case of those confessors who actually sought martyrdom, their death, like that of the soldier fighting to stop the spread of Nazism or Communism, is not an end in itself, but in order to achieve a greater good—i.e., the spread of the faith, the end of tyranny, etc. The voluntary martyr, therefore, far from opening even a tentative door to physician-assisted suicide (even as the lesser of two evils, as some suggest it may actually be), presents us with someone quite different from the person who seeks death only in order to stop his own personal physical and mental suffering. Such a person thereby rejects the providence of God in his life, a providence that encompasses many things, including purification and refinement of the soul which, experience shows, comes to those who accept the suffering of their final illness.

The Saints Show Us How to Die

Orthodox Christianity not only possesses a body of abstract theology and doctrine but also contains what could be called living theology or “theology in action”—which is the lives of the saints. Thus, “the Christian experience is the same across generations. From the inside, one will experience this unity as a bond to God across the generations of Christians. Dogmas are not simply to be known but experienced and lived.”

This is where the saints can be of help, for their lives are not

intellectual arguments but actual experience. Such a traditional and rich Christian theology reflects and describes the process of sanctification and transfiguration rather than being reduced either to theological theories or twentieth century political-sociological principles. Therefore the saints—that is, those who have been specially chosen by the Holy Spirit and revealed to the Church for special honor and emulation by the faithful—are actually “theology incarnate.” This gives them practical power in the day-to-day lives of the faithful, for they often provide better and more accessible models for how to live and die than could many learned volumes by the fathers of the Church. Thus, St. John of Kronstadt exhorts his readers:

Call upon the saints, so that seeing every virtue realized in them, you may yourself imitate every virtue... When your faith in the Lord, whether in health or in sickness, in prosperity or poverty, whether at any time during this life, or at the moment of leaving it, grows dim from worldly vanity or from illness and the terrors and darkness of death, then look with the eyes of your heart and mind upon the



companies of the saints... These living examples, so numerous, can strengthen the wavering faith in the Lord and the future life of each and every Christian.... Those Christian communities who do not venerate the saints... lose much in devotion and in Christian hope. They deprive themselves of the great strengthening of the faith by the examples of men like unto themselves.

Accordingly, if we look at the various ways in which traditional Christian saints arrive at the moment of death—almost always through the pain and suffering of a “final illness,” just like everyone else—we can see healthy and congruent models not only of what is called a “holy death” but vivid descriptions of how traditional Christians in fact die. To illustrate this I have chosen deaths from the lives of nine saints—seven men and two women—of comparatively recent times. After giving excerpts from their lives, usually written by direct disciples who were eyewitnesses of these events, we will look at similarities and dissimilarities in terms of how each one approached his end, and how he viewed pain and the use of medicine and physicians, etc.

The first six examples were elders or *starsi* in the world of pre-Revolutionary Russian Orthodox spirituality. That is, they were spiritual directors thoroughly imbued with a certain Russo-Byzantine legacy of spiritual formation which permitted no innovation and left only very little room for personal “style” regarding how that Tradition was to be lived and then passed down. These elders—all of them were glorified by the Russian Church Abroad in 1990—were also, successively, spiritual fathers in a particular place, the great Optina Hermitage; they were also conscious bearers of a worldview and exemplars of a way of life which they both taught and modeled for their spiritual children in the monastic community, as well as laymen who came to them from the society at large for direction.

The author of Elder Leonid’s life tells us that when the elder’s final illness (of only five weeks duration) came, in 1841, he experienced sharp pain on his right side as well as lung congestion and constipation. “The people who surrounded the elder wanted to summon a physician but he would not agree and did not want to take any medication.” He also refused food, accepting only a little water and Holy Communion. After the first two weeks of suffering he “began to prepare intently for death.”

Lying on his death bed he would call out in a compunctionate voice, “O Ruler of All Things! O Redeemer! O All-Merciful Lord! Thou seest my illness; I can endure no longer. Receive my spirit in peace”... He told the fathers and brothers who came, “Pray that the Lord shorten my sufferings.” But then once again, submitting to God’s will and entrusting himself to His Providence, he called out, “Lord, Thy will be done! Do what is pleasing in Thy sight.”

The Elder Macarius, who died in 1860 after an illness of only two weeks, had himself been greatly influenced by the traditional Christian death of one of his own spiritual children, a layman from the nobility and mother of one of his disciples. “The Elder, with tears in his eyes, called this death *holy* [and added] *I count myself fortunate that God has allowed me to see a righteous death.*”

Two days later his own death agony began. Although he was given various medicines, he experienced no relief. He went to Confession and received both Holy Communion and Holy Unction (Anointing of the Sick).

He was surprisingly peaceful, and with a clear mind and firm will he gave the necessary orders in preparation for his coming death, down to the smallest details... When his disciples asked, “What shall we do without you, Father?” He said: “You have seen the way I have acted in your presence. If you desire to imitate me, follow God’s commandments, and God will send you His Grace.”

Although by now Elder Macarius was tormented by shortness of breath, he “strengthened himself with the Sign of the Cross, took the most bitter medicine, and suffered in silence, only gently moaning and praying.”

[He] often gazed with tears and reverence at the icon of our Savior wearing the crown of thorns, exclaiming: “Glory to Thee, my King and my God!”... Yet his spirit was completely peaceful and quiet, like a child, and sometimes by a fatherly look, sometimes by squeezing their hands and weeping, he thanked the brethren surrounding him for their care.

The following year (1862) saw the death of Elder Moses at the Optina Hermitage. His disciples described his three week long illness in these words: “At last the time came for the Elder to be released from this life like a ripened fruit from the tree.”

We are told that he suffered from a large swelling, perhaps a tumor, in his back, which caused intense and growing pain. The doctors operated, providing some relief, but an abscess grew to the size of a bowl and his condition was “unexpectedly complicated by an acute abdominal edema ... which redoubled the patient’s sufferings.” When asked how he was feeling, the elder murmured: “Well, God continues to be long-suffering with me.” And to another he said, quoting from Psalm 50: *A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise.* Those who saw him at the very end said that he lay “upon his bed of sickness ... radiant amid grievous sufferings.” “He showed the same magnanimity and the same spiritual fortitude with which throughout his long life he had endured the greatest privations, sorrows and cares...”

In 1864 Elder Anthony foretold his own death, which came the following year. At the onset of his illness (typhoid fever), which lasted about one month, he instructed one of his spiritual children to write with large letters on a poster: “Don’t waste time!” and fasten it over his bed of illness as a steady

reminder for others ... as well as for a reminder to himself ... His physical sufferings were very severe... Amidst his fatal sufferings he took more care for others than for himself.”

The elder paid no attention to his doctor’s order to rest and cease from his labors and, “conquered by love which he was unable to contain, did not care to suppress or conceal” the spiritual gifts God had given him in abundance. Near the end he remarked:

Other people are afraid and fear death, but I, a sinful man, have no fear, nor am I at all afraid; on the contrary, I feel a kind of joy and peace, and I await my death like a great feast...

One could not notice in him any trace of impatience or any similar thing.”

Although he tended to ignore his physician’s insistence that he rest, Elder Anthony did not refuse other kinds of medical assistance but at the same time he told his disciples that he hoped he was not being helped by either the doctors or their medicines! For “having surrendered completely to the will of God, he had, since the very beginning of his illness, no desire to prolong his life.”

Elder Ambrose came to his deathbed in 1891, suffering from extremely painful abscesses in his ear. This condition lasted about three weeks, towards the end of which, greatly weakened, he slipped into a twilight state of semi-consciousness as the infection spread throughout his body. His followers believed that

during the dying process he was given a profound if disturbing sense of spiritual desolation: “He probably was allowed providentially to experience for a short time an abandonment by God, as it were, in order to give him a complete understanding of the poverty and weakness of human nature.” At the end, “he raised his right hand, joined his fingers together and made the Sign of the Cross... Then he took his last breath.”

Next in this spiritual dynasty, we have the death of Elder Joseph in 1911. Unlike his predecessors, he was in failing health for a very long time—six years—but it was only near the end that he developed a high fever and his condition became suddenly critical.

Diagnosed with malaria:

He lay almost without moving and with eyes closed; only his lips whispered the prayer unceasingly... He clearly foresaw his approaching departure from this life, and he prepared for this hour quietly and joyfully, by immersing himself completely in prayer and pious reflection. [At death an] angelic smile irradiated and rested upon his noble countenance.

St. John of Kronstadt, a renowned miracle-worker and a married parish priest rather than a monastic, died in a manner quite similar to that of the elders—i.e., although in extreme pain from “an illness which he meekly and patiently endured, never complaining to anyone,” he predicted the exact day of his death and resolutely rejected the orders of the doctors who treated him, saying “I thank my Lord for granting me suffering for the purification of my sinful soul.”

The last two examples are nuns, neither of them yet canonized but both greatly venerated as righteous women. Abbess Thaisia, a spiritual daughter of St. John of Kronstadt, was seventy-five when she died in 1915. For the last two months of her life she was bedridden, suffering from a kind of paralysis, swelling of the legs, and shortness of breath. In order to breathe she had to lie in bed sitting, alternately dozing and alert. Her last words and conversations are apparently not recorded although we are told that “when she would wake, she would demonstrate flashes of thought, but then would fall

into a semi-coma.” When well, she had been a vigorous organizer and founder of convents and a copious writer and memoirist, but on her death bed all seemed to be peaceful silence; the details of her death agony were so unremarkable yet evidently serene that no one thought to record them.

Finally, the abbess and eldress Euphemia of Serbia, who died in 1958, had suffered increasingly from diabetes which, combined with a bout of rheumatic fever

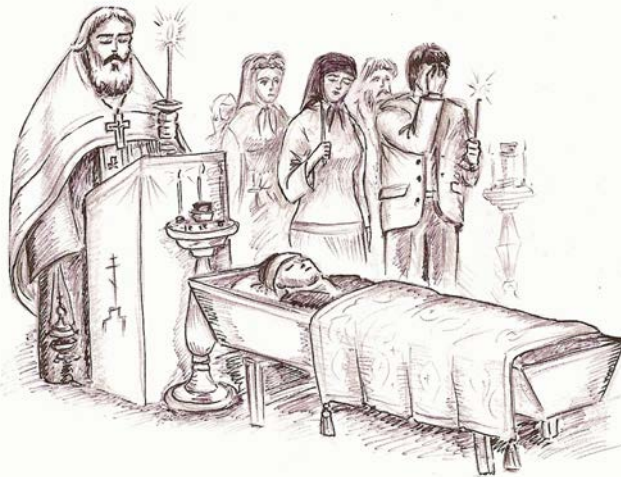
which had damaged her heart when she was young, made her last years miserable. When odorous sores erupted on her legs, oozing pus, her fellow nuns urged her to take the medicine offered by the doctors.

She would answer in the words of the Psalms, *O sister, do you not know that God is the fortress of our heart?* and it therefore became clear to us that the Lord sent her such a serious illness that she might be given greater glory in Heaven... She said, “The Lord knows how much one can endure, and allows just so much for our testing. Since you cannot bear the lesser trials, the Lord does not send you great ones. The Lord promises us a great reward for endurance.”

Conclusion

In the cases of saints it would be ludicrous to expect to find any examples of physician-assisted suicide or any other kind of suicide for that matter.

Such a death was and is viewed with horror by traditional Christians. One might suppose that in today’s Western culture these same monks and nuns might approach death differently,



but in fact there are monastics in the Orthodox Christian tradition spread all throughout today's world (including the United States), and among them is never found a suggestion that death should be hastened by the hand of man. This is true even in very pluralistic and technologically advanced societies such as our own. How to account for this? It seems that traditional Christians today still know their spiritual heritage, and still value and abide by it, following the examples of their fathers and mothers in the faith and being relatively unimpressed by the "new thinking" of our technological age. Their experience affirms that the "old way" (patience with the circumstances God sends or allows at the time of one's end) brings more peace and fulfillment than any other way. This is related to an old-world, almost tribal, ability on the part of many of our ancestors (including non-Christians) actually to sense that the span of life has reached its natural conclusion and the end is near. To interfere with or suppress this inherent sense of things (which modern medicine and technology can easily do if we are not careful) would be to cease being a child of God, fully human, fully aware.

We can look for other distinctive patterns in the deaths of the righteous men and women I have cited above. The first thing we notice is that none of them died suddenly and without warning, say, from a fatal stroke or heart attack. This may have had more to do with lifestyle and diet, which were naturally much different from (and apparently healthier than) ours today. Although the medicine of that time was primitive and unsophisticated, we do have some medical diagnoses to help us grasp what was happening on these particular deathbeds. We note that one of these monastics died from malaria, another from diabetes, and still another from cancer. The rest may well have suffered from congestive heart failure, together with other undiagnosed and poorly understood ailments. In all of these cases, however, there was considerable physical discomfort and sometimes actual agony. In one case, the pain was sufficient to cause the patient to beg God to shorten his sufferings. In almost all of these examples, we also see a deterioration and failing of body functions that would cause most men and women (both the patients and their caregivers), distress and even repulsion (such as oozing sores, etc.).

In the midst of all this physical messiness and pain, however, what do we find? A profound acceptance of God's will and even, in a few cases, a fear that taking medicine might actually interfere with Divine Providence. This is not to say that the taking of medicine, even painkillers, is forbidden to Orthodox Christians (some took medicines, including pain killers, without protest, others did not)—but the Church Fathers teach that although knowledge of medicines is given by God, one should be very careful and aware at all times of the impact such drugs have, even in extremis, on one's mind and soul as well as on one's body. About this, St. Basil the Great wrote,

"Whether or not we make use of the medical art, we should hold to our objective of pleasing God and helping the soul, fulfilling this precept: Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31).

We also notice that in all of these cases there was no impropriety, rudeness, or misbehavior of any kind, such as is sometimes the case with the dying when they have no larger context in which to understand their suffering. Among Orthodox Christians, as exemplified by the saints discussed above, illness is never an excuse for resting from the labor of cooperating with God's Grace and doing spiritual work on oneself. In fact, even if we are bedridden, we are to continue the struggle against the passions [vices], producing fruits worthy of repentance. This work of perfection demands that we acquire patience and long-suffering. What better way to do this than when we lie on a bed of infirmity? St. Tikhon of Zadonsk says that in suffering we can find out whether our faith is living or just "theoretical." The test of true faith is patience in the midst of sufferings, for *patience is the Christian's coat of arms... Many wish to be glorified with Christ, but few seek to remain with the suffering Christ. Yet not merely by tribulation, but even in much tribulation does one enter the Kingdom of God.*

It appears, then, that physician-assisted suicide, aside from being a violation of both Christian law and Christian simplicity, should be absolutely avoided in order not to deprive the terminally ill of the full human and spiritual experience of dying, an experience which, within the context of a traditional Christian way of thinking, living, and acting is far from intolerable or negative; rather, it is exceedingly enriching and valuable, offering another way of knowledge—that of experience informed by theology—a way of knowing of which modern man, in his race to avoid all that is uncomfortable or unpleasant, has almost no understanding.



A man obtains the fear of God if he has the remembrance of his unavoidable death and of the eternal torments that await sinners; if he tests himself every evening as to how he has spent the day, and every morning as to how he has spent the night, and if he is not sharp in his relations with others.

St. Abba Dorotheos

Do not be deceived regarding the knowledge of what will be after your death: what you sow here, you will reap there. After leaving here, no one can make progress. Here is the work, there the reward; here the struggle, there the crowns.

St. Barsanuphius the Great

Ο Ίεράρχης Χρύσανθος, Άγωνιστής για τὰ Δίκαια τῶν Ἑλλήνων

Γράφει ὁ Τάσος Κ. Κοντογιαννίδης, συγγραφέας-δημοσιογράφος.



Τέτοια μέρα, στις 28 Σεπτεμβρίου τοῦ 1949, ὁ ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀθηνῶν καὶ ἀκαδημαϊκός, ὁ ἀπὸ Τραπεζοῦντος Χρύσανθος, ἄφηνε τὴν τελευταία του πνοὴ σὲ ἓνα διαμερισμάτι τῆς Γλυφάδας (ἐπὶ Κατοχῆς διέμενε στὴν ὁδὸ Σουμελά 4 στὴν Κυψέλη). Ἡ πάνδημη κηδεῖα του, παρουσία τοῦ βασιλιᾶ

Παύλου, ἔγινε μὲ τιμὲς πρωθυπουργοῦ.

Ὁ Χρύσανθος ἦταν ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἱεράρχης ἀλύγιστος. Δὲν ἤξερε τί θὰ πεῖ ἐλαστικότης χαρακτηῖρος, τί θὰ πεῖ ἀνάγκη ἠθικῆς προσαρμογῆς πρὸς τὶς περιστάσεις τῆς ὁποίας ἐλατήριο θὰ ἦταν τὸ ἀτομικὸ συμφέρον. Εὐλόγησε τὰ ὄπλα στὸ ΟΧΙ τοῦ 1940, στάθηκε δίπλα στοὺς τραυματίες τοῦ πολέμου καὶ δὲν δέχθηκε συμβιβασμὸ μὲ τὴν κατάσταση ποὺ εἶχε δημιουργηθεῖ μὲ τὸ στρατὸ κατοχῆς...

Στις 27/4/1941 οἱ Γερμανοὶ μπῆκαν στὴν Ἀθήνα. Ὁ Ἑλληνας φρούραρχος Καβράκος τοῦ ζητοῦσε νὰ πᾶνε μαζί νὰ τοὺς ὑποδεχτοῦν στοὺς Ἀμπελοκήπους καὶ νὰ τοὺς παραδώσουν τὴν πόλη. Ὁ Χρύσανθος ἀρνῆθηκε κατηγορηματικὰ λέγοντας «Ἔργον τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου εἶναι νὰ ἐλευθερώνη καὶ ὄχι νὰ ὑποδουλώνη». Δυὸ μέρες μετὰ, ὁ ἐπίτροπος τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς Μεταμορφώσεως Πλάκας, Πλάτων Χατζημιχάλης, τοῦ ἀναγγέλλει τὸ σχηματισμὸ τῆς κυβέρνησης Τσολάκογλου τῆς ὁποίας ἦταν μέλος, καὶ ζητεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν Χρύσανθο νὰ τοὺς ὀρκίσει. Τοῦ ἀπαντᾷ: «Ἡ ἐθνικὴ κυβέρνησις τὴν ὁποία ὄρκισα, ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ ὑφίσταται καὶ νὰ συνεχίζει τὸν πόλεμον. Ἄλλην κυβέρνησιν δὲν δύναμαι νὰ ὀρκίσω!», προσθέτοντας ὅτι «σὲ ὑποπτες καὶ ἀντεθνικὰς ἐνέργειες, ποὺ θὰ εἶναι ἐθνικῶς ὀλέθριες, δὲν μπορεῖ ἡ ἐκκλησία νὰ δώσει τὸν ὄρκον καὶ τὴν εὐλογία τῆς».

Λίγες ὥρες μετὰ, καθὼς ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀρχιεπισκοπὴ γιὰ νὰ κηδέσει τὸν φίλο τοῦ Κων. Σπανοῦδη, δημοσιογράφο στὴν Πόλη καὶ πρόεδρο τῆς ΑΕΚ, συναντᾷ τὸν ὑπασπιστὴ τοῦ Τσολάκογλου (ταγματάρχῃ Δ. Παργαρόπουλο) ὁ ὁποῖος τὸν καλεῖ ἐκ μέρους τοῦ στρατηγοῦ νὰ πάει στὴν ὀρκωμοσίαν. «Ἐγὼ δὲν ἔρχομαι νὰ ὀρκίσω κυβέρνησιν προβληθεῖσα ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, τὰς Κυβερνήσεις ὀρίζει ὁ λαὸς ἢ ὁ Βασιλεὺς. Ἡ κυβέρνησις ποὺ ὄρκισα ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ

ὑπάρχει καὶ νὰ δίδῃ τὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ τοῦ Ἑθνους ἀγῶνα στὴν Κρήτη».

Θαρραλέα στάση τήρησε ὅταν τὸν ἐπισκέφθηκε τὴν ἐπομένῃ ὁ Γερμανὸς στρατηγὸς Στούμ, λέγοντάς του: «Προσέξατε στρατηγέ μου, νὰ μὴν τραυματίσητε τὴν ὑπερηφάνειαν τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Λαοῦ». Λίγες μέρες μετὰ, ὁ μέγας αὐτὸς ἱεράρχης θὰ παυθεῖ καὶ τὴ θέση του θὰ πάρει ὁ ἀπὸ Κορινθίας Δαμασκηνός, μὲ τὶς εὐλογίες τοῦ Τσολάκογλου.

Ὁ Χρύσανθος (κατὰ κόσμον Χαροῖλος Φιλιππίδης) γεννήθηκε στὴ Γρατινὴ Ροδόπης τὸ 1881. Φοίτησε στὸ Γυμνάσιο Ξάνθης, σπούδασε στὴ Θεολογικὴ σχολὴ Χάλκης, χειροτονήθηκε διάκονος τὸ 1903 καὶ ἐστάλη στὴν Τραπεζοῦντα ὡς ἱεροκήρυκας καὶ καθηγητῆς στὸ ἐκεῖ Φροντιστήριον. Σπούδασε στὴ Λειψία καὶ τὴ Λοζάνη, ὀρκίστηκε Μητροπολίτης Τραπεζοῦντος τὸ 1913 καὶ ἀγαπήθηκε ἀπὸ τὸν Ποντιακὸ Ἑλληνισμό. Ὅταν λίγο ἀργότερα οἱ Ρῶσοι κατέλαβαν τὴν Τραπεζοῦντα καὶ ἔφυγε ἡ τουρκικὴ διοίκηση, πῆρε ὑπὸ τὴν προστασία τοῦ τὸν μουσουλμανικὸ πληθυσμὸ.

Κατὰ τὴν ταραχῶδη περίοδο 1915-1923 μεταβάλλεται σὲ ἐθνικὸ ἠγέτη γιὰ τὸν Ἑλληνισμό τῆς «καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀνατολῆς» καὶ ἀγωνίζεται στὸ Παρίσι γιὰ τὰ δίκαιά τῆς φυλῆς μας στὴ Συνδιάσκεψη τῆς Εἰρήνης τοῦ 1919, μὲ συναντήσεις καὶ συνομιλίες ποὺ εἶχε μὲ τὸν Ἀμερικανὸ πρόεδρο Οὐίλσον καὶ τὸν Γάλλο πρωθυπουργὸ Κλεμανσό. Ἐκεῖ ἔθεσε ἐνώπιόν τους τὴν ἀνεξαρτησία τοῦ Πόντου, κέρδισε τὸ θαυμασμὸ τους καὶ βοήθησε σημαντικὰ τὸν Ἐλευθέριον Βενιζέλο στὸ χειρισμὸ τῶν θεμάτων τῆς Ἀνατολῆς.

Τὸ 1921 ὁ πρωθυπουργὸς Γούναρης καλεῖ τὸν Χρύσανθο νὰ μετάσχει τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ἀποστολῆς στὸ Λονδίνο, ἀλλὰ στὴν Τουρκία τὸ «Δικαστήριον τῆς Ἀνεξαρτησίας» τὸ πληροφορεῖται καὶ τὸν καταδικάζει ἐρήμην εἰς θάνατον! Τὸ 1938 ἐκλέγεται ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἀθηνῶν σὲ ἐπανεκλογή, μὲ ἀντίπαλο τὸν ἀπὸ Κορινθίας Δαμασκηνό.

Ἡ Διαθήκη τοῦ Χρύσανθου

Ὁ Χρύσανθος μὲ τὴν ἀπὸ 10/7/1943 διαθήκη τοῦ ζητοῦσε συγγνώμη ἀπὸ ὅσους ἐλύπησε καὶ συγχωροῦσε ὅσους τὸν ἐλύπησαν. Περιουσία δὲν εἶχε, καὶ τὰ λίγα προσωπικά του εἶδη (σταυρὸ, ἀρχιερατικὰς ράβδους, ἄμφια καὶ στυλογράφο) τὰ ἄφησε σὲ συνεργάτες του ἀρχιμανδριῖτες καὶ διακούς. Ἄφησε ὅμως κάτι ἄλλο στοὺς οἰκείους του. Μιὰ ἐντολὴ νὰ μὴν ἀγγίξουν δημόσιο χρῆμα. «Οἱ συγγενεῖς μου κατὰ σάρκα», ἔγραφε, «θὰ σεβαστοῦν τὴ μνήμη μου καὶ δὲν θὰ ζητήσουν συντάξεις καὶ ἐπιδόματα ἀπὸ τὸ κράτος. Ἄν κανεὶς ἀθετήσῃ τὴν τελευταίαν μου ταύτην θέλησιν, τὸν τοιοῦτον ἀποκηρύσσω ἀπὸ συγγενὴν μου καὶ παρακαλῶ Ἐκκλησίαν καὶ Πολιτείαν νὰ ἀπορρίψωσι τοιαύτην ἀσεβὴν αἴτησιν».

Ὁ Καποδίστριας ὡς Πρότυπο Χριστιανοῦ Ἠγέτη

Πρ. Ἐμμανουὴλ Ἀνδρέου Γιαννοῦλη, πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου καὶ πτυχ. Νομικῆς καὶ Θεολογίας Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν.

Αὐτὸ τὸ θέμα μᾶς προτρέπει νὰ διερευνήσουμε τὶς πράξεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ νὰ εἰσχωρήσουμε στὰ ἄδυτα τῆς ψυχῆς ἑνὸς ἀνθρώπου, ὁ ὁποῖος ἀκολούθησε ἐκούσια καὶ συνειδητὰ στὴ ζωὴ του τὴν ὁδὸ τῆς θυσίας καὶ τῆς αὐταπαρνήσεως, ἀρετὲς ἀπόλυτα συμβατὲς μὲ τὴ Χριστιανικὴ διδασκαλία ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ τὴν ἰδέα τοῦ ἔθελοντισμοῦ. Αὐτὸ θὰ ἐπιχειρηθεῖ μέσα ἀπὸ ἓνα ἐνδεικτικὰ ἐπιλεγμένο πλαίσιο ὀρισμένων σταθμῶν τῆς ζωῆς του.

Ὁ Καποδίστριας γεννήθηκε στὴν Κέρκυρα τὸ 1776. Γονεῖς του ἦταν ὁ Κερκυραῖος Πολιτικὸς Ἀντώνιος-Μαρία καὶ ἡ Ἡπειρώτισσα (Κυπρία στὴν καταγωγή) Διαμαντῖνα Γονέμη. Ὑπῆρξε τὸ ἕκτο παιδί αὐτῆς τῆς εὐσεβοῦς πολύτεκνης οἰκογένειας, δύο μάλιστα ἀπὸ τὶς ἀδερφές του ἔγιναν μοναχές. Ὁ λόγιος ἱερωμένος Ἀνδρέας Ἰδρωμένος πολὺ συνέβαλε στὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴ του παιδεία. Ἐπίσης τὸν βοήθησε καὶ ἡ φιλία ποῦ εἶχε μὲ τὸν Μητροπολίτη Ἄρτης καὶ μετέπειτα Οὐγγροβλαχίας Ἰγνάτιο, ἡ οἰκία τοῦ ὁποῖου στὴ Ρωσία ἀπετέλεσε ἀργότερα ἓνα ἀπὸ τὰ πνευματικὰ του καταφύγια.

Ὁ Καποδίστριας ὑπῆρξε μία συγκροτημένη καὶ ὀλοκληρωμένη προσωπικότητα. Ἐβίωνε τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη καὶ ὅλες του οἱ ἐνέργειες διαπνέονταν ἀπὸ τὶς ἠθικὲς ἀρχὲς καὶ τὰ φιλάδελφα αἰσθήματά του. Θαυμάζουμε τὴν ἀκεραιότητα τοῦ χαρακτήρα του καὶ μέσα ἀπὸ μία ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα του. Ἐγραφε: «Εἶμαι εὐχαριστημένος... Ἀντιστάθηκα στὶς πιὸ μεγάλες καὶ γοητευτικὲς προτάσεις... Μοῦ προσφέρθηκαν περισσότερες ἀπὸ μία ὠραῖες ἀποκαταστάσεις. Τὶς ἀρνήθηκα χωρὶς δυσαρέσκειαν. Θὰ εἶχα γίνει κροῖσος στὰ πλούτη, ἀλλὰ στοὺς ἀντίποδες. Θὰ εἶχα προχωρήσει κατὰ χίλια βήματα στὴ σταδιοδρομία μου, ἀλλὰ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὶς ἀρχές μου, ἀπὸ τὴν ἀτμόσφαιρά μας. Δὲν τὸ θέλησα καὶ οὔτε θὰ τὸ θελήσω ποτέ... Ἐλπίζω στὴ Θεϊκὴ προστασία». Σὲ ὅλες τὶς φάσεις τῆς ζωῆς του παρέμεινε πάντα σταθερὸς στὶς οἰκογενειακὲς ἀρχὲς καὶ στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη του. Τὶς ἡμέρες τοῦ Πάσχα 1811 ἔγραψε στὸν πατέρα του: «Μεθαύριο, Μεγάλῃ Πέμπτῃ, θὰ ἐκπληρώσω τὰ Χριστιανικά μου καθήκοντα. Θὰ κοινωνήσω...».

Στὴ συνέχεια ἀναφέρουμε μερικὲς ἀπὸ τὶς ἐνέργειες οἱ ὁποῖες ἐπιβεβαιώνουν τὶς ἀρετὲς τοῦ ἀνδρός. Στὸ Συνέδριο τῆς Βιέννης τὸ 1815, ἐνῶ ὅλοι διασκέδαζαν, ἐκεῖνος ζοῦσε λιτὰ καὶ ὑπεύθυνα: «Οἱ Αὐτοκράτορες χορεύουν, οἱ Βασιλεῖς χορεύουν, ὁ Μέττερνιχ χορεύει, ὁ Καστελερεΐ χορεύει, ὅλος ὁ κόσμος χορεύει», γράφει

ἐφημερίδα τῆς ἐποχῆς. Μόνον ὁ Καποδίστριας δὲν χόρευε. Σοβαρὸς καὶ μετρημένος ξενυχτοῦσε πάνω στὰ διπλωματικά του ἔγγραφα, σκεπτόμενος μὲ ποιὸν τρόπο θὰ μπορούσε νὰ βοηθήσει τὴ σκλαβωμένη πατρίδα του. Ἦταν τότε ποῦ προέτρεψε τὸν τσάρο Ἀλέξανδρο νὰ ἡγηθεῖ μιᾶς Συνομοσπονδίας Ὁρθοδόξων κρατῶν, στὰ ὁποῖα θὰ συγκαταλεγόταν βέβαια καὶ ἡ ὑπόδουλη τότε Ἑλλάδα, μὲ σκοπὸ τὴν ἀποτίναξη τοῦ ὀθωμανικοῦ ζυγοῦ καὶ τὴν ὀμαλὴ ἐνωμάτωσή της σὲ μία μεγάλη εὐρωπαϊκὴ οἰκογένεια «γύρω ἀπὸ μίαν κοινὴν Πατρίδα, τὴν Ἡνωμένην Εὐρώπην», ὅπως ἔγραψε. Αὐτὸ τὸ σχῆμα θὰ βασιζόταν πάνω στὶς Χριστιανικὲς ἀρχὲς τῆς ἀλληλεγγύης καὶ τῆς ἰσότητος καὶ θὰ περιελάμβανε καὶ τὰ μικρότερα κράτη, μὲ τὴν κατάθεση ἑνὸς ὑπομνήματος γιὰ μία πανευρωπαϊκὴ συνεργασία καὶ ἐνότητα. Ἔτσι ὁ Καποδίστριας ἀναδεικνύεται ὡς ὁ πρῶτος ὄραματιστὴς μιᾶς ἐνωμένης Χριστιανικῆς Εὐρώπης. Τὸ ὄραμα τῆς ἐνωμένης Εὐρώπης πραγματοποιήθηκε, δυστυχῶς ὁμως ἡ Εὐρώπη σήμερα τείνει νὰ ἀρνηθεῖ τὴ Χριστιανικὴ καταγωγὴ της καὶ παρατηρεῖται μία μεγάλη ἀνισότης ἀνάμεσα στὶς χώρες τοῦ Βορρᾶ καὶ τοῦ Νότου της.

Ὁ Καποδίστριας μόχθησε ὡσαύτως γιὰ τὴν πνευματικὴ ἀναβάθμιση τῆς νεολαίας. Πίστευε πὼς ἡ ἀνόρθωση τοῦ Γένους συνδεόταν ἄμεσα μὲ τὴ μόρφωση τῶν Ἑλληνοπαίδων: «Χωρὶς πίστιν εἰς τὸν Θεόν, ἀγάπην εἰς τὴν Πατρίδα καὶ ἐκμάθησιν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσης, τὰ Ἑλληνόπουλα θὰ καθοῦν στὶς ξένες χώρες. Φροντίστε, λοιπόν, νὰ διατηρεῖτε ἄσβεστες στὶς ψυχὰς τῶν μαθητῶν σας αὐτὲς τὶς ὑψιστὲς ἀξίες», ἔγραφε τότε πρὸς τοὺς διδασκάλους τοῦ ἔξωτερικοῦ. Μὲ τὴν συνεργασία τοῦ λογίου ἀρχιμανδριτῆ Ἀνθίμου Γαζῆ ἴδρυσεν τὴ «Φιλόμουσον Ἐταιρείαν τῆς Βιέννης», μὲ σκοπὸ τὴ μόρφωση τῶν Ἑλληνοπαίδων. Διέθεσε μάλιστα σημαντικὰ ποσὰ γι' αὐτὸν τὸν σκοπὸ.

Τὸ 1817 ἐκκλησιαζόταν τακτικὰ τὶς Κυριακὲς στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ ἐκκλησίαν τῆς Μόσχας, ὅπου: «Αἰσθανόταν ἰδιαιτέραν χαρὰν, ἐπειδὴ εἶχεν τὴν εὐκαιρίαν νὰ ἀκροᾶται καὶ νὰ ἐννοεῖ τὴν γλώσσαν εἰς τὴν ὁποῖαν δεόμεθα», δηλαδὴ τὴν ὠραιότητα καὶ συνεκτικὴ Ἑλληνικὴ γλώσσα, τὴν ὁποῖα ἐμεῖς σήμερα, δυστυχῶς, τόσο κακοποιοῦμε!

Ὁ ἔξοχος ἄνδρας ἔπραττε πάντα κατὰ συνείδησιν. Ὅταν διεπίστωσε τὴν ἀλλαγὴ πολιτικῆς τοῦ Τσάρου— ὑπὸ τὴν ἐπήρεια τοῦ Μέττερνιχ—πάνω στὸ Ἑλληνικὸ ζήτημα, τότε δὲν δίστασε νὰ ὑποβάλει εὐθαρσῶς τὴν παραίτησή του. Μάλιστα τοῦ ὑπενθύμισε τὰ λόγια του κατὰ τὴ στιγμὴ τῆς ἀναλήψεως τῶν ὑψηλῶν καθηκόντων του: «Μεγαλειότατε, ὁσάκις εὐρεθῶ πρὸ τοῦ τραγικοῦ διλήμματος νὰ ὑποστηρίξω τὰ συμφέροντα τῆς σκλαβωμένης Πατρίδος μου ἢ τὰ συμφέροντα τῆς ἀχανοῦς Αὐτοκρατορίας Σας, δὲν θὰ

διστάσω ούτε στιγμή: θα τεθώ με τὸ μέρος τῆς πατρίδος μου. Εἶμαι Ἕλληνας καὶ θα μείνω Ἕλληνας γιὰ πάντα».

Δὲν δίστασε νὰ θυσιάσει ἀκόμη καὶ τὸν ἀγνὸν ἔρωτά του πρὸς τὴν ἐκλεκτὴ Ἑλληνίδα Ρωξάνδρα Στούρτζα, ὅταν ἀπεφάσισε νὰ κατέβει πρὸς ἐκεῖνο τὸ «ἀπέραντο ἔρεϊπιον», τὴν ἀγαπημένη του Ἑλλάδα, ὕστερα ἀπὸ τὴν πρόσκληση τῆς Γ' Ἐθνοσυνελεύσεως τῶν Ἑλλήνων, τὸ 1827.

«Ἀγωνιῶ νὰ προγνωρίσω τί θέλω ἀπογίνει καὶ ἂν μοῦ ἔχει ὀρισθεῖ νὰ σηκώσω τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐπικαταβαίνοντα εἰς ἐμὲ σταυρὸν μετὰ τὴν ψῆφον τῆς Συνελεύσεως τῆς Τροιζῆνος... Ἡ κάθοδος μου εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα σημαίνει ἄνοδον εἰς τὸν Γολγοθᾶν μου», ἔγραψε τότε πρὸς τὸν ἐκλεκτὸ φίλο του Ἑλβετὸ τραπεζίτη Ἰωάννη Εὐνάρδο. Ἀποτελεῖ μοναδικὴ ἴσως περίπτωση πολιτικοῦ ἀνδρός, ὁ ὁποῖος ξεκίνησε τὴ σταδιοδρομία

του μετὰ τὴν αἴσθησι πῶς δὲν τὸν περιέμεναν δόξες, τιμὲς καὶ ὀφέλη, ἀλλὰ σταυρὸς καὶ μαρτύριο! Φαίνεται πῶς ὁ μέγας ἀνδρᾶς ὅλα αὐτὰ τὰ εἶχε συνειδητὰ ἀποδεχθεῖ. Σὲ αὐτὸ τὸ σημεῖο μάλιστα μιμήθηκε τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦ Χριστό, ὅπως ἀπεδείχθη ἀπὸ τὴν μετέπειτα πορεία του.

Ἔχω τὴν τιμὴ καὶ τὴν εὐθύνη ὡς ἱερεὺς νὰ διακονῶ ἐδῶ καὶ 33 χρόνια στὸν Ἱερὸ Μητροπολιτικὸ Ναὸ Κοιμήσεως Θεοτόκου Αἰγίνης. Στὶς 12 Ἰανουαρίου 1828 στὸν προαύλιον χώρον τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἔγινε ἡ πανηγυρικὴ ὑποδοχὴ τοῦ Κυβερνήτη ἀπὸ τὴν—ἐνωμένη πλέον—Βουλὴ, τὴν Ἀντικυβερνητικὴ Ἐπιτροπὴ καὶ ἕναν ἐνθουσιῶντα—πλὴν καταρρημαγμένο—λαόν. Μετὰ τὴ Δοξολογία, ἀπὸ τὸ πλατύσκαλον τοῦ ἐξώστη προσεφώνησε τὸν Κυβερνήτη ὁ Θεόφιλος Καΐρης. Ὅπως ὁ ἴδιος ἀπεκάλυψε ἀργότερα, ἡ καρδιά του ράγιζε ἀντικρίζοντας τὴ δυστυχία καὶ τὶς ὄψεις τῶν σκελετωμένων παιδιῶν!

Μὲ τὴν ἐγκατάστασή του στὸ Κυβερνεῖο ἄρχισε ἀμέσως τὸ τιτάνιον ἔργον του, ἀπὸ τὸ χάος νὰ δημιουργήσει κράτος.

Ὁ Καποδίστριας ἔστειλε δικούς του ἀνθρώπους καὶ μετὰ δικὰ του χρήματα ἐξαγόρασε σημαντικὸ ἀριθμὸν παιδιῶν ποὺ εἶχαν αἰχμαλωτισθεῖ καὶ μεταφερθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν Ἰμπραὴμ στὴν Ἀλεξάνδρεια. Ἄς ἀναφερθοῦμε ἐδῶ μόνον στὴν κοινωνικὴ μέριμνα τοῦ Κυβερνήτη, ἡ ὁποία ἐπεκτάθηκε μέχρι καὶ στὴν ἴδρυσιν Ἰγυειονομείων καὶ λοιμοκαθαρηθρίων. Σ' ἕνα τεράστιον κτήριον ἐκτάσεως 4.000 τ.μ., ποὺ ἔκτισε τὸ 1829 στὴν Αἶγινα μετὰ τὸν πρωτοεμφανιζόμενον στὴν

Ἑλλάδα ρυθμὸ τῆς ἀπλῆς δωρικῆς ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς, λειτουργήσε οὐσιαστικὰ ἡ πρώτη Σχολὴ Τεχνικῆς καὶ Ἐπαγγελματικῆς Ἐκπαίδευσης στὴν Ἑλλάδα. Οἱ 500 τρόφιμοι τοῦ ὄρφανοτροφείου, ἀγόρια καὶ κορίτσια, εἶχαν τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ παρακολουθοῦν μαθήματα οἰκοδομικῆς, ξυλουργικῆς, τορνευτικῆς, σιδηρουργικῆς, ὠρολογιοποιίας, ραπτικῆς, ὑποδηματοποιίας, βιβλιοδετικῆς καὶ τυπογραφίας. Οἱ ἀποφοιτῶντες ἔπαιρναν ἀπὸ τὸ Κράτος ἕνα μικρὸ χρηματικὸ κεφάλαιον γιὰ τὴν ἀγορὰ τῶν ὀργάνων τῆς τέχνης τους, δηλαδὴ ἐδῶ βλέπομε τὴ λειτουργία τοῦ κράτους προνοίας. Παράλληλα, εὐνοήθηκαν ἡ καλλιέργεια πατάτας, σιταριοῦ καὶ ἡ ἐκτροφὴ μεταξοσκωλήκων. Χορηγήθηκαν καὶ καλλιεργητικὰ δάνεια στὶς κοινότητες γιὰ τὴν καλλιέργεια τῆς ἐλιάς καὶ τῆς σταφίδας. Ὁ Κυβερνήτης ζοῦσε πολὺ ἀπλά. «Ἐμένα μοῦ

χρειάζονται 60 λεπτὰ γιὰ νὰ ζήσω», ἔλεγε. Καὶ ὁ Μακρυγιάννης: «Ὁ Κυβερνήτης ἔτρωγε ἐπὶ τέσσαρις μέρες μίαν κότα».

Εἶχε φοβερὰ ἀδυνατίσει. Στὴν παράκληση τοῦ ἱατροῦ του ἡ ἀπάντησις ἦταν: «Τότε μονάχα θὰ βελτιώσω τὴν τροφήν μου, ὅταν θὰ εἶμαι βέβαιος ὅτι

δὲν ὑπάρχει οὔτε ἕνα Ἑλληνόπουλον ποὺ νὰ πεινάει». Δὲν ἐπιθυμοῦσε νὰ τὸν ἀποκαλοῦν «κόμη». Πολὺ καλύτερα ἀποδεχόταν τὸ «μπαρμπά-Γιάννης» τοῦ λαοῦ. Ντυνόταν ἀπλά. Ὁ Νικόλαος Δραγούμης περιγράφει ἐκεῖνο τὸ χαριτωμένο περιστατικὸ ποὺ συνέβη στὴν πρώτη περιοδεία του στὴν Κορινθία, ὅταν τὸν παρεκάλεσε ὁ Κολοκοτρώνης νὰ ἀλλάξει στολή, ἐπειδὴ ὁ λαὸς ζητωκραύαζε γιὰ Κυβερνήτην του τὸν προπορευόμενον ταχυδρομικὸν διανομέαν Καρδαρᾶ «ἐνδεδυμένον βελούδιον χρυσοκέντητον σεγκούνιον». Ἡ στολή ὅμως ποὺ τελικὰ φόρεσε δὲν διέφερε ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνη τῶν δασονόμων τῆς ἐποχῆς τῆς Ἀντιβασιλείας ἐπὶ Ὀθωνος (κοινῶς τοῦ δραγάτη!). Ὡς ἄνθρωπος, βέβαια, ὁ Καποδίστριας δὲν ἀπέφυγε τὰ λάθη στὰ 55 χρόνια τῆς ζωῆς του. Τὰ ἀγὰ κίνητρα, ὅμως, ὅπως καὶ οἱ ἀρετές του δίκαια μποροῦν νὰ τὸν χαρακτηρίσουν πρότυπον Χριστιανοῦ ἡγέτη ἰδεατό, μετὰ τὴν ἐννοία ὅτι κάλλιστα μπορεῖ νὰ ἀποτελέσει πρότυπον γιὰ ἄλλους.

Στὴ «Μεγάλῃ Ἑλληνικῇ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια» διαβάζομε: «Κατὰ τὴν πρώτην δοξολογίαν θρόνου τοῦ Καποδίστρια ἦταν ἕνα ἀπλοῦν ξύλινον στασίδι. Αὐτὸ ἐχρησιμοποιοῦν ὅταν τακτικῶς ἐκκλησιάζετο τὰς Κυριακάς καὶ ἑορτάς». Πρόκειται γιὰ τὸν «θρονίσκον



Δεσποτικὸν» κατὰ τὸν Κασομούλη, ποὺ κατεσκευάσε ἡ Ἀντικυβερνητικὴ Ἐπιτροπὴ γιὰ τὴν ἡμέρα τῆς ὑποδοχῆς του.

Μέχρι σήμερα αὐτὸ τὸ κάθισμα βρίσκεται στὴν Ἐκκλησία, ἀπέναντι ἀπὸ τὸ Δεσποτικὸ, μέσα στὴ «Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ», κατὰ τὴν ἔκφραση τοῦ ἴδιου τοῦ Καποδίστρια μέσα σὲ κείμενό του, ὅπως στὰ χρόνια τὰ βυζαντινὰ ὁ θρόνος τοῦ Αὐτοκράτορα βρισκόταν ἀπέναντι ἀπὸ τοῦ Πατριάρχη.

Ὁ Καποδίστριας ἤθελε καὶ μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο νὰ καταδείξει τὴ συνέχεια αὐτῆς τῆς παράδοσης. Σκόπευε, μάλιστα, νὰ ἐφαρμόσει τὸ βυζαντινορωμαϊκὸ δίκαιο, τὸ ὁποῖο ἐξ ἄλλου δὲν ἔπαυσε νὰ ἰσχύει στὸν τόπο κατὰ τὴν περίοδο τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας μὲ τὴν «Ἐξάβιβλο» τοῦ Ἀρμενοπούλου. «Καθὼς ἀντικρῦζει κανεὶς τὸ ἄδειο στασίδι τοῦ Καποδίστρια μέσα στὴ Μητρόπολη, εἶναι εὐλογο νὰ φαντάζεται καὶ νὰ διερωτᾶται: ποιά θὰ ἦταν ἡ μορφή τῆς πατρίδας μας σήμερα, ἂν δὲν εἶχε τόσο νωρὶς μεσολαβήσει τὸ τραγικὸ γεγονὸς τῆς δολοφονίας του;». Τὸ ἐρώτημα πάντως παραμένει: Σὲ ποιὲς ἀξίες ἄραγε βασίστηκαν οἱ σύγχρονοι πολιτικοὶ μας, ὥστε νὰ ὀδηγηθεῖ ἡ χώρα στὰ σημερινὰ ἀδιέξοδα; Ἔχω τὴ γνώμη πὼς, ἂν δὲν βρεθοῦν ἄνθρωποι ποὺ νὰ διακατέχονται ἀπὸ τὰ ἴδια μὲ τὸν Καποδίστρια ἰδανικά, πολὺ δύσκολα θὰ προκύψει ἡ ἐπιθυμητὴ ἀπ' ὅλους μας ἀνάκαμψη...

Ὅπως ἔλεγε καὶ ὁ Steven Runciman: «Ἄν ὅλοι οἱ λαοὶ, γιὰ νὰ προοδεύσουν, πρέπει νὰ κοιτοῦν μπροστά, οἱ Ἕλληνες πρέπει νὰ στραφοῦν πίσω, στὶς ἀξίες καὶ στὶς παραδόσεις τους».



Γιὰ τὶς Ἀρρώστιες καὶ Συμφορὲς

Ἀγίου Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο: «Ἀνθρωπικὰ ἐφόδια γιὰ τὴν σωστὴ ἀντιμετώπιση τῶν θλίψεων», τῶν ἐκδόσεων «Ορθόδοξη Κυψέλη».



Ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος στὸ λόγο του, «ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἴτιος τῶν κακῶν ὁ Θεός», μᾶς λέγει:

«...Κάθε κακὸ δὲν εἶναι κακό. Κακὰ εἶναι οἱ ἁμαρτίες· κακὰ δὲν εἶναι ὅσα μᾶς προκαλοῦν ὀδύνη στὸ σῶμα, ὅπως εἶναι οἱ ἀρρώστιες καὶ τὰ τραύματα τοῦ σώματος, ἡ φτώχεια, οἱ ταπεινώσεις, οἰκονομικὲς ζημιές, θάνατοι συγγενῶν, τὰ ὁποῖα ἐνεργεῖ (κατὰ παραχώρηση) πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον τῆς ψυχῆς ὁ σοφὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς Κύριος.

Ὁ Κύριος, ὁ Ὅποῖος ἀφαιρεῖ τὸν πλοῦτο ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς ποὺ τὸν μεταχειρίζονται ἁμαρτωλά, γιὰ νὰ καταστρέψει ἔτσι τὸ μέσο τοῦ κακοῦ. Παραχωρεῖ ἀρρώστιες, σ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ συμφέρε νὰ εἶναι τὸ σῶμα τους δεμένο μὲ τὶς ἀρρώστιες, παρὰ νὰ εἶναι... ἐλεύθερο γιὰ ν' ἁμαρτάνει. Παίρνει μὲ θάνατο ἐκείνους, ποὺ τοὺς συμφέρε ὁ θάνατος παρὰ ἡ παράταση τῆς ζωῆς. Ἐπίσης, προκειμένου νὰ σταματήσει ὁ Θεὸς τὶς ἐκτεταμένες ἁμαρτίες, φέρει πείνα, ξηρασίες, κατακλυσμιαίες βροχές, ποὺ ἀποτελοῦν μαστιγες κοινὲς πόλεων καὶ ὀλοκλήρων ἐθνῶν...»

Ἄλλοῦ πάλιν ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος μᾶς λέγει τὰ ἑξῆς:

«Οἱ ἀρρώστιες τῶν πόλεων καὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν, οἱ ξηρασίες καὶ οἱ ἀφορίες τῆς γῆς, ὅπως καὶ οἱ ἀτομικὲς θλίψεις ἀνακόπτουν τὴν αὔξηση τῶν κακῶν. Αὐτὰ τὰ εἶδη τῶν μὴ πραγματικῶν κακῶν ἐνεργοῦνται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, γιὰ ν' ἀναιρέσουν τὴν ἐνέργεια τῶν ἀληθινῶν κακῶν, ποὺ εἶναι οἱ ἁμαρτίες. Ἐπομένως ὁ Θεὸς ἀναιρεῖ τὸ κακὸ (ποὺ εἶναι ἡ ἁμαρτία) ἀλλὰ τὸ (ὄντως) κακὸ δὲν κατάγεται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό. Ὅπως ὁ γιατρὸς ποὺ δὲν εἰσάγει τὴν νόσο, ἀλλὰ ἀφαιρεῖ τὴν νόσο ἀπὸ τὸ σῶμα. Οἱ ἀφανισμοὶ τῶν πόλεων, οἱ σεισμοὶ καὶ οἱ νεροποντές, οἱ καταστροφὲς στρατευμάτων καὶ τὰ ναυάγια καὶ ὅλες οἱ πολυάνθρωπες συμφορές, ποὺ ἐνεργοῦνται ἀπὸ τὴ γῆ, ἀπὸ τὴ θάλασσα, ἀπὸ τὸν ἄερα, ἀπὸ τὴ φωτιὰ ἢ ἀπὸ ὁποιαδήποτε αἰτία, γίνονται γιὰ τὸν σωφρονισμὸ τῶν ἐπιζώντων ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, ποὺ μὲ ἐκτεταμένες μαστιγες ἀνακόπτει τὴν πάνδημη ἁμαρτωλότητα...».

Δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸ νὰ ἐπιτύχουμε μὲ ἄλλο τρόπο τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποὺ μᾶς ἔχουν ἀπαγγελθεῖ, καὶ νὰ ἀξιωθοῦμε τὴν βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν, παρὰ μόνον ἂν ὀδεύσουμε τὸν ἐδῶ βίον μας μὲ θλίψη.

Ἐὰν εἴμαστε ξύπνιοι, προσεκτικοί, οἱ θλίψεις μᾶς οἰκειώνουν πρὸς τὸν Θεό, καὶ μαθητεύουμε νὰ εἴμαστε ἐπεικεῖς.

Ὁ Θεὸς δὲν ἐμποδίζει τὶς θλίψεις νὰ ἔλθουν, ἀλλὰ ὅταν ἔλθουν εἶναι παρῶν, ἐργαζόμενος νὰ μᾶς καταστήσει χρήσιμους καὶ ἔμπειρους.

Μὴν ἀπελπίζεσαι, ἀλλὰ τότε, ὅταν ἔλθουν οἱ θλίψεις, περισσότερο νὰ ἀφυπνιστεῖς, ἐπειδὴ τότε οἱ προσευχὲς γίνονται πρὸς καθαρές.

Ἡ θλίψη ἐργάζεται ἰσχυροὺς τοὺς θλιβομένους, τοὺς κάμνει κατασκευαστικὸς καὶ ταπεινώνει τὴν διάνοια.

Εἶναι μεγάλο κατόρθωμα τὸ νὰ ὑπομένει κανεὶς τὴν θλίψη μὲ εὐχαριστία.

Οἱ θλίψεις εἶναι τὰ καταλληλὰ φάρμακα στὰ δικά μας ψυχικὰ τραύματα. Ὁ Θεὸς ἐπιτρέπει νὰ γίνονται αὐτὰ γιὰ τὴν θεραπεία τῶν ἰδικῶν μᾶς ψυχῶν.

Κανεὶς δὲν ἐπικοινωνεῖ μὲ τὸν Χριστὸ τρυφώντας καὶ κοιμώμενος, ἀλλὰ ἐκεῖνος ποὺ βρίσκεται σὲ θλίψη καὶ πειρασμὸ, αὐτὸς στέκεται κοντὰ σὲ Ἐκεῖνον.

Μεταμοσχεύσεις

Προσωπική εμπειρία του κ. Δημητρίου Ταντήλα, καθηγητή της Χειρουργικής του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, στην εκδήλωση για την Ενημέρωση για τις Μεταμοσχεύσεις.

Η έπιστήμη λέει ότι πέθανε, αλλά... Πριν από δεκαπενταετία, έφημερεύων έπιμελητής στο Ίπποκράτειο Νοσοκομείο, είχαμε μία κοπέλα 19 χρονών, μετά από άτύχημα και ήταν έγκεφαλικά νεκρή. Την κρατήσαμε ένα μήνα, σαράντα μέρες στον αναπνευστήρα και μετά, λοιπόν, κινητοποιήθηκε ή ομάδα των μεταμοσχεύσεων για να πάρουν τα όργανα.

Όπως είπε κι ο κ. Καρακατσάνης, πρέπει να υπογράψει αναισθησιολόγος, ένας νευρολόγος και ο θεράπων ιατρός. Οι δύο τα είχαν κανονίσει τα πάντα, πήραν υπογραφές, έτοιμασθηκαν τα χαρτιά όλα για τη μεταμόσχευση και περίμεναν, όμως, να πάρουν και τη δική μου υπογραφή, του θεράποντος χειρουργού.

Με ειδοποιούν λοιπόν άμέσως και πηγαίνω στο Ίπποκράτειο και μου λένε «έλα, υπέγραψε, για ν' άρχισει ή μεταμόσχευση».

Λοιπόν, βέβαια τὸ σπῖτι μου ἀπὸ τὸ Ίπποκράτειο εἶναι πέντε λεπτά μετὰ τὸ αὐτοκίνητο· ἐμένα μου φάνηκε χρόνος ὀλόκληρος μέχρι νὰ φτάσω στὸ Ίπποκράτειο καὶ προσευχήθηκα, νὰ δῶ... λέω «Θεέ μου, φώτισε με νὰ μὴ γίνεῖ αὐτὸ ποὺ δὲν πιστεύω». Λοιπὸν πράγματι πήγα στὸ Ίπποκράτειο, ἐκεῖ μῆκαμε στὸ γραφεῖο μου, μοῦ φέρανε τὰ χαρτιά οἱ συνάδελφοι, νὰ υπογράψω κι ἐγὼ καὶ νὰ τελειῶναι. Τοὺς λέω, «δῶστε μου, εὐχαριστῶ πολὺ, περάστε ἔξω, φωνάξτε μου τὴ μητέρα μέσα». Λοιπὸν, φωνάζουνε τὴ μητέρα μέσα καὶ ἄρχισα νὰ τῆς κάνω μία ἐνημέρωση. Λέω ὅτι, ἡ ἐπιστήμη λέει ὅτι πέθανε. Ἐγὼ σὰν χειρουργὸς ποὺ πιστεύω, ποὺ εἶμαι Χριστιανός, δὲν πιστεύω σ' αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα. Καὶ κάτι ἄλλο ἐπιπλέον, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι ἰκανός. Μπορεῖ! Εἶναι Παντοδύναμος, μπορεῖ νὰ κάνει καὶ κάποιο θαῦμα! Ἐπομένως λέω, ἂν θέλεις νὰ πεθάνει ἡ κόρη σου, υπέγραψε. Ἐγὼ διαφωνῶ σὰν γιατρὸς προσωπικά. Ἐγὼ δὲν θὰ υπέγραφα.

Ὅποτε, ξεσηκώθηκε λοιπὸν ἡ μητέρα, ὄχι γιατρέ, λέει, πρὸς Θεοῦ, λέει, τί λές τώρα, λέει, καὶ μόνο ποὺ αὐτὸ μοῦ εἶπες, λέει, μοῦ φτάνει. Λοιπὸν, ὅποτε, λέω, θὰ υπογράψεις; Ὅχι, πῶς θὰ υπογράψω; Ὅταν ὑπάρχει καὶ μία ἐλπίδα! Κι ἐγὼ πιστεύω στὸν Θεό, ὅτι μπορεῖ νὰ κάνει καὶ τὸ θαῦμα του.

Ὅποτε βγαίνω, λοιπὸν, ἔξω, μετὰ πιάνον οἱ συνάδελφοι, τί ἔγινε; Λέω, δὲν θέλει ἡ μαμὰ νὰ υπογράψει. (πρέπει

νὰ υπογράψει ἡ μητέρα ὅτι δέχεται). Μά, λένε, αὐτό... Ὅχι, γιατρέ, λέει, ἐγὼ δὲν υπογράφω!

Λοιπὸν, τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα... Σὲ μία ἐβδομάδα ἡ κοπέλα ἀνένηψε, ἔγινε καλά· εἶχα μάλιστα κι ἕναν βοηθό, εἶναι τώρα παιδοχειρουργός, ὁ ὁποῖος τὸ θυμᾶται τὸ περιστατικὸ καὶ εἶναι ἀνεξίτηλα μέσα στὴν καρδιά του τυπωμένο. Λοιπὸν, ἡ κοπέλα αὐτὴ βγήκε ἀπὸ τὸ νοσοκομείο μας, μάλιστα τὴν κρατήσαμε κανένα μῆνα μετὰ καὶ τὴ γύριζαν στοὺς διαδρόμους ποὺ περπατοῦσε, καὶ εἶναι σ' ἕνα χωριὸ τῆς Ἀριδαίας, παντρεύτηκε κι ἔχει παιδάκια!

Ἄν μου ἐπιτρέπεται, γιὰ νὰ μὴ σᾶς φάω τὸ χρόνο, νὰ κάνω μόνο δυὸ σχόλια μικρούλια. Λοιπὸν, ἐφόσον ἡ διάγνωση τοῦ ἐγκεφαλικοῦ θανάτου μπαίνει καθαρὰ με ἀνθρώπινα κριτήρια, τὰ ὁποῖα ἀνθρώπινα κριτήρια οὐδέποτε εἶναι ἀλάθητα, ἂς τὸ σκεφτοῦμε. Τί θὰ μᾶς ποῦνε αὐτοὶ γιὰ τοὺς μοναχοὺς, στοὺς ὁποίους εἶναι

γνωστὸ ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει πτωματικὴ ἀκαμψία. Θὰ μᾶς ποῦν ὅτι ζοῦνε; Ἐ, ἂς μᾶς ἐξηγήσουν! Ζοῦν ἢ δὲν ζοῦνε;

Και δευτέρον καὶ τρίτον καὶ τελευταῖο. Αὐτὴ ἡ ὑπερευαισθησία μας γιὰ νὰ σώσουμε δέκα, εἴκοσι, τριάντα, ἕκατὸ

ἀνθρώπους... γιὰ νὰ μὴν ὑπάρχει, νὰ ὑπάρχει καὶ μία ἀνάλογη εὐαισθησία, ποὺ σκοτώνουμε τριακόσιες χιλιάδες μωρά, πρὶν γεννηθοῦν; Τὰ σκοτώνουμε καὶ προσπαθοῦμε νὰ δημιουργήσουμε κλωνοποιημένα ἀνθρωπόμορφα τέρατα γιὰ νὰ τοὺς πάρουμε τὰ ὄργανά τους. Μήπως αὐτὸ εἶναι ὑποπτο;

Εὐχαριστῶ πολὺ!



Λέγουν ὅτι γιὰ πέντε αἰτίες παραχωρεῖ ὁ Θεὸς νὰ πολεμοῦμεθα ἀπὸ τοὺς δαίμονες. Πρῶτον γιὰ νὰ διακρίνουμε τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀπὸ τὴν κακία, πολεμοῦντες καὶ ἀντιπολεμούμενοι. Δεύτερη αἰτία, γιὰ νὰ ἀποκτήσουμε τὴν ἀρετὴν μετὰ πόλεμον καὶ κόπον, ὥστε νὰ ἔχουμε βεβαία καὶ σταθερὴ τὴν ἀρετὴν. Τρίτον, γιὰ νὰ μὴ ὑψηλοφρονοῦμε, ὅταν θὰ προκόπτουμε στὴν ἀρετὴν, ἀλλὰ νὰ μάθουμε νὰ εἶμαστε ταπεινοί. Τετάρτη αἰτία, γιὰ νὰ μισήσουμε ὀλοκληρωτικὰ τὴν κακία, ἀφοῦ τὴν δοκιμάσουμε. Καὶ τέλος πέμπτη αἰτία, γιὰ νὰ μὴ λησμονήσουμε τὴν ἀδυναμία μας, οὔτε τὴν δύναμη τοῦ Θεοῦ, ποὺ μᾶς ἐβοήθησε νὰ φθάσουμε στὴν ἀπάθεια.

Ἅγιος Μάξιμος ὁ Ὁμολογητής

Ἀνατολή και Δύση

Ἀγίου Νικολάου Βελμίροβιτς (Ἐπισκόπου Ἀχρίδος, +1956).

Ἡ Δύση εὐρίσκεται στήν σπασμώδη ταραχή, ἐνῶ ἡ Ἀνατολή στήν παραίτηση καί τήν ὑποταγή στό πεπρωμένο.

Ἡ Δύση συνεχῶς τρώγει ἐκ τοῦ Δένδρου τῆς Γνώσεως καί αἰσθάνεται ὀλοένα καί περισσότερον τήν πείνα διὰ τήν γνώση, ἡ Ἀνατολή κάθεται κάτωθεν τοῦ Δένδρου τῆς ζωῆς, ἀλλά δέν μπορεῖ νά φθάση ἔως τὸν καρπὸν.

Ἡ Δύση ἔχει μανία διὰ τὴν ὀργάνωση. Ἡ Ἀνατολή ἔχει μανία διὰ τὸν ὀργανισμό.

Ἡ Δύση ἀπαύστως τακτοποιεῖ τὰ ἐξωτερικὰ πράγματα, ἐνῶ οἱ ἐσωτερικὲς ἀξίες ἡ μία μετὰ τὴν ἄλλη ἐξαφανίζονται. Ἡ Ἀνατολή ἀπαύστως καλλιεργεῖ τὰς ἐσωτερικὲς ἀξίας, καθὼς αἱ ἐξωτερικαὶ πίπτουν καί χάνονται.

Ἡ Δύση κτίζει τοὺς τερατώδεις βαβυλώνιους πύργους, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ οἱ πύργοι αὐτοί... κτίζονται ἀπὸ ἀκατέργαστη πέτρα καί ἐπειδὴ πάντοτε τείνουν πρὸς μία πλευρά, ταχέως καταρρέουν· ἡ Ἀνατολή ἐν ἰδρωτί κατεργάζεται «πέτρα τὴν πέτραν» καί κατάφερε νά κατεργασθεῖ τὰς ὠραιότερας πέτρας, ὅμως, καθόλου δέν μπορεῖ νά τὰς συναρμολόγησῃ σὲ ἓνα οἰκοδόμημα.

Στὴν Δύση καλλιεργοῦνται τὰ πράγματα καί τὰ πράγματα λάμπουν, καθὼς ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὀλοένα καί περισσότερον ἐξαγριώνεται καί σκεπάζεται μὲ τὸ σκότος. Στὴν Ἀνατολή καλλιεργοῦνται μόνον μερικοὶ ἄνθρωποι καί αὐτοὶ λάμπουν, καθὼς τὰ πράγματα εἶναι ξεχασμένα στὸν ἀγριότοπο καί μεγαλώνουν ἐκεῖ ἐντὸς τῶν ζιζανίων.

Ἡ Δύση πιστεύει πρωτίστως εἰς τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἔπειτα εἰς τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ καί τελικῶς εἰς τὸν Θεὸν Ἡ Ἀνατολή πιστεύει εἰς τὸν Θεόν, ἀλλὰ ἐκμηδενίζει τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ καί ἀπορρίπτει τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Διὰ τοῦτο ἡ Δύση δέν ἔχει τὴν ἐνότητα, οὔτε μπορεῖ νά φθάσῃ μέχρι τὴν ἐνότητα, διότι ἡ ἐνότητα ὑπάρχει μόνον ἐν Θεῷ· οὕτως ἡ Ἀνατολή ἔχει τὴν ἐνότητα ἐσωτερικῆ, ἀλλὰ δέν θέλει νά τὴν ἐφαρμόσῃ καί στὰ ἐσωτερικά. Διὰ τοῦτο τόσο συχνὰ ἡ δραστηριότητα τῆς Δύσεως μετατρέπεται στὸν πόλεμο καί τὴν εἰρήνη καί τῆς Ἀνατολῆς εἰς τὴν παραίτηση καί τὴν ὑποταγή στό πεπρωμένο.

Διὰ τὸ ὅλα γίνονται οὕτω διερωτᾶσαι, καλὸ μου παιδί; Ἐπειδὴ ἡ Δύση δέν μπορεῖ νά δεχθεῖ τὸν Χριστόν, καί ἐπειδὴ ἡ Ἀνατολή δέν μπορεῖ νά δεχθεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν. Ἡ ἔπειδὴ ἡ Δύση ἀνεγνώρισε τὸν ἄνθρωπον καί δέν ἀναγνωρίζει τὸν Θεόν, ἐνῶ ἡ Ἀνατολή ἀνεγνώρισε τὸν Θεόν καί δέν ἀναγνωρίζει τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

Διὰ τοῦτο ἡ Δύση εὐρίσκεται στήν σπασμώδη ταραχή καί ἡ Ἀνατολή στήν παραίτηση στό πεπρωμένο. Καθὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἀπλώνει καί τὰ δικά Του χέρια, διὰ νά ἐναγκαλιστεῖ εἰς μίαν ἀγκάλη καί τὴν Ἀνατολή καί τὴν Δύση, ἀλλὰ δέν μπορεῖ· δέν μπορεῖ νά ἐναγκαλιστεῖ τὴν Ἀνατολή, λόγω τῆς νιοβάνας, οὔτε τὴν Δύση λόγω τῶν ξιφῶν.

Ἴδου ἡ Ἀνατολή καί ἡ Δύση εἶναι στήν ψυχὴ σου. Ὁ σπασμὸς καί ἡ παραίτησις εἶναι σπόροι στὸν ἴδιο ἀγρό. Τὸ Δένδρον τῆς Γνώσεως καί τὸ Δένδρον τῆς Ζωῆς μεγαλώνουν τὸ ἓνα πλάι εἰς τὸ ἄλλο. Ἡ Ἀνατολή

καί ἡ Δύση συγκρούονται εἰς ἕκαστο ἄνθρωπον. Καί δέν σημαίνουν τὴν συγκατοίκηση, ἀλλὰ τὴν σύγκρουσιν. Ἐὰν ἡ Ἀνατολή καί ἡ Δύση σήμαιναν τὴν συγκατοίκηση καί ὄχι τὴν σύγκρουση, στὸν ἄνθρωπον θὰ βασιλεύεν ἡ εἰρήνη, ὡς καί εἰς τὸν κόσμον τότε εἰς τὴν θέση τῆς σπασμώδους ταραχῆς

καί τῆς παραιτήσεως στό πεπρωμένο θὰ ἦσαν ἄλλες δυνάμεις, θετικὲς καί ἡπιες.

Γνώρισε τὸ Δένδρον τῆς Ζωῆς καί θὰ θεραπευθεῖς ἀπὸ τὰς ἀσθενείας καί τῆς Δύσεως καί τῆς Ἀνατολῆς. καί θὰ γίνεις ὑγιὴς καί πλήρης ἄνθρωπος. Ἐνας ὑγιὴς καί πλήρης ἄνθρωπος εἶναι αἰσιόδοξος. Τότε ἡ δραστηριότητα καί ἡ πίστη—τὰ ἀντίθετα τῶν ἐν λόγω ἀσθενειῶν—θὰ ἀνθίσουν στὸν σκουπιδότοπο τῆς σπασμώδους ταραχῆς καί τῆς παραιτήσεως στό πεπρωμένο.



Στὸν πρῶτο καιρὸ ποὺ ἤμουν κοντὰ στὸν ἅγιον Γέροντά μου, ὅταν πρωτοπῆγα κοντὰ του, ἐκεῖ σ' ἐκείνον τὸν ἀπαράκλητο τόπο τῆς ἐρήμου, ἐκεῖ κοντὰ σ' αὐτὸν τὸν ἄνθρωπο, γνώρισα καί εἶδα στήν πράξη τὸν ἐγωισμό μου.

Γέροντας Ἐφραίμ Ἀριζόνας

Μὴ Γίνεσθε Σκλάβοι Ἀνθρώπων

Περιοδικὸν «Ἄρδην» τ. 11.

“La science est trop lente, que la priere galope et que lumiere gronde.”

«Ἡ ἐπιστήμη βραδυπορεῖ. Καλπάζει κείνη ἢ προσευχὴ καὶ τὸ φῶς βρονχᾶται.»

Ἀρθοῦρος Ρεμπὼ

“Une Saison en Enfer”

(«Μία Ἐποχὴ στὴν Κόλαση»)

† † †

Υπάρχει στὸν πλανήτη ἓνας τόπος ὅπου θάλλει ὡς καθεστῶς, μόνιμο διότι νόμιμο: ἡ οἰκουμενικότης. Τόπος τέτοιος δὲν εἶναι βεβαίως ὁ ΟΗΕ, διότι ἐκεῖ σαρώνει τὸ Συμβούλιο Ασφαλείας του· καὶ μέχρι νὰ καταργηθεῖ τὸ Συμβούλιο Ασφαλείας, οἰκουμενικότης δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ὑπάρξει. Ἄλλωστε, καὶ μετὰ ἀπὸ τὴν ἐνδεχομένη του ἐξαφάνιση, θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ καταργηθοῦν καὶ οἱ ψηφοφορίες ἀπὸ τὸν ΟΗΕ. Μὲ νόμιμο τὸ νόμιμον, ἄλλωστε, 51%-49%, ἓνα καθεστῶς οἰκουμενικότητος δὲν ὑφίσταται. Κατατυραννεῖ, ἀπλῶς, ἡ δικτατορία τῆς ψηφοφορίας. Κι ἂν ὑπάρχει ἀντίρρηση ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ, ἄς ρωτήσουμε τὸ νικημένο 49%, πῶς νοιώθει...

Οὔτε τὸ Ἴντερνέτ, βεβαίως, παράγει οἰκουμενικότητα, διότι ἄλλο κυκλοφορία κι ἄλλο εὐφορία. Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο δὲν παράγει καθεστῶς οἰκουμενικό, διότι χρειάζεται νὰ ἔχει ἐνορίες. Χωρὶς ἐνορία, πατριαρχεῖο Οἰκουμενικὸ δὲν νοεῖται, ἄρα, χωρὶς κάποια τουλάχιστον ὄρια, τὸ Πατριαρχεῖο παύει ὑφιστάμενο. Ἡ οἰκουμενικότης ὅμως εἶναι ἓνα καθεστῶς, ποὺ καταργεῖ τὸ ὄριον, εἶναι πέραν τῶν ὀρίων ποὺ θέτουν ἀμοιβαίως ἢ ἑτεροβαρῶς οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ὅπως π.χ. τὸ τραγωδίας σημαντικόν, «ἄρχομεν τῶν ἐκεῖ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπακούωμεν ἄλλου»...

Ἡ οἰκουμενικότης, ὡς καθεστῶς γιὰ ὅλους τοὺς καθεστῶτες, πρέπει νὰ εἶναι μία ὑπερορία, ἀλλοιῶς ξαναπέφτει στὸ σύνορο. Τὸ μόνο, λοιπόν, στὸν κόσμον μὴ συνοριακὸ καθεστῶς, εἶναι ὁ τόπος τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους. Κι ὅμως ἔχει σύνορα καὶ μάλιστα περιορισμένα, ἀφοῦ αὐτὰ ὀρίζονται ἀπὸ ἓναν τόπο μικρὸ κι ἓνα κατὰ φύσιν ἄτοπον, δηλαδὴ τὴν ἀπουσία τοῦ θηλυκοῦ. Ὁ ὅποιος ὅμως τοῦ βίου πλάνης καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπείων γυρολόγος, αὐτός, μόλις πάρει ἀντίδωρο τὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος, γνωρίζει πῶς τί πάει νὰ πεῖ γιὰ τὰ σωθικά του τὸ «ἐπ’ ἐλευθερία ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί».



Πουθενά, σὲ κανένα καθεστῶς, δὲν νοιώθεις τόσο ἐλεύθερος, τόσο ἀπελευθερωμένος ἀπὸ τὴν «πρὸς ἀλλήλους τῶν καθ’ ἡμέραν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ὑποψίαν», ποὺ εἶναι τὸ τραγικό, ἐς αἰεὶ, σύνορο τοῦ Θουκυδιδείου καθεστῶτος γιὰ μία σώφρονα συνύπαρξη μεταξὺ τῶν ἐμφοβῶν συμπαικτῶν τοῦ ἀντιπάλου δέους. Ἐκεῖ, στὸ περιβόλι τῆς Παναγίας, καταργεῖται ἡ περὶ καθεστῶτος ὀρθοφροσύνη, ποὺ ἐπιτάσσει ὅτι «τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ δέους ξυνίσταται», ὥστε αὐτὰ τὰ πάντα, νὰ μποροῦν νὰ συνίστανται ὡς καθεστῶς τῆς ἑτερότητας τῶν συμπαικτῶν, δηλαδὴ ὡς καθεστῶς ἐλευθερίας. Διότι, ἐκεῖ, ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπη τῆς Ἐλεούσας, βλέπουμε στὸ πετσί μας καὶ τὴν σάρκα τῶν ἄλλων νὰ λειτουργεῖται σὲ καθ’ ὀλοκληρίαν καθημερινότητα, τὸ ἄλλως ἀνέφικτον παντοῦ, τὸ ἀψηλάφητο ἄλλοῦ, νὰ πετυχαίνει τὸ ἐπίτευγμα, τὸ πανηγυρτζίδικο αὐτό, «Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀμερόμινους εἶναι». Νὰ λειτουργεῖται καὶ νὰ λειτουργεῖ ἡ ἀμερμνησία, δηλαδὴ νὰ ἐφαρμόζεται

ἐμπράκτως ἡ οἰκουμενικὴ τῶν πάντων ἐλευθερία, ποὺ καταργεῖ τὸ δέος μου ἐνώπιον τοῦ φοβισμένου ἐνώπιόν μου ἄλλου: ἐλευθερία οἰκουμενικὰ ἀμέρμνη, ποὺ καταργεῖ τὰ σύνορα. Ὁ φόβος παράγει πάντοτε τὰ σύνορα, ἐνῶ ἡ οἰκουμένη ἔξω βάλει τὸν φόβον!

Ἐπὶ ἓνα συνεχῆς «δωρεάν» στὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος,

ποὺ δὲν μπορεῖς νὰ τὸ καταλάβεις, ἂν δὲν νοιώσεις, ὅτι αὐτὸ τὸ «δωρεάν δότε» ἐκρέει ἀπὸ μιὰ ἀέναη ἐκρηξη ἐλευθερίας, ποὺ ἐκρήγνυται ἐκεῖ, μέσα ἀπὸ μιὰ συνεχῆ ἐνδορρηξία τῆς ἀνθρωπαρεσκείας καὶ τοῦ ἐγώ. Τὸ «ἐγώ» αὐτοκενοῦται, ὄχι ἀπλῶς μέσα σ’ ἓνα κοινοβιακὸ «ἐμεῖς», ἀλλὰ σ’ ἓνα «ἐσύ» τοῦ πλησίον κι ἔτσι τὸ καθεστῶς, ἐκεῖ, γίνεται Διακονία. Καὶ γνωρίζουμε—χωρὶς ἐμεῖς νὰ τὸ πετυχαίνουμε—ὅτι ἡ Διακονία τοῦ πλησίον εἶναι μιὰ Οἰκουμενικότης ἐν κινήσει, ποὺ νικᾷ τὸ ἀκίνητο σύνορο τοῦ φόβου.

Πουθενὰ ἄλλοῦ, ἔξω καὶ παντοῦ, δὲν βλέπεις νὰ χτίζεται σκαλί-σκαλί, ἐκεῖνο τὸ δυσθεώρητο ἀνθρωπίνους ὀφθαλμοῖς τὸ «ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰρήνης τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου», ὅσο στὸ Περιβόλι τῆς Παναγίας.

Μιὰ ἀνειρήνευτη προσευχὴ ὑπὲρ τοῦ σύμπαντος τῆς εἰρήνης, μιὰ εἰρηνευμένη καταλλαγὴ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἐμπολέμου σύμπαντος κόσμου, τέτοια οἰκουμένη εἰρήνης ὀργώνει, σπεῖρει, ἀρδεύει καὶ συνάγει αὐτὸς ὁ Θεόδοτος στύλος τῆς ὑπομονῆς. Μιὰ εἰρήνη ποὺ ἀναπαύει δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους, διότι καταργεῖ τὸ δίκιο καὶ τὸ ἄδικο τοῦ καθενός, διὰ τῆς κενωτικῆς—ὑπὲρ τοῦ οἰουδῆποτε διπλανοῦ—ἀγάπης.

Καὶ ὅταν καθεστηκυῖα τάξις γίνεται ἡ ἀγάπη, ἐκεῖ, τὰ σύνορα πάσχουν τὴν «καλὴν ἀλλοίωσιν» καὶ μεταμορφώνονται σὲ οἰκουμένη. Ἡ ἀγάπη δὲν γνωρίζει σύνορα. Ἀγάπη κατ' ἐπιλογὴν, δηλαδὴ ἀγάπη μὲ σύνορα-ὄρια, σημαίνει ὅτι ζῆ ἀκόμη ὁ «ζοφώδης ἔρως τῆς ἁμαρτίας», δηλαδὴ ἡ ἐπιβολὴ τῆς ἡδονῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐπὶ τῆς ἡδονῆς τοῦ ἑτέρου. Στὸ θεοφρούρητο περιβόλι, ὡς εἰρήνην ἱερουργεῖ ἡ ἀγάπη. Ἡ ἀγάπη ὅμως σημαίνει οἰκουμενικὴ ἀγκαλιὰ καὶ ἡ ἀγκαλιὰ δὲν κάνει διακρίσεις: ἀγκαλιάζει. Πλαστουργεῖ οἰκουμένη. «*Εἰ θέλοι, δύνασαι ὅλος πῦρ εἶναι*», μᾶς παροτρύνει, ἀγαπητικὰ καὶ περιγελαστικὰ τὸ Γερωντικόν, ὅμοια μὲ τοὺς γελαστοὺς Γέροντες τοῦ Ὁρους, ποὺ σὲ πραινούν, κοροϊδεύοντας τρυφερὰ τὴν γεώδη σου τρυφή. Ἄν θέλεις... Ἄν θέλεις, μπορεῖς νὰ γίνεις φωτιὰ καὶ νὰ πυρπολήσεις τὰ ἀναλώσιμά σου, τὰ νευρωσικά σου τὰ φθαρτὰ, αὐτὰ ποὺ σὲ πνίγουν μέσα στὴ συσσώρευση τῶν φθαρτῶν, μέσα σου. Ἄν θές, ἂν ἀντέχεις τὴν ἀριστοκρατικὴ σου ἔκρηξη, σπάστα ὅλα! Ὁλλα τὰ ἀναλώσιμά σου, πέταξέ τα ὅλα καί, εἰ θέλοι, πέταξε! Ποτὲ καὶ πουθενὰ ἄλλου δὲν ἀκούγεται ὡς βροντὴ ἐλευθερίας καὶ πράξις ὑποποιοῦ κενώσεως ὁ ἐπινίκιος ὕμνος, ναί, «*Τὰ σὰ ἐκ τῶν σῶν Σοὶ προσφέρωμεν κατὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ πάντα*». «Ναί» στὴν ἀπελευθέρωση τοῦ σαρκίου μας ἀπὸ τὸ σαρκίον μας, ἄρα, «ναί», στὴν οἰκουμένη τῆς ἐρωτικῆς μετοχῆς.

Στὴν ἀγία ἀνηφόρα τοῦ Ὁρους, ὅλα τὰ «ὕλικα ἀγαθὰ», ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλα τὰ ἄυλα «ἀγαθὰ», ὅπως ἡ πρωτιά, τὸ ἀρχηγῆλικι, ἡ ἀνθρωπαρέσκεια, ὅλα τοὺς παίρνουν τὴν κατηφόρα καὶ καταντοῦν ἐκεῖ στὴ θάλασσα τοῦ Ὁρους, στὰ ψάρια ποὺ τρέφουν τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ ἐμᾶς τοὺς μοναχοὺς. Τὸ περιβόλι τῆς Κουροτρόφου ἀνήκει σὲ ὅλους, Οἰκουμενικὴ ἰδιοκτησία τῆς Παγγενῆς καὶ τῆς Λαοθάλασσας, μᾶς τρέφει ὅλους, ὅλους μᾶς ντύνει καὶ μᾶς στολίζει. Ἴσους καὶ ἀριστοκράτες, Ὁμοίους, κατὰ διάκρισιν πάντοτε τῆς ζωοποιοῦ μας νεκρώσεως: ὅσο πιὸ πολὺ τὸ μαδᾶς καὶ τὸ φοφᾶς μέσα σου τὸ «δικό μου καὶ δικό σου», τόσο πλουσιώτερος γίνεσαι καὶ ἀνακαλύπτεις καὶ μέσα σου καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἔξω σου, ἓνα ἄλλου εἶδους ἀρχηγῆλικι, παραμυθιασμένο ἀπὸ τὴν ὑποποιοῦν σου κένωσιν καὶ σαλταρισμένο πρὸς τὴν θέωσιν.

«*Τὰ σὰ ἐκ τῶν σῶν*», πρὸς τὸν κάθε πλησίον διπλανό μας! Ὅλα δικά του ἄς εἶναι! Καὶ γι' αὐτὸν τὸν πλησίον, ὅλα δικά μου πρέπει νὰ εἶναι! «*Ἀλλήλων ἰσόδοιοι, ἀλλήλων κύριοι... ἐν τῇ ἀμάχῳ ἐλευθερία*» μας... Ἐνα πανηγυρτζίδικο μηδέν-μηδέν ἢ καλύτερα, μία διαρκῆς ἰσοπαλία ἀνάμεσα σὲ δύο ἐγωπάθειες, γιὰ ἓνα γιορταστικὸ ἓνα-ἓνα! Διαρκῆς «μετάδοσις», «ἀντίδοσις» ὅλων πρὸς ὅλα καὶ ὅλους, «*Σοὶ προσφέρωμεν κατὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ πάντα*», μόνον τόσο πολὺ, μόνον συνεχῶς ἐκεῖ, στὸ Ἅγιον Ὁρος.

Εκεῖ, μόνον τόσο ἐκεῖ, καὶ μόνον τόσο πολὺ, ζῆ καὶ βασιλεύει τὸ οἰκουμενικὸ κοινωνικο-πολιτικὸ καθεστῶς τοῦ «δὲν ὑπάρχουν δικά σου καὶ δικά μου»! Τὸ Ἁγιορείτικο κοινωνίας «σύστημα» δὲν εἶναι οὔτε «κεφαλαιοποιητικὸ» οὔτε «ἀναδιανεμητικὸ». Εἶναι κοινωνικῆς ἀσωτείας ὀλοποιητικόν. Ὅλοι τοὺς ποιητὲς τοῦ Προσφόρου, οἱ καλόγηροι ποιοῦν συνεχῶς τὸ Ὅλον. Καὶ τὸ προσφέρουν Πρόσφορον πρὸς ὅλους, κατὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ πάντα, μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν καθημερινὴ τους ἀπογύμνωσι καὶ τῆς Παγγενῆς τοὺς τὸ οἰκουμενικὸ πανηγύρι, γιορτὴ καθημερινὴ καὶ διάσκεδαση (διάσκεδάννυμι)—σκόρπισμα, ἀσωτεία «*ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰρήνης τοῦ σύμπαντος κόσμου... τὰ σὰ ἐκ τῶν σῶν*»...

Μόνον στὸ περιβόλι τῆς Βρεφοκρατούσας καταλαβαίνεις πόσο νηπιώδης νεύρωση εἶναι νὰ γίνεσαι μίξερὸς ἰδιοκτήτης, κτήρῳ τοῦ ἰδίου, ἐνῶ, ἂν πετάξεις τὶς κτήσεις καὶ κατακτήσεις σου τὶς «ἴδιες», μπορεῖς νὰ γίνεις κτήτωρ-πρωτομάστορας τοῦ αἰδίου πού, δυνάμει, κατοικοεδρεῖ ἐντός σου καὶ γιὰ τὰ ἔξω σου. «*Τὸ δὲ ἐμόν καὶ τὸ σὸν τοῦτο ρήματά ἐστι ψιλὰ μόνον*», ψιλὰ γράμματα γιὰ παίχτες μὲ ἀποψιλωμένη λογικὴ. Μόνον ὅσο ἀποψιλῶνεις τὸ «ἐμόν» καὶ τὸ «σόν», μόνον μὲ τὴν ἀποψίλωσι τοῦ ἐδάφους καὶ τοῦ ὑπεδάφους σου ἀπὸ τοῦτα τὰ «ψιλὰ ρήματα», πού σοῦ χαϊδεύουν τὸ μαλακό σου ὑπογάστριο, μόνον ἔτσι γίνεσαι ἀρχηγὸς τῆς Οἰκουμένης καὶ παίζεις στὸν μεγάλο τελικό. Ἄλλοιῳ, παραμένεις πάντοτε ἐπαρχιακὸς προύχοντας καὶ μικρομεσαίος νταβατζῆς. Κι ὅσο πιὸ πολὺ μένεις κολλημένος στὰ εἶδη διατιμήσεως, τόσο πιὸ πολὺ γίνεσαι δούλος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, γιὰ τὴν πρῆπει νὰ τοὺς κολακέψεις, νὰ τοὺς ὑποτάξεις, νὰ τοὺς ἐξαγοράσεις καί, τότε, χάνεις τὴν Οἰκουμένη πού ἔχεις μέσα σου καὶ ἔξω σου.

Στὸ Ἅγιο Ὁρος παράγεται μιὰ παραγωγικότητα καὶ ἓνα ὑπερπροϊόν, ποὺ ἐπιβάλλει ἓνα ὀλοκληρωτικὸ καθεστῶς, ὅπου «*ἡ τιμὴ, τιμὴ δὲν ἔχει*». Ὅπου ἡ τιμὴ εἶναι τὸ μόνο, καθολικὸ, ἐνικώτατο καὶ οἰκουμενικὸ «ἀγαθόν», ἀδιατίμητο.

Στὸ Ἅγιο Ὁρος, παντοῦ καὶ ἐδῶ, «*...τιμῆς ἠγοράσθητε. Μὴ γίνεσθε δούλοι ἀνθρώπων*».



Ἄν ὁ Μωυσῆς δὲν ἔπαιρνε ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸν ράβδον ἐξουσίας, δὲν θὰ γινόταν θεὸς γιὰ τὸν Φαραῶ, ὥστε νὰ τιμωρῆ μὲ μάστιγες αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν Αἴγυπτον. Ἐτσι καὶ ὁ νοῦς ἂν δὲν πάρῃ στὸ χέρι του τὴν δύναμη τῆς προσευχῆς, εἶναι ἀδύνατον νὰ συντρίψῃ τὴν ἁμαρτία καὶ τὶς δαιμονικὲς δυνάμεις.

Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Σιναΐτης

THE IMAGINATIVE FACULTY, FANTASY AND IMAGINATION [PART 2 OF 2] [CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE]

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from "The Science of Spiritual Medicine: Orthodox Psychotherapy in Action."

Manifestations of Fantasy and Imagination

It is important to investigate how fantasy and imagination are manifested, how they make their appearance and how they develop. This means looking at the factors that stimulate the soul's imaginative faculty.

The senses play a significant role in the development of fantasies. Most of the time, imagination is a reworking of the images brought to us by the senses. These are images that come from perceived reality. St. Maximos teaches that, when the body is impelled by the senses towards desires and pleasures, the degenerate nous *concedes and assents to its impassioned fantasies and impulses*. Thus, when the body is motivated by the senses, the nous consents to fantasies and imaginings. We see something, we desire it, we feel pleasure, and the imaginary image is created. Likewise, the memory of a person, thing or subject arouses the imagination. While the degenerate nous acts in this way, the virtuous nous *exercises self-control and holds itself back from impassioned fantasies*.

Again, St. Maximos teaches, *We carry about with us impassioned fantasies of things we have experienced*. When we experience various things, when we acquire a passion for someone or something, we naturally have impassioned fantasies and imaginings, which we carry around with us. In addition, St. Gregory Palamas writes that the imaginative faculty of the soul assimilates imprints or images from the senses. *This faculty totally separates, not the senses themselves, but the images that exist within them from their bodies*. The senses are not to blame, but through the senses *things that have been heard, tasted, smelt and touched* are impressed on the soul's imaginative faculty and become visible.

Thoughts are also connected with the senses, and fantasies can enter us through thoughts too. St. Hesychios the Priest says that *Every thought enters the heart in the form of a mental image of something perceptible to the senses*. Mental images of perceptible objects assail our thoughts. St. Gregory of Sinai says **the causes of passions are sinful acts, the causes of thoughts are passions, and the causes of fantasies are thoughts**. Passions come from the sins that a person continually commits. The passions in their turn create many thoughts, because according to which passions we have, the corresponding thoughts are provoked. Then the thoughts become a source of fantasies.

According to the teaching of St. Gregory of Sinai, when the passions are active, some thoughts precede and some follow.

In other words, sometimes the thought comes first and the fantasy follows and sometimes the fantasy comes first and the thought follows, though this happens more rarely. In any case, thoughts are very closely connected with fantasies and imaginings. *Every thought is an imagination in the nous of something perceptible to the senses* (Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos). Every thought is a combination of an image and a concept. It is not a simple idea, but is always linked with fantasy and imagination.

Man's nous, revolving around and preoccupied with images originating from the senses, *formulates various kinds of thoughts by reasoning, analogy and inference. This happens in various ways, passionately or dispassionately or somewhere in between, with or without error. These thoughts give rise to most virtues and vices, and to opinions, whether right or wrong*. (St. Gregory Palamas). The prevailing state of our thoughts is of paramount importance. If our thoughts are satanic, they poison our whole spiritual organism. If they are divine, they create spiritual health within us. Thoughts are always linked with imaginings, good or bad.

As sense perceptions and thoughts are closely connected with passions, fantasies and imaginings also originate from the passions or are even expressed through them. St. Neilos the Ascetic identifies an important point: If someone gets rid of his passions but continues to be negligent, *he will find that the images of past fantasies begin to emerge again like young shoots*. We can eradicate the passions and struggle to make them inactive, but the images of past fantasies can penetrate our imaginative faculty if we are careless and do not live with spiritual vigilance. Anyone who is not vigilant and watchful creates the conditions for the passions to come back in through their images. Thus the passions produce fantasies and imaginings, and fantasies and imaginings create an environment in which these passions can re-appear.

Since the greatest and most terrible passion of all is pride, fantasy and imagination are closely linked with pride. Someone who is proud has something wrong with his imaginative faculty. It is inflamed. It conceives all kinds of images and fantasies and makes his soul an earthquake zone.

Fantasies and imaginings are also expressed in dreams, which are the main indication that images exist within the soul. St. Diadokos of Photiki says: *Dreams are generally nothing more than images reflecting our wandering thoughts, or else they are the demons' mockery*. Most dreams are the result of imagination originating from the development and existence of passions. Consequently, those who are engaged in the acquisition of virtue take care *never to trust imagination*. In addition, St. Maximos says that when desire increases the materials that cause sensual pleasure, then *the nous fantasizes during sleep*. Dreams are fantasies, and they relate to the passions existing within us. From the images in these fantasies, we can discern which passions we have.

Since fantasies and imaginings are a phenomenon of our fallen state and both the devil and man have imagination, man is subjected to satanic energy through his imaginative faculty, as we mentioned above. The devil deceives us through fantasy and imagination and many mental images are the result of his work. St. Hesychios the Priest says: *Being a bodiless nous, the devil is unable to deceive our souls except through fantasies and thoughts.* He continually excites the soul's rational and imaginative faculties, and many sins are a result of the devil's drastic action.

The Consequences of Fantasy and Imagination

From what has been said so far, it is clear that, when the imagination is continually cultivated, it produces many disorders within our spiritual organism. An arousal of fantasy and imagination is concealed in almost every sin and is the main source of trouble. It infects the whole soul and continuously corrupts it. Two serious and terrible consequences of fantasy can be identified as follows.

The **first** is that it distorts a person's whole spiritual life and leads him to self-theosis. Archimandrite Sophrony writes: *Such demonic images and those conjured up by man may influence people, altering or transforming them, but one thing is inevitable: Every image, whether created by man himself or suggested by demons, and accepted by the soul, will distort the spiritual image of man created in the image and after the likeness of God. This "creation" in its ultimate development leads to the self-divinisation of the creature, that is, to the affirmation of the divine principle as contained in the very nature of man. Because of this, natural religion—religion of the human mind—may fatefully assume a pantheistic character.*

Insofar as thoughts play an important role in man's spiritual state, thoughts connected with fantasy, particularly demonic fantasy, inevitably distort his whole spiritual life. A person can reach the point of recognizing elements of divinity within himself, and once he recognizes elements of the divine in something created, he is actually a *pantheist*. Any ideas we have, if we worship them, impart this pantheistic character. **Self-theosis is the greatest sin of all.** It is the sin into which Adam fell, which led to the distortion of man's whole life, inward and outward, with devastating consequences. Self-deification, the recognition of a divine principle within ourselves, is actually a repetition of Adam's Fall. Contemporary natural religions, along with meditation, yoga and so on, come into this category.

The **second** consequence, related to the first, is that fantasy and imagination give rise to many psychological abnormalities, even hallucinations and delusions. When someone assiduously cultivates daydreams, even daydreams about spiritual states, and particularly when he continues doing this for many years, his whole spiritual life is distorted and he suffers from serious psychological and pathological disorders. People can reach this point through practicing meditation. Again,

Archimandrite Sophrony remarks: *[They] conjure up scenes from the life of Christ or similar sacred studies. It is generally neophytes who adopt this course. With this sort of imaginative prayer the mind [nous] is not contained in the heart for the sake of inner vigilance. The attention stays fixed on the visual aspect of the images considered as divine. This leads to psychological (emotional) excitement, which, carried to an extreme, may result in a state of pathological ecstasy. One rejoices in what one has "attained," clings to the state, cultivates it, considers it to be "spiritual," charismatic (the fruits of grace) and so sublime that one thinks oneself a saint and worthy of contemplating Divine mysteries. But in fact, such states end in hallucinations, and if one does not succumb to mental illness, at the least one continues "bewitched" and living in a world of fantasy.*

This is exactly how demonic states of delusion and heresy come about.

As is obvious from what we have mentioned, the soul of the person in this state is sick. Every deluded person and heretic who cultivates his imagination is sick in his soul. This is what deadens the soul. St. Gregory of Sinai says that, when the nous fantasizes, *it loses even the slight God-given condition it had and becomes altogether dead.* Someone preoccupied with his imagination is in grave danger of being deprived of what little grace he has and *often of losing his mind.* Deceived by fantasy, he often becomes insane, and then even an alleged hesychast becomes a *fantasist and not a hesychast.*

The monastic tradition knows of many such cases of ascetics who were deluded, precisely because they were careless about the serious matter of fantasy and imagination. They lost their salvation, but also their minds. We see many such cases in secular society too. We come across people who intensely cultivate their imaginative faculty and are inwardly disturbed. Nervous disorders and insanity are a clear indication that the imaginative faculty is over-developed and inflamed.

Abba Poimen says that he knew a monk whom the devil attacked so fiercely through his imagination that on one occasion he thought he saw a brother sinning with a woman. When he could not bear to look any longer, he drew near to touch them with his hand and say: *Now stop! How much longer? Then,...* *It turned out to be sheaves of corn.* There was nobody there, but the sheaves of corn looked like people, or the devil gave them that appearance.

Also, Abba Ilias narrates that he once saw someone *taking a flask of wine under his arm*—he saw someone stealing wine. However, he realized that Satan was at work, and immediately asked the brother to show him what he had under his cloak. There was actually nothing there at all, and he recognized that it was the action of demons.

Of course, these two examples do not imply that those monks saw such things because they had lost their wits by stimulating their imagination. It was the work of the devil. We mention these examples, however, to make clear that it is

possible to see non-existent things through satanic activity but also through stimulating the imagination. We can experience hallucinations and illusions. Just as a drug addict often suffers from delusions under the influence of drugs, so someone in the grip of fantasy and imagination sees things that do not exist and suffers from delusions and hallucinations.

The cultivation of imagination and fantasy leads to hallucinations and delusions, when assisted by the action of a sick human brain.

Imagination, Fantasy and Prayer

Prayer, especially what is called pure prayer of the heart, should be free from fantasy and imagination. A nous caught up in fantasy is incapable of praying purely. The prayer of such a nous is impure, full of mental images and fantasies.

The imagination is hostile to pure prayer and the diligent work of the nous. As Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos say: *This accursed fantasy is a great obstacle to pure prayer of the heart and to the single undistracted work of the nous.* The saintly Fathers teach that all those who want to pray purely must *pray with God's help, without fantasies, imaginings, impressions, with the nous and soul wholly and completely pure.* They should not form mental images concerning God. The nous must remain pure and immaterial. Only then can pure prayer unfold in the heart.

St. Neilos the Ascetic advises: *Stand on your guard and protect your nous from conceptual images while you are praying.* Again he urges: *Never try to see a form or shape during prayer.* Elsewhere he teaches us not to form an image of God inside us when we pray: *When you are praying do not form any image of the Deity within yourself, and do not let your nous be stamped with the impression of any form, but approach the immaterial in an immaterial manner and you will understand.*

We also need to be cautious about the delight we feel during prayer. Fantasy may develop, especially amongst those who live together and pray as a community. St. John Climacus says that the joy felt by those who live in a monastic community is different from that experienced by those who pray *in hesychia.* The former *may be slightly influenced by imagination* whereas the latter is full of humility. Consequently, the most suitable prayer is *Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me, a sinner,* which should be said without using the imagination and accompanied by sincere and profound repentance.

When someone prays purely he is illuminated and enlightened by God. This illumination is divine grace, which comes to man through pure prayer. St. Diadokos of Photiki says: *The blessed light of the Divinity only rises when the heart is completely empty of everything and free from aliform (wing-like, Ed.).*

When man's nous is free from impressions, when it does not accept any fantasies or imaginings, it receives the rays of divine brilliance, according to Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos. During prayer, the nous must also be clear of every conceptual image. *The concept of God is not one of those thoughts that*

imprint images in the nous, but one that makes no imprints. This is why the person praying must *separate himself completely from concepts that imprint images in the nous.* We must reject all conceptual images during prayer. The pure nous *is called the throne of God,* according to the same Fathers.

Certainly, the Holy Fathers recommend great caution, because someone can pray calmly and purely and yet be approached by a strange and alien figure, originating from the devil, which compels him to accept it as divine, with the result that he falls into presumption and pride. This is a trap set by the devil. St. Neilos the Ascetic writes: *Be on your guard against the tricks of your adversaries. While you are praying purely and calmly, sometimes some strange and alien form suddenly comes before you, making you imagine in your conceit that the Deity is there. Their purpose is to persuade you that the figure suddenly disclosed to you is divine.* Of course God is *without quantity or form.* There are many criteria for distinguishing theoria that comes from God from that which comes from the devil. However, the Holy Fathers recommend us not to accept any concept or vision while praying. If it is from God, God knows how to convince us.

St. John Climacus recommends: *Do not accept any sensory image during prayer, lest you be distracted.* We refuse every perceptible image and every kind of imagination and fantasy during prayer. As the holy Fathers say, the uncreated Light is shapeless, tranquil, single and colorless. The opposite is true of diabolical light.

Imagination, Fantasy and Theology

We have already mentioned that pure theology develops in the person who has been freed from fantasies and imaginings. Anyone who has passed through the stages of purification (freedom from sensual pleasure and pain) and illumination of the nous (freedom from forgetfulness and ignorance) and has been delivered from fantasy's images, has acquired pure theology. He is initiated into pure knowledge of God. The eyes of his nous are able to receive divine energy, as St. Maximos says.

Because knowledge of God is linked with the theoria of uncreated Light, St. Hesychios the Priest stresses that the *blessed light of divinity* rises within us when our nous is freed from everything and is without form. Then the nous *is in its natural state* and is ready to proceed *to all kinds of delightful spiritual theoria pleasing to God.*

A theologian is someone in whom the deifying energy of the Triune God dwells. However, just as God does not dwell in man-made temples, *neither does He dwell in any imaginings or fabrications of the nous,* as St. Basil the Great says in his teaching quoted by Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos. When man's nous is driven by the soul's imaginative faculty and the senses, *it engenders a composite form of knowledge.* This is the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas: *When the nous enthrones itself on the soul's imaginative faculty and thereby becomes associated with the senses, it engenders a composite form of knowledge.*

The Holy Fathers talk about two kinds of theoria. There is one kind of action and grace that is “received” and another that is “apprehended.” They teach that these two types of theoria are as far apart as the east is from the west and the heaven from the earth; and that one is as superior to the other as the soul is superior to the body. The theoria that is “received” is more excellent. It is engendered in the heart *by God Himself hypostatically*, and also transmits this energy and grace outwards to the body. Theoria that is “apprehended” is lower. It is produced *externally, and by considering how well created things are directed, ordered and arranged. By bringing together different images into a semblance of the truth, it progressively reaches up to God in faith.* “Received” theoria is engendered in the heart by God hypostatically, whereas “apprehended” theoria comes from looking at God’s creation and His ruling providence. The second type of theoria involves an element of imagination. The first type, the superior “received” theoria, is the unadulterated theoria of God, which is sometimes called apophatic theology.

Besides, as St. Isaac the Syrian says, our soul has two eyes. With one eye we see what is hidden in nature (“apprehended” theoria) and with the other we behold the glory of God, when God leads us to the spiritual mysteries (“received” theoria).

The Prophets did not speak about God using their imagination, but through God’s revelation in their heart and nous. St. Basil the Great says that the Prophets *saw images imprinted in their governing faculty [nous] by the Spirit.* As St. Gregory Palamas teaches, *The Holy Spirit settles upon the nous of the Prophets and, using this governing faculty as material, announces the future to them, and through them to us.*

God revealed His mysteries to the Prophets within their heart, to their nous. Their reason, aided by appropriate education, which includes images of the world perceptible to the senses, articulates this revelation, but the revelation itself has absolutely nothing to do with the imaginative faculty. The holy Fathers speak about God without using their imagination. Also, what is termed a symbol in theology is not simply a symbol or something symbolic, but an energy that comes from the very nature of the divine Being. The Prophets and those initiated into holy mysteries do not imagine God, but God is revealed to their pure hearts.

Liberation from Fantasy and Imagination

All this shows that we must be freed from what the holy Fathers call *accursed fantasy*, which is the source of many bodily and spiritual disorders. We shall identify ways of freeing ourselves from this horrific, disfiguring condition.

In the first place, we have to fight against fantasy and imagination. We must realize that we need to struggle to get rid of them. As St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite says, *Impassioned fantasy has more power and domination over us than the senses themselves.* In order for the senses to sin, they need various things or pretexts, whereas the imagina-

tion works without anything, even when the senses are not functioning.

In addition, we must not accept any images at all from the imaginative faculty. When we realize that our imaginative faculty is at work, we should immediately stop it. St. Diadokos says: *We can achieve great virtue just by never trusting our imagination.* The holy Fathers advise us not only to reject thoughts, but not even to believe what we see with our eyes or hear with our ears. *Even if you see something with your own eyes or hear it, do not accept it,* according to Abba Ilias. Indeed, Abba Poimen commands: *Even if you touch something with your own hands, do not testify to it.* We must make an effort to reject what thoughts and fantasies tell us, but also to refuse to process information gathered by our senses, because the devil may tempt us through the senses.

We must keep calm even when faced with imaginary images coming from the devil. When the devil troubles us during prayer we should not be disturbed. St. Neilos the Ascetic says that, even if you see a sword drawn against you or a torch before your eyes, or a disgusting and bloody figure, *do not be shaken, stay calm and do not lose heart at all.* There is absolutely no need to be anxious. A good confession of faith is needed: pray to Christ with faith and they will disappear.

There are circumstances, mainly at the beginning of our spiritual struggle, where, if we cannot completely reject imagination, we should at least put it to good use. This undoubtedly involves the risk that we may remain in this condition and suffer other psychosomatic problems. Saints Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos teach that *imagination should be discarded altogether.* If we cannot achieve this by repentance, humility and contrition, then we should *contradict and counterbalance it with well-ordered imagination.* This is said with many reservations, and only applies when we are at the beginning of the spiritual struggle, the aim being that we should quickly abandon this method.

As fantasy and imagination are closely connected with the soul’s illness and existing passions, they are healed by our endeavor to cure our soul and free ourselves from passions. As St. Maximos says, *once the soul starts to be aware of its own good health, then even its imaginings during sleep become simple and calm.*

We must also strive to keep our nous pure. This is called vigilance or watchfulness (*nepsis*) in the language of the New Testament and the holy Fathers. Saints Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos write that the nous is an essence that is indivisible, simple and complete within itself. We must keep it *pure and radiant*, and ensure it is *separate from the imagination, with no participation in it.* Guarding the nous is a very good method of getting rid of the burden of imagination and fantasy. The only way to achieve spiritual vigilance is *by examining the imagination closely*, because the devil cannot provoke and deceive the nous in the absence of thoughts

linked with fantasy and imagination, according to St. Hesychios the Priest.

The most effective method of getting rid of fantasy and imagination is repentance. We can only purify our imaginative faculty through profound repentance. The holy Fathers have much to say about the praxis of repentance. Fantasy is expelled *through repentance and contrition, mourning and humility*, as Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos write. Repentance is associated with hardship and tears. Weeping completely burns up all our anthropocentric attitudes to life.

Furthermore, when we struggle to observe Christ's commandments we are delivered from the appalling and distorting states caused by fantasy and imagination. Keeping the commandments of Christ means trying to follow God's precepts and reaching theosis through them.

Repentance is linked with humility. Or rather, repentance comes about in a climate of humility. Wherever there is deep humility it is impossible for imagination and fantasy to develop, as they thrive on pride, egotism and conceit. The proud man usually day-dreams and has a high opinion of himself; he sets himself high goals to achieve and thus stimulates his imaginative faculty.

Since many fantasies are also expressed in dreams, the holy Fathers recommend that we should say many prayers before going to sleep. Abba Philemon advises: *Before going to sleep, say many prayers in your heart... as far as you can, take care to sleep only after reciting psalms and attentive reading... Say the holy Creed of the Orthodox faith before falling asleep.*

Much prayer, reading holy books and reciting the Creed can free us from the attacks of imagination and fantasy. It is noticeable that studying the writings of the holy Fathers crucifies the imagination, whereas reading impassioned writings, especially fiction, excites the imagination. The Fathers never concerned themselves with so-called Christian fiction, narrative tales and so on, because that sort of writing provokes fantasy. By contrast, even poetry written by the saints has an element of repentance and theoria of God. The poems of St. Symeon the New Theologian contain a revelation of God. There is no trace in them of speculation or contamination with figments of the imagination.

Above all, when the grace of God enters the human heart it creates a perception that enables someone to distinguish between grace and impassioned fantasy, which is satanic energy. St. Hesychios the Priest says: *The soul that has received blessings and sweetness from Jesus, repays the Benefactor by offering thanks to Him with exultation and love.* Through the nous, the soul sees the Lord within itself *destroying demonic fantasies*. When Christ enters the heart, He brings peace and expels all the fantasies and imaginings of the evil spirits.

The subject of fantasy and imagination is wide-ranging and very important for spiritual life, as is clear from what has been said above. We can only acquire a clear perception

of Orthodox life and pure knowledge of God when we are purged of *accursed fantasy*. As long as we are dominated by it, we remain in the world of fantasies and imaginings, and cannot acquire a clear perception of Orthodoxy.

Conclusion

We have made this analysis of imagination and fantasy for the following reasons.

Firstly, some people think that imagination is good and should be cultivated, as it does us no harm and comes naturally to human beings. It has been shown here, however, that the fantasy and imagination at work in the imaginative faculty are a phenomenon of man's fallen state and do not allow the nous to acquire experience of God. The nous must be liberated not only from fantasy but from the activity of the imaginative faculty. According to St. Gregory Palamas, when the nous is linked with the imaginative faculty it produces *a composite form of knowledge*.

Secondly, I wanted to emphasize that we should all strive to free ourselves as far as possible from the power of imagination. We must not trust it or cultivate it. At the very least, we should use it for good purposes and only in the short term. Our ultimate aim must be to be set free from its influence through repentance.

Thirdly, theosis is very closely linked with complete liberation from fantasy and imagination. This is the Church's teaching, which represents the experience of the saints, including those alive today. If we ignore the tradition of our saints, we reduce Christianity to the level of ethics and psychological sentimentality.



If at some time you show mercy to someone, mercy will be shown to you.

If you show compassion to one who is suffering (and of course, this is not a great deed) you will be numbered among the martyrs.

If you forgive one who has insulted you, then not only will all your sins be forgiven, but you will be a child of the Heavenly Father.

If you pray from all your heart for salvation—even a little—you will be saved.

If you rebuke yourself, accuse yourself, and judge yourself before God for your sins, with a sensitive conscience, even for this you will be justified.

If you are sorrowful for your sins, or you weep, or sigh, your sigh will not be hidden from Him and, as St. John Chrysostom says... *if you only lament for your sins, then He will receive this for your salvation.*

St. Moses of Optina

WHY CHILDREN SUFFER?

From the book "When Children Are Ill; Counsels of an Orthodox Doctor," Moscow 1992. Translated from Blagovestnik, parish bulletin of the Holy Virgin Cathedral in San Francisco, July 1993.

"Father, father! How sorry I am for you!" Iliusha moaned bitterly... I know what the doctor said to you about me... Don't cry, and when I die get a good boy, another one... call him Iliusha and love him instead of me..."

"I don't want a good boy! I don't want another boy!" The captain muttered in a wild whisper, clenching his teeth. "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, may my tongue..." he broke off with a sob and sank on his knees before the wooden bench.

[Dostoevsky, "The Brothers Karamazov"]

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A family is one body, and often the spiritual burden which lies upon it is divided among its members unequally. It happens that children shoulder a load beyond their strength and pay with their health for the sins and failings of their parents.

Here is the case of one family I know. A seven-year-old girl became gravely ill; she had a prolonged high fever which refused to break, the doctors were unable to determine the cause of the illness, and the parents were on the verge of despair. The girl's grandmother conveyed to them what one priest had said: the girl is sick because you do not go to confession nor communion, and your sins are weighing on the child. Deeply affected by what they had been told, the parents began going to church; they repented of their sins, began partaking of the Holy Mysteries, and reformed their lives. Their daughter's illness passed. It had befallen her by God's allowance; through it the entire family was drawn close to the Church.

People sometimes wonder why it is that children suffer. All right, so we're sinful, but... It is, by the way, one of Dostoevsky's perennial concerns. The Brothers Karamazov, for example. On grounds of human justice, the question is insoluble. The answer can be found only through the perspective of eternity, of God's providence. Dostoevsky came to recognize this only after the death of his son, when he went to Optina to find some consolation and spoke to Elder Ambrose, although it was only just before his own death that he fully comprehended the spiritual meaning of the suffering of innocents.

My duties often take me to one of Moscow's homes for mentally retarded children. Many of them do not even get out of bed; many have been simply abandoned by their parents as though they were incurably diseased; here are children with severe developmental problems. They all suffer terribly, although many of them, because of their retardation, are not aware of it. Entering this house is like stepping into the depths of hell. And yet, it is precisely here that one

can sense the sweetness of paradise; it comes from the hearts of those who live with God. Here are many children who go to church and who love the Lord.

Children and suffering. How can one make any sense of it? How can one bear it?

After having been in the children's home, one leaves with a feeling that perhaps this world—which the enemy of the human race is trying to turn into one big "Disneyland," full of gum-chewing, grinning, senselessly happy robots—this fallen pornographic world is still hanging on only because there are children who, by their sufferings, are outweighing our godlessness and unrepentance in the scales of God's justice. The fate of these children will be revealed in eternity. Their sickness and "abnormalities" are manifestations only of this earthly life. If God did not create death—which entered the world through man's falling away from God—He certainly did not create sickness.

Two and a half years ago there came to me for confession a sick twelve-year-old girl from this home. She could not put two words together, she would spin around like a top; her abnormal expressions and constant grimacing, everything about her said "deranged." And this girl began having confession and receiving communion each Sunday.

Within a year she felt a need for revelation of thoughts (whoever prays and confesses frequently understands what this means). The girl began leading such a vigilant spiritual life as would astonish even those who consider themselves deeply believing and churchly. She began to practice the Jesus Prayer (*Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*), to battle against the devil's provocations, to forgive offenses, to endure everything. In the course of several months she learned to read and write, all signs of debility disappeared, an imprint of spirituality appeared on her face. Everything she did or said conveyed sensitivity and discernment. Whenever I saw her my heart contracted with a recognition of the sinfulness and falsehood in my own life.

Then she was transferred to another children's home, and for some time I did not see her. But one day she came to me and said, "Father, don't worry about me. I'm always with God. He doesn't leave me, even when I sleep..."

If, after this, all the wise men of the world should gather and present me with the tightest arguments that God does not exist, I would look at them with pity...

Sick children take upon themselves the exploit of martyrdom and foolishness in order that the Lord would not vent His wrath upon this world, and that we, perhaps thanks to them, might still have time for repentance. But we, due to our lack of repentance and habitual disregard of our sins (instead we cast the blame for them on others), are simply not aware of this (or refuse to accept it).

And so, we hear people murmuring: "If God is just, as you claim, then how can He allow children to suffer?"

Yes, God is just. He does not teach us to sin. He says, *Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* (Mt 5:48).

We wouldn't have any problem with the question of why it is children suffer if in this matter, as in everything, we looked upon Christ the Saviour and measured our life in light of Him. Why do children suffer? For what reason did the Saviour suffer? After all, He was sinless. Every child is born into the world bearing upon itself the stamp of ancestral sin. But the Lord did not even have this. He—who is purer than any newborn infant—suffered, and how!

Here, then, is the answer to the question of why children suffer. For our sins. For our carelessness concerning the salvation of their souls and our own salvation. Our task as parents consists not only in providing for our children's physical needs but primarily in educating them spiritually, in opening up for them the path to God. Here is the word of the Saviour: *Forbid them not to come unto Me.* (Mt 19:14).

If we do not bring our child to church, if we do not teach him to pray, if we do not have icons in our homes, the Gospel, if we do not strive to live righteously, it means that we are hindering his way to Christ. And this is our principal sin which will lie also upon our children.

This is why our children suffer for our sins, even if they are innocent of them. We are tied to them by an invisible thread, in them is our blood, our spirit. If they were not our children they would not suffer for us. But in that case they wouldn't have been born from us. Sin is a great evil because it causes innocent suffering. But by the same spiritual law, through the suffering of some, the sins of others are redeemed. *By His wounds are we healed,* we say, speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who opened for us the door to salvation.



THE NEUROBIOLOGICAL SICKNESS OF RELIGION

By Fr. John Romanides.

St. Gregory Palamas summarizes the patristic tradition against mysticism as follows: *The practice of making the nous abandon, not the physical thoughts, but the body itself in order to come upon rational spectacles, is the strongest of the Greek delusions and the root and source of every erroneous opinion, the invention of demons and the punishment which gives birth to despair and is the offspring of madness.*

An inseparable part of the cure in question is that the glorified have become specialists on the thoughts of Satan since *we are not ignorant of his thoughts.*"

The invincible weapon against the devil is the repair of the short-circuit between the noetic faculty in the heart and the

brain. This cure consists of confining all thoughts, good and bad, to the brain which is brought about only when the noetic faculty in the heart returns to its natural circular motion by means of unceasing prayer. Naive are those who think it is possible to keep only good thoughts in the brain by getting rid of bad thoughts. Not only is this impossible but one is obliged to know exactly how the devil manipulates human thoughts from the environment in order to defeat him at his own game.

Success in this contest against the devil is guaranteed by means of the circular motion of the noetic faculty in the heart. St. Gregory Palamas summarizes the patristic tradition as follows: *Noetic faculty acts on the one hand upon other things, surveying what it needs, which the Great Dionysius calls motion in a straight line. When it returns to itself and acts upon itself the noetic faculty sees itself. This again the same one (Dionysius) calls circular motion. This is the best and special motion of the noetic faculty by which it transcends itself and finds itself with God ... and ascends by means of the way without error. For also it is impossible for such a motion of the noetic faculty to fall into error.*

During this state of either illumination or glorification the brain is functioning normally in communion with the environment and adding no kind of metaphysics or ontology to this experience of *seeing* (Christ) *in a mirror dimly or face to face* (1 Cor 13:12). The only *theoria* involved in one's first glorification is a loss of orientation until one gets used to seeing everything saturated by Christ's uncreated glory of the Father which has no similarity whatsoever to anything created.

The uncreated glory of God is everywhere present saturating creation and therefore in each person and his heart. This uncreated glory's ruling, creative, providential and even purifying energy is already at work in each individual and in one's heart. However, not all respond in the same way to the uncreated purifying energy of God because of the short-circuit in the heart and one's environment. That one searches like Augustine for God outside of oneself in some kind of mystical experience by sending a supposedly immaterial soul into a world of immaterial archetypes is of course nonsense and, according to the Fathers, demonic.

St. Dionysios the Areopagite was never understood by Orthodox Fathers as a mystic. He did not write a book on Mystical Theology, but on Secret Theology, so called because there is no similarity between the created and the uncreated and therefore it is *impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive God.* In other words, Dionysius has nothing to do with Neo-Platonism and nothing to do with the Franco-Latins and pseudo-Orthodox who imagine that they are his disciples.

The reason why there is no speculative theology in the Orthodox Church is the fact that the sickness of religion is neurobiological and its cure is a tested fact. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*

A FISHER OF MEN

ARCHIMANDRITE MITROFAN (MANUILOV)

Source: *Orthodox America* #49, pp.4-5.

Voronezh, 1924. Alexis Pavlovich Manuilov had recently finished his course of study at the Institute of Agriculture. As the son of a priest, he could hardly look forward to a bright future under the atheist regime. During the Revolution, his grandfather, also a priest, had been tied to the horns of a bull which then ran about beating its head against the walls of houses in order to throw off its burden. Experience had instilled him with a good measure of sobriety, but the young man was nevertheless stunned upon learning from a friend that a serious case had been drawn up against him as “an enemy of the people.” A thick cloud of despair settled over his soul, blocking out any rays of hope. His fate was sealed. He felt it was useless to bother anyone with appeals, and only out of love for his mother did he agree to go visit Archpriest Mitrofan Butchnyov, a righteous man of prayer living at that time in Voronezh. The priest was in hiding between periods of imprisonment, and Alexis found him in a basement room conducting a Bible study; he was explaining the calling of the Apostles. “And you, Alexis,” he said, pointing to the young man whom he had never met, “will become a fisher of men.”

The next day they had a talk. Fr. Mitrofan said in a tone of assurance: The same people who fabricated your case will tear it up. Coming from any other person, Alexis would have dismissed these words as foolishness. As it was, the sun burst through the clouds weighing upon his soul, dispelling every trace of gloom. Even strangers whom he met as he walked home smiled in an unconscious response to the joy that flooded his entire being. He had been awaiting death when life miraculously burst forth.

The next day he received confirmation of the priest’s prophetic words.

It was the beginning of a close relationship which brought Alexis to witness many miracles through Archpriest Mitrofan’s prayers before an icon of the *Mother of God The Unexpected Joy*: healings from cancer and tuberculosis, exorcisms

of demons. Alexis became not only his spiritual son, but also his son-in-law when he married Fr. Mitrofan’s eldest daughter Nadezhda. As a child, she had often accompanied her father to Optina where Elder Nektary said of her that “she has the soul of an angel.” She knew the Psalter by heart, and although they remained childless, through her spiritual tutelage, she prepared her husband to shoulder the responsibility of the large spiritual family which God’s Providence granted him in later years.

Realizing the impossibility of leading any kind of normal life under the communists, the Manuilov couple fled from their homeland with the retreating German army. For several years, they shared the hardships of life in the D.P. (*displaced person*, Ed.) camps where Alexis Pavlovich served as a reader in one of the churches, an experience which nourished his desire to become a priest.

He was deeply attached to his wife and it was a great shock when, on the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord, 1953, she died of cancer. Someone suggested that he allay his grief by reading the Gospel, praying at the end of each chapter for the repose of the slave of God Nadezhda. And indeed, in so doing he experienced not only an alleviation of his sorrow, but he sensed as never before the proximity of the other world—something he never forgot.

Alexis Pavlovich was further consoled by a letter from Vladika John (Maximovitch), then Archbishop of Western Europe, whose acquaintance he had made not long before. “By God’s Providence,” wrote Archbishop John, “our earthly sorrows sometimes work to our great advantage in eternal life.” Recognizing in this righteous hierarch the same grace-filled spirit of asceticism he had encountered in Archpriest Mitrofan, Alexis Pavlovich began looking to him for guidance, and for the rest of his life remained closely tied to this saint of our times.

Following his advice, Alexis Pavlovich went to the monastery of St. Job of Pochaev in Munich to pray for his wife and calm his soul. There he conceived the desire to become a monk. The following year, on the feast of Great-Martyr George, he was tonsured by Vladika John and ordained to the priesthood, thus fulfilling—30 years later—the prophecy of his first spiritual mentor. In monasticism, he was given



**Mother of God
“The Unexpected Joy”**

the name Mitrofan, after the great saint and hierarch of his native city, before whose relics he had often prayed as a boy.

In August 1954, the new hieromonk was sent to Tunis. Although there was a well-established Russian colony there, it was spiritually dormant. For more than 30 years, they had been satisfied with holding services in a single-room house chapel. At one time plans for a church had been drawn and a foundation had even been laid, but progress stood still—and not for lack of money. It was a high-society community numbering many old naval officers and their families. Fr. Mitrofan did not know how they would receive him: newly-ordained, a D.P., the son of a simple priest; but he was full of enthusiasm for the task which lay before him and firmly believed that a Russian soul must simply be awakened, and then it can move mountains.

The Power of Humility

He was met at the airport by a colonel whose enormous physical proportions were matched by his stature in the community.

“If you listen to me,” advised the colonel, “everything will be just fine.” As inexperienced as he was in his new obedience, Fr. Mitrofan was not intimidated. “I shall listen to the voice of the Church and to my conscience as a pastor,” he replied firmly; he had only one Lord and Master. Displeased by this insubordination, the colonel managed to insure Fr. Mitrofan’s unpopularity in the community. This the new priest might have endured, but the colonel was an ordained reader who served regularly in the altar, and the lack of harmony weighed upon Fr. Mitrofan, obstructing his concentration during the Divine services. Calling the colonel into the altar after service one day, he explained that unless his peace of heart was restored, his conscience would not allow him to continue serving. “I know I am a sinful man,” he said to the colonel. “If I have done anything to offend you, please forgive me.” And there in the altar, still vested, he made a full prostration before the very one who had caused him such grief.

His words tore at the soul of the colonel who turned white as a sheet and fell to his knees in tears, begging forgiveness for what he knew to be entirely his fault. Fr. Mitrofan’s humility had ripped apart the nets of the evil one. The two men embraced; it was the beginning of a close and treasured friendship. At once, the colonel enlisted the cooperation of the community, and the mountain of indifference began to move.

Within two years a magnificent church was constructed, dedicated to the Resurrection. However, as Vladika John wrote to Fr. Mitrofan, the building of churches always brings trials, and the devil was not slow in seeking revenge. He stung some members of the community with jealousy, causing troubles to heap themselves upon Fr. Mitrofan who finally asked to be transferred to France to be with his beloved abba, Vladika John.

In 1958 Fr. Mitrofan arrived in Paris where the close presence of his righteous mentor filled him with renewed zeal. There he served in the church of All Saints of Russia and gave religious instruction. His favorite obedience was to accompany Vladika John in his daily visits to the hospitals. The love for visiting the sick, instilled during these years, remained with Fr. Mitrofan to the very end of his life. With the exception of celebrating the Proskomedia, nothing gave him more joy than to take Holy Communion, the gift of life, to the sick and dying whom he was thus able to console.



Vladika (St.) John Maximovitch of San Francisco with other ROCOR Hierarchs

Through his close association with Archbishop John, Fr. Mitrofan was witness to many miracles, some of which he experienced himself. He told of one incident during their time together in Paris. They were hurriedly preparing to leave for some service on the outskirts of the city. Fr. Mitrofan had a nose-bleed which wouldn’t stop, and he was concerned that he would have to stay behind. Vladika waved his hand by Fr. Mitrofan’s nose, and the bleeding instantly

stopped.

His faith in Archbishop John’s power of prayer extended through time and space. Once when Vladika had already left for America, Fr. Mitrofan found himself flat on his back with a high fever that would not allow him to get up. It was a feast day and he was expected at the church. “Vladika !” he shouted, “help me!” He rose from his bed and went to church where he served with more than his usual energy.

Under Archbishop John’s discipleship, Fr. Mitrofan grew from strength to strength, absorbing the genuine pastoral spirit of his beloved abba; this was a fearless, self-sacrificing spirit whose concern was to ignite the Church—quite unlike the formal attitude which, said Fr. Mitrofan later, characterizes so many Orthodox priests today. Vladika himself acknowledged this spiritual bond. Before departing for San Francisco he told his flock that they had no need to grieve: “I am leaving you Fr. Mitrofan in my place.” Indeed, after

Archbishop John's repose someone fittingly characterized Fr. Mitrofan as Vladika's "spiritual transmitter."

Having grown accustomed to such a close spiritual relationship, Fr. Mitrofan sorrowed greatly over the physical separation and asked that he might follow Vladika's move to San Francisco. He arrived there in 1964 and settled in, with his abba at St. Tikhon's—a large house with a church, which served at that time as the bishop's residence. The fact that the church was dedicated to St. Tikhon who had been a bishop of Voronezh, made Fr. Mitrofan feel at home. He entered at once into a busy schedule of services and visiting hospitals; he gave catechetical instruction to both adults and children, and also taught Church Slavonic.

Two years later his blessed abba, Vladika John, left this world. But for Fr. Mitrofan he remained a living, spiritual guide with whom he conversed as though he were present. Each time he left the house he would turn to Vladika's portrait and ask his blessing. No decisions were made and nothing of importance was done without consulting Vladika in prayer. Often, very often, he served memorial services in Archbishop John's sepulchre beneath the cathedral. "Prayer in the sepulchre," he would say, "is my medicine." In later years, when it became difficult for him to get about, he would pray in Vladika's room at St. Tikhon's, reading through his thick stack of commemoration lists which he had accumulated with time.

Unexpected Joy

People began seeking out Fr. Mitrofan as a man of prayer. Burdened with family problems, trouble at work, illness or grief, they came to him for consolation and advice. He was always ready to pray. There was in his cell a wonder-working icon of the *Mother of God Unexpected Joy*, a copy of the Voronezh icon, before which he served frequent *moeliebens* (*parakleses*), imparting his firm faith in the help of the Heavenly Queen to those who came to him in their hour of need. He would stand before the icon and boldly address the Theotokos with his characteristic directness. "Mother of God, help the slave of God N..., restore love and harmony to his family and make him to be a fruitful servant of thy Son." When he heard of an answered prayer he would say, "Well, what did I tell you? Didn't we pray to the Queen of Heaven? Isn't She greatest among all the saints?" His great faith in the intercession of the Mother of God inspired him to follow the example of St. Seraphim in teaching people to say the Jesus Prayer with the insertion of "through the Theotokos" have mercy on me, a sinner.

Father Mitrofan recommended everyone to read the Gospel and Psalter more often. "Most people 'swallow' the Word of God as they read; this isn't right, and can even harm the soul, just as gulping food is bad for the body. You should 'chew' each passage, word by word," he advised, "thoroughly penetrating into its meaning. Then, when you come to read

the passage again, you will have gained a whole new understanding of it." Among those passages he frequently read aloud were *Man shall not live by bread alone...* and *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

Those who recognized Father Mitrofan's pastoral gift soon attached themselves to his growing spiritual family, although his frankness did not appeal to everyone. As a physician of souls, his method of treatment was very direct; he was not interested in appearances and was not afraid to censure an individual in front of others. Not a few people took offense at this and turned away from him. But those who bravely suffered their pride to be thus wounded, as true spiritual athletes, were crowned with spiritual progress. One of his spiritual children, a man who served as an acolyte at St. Tikhon's and who was the subject of frequent correction, remarked: "No other priest has effected such change in my soul."

Someone attending a service at Saint Tikhon's for the first time could be taken aback by Fr. Mitrofan's apparent severity in dealing with his flock. It was not unusual for him to raise his voice in admonition during a service: "Stop talking; have you forgotten where you are!" "Stand straight;" "Don't crowd; the first shall be last." However, he was the first to admit to his passionate nature and quick to ask forgiveness of those he may have offended by a sharp remark. His flock understood that his chastening was rooted in love and responded with their devotion and gratitude.

Very often Fr. Mitrofan's raised tone of voice was directed towards a careless or indifferent attitude which he did not tolerate. In showing someone how to trim the wick of the vigil lamp burning perpetually before his *Unexpected Joy* icon, he expected the person to listen carefully and repeat the same procedure if asked to do it again—not because he thought his way was superior, but because it served as a lesson in watchfulness and obedience. To give another example: Fr. Mitrofan always ate from the same bowl and used the same spoon. Those who helped out in preparing his meals knew this. If they overlooked the proper order, he would immediately correct them. Again, this was not from any fastidiousness on his part, but an effort to instill a proper attitude. "Everything concerning spiritual life demands maximum attention and concentration," he stressed. "We are small people, and small things have significance for us."

Fr. Mitrofan was particularly intolerant of any carelessness regarding church matters. Even such a simple task as placing the *prospora* from *Proskomedia* on a tray was to be done with reverence. He chastised those who arrived late for services and those who began talking or left the church before the end of the First Hour. He impressed people with the need to pray in church, and not simply to "attend." He drew an analogy: "If you go shopping, you cannot simply stand in

the aisle waiting for your cart to fill up by itself; you have to either ask someone's help or get the items you need from the shelves. Divine services likewise demand your participation, otherwise you'll leave with nothing gained."

He expected his spiritual children to be more than "Sunday visitors." "I'm going to pray only for those who truly help the Church and don't come merely to cross themselves, light a candle and then turn to talk with their neighbor. Such people are not members of the Church; real members are those who help Her; they form the Church, the Body of Christ... It's high time we stopped looking through the window. For all of us the time has come to think seriously about how we can serve others—the sick, the elderly. The Lord is not going to have mercy on those who have shown no mercy..."

Fr. Mitrofan himself was first to give an example of "action." He was constantly making the rounds of hospitals, cheering up the sick with his favorite greeting, *Christ is Risen!* He often took his icon of *Unexpected Joy* before which he would serve *moliebens* at the bedside of the critically ill. To his great sorrow, very few of the miraculous healings worked through this icon were ever recorded. Those who drove him around on these missions shared the blessing of his God-pleasing labor.

Another sphere of activity to which Fr. Mitrofan was particularly devoted was the raising of funds in support of the monastic communities in the Holy Land. Each year he collected several thousand dollars which he divided among the nuns of Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives, and the Hebron community whose Abbot, Fr. Ignaty, was his close friend. Having made over 20 pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Fr. Mitrofan knew first-hand the economic hardships suffered by the nuns and the importance of maintaining these communities of prayer, and he tried to interest all those with whom he came in contact to add their support. He would come back from these pilgrimages laden with gifts of small icons and crosses, candles and other tokens of remembrance to be distributed. However, as one of his spiritual children observed, his greatest gift was the fount of grace which he shed abundantly upon them all for some time after his return.

Fr. Mitrofan loved nothing better than being able to console someone, to flood their heart with warmth and to relieve them of whatever burden they were carrying. He had a special gift of detecting an unexpressed sorrow or hurt and of being able to melt it away with the fire of his love.

He had a special love for children—and they felt at ease with him for he shared some of their most precious qualities. Tucked away, there was a box of candy, lots of candy, which would inevitably be produced when children came to visit—and not only children. "Life has enough bitterness," he would say, "here's something sweet."

His love expressed itself in so many ways—most perfectly, perhaps, in prayer. His boldness stemmed from his reliance on the help of his two spiritual mentors. "What am I but a sinner?" he would say. "By the prayers of Vladika John and Archpriest Mitrofan I live and serve God." He was filled with compassion and a genuine concern for the eternal fate of countless souls, and for this reason he was especially diligent in performing the *Proskomedias* which bestows great spiritual benefit on those commemorated. He concentrated on praying for the dead—who have no other recourse than the prayers of the Church—and for those who have no one else to pray for them. His *Proskomedias* lasted a few hours!

For many years, Fr. Mitrofan suffered from ulcerated varicose veins. Long hours of standing at prayer aggravated this condition; open wounds developed and he became unable to sleep from the pain. People urged him to rest, to lie flat, but he insisted on serving, on performing his priestly obedience. He miraculously recovered from one stroke, but a second greatly weakened him, and to relieve his faithful circle of myrrhbearers from the burden of the constant care he required, he moved to Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville in September, 1985. There in his cell he continued to receive people, to spread his warmth, and to pray. It was while he was serving a *molieben* before his icon of *Unexpected Joy* that he suffered a third stroke, from which he never recovered. He reposed a week later, dying in the hospital, minutes after a monk had visited him with the icon and chanted its *akathist*. It was the Church New Year.

During the course of the next 40 days, some of his spiritual children divided the Psalter, each taking a section, in such a way that the entire Psalter was read daily. They, who had received so much in prayer from their beloved Fr. Mitrofan, now took their stand to pray...



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PSYCHOLOGY VS. THE NEPTIC TRADITION OF THE CHURCH

By Elder Sophrony, taken from the book, "I Know a Man in Christ," by Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, Hierotheos, published by Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2015.

People's growing love of psychology is a terrible thing. Psychology helps those in the West, but it is dreadful when the Orthodox learn psychology and substitute it for the neptic tradition of the Church. Psychological methodology is outside the Orthodox tradition and, at the same time, it is characterized by the Western mentality. (p. 269)

The whole of the West was influenced by St. Augustine. Augustinian theory is rather psychological; it deals with God psychologically. In Greece today there is a noticeable trend towards psychology, which is why St. Augustine is studied so much; he may be a saint, but his work is subject to much exploitation. (p. 345)

I am sorry about those spiritual fathers who assert that the spiritual life is not enough and psychology is also necessary. (p.368)

Human psychology uses different anthropology. It is more or less heretical. It is dangerous. It is bad that it is used by spiritual fathers. To a certain extent it helps those who have no experience to understand other people, but it does harm. Spiritual things also have psychological repercussions, as can be seen when one looks at the Orthodox and the Latins. But psychological things are not spiritual as well. (p. 364)

Psychology and the spiritual life have different starting points; their anthropology is different. However, we cannot overlook

psychology, which mainly helps people who are atheists and do not want to use the hesychastic tradition of the Church. It is a remedy for people who are far from the living God and are in terrible torment. It should be used discreetly and wisely. Medication may help the body that has suffered serious harm from various problems, but the cure will come through man's regeneration by the grace of God. The soul's wounds are cured by means of prayer. (p. 227)

The view that everything psychological is also spiritual, and everything spiritual is also psychological is a deadly danger. It is very dangerous for us to regard people's psychological problems as spiritual states. Such a view is a blasphemy against God. The exact opposite ought to happen, that is to say, we ought to make a distinction between spiritual life and psychological life. (p. 358)

In all our years in the Monastery here in England, I have never met anyone who was cured through psychoanalysis, although it is highly developed in Western societies. Psychoanalysis does not cure man; rather it confuses him even more. However, to be fair, neurologists and doctors who give drugs to patients are more humble than psychoanalysts, and they help people to become socially balanced. They also help those within the Church, when they have problems of a neurological nature for various reasons. (p. 358)

There is a difference between psychology and life in Christ. Psychology attempts to deliver man from guilt complexes, whereas in life in Christ we experience grief, pain, on account of being far from God, and we do not stop repenting until this grief is transformed. (pp. 343-4)