

THE CANADIAN ORTHODOX MISSIONARY

Volume 19, Issue 6, Nr.171 — November/December, 1995



A striking reminder of the universality and agelessness of Orthodox Christian monasticism is evoked by this photograph of Bishop Varlaam (Novakshonoff) walking along the road of the Canadian Orthodox Monastery of All Saints of North America, near the tiny village of Dewdney, BC.

THE CANADIAN ORTHODOX MISSIONARY

COMMEMORATING THE TWENTY FIFTH YEAR OF THE CANADIAN
ORTHODOX MONASTERY OF ALL SAINTS OF NORTH AMERICA
AND THE TWENTIETH YEAR OF SYNAXIS PRESS .

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PUBLISHED AND PRINTED IN CANADA

The Canadian Orthodox Missionary is published bi-monthly by the Department of Education of the Diocese of Vancouver, of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, (Kiev). It is published with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Varlaam.

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Reader Nicholas Franck

Subscription Rate: \$10 a year.

FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE DEHUMANIZATION OF MAN

A response to the late Phillip Sherrard.

It is a hot March morning as a brilliant and beautiful university teacher leaves her home and sets out for lectures. She is an immensely popular philosopher, the first woman to have ever made a major name for herself in the field of mathematics. Her published works include treatises in mathematics and astronomy.

She will never make it to her destination this warm spring day, for on her way, a band of savage creatures who were once human beings will drag her from her vehicle and literally rip her body apart with their hands and teeth. Her cries of agonizing pain and terror will fall on deaf ears, because the former human beings who will be ripping the flesh off her writhing, still living body will be so totally dehumanized that her dying screams will only spur them on in their frenzy.

Who was this majestic and brilliant woman? Who were the savage, dehumanized creatures who committed this unspeakable act of savagery and what force reduced them to the level of biped jackals?

Her name was Hypatia. She was a moderate, uncommitted pagan, noted for her humility and modesty as well as for her physical beauty and scholarly brilliance. And "them?" Oh, they were Christians; Orthodox Christians to be exact. They had once been humans.

Do I hear a gasp from some of our readers? I certainly hope so. I hope to see a few "double takes" as Christians read this page. Most of these Christian former human beings were monks from Nitria in the Egyptian desert. They were all communicants of the Orthodox Christian Church. The year was A.D.415, the Patriarch of the city, Alexandria, in which all this took place was Cyril.

But then, if that is so, what could have reduced these men to the level of the most disgusting savage beasts? Was it "modern science" that dehumanized them? Was it philosophy? Let me hear another disbelieving gasp: it was religion, brothers and sisters, that so totally dehumanized these creatures. The force that worked this dehumanization is known as "Fundamentalism." You will recognise this force easily enough if you look. It just murdered the prime minister of Israel and it downed the PanAm jet over Scotland, and the Air India flight off the coast of Ireland, both of which killed hundreds of "uninvolved" human beings. You will recognize it because it is always scapegoating; it is always looking for the "them" and "they" who are responsible for people not agreeing with their usually right-wing extremist worldview and their version of whatever religion they belong to. It is always looking for someone to blame for their own failures, seeing "dehumanization" in everything that is not what they suppose it to have been in some golden "yesterday." What is more dangerous in Fundamentalist scapegoating, such as that of Phillip Sherrard, is that it really constitutes what the Canadian philosopher David Goa refers to as "Utopian nostalgia." Sherrard is deeply attached to medieval scholasticism, as well as being an expert in Moslem Sufism and Shia mysticism and an inveterate Augustinian. His type of Fundamentalist scapegoating really consists in a desire to replace reality with a nostalgic mysticism and a "return" to a halcyon day that never did exist, a time when mystical superstition and theologized magic formed what Western mystics supposed constituted "spirituality." One hears in it also an echo of the mythological dream of "godly nations," so popular with American Fundamentalist Protestants (America is, for them, always the godly nation).

Fundamentalism is always dangerous. It does not matter whether its virus breeds inside the Orthodox Church or outside of it. It is based in a twisted logic, a fear of truth and an inability to cope with reality and a moralism that tends toward religious fascism. It dogmatizes the erroneous theories of the past and will not tolerate it when they are replaced by more sound ideas which the advance of technology has made possible, and often enough, it venerates and dogmatizes the ignorance of the past. Fundamentalism whistles past the graveyard of its own psyche in a vain attempt to drive away goblins which its own fantasies have conjured into existence. In my view, Phillip Sherrard represented just this sort of Fundamentalism, and his works reflect the path of a doctrinaire philosopher, which may be why he misrepresents the patristic view of the intellect in the English version of the *Philokalia*, which contains more than a few quite serious conceptual errors. Here, indeed, is the point. It is not modern scientists, but modern hierarchs and theologians who deprived Orthodox Christians of the avenues of spiritual growth and development. Was it modern science that caused many archbishops and bishops and priests to scoff at fasting and discourage the faithful from doing it? Actually, modern science has confirmed the benefits of fasting. Was it modern science that introduced Latin concepts of hyper-clericalism into the Orthodox Church and so deprived the faithful of an active life in the spiritual/liturgical fabric of the Church? It was not. It was Orthodox hierarchs and priests. Did modern science create the incredible contrived nonsense that Bishop Maximos of Pittsburgh is now foisting, with Fundamentalist fervour, on Orthodox people under the guise of Orthodox teaching? Did modern science lure those benighted hierarchs of SCOBA off to Rome to sell their souls

at the very seat of repressive scholasticism? What Phillip Sherrard laments the loss of is not genuine spirituality and spiritual life. He laments that modern science has made it impossible for Fundamentalists to maintain their fairytales and magic that once passed in some circles as "spirituality." Meanwhile, Sherrard has been as much a part of the destruction of sound Orthodox theology and spirituality as have the hierarchs of the Greek Orthodox Church, and very many of the members of SCOPA.

I requested the following review by Nicholas Franck because Sherrardism is, in some circles, being presented as if it represented *the* Orthodox Christian worldview. In Orthodoxy we do not have a tradition of fear of reality or a history of "intellectual bating." It is my view, and I will discuss it during the coming year, that premises such as those of Phillip Sherrard and other scholastics bear much of the responsibility for the success of modern atheism, if for no other reason because they support the Fundamentalist habit of teaching young people that they must choose between God and truth. They may be playing to the fears and alienation of a segment of the population (generally one that does not understand the language of physics and is thus blinded by a fear of the unknown), but in so doing, they actually cripple the Christian message and its ability to give valid guidance in this world. God is truth, and therefore, truth is sacred, even if it does not confirm scholastic and Fundamentalist nostalgic longings.

Phillip Sherrard has a comfortable scapegoat for the failure of modern Christianity, or one should perhaps say of scholastic Christianity, because that is what Sherrard is defending. The great problem in this is that such an approach deflects Orthodox Christians from taking a good, hard look at themselves and seeing what they have done and are doing wrong to such a degree that the witness of authentic Christianity is no longer transforming the world, or even the individual. We do not need scapegoats, we need to assess ourselves. Modern science is not a problem for authentic Christianity — modern Christians are. A return to deadening medieval scholasticism and superstitious word-magic mysticism, as Sherrard most certainly advocates, is clearly not the answer.

Archbishop Lazar

Reader Nicholas Franck

ON PHILLIP SHERRARD'S "RAPE OF MAN AND NATURE"

The October 1995 edition of *The Christian Activist* published an excerpt from Phillip Sherrard's **Rape of Man and Nature**, titled "Modern Science and the Dehumanisation of Man." Sadly, this feature carried also the obituary of the renowned scholar, and it was thus in a sympathetic spirit that this reviewer approached what had become the literary epitaph of a great writer, esteemed among many Orthodox Christian readers.

In my regular bookreview articles, I recently wrote of Sherrard's **Eclipse of Man and Nature** and, too harshly for some, too cautiously for others, questioned some of the foundations and inferences of that admittedly popular work. Sentiment aside, one cannot but be dazzled by Sherrard's masterful style, literary gift and apparently intimate familiarity with sources cited in support of his views. Nevertheless, this sympathetic perusal of Sherrard's work too soon hardens as the great gifts tarnish and the well-contrived polemic unravels before the reader's eyes in a shocking display. What could have passed for controversial provocation as presented thematically through **Eclipse of Man and Nature** can only be described as pernicious error as pursued through **Rape of Man and Nature**.

To recap Sherrard's overarching thesis as outlined in these works, and doubtless elsewhere: the author is of the belief that modernity, the Western rational and scientific mind-set spawned over the past few centuries is, quite literally, a demonic project designed to inhibit spiritual growth within and without the host culture. An objection which I voiced in my earlier review regarding such claims is that this "hell in a handbasket" analysis contains not only what (Western) logicians would decry as a "slippery slope" fallacy, but it also misrepresents Eastern Christian teaching relative to the theological significance and meaning of the Fall. The Fall is an existential crisis in human (pre) history of such magnitude as to estrange humanity from Divinity at such a crucial juncture in our species' awareness of our creature selves that any subsequent awareness or ignorance of God can only be understood as consequent to this cosmic tragedy. It is thus absurd and likely irresponsible to insist other creatures, human or demonic, can broaden this fissure solely of their own volition and impose, through some

systematic abstraction, a condition of further alienation binding upon all humankind. While Sherrard insists that he has no desire to nostalgise or romanticise pre-scientific scholasticism, his critique suggests otherwise. What is apparent, often in quite unveiled terms, is a case for a return to or advancement of a mythopoetic language culture in lieu of the contemporary state of affairs as perceived by him. The dangers inherent in his proposition are manifold: the unsuspecting reader is dependent upon Sherrard's very complex account of the rise of modernity and the broad impact of its innovators upon the many; and further, the presupposition that the metaphysical concerns of the precedent culture he portrays necessarily nurtured spiritual growth in the manner he believes it did. Through **Rape of Man and Nature**, Sherrard indicts modern science as a conspiratorial plot hatched by our finest minds with intention of compounding the post-Edenic exile.

One of Sherrard's most intriguing comments is to the effect that science and technology were not unknown to the ancients and were, in fact, an importation from the East in many instances, but were lacking in popular, commercial or academic appeal as to remain largely unexplored. His historical review appears highly selective so as to force his thesis upon the hearer, wholly trusting upon his rendition. It could be countered, for example, that many of the figures of the early Enlightenment cited for their influence upon the popular techno-worldview (Galileo, Newton, Bacon) have been less pivotal than Dr Sherrard supposes. Many later figures upon which his analysis does not dwell nor even mention (Locke, Hume, Mill) might have more directly shaped Western secular popular culture in that they contributed so strongly to the prevalence of that empirical and social science that most encounter with greater familiarity than the writings of some of those original theorists. Curiously, some of the rationalists (Descartes, Leibnitz) taken to task by Sherrard for the destabilisation of the religio-mythic European mind, characterized themselves at some level as being amongst the Believers. Diderot, the French encyclopedist, who was not at all inclined to identify himself that way, served as academic advisor to Catherine the Great and the Imperial Russian court, but seems not to have weakened the spiritual fabric of that nation.

In acknowledgement of Dr Sherrard's expertise as cultural historian, let us dispense with petty quibbling over arcane fatuous accounts and concede his historical backdrop as a plausible one. It is futile for most of us to challenge, however validly, his version of the rooting of scientism in the modern mind, because at least as much time spent lounging about university humanities departments as this Reader has endured is requisite to having even a name recognition of the villains identified in Dr Sherrard's plot theory. Indeed, anyone who has been absent from such a rarefied atmosphere for a year or longer, who can still fill a (double spaced) typed page with reminiscings on the manner in which Rene Descartes and Gottfried Leibniz have molded their consciousness should read no further, but apply posthaste for the professorship vacated by Dr Sherrard's passing.

Despite the tenuous nature of some of Sherrard's representations, he is so seriously immersed in the erudite domain as to ignore his tendency to preach to a select audience of the already converted. Anglo-American readers tend to be less impressed by philosophic and mathematical meta-theory than are the Continentals with whom he may have been long acquainted. Certain sectors of American popular culture — the "religious right", for instance — are characterised by a marked anti-intellectual bias, and predisposed to be suspicious of academic tradition and trend. Though it can be questioned as to whether or not many of us are "trained thinkers" in the mode of the Enlightenment, this is somewhat beside the point being made by Sherrard. He holds certain notions as regards the broad fashion in which educational movements affect culture and what constitutes "thinking"; notions perhaps at odds with his sentiments. In making a formal concession to his authoritative position, it is, nevertheless, worth observing the aspersions cast on the dilapidated state of contemporary scientism in the wake of its early revolutionary emergence. He dismisses the more recent schools of quantum physics, for example, as merely a reiteration of the old mechanistic Newtonian axioms enhanced by more fashionable metaphor. Ignoring (or being unaware of) the formidable case made by such as Heisenberg and Hawking for randomness and, hence, the possibility of Creativity and Will, Sherrard complains that this is simply the same old robotic tinman dressed up in velcro as R2D2. Before moving on from the background lecture, Sherrard makes further startling assertions regarding a "shocking lack of inherent value in the value-neutral scientific method" and the lack of absolute certitude which plagues empirical analysis. He apparently supposes that anyone "deluded" enough to respond that such condemnations generally serve as categorical definitions in ordinary discourse, and are not diabolical deceptions, probably is not worth saving.

Even given such orientation, it remains unclear how objective and external approaches to practical and applied knowledge prevent or inhibit spiritual transformation and the possibility of divine/human dialogue or communion. The existential point of departure assumed by virtually a generation of Orthodox Christian theologians seems to be largely ignored by Sherrard. The now familiar observations made by Nikolai Berdyaev, among others, regarding spiritual consciousness, for instance, is that it lies within the realm of subjective experience. Berdyaev's articulation of the conscious impediments posed to spirituality by objectification is that the only real barriers posed by systematic thought to personal transformation are those we ourselves erect. In

other words, according to Berdyaev, it is not the existence of science or philosophy or commerce or art or politics, nor even sex, drugs, rock and roll or Fundamentalist religion which keeps us from salvation, rather it is our making idols of any of these pursuits and looking without and not within for the answers to our spiritual failings as well as for our spiritual healing. Berdyaev is not being singled out here as a counterexample to the arguments set forth in **Rape of man and nature**, but rather in order to question why the author of the latter work sees at all problematic the tendency he observes amongst scientific thinkers to discuss theism as "purely subjective." The subjective nature of the spiritual life is, of course, a supposition of Kant and Nietzsche, but it is also understood by Dostoevsky, Berdyaev and Khrapovitsky (and, I believe, by the writers quoted in the *Philokalia*). Sherrard very clearly pines for the "proofs" of divinity popularised by Roman Catholic scholastics who neatly deduced the necessity of the Prime Mover and the required existence of the Great Architect (as if faith were insufficient). What is unaddressed is the role of such entities in the personal communion with Divinity as discussed in depth in theology, or whether one is moved an iota closer to salvation by the intellectual awe or intimidation resultant from exposure to deductive logic.

In order to better appreciate the alarm expressed by Sherrard regarding the spiritual threat posed by modernity, it would be fruitful to examine some of the views regarding the role of language in culture, the relationship presumed between language and thought and what Sherrard conceives "thinking" to be. Part of his fondness for prescientific scholasticism lies in the language employed by this institution and the popular metaphors it provided, which Sherrard interprets and indicating that the speakers of such phrases "thought religiously." By contrast, modernity utilises techno-speak and psychobabble to the extent persons are described as machinery and are so conceptualised. The fact that mechanistic metaphor is, to the poetic ear, lacking in charm and grace is easily appreciated, but the notion that the consequences of this threaten spiritual awareness or the idea that religio-mythic vocabulary could nurture it cannot be supported through either appeal to contemporary neurolinguistic or to Christian doctrine.

The notion that Sherrard expresses betrays, on the one hand, a devotion to a platonic understanding of the significance of language, and an odd, contradictory, crude determinism regarding thought processes on the other hand. This nominalist view of language is one which serves platonic and neo-platonic thought and its metaphysic regarding social convention and the nature of ultimate reality. Its nominalist linguistic theory was developed and perpetuated by Augustine of Hippo, purveyor also of the heretical doctrine of Original Sin which Sherrard's portrayal of human demise would complement. Augustine's teaching on language acquisition stood until the current century, at which time it was toppled by the challenges of contemporary language research. It was not undone by a new metaphysic or even by a complex counterthesis, but rather by the voice of intuitive reasoning. This voice was of the opinion that language is an innate human characteristic for the conveyance of describable thoughts, feelings and experiences. As mundanely self-evident as such a thesis may sound, it is quite at odds with the platonic belief that words are symbols which invoke the presence of that which is named; as does incantation in a magical spell. One reason that the modern linguistic view was so readily acknowledged was that everyone uses language to talk about themselves and their thoughts, feelings, etc to others, but not everyone is conscious of language as a telepathic link to some unknowable realm. That is, not many conceive this linguistic function who are outside the magical spell cast by Dr Sherrard and the neo-neoplatonists, including the sacramentalist Latin Church. The bearing of symbolic metaphysical linguistics upon Roman sacramentalism and the manner in which this differs from Orthodox Christian doctrine is too intricate to sort out here. Suffice it to say that an acquaintance with word magic is requisite for such concepts, and thus Platonists involved in New Testament exegesis will have a difficult time in reconciling it.

Since the early linguistic metaphysic holds that language invokes not only thoughts but entities and phenomena, a prevalence and proliferation of metaphor are critical to an appreciation of the problems outlined in **Rape of Man and Nature**. "Thought" entails filtering and selecting cognitive components, i.e., words and phrases. When Descartes "exiles" God to the outer limits of academia, or when some other wit "consigns" or "relegates" God to some remote clime, God, of course, does not go anywhere or do anything. From a neo-platonic perspective, however, some actual, meaningful distancing has taken place. For those who seek God in their hearts, not much has changed unless their noetic insight has dimmed, for His Light does not. Platonic thought, however proposes a metaphysical dynamic that could be represented as Being/being. For the neo-Platonist in the process of interpreting the Gospels, this can too easily be conflated to a Word/word relationship. Simply put, speakers who are "charged up" or "on the track" regarding scriptural studies do not likely imagine themselves to be a locomotive. Similarly, a parishioner "putting all his chips" on prayers to a patron saint may not premise his theology on the Kingdom as a cosmic casino but merely reveal a colourful past. "By Jove, you must be a Pisces!" however, is an exclamation replete with religio-mythic referents, but reveals no spiritual gift. Religiosity in and of itself can be just as detrimental to spiritual growth as other forms of idolatry, and every bit

as tempting as overinvestment in intellectual and technological preoccupation. Sophistication may have little to do with spiritual delusion and captivity, and students of the Book of Genesis will recall that for the genuinely idolatrous, any farm animal will do.

To be fair, what Sherrard seems to find most decidedly lamentable is not that the glory of the pre-scientific world cannot be recaptured but that so many are fascinated by mere gadgetry and have so little time for not only theology, but for art, literature, music, poetry and those lyrical pastimes that make life worth living. He yearned also, as his works make clear, for a society in which theology was not only popular but taken seriously. The occasional ecclesiological excesses of the Byzantine East and early Christian West are not unacknowledged in his writings, nor is discussion of frequent outbreaks of heresy. It was, after all, in response to heresy that much Church doctrine and dogma were initially articulated. Serious theology calls for theologians who can be taken seriously, and whose work is credible. When Dr Sherrard calls for "dismantling of the whole present scientific industrial structure," and states that scientists who have not confessed "a complete inner conversion" ought not to practise, the practicality of his remarks as well as his credibility as a social critic are drawn into question. Indeed, his socially critical style at this stage is remarkably reminiscent of that of the Unabombers. The advocated social reforms are respectively extreme and, in retrospect of societal ills, notably similar. What is good for ecoterrorism on the left is also appropriate for the "religious right" on the right. Both call for the destruction of our civilisation in order to save it. This is the path shown by the Utopian Idealist so long ago, and since trod by Napoleon, Stalin and countless others. The wisdom of the philosopher-king will prevail on so grand a scheme and not the petty wants of the many or the few.

Sound scary? It should. This is the voice of a repression so powerful that beside it the captivating fascination of tinkering with gadgets is no more spiritually troubling than the longing of a child for a bicycle displayed in a shop window. Love, the gospels tell us, is the nature and Way of God, and love must be ever predicated upon freedom, indicative of a willful choice. An intimacy not freely chosen, forced or coerced is one that is rapine. Any experience, whether that of a relationship or a studied technology is contextual, to be interpreted in the context of personal background, motive and intent. Technology can be evaluated, similarly. Are the communications satellites accessed by televangelists evil? Is the message broadcast better or worse when satellites are employed? Are seminarians any the worse for relying upon word processors for composition? Would the use of quill pens make them any more saintly?

Our intellectual curiosity as well as our inventiveness as a species are in a sense elements of our Fall, though not to say its cause. A sublimation of these human characteristics is not the gateway to spiritual transformation so much as the acquisition of humility and grace. Contemporary Greek theologians have pointed out (Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos and Fr John Romanides, for example) that the English translation of the Philokalia, to which Dr Sherrard was a party, is in error as regards the role of human intellect in the process of spiritual illumination and glorification. The noted error implies that a sublimation of intellectual faculty is in order, whereas the Greek scholars hold that a drawing of the perceptual faculty of the soul into its heart is the hesychastic teaching. Whether this difference of translation is an unsuspecting error, or whether it was intentionally contrived to support a presupposed view, we cannot know.

Anthropology and theology are agreed that departure from the Original Nature has something to do with evolved human consciousness and its expression in language. Because of this departure, our tongue is that of the Fallen, the dialect of the diaspora. Whether we come of age in a university classroom or a prison cell, we ultimately tell our tale in the sinful syntax, even the saints among us. This medium is corrupted, and not to be confused with the communion of the Word, yet it is the text of our tragedy. Those with pure hearts can best read this text that sinners wrote, and better project its flawed passages. Those with ears to hear, be they amplified by electronic hearing aids, will listen.

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The Language of Instinct, Steven Pinker, MIT, 1994 (Note: Sherrard complains of the capitulation of academic philosophy to the study of linguistic and information theory and logic. In light of the spiritual risks posed by confusing metaphysical speculation with theology, this would seem a credit to the integrity of contemporary philosophy and a responsible gesture on its part.)
Unabomber Manifesto, Washington Post, September 19, 1995.
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UNDERSTANDING THE DIVINE LITURGY
(Scripture in the Liturgy)

THE EPIKLESIS
(The Invocation of the Holy Spirit)

The *epiklesis* is the actual consecration of the Gifts,¹ during which the miracle is completed and the change of the Gifts from sanctified bread and wine to the Body and Blood of Christ is fully accomplished. All that has gone before this moment has been an ever deepening preparation for the moment of this awesome gift of God. In the first portion of the Divine Liturgy, we have been called into a spirit of oneness and unity in the Holy Spirit. Our hearts and minds have been sensitized by the words of the litanies and hymns, and by our growing communion of love with one another. We have been instructed, and we have been led forward in the process of searching our souls to root out all malice and to forgive everyone, desiring also their forgiveness. In all this, we have not been prepared for the Mystery, but we have fully taken part in the unfolding of the Holy Mystery.

We will not set forth the prayers of the *epiklesis* here. This moment in the Divine Liturgy is approached with the utmost awe and compunctiousness. It is no less the "work of the people" than is the rest of the Liturgy, and the whole congregation comes to this moment with deepening reverence and thankfulness. Here, truly, in the Holy Spirit, the boundaries of time are abolished, and every physical, material and human limitation which seems to be a separation in the commonwealth of God, vanishes. For, Christ, our High Priest, *"sacrificed for our sins once perpetually when he offered Himself"* (Hb.7:27), and we, in all times and places, now become participants in the timeless, perpetual and eternal mystery of redemption. In this moment we stand in Bethlehem — for the pre-eternal God comes to us bodily; we stand in Gethsemane — for the God-man pours Himself out for us; we stand on Golgotha — for the Body and Blood of the Redeemer is offered for us; we stand at the open sepulchre, beholding that *"death has been swallowed up in victory"* (1Cor.15:24). We stand at the very gates of Paradise, prepared to receive the Fruit of the Tree of Life Which blossomed forth on the Cross. We stand in awe and fear and spiritual rejoicing, understanding that the body of the man Jesus is raised from the dead, has ascended into heaven and sits as God in the right hand of the glory of the Godhead. Therefore, in this one body of the Son of man, all the laws of the fallen nature and the bonds of death have been totally conquered and the power of death and of the evil-one have been utterly set at naught. We understand that we, in partaking of that one triumphant Body partake also in all its victory and life and become united with that very Body, enthroned forever in the glory of the Living God. We become one with Him Who is *the life and the resurrection*, and we are united with Him Who will come to *judge the living and the dead*. We receive that sustenance without which no-one can have any life in him, as our Saviour said:

I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he will live forever. The bread that I give him is My Flesh, which I give so that the world may live...I tell you in truth: if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink of His blood, you cannot have life in yourselves. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has everlasting life, and I will raise him to life on the last day. For My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me and I live in him. The living Father sent Me, and because of Him I live also. In the same way, whoever eats Me will live because of Me" (Jn.6:51—58).

Let us, therefore, come to this moment in awe, in repentance, in spiritual rejoicing and all expectation, not as without understanding, but as filled with all understanding knowing that *"now is our salvation nearer than*

1. I am not suggesting here the "magic language" theory which spawned Latin "sacramentalism." The entire Liturgy is concerned with the consecration of the Holy Gifts. This begins, in the Liturgy, with the progressive opening up of our hearts in faith and the re-directing of our minds and souls; a kind of consecration of our own hearts in faith. We do not suggest that there is only one moment or one prayer in the Liturgy which constitutes the "moment of change" independent of the rest of the Divine Liturgy. This miracle of God takes place according to His promise, but also according to our faith. The miracle occurs, not because we recite a potent formula, but because we, the priest and congregation, prayed for it with faith. The Liturgy has prepared us to receive what God has promised to give if we ask for it with pure faith. We are not speaking here only of a faith in Him, but also of correct faith, that is right belief. We cannot suppose that the rest of the Liturgy, except for the *epiklesis*, is dispensable or of relative value or necessity. The correct co-serving of the Liturgy by priest and faithful, in oneness of heart and mind is in itself the manifestation and confession of that faith which draws us into communion with God.

when we first believed" (Rm.13:11).



Following the consecration, the priest commemorates the living and the reposed, the hierarchy and the faithful and he censes the Gifts and the Holy Table, and the congregation sings the hymn to the Theotokos. Then the final Litany of Preparation is served as the faithful enter deeply into prayer, preparing to approach the Holy Gifts, the "medicine of immortality" as St Ignatios the God-bearer refers to it.



SAINT MACRINA
CANADIAN ORTHODOX WOMENS' CONFERENCE

MAY 4-5, 1996

Sponsored by The Canadian Orthodox Monastery of All Saints of North America

(Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kiev)

FACILITATOR: Merideth Franck

Workshops will be held at:

Monastery of All Saints of North America

37323 Hawkins Road, Dewdney, B.C. VOM-1H0

Voice: (604) 826-9336 / FAX: (604) 820-9758

THE GOAL

To explore the way in which our verbal and physical communications affect our children, families and parishes. Participants will learn a sound, Orthodox Christian understanding of gender as prophecy and revelation, and the difference between roles and relative value. It is anticipated that participants will come to have a greater understanding of the power of our verbal and physical communications to either build up or destroy, to heal or to wound. We will explore the way in which our communications skills can strengthen our families and strengthen and build our parishes.

THE PROGRAMME

"COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATING FOR FAMILIES AND PARISHES"

Merideth Franck, a Salt Lake City social worker, developer and author of the award winning *CHANCE Programme*, will conduct the workshops. Her *CHANCE* approach to the development of communications skills for problem solving and the strengthening of family units is now used in several American states as a basic tool in social work. It earned her awards and accolades from state governments and social services departments across America. Merideth and her family are members of the St Nicholas Parish in Langley, B.C., though they live in Salt Lake City. She will demonstrate how the women of a parish community can help build and strengthen the community by developing the appropriate communications skills, and instructing others in them. Learn what types of communicating destroy and wound and what type build up and heal. Through this workshop, we will learn how to put into practice that fundamental reality that the Church is a spiritual hospital, not a religious organization.

Registration fee for the Workshop is \$50. This will include the meals. Accommodation must be arranged as the monastery does not have a guest house for women visitors. Please write for brochure and information about available accommodations.

LETTERS TO VLADIKA:

Answered by Archbishop Lazar Puhalo.

Question:

There is a parable in the Bible that we recently discussed in our Bible Study class, and I still find it confusing. Can you give us any explanation of this verse:

"...when the demon goes forth from a person, it wanders in dry places, seeking rest, and cannot find it. Then, returning to its former dwelling, finds it vacant, swept and garnered, so it takes seven demons more wicked than it is, and moves back in to dwell there. Then the final condition of that person is worse than it was before."

Art McMillan
Toronto, ON.

Reply:

You are using one or another translation of either Mt.12:43f or Lk.11:24f. I can give you a perspective on this parable from the monastic experience. When one struggles against a given passion, and finally puts it forth (for a simple example, say smoking cigarettes or pot), it is necessary to close and bolt the door of the heart against the passion. However, many times, we harbour a love and desire for the passion we have put out, and we nourish that desire, sometimes even unaware of this ourselves. This secret desire or longing for the passion is the sweeping and preparation of the heart for its return. The passion (or demon behind the passion) does return, and finding such fertile soil, plants related passions in the heart. Yielding to one passion in such an addictive way makes it easy for other passions to accompany it back into our hearts. Once we have rationalized and justified accepting the one passion back into our person, it is much easier to rationalize and justify accepting others. We then come into a kind of bondage to the whole package of passions, because we have allowed passion itself to defeat us. Behind the passion and the defeat is the tempting of a "homeless demon" seeking a place for itself. In reality, however, it is our nourishing of the passion (remember, the demon went in to a "dry place," that is, a place where it was not being sustained, and so when our heart was ready to sustain it, it naturally returned) that causes the defeat.

The parable, as applied in the monastic struggle, teaches us that when we drive a demon (a passion) out of our hearts, we must take great care and struggle diligently that we bolt the door against it and root out all desire and longing for its return. The battle is not over simply because we cease to externally fulfil the passion, but only when every desire, every longing, every nostalgia for it and every fond memory of it, has been so completely rooted out within us that there is no room left for it to return, when it can no longer find sustenance and nourishment in our hearts, when our heart has become for this passion, this demon "a dry place," without nourishment or space.

QUESTION:

Recently, a theologian from Greece visited our parish. During his talk to our adult group, he told us that most of us were living in sin. We were all married, so most of us were shocked by this. I was even more shocked when he explained that because many of us married couples had sexual relations when we were not necessarily intending to conceive a child, we were living in sin. He told us that married couples must abstain from all sexual contact except when we were planning to conceive a child, and that all forms of conception control are sinful, even condoms. He suggested that we sleep in separate beds unless we desired to have a child.

I never heard of this before, and our priest never mentioned anything like that when he gave us pre-marriage lessons. It does not even sound Scriptural. Can this be true?

Anastasios Pappas

REPLY:

I think the word "theologian" is being used a bit too incautiously in our day. This man you speak of certainly does not qualify. What he told you is both blasphemous and heretical. I am enclosing a copy of the latest edition of "The Ark" for you. In it George Gabriel has given an excellent refutation of such heresies. This work of George Gabriel, titled **You Think My Words Immodest**, will be available soon as volume 2 of the St Maximos the Confessor Seminary series, "Studies in Gender and Human Sexuality."

The root of this heresy, as with so many other morbid falsehoods, is the mind of Augustine of Hippo. Probably your visiting, would-be theologian is among those ignorant souls who are trying to foist Augustine of Hippo off on Orthodox Christians as a saint and "father of the Church." He is neither, and has never been recognised as such by the Orthodox Church. I think that teachings like the one you described, drawn directly from Augustine, only reinforces in us the conviction that Orthodox Christians should work even more diligently at refuting and rebuking those who would seek to introduce Augustinianism into the Orthodox Church, and thus corrupt our theology and spirituality.

QUESTION:

There has been a lot of debate on internet as to whether a priest can give the blessing with the hand cross at the end of the Liturgy. Apparently, some articles have appeared in Orthodox publications stating that this is not permitted, that only bishops can bless with the hand cross. Is this true?

A priest of the Russian Church.

REPLY:

Oh, good grief. Are there no serious problems in the Church and the world, so that we have to worry about insignificant nonsense like that? I suppose there are some bishops who have nothing to do but sit about and ponder their prerogatives, feeding their pride on their petty little symbols of rank, but it really is tragic that anyone would waste time on such matters. Let me say that, at least in this archdiocese, it is perfectly acceptable for priests to bless with the hand cross, and it is expected of them. What is not acceptable, and not tolerated is for them to be arrogant and rank-crazy.

I was also asked in one short letter if perhaps the canons of the Church might not be set aside in order to attain the unity of all faiths, for the sake of love. I must reply that Ecumenists are not pursuing this course for the sake of love, but for the sake of personal pride and self-will. Seeking love where there is only the philosophy of this fallen world, they cannot discern that the love they seek is but a shadow of their own lust and pride. They do not seek love where it may truly be found, but 'grasping at a dimly lit shadow they forsake the brightness of the sun'.

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STUDY OF A Gnostic DOCUMENT THE TALE OF ELDER BASIL THE NEW

Internal contradictions and heretical teachings in the descriptions of the "toll-houses."

After the toll-house of remembrance of wrongs, the angels explain to Theodora's soul how the demons know everything evil that a man has done and also how the toll-houses work. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, they repeat a fable recorded by two men who were not only Platonists, but who have been named as heretics by the Orthodox Church. The fable they repeat is, in Gregory of Thrace's retelling:

Do you not know that every Christian has from the time of his baptism his own good angel to guard him and to lead him into every good work and to write down his good deeds all through his life, but by way of parallel by divine permission an angel of evil goes with him, following him and himself recording all the bad deeds that he performs, so long as he is in this life, all life long? These angels of evil report all misdeeds in detail to the guardians of each gate, so that those who lie in wait for you to stop and stay each human soul who dies and takes this way of ascent may drive it off into the abyss of fire and the depth of hades, where they also have their place, unless the soul has properly repented of what it has done, and with the aid of a guardian angel is able to produce good deeds that clearly measure up and are balanced against the sins and base thoughts displayed by the accusers, and thus the soul will be able to escape their hands. But if it is not found with more, or an equal number of, good points to balance bad deeds, that by them the soul may be bought off, they drag it away violently and mercilessly beat and bind it up and as was said, thrust it down in the abyss of hades in darkness and the shadow of death until the fearful and inexorable judgment. So it is that they know all the sins of men in this world (f. 87r – 88r). (Origen and Clement of Alexandria are the actual sources).

One does not even need to discuss the heretical concept of salvation being taught in this passage. Clearly, it is a doctrine of salvation by good deeds and merits. The teaching about the soul going away into the "abyss of fire" is also clearly heretical. We have already examined how St Mark of Ephesus profoundly refutes such heretical concepts.

Quite apart from the unscriptural nature of this fabulous tale, it is just plain silly. Moreover, as we pointed out, it is not possible that the demons know all a man's sins, unless we are to believe that the sins committed in the heart are not sins, although the Saviour speaks of committing adultery in the heart (Mt. 5:28). It is perfectly clear from the holy fathers quoted earlier that the demons cannot know the inner man or penetrate the soul.

As Theodora's soul supposedly traverses the mythical *telonia* or "toll-houses," we witness how the angels and the demons argue over each of her sins. For instance, as a slave she was joined to a man by her master, without a church wedding, and she lived with him and seems to have had children by him. But she also *"fell into sin with other young men who were in the house of my master, being deceived by them and because I did not know about these terrible toll-houses and bitter investigations"* (f. 94 r). Now since this was the toll-house of adultery, the demons claimed that this was adultery because she was already married, but the angels said that since there was no church matrimony,² it was fornication and did not belong to that toll-house. Presumably the angels strove to have these sins reckoned as fornication and not adultery because fornication in their eyes is less serious a sin. But it is hard to see what difference it makes whether one is dragged off to Hades at the toll-house of fornication or the toll-house of adultery; all sins here seem to have the same gravity, though this is contrary to Scripture (e.g., *"There is a sin unto death...All unrighteousness is sin and there is a sin not unto death"* (1 Jn. 5:16,17). Even if there had been a difference among sins in Gregory's mind, the system of toll-houses gives no hint of it. One wonders, incidentally, how long it took the demons and angels to haggle over every sin, even the most trifling. Obviously, this would take much longer than it would to commit the sins, so this process must take many lifetimes, if there is any sort of time reckoning there. But since Theodora's soul was already allotted to Basil because of his accumulated supererogatory merits, why should the angels have taken all this trouble?

Theodora's soul has difficulty at some toll-houses, like those of anger, slander, foolish speech—which comprises bawdy songs which she sang and taught to others, licentious walking about, uncontrolled laughter, ribald jesting, drunkenness, gluttony, adultery and fornication, but at others it is determined that she never sinned throughout

2. This idea is especially strange because in the ancient Church, there was no "Church Matrimony," nor was there in ancient Israel. Does this mean that the first Christians, who did not have a "Church Matrimony" have all been dragged off to hell by demons for the "sin of fornication?" Were the angels unaware that "Church Matrimony" did not develop until later in history?

her entire life. This is marvellous in itself, but we are even more astonished when we find that these toll-houses include: malice, pride, vainglory (or, vanity), love of money, remembrance of wrongs, stealing, and a number of others. Theodora claims that not one sin of remembrance of wrongs was found, but she is clearly seen to remember wrongs even in this narration. She tries to excuse herself from her acts of fornication by saying that young men lead her astray, that is, they wronged her, and she also blames God for not having taught her about the toll-houses. But from the other toll-houses we see that she was engaged in singing bawdy songs, ribald jesting, drunkenness, lascivious dancing and so on. She was no victim of evil men, but quite enjoyed herself. She should, therefore, have had the humility to blame herself here and not others. Furthermore she never confessed the sins of fornication (f.96v), and the only reason for this can be her pride and vainglory, though she is reputed to be wholly sinless in this respect. In fact, it is doubtful that there has ever lived another human being so holy as Theodora, except our Saviour of course, because she never committed a single sin of pride or vainglory. Imagine, a human being without vanity, especially a person whose life was so questionable in many other realms! St John Chrysostom even suspects that the Theotokos was subject to "superfluous vanity" when she asked that our Saviour come out to speak with her (*Homily 44 on Matthew*). In truth, vainglory is inescapable for *all* humans. St John of The Ladder writes:

"The sun shines on all alike, and vainglory beams on all activities....When I talk I am defeated and when I am silent I am again defeated by it. However I throw this prickly pear, a thorn stands upright" (The Ladder 22:5).

As for pride, it is the chief human illness which nestles in the very depths of the heart, it is the origin of all the sins and the cause of man's downfall. For this reason even the greatest saints struggled mightily with this passion, whereas the rest of us are totally submerged in it. St John of The Ladder says:

"Where a fall has overtaken us, there pride has already pitched its tent; because a fall is an indication of pride" (23:4).

Is there any man who has never fallen in his life? We already know about Theodora. But Theodora says, *"How and of whom could I desire to be proud, being a poor slave woman from birth?"* (f. 81 v). If she is deluded enough to believe this, the demons are not.

Strangely, there is no toll-house of blasphemy, that most serious sin, and none for sacrilege, though Apostle Paul says, *"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1Cor. 3:17)*. Still more strange is the placement of the toll-house of "idolatry and all heresies" (f.92v), it holding the fifteenth position. For since, as St Cyprian of Carthage says, *"There is no salvation outside the Church" (Epistle 72)* and *"Now it is manifest that they who are not in the Church of Christ are reckoned among the dead" (Ep. 70)*, and St Mark of Ephesus says, *"This is our boast, our Faith, the good inheritance of our Fathers. With this we hope to stand before God and receive the forgiveness of our sins; but without this I know not what righteousness will deliver us from eternal torment" (PO 17:340 Epistle to the Monastery of Vatopedi)*, then this toll-house should be first in line. Obviously it would be pointless to balance out the good and evil deeds of idolaters and heretics, since they have no share in salvation anyway. And since, as the angels informed Theodora, a man receives an angel at baptism, idolaters and heretics have no angels to help their souls and to bring forth their good deeds, for they have no baptism.

From these observations alone we can conclude that Gregory's tale about the toll-houses is untrue and that either he simply made it up, or he was lead astray by some demonic vision.³ The latter seems more likely, since he saw all this in a Gnostic style "out-of-body state". And St Isaac the Syrian writes, "Whatever the intellect perceptibly beholds, hears or apprehends within itself in the realm of the spirit, it has no power to express when it turns again towards the body. It merely remembers that it saw them, but how it saw them, it knows not to express with clarity. This convicts the false scriptures called 'revelations', which, being composed by the originators of the corrupt heresies under the influence of demonic fantasies, describe the celestial dwellings in the firmament—the pathways into Heaven, the places set apart by the Judgment, and manifold figures of the celestial hosts, and their diverse activities. But all these things are shadows of an intellect inebriated by conceit and deranged by the working of demons" (Epistle to Abba Symeon). Although everything Gregory saw was "noetic",

3. One might be inclined to suspect the first, because, in order to advocate their teachings, Gnostic writers often contrived entire "gospels," and often produced whole works and series of works which they falsely attributed to apostles or famous Christian writers and fathers. The scope of the obvious delusion and hallucination involved in this tale, however, suggests the latter.

it differs in no way from what surrounds us here. But St Isaac tells us most clearly that there is nothing there which has any likeness to things here, and St Paul says the same: "And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) how he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4). And again, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that I love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Before continuing with Theodora's story we should take note of something the angels tell her: "*But if men knew of these things [that is, of the toll-houses], they would strive greatly to be delivered from such dire circumstances, even as some of them actually do and pass unscathed through the toll-houses, though these be very rare and one out of a thousand or ten thousand. But since they do not know about them, they live negligently*" (f 85 v). Theodora also says that she would have not committed fornication if she had known about the toll-houses. Apart from the doubt this passage casts on the character of God, Who must thus purposely withhold this knowledge, Gregory is teaching something here which is grossly wrong and which our Saviour Himself condemned. In the parable about Lazarus and the rich man, the rich man asks Abraham to send back Lazarus to tell his brother about what he (the rich man) is suffering, "*lest they also come into this place of torment*". Abraham answers (in the words of our Saviour), "*They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them*". When the rich man objects, "*Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent*". Abraham answers, "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*." (Lk.16:28-31). Here our Saviour is condemning 'special revelations' about things not revealed in Scripture and He says that if a man will not come to repentance by listening to God through the Scriptures, he will not repent by listening to men or to the revelations of demons. But Gregory is full of special revelations and he thinks that this will greatly edify others, contrary to the words of the Saviour.

Theodora's soul finally traverses the toll-houses and passes through the "gates of Heaven". Once within it is taken to worship the Holy Trinity and then shown around. Here Theodora's story is similar to many other Gnostic tales about such heavenly visions and has the usual materialistic descriptions. Indeed, this section of the narration follows closely the Massalian document falsely attributed to St Makarios of Egypt,⁴ for Gregory claims that she was then taken to Hades and after forty days from her death, her soul is taken to Basil's house. This in itself is an heretical teaching which has been so clearly refuted by St Mark of Ephesus that one simply marvels that the supporters of the toll-house heresy and this clearly Manichean "Life" are unaware of it. St Mark of Ephesus says:

But if, as was said, no-one has entered either the Kingdom or Gehenna, ['no-one' must include Theodora] how is it that we hear concerning the rich man and Lazarus that the former was in fire and torment and spoke with Abraham? The Lord said everything about Lazarus in the manner of a parable, even as He spoke of the ten virgins and in the rest of the parables. The parable of Lazarus has not come to pass in actuality, because the sinners in Gehenna shall not see the righteous who are with Abraham in the Kingdom, nor will any of them know his neighbour, being in that darkness.

Accepting this opinion our Church thus is minded and preaches, and She is most ready and well prepared to defend it. Firstly, the Lord in the Gospel according to Matthew describes beforehand the judgment to come, saying, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit..." — it is evident that they have not yet inherited — "the kingdom prepared for you;" "prepared" He says, not "already given." But to sinners He says, "Depart ye cursed" — evidently they have not yet departed — into everlasting fire "prepared" not for you but "for the devil and his angels." Here again He says "prepared," since [that fire] has not yet received the condemned demons. And how could this be, when the demons even till now and until that very day roam about everywhere in the air and work their deeds in those who obey them? This very thing they cry out to the Lord in another place, as it is recorded in the same Gospel, "Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" So it is clear that they do not endure torment yet, since the time has not yet come. If, therefore, the wicked demons, the first to work evil, for whom hell has especially been prepared and stored up, if they have not yet paid the debt of their fitting condemnation and freely wander about wherever they wish, what reasoning could persuade us that souls which amidst sins have departed from hence are straightaway given over to fire and to those torments which are prepared for others [i.e., the

4. That is, the fable that teaches that the soul of a deceased person wanders in familiar places for three days, and that it is then taken to heaven to reverence God, and after taken to Hades to witness the torments of the damned. A refutation of this heretical and blasphemous teaching appears in an appendix at the end of this book.

demons]? Nay, but then what need is there of the judgment, or even of the resurrection of the bodies of these [souls], and of the Judge's coming [again] to earth and of that fearsome, universal theatre, if each man has received his due before that day? And how is it that the Lord in the parable of the virgins says that the virgin souls who went forth to meet the Bridegroom "slumbered and slept while the Bridegroom tarried," which means that they died, but that they did not enter the bridal chamber until the Bridegroom came from Heaven, awakening all the virgins as it were from sleep, and the one group he led within along with Himself, while the others He shut out, which thing clearly shall come to pass only on that day? For He says, "Then shall the Kingdom of the heavens be likened to ten virgins." And how is it that having travelled into a far country and delivered unto His servants His goods, He summons all together upon His return and requires of each one his work, if even before the Master's return each of the servants has laid bare his work and received his recompense?

But also the divine Apostle in his second epistle to the Corinthians says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done [lit. through] his body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2Cor.5:10). Do you see that before [the time of] that judgment seat and before [the time when] we shall all appear gathered together, [that is] while we are bereft of our bodies, no one shall receive according to that which he has done through his body? But also in his second epistle to Timothy he says that on the one hand the time of his departure is "at hand," but the crown of righteousness is "laid up," and therefore is not "at hand," that "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2Tm.4:6-8). And in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with the everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all those who believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day" (2Ths.1:6-10). And again in the epistle to the Hebrews where he speaks concerning the saints who have gone before us, "And all these, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hb.11:39-40). This we must think concerning all the faithful and righteous who lived until the Master's coming. For just as those who have gone before have not been made perfect without the apostles, so neither are the apostles without the martyrs, nor the martyrs without those who after them have entered and shall enter into the good vineyard of the Church. This is indeed taught most lucidly by the parable where at different times there were different callings for workmen into the vineyard, but the recompense was given to all at the same time, and those who came first received nothing more. The great Evangelist, John the Theologian says the same in Revelations: "And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the soul of those who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' And white robes were given unto every one of them and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants and also their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev.6:9-11). From all these things, therefore, it is evident that neither are the saints in perfect enjoyment of those good things and of the blessedness to come, nor have sinners already received condemnation and been sent away to torment. And, indeed, since they are incomplete and, as it were, cut in half, being bereft of their bodies which they wait to receive incorruptible after the resurrection, how could they attain to those perfect rewards? Hence the Apostle says, "Christ the first fruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at His coming, then cometh the end" (1Cor.15:23, 24), then, he says they shall appear, then they shall be perfected. And the Lord says, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the heavens" (cf Mt.13:43). (TEN ARGUMENTS AGAINST PURGATORY).

Must we really believe that this so obviously Manichean Gregory of Thrace was a far greater church father than St Mark of Ephesus, and that St Mark's writings are dubious, while this monstrous tale is of greater value?

It is difficult to understand how Theodora knew that forty days had passed when in that place, as she herself says, *the day is unwaning* (f. 70 v). In any case, what meaning could earthly time have in a 'noetic' realm, since time is the measure of the motion of material objects?

At this point, the tale returns to Gregory, and Theodora's "soul" leads Gregory inside the elder Basil's house where he, on a lofty throne, (*though still alive on earth, mind you*) is sitting at table with his departed spiritual children, feasting with them. Gregory falls at his feet and Basil says "Welcome", touches him (though Gregory couldn't touch himself) and tells Theodora's soul to show him around the house and the gardens (f.110r-111r). Afterwards Gregory "as it were comes to himself" and ponders that awesome and wondrous vision (f.113 v).

All this is exceeding strange, especially in light of the consensus of the holy fathers expressed so eloquently by St Mark of Ephesus:

We reply that Heaven is not a physical place where the angels dwell like as we, but it is a noetic place surpassing sense perception, if indeed this should be called a place at all; but more properly, it must be called the "place of God." (loc.cit.)

After all this, one more question still needs to be asked: if there are such things as toll-houses like Gregory describes, what are their purposes? For nothing created or permitted to exist by God is without a purpose. The purpose of the toll-houses as explained to Theodora's soul by the angels, is to hinder from ascending to Heaven a soul whose sins outweigh its good deeds; then demons seize it and drag it down to Hades to dwell there until the fearful and inexorable Judgment. So actually this extremely intricate and tortuous system was devised by God only to determine where souls are to dwell till His second coming: either a soul continues on to Heaven, or the demons drag it off to Hades. After the second Coming, they will again be judged, with their bodies (or are all the holy fathers supposed to be in error, and only the Bogomil, Gregory of Thrace, correct?). The first problem that arises here (besides those already discussed with regards to weighing good and evil deeds and human justice) is that we have already established that demons do not have the power to lay hands on, so to speak, the human soul after death. St John Chrysostom writes:

"Let us not be persuaded by the demon at all, but though he say something true, let us flee and turn away from him. For sound and saving doctrine are not to be accurately learned from demons, but from Divine Scripture. Now so as to know that a soul which departs from the body does not fall under the tyranny of the devil, listen to what Paul says, 'He who is dead is freed from sin,' that is, he no longer sins. For if while the soul dwells in the body the devil cannot bring violence upon it, it is obvious that when it departs he likewise cannot...!And it came to pass', He says, 'that the beggar died and was carried away by the angels.' Not only the souls of the righteous, but also the souls of those who have lived in wickedness are carried away thither....'Thou fool, this night they shall require thy soul of thee.' See how there He says 'carried away by angels', here 'they shall require'? The one the angels led forth as one in bonds, the other they escorted as a champion" (PG 48:984).

St Anthony the Great says (as recorded by St Athanasios the Great):

"But the demons, as they have no power, are like actors on the stage changing their shape and frightening children with tumultuous apparitions and various forms: from which they ought rather to be disposed as shewing their weakness" (Life §28). And again, "Since they have no power to effect anything, they do nought but threaten" (§ibid). St Anthony also says that once the devil appeared to him and said, "'Why do the monks and all the other Christians blame me undeservedly? Why do they curse me hourly?' Then I answered, 'Wherefore dost thou trouble them?' He said, 'I am not he who troubles them, but they trouble themselves, for I am become weak. Have they not read, "the swords of the enemy have come to an end, and thou hast destroyed the cities"? I have no longer a place, a weapon, a city.' ...Then I marvelled at the grace of the Lord, and said to him, '...even against thy will thou hast spoken truly. For the coming of Christ hath made thee weak, and He hath cast thee down and stripped thee'" (§41).

It is, therefore, doubtful (and especially because the holy fathers declare that demons are not even able to see it) that the demons have any power whatsoever over the soul of a man after his death, though they would like us to believe the contrary (and this explains the source of this whole tale about Theodora and the toll-houses). Where and to what the souls of departed Christians go is God's inscrutable decision, for they are His servants, and the demons have no part in it, as Apostle Paul writes, *"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth"* (Rm.14:4). St Irenae also writes:

"The souls go away to the invisible place ordained for them by God, and there they dwell until the resurrection, awaiting the resurrection. Thereupon they shall receive back their bodies and be resurrected in their entirety, that is, bodily, even as the Lord arose, and thus they shall go before the countenance of God" (Against Heresies Bk. V §31).

Not surprisingly, this is part of St Irenae's refutation of Gnosticism.

God determines these things with all knowing simplicity, and they are executed by His angels, not by His enemies.

But to return to the question concerning the purpose of the toll-houses, it is clear that God and God alone is the judge of souls and determines what is best for them (and such is the nature of God's judgment—see St Dionysios the Areopagite *On the Divine Names* Ch. VIII, §7—for He does not punish). Likewise it is certain that *"He needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man" (Jn. 2:25)*, since He alone knows all things. Therefore God has no need of the toll-houses. Could they be for the sake of the angels? But *"Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (Hb. 1:14)*. Clearly the toll-houses are not for the angels' sake. Then for men? Perhaps men are profited by this pitiless inquiry into all their doings. First of all we should remember that the soul is not a human being, and therefore only the soul could be profited in this way. But profited how? Perhaps it will be moved to compunction and repentance? *"In Hades there is no confession and repentance"* writes St John Damascene (PG 96:1084 B) But one might object, "Well, that is in Hades; the toll-houses are before that." Firstly, what good would the soul's repentance be when such repentance does not belong to the whole man, body and soul, which committed the sins? But further, St Titus of Bostra (AD 378) writes:

The soul cannot enjoy anything, or possess, or do anything, or suffer anything except it be together with the body, being the same as it was created in the beginning, and thus it enjoys that which is proper to it" (PG 96:500 C).

Moreover, St Mark of Ephesus brings up this further argument, showing that since the will is inactive after death, the soul cannot improve its state:

"In order to gain bliss both the uprightness of the will is required—whose proper object is the universal good—and the good deeds deserving of recompense which are a consequence of this will. However, both the motion of the will and that of works must necessarily be confined to this present life; this you [i.e., the Latins] also think, since you say that the will of those held in Purgatory is immovable.... Now since Purgatory does not make an evil will a good will, but the uprightness of will is required for bliss, then Purgatory contributes nothing towards the reception of bliss. But that which has no function exists in vain. And since God did not create a single thing in vain, Purgatory does not exist" (Ten Arguments Against Purgatory. V. Patrologia Orientalis XV 424).

How, therefore, can the soul be profited by going through the toll-houses? By the anguish it suffers? But this would be another form of Purgatory, which, as St Mark proves, cannot exist. To return to the narration of Theodora, we see that her soul had to pass through the toll-houses even though it was already saved. Therefore no profit was expected from them; and further, if some profit was to be had, surely the angels would have pointed it out to Theodora. Hence we can conclude that the toll-houses do not exist for the sake of human souls.

We are, then, obliged to think that the toll-houses exist for the demons' sake. What would they gain hereby? In their eyes, a great deal. Firstly, since they are very passionate creatures, they would be able to satisfy somewhat their unquenchable malice against mankind by bringing forth each and every sin to torment and dismay the wretched soul, and with luck they would even be able to drag it off to Hades to dwell with them. Secondly, it would bolster their overweening pride, that they have not become weak by Christ's incarnate *ekonomia*, that they can still wreak their vengeance by leading a man into sin and after his death by tormenting him with it. It would show that they are not simply 'condemned criminals', but that they still have their rights: if they find more evil deeds than the angels find good ones, they can tell the angels, "Get away! By rights this soul is ours!" And thirdly, it would give them possession of the pathway to Heaven, that is, to His presence, as we have seen. But is it conceivable that God would show such favour to these rebellious and accursed creatures? It is a blasphemy even to think that God allows the existence of this intricate system of toll-houses just to please the

demons (for ultimately even they derive no profit from this)! Since it is impossible that the toll-houses exist for the demons' sake, they have no purpose at all. And in the words of St Mark of Ephesus, "*That which has no function, exists in vain. And since God did not create a single thing in vain*" the toll-houses do not exist.

Gregory's tale, however, leads us to believe that God permits the existence of the toll-houses just to please the demons and to fulfil the necessity demanded by human justice. For this is the explanation why Theodora's soul had to pass through the toll-houses though it was already saved: it gave satisfaction to the demons (even though in the end they were cheated by Basil's supererogatory merits). The demons are here presented as the rightful owners of man's sins, and these sins must be bought from them. This is a blasphemy against God, for the prophet David says, "*Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee*" (Ps. 50:4); Gregory puts the demons in the place of God. Further he instils in us great fear of the demons; our Holy Fathers, however, exhort us to the opposite: "*But if the demons had power not even against the swine, much less have they any over men formed in the image of God. So then we ought to fear God only, and despise the demons, and be in no fear of them*" (St Anthony the Great in his *Life* §29, §30). When we also take into consideration the fact that Gregory was subject to many other strange visions and that the origin of the idea of aerial toll-houses is pagan and pre-Christian, and was preserved only in Gnostic literature, we must conclude from all these points that Gregory's vision was inspired by demons for the delusion of men.

(We will conclude this discussion in The Canadian Orthodox Missionary in the next issue with a brief look at one or two points in the incredible "Apocalypse of Gregory." This entire study will be available in a booklet titled THE LIFE OF ELDER BASIL THE NEW: STUDY OF A Gnostic Document, which contains this whole series.)

COMING EVENTS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE

This year, the annual *Summer Institute* conference will focus on the Orthodox Christian Family. We will be taking a different view of the meaning of the family and "family values" than that espoused by the "Religious Right."

The Summer Institute takes place during the first week end of August, in conjunction with the "Joy of Canada" Pilgrimage. More information will appear in the next few issues of *The Canadian Orthodox Missionary*.

Also among the long-term plans for the conference/workshop series at the Monastery are a conference on Psychiatry and Orthodoxy and a workshop on quantum physics and the Orthodox faith, titled "**The evidence of things unseen.**"

We will be planning conference activities in our American Midwest Deanery, and Archbishop Lazar's "Westminster College Lectures," hosted by Dr Kharalambos Anstall, will continue in Salt Lake City.

As the year draws to a close, Archbishop Lazar and the brotherhood would like to especially thank Dr and Mrs Anstall for their frequent hospitality, and for the effort they have put into the educational programme of the Archdiocese, together with the tireless Joan Robinson, who make the programmes in Salt Lake City possible.

The Canadian Orthodox Missionary
P.O. Box 689, Lynden, Wa. 98264.

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The Canadian Orthodox Missionary is published
six times a year by the

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND
EVANGELISM, UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX
CHURCH, KIEV.

ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDANCE TO:

The Canadian Orthodox Missionary, 37323

Hawkins Rd., Dewdney, B.C.,
V0M-1H0, Canada.

*In America, the "Known office of publication," in accordance
with U.S. Postal Regulations is 8648 Brookfield Dr., Lynden,
WA. 98364.*

Second Class Postage
Paid at Lynden, WA.
98264