

# Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN

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Editor: George Karras

Story Editors:

Markos Antoniathis & Kostas Matsourakis

## THE PAPAL-LIKE TRAP IN THE "TOMOS"

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*From the Editor: On Sunday, January 6, 2019, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople handed over the document, known as a "Tomos," or the decree granting autocephaly, to the "head" of the new Ukrainian pseudo-church, the previous schismatic Metropolitan Epiphany. This autocephaly was decided and declared by Constantinople alone and might well signify the greatest cleft in Orthodox Christianity since the great schism of 1054. It is now up to the other Orthodox churches as to whether they will recognize such autocephaly—several have already declined to do so. This article presents some of the many issues associated with Constantinople's actions, even among those who support autocephaly for Ukraine.*

† † †

As the holy synods of the local Orthodox churches deliberate whether or not to accept the Patriarchate of Constantinople's decision to create an autocephalous church in Ukraine, the text of the newly-issued *tomos* may prove decisive in their decisions. While very few, if any, churches appear to be op-

posed to the idea of an autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church in principle, they may very well oppose the manner in which it was granted and the document granting it. This is because the *tomos*, as a canonical document, not only grants autocephaly but attempts to define the very nature of autocephaly and assert Constantinople's vision of its primatial relationship with the other churches. Orthodox hierarchs must read the document carefully and discerningly in order to identify any traps that may have been laid for them in it. In the absence of a conciliar decision, to accept the *tomos* is to accept the vision of the Church that Constantinople has articulated within it.

### Consecrating a New Ecclesiology

Shortly after the Ukrainian translation of the *tomos* was made available, Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, an outspoken proponent of Ukrainian autocephaly, made the following public comment in Russian on Facebook:

*After reading the Ukrainian translation of the tomos (the Greek original isn't available yet), some observers have already come to the conclusion that this autocephaly is curtailed in comparison to the autocephalies of the other local churches. This conclusion, however, is rather hasty.*

*The Brotherhood of St. POIMEN has delayed the publication of the first 2019 issue as we anxiously awaited the results of the Constantinople Patriarchate's "initiative" to solely assume oversight of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and grant its leadership to those whom in the past Constantinople herself (along with all other Orthodox churches) had identified as schismatics. This series of regretful actions have in turn created the greatest rift that has ever existed in His Church since the great schism of 1054.*

*We pray that Patriarch Bartholomew takes actions to reverse what he has put in place in Ukraine and thus re-establish the unity that Our Lord would desire for His Church; any continued actions to the contrary will surely result in Mr. Bartholomew being labeled as the "Schism Patriarch."*

*We are including several articles in this issue so that our readers become aware of the facts surrounding the on-going serious events. Regretfully, there is very little available within the established media and whatever has been circulated by Constantinople is biased and one-sided.*

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688  
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.orthodoxheritage.org)

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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate \$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US). This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

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*The degree of Ukrainian autocephaly provided by the tomos is the same as the degree of autocephaly of the other newly-established (νεοπαγῆ) churches. According to the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s interpretation, this degree [of autocephaly] is by definition less than that of the ancient (πρεσβυγενῆ) churches. In particular, the newly-established churches have communion with the other local churches through the Ecumenical Patriarchate, whom they recognize as their head.*

*Constantinople essentially took advantage of the Ukrainian tomos to canonically secure this interpretation of ALL new autocephalies which, by the way, includes that of Moscow. Another question is that not all new autocephalies agree to accept this interpretation. The newly-established Orthodox Church of Ukraine, however, agrees to accept it. And this is its sole difference from the other local Orthodox churches. [...]*

In the *tomos*, this ecclesiology is expressed most explicitly when it states, “we declare that the Autocephalous Church in Ukraine knows as its head the most holy Apostolic and Patriarchal Ecumenical Throne, just as the rest of the Patriarchs and Primate also do.” This is no small statement, as *the Orthodox Church knows one head, Jesus Christ* (cf. Eph 5:23, Col 1:18). While no one disputes that the Patriarch of Constantinople holds a primacy *inter pares*, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has in recent years rejected this concept, most famously in Metropolitan Elpidophoros (Lambriniadis)’s speech declaring the patriarch to be *primus sine paribus*, and more recently in statements by Patriarch Bartholomew, such as when he said, “The beginning of the Orthodox Church is the Ecumenical Patriarchate; ‘in this is life, and the life is the light of the Churches,’” and “the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the first Church and the head and origin of all the local Churches.”

So then, as expressed in the *tomos*, how does Constantinople understand its own headship?

#### The First See is Judged by No One

Historically, the Church of Constantinople’s right to hear appeals from other churches was closely tied to its role as the church of the Byzantine, then Ottoman, capital and its patriarchs’ close associations with imperial authorities. Attempts to universalize this right were often contested or simply rejected, as by the 12<sup>th</sup> century canonist John Zonaras and, following him, St Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain in the *Pedalion*. The *tomos*, however, flatly asserts “the right of all Hierarchs and other clergy to address petitions of appeal to the Ecumenical Patriarch, who bears the canonical responsibility of irrevocably passing judgment over matters related to bishops and other clergy in local Churches.”

This claim to universal jurisdiction has appeared in other recent documents, such as Patriarch Bartholomew’s letter unilaterally receiving Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) into his jurisdiction, claiming that he “indisputably has the responsibility to judge ecclesiastical matters everywhere and to give them a final conclusion” and his letter dated December 24, 2018 to the primates of the Orthodox churches, which speaks of “the exclusivity of the responsibility and privilege belonging to the Church of Constantinople to treat all ecclesiastical issues without limits.”

Moreover, the *tomos* requires that “in the case of major issues of ecclesiastical, doctrinal and canonical nature, His Beatitude the Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine must, on behalf of the Holy Synod of his Church, address our most holy Patriarchal and Ecumenical Throne, seeking its authoritative opinion and conclusive support.” As Vladimir Burega, professor and pro-rector at the Theological Academy of Kiev,

has observed, this is the culmination of a gradual process of making greater and more exclusive claims to authority. Thus, in the *tomos* of autocephaly issued to the Church of Serbia in 1879, Constantinople simply requested that the newly-created church consult with the other autocephalous churches “on issues of common ecclesiastical significance which require a common voice and approval.” Not only did Constantinople not set itself apart from the other Orthodox churches, but it correctly identified the purpose of consultation between the churches: finding a common voice. In later *tomoi*, however, this was gradually transformed into a question of new churches submitting to a higher authority.

The most disturbing aspect of these two claims—universal appellate jurisdiction and being the point of reference for major canonical decisions—is the finality attributed to Constantinople’s decisions. Thus, the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s “judgment over matters related to bishops and other clergy in local Churches” is asserted to be “irrevocable.” So too, its opinion is “authoritative” and “conclusive.” **It is very difficult to see how such rights would differ materially from Rome’s doctrine that “the First See is judged by no one.”**

The serious ramifications of enforcing such rights can be seen in some of Constantinople’s recent actions within its own jurisdiction. In late November, the Holy Synod of Constantinople suppressed its Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe (“Rue Daru”), without any warning or prior consultation with members of the Archdiocese. With Constantinople acting as the highest juridical authority, the bishop and people of this archdiocese have no recourse against an obvious injustice. **Asserting such a right across the entire Orthodox world only multiplies the potential for future injustices.**

#### A Church without Boundaries

The *tomos* declares that the jurisdiction of the newly-autocephalous church is limited to the territory of the Ukrainian state no less than four times. Precedent for the idea that every independent state with a critical mass of Orthodox faithful should have an autocephalous church will no doubt give pause to more than a few churches. Just as many will be troubled by Constantinople’s assertion in the *tomos* that “the Ecumenical Throne [...] bears canonical competence over the *Diaspora*.”

An even more serious ecclesiological implication of this text is that it enshrines a claim that there are two types of churches: local churches whose territory is limited by the boundaries of states (or perhaps, in the case of the ‘Ancient Patriarchates’, the canons of the Ecumenical Councils) and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, whose territory is boundless. It is boundless in two senses: in its claim to jurisdiction over all places not within the defined territory of a local church and in its claim to have the right to establish *stavropegia* (parishes, monasteries or other foundations directly under the patriarch)

on the territory of any local church. In addition to cementing these claims, the *tomos* adds another: the right to an *exarchate* (essentially, a diocese) of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Ukraine. So here Constantinople asserts its right not only to sole jurisdiction in the *diaspora* and to establish individual institutions under its patriarch’s direct control wherever he pleases, but also the right to create its own diocese within the territory of an autocephalous church.

#### A Turning Point in Orthodox History

How the other Orthodox churches respond to Constantinople’s actions in Ukraine will mark a turning-point in modern Orthodox history. If they accept the *tomos* on Constantinople’s terms and commemorate Epiphany as metropolitan of an autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, they effectively assent to Constantinople’s ecclesiological vision and encourage ever more grandiose claims to special primatial privileges.

Few would disagree that there is a very strong pastoral case for creating an autocephalous church in Ukraine. However, **the path to this autocephaly is through the narrow gate of a pan-Orthodox council.** If the churches reject the *tomos*, it is not an act of rebellion or a rejection of Constantinople’s canonical primacy but rather an exercise of their duty to be a part of the universal Church’s decision-making process because as Patriarch Athenagoras, of blessed memory, never ceased to remind us that “**the granting of autocephaly is a right belonging to the Church as a whole**” and this right cannot be claimed as the sole property of a single church.



**A** person, who carefully examines the movements of his heart cannot but experience pain of heart, when he daily turns over in his mind recollections of proud ostentation and carnal pleasures [i.e., his sensuality]; which are evoked in him not only from the outside, but also from within, as memories of his soul, with which he consorted—not only in thought, but also in action. The Lord said that he would not help those who voluntarily remain in sensuality, but rather those who are warred against, on their own, by involuntary reflections of their former evils. This is why He promised to defend the latter, as having been injured by the Enemy. Conversely, He condemns those who remain in sensuality; because they reject His commandments, saying to them: *Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven* (Mt 7:21). He then *likens them to the foolish man who built his house upon the sand* of his own will. (Mt 7:26).”

**Abba Mark [from the Evergetinos]**

## ON HAPPINESS

By Fr. Pavel Gumerov, from "And They Shall Be One Flesh."

There are conflicting ideas about happiness; some think it is a sum of earthly good things, a kind of social welfare package that makes a person's life comfortable and carefree. Each to his own, but nevertheless, in this case you either got lucky and are happy, or you are left to drag out the pitiful existence of the luckless. This idea of happiness is primitive and over-simplified.

Happiness is immaterial—it is a state of the soul. Of course, people understand happiness in various ways. Some find it in their family, others go to a monastery to dedicate their whole lives to God; for a monk, that is happiness. Some have no family but find happiness in laboring for the good of people, because this labor brings joy to himself and others. Another may have nothing at all, but he is still happy. He is happy because the weather outside is good and he has no sickness at the moment. There are all different kinds of people. And to the contrary, a person may have everything: health, material wealth, a good family, etc. He has only to live and rejoice, but he is still unhappy, does not appreciate it all, and is always discontented with one thing or another.

Thus, happiness does not depend on material conditions of life—it is within a person, in his own soul: *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation... behold, the kingdom of God is within you.* (Lk 17:20-21). This, as we have said, is a state of the soul: the ability to appreciate everything given to us, and to thank God for it.

Every day can give us happiness; we must only be able to see it.

One priest used to counsel his spiritual children to end every day by writing down no fewer than fifty things, *that you should thank God for.* Without the ability to see something joyful and bright in every day, not only can we not be happy, we cannot even live a normal life. Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote a story called "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich." In it is described an ordinary day of a prisoner in a strict-regime concentration camp. However, this story is not about the horrors of camp life, but about how one man, in what would seem to be utter darkness, manages to see something good and positive.

He receives an extra piece of bread and he can almost taste it, he thinks about how he is going to eat it; suddenly he unexpectedly finds a piece of a saw and is able to make from it a cobbler's knife and earn a little money. He is able to avoid solitary confinement—that is a great joy. Ivan Denisovich even finds pleasure in work. First of all, he can warm himself by work and the frost doesn't get to him so badly, and secondly, as a former peasant he loves labor, he likes doing what he knows how to do well. The hero of the story always tries to see good human qualities in everyone

around him. He greatly appreciates the help and support of his comrade prisoners. Even in prison, in solitary confinement this person does not fall out of life, and every day brings him joy.

Once a certain priest went to visit the now reposed elder Archpriest Nicholai Guryanov and told him about the sorrows and problems he was having. Fr. Nicholai heard him out and said:

—Rejoice!

—What is there to rejoice about?

The priest thought to himself. But the elder went on:

—Rejoice that you were born, rejoice that you are baptized, rejoice that you are in the Orthodox faith, rejoice that you are still alive!

And perhaps the words of the Apostle Paul: *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* (1 Thess 5:16-18) is the formula for happiness. It is the ability to be joyful about life, to always be with God and to thank Him for all that he sends us.

St. John Chrysostom says, *If something good happens, bless God, and it will remain good. If something bad happens, bless God, and the bad will cease. Glory be to God for all things!*

We not only have to know how to see happiness in our lives, but we also have to be careful with regard to it, and not spill it. There is an oriental fable on this theme.

A certain youth asked his father, "What is happiness?" And his father sent him to a well-known wise man. So, the young man went to the famous teacher expecting to see an ascetic, but the man turned out to be rather wealthy, possessing a fine palace filled with works of art. The youth came to the palace and asked the wise man, "Teacher, tell me what happiness is." The teacher gave him a small spoon filled it with olive oil, and said, "Walk around my palace, look at all the treasures and beautiful works of art inside it, and when you return tell me what you saw. But in doing so, make sure that you do not spill the oil from the spoon." In a little while the youth returned and told the man all about that he had seen, adding that as he looked around at the treasures, all the oil spilled out of his spoon. Then the wise man filled the spoon again with oil and repeated the request. When the youth returned and the teacher asked him what he had seen, the boy said, "I couldn't see anything in your palace because I was making sure not to spill any oil." And truly, he brought the spoon back without spilling a drop. "Happiness is in this," said the wise man. "In being able to preserve the gift that you have, and not waste it."

This parable tells us that by looking at all the wealth and beauty that does not belong to us, that was not given to us, we are not only unable to see them clearly, but we also lose what we do have.

Some people (and there are many) chase all their lives after the bird of happiness, the unreachable ideal, seeking happiness in one marriage, then in another, a third, getting disappointed and then falling in love again. They are passing by their own happiness, and life passes them by. Such people are deeply unhappy.

The English author and thinker G. K. Chesterton has a wonderful saying about this: "Faithfulness to one woman is a small price to pay for seeing at least one woman. Complaining that you can only marry once is like complaining that you can only be born once. This is incompatible with the great experience that we are talking about, and reveals not exaggerated sensuality, but a strange insensibility. Only a fool would be dissatisfied that he cannot enter Eden through five gates. Polygamy is a lack of love, it's like distractedly grabbing up ten priceless pearls."

In speaking of happiness in general and about family happiness in part, it is impossible not to touch upon the subject of love, for love and happiness are two sisters; these concepts are closely related to each other. One wise man said, "Happiness does not mean being happy yourself, but making other people happy." This thought could be expanded: "Whoever makes others happy is happy himself." After all, the possibility to love, to give others happiness, is the manifestation of God's image in us. In this we make ourselves like unto God Himself. The Lord creates the world and man precisely out of love. God cannot but pour out His love and care for people, for He Himself is Love.

And of course, the only person who is truly happy is the person who knows how to love and to give love and happiness to others.

There used to be a slogan here that went, "Man is the forger of his own happiness." At first glance this sounds a little haughty, but if you think about it, there is no contradiction with Christianity in it. After all, happiness directly depends on our relationship to reality; on how we build our lives, relate to others, and appreciate all that God sends us.



Repentance signifies the renewal of Holy Baptism. Repentance is a new agreement with the Lord for a new life. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. It is reconciliation with God by deeds of virtue in opposition to our sins. Repentance means a purification of our conscience.

**St. John Climacus**  
[Ladder of Divine Ascent, Homily 5,2]

## THE BIRTH OF THE WEST'S POST-PATRISTIC BATTLE AGAINST THE HOLY FATHERS

*By Protopresbyter Theodoros Zisis, Emeritus Professor of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. This article is the first part of an insightful presentation by Fr. Theodoros at the "Patristic Theology and Post-Patristic Heresy" a 2012 Symposium of the Holy Metropolis of Piraeus.*

### The Scholasticism of the Franco-Papist West against the Patristic East

In the West, until the 8<sup>th</sup> century, theology and spirituality, in essence, followed the route marked out by the East. As G. Dumont points out, the sources and principles of theological thought, liturgy and spirituality for the West, which characterize the flourishing era of Latin Catholicism, are to be found in the East, however much this may come as a surprise to many Western Christians.

The West owes the East a debt as regards the fact that it formulated into dogmas the great mysteries of Christianity concerning the Holy Trinity, the union of divine and human nature in the one person of Christ, a large number of feasts in the Church's year, especially in honor of the Mother of God, as well as the foundation and organization of monasticism.

The estrangement between East and West begins at a particular time in history: the dynamic appearance on the historical stage of the German Franks of Charlemagne offered the throne of Rome a powerful ally against the pressures of the Byzantine emperor and gave the German prince and his successors the opportunity to found and construct the Holy Roman Empire of the German people as a replacement for Romania (New Rome/Constantinople) which was henceforth known as Byzantium.

According to the analysis of Le Guillu, Charlemagne's ambition was to create a new theological tradition independent of the Patristic Tradition of the East. As he explicitly says: "In the Carolingian books, the first attempt is made by the West to define itself in opposition to the East." The greatest contribution to this estrangement was made by the abandonment of the Patristic Tradition and by the construction of a new theology on the Aristotelian syllogistic method, i.e. the formation of the Scholastic Theology.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century conflict between Saint Gregory Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian, we have the clash of the new, scholastic theology with that of the Patristic Tradition of the East which was rooted in the Holy Spirit, and which, until then, the West had followed, too.

### The Clash between Orthodox Illumination and Western Enlightenment in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century

There was, indeed, a severe conflict between the scholastic, post-Patristic theology of the Westerners and the empirical theology of the Fathers of the Church which was inspired

by the Holy Spirit. The former was expressed by Barlaam the Calabrian, one of the chief architects of the Western Renaissance and the latter by the great God-bearing and God-revealing Theologian, Gregory Palamas, who achieved in the 14<sup>th</sup> century what John Damascene had in the 8<sup>th</sup>: the expression and codification of the teachings of the Fathers who came before on many issues, the most important being:

(a) whether theology ought to be dialectic or demonstrative, i.e. whether it should be founded on philosophical analysis and discussion, as Barlaam wanted, bringing the scholasticism of the West into the East, or founded on the certainty of the experience of the Holy Spirit which the Prophets, Apostles and Saints had enjoyed, as taught by Palamas;

(b) whether human wisdom leads to perfection and deification, as Barlaam claimed, or whether these were achieved only through divine wisdom, which is granted to those who keep the commandments of God and are cleansed of the passions, in which case, after purification, they receive divine illumination and thereafter attain to the vision of God, as Saint Gregory Palamas contended; and,

(c) whether this illumination is the fruit of the created energy of the intellect, as Barlaam would have it, or of the uncreated energy of God, as stated by Saint Gregory, which really deifies people by energy, by grace, but not by nature and essence, because the uncreated energies are distinct from the essence of God.

Saint Gregory's arguments were overwhelmingly successful and a famous victory was won by the Patristic East, inspired by the Holy Spirit over the scholastic and post-Patristic West. We shall not analyze this here, but merely observe that without observance of God's commandments, the ascetic way of living, and the effort to purify oneself of evils and passions, as the Holy Fathers, those theologians of experience, lived and taught, without these no-one can become wise in divine matters. So the only chance that someone who is not illumined and glorified has, when wishing to speak about theology, is to follow those who were illumined and deified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. If this condition is not in place, we have no wisdom or theology, only foolishness and childishness.

Addressing Barlaam, and all the post-Patristic theologians of all ages—the thinkers, philosophers, academics—Saint Gregory observes pithily in the Holy Spirit: *Without purification, even if you learn natural philosophy from as far back as Adam and up until the end of the world, you will be none the wiser.* Over the last few days I have been looking closely at Saint Gregory Palamas' writings, to confirm what I wanted to say here "following the divine fathers and this God-revealing and God-seeing Father." It would take a long time for me to present the Patristic attitude of Palamas, the honor and value he accords the Holy Fathers.

Of the many things I have perused, I would present merely a few which are indicative, in order to show how mistaken

and how far outside the Orthodox Tradition are those clergy and laity who, (at their academies and theological schools) instead of making the Spirit-inspired and God-illumined Holy Fathers the object of their studies, those who have given us access to the vast, uncreated world of divine majesty, instead bring us down to the created and petty things of human thoughts and philosophies and, often enough, initiate us into the depths of Satan, as Saint Gregory says. For example, they get rid of the confessional lesson of Religious Instruction from schools, catechism, dogmatics, liturgics, history, references to the Mother of God and the Saints, Scripture—Old and New Testaments—and have, instead, through the lesson dubbed "Religious Knowledge," introduced Masonic, Satanic syncretism.

In confirming his truly wondrous accord with the Fathers over all the intervening centuries, Saint Gregory says that it is impossible for the God-bearing Fathers not to agree among themselves, because they are all guided by the inspiration of one and the same Holy Spirit. The Fathers are the sure guardians of the Gospel and Theology because the Spirit of genuine truth is manifested and resides in their spirit, so any people who apprentice themselves to them are taught by God. With authority and mastery he stresses that: *this perfection is for salvation, both in knowledge and dogmas, saying everything regarding God and His creatures, as the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers held, and as all those through whom the Holy Spirit witnessed.*

Barlaam would not have ended in heresy, and with him all the modern, post-Patristic Neo-Barlaamites, had he believed that the divine is not to be approached through human reasoning but with Godly faith; had he accepted, in simplicity, the traditions of the Holy Fathers, which we know are better and wiser than human musings, because they come from the Holy Spirit and have been proved by words rather than deeds. In a snapshot of the Barlaam-like terminology of today's post-Patristic theologians, Saint Gregory asks Barlaam if the latter has understood where this *piety greater than the Fathers* will lead. Barlaam was led there, to such a pit of impiety, because, with reason and philosophy, he investigated what is *beyond word and nature* and did not believe, as did Saint John Chrysostom, that it is not possible to interpret in words the manner of the prophetic sight except and unless you have learned it clearly through experience. For if word is able to present the works and passions of nature, how much more is this true of the energy of the Spirit?

What we have said so far has been aimed at demonstrating that doubts began to be cast on the standing of the Fathers from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, with the development of scholastic theology and then the anthropocentric Humanism of the Renaissance. The scholastic theology of Papism is responsible for the neglect of the Fathers, not only because it made logic and dialectics the basic tools for theologizing and ignored the

illumination from above, divine wisdom, but also because it dogmatized the elevation of the Pope over the synods and Fathers, even over the Church itself. The criterion for correct theological thinking was no longer one of being in agreement with the Fathers, but with the Pope.

Whereas the Tradition of the Church functioned along the line of Christ – Apostles – Fathers, the Papal monarchist view went Christ – Peter – Pope. This powerful post-Patristic storm did not shake the Patristic tradition, the Patristic foundations of the Church, because God revealed, in the middle and late Byzantine times, three new, great hierarchs and ecumenical teachers:

[1] Saint Photius the Great, who was the first, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, to oppose systematically and most theologically the anti-Patristic and heretical Papist teaching on the issue of the filioque and that of the primacy of the Pope, endorsing the Orthodox teaching with a decision of the synod in Constantinople in 879, which is considered ecumenical;

[2] Saint Gregory Palamas, who, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, opposed the humanist philosopher, Barlaam, at the time when Scholasticism was at its height, and who promulgated the illumination of theologians through the uncreated grace and energy of God, as opposed to the created and limited illumination of human wisdom, a position completely endorsed by the hesychast synods of 1451, in Constantinople, which are also considered ecumenical; and,

[3] Saint Mark of Ephesus, that giant and Atlas of Orthodoxy, rightly called Anti-Papist and the Scourge of the Pope, who alone negated and nullified the decision of the pseudo-unifying synod of Ferrara-Florence, which scurrilously and oppressively dogmatized anti-Patristic and heretical teachings, and which to this day is numbered among the ecumenical synods by the Papists.

#### Patristics and Post-Patristics at the Pseudo-Synod of Ferrara-Florence

Sylvestros Syropoulos, who wrote the history of the pseudo-synod of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439), where, on a Synodal level, Patristic Orthodox theology came into conflict with the post-Patristic scholastic theology of Papism, has preserved for us facts and information which help us to realize how far the

Church is Patristic and how far the West, since the Franks seized the, until then, Orthodox Patriarchate of Old Rome in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, was converted into being post-Patristic, and anti-Patristic, giving rise to a whole host of heresies and schisms.

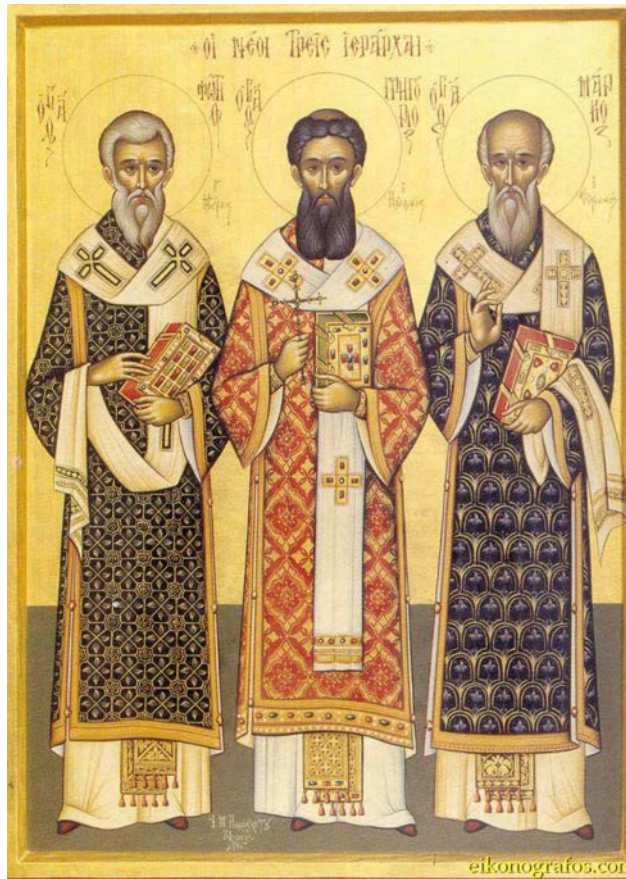
The Orthodox patriarchs knew that Papism and scholastic theology had transcended and pushed aside the Fathers of the Church and had replaced them with their own “Fathers,” chief among whom was Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> century); thus, in their letters appointing their representatives, (their *locum tenentes*) they (the patriarchs) also set out the limits for the

discussions and decisions of the Synod, whether this was to take place in Basel, Switzerland, where the reformist delegates awaited the Pope, or in some other place designated by the Pope. Union was to take place “*canonically and legally, in accordance with the traditions of the holy ecumenical synods and the holy teachers of the Church and nothing was to be added to the faith nor removed or introduced as new.*” Otherwise they would not accept the anti-Patristic and post-Patristic decisions of the synod.

By taking this stand, the patriarchs expressed the firm, permanent and inviolate position of the Church over the centuries that the Fathers constitute a *sine qua non* element of the identity of the Church and its theology. There is no theology which transcends the Fathers, and those who denigrate them, or condemn them, or, even worse, transcend and surpass them, as

at the well-known Conference in June 2010, at “The Academy of Theological Studies” of the Holy Metropolis of Volos, are no theologians.

According to Saint John Damascene, the mouthpiece of all the Fathers and voice of the self-awareness of the Church, *anyone who does not believe in accordance with the Tradition of the Church is an unbeliever.* Earlier than this, the truly great Athanasius, in his well-known letter to Serapion, makes it clear, in wonderful fashion, what this Tradition is on which the Church is founded: *it is what Christ handed down, what the Apostles preached and what the Fathers preserved.* The Orthodox Patriarchs’ most Orthodox and Patristic framework



**The New Three Hierarchs and Pillars of Orthodoxy: Sts. Photios the Great, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus**

for the discussions and decisions of the council immediately met with resistance on the part of the papal theologian of the Council of Basel and legate to Constantinople, John of Ragusa, who, expressing the Western Frankish spirit of theology which no longer needed the Fathers, intervened with Emperor Ioannes VIII Palaeologus to ask the patriarchs and he succeeded in his aims—to change their letters, omitting the terms and limitations regarding agreement with the synods and the Holy Fathers.

Unfortunately, the emperor gave way, in the face of his great need for financial and military assistance. But even worse, the patriarchs themselves retreated, even though their criteria ought to have been unalterable and firm, purely spiritual and never political, as regards matters of faith. Syropoulos sadly notes that this was an unfortunate prelude for what was to follow and indicated that the emperor had abdicated his role as *fidei defensor*: “It was to such preconditions that the defender of the dogmas of our Church had submitted us.”

Of course, the theologians on the Orthodox side, particularly Saint Mark of Ephesus, had no need of patriarchal suggestions in order to take a stand firmly on the Fathers and to force the Latin theologians into a difficult corner, since the latter did not have Patristic arguments and attempted to endorse their positions dialectically and philosophically in accordance with the prevailing Scholastic Theological method, which was based on the logical categories of Aristotle.

Syropoulos actually preserves a charming and most instructive event for all of us, especially the post-Patristic innovators of our own times. According to him, when the representative of the Orthodox Church of Georgia (Iberia) heard Juan de Tarquemada, from Spain, frequently invoking Aristotle, he turned to Syropoulos in consternation and said: “What Aristotel, Aristotele? Aristotele no good”. When Syropoulos then asked him what was good, he replied: “Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Basil, theologian Gregory, Chrysostom. No Aristotel Aristotele.”

He mocked the Latin scholiast with hand movements, nods and gestures, but, as Syropoulos observes, “he was probably mocking us Orthodox, who had abandoned the Fathers and polluted ourselves with such teachers.”

Earlier, he relates another incident, with the same Georgian delegate leaving the Pope speechless and acting as a teacher to him. Just before the apostasy was completed and the shameful unifying text was signed, the Pope summoned this cleric and with the sweetest affability, which recalls the blandishments and geniality of our contemporary ecumenists, advised him to recognize that the Church of Rome was “the mother of all Churches and indeed the successor to Saint Peter and the *locum tenens* of Christ and the shepherd and universal teacher of all Christians.” So, in order to find salvation for your soul, added the Pope, you must follow the Mother Church, accept

what She accepts, submit to the bishop and be taught and shepherded by him.

The answer of the truly Orthodox bishop lies within the enduring position of the Church and is in agreement with the Fathers. It is a word for word repetition, a thousand years later, of the stance of Athanasius the Great, whom we have mentioned, and of all the Holy Fathers who came after him: *By the grace of God we are Christians and we accept and follow our Church. For our Church holds true to what it has received both from the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ and from the tradition of the Holy Apostles and of the ecumenical synods and of the holy teachers recognized by the Church; and it has never departed from their teaching nor has it added nor left anything to chance. But the Church of Rome has added to and transgressed the bounds of the Fathers. This is why we, who hold fast to the things of the Fathers, have cut it off or have removed ourselves from it. So, if your beatitude wishes to bring peace to the Church and unite us all, you must expunge the addition of the filioque from the Creed. You can do this easily, should you wish, because the nations of the Latins will accept whatever you suggest, since they consider you the successor to Saint Peter and respect your teaching.*

Syropoulos’ conclusion: the Pope expected to lead by the nose and win over the Iberian with his false blandishments, given that the man was a foreign-speaker, an individual both unlearned and barbarian. “But, when he heard this answer, he was left speechless.”



The most destructive work in the dogmatic conscience of the membership of the Orthodox Church has been, and continues to be performed by Ecumenism. Ecumenism today is the agent of inter-Christian and inter-religious syncretism and, consequently, is the official agent of the most dangerous multi-heresy of all times, since, through its syncretism, it contributes in a decisive manner to the weakening of the Orthodox criterion and Orthodox self-awareness.

In particular, through its representatives at the local and international level, it continually and gradually makes increasingly greater “discounts” from the ecclesiological/dogmatic awareness of the spiritually-unsuspecting Orthodox faithful. Above all, it achieves this through the relativization, or abolition in practice, of the status of the teachings of the Holy Fathers and, moreover, of their collective decisions made in the context of the Ecumenical Synods.

**Dimitrios Tselengidis**  
Dogmatics Professor of the Theological School,  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



## ON PATRISTIC THEOLOGY

By Rev. John S. Romanides (+2001).

### The Two Kinds of Faith

Human beings can have two kinds of faith. The first kind of faith, which has its seat in the mind, is the reasonable faith of acceptance. In this case, a person rationally accepts something and believes in what he has accepted, but this faith does not justify him. When Holy Scripture says, *man is saved by faith alone* (Eph 2:8), it does not mean that he is saved merely by the faith of acceptance. There is, however, another kind of faith, the faith of the heart. It is referred to in this way because this kind of faith is not found in the human reason or intellect, but in the region of the heart. This faith of the heart is a gift of God that you will not receive unless God decides to grant it. It is also called *inner faith*, which is the kind of faith that the father of the young lunatic in the Gospel asked Christ to give him when he said, *Lord, help my unbelief*. (Mk 9:24). Naturally, the father already believed with his reason, but he did not have that deep inner faith that is a gift of God.

Inner faith is rooted in an (empirical) experience of grace. And since it is an experience of grace, what would this make inner faith as far as an Orthodox Christian is concerned? Inner faith is noetic prayer. When someone has noetic prayer in his heart, which means the prayer of the Holy Spirit in his heart, then he has inner faith. Through this kind of faith and by means of prayer, he beholds things that are invisible. When someone has this kind of vision, it is called *theoria*. *Theoria*, in fact, means vision.

As a rule, there are two ways for vision to take place.

When a person has not yet attained to *theosis*, it is still possible for him to see by means of the prayer that the Holy Spirit is speaking within his heart. After attaining to *theosis*, however, he can see by means of *theosis*, in which both this inner faith (i.e., prayer of the heart) and hope are set aside, and only love for God remains (as a gift of God). This is what St. Paul means when he says: *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away*. (1 Cor 13:10 & 13:13). Note that since faith and hope have fulfilled their purpose and man has reached the point of seeing God, the source of his faith and hope, he now simply knows and loves the One Who is Love.

When the perfect is come, faith and hope are thus done away, and only love remains. And this love is *theosis*. In *theosis*, knowledge comes to an end; prophecy is set aside; tongues, which are in noetic prayer, cease; and only love remains. St. Paul says this in passages of great clarity and beauty. The Church Fathers in turn offer interpretations of these subjects that are indisputably correct. These interpretations are found throughout the entire *Philokolia*.

### What is the Core of Orthodox Tradition?

We happen to be entrusted with a treasure—the theology of Orthodox Tradition. Orthodox theology is the culmination and product of centuries of experience that have been repeated, renewed, and recorded by those who have experienced theosis at different times. We have the experience of the patriarchs and the prophets as well as the later experience of the Apostles. We call all of these experiences *glorification*. To say the prophet was glorified means that the prophet saw the glory of God. To say the Apostle was glorified means that the Apostle saw the glory of Christ. Seeing the glory of Christ, the Apostle ascertained by his own experience that the glory of Christ in the New Testament is the glory of God in the Old Testament. Hence, Christ is the Yahweh and the Elohim of the Old Testament.

Although it is not clear in the Old Testament Who the Holy Spirit is, the Apostles discovered Who He is by experience. Their experience repeats the experience of the prophets, but there is a difference because the Apostles were glorified after the Incarnation: Yahweh of the Old Testament now has the human nature of Christ. Although three of the Apostles were partially glorified during the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, all of the Apostles were fully glorified at Pentecost, during which they reached the highest state of glorification that any human being can ever reach in this life.

After the experience of the Apostles come the experiences of the glorified who include the Church Fathers and those saints who reached theosis. And so the experience of theosis continues to appear in each generation up to the present. This experience of theosis is the core of the Orthodox tradition, the foundation of the local and ecumenical councils, and the basis for the Church's canon law and liturgical life today.

If the contemporary Orthodox theologian is to acquire objectivity, he must rely on the experience of theosis. In other words, we can positively state that a student of Patristic tradition has acquired objectivity in his theological method only when he has personally undergone purification and illumination, and reached theosis. Only in this way will the researcher not only understand the Patristic tradition, but also verify for himself the truth of this tradition through the Holy Spirit.



There is one religion only, the Orthodox Christian Religion. And this spirit the orthodox one is the true one. The other spirits, are spirits of delusion and the teachings are mixed up.

St. Porphyrios (+1991)

## SINCERE RELIGION

By St. Sebastian Dabovich.

*St. Sebastian Dabovich (now St. Sebastian of Jackson and San Francisco) was a prominent Serbian priest in the Russian mission in America in the 1890s and early 1900s. He founded numerous churches and was the author of several books. He died in Serbia in 1940 and was glorified as a saint on May 29, 2015. His feast day is commemorated on November 30.*

† † †



We live in a peculiar age. No time has ever dawned upon the earth like the present era. Startling developments in the world of truth keep the minds of men, to some extent, constantly reaching out after it. “More light! Greater knowledge!” is now the almost universal cry. Great discoveries in science have opened many new and hitherto unknown avenues to

the greater physical development of the human family; and at the same time—it may be said to be true—that the mental development of man has, to some extent, kept pace. In all this onward movement in the world of material and mental research, men turn to the representative of God among men, and inquire if in the “religious world” there are any developments; and we find that there are many and great changes in this “religious world.” Take note—many and great changes in the world of religious opinion, but very little development in religious life!

Many a searching, although blind, mind has mistaken religion for some philosophical system. Too irreverent and profane handling of religion often makes of it a science, a pastime study. Now and again we come by the way of such who make religion a speculation; yes, and a speculation without a question as to its nature. Do you not know that religion is one of the qualities of your soul? An essential substance, I might say, to be plain, of your self-recognizing, self-satisfied, living spirit? Those who are convinced of this fact are not indifferent to religion. Indifference has no place in the serious life of one who seeks to be right-minded.

We hear it frequently remarked that it matters not what one believes if he does right. However, if one does not believe right, he does not do the right thing—that is, if his belief is sincere and carried out in practice. If one believes that which is wrong, and still acts otherwise from force of circumstance, he is wrong in heart. A man may believe

in polygamy, but the law and common custom may forbid its practice. He would be in outward life aright, but in heart would be a virtual polygamist. And if circumstances were favorable, his life would bear its legitimate fruit. And this is just as true of every other moral evil. It is all-important to believe right. Every false religion which has cursed mankind has started in a wrong belief. It might not have affected practical duties for a time, but the fruit finally developed. Thus belief in that first lie of Satan’s (Gen. 3:4) has borne its legitimate fruit in—first, the deification of the beautiful, and unnatural curiosity; second, self-love, delusion, and idol-worship; third, free-thinking, protesting, infidelity, and anarchy.

*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* (Jude 1:3). It is worthy, and more, too, it is a duty, to mention the fact that the large number of Bible-worshippers, who daily read the Holy Scriptures, will not see such passages as this. It is strange, yet it is plain to those who understand the human soul. What do those people think of such texts, and also of these: *I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Mt 16:18). *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all* (Eph 4:4-6). *And there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd* (Jn 10:16). *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle* (2 Thess 2:15).

To read the Bible does not mean to be a Christian. One may go to church and also study the Holy Scriptures, and yet not be religious. One may be religious, and yet be laboring under false impression, and also untruthful doctrine. If your friend requests you to do something for him, and you, knowing what he said, would still hesitate, had you not been positive of his own opinion of the request. If you are not always positive of a man’s idea, even when you have his words, are you sure of God’s opinion? Are you so elevated that you can read God’s mind?

“Obey and believe in my doctrine,” says the papist Rome. “Be free and strive to create a belief for yourselves,” say the Sects. But the True Church calls to her own, *Let us love one another, that we may with one mind confess Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

What is the Orthodox Church? This is the thought, which is repeated more than once in the closed closet of the heart; the question silently asked by the inquiring mind; and, beyond doubt, it is a proof of the quickening presence of the *Spirit of Truth, which abideth everywhere*, stirring our souls to action superhuman, and to the contemplation of things which are above our comprehension.

Of late, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is often heard of, and the existence of an Orthodox Catholic Church has come before the notice of the reading masses in western Europe and America. A grand revelation! And a heavenly blessing is reserved for all religious people who are striving in these latter times to be right-minded. In the midst of Romanism and Protestantism, free from the fanaticism of a Pius, or the indifferentism of a so-called liberalism, clear of modern congregationalism—almost daily crumbling into isms—we can see a glow in the midst of this chaos, as if of a new spark created in a combustible mass. What we see is none other than the light once revealed to Adam, then faithfully preserved in the Church of the old dispensation, and finally entrusted to the **One** and only Church of God—the Alpha and Omega. This spark we now see illuminated to perfection by the new covenant of God with man, the pledge of which is no less than the ETERNAL WORD, the Only-begotten Son of God Himself—the man Jesus, who is the chief cornerstone of the Orthodox Catholic Church, which rests on the foundation of the Apostles, chosen and put into their places by the Supreme Architect—the Lord Jesus Christ. And behold, **this is the Holy Orthodox and Universal (Catholic) Apostolic Church—still the ark of salvation for mankind.** Could this stronghold, planned by God the Almighty, be obliterated, because of persecution and temptation, and because of the many that willfully stray away, which of themselves break into numerous sects, as the body deprived of life turns to dust? *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it!*

“We are all obnoxious to error and mistakes, and it is but natural that we should make due allowance for human weakness and ignorance. If God had left us in our higher concerns to our devices, we should be still groping in the dark like the heathen of old, whom God left to themselves, in order to show how utterly unable the natural man is to find and grasp the supernatural truth. God mercifully revealed to us His truth, and expects us to thankfully accept it, neither doubting nor denying it. Therefore, what in human concerns might be called a liberal concession to our opponents, would in religion be a foul treachery, opposite God’s truth entrusted to His Church.

It is not liberal, but indifferent, to regard all sorts of religion as equivalent. It is likewise improper not to care to what religion one belongs, just as if one was as good or as bad as the other; or, to put it more forcibly, it is deceitful to call untrue the claim that one Church teaches Christ’s truths purely and completely, to the exclusion of all other churches. This is the principle of all worldly people, and it is a fashion to consider a conscientious religious church-life a downright nuisance, though one is still afraid to call it so. The crowd calls it liberal when they refuse to make any

distinction between the teaching of the different churches, just as if truth and untruth could exist one at the side of the other without any disrespect to God, the Author of truth. It is desire of faith and conviction, or rather desire of taking an interest in religion, that produces this baleful indifference.

It stands to reason that it is sinful to care so little for the revealed truth as to place it on a level with error. You will say, shall we then condemn our erring brethren? By no means. Christ forbids us to judge anybody, for only God knows whether our brother culpably holds the error, or whether he believes it to be the truth. However, even if he believes his error to be the truth, error remains error, and never can become truth. Therefore, we must always condemn error, though we may not condemn the person erring, but must pity him that he takes error for truth.

If you think it is all the same what a man believes, provided he is convinced that it is the truth, you are mistaken, for the heathen of old, the Jews, the Mohammedans, and the professors of all other religions, believe they possess the truth. Why, then, did God send His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, if mankind could be saved without him? Christ commanded His apostles and their successors to convert the world to Christianity, not to that sort of vague Christianity which we find in the numerous seditions which appropriate this name, but to His one Church, *which is the Foundation and pillar of the truth*, and against which the gates of hell can never prevail. He who believes in these words of Christ can never be indifferent to which Church he belongs, nor can he be indifferent whether his friends or acquaintances continue in error. Therefore, it is his first duty never to countenance religious indifference.

Those who will study the doctrine of the Church, not in the errors and weakness of human superstitions and failings, but in her own divinely inspired rites and institutions, will appreciate the matchless purity of our beloved Church. Let us not be misunderstood. We do not assume to ourselves any prerogative of goodness; on the contrary, woe unto us who have so little profited by the perfect holiness of our Mother Church. The best among us fall grievously short of the ideal of the Church, which towers high above us, bearing aloft the standard of the cross.

Truly glorious and divine is the plan of our Church, but beware of judging her by the failures and errors of her unworthy children. In her daily Liturgy our Mother—the Church—calling the faithful to prayer, teaches us thus: *Let us pray to the Lord for the peace of the whole world, the good estate of the holy churches of God, and the union of them all. For the unity of the Faith, and the communion of the Holy Spirit making request, let us commend ourselves and one another and all our life to Christ our God.*

## “PRAYER WITHOUT CEASING” IS NECESSARY FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

*St. Gregory Palamas.*

Let no one think, my brother Christians, that it is the duty only of priests and monks to pray without ceasing, and not of laymen. No, no; it is the duty of all of us Christians to remain always in prayer.

St. Gregory the Theologian teaches all Christians to say God’s name in prayer more often than to breathe. So, my Christian brethren, I too implore you, together also with St. Chrysostom, for the sake of saving your souls, do not neglect the practice of this prayer. Imitate those I have mentioned and follow in their footsteps as far as you can.

At first it may appear very difficult to you, but be assured, as it were from Almighty God, that this very name of our Lord Jesus Christ, constantly invoked by you, will help you to overcome all difficulties, and in the course of time you will become used to this practice and will taste how sweet is the name of the Lord. Then you will learn by experience that this practice is not impossible and not difficult, but both possible and easy. This is why St. Paul, who knew better than we the great good which such prayer would bring, commanded us to pray without ceasing. He would not have imposed this obligation upon us if it were extremely difficult and impossible, for he knew beforehand that in such case, having no possibility of fulfilling it, we would inevitably prove to be disobedient and would transgress his commandment, thus incurring blame and condemnation. The Apostle could have had no such intention.

Moreover, bear in mind the method of prayer—how it is possible to pray without ceasing, namely by praying in the mind. And this we can always do if we so wish. For when we sit down to work with our hands, when we walk, when we eat, when we drink we can always pray mentally and practice this mental prayer—the true prayer pleasing to God. Let us work with the body and pray with the soul. Let our outer man perform his bodily tasks, and let the inner man be entirely dedicated to the service of God, never abandoning this spiritual practice of mental prayer, as Jesus, God and Man, commanded us, saying: *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.* (Mt 6:6).

The closet of the soul is the body; our doors are the five bodily senses. The soul enters its closet when the mind does not wander hither and thither, roaming among things and affairs of the world, but stays within, in our heart. Our senses become closed and remain closed when we do not let them be attached to external sensory things, and in this way our mind remains free from every worldly attachment, and by secret mental prayer unites with God its Father. *And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly,* adds the

Lord. God who knows all secret things sees mental prayer and rewards it openly with great gifts. For that prayer is true and perfect which fills the soul with Divine grace and spiritual gifts. As chrism perfumes the jar the more strongly the tighter it is closed, so prayer, the more fast it is imprisoned in the heart, abounds the more in Divine grace.

Blessed are those who acquire the habit of this heavenly practice, for by it they overcome every temptation of the evil demons, as David overcame the proud Goliath. It extinguishes the unruly lusts of the flesh, as the three men extinguished the flames of the furnace. This practice of inner prayer tames passions as Daniel tamed the wild beasts. By it the dew of the Holy spirit is brought down upon the heart, as Elijah brought down rain on Mount Carmel. This mental prayer reaches to the very throne of God and is preserved in golden vials, sending forth their odors before the Lord, as John the Divine saw in the Revelation, *Four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints* (Rev 5:8).

This mental prayer is the light which illumines man’s soul and inflames his heart with the fire of love of God. It is the chain linking God with man and man with God. Oh the incomparable blessing of mental prayer! It allows a man constantly to converse with God. Oh truly wonderful and more than wonderful—to be with one’s body among men while in one’s mind conversing with God. Angels have no physical voice, but mentally never cease to sing glory to God. This is their sole occupation and all their life is dedicated to this.

So, brother, when you enter your closet and close your door, that is, when your mind is not darting hither and thither but enters within your heart, and your senses are confined and barred against things of this world, and when you pray thus always, you too are then like the holy angels, and your Father, Who sees your prayer in secret, which you bring Him in the hidden depths of your heart, will reward you openly by great spiritual gifts. But what other and greater rewards can you wish from this when, as I said, you are mentally always before the face of God and are constantly conversing with Him—conversing with God, without Whom no man can ever be blessed either here or in another life?

Finally, my brother, whoever you may be, when you take up this book and, having read it, wish to test in practice the profit which mental prayer brings to the soul, I beg you, when you begin to pray thus, pray God with one invocation, *Lord have mercy*, for the soul of him who has worked on compiling this book and of him who helped to give it to the public. For they have great need of your prayer to receive God’s mercy for their soul, as you for yours. May it be so! May it be so!

## Από τὸν Καποδίστρια στὸν Τσίπρα...

Τοῦ κ. Γιώργου Ν. Παπαθανασόπουλου, ἀπὸ τὸ «Ρωμαϊκὸ Ὀδοιπορικὸ».

Ἄν κάποιος θέλει πρακτικὰ νὰ ἀντιληφθεῖ τὴ διαφορὰ μεταξὺ ὑπερήφανης καὶ ἀναξιοπρεποῦς διπλωματίας ἀρκεῖ νὰ ἀνατρεῖξει στὶς προσωπικότητες καὶ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πρώτου Κυβερνήτη τῆς Ἑλλάδος Ἰωάννου Καποδίστρια καὶ τοῦ σημερινοῦ πρωθυπουργοῦ Ἄλ. Τσίπρα.

Δὲν θὰ ἀναφερθῶ στὴν μεταξὺ τῶν δύο ἀνδρῶν χαώδη διαφορὰ ὡς πρὸς τὶς γνώσεις, τὶς ἐμπειρίες, καὶ τὶς ἱκανότητες. Δὲν θὰ μείνω στό κῦρος πὸν διέθετε διεθνῶς καὶ μεταξὺ τῶν ἡγετῶν τῶν μεγάλων δυνάμεων ὁ πρῶτος καὶ πῶς «ἀντιμετωπίζουν» τὸν σημερινὸ πρωθυπουργὸ ὁ κ. Τράμπ ἢ ἡ κα Μέρκελ. Δὲν θὰ σταθῶ στὸ ὅτι ὁ πρῶτος Κυβερνήτης τῆς Ἑλλάδος χειριζόταν ἄριστα, πέραν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς, ἄλλες πέντε γλώσσες: ἀγγλικά, γαλλικά, ἰταλικά, γερμανικά καὶ ρωσικά. Θα... μνημονεύσω, πρὸς σύγκριση, μόνο τὸν χειρισμὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν θεμάτων ἀπὸ τὸν Ἰωάννη Καποδίστρια.

Ἕνα ἀπὸ τὰ ἐπιχειρήματα τῆς κυβερνητικῆς προπαγάνδας εἶναι ὅτι ἡ συμφωνία τῶν Πρεσπῶν εἶναι ἀποτέλεσμα συμβιβασμοῦ, μὲ τὸ δεδομένο ὅτι οἱ ΗΠΑ, ἡ Γερμανία, τὸ ΝΑΤΟ καὶ ἡ ΕΕ ἤθελαν μὲ κάθε τρόπο αὐτὴ νὰ περάσει. Ὁ Ἰωάννης Καποδίστριας στὸ θέμα τῆς ἰδρύσεως τοῦ ἐλεύθερου καὶ ἀνεξάρτητου Ἑλληνικοῦ κράτους εἶχε ἀπέναντί του ὅλες τὶς μεγάλες δυνάμεις τῆς ἐποχῆς του, πὸν ἀποτελοῦσαν τὴν Ἱερὰ Συμμαχία καὶ ἐπηρεάζονταν ἀπὸ τὸν ἀνθέλληνα καγκελάριο τῆς Αὐστροουγγαρίας Μέτερνιχ.

Εἶναι ἀνακρίβεια τὸ ὅτι ἡ Ἐπανάσταση τῶν Ἑλλήνων σώθηκε ἀπὸ τὶς Μεγάλες Δυνάμεις, μὲ τὴν ναυμαχία τοῦ Ναυαρίνου. Ἡ Ἐπανάσταση σώθηκε ἀπὸ τοὺς διπλωματικοὺς χειρισμοὺς τοῦ Καποδίστρια καὶ τὴ γενναιότητα ἀγωνιστῶν, μὲ πρῶτον τὸν Κολοκοτρώνη. Μπορεῖ νὰ λεχθεῖ ὅτι τὸ Πρωτόκολλο τῆς Πετρουπόλεως (1826) καὶ ἡ Ἰουλιανὴ Σύμβαση τοῦ Λονδίνου (1827), σημαντικοὶ σταθμοὶ στὴ θετικὴ ἔκβαση τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ζητήματος, προδιαγράφονται στὴν εἰσήγηση τοῦ Καποδίστρια πρὸς τὸν Τσάρο Ἀλέξανδρο, τὴν ἀνοιξη

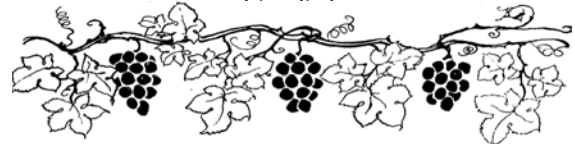
τοῦ 1822. (Γεωργίου Διον. Πουγκαμισὰ «Ἰωάννης Καποδίστριας - Ἐθνικὸς Ἀγωνιστῆς, Διπλωμάτης, Θεμελιωτῆς Κράτους», Ἔκδ. «Κασταλία», σελ. 37). Ὁ Καποδίστριας πέτυχε νὰ ὑπογραφεῖ, στὶς 6 Ἰουλίου τοῦ 1827, στὸ Λονδίνο, ἡ τριμερὴς Συμφωνία Ἀγγλίας, Ρωσίας καὶ Γαλλίας, ἀπότοκος τῆς ὁποίας ἦταν ἡ ναυμαχία τοῦ Ναυαρίνου, τὸν Ὀκτώβριο τοῦ 1827.

Ὁ Κυβερνήτης ἔρχεται στὸ Ναύπλιο στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ 1828, χωρὶς ἀκόμη νὰ ἔχει ἀναγνωριστεῖ τὸ νεο-Ἑλληνικὸ κράτος. Στὶς 30 Νοεμβρίου τοῦ 1829, μὲ τὴ δεύτερη Διάσκεψη τοῦ Λονδίνου, ἀναγνωρίζεται ἀνεξάρτητο Βασίλειο. Ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος Δεσποτόπουλος γράφει στὴ σχετικὴ μελέτη του: «Ὁ Κυβερνήτης χειρισθεὶς αὐτοπροσώπως τὸ θέμα τῶν σχέσεων τῆς Ἑλλάδος πρὸς τὶς τρεῖς μεγάλες Δυνάμεις, ἐνεργήσας ἀκαταπονήτως καὶ εὐστόχως παρὰ ταῖς Κυβερνήσεις αὐτῶν διὰ τὴν ἀναγνώριση τῶν ἐθνικῶν δικαίων καὶ

ἀντιμετωπίσας ἐπιδεξιῶς καὶ ἀνατρέψας τὰς δυσμενεῖς διὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἀποφάσεις αὐτῶν, ταυτοχρόνως ἐξησφάλισε παρ' αὐτῶν ἐνισχύσεις ἀποφασιστικὰς ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀγῶνος καὶ τῆς Χώρας».

Μία σημείωση: Ὁ ὑπέροχος Κυβερνήτης Ἰωάννης Καποδίστριας, πέραν τῶν μεγίστων καὶ πολλῶν ἱκανοτήτων του, πίστευε σὲ ἀξίες, σὲ ἰδανικά, στὴν Ἑλλάδα, στὸν Χριστὸ, καὶ στὴν

Ὁρθοδοξία. **Ἀντιμετώπισε θεματα καὶ τὰ ἔλυσε ἐπ' ὠφελεία τῆς Πατρίδας, δὲν τὰ διεκπεραίωσε ὡς ὑποτακτικὸς.** Οἱ ἰσχυροὶ τῆς Γῆς δὲν τοῦ ἐπιδαψίλευσαν ἐπαίνους καὶ τιμὲς οὔτε Νόμπελ, ἀν ὑπῆρχε... Ἡ δολοφονία ἦταν ἡ «ἀμοιβή» του. Ὅμως Αὐτὸς μένει φωτεινὸ παράδειγμα στὴν Ἱστορία μας. Αἰώνια του νὰ εἶναι ἡ μνήμη!



Ἄν δὲν κυριευθοῦμε ἀπὸ τὸν ἔρωτα τῶν οὐρανίων Ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν πόθον τῆς ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ (πὸν εἶναι ἡ Βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν), ἀλλὰ μένουμε προσκολλημένοι στὴν ἐπίγεια ζωὴ, κυλιόμενοι μέσα στὸν βοῦρκο τῶν κοσμικῶν φροντίδων, δὲν θὰ μπορέσουμε νὰ ἀπολαύσουμε τὴν οὐράνια πατρίδα!

**Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος**

## Ἡ Ἔωσφορική Ὑπερηφάνεια τοῦ Παπισμοῦ

Τοῦ πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου π. Διονυσίου Τάτση, Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 31/7/2015.

Συνήθως μιλάμε γιὰ τὸν ἐγωισμό καὶ τὴν ὑπερηφάνεια ἑνὸς προσώπου καὶ δυσανασχετοῦμε, γιὰτὶ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ ἐπικοινωνήσουμε μαζί του. Πρόκειται γιὰ ἄνθρωπο ποὺ ὅλα τὰ «γνωρίζει», ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλα τὰ στηρίζει στὸν ἑαυτόν του.

Σὲ κανένα δὲν ἀναγνωρίζει κάτι ἀνώτερο ποὺ νὰ μὴ τὸ ἔχει ὁ ἴδιος. Εἶναι πάντα ἐπικριτικός, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπαιτητικός ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους νὰ τὸν δέχονται καὶ νὰ τὸν ἐπαινοῦν. Δυὸ ὑπερήφανοι δὲν μποροῦν νὰ συνεργαστοῦν οὔτε νὰ συνυπάρξουν, γιὰτὶ ὁ καθένας ἐπιμένει στὴ γνώμη του καὶ ὅταν ἀκόμα εἶναι ὀφθαλμοφανῶς ἐσφαλμένη. Ἐπίσης ὁ ὑπερήφανος εἶναι φιλόδοξος καὶ φθονερός. Θέλει μόνο αὐτὸς νὰ δοξάζεται καὶ ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους ποὺ ἔχουν προσόντα, ἱκανότητες καὶ ἐπιτυχίες τοὺς φθονεῖ. καὶ αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μυστικό του μαρτύριο. Διέπεται ἀκόμα ἀπὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀνατροπῆς καὶ τοῦ νεωτερισμοῦ.

Ἡ ἔωσφορική ὑπερηφάνεια, ὅταν μπεῖ στὸ χῶρο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, νοθεύει τὴ διδασκαλία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ὀδηγεῖ στὴν αἵρεση. Αὐτὸ συνέβη πολλές φορὲς ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνες, τὸ πιὸ ὅμως χτυπητὸ παράδειγμα ὑπῆρξε ὁ παπισμός, ὁ ὁποῖος ἔχει αἰχμαλωτίσει ἑκατομμύρια Χριστιανῶν στὸ ἔρεβος τῆς αἵρεσης. Ὁ Πάπας ἔγινε ὁ μέγας αἰρετικός, ὁ ὁποῖος συνεχίζει νὰ ἀπομακρύνεται ἀπὸ τὸ δρόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ, γιὰτὶ συνεχῶς ἐπινοεῖ νέες αἱρέσεις, προκειμένου νὰ στηρίξει... τὶς παλιές, ποὺ στὶς μέρες μας ἀμφισβητοῦνται καὶ ἀπὸ πολλοὺς παπικούς.

Ὁ Φώτης Κόντογλου, ποὺ ἀγαποῦσε τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ πικραίνονταν ἀπὸ τὴ δράση τῶν αἰρετικῶν, ἔλεγε γιὰ τὸν παπισμὸ ὅτι «ἔχει ἔωσφορικήν ὑπερηφάνειαν, ἡ ὁποία ἐκδηλώνεται εἰς κάθε περίστασιν. Ἀπὸ αὐτὴν καὶ μόνην ἐάν κριθῆ, ἀποδεικνύεται ὅτι δὲν ἔχει σχέσηιν μὲ τὸν Χριστιανισμόν, τοῦ ὁποίου τὸ θεμέλιον εἶναι ἡ ταπεινότης: Πρωτεῖα, ἀλάθητα, καισαρισμοί, πλοῦτη ὑλικά, ἐμφανίσεις αὐτοκρατορικά, ὅλα τὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ τοῦ παπισμοῦ εἶναι ἀνάποδα ἀπὸ ὅσα δίδαξε καὶ ἔκαμεν ὁ Χριστός, ποὺ εἶπε **“εἴ τις θέλει πρῶτος εἶναι, ἔσται πάντων ἔσχατος καὶ πάντων διάκονος”**» (Μάρκ. 9:35). καὶ διερωτᾶται: «Πῶς εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ παρουσιάζεται ἡ ἔωσφορική ἀλαξονεία, ὡς ὀδηγὸς τῶν Χριστιανῶν; Τί ἄλλο χρειάζεται, διὰ νὰ ἐξηγηθοῦν ὅλοι οἱ νεωτερισμοὶ καὶ αἱ ἀντιχριστιανικαὶ καινοτομίαι, εἰς τὰς ὁποίας προέβη κατὰ καιροὺς ὁ παπισμός; Ὁ ἅγιος Ἐφραίμ ὁ Σύρος λέγει: **“Ἡ ὑπερηφάνεια ἀναγκάζει ἐπινοεῖν καινοτομίας, μὴ ἀνεχόμενη τὸ ἀρχαῖον”**» (Τι εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ τί εἶναι ὁ Παπισμός, 1992, σελ. 9-10).

Παρόλα αὐτὰ ὅμως, τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο καὶ ἰδιαίτερα ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης κ. Βαρθολομαῖος, μιλάει γιὰ τὴν «ἐκκλησία» τοῦ Πάπα, τὸν ὁποῖο ἀποκαλεῖ ἀγιώτατο καὶ πεφιλημένο ἀδελφὸ του. Δὲν τὸν θεωρεῖ αἰρετικό, γι’ αὐτὸ καὶ συναντᾶται συχνὰ καὶ συμπροσεύχεται καὶ συνευφραίνεται. τὸ θέμα εἶναι σοβαρότατο καὶ προκαλεῖ ἀνησυχία στοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους, οἱ ὁποῖοι βλέπουν τὸν οἰκουμενισμό νὰ διαβρώνει συνειδήσεις καὶ σὲ λίγο θὰ μιλάμε γιὰ ἔνωση τῶν «ἐκκλησιῶν» καὶ κοινὸ ποτήριο, χωρὶς νὰ ἔχουν ἐγκαταλειφθεῖ ἀπὸ τοὺς αἰρετικούς τὰ ἔωσφορικά τους δόγματα.

**Εἶναι καθήκον τῶν Χριστιανῶν νὰ διαφωνοῦν δημοσίως μὲ τοὺς οἰκουμενιστὲς καὶ νὰ ὑπερασπίζονται τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία.** Ἀλίμονο ἂν τοὺς ἀκολουθοῦμε λόγῳ κακῶς νοούμενου σεβασμοῦ πρὸς τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο καὶ τοὺς ἐν Ἑλλάδι ψοφοδεεῖς μητροπολίτες, οἱ ὁποῖοι «διαφωνοῦν συμφωνοῦντες», δηλαδὴ μεταξὺ τους διαφωνοῦν, ἀλλὰ δημοσίως συμφωνοῦν μὲ τὸν «μεγάλου ποιμένα καὶ δεσπότη», τὸν Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριάρχη! Αὐτὴ τὴν ἀξιοκατάκριτη τακτικὴ θὰ μπορούσαμε νὰ τὴ χαρακτηρίσουμε μὲ μιὰ παραβολικὴ φράση: «Ἡ μεταμόρφωση τοῦ λιονταριοῦ σὲ βάτραχο!».

Ἐπάρχουν ὅμως καὶ μητροπολίτες μὲ παρρησία, ποὺ λένε τὰ πράγματα μὲ τὸ ὄνομά τους καὶ σ’ αὐτούς πρέπει νὰ ἔχουμε ἐμπιστοσύνη. Ἐχομε ἀκόμα καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα τῶν συγχρόνων γερόντων, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἦταν ὅλοι τους ἀντιοικουμενιστὲς καὶ ἀντιπαπικοί.



**Ἐ**σὺ λοιπὸν δὲν εἶσαι πλεονέκτης; Ἐσὺ δὲν εἶσαι Ἰσραήλ, ἀφοῦ οἰκειοποιεῖσαι, ὡσὰν δικά σου, ἐκεῖνα, ποὺ δέχτηκες ἀπὸ τὸν Θεόν, γιὰ νὰ τὰ διαχειρισθῆς ὡς οἰκονόμος;...

Τὸ ψωμί, ποὺ ἐσὺ παρακρατεῖς, ἀνήκει στὸν πεννησμένον, τὸ ἔνδυμα, ποὺ ἐσὺ κρατᾶς σὲ ἀποθήκες ἀνήκει στὸν γυμνόν. Τὸ παπούτσι, ποὺ σαπίζει στὸ σπῆτι σου ἀνήκει στὸν ξυπόλυτον, τὸ χρῆμα, ποὺ τὸ κατακρατεῖς καὶ τὸ κρύβεις, ἀνήκει σ’ ἐκεῖνον, ποὺ τὸ ἔχει ἀνάγκη.

Ὡστε τόσοις ἀνθρώπους ἀδικεῖς, ἐνῶ θὰ μπορούσες νὰ τοὺς εὐεργετήσῃς μὲ τὶς δωρεές σου.

**Ἅγιος Βασίλειος ὁ Μέγας**

## Τὰ Τέσσερα Κακά

Από τὸ βιβλίον «Ἀββᾶς Ἀμμωνᾶς».

**Υ**πάρχουν τέσσερα κακά, καὶ ἐὰν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔχει ἓνα ἀπ' αὐτά, οὔτε νὰ μετανοήσῃ μπορεῖ οὔτε ἢ προσευχή του νὰ εἰσακουσθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό.

Πρῶτο κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΥΠΕΡΗΦΑΝΕΙΑ. Ὁ ὑπερήφανος νομίζει ὅτι ζεῖ καλά, ὅτι ἡ διαγωγή του ἀρέσει στὸ Θεὸ καὶ στοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὅτι πολλοὶ ὠφελοῦνται μὲ τὴ συναναστροφή του.

Δὲν κατοικεῖ ὁ Θεὸς στὸν ἄνθρωπο ποὺ σκέπτεται ἔτσι. Ὁ Χριστιανὸς πρέπει μᾶλλον νὰ θεωρεῖ τὸν ἑαυτό του κατώτερο ἀπὸ τὰ ἄλογα ζῶα καὶ νὰ πιστεύει ὅτι τὰ ἔργα του δὲν εὐχαριστοῦν τὸ Θεό. Ἄλλωστε ἔχει λεχθεῖ ἀπὸ προφήτη: «Πᾶσα δικαιοσύνη ἀνθρώπου ὡς ῥάκος ἀποκαθημένης ἐστὶν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ.» (πρὸβλ. Ἦσ. 64:6).

Καὶ ἂν δὲν πιστέψῃ πραγματικὰ ἢ ψυχῇ ὅτι εἶναι πιὸ ἀκάθαρτη ἀπὸ τὰ ζῶα, τὰ πουλιὰ καὶ τὰ σκυλιὰ, ὁ Θεὸς δὲν εἰσακούει τὴν προσευχή της. Καὶ τοῦτο, διότι τὰ ζῶα, τὰ πουλιὰ καὶ σκυλιὰ, οὐδέποτε ἀμάρτησαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ δὲν θὰ δικαστοῦν στὴν Κρίση. Εἶναι λοιπὸν φανερὸ ὅτι ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς εἶναι ἐλεεινότερος ἀπὸ τὰ ζῶα. Τὸν συμφέρει, σὰν τὰ ζῶα, νὰ μὴν ἀναστηθεῖ οὔτε νὰ δικαστεῖ στὴν Κρίση. Τὰ ζῶα δὲν κατακρίνοῦν καὶ δὲν ὑπερηφανεύονται. Ἐπὶ πλέον ἀγαποῦν ἐκείνους ποὺ τὰ τρέφουν. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὅμως δὲν ἀγαπᾷ, ὅπως ὀφείλει, τὸ Θεό, ποὺ τὸν ἐπλασε καὶ τὸν τρέφει.

Δεύτερον κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΜΝΗΣΙΚΑΚΙΑ. Ἐὰν κάποιος μνησικακεῖ ἐναντίον ὁποιοῦδήποτε ἀνθρώπου, ἀκόμη καὶ ἐναντίον ἐκείνου ποὺ τυχὸν τὸν τύφλωσε, τότε ἢ προσευχή του δὲν ἀνεβαίνει πρὸς τὸ Θεό. Θὰ εἶναι πλάνη νὰ πιστέψῃ πὼς θὰ ἐλεηθεῖ ἢ θὰ συγχωρηθεῖ, ἀκόμη κι ἂν ἀναστήσῃ νεκρούς.

Τρίτο κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΣΗ. Ἐκεῖνος ποὺ κατακρίνει ἄνθρωπο ἁμαρτωλό, εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸς ἀξιοκατάκριτος, ἀκόμη κι ἂν θαυματουργεῖ. Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶπε: «Μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθήτε.» (Μαθ. 7:1). Πρέπει λοιπὸν νὰ μὴ κρίνει ὁ Χριστιανὸς κανένα. Ὁμοίως: «Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ κρίνει οὐδένα, ἀλλὰ τὴν κρίσιν πᾶσαν δέδωκε τῷ Υἱῷ» (Ἰωάν. 5:22).

Ὡστε αὐτὸς ποὺ κρίνει πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν Κρίση, ποὺ θὰ κάνει ὁ Χριστὸς, εἶναι ἀντίχριστος. Ἐξ ἄλλου πολλοὶ ποὺ ἦσαν πρὶν ληστὲς καὶ πόρνοι, ἔγιναν ὄσιοι καὶ δίκαιοι. Καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ εἶδαμε τίς ἁμαρτίες τους, ἀλλὰ δὲν ἀντιληφθήκαμε τίς κρυφές ἀρετές τους καὶ τοὺς κρίναμε ἀδίκως.

Τέταρτο κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΕΛΛΕΙΨΗ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣ. Χωρὶς αὐτή, καθὼς λέει ὁ Ἀπόστολος, κι ἂν ἀκόμη λαλήσουμε με ἀγγελικὲς γλῶσσες, κι ἂν ὀρθοδοξοῦμε σὲ ὅλα, κι ἂν μετακινῶμε ὄρη, κι ἂν δώσουμε ὅλα τὰ

ὑπάρχοντα μας στοὺς φτωχοὺς, κι ἂν μαρτυρήσουμε, σὲ τίποτα δὲν θὰ ὠφεληθοῦμε. (Α' Κορινθ. 13:1-3). Ἄλλ' ἴσως νὰ ἐρωτήσετε: «Πὼς εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ δώσει κανεὶς ὅλα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά του στοὺς φτωχοὺς χωρὶς νὰ ἔχει ἀγάπη; Ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη δὲν εἶναι ἀγάπη;»

Δὲν εἶναι τελεία ἀγάπη ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη, ἀλλὰ μέρος της. Ὑπάρχουν πολλοὶ οἱ ὁποῖοι ἄλλους ἐλεοῦν καὶ ἄλλους ἀδικοῦν, ἄλλους φιλοξενοῦν καὶ γι' ἄλλους κρατοῦν μνησικακία, ἄλλους καλύπτουν καὶ ἄλλους ἐμπαίζουν. Συμπαθοῦν τοὺς ξένους καὶ μισοῦν τοὺς δικούς τους. Δὲν εἶναι λοιπὸν ἀγάπη αὕτη, δὲν εἶναι.

Ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη κανένα δὲν μισεῖ, κανένα δὲν ἐμπαίζει, κανένα δὲν κατακρίνει, κανένα δὲν στενοχωρεῖ, κανένα δὲν βδελύσσεται, οὔτε πιστὸ οὔτε ἄπιστο, οὔτε ξένο οὔτε ἁμαρτωλό, οὔτε πόρνο οὔτε ἀκάθαρτο. Αντίθετα, περισσότερο ἀγαπᾷ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς καὶ τοὺς ἀμελεῖς. Γι' αὐτοὺς πονᾷ καὶ πένθει καὶ κλαίει.

Ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη συμπάσχει περισσότερο μὲ τοὺς κακοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς παρὰ μὲ τοὺς καλοὺς. Ἔτσι μιμεῖται τὸ Χριστό, ὁ Ὅποιος τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς κάλεσε σὲ μετάνοια τρώγοντας καὶ πίνοντας μαζί τους. Γι' αὐτό, δείχνοντας ποῖα εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη, δίδαξε λέγοντας: «Γίνεσθε ἀγαθοὶ καὶ οἰκτίρμοι ὡς ὁ Πατὴρ ἡμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος.» (Λουκ. 6:36). Ἐκεῖνος βρέχει καὶ γιὰ τοὺς πονηροὺς καὶ γιὰ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς, ἀνατέλλει τὸν ἥλιο καὶ γιὰ τοὺς δίκαιους καὶ γιὰ τοὺς ἀδίκους. Ἔτσι καὶ ὁποῖος ἔχει ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη, ὅλους τοὺς ἀγαπᾷ, ὅλους τοὺς ἐλεεῖ, γιὰ ὅλους προσεύχεται.

Ὑπάρχουν μερικοὶ ποὺ κανοῦν ἐλεημοσύνη καὶ στηρίζουν τὴν σωτηρία τους μόνο σ' αὐτήν, ἐνῶ πολλές φορὲς ἁμαρτάνουν καὶ πολλοὺς μισοῦν καὶ τὸ σῶμα μολύνουν. Καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀσφαλῶς πλανῶνται ἐλπίζοντας στὴν ἐλεημοσύνη τους με τὴν ὁποία νομίζουν ὅτι εὐαρεστοῦν τὸ Θεό.



**Ο** Θεὸς ἐξετάζει τὴν πρόθεσιν. Σὲ ὅσα ὅμως μποροῦμε, ζητεῖ μὲ φιλόανθρωπον τρόπον καὶ ἔργα. Εἶναι μέγας αὐτός, ποὺ δὲν παραλείπει τίποτα ἀπὸ ὅσα μπορεῖ. Μεγαλύτερος ὅμως εἶναι ἐκεῖνος, ποὺ μὲ ταπεινώση ἐπιχειρεῖ πράγματα ὑπὲρ τὴν δύναμή του. Πολλὲς φορὲς οἱ δαίμονες μᾶς ἐμποδίζουν ἀπὸ τὰ ἐλαφρὰ καὶ ὠφέλιμα ἔργα καὶ μᾶς προτρέπουν περισσότερον στὰ πλέον κοπιαστικά.

**Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Σιναΐτης**

## Ἡ Οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν

### Ἡ Οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν δὲν ἔχει καμία σχέση με τὴ σημερινὴ παγκοσμιότητα, ποὺ ἰσοπεδώνει τὰ πάντα, γιατί ἐκείνη ἦταν θεμελιωμένη στὴν ἐλευθερία καὶ τὸν σεβασμὸ.

*Ὁμιλία τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Μόρφου Νεοφύτου στὸ Ἀκάκι (28 Ἰανουαρίου, 2009).*

Τὸ νὰ μιλά κανεὶς γιὰ τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶναι ἐγχείρημα δύσκολο, καθότι οἱ τρεῖς αὐτοὶ Μεγάλοι Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, παρόλο ποὺ μᾶς κληροδότησαν ἓνα λόγο γεμάτο φῶς, ἦσαν πρωτίστως ἄνθρωποι τῶν ἔργων. Δηλαδή πραγματώσαν ἐδῶ στὴ γῆ τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ μετὰ τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴ βιοτὴ τους, ἀφιερώνοντας ὅλες τους τίς δυνάμεις, ψυχικὲς καὶ σωματικὲς, στὴ διακονία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τὰ μεγάλα καὶ ποικίλα χαρίσματα, ποὺ ἔλαβαν δωρεὰν ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, τὰ ἔδωσαν μετὰ τὴ σειρά τους στὸν κόσμο, δοξάζοντας ἔτσι Ἐκείνον, ποὺ τοὺς τὰ ἔδωσε καὶ ἀνακουφίζοντας καὶ στηρίζοντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

Σπάνια συναντᾶμε, ἀκόμα καὶ σὲ ἁγιασμένους ἀνθρώπους, τέτοιο φρόνημα καὶ τέτοιο πλοῦτο χαρισμάτων. Ὅπως πολὺ ὀρθὰ σημειώνουν οἱ μελετητὲς τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου, ἡ πολυσχιδὴ προσωπικότητά τους συγκέντρωνε καὶ συνδύαζε θαυμαστὲς ἰκανότητες διαποτισμένες ἀπὸ ἀγιότητα, ἀσκητικότητα, θεολογία, ἀκαδημαϊκὴ γνώση, κοινωνικὴ εὐαισθησία, ποιμαντικὴ μέριμνα, συγγραφικὸ ταλέντο καὶ διοικητικὴ μέριμνα. Ἄλλωστε, δὲν εἶναι τυχαῖο, ποὺ ὁ ὕμνωδὸς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοὺς ὀνομάζει «**μεγίστους φωστῆρας τῆς τρισηλίου Θεότητος**» καὶ ἄλλοῦ τοῦ «**Χριστοῦ μας τὸ στόμα**». Ἐπομένως, θὰ μιλήσουμε γιὰ τοὺς τρεῖς αὐτοὺς Μεγάλους Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, ἔχοντας κατὰ νοῦν ὅτι ἔβαλαν τὰ θεμέλια γιὰ τὴν ὀρθὴ λατρεία τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ σὲ ὅλη τὴν οἰκουμένη καὶ μᾶς κληροδότησαν τὰ ἀθάνατα συγγράμματά τους, ποὺ παραμένουν μέχρι σήμερα ἓνα βασικὸ ἐργαλεῖο γιὰ οἰονδήποτε θέλει νὰ μελετήσῃ τὴν Ὀρθόδοξη πατερικὴ καὶ θεολογικὴ παράδοση.

Προτοῦ προχωρήσουμε, ὅμως, ἄς ρίξουμε μία σύντομη ματιὰ στὴ ζωὴ τους, κάνοντας ἀρχὴ μετὰ τὸν Μέγα Βασίλειο.

Ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος γεννήθηκε στὴ Νεοκαισάρεια τοῦ Πόντου περὶ τὸ 330 ἀπὸ γονεῖς εὐσεβεῖς, τὸν Βασίλειο καὶ τὴν Ἐμμέλεια, ποὺ εἶχαν ἀκόμα πέντε κόρες καὶ τρεῖς γιούς. Τὰ πρῶτα μαθήματά του ὁ ἅγιος τὰ παρακολούθησε κοντὰ στὸν πατέρα του, ποὺ ἦταν ρήτορας καὶ διδάσκαλος ἐγκυκλίων μαθημάτων. Ἀκολουθῶς, φοίτησε στὶς περίφημες σχολὲς τῆς Καισάρειας, τῆς Κωνσταντινούπολης καὶ τῆς Ἀθήνας, σπουδάζοντας ρητορικὴ, φιλοσοφία, γραμματικὴ, διαλεκτικὴ, ἀστρονομία, γεωμετρία καὶ ἰατρικὴ.

Στὴν Ἀθήνα ἀναπτύσσει μετὰ τὸν συμφοιτητὴ του, ἅγιο Γρηγόριο τὸν Θεολόγο, πνευματικὴ καὶ ἀδελφικὴ φιλία, ἡ ὁποία θὰ διατηρηθεῖ σ' ὅλη τους τὴ ζωὴ. Παρόλο δέ, ποὺ εἶχε μελετήσῃ σὲ βάθος ὅλους τοὺς μέχρι τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Πατέρες καὶ διδασκάλους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, δήλωνε ὑπερήφανα ὅτι τὴ θεολογικὴ του σκέψη τὴ διαμόρφωσαν ἡ μητέρα καὶ ἡ γιαγιά του. Ἡ μητέρα του Ἐμμέλεια, ποὺ τοῦ ἐμφύσησε τὴν αἴσθηση περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ μόνο Θεοῦ, καὶ ἡ γιαγιά του Μακρίνα, ποὺ κατὰ τὴν παιδικὴν του ἡλικία αὐξήσῃ αὐτὴ τὴν αἴσθηση περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ἦταν ἓνας ἄνθρωπος πολυσχιδής, ἀκαταπόνητος καὶ ὑπερδραστήριος, ἡγέτης σπάνιος. Μετὰ ὅ,τι ἀσχολεῖτο τὸ ἔφερε εἰς πέρας. Ἦταν πρότυπο μοναχοῦ ἀσκητῆ. Ὁργάνωσε τὸν μοναχικὸ βίον μετὰ ἀξιοθαύμαστο τρόπο, ἔτσι ὥστε νὰ διακονεῖται ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ κοινωνικὸ σύνολο, χωρὶς νὰ παρεμποδίζεταί τὸ πνευματικὸ, ἡσυχαστικὸ καὶ δοξολογικὸ ἔργο τῶν μοναχῶν. Ἦταν κοινωνικὸς μεταρρυθμιστής. Ἀγωνίστηκε ὅσο κανένας ἄλλος ἄνθρωπος στὴν ἱστορία γιὰ τὴν ἀναμόρφωση τῆς κοινωνίας καὶ τὴν ὀργάνωση τῆς κοινωνικῆς καὶ νοσοκομειακῆς πρόνοιας μετὰ τὰ λίγα μέσα ποὺ διέθετε, ἰδρύοντας στὰ προάστεια τῆς Καισάρειας τὴν περίφημη «πολιτεία τοῦ ἐλέους», ποὺ θὰ γίνῃ μεταγενέστερα γνωστὴ μετὰ τὸ ὄνομα Βασιλειάδα.

Ἦταν μέγας θεολόγος. Προσέφερε τὴν ὀριστικὴ λύση στὸ τριαδολογικὸ πρόβλημα, ποὺ συντάρασε τὴν





Ἐκκλησία κατὰ τὸν 4<sup>ον</sup> αἰώνα. Τὸ σχετικὸ θεολογικὸ του ἔργο υἰοθετήθηκε ἐπίσημα ἀπὸ τὴν Δεύτερη Οἰκουμενικὴ Σύνοδο, τὴν ὁποία ὄραματιζόταν καὶ ἀνέμενε, ἀλλὰ δὲν πρόλαβε, καθότι ἐκοιμήθη δύο χρόνια πρὶν. Κατέστη πρότυπο ποιμενάρχῃ, συγγραφέα καὶ θεολόγου. Συνδύαζε πρακτικὴ ἰδιοφυία, φιλοσοφικὴ σκέψη καὶ θεολογικὴ ἀκρίβεια. Γιὰ μία περίοδο 18 ἐτῶν, μέχρι τὸ τέλος τοῦ βίου του, παράλληλα μὲ τὴν ποιμαντικὴ του ἀπασχόληση καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἀσθένεια τοῦ σώματός του, παρήγαγε συγγραφικὸ ἔργο σὲ ἕκταση καὶ ποιότητα, ποὺ τὸν τοποθετεῖ στὴν πρώτη γραμμὴ τῶν Πατέρων ὄλων τῶν ἐποχῶν.

**Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος** γεννήθηκε γύρω στὸ 328 στὴν Ἀριανζὸ τῆς Καππαδοκίας, ποὺ βρίσκεται κοντὰ στὴ Ναζιανζό, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὀνομάζεται Ναζιανζηνός. Καταγόταν ἀπὸ οἰκογένεια γαιοκτημόνων τῆς Καππαδοκίας. Ἡ μητέρα του, ἡ Νόννα, ἀναγνωρίστηκε ὡς ἁγία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, ἐνῶ ὁ πατέρας του, ὁ Γρηγόριος, διετέλεσε ἐπίσκοπος Ναζιανζοῦ. Μετὰ τὶς σπουδές του στὴν Καισάρεια καὶ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρεια, μεταβαίνει στὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ λαμβάνει καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ἴδια ἀκαδημαϊκὴ γνώση, ποὺ ἔλαβε καὶ ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος.

Ἦταν ἄνθρωπος ἀσθενικός, ἡσυχος καὶ ἤρεμος. Προτιμοῦσε νὰ ζεῖ μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο καὶ νὰ ἀσχολεῖται μὲ τὸ γράψιμο. Ὅποτε ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ ζήσει σὲ μεγάλες πόλεις, τὸ ἔκανε γιὰ χάρι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἐξαιτίας τοῦ χαρακτήρα του, προτιμοῦσε τὴν ἀναχώρηση, τὴ φυγὴ. Γι' αὐτὸ ὅλη του ἡ ζωὴ ἦταν γεμάτη ἀπὸ συνεχεῖς μετατοπίσεις. Ἐνῶ ἡ μόρφωσή του, τὸ ἐνδιαφέρον του γιὰ τὰ ἐκκλησιαστικὰ πράγματα καὶ ἡ φωνὴ τῆς Θείας χάριτος ποὺ συχνὰ ἄκουε ἐντὸς του, τὸν ἔσπρωχναν πρὸς τὶς διοικητικὰ εὐθύνες, ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη τὸ φιλάσθενο σῶμα του καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία του γιὰ ἡσυχία, τὸν ἀπομάκρυναν.

Ὡστόσο, στὰ λίγα χρόνια ποὺ διακόνησε τὴν Ἐκκλησία ἀπὸ τὴ θέση τοῦ ποιμένα, ἄλλαξε τὴν πορεία τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πραγμάτων. Ἄν καὶ θεωρεῖται ὁ ποιητικότερος τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν, ὡς συγγραφέας δὲν ἐργαζόταν μεθοδικὰ καὶ συστηματικὰ, ἀλλὰ ἀνάλογα μὲ τὶς περιστάσεις. Τὸ ἔργο του εἶναι πολὺ μεγάλο σὲ ὄγκο καὶ θεωρεῖται ὁ πιδὸ μυστικὸς ἀπὸ τὴν τριάδα τῶν Ἱεραρχῶν. Τὰ δὲ κείμενά του χρησιμοποιήθηκαν πάρα πολὺ ὡς μαρτυρίες τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως καὶ ζωῆς καθ' ὅλους τοὺς αἰῶνες. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ ἀπένευσε τὸν τίτλο Θεολόγος ὡς κυριώνυμο, γιὰ τὸν ἰδιάζοντα, βαθὺ καὶ ὑψηλὸ χαρακτήρα τῆς θεολογίας του.

**Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος** ἀνήκει στοὺς ἁγίους Πατέρες, ποὺ λόγῳ τῆς τεράστιας συμβολῆς του στὰ διοικητικὰ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τοῦ μεγάλου κοινωνικοῦ καὶ πνευματικοῦ του ἔργου καὶ τῆς συμβολῆς του στὴν ἀνάπτυξη τῆς θεολογίας, ἡ μνήμη του διατηρήθηκε ζωντανὴ σὲ ὅλους τοὺς αἰῶνες. Εἶναι ὁ μόνος ἀπὸ

τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες, ποὺ δὲν κατάγεται ἀπὸ τὴν Καππαδοκία, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀντιόχεια τῆς Συρίας. Ἦταν παιδὶ ἐπιφανοῦς οἰκογενείας, τοῦ Σεκούνδου καὶ τῆς ἁγίας Ἀνθούσης, τῆς ὁποίας τὴν ἀρετὴ καὶ τὴν πίστη ἐγκωμίασε ὁ δάσκαλος τοῦ ἁγίου, ὁ ὀνομαστὸς φιλόσοφος Λιβάνιος, λέγοντας ὅτι εἶναι ἡ ἀξιότερη τῶν Χριστιανῶν. Ὁ ἅγιος γεννήθηκε μεταξὺ τῶν ἐτῶν 344 καὶ 354 καὶ, ὅπως προαναφέραμε, φοίτησε κοντὰ στὸν σοφὸ Λιβάνιο. Μετὰ τὴν κοίμησή τῆς μητέρας του, ἀσκήτεψε γιὰ τέσσερα χρόνια κοντὰ σὲ Σύρο Γέροντα καὶ ἄλλα δύο μόνος σὲ σπήλαιο.

Στὴ συνέχεια χειροτονήθηκε διάκονος καὶ μετέβη στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη, ὅπου δίδαξε καὶ ἐπιδόθηκε στὴ συγγραφὴ. Χειροτονεῖται ἱερέας καὶ ἐπιστρέφει στὴν Ἀντιόχεια, ὅπου ἀναπτύσσει μεγάλο πνευματικὸ ἔργο. Κηρύττει κάθε Παρασκευὴ καὶ Κυριακὴ καὶ τὴ Μεγάλῃ Σαρακοστῇ περιέρχεται ὅλους τοὺς ναοὺς τῆς πόλης καὶ κηρύττει καθημερινά, προφυλάσσοντας καὶ μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο τὸν λαὸ ἀπὸ τὶς διάφορες αἱρέσεις. Τὸ 398 ἐκλέγεται ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ ἀσκεῖ συνεχῆ κριτικὴ κατὰ τῶν ἀπασθαλιῶν τῶν βασιλέων, τῶν ἀρχόντων καὶ τῆς πολιτικῆς βίας.

Ἐπιδίδεται σὲ τεράστιο κοινωνικὸ καὶ ποιμαντικὸ ἔργο, κτίζοντας νοσοκομεῖα, γηροκομεῖα, πτωχοκομεῖα καὶ ὀργανώνοντας ὑποδειγματικὰ τὸ ἔργο τῆς κοινωνικῆς πρόνοιας. Ἀναπτύσσει τὸ αἶσθημα τῆς σοβαρότητας τῆς ἱερωσύνης καὶ συμβάλλει καὶ ἀπαιτεῖ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἱερεῖς του νὰ εἶναι ὀλιγαρκεῖς, λιτοὶ καὶ μὲ ἦθος. Κατὰ τὴ διάρκεια τῆς ἐπισκοπικῆς του διακονίας δέχθηκε πολλὰς ταλαιπωρίες, ἐξορίες καὶ διώξεις. Τὸ συγγραφικὸ του ἔργο εἶναι ὀγκῶδες καὶ θεωρεῖται ὁ ρητορικώτερος τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν.

Ἡ ἐποχὴ, ποὺ ἔζησαν οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες, ἦταν περίοδος ταραχῶν καὶ ριζικῶν ἀλλαγῶν, ἂν καὶ ὁ ἀρχαῖος κόσμος παρέμενε ἀκόμα πολὺ ἰσχυρὸς καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶχε νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσει τὰ βέλη καὶ τοὺς πειρασμοὺς τῶν ποικίλων αἱρέσεων. Ἡ δὲ αὐτοκρατορικὴ μοναρχία ἦταν τόσο ἰσχυρή, ποὺ εἶχε τὴ δύναμη νὰ ἀλλάξει μέσα σὲ μία μέρα ἀποφάσεις ποὺ ἀφοροῦσαν τὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὴν Παιδεία, μὲ ἀποτέλεσμα νὰ διώκονται ἅγιοι ἱεράρχες καὶ σημαντικὲς προσωπικότητες ἀπὸ τοὺς θρόνους καὶ τὶς θέσεις τους.

Ἡ αὐτοκρατορικὴ αὐλὴ ἦταν εὐάλωτη στὶς ἐπιρροὲς κακῶν συμβούλων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱεραρχῶν, ποὺ ἤθελαν μὲ τὸν ἕνα ἢ τὸν ἄλλο τρόπο νὰ ὑπηρετήσουν τὰ ἰδιοτελῆ συμφέροντά τους. Τὸ κλίμα αὐτὸ δὲν δίστασαν νὰ στηλιτεύσουν οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες, καὶ ἰδιαίτερος ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος, ποὺ δέχθηκε περισσότερο ἀπὸ τοὺς ὑπόλοιπους τὸν πόλεμο τῶν αὐλοκολάκων. Πέραν τούτου, οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶχαν νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσουν καὶ τοὺς φανατικοὺς Χριστιανούς, ποὺ δημιουργοῦσαν προβλήματα καὶ προχωροῦσαν σὲ βανδαλισμοὺς

έναντίον ειδωλολατρικών ναών ή στο κάψιμο βιβλίων άρχαίων συγγραφέων.

Ειδικά, ό Μέγας Βασίλειος κατέβαλε μεγάλη προσπάθεια να τιθασεύσει μερικούς μοναχούς, που επιδίδονταν σε τέτοιου είδους καταστροφές, διότι ως άριστος γνώστης της άρχαίας γραμματείας ήξερε ότι ή παιδεία της εποχής του ήταν στηριγμένη στα κείμενα των άρχαίων συγγραφέων. Έπομένως, εκείνο που χρειαζόταν δεν ήταν ή σύγκρουση και ή απόρριψη, ούτε και ή πλήρης άποδοχή, αλλά ή διάκριση, ή άνάλυση και ή άφομοίωση του άρχαίου κόσμου, όχι ως περιεχομένου, αλλά ως ένδύματος του όρθοδόξου Χριστιανικού λόγου.

Οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες έβλεπαν ότι την εποχή, που έζησαν, ή άρχαιοελληνική παράδοση ήταν ζωσα και πραγματική, όχι μόνο για τους ειδωλολάτρες, αλλά και για πολλούς Χριστιανούς, που αισθάνονταν κληρονόμοι των δύο πολιτισμών, του έλληνικού και του Χριστιανικού και ήθελαν να παραλάβουν από τον έλληνισμό ένα περίλαμπρο ένδυμα κι από τον Χριστιανισμό μία ύψηλή θρησκευτική και ήθική διδασκαλία. Μέσα σ' αυτή την άτμόσφαιρα, οί Καππαδόκες Πατέρες, και ειδικά ό Μέγας Βασίλειος, προσέφεραν τó μέτρο της διακρίσεως, που προέτρεπε μόν τους Χριστιανούς να σπουδάξουν τή φιλοσοφία και τις συναφείς επιστήμες, αλλά να προφυλάγονται από την κενή άπάτη των ειδώλων, έχοντας για όδηγό τους την άποκάλυψη της έν Χριστώ άλήθειας.

Η φιλοσοφία μπορούσε να είναι ένα όργανο έπεξεργασίας και διατύπωσης των θεολογικών και ήθικών άντιλήψεων, αλλά τó ζητούμενο ήταν ή διατήρηση της σχέσης με τον ένα και μόνο Θεό. Η χρησιμοποίηση των όρων και μεθοδολογίας της έλληνικής φιλοσοφίας θεωρήθηκε άναγκαία, για να διατυπωθεί και να κατανοηθεί σε όρους δογματικούς ή Χριστιανική πίστη. Αξίζει έδω να προσέξουμε τó εξής:

Οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες δεν έπαιρναν, όπως πολλοί πιστεύουν, ό,τι τους άρεσε από την άρχαία γραμματεία για να τó προσαρμόσουν στη Χριστιανική πίστη. Ούτε και συνέχισαν τó έργο μερικών άπολογητών, που ύποστηριζαν ότι κάποια άρχαία κείμενα προετοίμαζαν την έλευση του Χριστού. Αντιθέτως, έχοντας ξεκάθαρη άποψη, άντιμετώπισαν τον άρχαίο κόσμο στο σύνολό του. Και έχοντας ως άφετηρία τον βαθύ συγκλονισμό που ένιωθαν οί Έλληνες άπέναντι στο άπρόβλεπτο της ζωής, τó όποιο τους ένέπνεε την αίσθηση της τραγωδίας, άντιπρότειναν στην εποχή τους ως λύση τó άπέραντο έλεος του Θεού, ό όποιος σαρκώθηκε για να προσλάβει τή ζωή και να θεραπεύσει την ιστορία.

Στον τομέα της παιδείας, οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες άναδεικνύονται πρωτοπόροι άφου, σε μία εποχή

συγκρούσεων και ταραχών, είχαν τó σθένος και την τόλμη να ύποστηρίζουν και να επιμένουν ότι θα πρέπει να μορφώνονται όλοι, άνεξαρετήτως τάξεως και όχι μόνο οί άνώτερες τάξεις του λαού. Κατάφεραν, λόγω της προσωπικότητάς τους, της μεγάλης άκαδημαϊκής μόρφωσης και της ευρύτητας του πνεύματός τους, να καθορίσουν την παιδεία της εποχής τους.

Έτσι στα σχολεία διδάσκονταν και άρχαιοελληνικά κείμενα και συγγραφείς, όπως ό Όμηρος, οί άρχαίοι τραγικοί Αίσχύλος, Σοφοκλής και Ευριπίδης, ιστορικοί και ρήτορες, άκόμα και μερικές κωμωδίες του Άριστοφάνη. Πολλοί έρευνητές συμφωνούν ότι τα κείμενα αυτά δεν θα σώζονταν, άν οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες δεν τα ένέτασαν στην εκπαίδευση. Και άν σήμερα θεωρούνται προστάτες της παιδείας και των γραμμάτων, είναι γιατί, όχι μόνο διέσωσαν τα άρχαία γράμματα σε μία εποχή φανατισμού και μισαλλοδοξίας, αλλά και γιατί ή βαθιά τους πίστη τους επέτρεψε να είναι έπιλεκτικοί, διακριτικοί, άνοικτοί και κριτικοί προς κάθε κατεύθυνση.

Γνώριζαν δηλαδή, ότι ή γνώση δεν άρκεί από μόνη της για να κατευθύνει τους νέους προς την όδδ της άλήθειας. Έπιθυμούσαν να διαμορφώσουν τους νέους με τρόπο ώστε να άναπτύξουν τó δώρο της έλευθερίας που είχαν από τον Θεό δημιουργικά κι όχι φοβισμένα και καχύποπτα, γιατί μόνο έτσι θα μπορούσαν να αγαπήσουν πραγματικά τον Δημιουργό και τó δημιούργημά Του, τον άνθρωπο. Ήθελαν τα παιδιά να είναι μέτοχοι της αγάπης του Θεού, που εκβάλλει έξω κάθε φόβο, ώστε ό άνθρωπος να αισθάνεται την άνάγκη να διακονεί τον άδελφό του και όχι να τον ύποτάσει. Έτσι, οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες είδαν την παιδεία ως καλλιέργεια της ψυχής και κοινωνία με τον Θεό, ως διαμόρφωση καλών και ένάρετων χαρακτήρων και όμαλή ένταξη τους στην κοινωνία. Γιατί, όπως λέει άφοπλιστικά ό άγιος Γρηγόριος ό Θεολόγος, «οί άνθρωποι πρέπει να ζούν ό ένας για τον άλλο και όλοι για όλους».

Η κοινωνική ευαισθησία των Τριών Ίεραρχών είναι ύποδειγματική και άξεπέραστη σε εύρος και δημιουργικότητα. Πρώτοι οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες τόνισαν ότι, παράλληλα με την άσκητική και ήσυχαστική ζωή, θα έπρεπε να λειτουργεί και ή διακονία προς τον συνάνθρωπό μας, δηλαδή ή συμπαράσταση και ή βοήθεια προς κάθε πάσχοντα, άνεξαρετήτως φυλής, χρώματος και θρησκείας. Είναι γνωστά τα όργανωμένα συσσίτια του Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, στα όποια προσέρχονταν και Έβραίοι και Άρειανοί, καθώς είναι γνωστή και ή κριτική, που άσκοϋσε στους τοκογλύφους και όσους εκμεταλλεύονταν τους ανθρώπους στη δουλειά.

Ό άγιος Γρηγόριος σημειώνει ότι κανένας δεν είναι εκ φύσεως δούλος, άνατρέποντας τή σχετική άποψη, τόσο

του ἀρχαίου, ὅσο καὶ τοῦ ἰουδαϊκοῦ κόσμου. Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος μὲ τὴ σειρὰ του παραχωρεῖ ἐκκλησία στοὺς Γότθους, γιὰ νὰ τελοῦν τὴ λατρεία στὴ δική τους βαρβαρική γλῶσσα. Ὅλα αὐτὰ δείχνουν ἁγίους, ποὺ ἐφάρμοζαν στὴν πράξη καὶ στὴν κυριολεξία τὶς ἐντολὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Δὲν ἦσαν Χριστιανοὶ κατ' ὄνομα, ἀλλὰ κατ' οὐσίαν.

**Ἡ οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν εἶναι ὑποδειγματικὴ ἀφοῦ συνδιαλέγονταν μὲ ὅλα καὶ μὲ ὅλους, χωρὶς νὰ ἀποκλίνουν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀλήθεια τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ.** Ἡ ζωὴ τους ἦταν διαποτισμένη ἀπὸ μία οἰκουμενικὴ ἀντίληψη, ἡ ὁποία ἀποτυπώθηκε καὶ στὸ ἀπολυτικό τους, τὸ ὁποῖο λέει: «*τοὺς τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀκτίσι δογμάτων θεῶν πυρσεύσαντας*». Δηλαδή, οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶναι αὐτοί, ποὺ ἔδωσαν φῶς σ' ὁλόκληρη τὴν οἰκουμένη, μὲ τὶς ἀκτίνες τῶν Θεῶν δογμάτων.

Ἡ ἐποχὴ τους ἦταν ἐποχὴ πολυπολιτισμικότητας, ὅπως θὰ λέγαμε σήμερα. Οἱ ἴδιοι μαθήτευσαν σὲ ἐθνικούς καὶ ἰουδαίους δασκάλους καὶ ἔτσι ἀπὸ νωρὴς ἀντιλήφθηκαν ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι οἰκουμενικὴ καὶ ὅτι ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς ἔπρεπε νὰ γίνεῖ κατανοητὸς σὲ ὅλον τὸν κόσμο, ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀνεξαρτήτως καταγωγῆς, θρησκείας, φύλου, χρώματος ἢ κοινωνικῆς θέσης. Τὸ μήνυμα τῆς Ἀναστάσεως, τῆς νίκης κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου, ἔπρεπε νὰ φτάσει σὲ κάθε γωνιὰ τῆς γῆς. **Ἡ οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν δὲν ἔχει καμία σχέση μὲ τὴ σημερινὴ παγκοσμιότητα, ποὺ ἰσοπεδώνει τὰ πάντα, γιὰτὶ ἐκεῖνη ἦταν θεμελιωμένη στὴν ἐλευθερία καὶ τὸν σεβασμὸ τῆς διαφορετικότητας.** Γιὰ τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες ἡ οἰκουμενικότητα δὲν ἦταν σχῆμα λόγου ἀλλὰ πράξη καινοδιαθηκική. Ὁ πλησίον εἶναι ὁ ἀδελφός μου, τὸ ἄλλο μου μισό. Ἔτσι, μποροῦμε χωρὶς ὑπερβολὴ νὰ ποῦμε ὅτι οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶναι αὐτοί, ποὺ ἔνωσαν τὴν Ἀνατολὴ μὲ τὴ Δύση καὶ τὸν ἀρχαῖο κόσμο μὲ τὸν νέο κόσμο τῆς Χριστιανικῆς πίστεως.

Ἡ σκέψη τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν ἀποτελεῖ σήμερα τὸ κλειδί γιὰ τὴν ἐλληνικὴ παιδεία. Διότι προσφέρει τὸ οἰκουμενικὸ μήνυμα τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς συνδιαλλαγῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ προβάλλει τὸν ἄνθρωπο ὡς κέντρο τῆς δημιουργίας, ποὺ ἔχει τὴν εὐθύνη τῆς διαχειρίσεως τοῦ κτιστοῦ κόσμου ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ συνομιλεῖ καὶ νὰ κοινωνεῖ μὲ τὸν Θεό, ὡς πρόσωπο ἀνεπανάληπτο καὶ μοναδικό.

Τελειώνοντας, θὰ ἤθελα νὰ ἀναφερθῶ καὶ στὴ τεράστια συμβολὴ τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου στὴ Θεῖα λατρεία, μὲ τὴ διαμόρφωση τοῦ τυπικοῦ τῆς Θεῖας Λειτουργίας, ποὺ εἶναι τὸ κορυφαῖο λατρευτικὸ γεγονός τῶν Χριστιανῶν, τὸ ὁποῖο κορυφώνεται μὲ τὴν τέλεση τῆς Θεῖας Εὐχαριστίας. Ἡ Θεῖα Λειτουργία τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, ποὺ εἶναι προγενέστερη ἐκείνης τοῦ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου, εἶναι μεγαλοπρεπὴς καὶ μακροσκελὴς

καὶ τελεῖται δέκα φορὲς τὸν χρόνο. Ἐνῶ ἡ Θεῖα Λειτουργία τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου εἶναι στηριγμένη στὴν ἀποστολικὴ Θεῖα Λειτουργία, ποὺ ἀποδίδεται στὸν Ἰάκωβο τὸν Ἀδελφόθεο, ἀλλὰ ἀποτελεῖ καὶ μία συνοπτικότερη ἀπόδοση τῆς Θεῖας Λειτουργίας τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου.

Εὐχομαι, ἡ χάρη καὶ ἡ βοήθεια τῶν ἁγίων αὐτῶν Πατέρων, νὰ εἶναι πάντα μαζί μὲ ὅσους ἀγωνίζονται τὸν καλὸ ἀγῶνα τῆς παιδείας, δασκάλους καὶ μαθητές. Ἡ ἐποχὴ μας, μὲ τὸν ἔντονο συγκρητισμὸ, τὴν παγκοσμιοποίησι, τὴ συνύπαρξη τῶν πιὸ ἀντιφατικῶν πολιτιστικῶν στοιχείων, θυμίζει σὲ πολλὰ τὴ δική τους ἐποχὴ. Γι' αὐτό, ἡ παρουσία τους εἶναι καὶ σήμερα ἐπίκαιρη, ὅπως ἦταν στὴ δική τους ἐποχὴ. Εἴθε τὸ παράδειγμα, ἡ διδασκαλία τους, ἀλλὰ κυρίως ἡ μεσιτεία τους πρὸς τὸν Χριστό, νὰ βοηθοῦν ὅλους μας νὰ δοῦμε κι ἐμεῖς «*τὸ φῶς τὸ τῆς γνώσεως*».



## Ζακχαῖος ὁ Ἀρχιελῶνης.

Ἀρχμ. π. Μελέτιος Ἀπ. Βαδραχάνης, Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 13/01/2012.

**Ζ**ακχαῖος σημαίνει καθαρὸς, ἀθῶος· κι ὅμως ἠθικὰ ἦταν βρώμικος. Ἦταν τελῶνης καὶ μάλιστα ἀρχιελῶνης. Τελῶνης ἦταν ὅτι τὸ πιὸ χειρότερο καὶ ὅτι τὸ πιὸ ἀηδιαστικὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ ἐκεῖνη. Ἦταν τὸ πιὸ ἄγριο θηρίο, ποὺ ὑπῆρχε τότε, μὲ τὴ διαφορὰ ὅτι ζοῦσε στὶς πόλεις καὶ ὄχι στὰ δάση. Συνεργάτης τῶν Ῥωμαίων κατακτητῶν, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἔθνους του, ἄγριος, ψυχρὸς καὶ ἀνάληπτος στὴ προσπάθειά του νὰ εἰσπράξει τὸ μέγιστο δυνατὸ φόρο καὶ νὰ κρατήσῃ γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτό του τὸ ὑψηλότερο ποσοστό.

Ἀρχιελῶνης λοιπὸν καὶ πάμπλουτος καὶ μέλος τῆς ὑψηλῆς κοινωνίας ὁ Ζακχαῖος. Εἶχε ὅσα ἐπιθυμεῖ κάθε κτηνώδης ἄνθρωπος. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἀναπαύοταν· δὲν ἔλεγε ὅπως ὁ ἄφρων πλούσιος «*ψυχὴ μου ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ γιὰ πολλὰ χρόνια. Ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου*» (Λουκ. 12, 19). Μέσα του ὑπῆρχε ὑπαρξιακὸ κενό, ποὺ δὲ γέμιζε μὲ τίποτα. Κατοικοῦσε στὴν Ἱεριχὼ καὶ προφανῶς θὰ εἶχε ἀκούσει γιὰ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ τὴ διδασκαλία Του. Γιὰ τὸ Χριστό, ποὺ πῆρε τὸν τελῶνη τῆς Καπερναοῦμ, τὸν Ματθαῖο, καὶ τὸν ἔκανε Ἀπόστολό Του. Μέσα του ὑπῆρχε πόθος νὰ τὸν συναντήσῃ μὲ κάθε τρόπο καὶ νὰ τὸν φορολογήσῃ

πνευματικά. Θὰ εἶχε ἀκούσει ὅτι «ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται, καὶ βιασται ἀρπάζουσιν αὐτήν» (Ματθ. 11:12). Βιαστὲς στὰ χρόνια τῆς Κ.Δ. λέγονταν κυρίως οἱ τελῶνες, οἱ ὁποῖοι μὲ βίαιο καὶ βάνασο τρόπο φορολογοῦσαν, εἶχες δὲν εἶχες.

Κάποια μέρα μαθαίνει ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς περνᾷ ἀπὸ τὸ μέρος του. Τρέχει, γιὰ νὰ τὸν δεῖ. «Καὶ ἐξήτει ἰδεῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦ τίς ἐστι». Ἡ ἐπιθυμία του εἶναι σφοδρὴ καὶ σωστή. Ὁ Ζακχαῖος ὅμως ἔχει ἓνα σωματικὸ μειονεκτήμα, ἓνα κουσοῦρι. Εἶναι κοντός. Τὰ πλήθη τοῦ κόσμου, ποὺ περιτριγύριζαν τὸν Χριστὸ δὲν τὸν ἄφηναν, ἀκόμη καὶ ὀπτικά, νὰ τὸν συναντήσει. «Καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου, ὅτι τῇ ἡλικίᾳ μικρὸς ἦν».

Ἀλήθεια τί πρόβλημα τὰ μειονεκτήματα—σωματικὰ καὶ ψυχικὰ—τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Πόσοι σκανδαλίζονται ἀπ' αὐτὰ καὶ τὰ βάζουν μὲ τὸ Θεό. Κι ὅμως οὔτε τὰ πλεονεκτήματα μᾶς σώζουν οὔτε τὰ μειονεκτήματα μᾶς χάνουν.

Ὁ Σαοὺλ καὶ ὁ Ἀβεσσαλὼμ ἦταν ἄνδρες ψηλοί, ὄμορφοι, μὲ γοητεία. Ἀσκοῦσαν μεγάλη ἐπιρροὴ στὰ πλήθη. Κι ὅμως καταστράφηκαν κι αὐτοὶ καὶ δημιούργησαν προβλήματα στὸ λαὸ τους καὶ στὸ ἔθνος τους. Διότι ἦταν ἀτομοκεντρικοὶ καὶ ἐγωϊστὲς καὶ ὡς ἐκ τούτου δὲν εἶχαν τὴν Θεία βοήθεια. Ὁ Μωυσῆς ἦταν ἰσχυρόφωνος καὶ βραδύγλωσσος κι ὅμως διοίκησε δύο ἑκατομμύρια Ἰσραηλίτες ἐπὶ σαράντα χρόνια, μέσα ἀπὸ ἀντίξοες συνθήκες, καὶ τοὺς ἔφερε στὴ γῆ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. Ἐλάχιστα προσόντα εἶχε καὶ ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος τῆς Φιλαδελφείας (Ἄποκ. 3:7). Κι ὅμως ἠγήθηκε τεραστίου ἱεραποστολικοῦ ἔργου, τὸ ὁποῖο κανένας δὲν μπόρεσε νὰ σταματήσει. Ἡ παραβολὴ τῶν ταλάντων (Ματθ. 25:14–30) λέγει πολλὰ γιὰ τὸ θέμα μας. Ἡ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἡ προσπάθεια τῶν ταπεινῶν ἀνθρώπων σώζει.

Ὁ Ζακχαῖος ἦταν κοντὸς λοιπόν. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἦταν ἓνα «ἄχρηστο πάθος», ὅπως λέγει ὁ ἄθεος ὑπαρξιστὴς φιλόσοφος Jean-Paul Sartre. Πράγμα ποὺ συμβαίνει γιὰ τοὺς περισσότερους ἀνθρώπους, οἱ ὁποῖοι δὲν εἶναι τίποτα ἄλλο ἀπὸ ἓνα ἄθροισμα ἀχρήστων παθῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν. Εἶχε ἀσίγαστη ἐπιθυμία ὄχι γιὰ κάτι ἀνθρώπινο ἢ ἁμαρτωλό. Εἶχε ἐπιθυμία νὰ δεῖ τὸν Χριστό. Ἡ ἐπιθυμία ἦταν τόσο μεγάλη, ποὺ ἀδιαφορεῖ, γιὰ τὸ ἂν θὰ γίνεαι γελοῖος, ἂν τὸν κοροϊδέσουν, ἂν θὰ τὸν εἰρωνευτοῦν καὶ σακαφαλῶνει σὰν χαμίνι σὲ μία συκομορέα.

Ὁ Χριστὸς, ποὺ γνωρίζει τί συμβαίνει μέσα του, τὸν καλεῖ μὲ τὸ ὄνομά του καὶ τοῦ ζητᾷ νὰ κατεβεῖ, γιατί θὰ τοῦ κάνει ἐπίσκεψη στὸ σπίτι του. «Ζακχαῖε σπεύσας κατὰβηθι· σήμερον γὰρ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μείναι». Ὅταν ὁ ἀνθρώπος ζητᾷ ἓνα, ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ δίνει πολλὰ περισσότερα ἀπ' ὅτι σκέφθηκε καὶ διανοήθηκε (Ἐφεσ. 3:20). Ὁ Ζακχαῖος λαμβάνει τὴν ἀποκάλυψη

ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν εἶναι ἓνας τυχαῖος ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ ἓνας παντογνώστης, ποὺ γνωρίζει ὅσα μόνο ὁ Θεὸς γνωρίζει. Ἐπιπλέον τοῦ κάνει τὴν τιμὴ νὰ τὸν ἐπισκεφτεῖ καὶ στὸ σπίτι. Αὐτὸ τὸν συγκλονίζει καὶ δημιουργεῖ μέσα του ἓνα πνευματικὸ σεισμό.

Ἡ ψυχικὴ ἀλλαγὴ του ἀποβαίνει ραγδαία. Ἡ μετάνοιά του ἀποκαλύπτεται ἀνάλογη τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Αὐτὸς δὲν ἐνδιαφέρθηκε τί θὰ πεῖ ὁ κόσμος καὶ ἀνέβηκε στὸ δένδρο· ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἐνδιαφέρεται τί θὰ πεῖ ὁ κόσμος κι ἂν σκανδαλιστεῖ, ποὺ ἐπισκέπτεται ἓνα ἐχθρὸ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ συνεργάτη τῶν κατακτητῶν Ρωμαίων. Ὁ Ζακχαῖος δείχνει ὅτι σωστὰ ἐνήργησε ὁ Χριστὸς. Διότι γιὰ χατίρι του ἀπαρνεῖται τὸ ἄνετο καὶ χλιδάτο παρελθόν του καὶ γίνεται πτωχὸς καὶ φίλος τῶν ἀδυνάτων καὶ ὄσων ἀδίκησε. Δὲν θέλει νὰ ἀκολουθήσει τὸν Χριστὸ μὲ τὸ ἀζημίωτο, ὅπως ὁ πλούσιος ἄρχων καὶ νεανίσκος. Δὲν θέλει πλέον νὰ ἐφαρμόξει τὸ σατανικὸ ρητὸ «ὁ θάνατός σου, ἢ ζωὴ μου», ἀλλὰ πιστεύει στὸ λόγο τοῦ Χριστοῦ «ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ὁ κόκκος τοῦ σίτου πεσῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἀποθάνῃ, αὐτὸς μόνος μένει· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ, πολλὴν καρπὸν φέρει» (Ἰω. 12, 24). Αὐτὸ τὸ λόγο τὸν εἶπε ὁ Χριστὸς, ὅταν ἔμαθε ὅτι κάποιοι Ἑλληνες εἶπαν στὸν Φίλιππο «Κύριε, θέλομεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἰδεῖν» (Ἰω. 12:20–21). Εἶχαν παρόμοιο πόθο μὲ τὸν Ζακχαῖο. Καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς ἐξηγεῖ τί σημαίνει γνωριμία μὲ τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ ποῖα εἶναι ἡ δόξα τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Εἶναι ὁ σταυρὸς, ποὺ θὰ ἐπακολουθήσει.

Ἀκόμη καὶ ἐμεῖς, ποὺ διαμαρτυροῦμαστε σήμερα γιὰ τὴν ἄγρια φορολογία, τὴν ἀνεργία καὶ τὴν ἀδικία, ποὺ ὑπάρχει στὴ κοινωνία μας, προσπαθοῦμε μὲ κάθε τρόπο, θεμιτὸ ἢ ἀθέμιτο, νὰ βροῦμε ἐργασία, νὰ ἐξασφαλίσουμε περιουσία ἢ σύνταξη ἢ δύο μισθοὺς καὶ ἄλλα πολλά. Ὁ Ζακχαῖος ὅμως εἶναι καταπέλτης καὶ ἐντελῶς ἀδιάφορος γιὰ τὸ προσωπικὸ του συμφέρον. «Ἴδου τὰ ἡμίση τῶν ὑπαρχόντων μου, Κύριε, δίδωμι τοῖς πτωχοῖς, καὶ εἴ τινός τι ἐσυκοφάντησα, ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν». Ἡ μετάνοιά του δὲν εἶναι λεκτικὴ καὶ τυπικὴ, ὡς συνέβαινε καὶ συμβαίνει καὶ ἄλλοτε καὶ σήμερα, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον. Ἡ μετάνοιά του εἶναι οὐσιαστικὴ, ἀληθινὴ, κενωτικὴ γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸ του καὶ τὰ συμφέροντά του. Ὁ ἄλλοτε γδάρτης τῶν ἄλλων, γδέρνει τώρα τὸν ἑαυτὸ του.

Οἱ πατέρες παρατηροῦν ὅτι στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ὄνομα ἔχουν μόνο οἱ φτωχοὶ (Λάζαρος) ἢ οἱ πλούσιοι, ποὺ διαχειρίστηκαν τὸν πλοῦτο σὰν οἰκονόμοι Θεοῦ καὶ δὲν τὸν κατακράτησαν γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸ τους (Ἀβραάμ) ἢ οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ πλούσιοι, ποὺ μετανόησαν ὅμως καὶ διέθεσαν τὸν πλοῦτο τους στοὺς φτωχοὺς, ὅπως ὁ Ζακχαῖος. Καὶ ἔχουν ὄνομα, γιατί μόνο αὐτοὶ ἔχουν προσωπικότητα ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς. Οἱ ἄλλοι εἶναι ἀπλῶς «σάρκες»... (Γεν. 6:3).

## REPENTANCE AND NOT AUTO-CEPHALY IS NEEDED TO HEAL THE SCHISM IN UKRAINE

### AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ARCHBISHOP THEodosy (SNIGIRYOV) OF BOYARKA

*By Sergei Geruk, Archbishop Theodosy (Snigiryov) of Boyarka.*

—Your Eminence, how deep is the connection between the Ukrainian Church and the Moscow Patriarchate both throughout history and current times? Are the Ukrainian and Russian Churches really different, almost “warring” amongst themselves, as the schismatics say?

—Certainly not! The connection was and is very deep; historically and spiritually. We have always, for millennia, been one Church! From the Kievan baptismal font in 988 arose the Russian church, which spread the Gospel faith and church life throughout the territory of what was then Rus’. After all, the very same Holy Prince Vladimir of Kiev, like his grandmother Equal-to-the-Apostles Saint Olga, was born near Pskov, and was later the Prince of Novgorod, [Pskov and Novgorod are medieval cities now located in western and northern Russia.—Trans.]. He fought for the Orthodox faith, and it spread to the north, south, east, and west—across all Rus’.

The Ancient Russian Church was then, in terms of canonical status, part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Later, in connection with the wars and desolation [of Kievan Rus’.—Trans.], the residence of the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus’ was moved to Vladimir-on-Klyazma [located in central Russia.—Trans.], and subsequently to Moscow.

The transfer of the administrative center of the Kiev Metropolis was officially approved by the Patriarchal Synod of Constantinople. Then in the fifteenth century, as a result of historical events, there was a temporary separation of the Western Russian Metropolis, along with Kiev, from the rest of the Russian Church. The division lasted almost 230 years, and in the seventeenth century, unity was again restored. **So spiritually speaking, we have always been one Church.**

Administratively, things were a little different. In modern times, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the formation of an independent Ukrainian State, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church became independent, and received rights of broad autonomy, and full independence in its administration. In fact, our Ukrainian Church has received rights the likes of which had never been seen before in history. At the same time, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church remains in full spiritual and canonical connection with the entire Russian Church.

—In light of what you have said, the question arises that is often asked by Ukrainian schismatics: Why is the Moscow Patriarchate the Mother Church for Kiev, and not vice versa? After all, there was no Moscow during the Baptism of Rus’.

And Constantinople constantly repeats that it is the Mother Church for Ukraine.

—Schismatics, as usual, are using their traditional logical fallacy of equivocation (substitution of concepts), banking on the ignorance of whoever is listening to them.

In Church-legal terminology, the “Mother Church” (or *Kyriarchal* Church), is the Patriarchate or Local Church which currently encompasses or includes a given canonical and administrative Church territory. This does not mean the Church from which another [Church or nation.—Trans.] received the Orthodox faith.

By that logic, the Mother Church of the entire Orthodox World would be the Church of Jerusalem, but this is not so. And for Ukraine, the Mother, or *Kyriarchal*, Church today is the Russian Orthodox Church, whether someone likes it or not. Even if, theoretically speaking, we consider the transfer of the Western Russian Metropolis, which is now contested by some historians from the Phanar [Ecumenical Patriarchate.—Trans], this does not change anything.

**Canon law dictates a period of thirty years to confirm the canonical subordination of a given territory to a certain bishop**, upon the fact of this subordination, without subsequent polemics. This is so that there will not be unrest and instability in the Church. And it’s already been more than 300 years since this happened. What is unrecognized? What are they talking about? It seems that some “theologians” do not see anything beyond their office walls, let alone look out the window.

—**Remind us, please, in numerical terms how great is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church today: How many parishes, priests, believers are in it?**

—The [non-schismatic, Ed.] Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the largest religious confession in Ukraine. It includes 12,500 parishes, more than 250 monasteries, 12,000 priests, and more than 5000 monks and nuns. By comparison, all the remaining “Orthodox” confessions of Ukraine taken together have about 5000 parishes and a little more than 200 monks and nuns amongst them.

As for the number of believers in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, I think it is in the many millions. But this number does not lend itself to an exact calculation; statistics of this kind are not kept.

At the festive Cross Procession in Kiev [held by the canonical Church—Trans.], gathered around 250,000 believers were gathered; you can thus draw some conclusions. After all, the majority of believers can’t participate in the procession, only a few from all the dioceses could make it.

If we consider that not everyone was even able to make it to Kiev, or even organize transit, due to obstacles imposed by the authorities in all regions at different levels... then here we have this “small” crowd of believers, “only” 250,000 who gathered in one day, in one city.

—During the last few months the theme of granting a “*Tomos on the Autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church*” was raised by Ukrainian politicians and discussed in the press. By appealing to the Patriarch of Constantinople, President Poroshenko and the Verkhovna Rada violated the separation of Church and state, as defined in article 35 of the Ukrainian Constitution, did he not?

—Yes, that goes without saying! These attempts to interfere in the religious life of society demonstrated by political figures of Ukraine can be called unconstitutional. And it is not only the infamous appeal [of President Poroshenko], of which you are speaking. Following him, many officials of different ranks each according to their station, calling to action to work on this issue: diplomats, district and provincial leaders, etc.

The uninformed in Church matters so argue: What is wrong with the initiatives of the politicians? What is wrong with Ukraine having her own autocephalous Church?

**Ukraine already has her own church; absolutely autonomous, and the most populous—this is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.**

The opportunities and rights of our broad autonomy are much grater than even those of many churches with an autocephalous status! This is an objective and important fact: the rights of autonomy of our Church are much greater than those of many autocephalous Churches. And the majority of the believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church understand this; they understand and appreciate it. But at the same time, they appreciate the spiritual unity with the fullness of the Russian Church, founded by St. Prince Vladimir, as we have already said.

At this historical state, the overwhelming majority of the episcopate, the priesthood, and the lay people of our church are satisfied with its canonical status, and do not want to initiate changes. I am certain that the people of God will give no one the ability to use the Church as a bargaining chip in political games.

We are told that autocephaly will relieve internal tension and resistance from the schismatics, that it will heal the schism. They say that they will return to the bosom of the Church. But this is deception. No form of autocephaly will heal anything, everyone needs to understand this perfectly. **Repentance is needed for the healing of schism in Ukraine, not autocephaly; awareness of one’s own ecclesiological errors, the replacement of their “sacraments,” the canonical ordination of their “priesthood.”**



**The Kiev Pechersk Lavra**

Are they really ready for this yet? On the contrary, we hear from the side of the schismatics increasingly aggressive rhetoric about the seizure of lavras, churches, etc. But [healing the schism.—Trans.]—that’s not what this is really about. It must be understood that the initiative of politicians to “provide autocephaly” has no direct relationship to the canonical and most populous Orthodox Church in Ukraine. This initiative is all a thinly veiled desire for the non-canonical, summary legalization of Ukrainian church schisms, namely the so-called “Kiev Patriarchate” and the “Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church.” That is what all this talk is about, simply masked with some kind of “*Tomos of Autocephaly*.”

**—All said, what if Patriarch Bartholomew unilaterally still decides to legalize the Kiev Patriarchate?**

—If the question is whether Patriarch Bartholomew will break the canonical order in the Church for the sake of legalizing Ukrainian schisms: The latest information from inter-Orthodox consultations and meetings on this issue shows that the Patriarch understands the entire complex issue of the

Ukrainian problem. And it is unlikely that he would want to take responsibility for the unpredictable consequences of this step. [Unfortunately, Patriarch Bartholomew did commit the unthinkable—Ed.]

**—In his interview, Philaret [Denisenko, the “patriarch” of the “Kiev Patriarchate”.—Ed.] already spoke about how the Kiev Caves Lavra, Pochaev Lavra, and other holy places should be “expropriated” from the**

**Canonical Church.**

—Absolutely, in his recent interviews, the leader of the “Kiev Patriarchate” Philaret constantly repeats that in the circumstances of the canonical legalization of his organization, they will claim the property and the very name of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. And this will attract Ukrainian legislators, officials, politicians. Anti-Church bills have already been prepared in the committees of the Verkhovna Rada to help church raiders to implement these plans. And what can this lead to? **I am afraid that this could become the trigger for a full-scale civil confrontation on religious grounds.** It seems to me that this is obvious to any sensible person.

**—Philaret, however, cunning as ever, in a recent statement denied that the monasteries of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will be captured by force.**

—Yes, he tried to take it back; apparently he must have been told he spoke too soon and risked damaging the plans. And

how did he support his refutation? With his “honorable” word alone? But if one could believe his word, then there would have been no schism in Ukraine in the first place (remember his Archpastoral word on the cross and Gospel to leave office and not bring trouble in 1992)?

We have already seen this in Western Ukraine, where believers are expelled from churches that they themselves built, in total disregard for the decisions of the courts. And in the face of this, they say, “Everything was free and voluntary.” These are all fairy tales for television viewers. I think Philaret understands perfectly well what he wants to do and how he plans to do it.

God is not in power and hatred but in truth and meekness. Our flock hopes and believes that politicians and schismatics won't be able to take these self-destructive steps. If it comes to that, believers will protect their holy places as they are able.

—**And what if they can't?**

—Even if one assumes that someone is planning a full-scale persecution of the Church in Ukraine, as it was the case with the Communists, the believers still have no reason to lose spirit. As the folk proverb says: God is not in the wood of the church but the hearts of believers. We will pray in homes as we did in ages past. But we should always remember: With the help of God, the Church will stand *and the gates of hell will not prevail against Her.* (Mt 16:18).

Moreover, we know that Kiev is one of the protected places of the Mother of God, and we believe that she will not allow believers more trials than they can bear. I still think that it won't come to a forceful confrontation.

—**The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is now in a difficult position: The Russian Federation has been declared in Ukraine as an “Aggressor State.” Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church maintains a canonical connection with the Moscow Patriarchate. How loyal is the broader Ukrainian society to the believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church?**

—It is not only the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that is in a difficult situation, but rather the entire Ukrainian nation. And believers, as part of this nation, are no exception. But unlike other faiths of Ukraine, our Church represents the whole country in all its diversity. It really embraces the whole of Ukraine from Krai to Krai [edge/border] And like no other confession, the sum of its believers represents all regions without exceptions. Therefore, our Church as a community of believers from all regions perfectly understands that the problem of war in Ukraine cannot be narrowly reduced to a “war between the two countries.” The problem is much broader and more global.

It is justly said by Ukrainian sociologists, that in our country, and not only on the front line, there is a confrontation going between two different world views, two different mentalities, two different public self-identifications—pro-Western on the

one hand, and pro-Eastern, pro-Russian, if you will, on the other. For a very long time, both of these primary thought groups of Ukrainian society have lived peacefully, considered and called themselves Ukrainian, and built our country on the basis of parity.

In general, in Ukraine, as a multi-ethnic and multi-faceted state, there exist other significant public factions with their historical memory and worldview. And this diversity has never been a problem before. We always formed a single Ukrainian society, multifaceted, but calm and peaceful. And of course, absolutely, there was and still is present unto this very day the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Millions of our believers pray and build monasteries and churches from Transcarpathia to Donetsk and Luhansk, from Chernigov to Simferopol. Pay close attention: The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the only public institution in modern Ukraine which managed to survive in these difficult years structurally and territorially unscathed.

Why is that? The secret is simple. The Church does not divide but unites. It does not inflame confrontation and hatred, but on the contrary, seeks to extinguish it and calls for peace. Grant that all parts of Ukrainian society live and develop freely and calmly, and then we will all be peaceful and well in our common home. This is how the Ukrainian Orthodox Church thinks and acts.

If politicians were to act this way, the tragedies of today's times could be prevented.

—**Your Eminence, what do you think: Is it a long way until real peace can be established in Ukraine?**

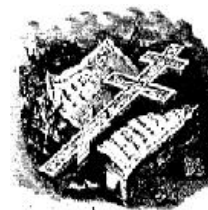
—I think that all external factors of the conflict will lose force if our internal contradictions are resolved; if Ukrainian society becomes one not only in words, but in reality.

And unity for Ukraine is possible only in diversity. That is how it came about in history, and nothing else can be done about it. To achieve this unity in diversity, it is necessary to avoid radicalization of society, and the incitement of hatred on national and religious grounds.

It is necessary to strive for dialog and respect for different points of view and mutual forgiveness.

I believe that such a path could lead in the foreseeable future to reconciliation and finally to the end of the conflict.

May the Lord help us!



**P**ray like a child, in simplicity of heart, concerning all your needs and sorrows; and entrust yourself to God's will, for the Lord arranges our salvation.

St. Nikon of Optina (+1931)

## THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

*A Commentary in the Light of the Fathers, by Hieromonk Gregorios, published by the Cell of St. John the Theologian Holy Monastery of Koutlounousiou, Holy Mountain.*

### The Parable

#### The Migration of the Prodigal Son to the Land of Sin

Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the estate that will come to me." So the father divided his livelihood between them.

A few days later, the younger son gathered all that he had and traveled to a far country. There, he squandered his property, living immorally. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place in that country, and he began to be in need.

He went and hired himself to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He wanted to feed himself with the husks that the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything.

#### Repentance and Return

But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I am dying with hunger! I will get up, go to my father, and tell him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son! Make me as one of your hired servants?"

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still at a distance, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. He ran, and embraced his son, and kissed him. Then the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you! I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

#### The Reception of the Father

But the father said to his slaves, "Bring out the first robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet! Bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this, my son, was dead, and he is alive again! He was lost and [now he] is found!" And they began to celebrate.

#### The Elder Brother

Now his elder son was in the field. As he came near to the house, he heard music and dancing. Calling one of the servants, he asked what was going on. The servant replied, "Your brother has returned! Your father has killed the fattened calf, because

he has received him back safe and healthy." However, the elder son became angry and he would not go in. Therefore, his father came out and begged him.

But he answered his father, "Look, for so many years I have served you, and I have never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet, you never gave me a goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this, your son, arrived, he who has devoured your living with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him." The father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours! But it was fitting to celebrate and to rejoice, for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found."

† † †

### Commentary—God is Love

#### A certain man had two sons.

Jesus Christ, with His teachings and His Sacrifice on the cross, revealed to us the truth about God the Father. Because, as St. Cyril of Alexandria tells us, *God the Father is Visible only to His Son by nature.*" We have been assured by John the Evangelist and Theologian: *No one has seen God at any time. The uniquely-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him.* (1 Jn 2:10). Christ has taught us that God the Father is paternal Love, which is continuously offered to mankind. In order that this truth be understood, Christ used the parable of the prodigal son who was saved.

**A certain man.** St Gregory Palamas says: *In the parable, the Lord calls Himself man, and this is not strange, because He truly became man for our salvation. What does seem strange is His projecting Himself as a man for our benefit, He who is always the protector of our souls and bodies as master and creator of both? He who presented deeds of extreme love and care for us even before we were created?*

The whole creation is an overflowing of divine love. Thus, Gregory the Theologian says: *It was not sufficient for the most merciful God to be moved only in the contemplation of Himself, but the divine kindness had to overflow and expand, so that more and more could benefit from the God of mercy; such being proof of His infinite kindness.* This is why God initially creates the angelic Powers. Next *"He creates a second visible material world, which is the entire universe surrounding us.*





Creation is a loving movement of God. St Maximos theologizes saying: God, *“in the extreme magnitude of His kind love moves beyond Himself (goes forth from Himself), according to His providence, for all living beings, and in a certain way is attracted by kindness, affection and love, and from regions above everything and removed from all things, He descends into the region of all things with ecstatic hyper-substantial strength, without departing from Himself. That is why the most learned in divine things call Him a zealot, because He has a great kind love for living beings ... They call God a projector and a progenitor of affection and love, because these qualities which resided within Himself (namely affection and love), He spread beyond Himself, throughout creation. This is why it has been said: God is love.”*

Even before God created man He demonstrated His love for him. St Gregory Palamas explains this as follows: *Before we were created, God created the Angels to be dispatched as deacons, as St. Paul says, to those who are going to inherit salvation, for our benefit. He also set in place the dome of heaven, built the foundation of the earth, and spread out the sea As for our moral betterment and our guidance towards virtue, there is nothing that our benevolent Master did not do [to assist us]. This material world was built by God as a mirror of the immaterial one, so that by spiritual contemplation of it, we will ascend towards it by means of a wondrous ladder, towards the numinous.*

The purpose of creating the world and man, was to make him a communicant of divine love. *Because the light should not remain unseen, the divine glory undeclared, nor the divine kindness un-enjoyed. Nor should the other divine goods remain unengaged, without someone to become their communicant.* (St. Gregory Nyssa).

Since the purpose of man's creation was that he become a communicant of divine goodness, St. Gregory of Nyssa says that *he was adorned by God with life, logos, wisdom and all the divine goods, so that by means of any of them he would aspire to the corresponding divine good.* All such goods are collectively expressed by the phrase: in the image of God.

Having created man, the Lord God took the man whom He had formed and placed him in the garden of delight, to cultivate and keep it. (See Gen. 2:15) In Paradise man experienced communion with God, *being God's tenant in God's residence, clothed in glory by the same God enjoying the uniquely sweet fruit, namely the contemplation of His face, like another angel.* (St. John of Damascus). The vision of God was the joy and food of Adam and Eve.

St. Basil the Great comments that the supreme good bestowed upon man by the Creator was *his sojourn near God and his union with Him by means of love.* Man had to cultivate and to keep this divine gift in the Paradise of divine love. Moreover, this work that was to be done

by man's free will, would have been the transition from according to the image to in the likeness. (Gen 2:15, Gen 1:25).

*The according to the image coexists in man from the beginning, but to become in likeness to God can only be achieved through the effort of our own free will . The Lord by giving us the power to be like Him allowed us to work toward the likeness of God so that our reward in heaven would reflect our effort.* (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

God is Love and the virtue that will perfect our likeness to God is the virtue of love: *Just as in an icon, when the most vivid of all colors is added it achieves its likeness to the prototype, so it happens to those whom Grace repaints in the divine likeness: when the lighting of love is added, it becomes apparent that the image is found in the effulgence of the likeness.* (St. Diadochos Photike). Man becomes like God through love: *In like manner, when the saints become perfect, they all attain to this perfection, and by the superabundant outpouring of their love and compassion upon all men they resemble God.* (St. Isaac the Syrian).

† † †

**A certain man had two sons.** The parable speaks about two sons, *because human nature was divided into two different paths, thus the division of good and evil separated the human world into two classes.* In the parable Christ calls the benevolent Father and God **man**, and He calls all virtuous and sinful persons His **sons**. *God is the father of both the virtuous and the sinful, because they have all been adopted by Holy Baptism and the parable refers to the faithful.* (St. Gregory Palamas).

God is depicted as a man who has two sons. With the loving relationship between father and child, Christ reveals to us that God is love. (See 1 Jn 4:8). He is the source of love from which man receives love. And because love is expressed most powerfully in the relationship of a father with his children, God calls Himself man and father of all of us. Because, *“on the one hand He became man for our benefit, and on the other He had us reborn by holy Baptism.* (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

From the first words of the parable, we can see that Christ told it in order to reveal to us the magnitude and the standard of God's love.

† † †

**God is love and man was created in the image of God, therefore man is an image of love.** Man resided in Paradise in order to partake of God's love. Because, **Paradise is the love of God.** Man, however, did not honor the divine gifts and chose death instead of life, and hate instead of love. Likewise, the prodigal son left the Paradise of Love towards afar country. He moved away from the Father who loved His children and from the blessed house of paternal love.

## SPIRITUAL FREEDOM OR SPIRITUAL SLAVERY?

By St. Theophan the Recluse, from "The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It," Letter no. 4.

*Worldly life deprives one of freedom and holds in cruel slavery those devoted to the world. Hypocrisy and egoism as persistent qualities of worldly life.*

† † †



Last time I did not talk about anything you had touched upon in your letter, and so I am sending you an addition.

You say, "Another thing I see is how everyone rushes around in a huff, in pursuit of something which no one ever manages to catch. When I happen to pass through some crowded street or place, what a fuss and bustle I see! But then I look—it is the same thing in their homes, and it is probably in their souls, too. I am at a loss—is it really possible to live this way? Another thing I see is how they bind, constrain and tyrannize each other; no one has his own will or any freedom. You do not dare dress as you would like to dress, you do not dare act as you would like to act, you cannot say what you would like to do it—

you cannot do anything as you would like to do it. "Everything they do is subject to some law that was written by no one knows who. It binds everyone, but no one knows how to break its hold. It is in this way that they tyrannize each other. You do not dare listen to anyone—that is unfortunate.

"I, for example, sing. When you want to sing, it is really paradise; it is pleasant for me and for the listeners. But there are times when you sing whether you want to or not. It is considered very polite to do this; to refuse would be considered against the 'law.' And so you sing. The burden is unbearable for me—your chest almost collapses, but you thrust it out to show that you are singing with, all your heart.

"I have noticed this in others, too. There is your freedom for you! Looking from the outside, everyone seems a freeman. A freeman, who gets all tangled up in his arms and legs! It was in regard to this that I began to examine closely whether people do things from the heart. And what of it? Maybe I am mistaken, but I have not seen anything that could be from the soul. There are empty caresses, a readiness to do things for each other, and also mutual admiration.

"Everything is superficial. Beneath the outward appearance that is elegant and smooth is concealed an entirely different spirit, which, if it were to be brought to light, would be found to be neither elegant nor even tolerable. So, it turns

out that when we gather together, we are a collection of hypocritical actors and actresses. What a comedy! Furthermore, what I find most astonishing is the coldness coming from everyone. How could this be?... Indeed, everyone seems to be everyone else's friend, ready to give them the shirt off their back, but there is an underlying coldness."

You are quite right. There is nothing more to add to your description. All this has long since been observed and mentioned to forewarn us.

Long ago, St. Makarios the Great described this bustle of life with its futile pursuit, a little of which you have experienced: *The children of this age have become like wheat poured into the sieve of this earth, and then scattered among the inconstant dreams of this world, in the presence of the unending turmoil of earthly cares, desires and maze of material concepts. Satan shakes the souls, and with the sieve, that is, the earthly cares, scatters the entire sinful human race. From the time of the Fall, when Adam transgressed the law and came under the prince of darkness who gained power over him, with the unending seductive and turbulent thoughts of all the sons of this age, he has led them to conflict in this sieve of the earth. The more the wheat in the sieve is shaken about, turned over and cast up, the more the prince of darkness takes over all people with their earthly cares: he shakes them, agitates them and alarms them, forcing them to flee to vain thoughts, unclean desires, earthly and worldly bonds, and constantly enticing the sinful race of Adam.*

*The Lord foretold to the Apostles the future coming of temptation over them: 'Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you like wheat: but I have prayed to My Father that thy faith fail not.' (Lk 22:31,32). The pronouncement and decision spoken by the Creator to Cain is clear: 'Thou shalt be groaning and trembling on the earth.' (Gen 4:12).*

*This sentence serves as a secret image and likeness to all sinners, because Adam's race, having transgressed the commandment and fallen into sin, secretly took upon itself these likenesses. People are led into uncertainty by inconstant thoughts of fear, terror, every kind of confusion, desire, and all kinds of pleasures. The prince of this world disturbs every soul which is not born from God, and he disturbs human ideas, which are like wheat constantly being shaken in the sieve, leading everyone into uncertainty, and ensnaring them with worldly seductions, pleasures of the flesh, terrors and confusions. (Homily 5:1,2)*

There is the summary of your observation! You noticed the way things are, and St. Makarios indicated both the reason for this and the origin. It is impossible to begin to speak of this view of the matter in this way if one does not begin to acquire this manner of speaking about things. I therefore ask you to adopt this view and always keep it in mind. It expresses the essence of the matter, and, once you have accepted it with conviction, it will serve for you as a

restraint from the charm of worldly life. In order to be able to think about this more and to get more familiar with this manner of thought, try to read the entire Fifth Homily of St. Makarios. I lent this book to your mother, and she wanted to acquire it.

For my part, I would just add that this futile pursuit and general discontent with everything goes back to the very thing of which I wrote last time. That is, the fact that not every aspect or need of human nature can be nourished by this way of life. An unsatisfied aspect such as hunger demands nourishment in the gratification of its need and drives man to seek such. So man runs to seek gratification, but as he moves around in that very circle, unsatisfied with respect to hunger, no gratification occurs, and hunger does not cease. But neither does the need for nourishment cease, nor does the pursuit of it. And it will never cease for those who live in the spirit of this world. Because the enemy blinds them, they do not notice their error: they have taken the wrong path and are headed in the wrong direction; in this darkness he torments and stifles these poor souls. So the enemy has blinded them, and there is no one to tell them of their error. Thus they roar like ferocious beasts. Isn't this the roar of the lion who goes about everywhere, seeking whom he may devour?

As for the other aspects of worldly life which you noted, I would just say that it cannot be any other way. For such a life is the life of the fallen man, whose primary characteristic is pride or egoism, which presents itself as the primary goal, while everyone and everything else are the means. Thus, everyone's goal is to impose his desires on someone else, or to bind him by them; you have quite accurately called this "tyranny." No matter how well someone conceals his desires, behind them stands egoism, which desires to twist you to its needs, or to use you as its means. So the goal is one of deception; essentially, it uses the strained contrivance of concealing one's faults without correcting them. Otherwise, one's influence on others and manipulation of them would be stopped. That is the reason that everyone exudes such coldness: everyone shuts himself up in his own shell and is unable to produce any warmth.

It is true that you will probably meet a few people with a kind heart; they flatter and touch the heart deeply and directly. Such a disposition is a vestige of the feeling of kinship with others with which man is endowed, but this is at the service of egoism, which uses it as the most expedient means for achieving its ends. I know one such person. It is better to be an outright egoist than such a flatterer. Although it is possible to make out what these flatterers are leading up to, it is a rare person who is able to do so.

While it is true that you almost continually come across good deeds, these are done only to obligate you ten times over for the one good deed. You will say, "How can this be?"

Everyone is always striving for honesty, and if you show dishonesty in something, you ruin yourself."

It is true that this is so, but this honesty is the mask of egoism; the main thing is not to besmirch oneself and lose face, and for this reason the most disgusting deeds are allowed, as many as one can get away with and conceal from others. You will even hear, or have already heard, someone condemned as being an egoist.

Do not think that those who speak like this are themselves above egoism. No, they condemn those who do not allow themselves to be exploited or used as a means to the egotistical ends of those who so judge them. Consequently, the latter are to be exposed as the real egoists.

I have heard that such individuals even reproach monks for egoism; they say that monks live selfishly by themselves. Poor monks! They do not eat, drink or sleep; they are on their feet day and night, in obedience, not having their own will or way-and somehow they have become egoists! By this alone, you may judge of what value in general these accusations of egoism are, such as you hear or will hear among worldly people. They mean they have met their match!

In looking over what I have written, I see that I have judged worldly life very bluntly, but I will not take back a single word. Maybe I would not have written what I have, except that I wanted you yourself to take notice of the rather dark stain on the world. I took a fancy to singing in this particular key, and I do not think it will warp you in any way, considering what you yourself have said.

But I expect you to ask, "Just how is one to be?" This is what we will be trying to answer for the rest of our correspondence. For now I will just say that, for you to shun everyone is, of course, impossible; but **refuse as much as possible to enter into this circle of worldly life.** When it does pull you against your will, act as if you were not there; look, but do not see; listen, but do not hear. Let what you see pass by your eyes, and what you hear pass by your ears. Outwardly behave like everyone else, be straightforward and sincere; but guard your heart from sympathies and attractions.

The main thing is to guard the heart, then you will be there in body only, but not in soul, faithfully carrying out the commandment of the Apostle: *Be as... they that use this world, (but) don't abuse it.* (1 Cor 7:31). "World" here refers to worldly life. You will be using the world, that is, you will have a need to come into contact with worldly life; but when you keep your heart at a distance, then you will not be abusing that life; that is, you will not be participating in it out of sympathy and desire, but out of being obliged by your present circumstances.

I have worn you out by my long letter, but you compelled me to do it. I ask that you carefully peruse what I have written, especially the last lines.

## PRIDE IS THE SUPREME ANTAGONIST OF DIVINE LAW

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from his book "Orthodox Psychotherapy."

A pure nous sees things correctly. A trained intelligence puts them in order. According to the theology of St. Thalassios, the intelligence by nature submits to the word and disciplines and subjugates the body, while it is an insult to the intelligence to be subject to what lacks intelligence, that is, the body, and thus "concern itself with shameful desires". It is also an act of depravity for the soul to abandon the Creator and worship the body. Thus, man's nous before the fall had a relationship with God, and the word expressed this experience and life with the help of the mind, that particular instrument of the body.

But after the fall came the dying and death of the soul. As a result, it became impossible for the whole inner world of the soul to function naturally and for all the harmonised inner functions to go on. Man's nous was confused, hidden by the passions and overcome by impenetrable darkness. The word, not having to express the experiences of the nous, was identified with the mind. Thus the intelligence was raised above the nous and now holds sway in fallen man. In fact this is the sickness of the word and of the intelligence. The intelligence is over-nourished, it has been raised to a greater position than the nous and has captured the word. The over-nourished intelligence is the source of great abnormality in the spiritual organism. Arrogance, with all the energies of egoism, which is the source of the abnormality, is raging there.

What Archimandrite Sophrony writes about the movements of the intelligence in fallen man and about the abnormality which this creates in the whole spiritual organism is characteristic. I quote it in its entirety because it is very expressive. "The spiritual struggle is a manifold struggle but the struggle with pride strikes deepest and is the most grievous. **Pride is the supreme antagonist of divine law, deforming the divine order of being and bringing ruin and death in its train. Pride manifests itself partly on the physical plane but more essentially on the plane of thought and spirit.** It arrogates priority for itself, battling for complete mastery, and its principal weapon is the reasoning mind.

"Intelligence, for example, will reject the commandment *Judge not, that ye be not judged* (Mt 7:1) as nonsensical, urging that the faculty of being able to judge is a distinctive quality in man, which makes him superior to the whole world and affords him the power to dominate.

"In order to assert its superiority the intelligence points to its achievements, to its creativeness, producing many convincing proofs purporting to show that in the age-old

experience of history the establishment or affirmation of truth falls entirely within its province.

"Intelligence, functioning impersonally, is by nature only one of the manifestations of life in the human personality, one of the energies of the personality. Where it is allotted priority in the spiritual being of man, it begins to fight against its source—that is, its personal origin.

"Rising, as he thinks, to the furthest heights; descending, as he believes, to the lowest depths, man aspires to contact the frontiers of being, in order, as is his way, to define it, and when he cannot achieve his purpose he succumbs and decides that 'God does not exist.'

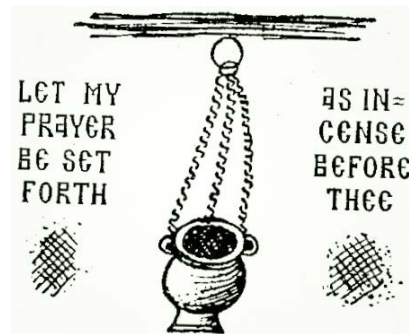
"Then, continuing the struggle for predominance, boldly and at the same time miserably, he says to himself: 'If there is a God, how can I accept that I am not that God?'

"Not having reached the frontiers of being and having attributed to himself this infinity, he stands up arrogantly and declares, 'I have explored everything and nowhere found anything greater than myself, so—I am God.'

"And it is a fact that when man's spiritual being is concentrated on and in the mind, reason takes over and he becomes blind to anything that surpasses him and ends by seeing himself as the divine principle.

"The intellectual imagination here reaches its utmost limits and, at the same time, its fall into the darkest night."

No wise people without God can have pure word and pure intelligence. St. Gregory of Sinai says: *Only the saints, through purity, have become intelligent in accordance with nature. None of those wise in words have had pure intelligence, because they corrupted it from the start with evil thoughts.*



Even though we all hobble along with a limp and are filled with wounds and sins, we like to speak about others. When we visit a hospital, we will observe that all the patients have some type of illness. However, we will not see anyone criticizing another sick person. Have you ever noticed this? No one says to another patient: 'Why are you lying in bed?' Whereas, we are all sick spiritually; and yet, we criticize one another. We have a problem with our eye, and we like to occupy ourselves with someone who has lung disease. Unfortunately, we wretched people fail to realize this.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheou and Arizona

## TAKING YOUR LAST BREATH

*From the "Plow," vol. 1-1 (2000), a periodical of the Ss. Peter & Paul OCA parish, Manville, NJ.*

In 1932, a witness traveled through the whole of Siberia on a scientific expedition. In the area in which the witness was, at the time of the incident there were no inhabitants around at all, just prisoners. In the camps at that time there reigned an unheard of tyranny. For no reason at all, people were shot, beaten, and flogged. Living conditions were terrible; there were sixty to eighty people in barracks, with two tiers of boards for sleeping. In case one of the prisoners didn't fulfill his daily assignment, the camp guards had the right to do what they wanted with him. People were dying of hunger and cold.

In July of 1933—as the witness recounts the incident—our exploration party stopped for several days not far from a concentration camp. The weather had become quite pleasant. After dinner we sat until late at night by the bonfire. We often heard some kind of cries, which echoed through the region. We didn't know yet what kinds of cries these were.

It was a clear, quiet night; the fresh Siberian air was giving off a fragrant aroma of flowers along the valley, I will remember it always! Our sweet morning sleep was interrupted by a kind of mournful human moan. We all got up quickly. The head of our party quickly took up a pair of binoculars, others set up two leveling instruments, and we were looking after our work, when we began to observe a crowd moving in our direction; because of the undergrowth it was difficult to understand what was going on.

It was sixty prisoners, and as they got closer we could clearly see that they were all wasted from starvation and overwork. What did we see? Each of them had a rope on his shoulders. They were dragging a sleigh—a sleigh in the month of July! And on the sleigh was a barrel with human excrement!

The guards who accompanied them apparently did not know there was a scientific expedition on the territory of the concentration camp. We heard the precise words of the guards' commands: "lie down and don't move." One of the guards ran back to the camp; apparently they considered us suspicious. One of our party somehow quickly determined the situation of the prisoners and said: "We've prolonged their lives a few minutes." At first we didn't understand these words. In perhaps 15 or 20 minutes we were surrounded by a platoon of camp guards, who approached holding rifles battle-ready, as if they were about to attack with bayonets. The platoon commander and the political commissar came up to us and asked for our documents. After verifying the documents they explained to us that these sixty men had been sentenced to be shot as an element foreign to Soviet power.

Already a ditch had been prepared for these sixty. The political commissar asked us to go into our tents, which we did. The

sixty martyrs were priests. In the quiet July morning the weak voices of many of the priests were clearly audible. One of the executioners asked the priests standing by the ditch, one by one: "You're taking your last breath; tell us, is there a God or not?" The reply of the holy martyrs was firm and confident: "Yes, there is a God!" The first shot rang out. Sitting in our tents, our hearts pounded. A second shot rang out, a third, and more. The priests were lead up one by one to the ditch; the executioners standing by the ditch asked each priest - Is there a God? The answer was the same: Yes, there is a God! We are living witnesses, we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears how people before their death confessed their faith in God.



## AN INSTRUCTIVE LESSON FOR YOUTH FROM THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

*By Archbishop John Maximovitch.*

The parable of the Prodigal Son is a most instructive lesson for youth. We see in the prodigal son the true character of flighty youth: light-minded, thoughtless, thirsting for independence; in short, everything that usually distinguishes the majority of youths. The younger son grew up in his parents' house. On reaching adolescence, he already began to imagine that life at home was too restrictive. It seemed unpleasant to him to live under his father's rule and his mother's watchful eye. He wanted to imitate his comrades, who had given themselves up to the noisy pleasures of the world. "I am the heir of a rich estate. Would it not be better," he reasoned, "if I received my inheritance now? I could manage my wealth differently than my father does." Thus the light-minded youth was carried away by the deceitful glitter of the world's pleasures and decided to throw off the yoke of obedience and to depart from his parents' home.

Are not many inspired by similar impulses today, and, while they may not leave their parents' home, do they not depart from the home of their Heavenly Father, that is, from obedience to the Holy Church?

The yoke of Christ seems difficult for immature minds, and His commandments burdensome. They think that it is not really necessary to keep that which God and His Holy Church command us. To them it seems possible to serve God and the world at the same time. They say, "We are already strong enough to withstand destructive temptations and seductions. We can hold on to the truth and sound teachings by ourselves. Slow us to perfect our minds through acquiring

many kinds of knowledge. Let us strengthen our wills ourselves amid temptations and seductions. Through experience our senses will become convinced of the vileness of vice!" Are such desires any better than the ill-considered request of the younger son to his father, *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me?*

And so, a light-minded youth ceases to heed the commandments and admonitions of the Holy Church. He ceases to study the Word of God and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and listens intently to the sophistries of those who are falsely called teachers, and in these pursuits he kills the best hours of his life. He goes to church less frequently or stands there inattentively, distracted. He does not find the opportunity to devote himself to piety and to exercise himself in the virtues, because he spends so much time attending shows, public entertainments, etc. In a word, with each day he gives himself up more and more to the world, and, finally, he goes off to "a far country."

What is the result of such an estrangement from the Holy Church? It is the same as the result of the prodigal son's leaving his parents' house. Light-minded youths very quickly waste their excellent energies and talents of soul and body, ruining for time and eternity all the good they have done. Meanwhile, there appears "a mighty famine in that land": emptiness and dissatisfaction - the inevitable result of wild pleasures. A thirst for enjoyments appears, which intensifies with the gratifying of wanton passions, and finally becomes insatiable. It often happens that the unfortunate lover of the world, in order to gratify his passions, resorts to base and shameful pursuits, which do not bring him to his senses like the prodigal son and do not return him to the path of salvation, but complete his ruin, both temporal and eternal!



One elder passed seventy weeks in fasting, eating food only twice a week, as he begged the Lord to reveal to him the meaning of a passage in Holy Scripture. But God would not reveal it to him. Seeing this, the elder said to himself, "I have labored long and hard, and I have accomplished nothing. I will go to my brother and ask him."

When he had left his cell and locked the door behind him, an angel from the Lord appeared and said to him: "Seventy weeks of fasting did not bring you nearer to God. Now, however, when you have humbled yourself and resolved to go to your brother with your question, I have been sent to you to explain the meaning of this passage." And fulfilling this, the angel departed.

From the *Paterikon* of Bishop Ignatius

## THE ECCLESIASTIC WORLD MAY DIVIDE INTO ORTHODOXY AND PHANARODOXY

By Maksim Palamarchuk, 12 January 2019, from the webpages of the "Union of Orthodox Journalists--UOJ."

*Actions of the Patriarch of Constantinople can provoke splits within the Local Churches.*

The pan-Orthodox world may again break up, like in 1054, this time having divided into Orthodoxy and "Phanarodoxy." This point of view was expressed by the Vicar of Kiev eparchy, Archbishop Theodosius of Boyarka of the canonical Orthodox Church of Ukraine in an interview with Pravoslavie.Ru.

According to the hierarch, today a pessimistic and optimistic scenario is possible in the ecclesiastic world in view of the actions of Constantinople. The former involves the beginning of persecutions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

"Nevertheless, Constantinople does not recognize its mistakes, as it was in the twentieth century, and will insist on the correctness of the decisions and its primacy of power, eastern "papism," said Vladyka Theodosius. "At the same time, representatives of Ukrainian schismatic groups who do not have the grace of the priesthood will be given carte blanche to all the shrines of the world, including the Holy Sepulcher and the Holy Mountain, to perform blasphemous services there. In this situation, the Local Churches will gradually be compelled to determine whether they remain within Orthodoxy or join the new "Pope."

The hierarch does not exclude that the separation may lie not only along the boundaries of the Churches, i.e. between the Local Churches but also within the Churches themselves.

"Within is between the ascetics of the faith, adherents of the canons of Orthodoxy, on the one hand, and ecumenists, religious "liberals" and ethnophiles, on the other," Archbishop Theodosius said. It means the once united Orthodox world may again break up. It will be a kind of dispersing to two different spiritual poles, as it was in 1054, this time having divided into Orthodoxy and 'Phanarodoxy.' At the same time, in addition to a purely religious confrontation, in some cases the struggle for churches and monasteries between Orthodox and "Phanarious" in the once united Churches will begin. This can create civil tension in some states. What Europe experienced hundreds of years ago can return again in Orthodox countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

According to the hierarch, the position of just one person—the Patriarch of Constantinople, who believes himself entitled to decide for the whole Church of Christ, for the whole of Orthodoxy, can lead to this entire tragedy.

"If this happens, then, no doubt, the descendants will call him the new Herostratus. I think that if all this happens,

then from this time on grace in the sacraments of the communities going farther and farther from the True Church of Christ, even if they externally retain the appearance of church structures, will dry up. As they are removed from Orthodoxy, the grace of the Holy Spirit will increasingly diminish until it gets scanty altogether. Where pride and heresy reign, there is no grace. May all this not be the case with our brothers,” concluded Archbishop Theodosius.

Earlier, Metropolitan Chrysostom, the head of the Metropolia of the Serbian Orthodox Church, battered the actions of Constantinople in Ukraine and sadly stated that “the celebration of Christmas this year will go down in history of the divided and fragmented Church.”

As the UOJ reported, on January 6, in the Cathedral of St. George in Istanbul, the Patriarch of Constantinople regrettably handed over to Epiphany the *Tomos* and the metropolitan’s crosier of the “Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine.”

† † †

## “THE SCALE OF THE SIN IN CONSTANTINOPLE SIMPLY FRIGHTENS ME,” SAYS METROPOLITAN ONUFRIY, HEAD OF THE CANONICAL UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

*The Patriarchate of Constantinople has now fallen. And to be with him is to be in his crime against the Church.*

[Metropolitan Onufriy]



I am a sinner. But the scale of the sin of the Constantinople Synod simply frightens me.

“Well, why argue, after all? Does it really matter which patriarchy or which church? There was Moscow, now there is Constantinople,

then there will be Kiev...”

The question is not idle. Why even speak out against something, or protect something?

So many are surprised by the holy Forerunner, John the Baptist. I have sat on the banks of the Jordan river, thinking about him preaching and baptizing people there. Why did he denounce the king? Why was this his policy?

The fact is, where politics came into contact with moral issues, a person of such authority as John the Baptist did not have the right to remain silent.

After all, King Antipas was the leader of the religious people, he stood at the top of God’s chosen people and served—whether voluntarily or involuntarily—as an example for those whom the saint called for repentance. Any act of the king could become either a temptation to sin, or an exalted

example worthy of emulation. There needed to be a voice of conscience!

The moral crime of the king forced the Forerunner to raise his voice. And he ended up in jail.

The king then enjoyed having this righteous man nearby, and he engaged in long conversations with him.

Is it possible that these conversations would have led to a change in the life of Herod Antipas, if not for the depraved dance of the young girl, his niece, during that binge of drunken bragging before his guests?

Was it worth it for John the Forerunner to denounce the king? Was it worth it to speak up when Herod was wrong, when he personally sinned?

How can we be silent now, when the patriarch of Constantinople sins against the Church of Christ?

Isn’t it easier to close your eyes and say that you can also be saved under the Patriarch of Constantinople? You can say this is important because of “love”! Indeed, you can say almost anything. But the problem is that—in the words of the Apostle Paul—love is “not unreasonable.” And if this slumber is imposed under the guise of love, this is a pure crime! It is a crime against Love itself!

For centuries, the church has been developing various canons and laws, holding the Church’s life in proper order. A single violation is painful when committed by any Christian. But a special, fatal wound occurs when a Church leader does it, and when those who are called to watch over the Church—Bishops—contribute to this robbery!

Power, wealth and politics destroy Christianity in everyone who clings to this dirt. The Patriarchate of Constantinople has now fallen. And to be with him is to be in his crime against the Church, and against Love. I cannot agree to this.

I am a sinner. But the scale of the sin of the Constantinople Synod simply frightens me.

Thus, I remain with the persecuted Church. But I am standing in the right position, in the position of the True Church. And because of this, I am happy.

I am happy, because only those who are faithful to Christ are willing to remain in this Church. I look with reverence at the holy bishops, priests, and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who build up the fullness of holiness with their loyalty. And I ask them not to reject me, a sinner.



The Church of Christ is not built upon any particular set of philosophical principles, and She is not built upon any particular type of sociopolitical organization; rather, the Church is made up of those whose noetic faculties are being healed, the goal being the illumination of the heart, and ultimately, glorification, which is vision of God’s uncreated energies by means of those selfsame energies.

Fr. John S. Romanides (+2001)

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688



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POIMEN@MAIL.COM

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## A NEW YEAR GREETING AND A REMINDER ON THE SORROWS WE MIGHT EXPERIENCE

By St. Barsanuphius of Optina, January 1, 1913.



I greet all of you gathered here with the New Year. I congratulate you with the joys that I hope the Lord might send you in the coming year. I congratulate you also with the sorrows that will inevitably visit you this year; perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow, or in the near future. Incidentally, do not be confused by sorrows or fear them. Sorrows and joys are closely bound up with each other. This may seem strange to you, but remember the words of the Savior: *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.* (Jn 16:21). Day turns to night, and

night turns to day, bad weather turns to good; so also does sorrow turn into joy, and joy into sorrow.

The Apostle Paul pronounced threatening words against those who do not endure any punishment that comes from God: If you are left without punishment, you are illegitimate children. Do not be depressed; let those be depressed who do not believe in God. For them, of course, sorrow is onerous, because they know only earthly pleasures. But people who believe in God should not despond, because through sorrows they receive the rights of sons, without which one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

***Never be despondent. Let those be despondent who do not believe in God. For them sorrow is burdensome, of course, because besides earthly enjoyment they have nothing. But believers must not be despondent, for through sorrows they receive the right of sonship, without which it is impossible to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Say the Jesus Prayer, and leave everything to the will of God. This prayer has many subdivisions, from simple utterance to creative prayer. But for us, even if we were to be on the bottom step, it would be salvific. The powers of the enemy run from one who utters this prayer, and sooner or later he'll be saved all the same.***

*Scorning the impious decree, the Children brought up together in godliness feared not the threat of fire, but standing in the midst of the flames, they sang: 'O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.'* (Irmos of the Nativity of Christ, tone 1, canticle 7).

Sorrows are that very threat of fire, or trial, but we must not fear them; rather we must be like the godly children and sing unto God in our sorrows, believing that they are sent to us by God for our salvation.

May the Lord save you all, and lead you to the Kingdom of Unwaning Light! Amen.