



ORTHODOXY CANADA

VOLUME 6, Nr 12



TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
SAINTS KYRIL AND METHODY SOCIETY

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*Copyright, 1979. Published by The Saints Kyril and Methody Orthodox Christian Educational Society, Box 404, Chilliwack, B.C., V2P-6J7, Canada.
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Subscription rate: \$7.00 per year. Please send all subscriptions, correspondence and changes of address to: Sts Kyril and Methody Society at the above address.

GOD'S SPECIAL NATION

After the time of the terrible tower, people began to build different nations with different languages. Each group of people even began to look different from one another, because they lived in different climates and ate different kinds of food.

Satan had led people into disunity. No-one wanted to remember God any more and no-one was left in His Holy Church. People began to worship demons and statues, and they became more evil and cruel all the time.

But there were still a few people who did remember about God, and some of the old people knew the stories about the terrible tower, and how God cared for His people. A man named Abraham heard about these things, and he also saw the evil and the demon-worship around him. Then, deep down in his heart, he began to long to know this wonderful God who had created the earth and who loves His people. As soon as Abraham opened the door of his heart, God spoke to him:

"I am the God you seek, Abraham! Come away, out of this land. Leave your relatives and follow Me. I will make a great nation of you and your family."

Abraham replied in his heart, "Here I am, O Lord! Lead me where you will."

Abraham told his relatives about this wonderful revelation, and his nephew Lot believed in God and agreed to go with Abraham wherever God led him. So Abraham and Lot and their families set out, and God led them into the land of Canaan, and told Abraham, "This will be your home. Your children shall grow here into a great nation, and they will be My Holy Church."

God knew that people were so weak, and Satan was so clever, that He had to give His faithful a special kind of Church to belong to. It had to be a visible Church, one which could be seen. That way, God's people could always keep themselves apart from the other religions and societies of the world. This would help keep God's people from being confused by the false religions and teachings. In His Holy Church, the sons and daughters of God would be separate from the religions of the sons and daughters of the world.

This new holy nation which God now created for His Church is the same as the Orthodox Church we belong to now. That is why we Orthodox people often call Abraham our father.

After Abraham and his family reached this promised land, it was decided that his nephew Lot would settle in one part of the country, and Abraham and his family would settle in another. This way, there would be plenty of land for each one to raise sheep on, and their workers and children would not quarrel. Lot, who was selfish and greedy, wanted the best land for himself. Abraham was meek and humble and truly loved God. So even though he was the chief, he allowed Lot to have the best land. Abraham trusted God, and he knew that God would help him.

(Continued: God reveals Himself)

9 SEPTEMBER
SAINT CIARAN,
ABBOT OF CLONMACNOISE

The holy abbot Ciaran was the son of the wagon-maker, Beoit. Beoit was a very good and careful worker, and so he became rich. He and his wife Darerca had five sons and three daughters. Of these sons, four became presbyters and one, a deacon. All three daughters became nuns.

This blessed family lived in the province of Meath, but because the local king was greedy and asked for too much tax money, the family moved to Roscommon in the province of Connaught. St Ciaran was born at Roscommon in the year 515.

Like other boys his age, the young Saint learned to work hard, helping his father, and also working for neighbouring farmers. One of his chores was to herd his family's sheep. Ciaran especially liked this duty, because he could be alone and pray to God in peace. The boy knew many of the psalms by heart, and he loved to chant them as he watched over the flock.

The sheep were grazed in a plain called Ai. At that time, the wondrous old man, Saint Diarmat lived on this plain. This holy elder at once saw God's Grace in the young shepherd, and he taught the youth to read the psalms from the book for himself. The two spent many hours together, reading and praying. The elder taught the young Saint many things about spiritual struggle, and how to keep himself clean and pure for Christ's sake.

When he was old enough, St Ciaran wanted to go to school. In those days, there were no public schools, and the bishops and presbyters taught the students. St Findian had a school at Cluain. Here, he taught the Divine Scripture and the sciences.

Saint Ciaran learned quickly, and grew in wisdom and in spirit under his elder. Some of the other students, however, were jealous of the young Saint, and they used to torment him and shun him. Ciaran only prayed for them and tried to teach them love and mercy.

The students of the school had to take turns working in a flour mill, to help pay for their needs. St Ciaran toiled with meekness and obedience. The Saint loved beggars, and from his earliest youth he had sought to help them and give them money, food or clothing whenever possible. He even gave them some of the flour which he ground.

SAINT CIARAN



SAINT CIARAN

As Saint Findian grew older, he called his monks together and announced that when he reposed, Ciaran should take his place as abbot. To this, they all agreed. Meanwhile, St Ciaran got a blessing from his elder to visit some of the holy places of Ireland. He went to Lake Erne to hear the holy words of St Ninned, and from there, the young man went to the sacred isle of Aran. On Aran Island, the monks lived in great poverty and worked very hard. The holy elder, St Enda was abbot of Aran in those days, and he accepted St Ciaran with joy. The young Saint joined the hard labour and prayers of the monks, and he daily grew in God's Grace.

From Aran, the Saint made his way to Scatterry Island to learn what he could from Saint Senan. The blessed one journeyed round the whole country, learning much from the holy elders, and working and praying with all the monks. Soon, however, many monks came desiring to have St Ciaran as their elder. The Saint built a small monastery on Hare Island (called Inis Aingin in the Irish language) which is in Lake Ree. Even though Ciaran was the abbot of this monastery, he served the brothers, and often when a visitor came, Saint Ciaran would wash his feet and serve him like a slave.

God worked many miracles and healings through this young Saint, and the faithful from all over Ireland began to come to Lake Ree as pilgrims. The Saint was sorrowful because of the attention and praises he was receiving, and so after a while, he appointed the holy presbyter Donnan as abbot, and he himself departed to the wilderness of Clonmachnoise. In those days, the elder Diarmat was living in this wilderness in a poor cell. The Saint came to this cell and built himself one nearby. He lived here with his old friend and teacher for a long time, and a brotherhood soon grew up around him.

St Ciaran became a father of Saints, for many of his monks later became wonderworkers. The Saint spent many years in struggle and prayer. He travelled throughout Ireland preaching and teaching the rulers and people alike to be merciful and charitable.

This holy elder and wonderworker reposed in the Lord on 9 September, in the year of our Lord 550. He was about thirty-five years old.

When St Columba of Iona, who had been his classmate at Cluain, heard of the repose of Saint Ciaran, he wrote:

"Most blessed Ciaran living among men passed a life as that of an angel, for the Grace of the Holy Spirit burned in his face before the eyes of men. Who could expound his earth-

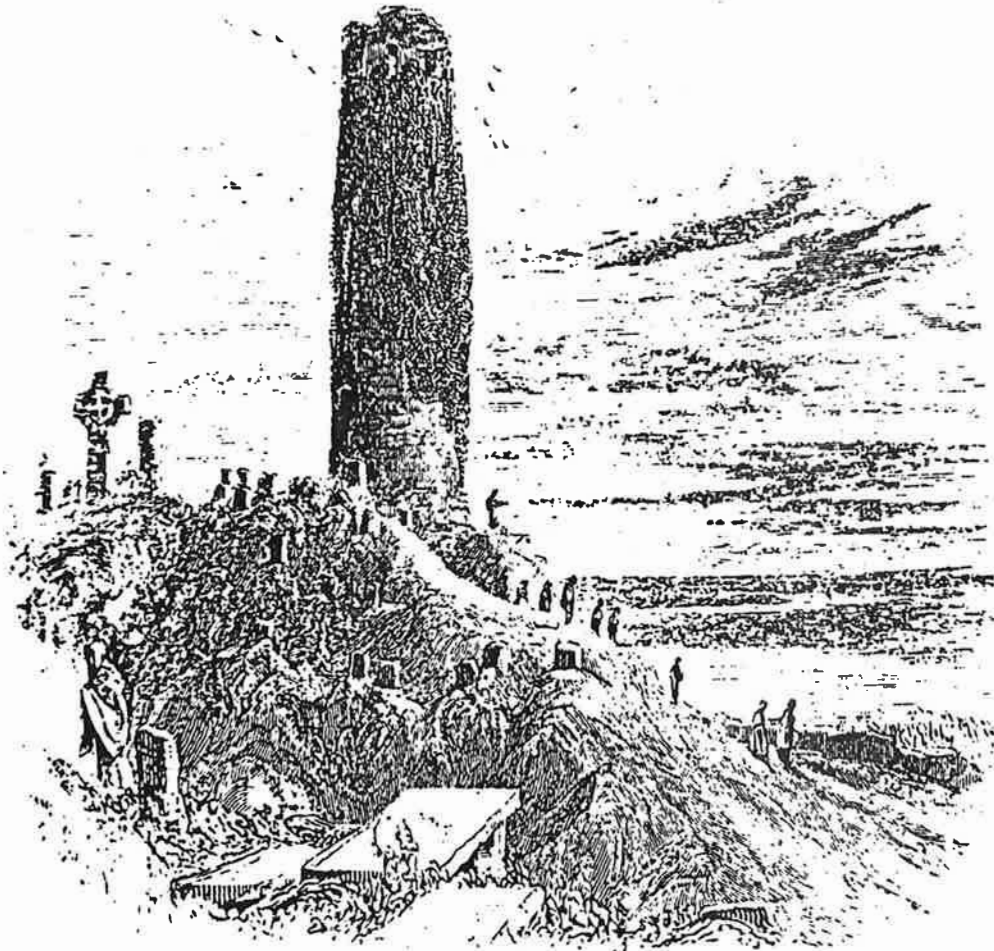
SAINT CIARAN



Map of Ireland, showing Saint Ciaran's travels to the main holy places. The exact location of Cluain, where St Ciaran went to school, together with Saint Columba (Colum-cille) is not known, but it is thought to be at or near Cloyne on the coast of County Cork.

SAINT CIARAN

ly converse? For he was young in age and body, yet a most holy elder in mind and in manners, in humility, in gentleness, in charity, in daily labours, in nightly vigils and in holy works. For now he lives in rest without labour, in age without senility, in health without sorrow, in joy without grief, in peace without a foe, in wealth without poverty, in endless day without night, before the throne of Christ, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns unto ages of ages. Amen."



17th century drawing of the ruins of Clonmacnoise Monastery. The round bell tower was built in about 960 by Fergal O'Rourke.

SAINT WINNOK



6 NOVEMBER

SAINT WINNOK
THE BRITON

When the holy great elder Bertin was abbot of the Monastery of St Omer at Sithiu, France, men came from all over Europe to join his brotherhood. Among those who came was Winnok, a pious youth from Wales.

St Winnok was accepted into the monastery at once, for St Bertin could see in spirit the great faith and gifts of Grace which this young man had.

Winnok struggled for many years under the care of the elder. He was considered by all to be an example of apostolic poverty and humility. The youth was perfect in obedience, and for this, God granted him many gifts of Grace.

The holy elder Bertin wanted to build a second monastery, where the light of Christ's Gospel could shine in a new area. When he managed to obtain some land in the district near the town of Dunkirk, he established a new brotherhood and appointed St Winnok to be its abbot. This new monastery grew and became famous for its charity and hospitality to the poor and hungry. Every visitor, no matter what their rank, was received with equal warmth and love. A hospital was built, and the Saint himself used to serve the ill. He comforted the broken-hearted, healed the sick, and turned many to the path of salvation.

Saint Winnok was especially well known for his love of hard work, and his meekness and compassion. This holy elder lived to a very old age, serving others until the end of his life. He grew rich in Grace and the mercy of God. At length, his strength began to weaken, but he did not want to stop serving the needs of others and fulfilling his own duties. The old man still went daily to the mill to grind flour for the bread which the monks gave to the poor and ill. When he grew weak, the Saint prayed to God to give him strength to continue his work. God heard the prayers of His servant and helped the Saint, so that, by God's mercy, Winnok was able to grind in the mill up until his holy repose itself.

The Lord worked many miracles through Saint Winnok, because of the Saint's great compassion and selfless love.

This holy elder fell asleep in the Lord on 6 November, 717 A.D. On 18 September, 900, his sacred relics were taken to the town of Berrques and placed in a new church there. The name of the town was then changed to Berrques-St-Winnoc.

19 DECEMBER

SAINT WUNEBALD

This holy pilgrim was the younger brother of St Willibald (7 July) and the blessed virgin Walburga (26 February). He was born in the south of Britain to the English nobles Richard and Wuna. When the older brother, Willibald, decided to set out on a pilgrimage to the holy places of Europe, and to the Holy Land itself, the young servant of God Wunebald begged to go with him.

Together, these two Christ-loving brothers set out on their perilous journey, taking their father with them. Near the end of summer, in sailing season, they set sail from the port of Hamwith. After several days, they arrived near the mouth of the River Seine, and camped there, not far from the city of Rouen. After they had rested for a few days, the three set out and visited the holy places of France.

When they reached the town of Lucca, the father fell ill, and after a few weeks, he reposed in the Lord. The two brothers buried him near the church of Saint Frigidian, and they decided to stay in the monastery there until the end of winter.

Both the brothers loved the monastery, and they entered into complete obedience to the abbot. In spring, both brothers were sick with the flu, and they stayed in the blessed monastery for another while. They were there from the feast of St Martin until Holy Pascha. The abbot noted that the two brothers, even though they were ill, kept the monastic rule and the fast of Great Lent as strictly as possible. When the two at last decided to leave, the abbot begged them to stay, but they went on to Italy instead.

When the two brothers came to Rome, they visited the holy places, and then they parted ways. St Willibald wanted to go on to the East, to the Holy Land, but St Wunebald wanted to stay in the monastery in Rome.

In the year 727, Wunebald went back to England, and after a short time, he went to Germany to join his uncle, Saint Boniface, in his missionary work.

Saint Wunebald entered into perfect obedience to his elder, and after several years, he was given a blessing to found a monastery in the Bavarian wilderness. This monastery grew and became a great missionary centre. Through the prayers and

SAINT WUNEBALD

works of St Wunebald, hundreds of souls were converted to Christ and baptized into His Holy Church.

This holy abbot and elder fell asleep in the Lord on 19 December, in the year of our Lord 761.





VLADIK A

EXTRACTS FROM THE LIFE AND WORKS OF BLESSED
ANTONY OF THE DIASPORA, METROPOLITAN OF KIEV
AND PRESIDENT OF THE SYNOD OF THE RUSSIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA.

THE FAITH OF THE ROMAN CENTURION

"And when the centurion, who stood near Him, saw that He so cried out and gave up the spirit, he said, 'Truly, this man was the Son of God'." (Mk.15:39).

Thus began the faith of the centurion. It is clear that this cry of Christ expressed a treasure of moral content in a spirit which the centurion understood. Such a connection between a tormenting cry of the soul and the beginning of a new Grace-filled life in one who has heard it, is found repeatedly in the Holy Scripture. We will begin a survey of these places in the Scripture with the most dramatic one:

...I looked back with mine eyes, and upon the right side I saw a woman, and, behold, she mourned and wept with a loud voice, and was much grieved in heart, and her clothes were rent, and she had ashes upon her head.

Then let I my thoughts go that I was in, and turned me unto her, and said unto her, "Wherefore weepest thou? Why art thou so grieved in thy mind?"

And she said unto me, "Sir, let me alone, that I may bewail myself, and add unto my sorrow, for I am sore vexed in my mind, and brought very low."

And I said unto her, "What aileth thee? Tell me."

She said unto me, "I thy servant have been barren, and had no child, though I had an husband thirty years. And those thirty years I did nothing day and night, and every hour, but make my prayer to the Highest. After thirty years God heard me thine handmaid, looked upon my misery, considered my trouble, and gave me a son: and I was glad of him, so was my husband also, and all my neighbours: and we gave great honour to the Almighty. And I nourished him with great travail. So when he grew up, and came to the time that he should have a wife, I made a feast.

"And it came to pass that when my son had entered into his wedding chamber, he fell down and died. Then we all overthrew the lights, and all my neighbours rose up to comfort me: so I took my rest unto the second day at night. And it came to pass, when they had all left off to comfort me, to the end I might be quiet; then I rose up by night, and fled and came hither into this field, as thou seest. And I do now purpose not to return into the city, but here to stay, and neither to eat nor drink, but continually to mourn and to fast until I die."

Then left I the meditations wherein I was, and spake to her in anger, saying, "Thou foolish woman above all other, seest thou not our mourning, and what happeneth unto us? How that Sion our mother is full of heaviness, and much humbled, mourning very sore? And now, seeing we all mourn and are sad, for we are all in heaviness, art thou grieved for one son? For ask the earth, and she shall tell thee, that it is she which ought to mourn for the fall of so many that grow upon her. For out of her came all at the first, and out of her shall all others come, and, behold, they walk almost all into destruction, and a multitude of them is utterly rooted out. Who then should make more mourning than she, that hath lost so great a multitude; and not thou, which art sorry but for one? But if thou sayest to me, 'My lamentation is not like the earth's, because I have lost the fruit of my womb, which I brought forth with pains, and bare with sorrows; but the earth not so: for the multitude present in it according to the course of the earth is gone, as it came.' Then say I unto thee, 'Like as thou hath brought forth with labour; even so the earth also hath given her fruit, namely, man, ever since the beginning unto him that made her. Now therefore keep thy sorrow to thyself, and bear with a good courage that which hath befallen thee. For if thou shalt acknowledge the determination of God to be just, thou shalt receive thy son in time, and shalt be commended among women. Go thy way then into the city to thine husband.'

And she said unto me, 'That will I not do: I will not go into the city, but here will I die.'

So I proceeded to speak further unto her, and said, 'Do not so, but be counselled by me: for how many are the adversities of Sion? be comforted in regard of the sorrow of Jerusalem. For thou seest that our sanctuary is laid waist, our altar broken down, our temple destroyed; our psaltery is laid on the ground, our song is put to silence, our rejoicing is at an end. The light of our candlestick is put out, the ark of our covenant is spoiled, our holy things are defiled, and the name that is called upon us is almost profaned: our children are put to shame, our priests are burnt, our Levites are gone into captivity, our virgins are defiled, our wives are ravished; our righteous men carried away, our little ones destroyed, our young men are brought in bondage, and our strong men are become weak. And which is the greatest of all, the seal of Sion hath now lost her honour; for she is delivered into the hands of them that hate us. And therefore, shake off thy great heaviness, and put away the multitude of sorrows, that the Mighty may be merciful unto thee again, and the Highest shall give thee rest and ease from thy labour.'

And it came to pass, while I was talking with her, behold, her face suddenly shined exceedingly, and her countenance glistened, so that I was afraid of her, and mused what it might be. And behold, suddenly she made a great cry very fearful: so that the earth shook at the noise of the woman.

And I looked, and, and behold, the woman appeared unto me no more, but there was a city builded, and a large place shewed itself from the foundations: then was I afraid, and cried with a loud voice, and said, 'Where is Uriel the angel, who came unto me at the first? For he hath caused me to fall into many trances, and mine end is turned into corruption, and my prayer to rebuke.'

And as I was speaking these words, behold, he came unto me, and looked

upon me. And, lo, I lay as one that had been dead, and mine understanding was taken from me: and he took me by the right hand, and comforted me, and set me upon my feet, and said unto me:

"What aileth thee? and why art thou so disquieted? and why is thine understanding troubled, and the thoughts of thine heart?"

And I said, "because thou hast forsaken me, and yet I did according to thy words, and I went into the field, and, lo, I have seen, and yet see, that I am not able to express."

And he said unto me, "Stand up manfully, and I will advise thee." Then said I, "Speak on, my lord, in me; only forsake me not, lest I die frustrate of my hope. For I have seen that I knew not, and hear that I do not know. Or is my sense deceived, or my soul in a dream? Now therefore I beseech thee that thou wilt shew thy servant of this vision."

He answered me then, and said, "Hear me, and I shall inform thee, and tell thee wherefore thou art afraid: for the Highest will reveal many secret things unto thee. He hath seen that thy way is right: for that thou sorrowest continually for thy people, and makest great lamentation for Sion. This, therefore, is the meaning of the vision which thou lately sawest:

Thou lately sawest a woman mourning, and thou beganst to comfort her: But now seest thou the likeness of the woman no more, but there appeared unto thee a city builded. And whereas she told thee of the death of her son, this is the solution: This woman, whom thou sawest is Sion: and whereas she said unto thee, even she whom thou seest now as a city builded...that she hath been thirty years barren: those are the thirty years wherein there was no offering made in her. But after thirty years Solomon builded the city, and offered offerings: and then bare the barren a son. And whereas she told thee that she nourished him with labour: that was the dwelling in Jerusalem. But whereas she said unto thee, 'That my son coming into his marriage chamber happened to have a fall and died': this was the destruction that came to Jerusalem. And behold thou sawest her likeness, and because she mourned for her son, thou beganst to comfort her: and of these things which have chanced, these are to be opened unto thee. For now, the most High seeth that thou art grieved unfeignedly, and sufferest from thy whole heart for her, so hath he shewed thee the brightness of her glory, and the comeliness of her beauty: and therefore, I bade thee remain in the field where no house was builded: for I knew that the Highest would shew this unto thee. Therefore I commanded thee to go into the field, where no foundation of any building was. For in the place wherein the Highest beginneth to shew his city, there can no man's building be able to stand. And therefore fear not, let not thine heart be affrighted, but go thy way in, and see this beauty and greatness of the building, as much as thine eyes are able to see..." (2 Esdras 9:38-10:55).

What was it that God's chosen-ones, pre-eminently Christ the Saviour, were appealing to Him about with such a cry? For deliverance from death? Apostle Paul gives an answer to such a question: "In the days of His flesh [Jesus] offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence toward God" (Heb. 5:7).

Not upon the conscience of the centurion alone did this Divine outcry create such a regenerative influence, but also

inanimate nature: "the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom and the earth shook and rocks fell." Nor did the matter end even there but "tombs opened and the bodies of the reposed arose."

Such were the terrible, Grace-filled last sufferings and death cry of Jesus Christ. This saving cry was foreimaged by the suffering woman whom Esdras saw. This mystical phenomenon is repeated again in the Apocalypsis:

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered...And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations...and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God..." (12:1-2, 5-6).

Of course, in this vision, as in Esdras' vision of the grieving woman, we find imaged the birth of the Son of God from the Most Holy Virgin, which birth, though painless, was foreordained for struggle and sufferings. Such is the factual aspect of prophecy. This aspect is not, however, the main one and not the substance: it is only a concrete expression of a broader idea lying at the basis of the visions and prophecies. It is expressed in such a broad view in the farewell conversation of the Lord Jesus Christ: "A woman when she is in labour has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (Jn.16:21).

This is an exposition of the closing days before Christ's sufferings and Resurrection, but more than that, it reveals that Grace-filled law of spiritual life according to which a believer must suffer the torments of death, casting aside all the sinful content of the old man and opening oneself to the acceptance of the new Grace-filled life. This experience, which is both martyric and at the same time, a joyous expectation, is amazingly united in the souls of those who are saved, as is explained in the cited Scriptural visions. This is what comprises the dogma of redemption, the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection, contrary to the theory of the juridical sentence of the threatening Roman Catholic god, for this transformation in a person's heart takes place with the participation of Divine Grace.

All this is explained in detail in my book, *THE MORAL IDEA OF THE DOGMA OF REDEMPTION*,* in which I strove to gather and explicate the main places of Scripture which reveal this mystery. We return to them now, desiring, in particular to comprehend and clarify the meaning of that Biblical cry which Saint John Chrysostom said signified the striving of the soul to God,

* Available in English from Monastery Press, 8011 Champagneur, Montreal, P.Q., Canada.

and not merely suffering.

Let us return to the maxims of the Scripture. This expression, "to cry," "to cry out," "cry," is met most frequently in the Psalms — the most elevated book of the Old Testament. Its superiority is understandable: man praying to God converses with Him, becomes a participant of the Divine Nature [*the doctrine of theosis*], as is said in the prayer in the appendix of the Psalter, in accord with the words of Apostles Peter and Paul (compare 2Pt.1:4 and Hb.3:14; 6:4). This is why the greatest revelations are sent from God to His chosen-ones mainly during prayer. *The highest degree of tension of the spirit of one praying is expressed in Scripture by such words as "to cry," "to cry out," "lament."*

There are many passages about this in the sacred books, just as there are about the Lord accepting to His heart such prayerful lamentations, even when a person has seemingly fallen into a hopeless situation.

The most literal meaning of the word notwithstanding, such a Grace-filled cry or lamentation is sometimes expressed with no sound at all. Such was the prayer of Moses before the crossing of the Red Sea. Moses' prayer was soundless, yet the Lord says to him, "The Lord said to Moses, 'Why do you cry to Me? speak to the children of Israel and let them proceed'" (Ex.14:15). Such also was the prayer of St Hannah, the mother of Samuel: "She spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (1Ki.1:13).

She later changed this to a thankful glorification of God, which entered into the Divine services among the eight Old Testament hymns which comprise the eight daily irmoses (key hymns) of matins. And so this mortal lamentation of the soul, later replaced by a triumphant doxology and thanksgiving, is like a fore-image or foretelling of that death lamentation of Christ on Golgotha, which was, after Christ's Resurrection, seen to be the beginning of the resurrection "of many bodies of reposed saints."

Now we can more clearly see how closely united are this despondent, prayerful death cry and the subsequent outpouring of Divine power — that fore-image of resurrection which was revealed in the resurrection of many saints at the moment of Christ's three-day death. Many are the passages in the psalms about the death cry of sufferers, and their salvation sent from God. We shall cite only some of them. Before us is the book of the Prophet Jonah. Here, in the whale's belly, he is near death, but the cry of his departing soul unites with an unwaivering faith in God's mercy and in His victory over death. Remarkable is the assuredness of salvation united in the heart of the prophet who is already separating from earthly life: "And I said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me...For Thou hadst cast me into the deep in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all Thy billows and thy

waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple" (Jonah 2:2-4).

This hymn of Jonah, as the song of Moses and Hannah, is daily repeated at matins. It is especially remarkable that the one praying here is not limited to a confession of personal feelings before God, but appeals to all mankind with a teaching, a comfort, an enlightenment: "They that honour vain and false gods forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of my thanksgiving: I will pay that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (vs 9-10, Orthodox Bible).

This is even more clearly and instructively presented to us when we read in the Psalms about a similar conversion from sin to repentance, from death to life of a whole nation, of a whole multitude. And this conversion, this change or re-birth is also expressed in, and accompanied by, a deathly cry. Looking at one's inner strength, such a lamentation of even the Lord Himself compels one to come to the help of the one crying out and to comfort him in his suffering.

Pay attention to the oft-repeated expressions in the Psalms: "They cried unto the Lord in their grief, and He saved them from their woes" (106:19-20). Or also about the nation: "Therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distress" (106:12-13; cf. 119; 137:3).

If the Lord does not respond immediately to a voice crying to Him, then man will come near to despondency or grumbling, but he pours out his lamentation again before God. Such is the content of Psalm 21 (compare Ps.87:2), and also the book of Job, who lamented upon earthly injustice (19:7), and the prophets lamented about the same (Lam.2:28). Thus did the Holy Scripture prepare the nation to understand the suffering pre-death cry of the Redeemer, and here the Roman centurion understood what Christ's cry signified. It is unknown if he had read the cited passages of the Holy Scripture, but it is clear that he understood the connection between the death cry of a righteous-one and of heavenly help and salvation from God. We already had occasion to write that this salvation is not the fate of only the most elevated sufferer, but of those whom He places in His soul (compare the words of Apostle Paul, "death works in us, but life in you" -2Cor.4:12-).

(Translated from THE LIFE AND WORKS OF METROPOLITAN ANTONY, by Archbishop Nikon of Washington and Florida, Vol. 5, page 190f).

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH ON THE STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH.

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM:

"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 doctrines 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..."
(HOMILY TWO, ON LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN, PG.48:984).

SAINT MARK OF EPHESUS:

"We affirm that neither the righteous have as yet received the fulness of their lot and that blessed condition for which they have prepared themselves here through works, nor have sinners, after death, been led away into the eternal punishment in which they shall be tormented eternally. Rather, both the one and the other must necessarily take place after the Judgment of that last day and the resurrection of all. Now, however, both the one and the other are in places proper to them: the first in absolute repose and free, are in heaven with the angels before God Himself, and already as if in the paradise from which Adam fell (into which the good thief entered before others) and often visit us in those temples where they are venerated, and hear those who call on them and pray for them to God, having received from Him this surpassing gift, and through their relics perform miracles, and take delight in the vision of God and the illumination sent from Him more perfectly and purely than before, when they were alive..."

"Secondly, you asked, what do we mean by saying that the Saints are with God in Heaven together with the angels? 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.' For John the Damascene says in his thirteenth Theological Chapter entitled 'On The Place of God': 'The place of God is said to be where His energy is manifest,' and again, 'The place of God is said to be that which [or, he who] has a greater share in His energy and grace. For this reason the heaven is His throne, for in it are the angels who do his will;' and again, 'A noetic place is where

the noetic and bodiless nature both functions noetically and exists, both is present and active.' We say, then, that such a place, supercelestial and supermundane, noetic and bodiless, contains both the angels and the Saints, and we are accustomed to call it Heaven. And we have believed that in it more than elsewhere and especially God is and appears and is active, since we possess the Master's words, 'Our Father Who art in Heaven,' and again, 'The face of My Father Who is in Heaven.' For just as the noetic natures are something akin to Divinity and are comprehended by the mind alone, while every nature in the realm of the senses is completely alien to Divinity, according to Gregory the Theologian, so the place and world of the noetic and immaterial natures is akin to God and was created by Him first, according to the same Theologian, but this earthly place and world is in every wise alien to Him.' (ORATIONS AND REPLIES TO THE CARDINALS ON THE ORATIONS, P.O. 15:109-154).

SAINT TITUS OF BOSTRA:

"But though the soul be immortal [by Grace], yet it is not the person, and so the Apostle does not consider [death] to differ in any wise from destruction. For the soul cannot enjoy anything, or possess, or do anything, or suffer, 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. This state is lost in death through the disobedience of Adam, and again through the obedience of the one Christ, through hope it receives [in the resurrection] again the state of being a person".

(AGAINST THE MANICHAEANS, HOMILY 1:16, quoted by St John Damascene in P.G. 96:489B).

SAINT METHODIOS OF OLYMPIOS:

"Man, with respect to his nature, is most truly said to be neither soul without body, nor, on the other hand, body without soul; but being composed out of the union of soul and body into one form of the beautiful."

(AGAINST ORIGEN, ON THE RESURRECTION, 1:5).

(CONTINUED).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.....

QUESTION:

1

....Thank you so much for taking the time and trouble to collect and print the precious words of the holy fathers on the subject of the soul after death. It is such a joy to see these words of hope and love, as opposed to the theological speculations so popular these days...

There are a few observations I would like to offer, however. In a recent issue of ORTHODOXY CANADA, you quote St Aphraat the Persian, but there are some errors in the translation you used. The text you printed reads, "But the righteous sleep, and their slumber is pleasant to them, in the day-time and in the night-time, they take no thought of all that long night..." But the actual text reads, "...and they have no perception of all that long night..." Further down, the text you used says, "And the righteous look not forward to their promises, nor do the wicked look forward to their sentence of punishment..." The text should read, "And the righteous receive not their promises, nor do the wicked receive their sentence of punishment..."

In Christ, Fr I.

REPLY:

Thank you very much for the observation and information. We will certainly check out these translations, and make the appropriate corrections before the final text is published.

QUESTION:

2

...From your articles and the passages from the holy fathers you have given us, I understand that, after death, a person is deprived of all bodily sensations, like seeing, taste, hearing, etc. Yet, you yourself also say that the souls have some sort of sensations, because the sleep of the righteous is pleasant to them (I think that is what you said). From other things you say, I gather that the soul does still have some kind of sensations. Also, how do the Saints, or even just the faithful, hear our prayers and pray for us?

REPLY:

It is easier to say what sort of sensual perceptions the souls do not have than to define what sort of sensations they do have. We understand from the teaching about hesychasm that when the mind is brought into the heart, into that "kingdom of God which is within you," it no longer has consciousness of sensual sensations, but is in a realm of the sensations of Grace. Here, it perceives and has sensations which are supra-sensual

indefinable, but very real. Here, the hesychast truly experiences the kingdom of God, yet without the use of the bodily sensations. He perceives in the "realm of Grace." Simply speaking, the departed soul knows the state it is in (somehow). This is not to suggest that the soul sees, has adventures, is judged, or functions sensually, only that it does perceive noetically in the realm of Grace, and feels (has sensation) of joy or sorrow — that is, it perceives its state.

When we say that the soul "exists in a certain reflective state within itself" (St Anastasios of Sinai), we understand that this is similar to the state which the hesychast strives for already in this life. And if he attains to such a state, then he removes his perception from the carnal, sensual and places it in the realm of Grace, in the "kingdom of God which is within you." In this respect, the soul is awakened to a new realm of sensation precisely because it is deprived of the former. St John Chrysostom has said something like this already, in his HOMILY ON LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN, where he writes:

"The man who sleeps shall certainly rise up, and death is nothing else save protracted sleep. Do not say to me, 'He who has died does not hear, does not speak, does not see, does not feel, since neither does a man who sleeps.' If it is necessary to say something wondrous, the soul of a sleeping man somehow sleeps, but not so with him who had died, for [his soul] has awakened."

As to how the souls of the Saints heed our prayers if they have no sensual sensations, this is no mystery at all, if one notices in the lives of the Saints how they already in this life know our needs and perceive our unspoken prayers. It is said in the life of St Varsonuphios the Great that while a visitor was yet a long way off and had not yet arrived, the Saint already knew his need and his questions. Indeed, the Saint often made answer to questions which had not yet been uttered, but were still silently in the heart of the visitor. Such a marvel is one who has attained to co-suffering love in Christ. With what sensual sensations did the Saints do such things? With none. For, neither with their ears did they hear them, nor with their eyes did they see them. But they, as participants in the Holy Spirit, perceived all these things in the realm of Grace, by revelation. For, the Holy Spirit which dwells in them knows all things, and in Him, the Saints also know and perceive what is beneficial for them to know and to perceive. This is just what St Anastasios of Sinai says when, speaking of the sleep of the righteous souls, he adds, "but as for the souls which have acquired the Holy Spirit and have become as it were one body and organism with Him, it seems to me that through His illumination they rejoice even after death, and they noetically glorify God the Word and intercede for others, as we learn from the Scriptures." (see Vol. 6, Nrs. 8-9 of this journal, p.16).

Therefore, it is easier for us to understand the nature of the sleep of the soul after death if we think more in terms of

the "hesychia of the soul." But, let us not try to define all this or turn types into doctrines or try to give it all some rational explanations.

The soul does not, of course, die with the body. When the "death of the soul" is mentioned anywhere in the fathers, etc., it refers to the soul being cut off from God by its own deeds and will. The soul has no sensual sensations, nor is it in any manner "judged" while it is apart from its body. Yet, to say that the soul has no "sensations" is also wrong. The very fact that it is alive causes some sort of "sensations." But these sensations are of a different order and nature -- again, something like what hesychasts and Saints already experience in this life. For further comments on this subject, see the chapters on "The State of The Soul After Death," and "Out of Body Experiences," in the lecture series currently appearing in THE TLINGIT HERALD and ORTHODOXY CANADA.

QUESTION:

3

What is the difference between purgatory and toll-houses?

REPLY:

It is easier to describe the similarities between the two myths. The differences could only be expressed in legalistic, scholastic sophisms -- "whereas purgatory is said to be thus, the toll-houses are, actually speaking, such..." -- that sort of thing. In fact, both myths assigned a judgmental and tyrannical power to demons which they simply do not have, and by whatever shade of apology one reads for them, both are teachings of satisfaction and purification, and neither is to be found in the Divine Scripture or Sacred Tradition of the Church. The difference in the two lies essentially in the legal details of each. While the purgatory myth follows more closely the fables of pagan Greece, the toll-house myth is practically identical to the Mazdean fables, as expressed in the three main branches of Mazdaism -- Zoroastrianism, Mithraism and Manichaeism. The Mazdean fables include the myth that the soul wanders on earth for three days after death. After these three days, the souls of both the righteous and the unrighteous are led away and pass through eight toll-gates. At the first seven, there are three categories of vice which the demon-toll collectors charge one with. There is a final gate, and this makes twenty-two categories of toll to be gathered. There are, of course, variations on the details. It is interesting that in the Avesta (the sacred book of Zoroastrianism, etc.) we also find the demon Wrath, who crushes, severs and sunders the body, together with a demon called "Looser of Bones". These two extract the soul, dismembering the body. The entire myth of the aerial toll-gates (houses), both in its details and the philosophy and psychology of it, very

closely parallels the Mazdean fables.

The difference between the purgatory myth and that of the aerial toll-houses is that the one gives God satisfaction by means of physical torment, while the other gives Him His needed satisfaction by means of mental torture.

4

QUESTION:

When you visited us earlier this year, you said something about demons sometimes being seen by a person as he is dying, but not after the soul was separated from the body. You said that demons cannot judge the soul, that this power was given the the Son of God only. I also remember that, in answer to Father _____'s question, you said that judgment was instantaneous, not some drawn out legal procedure.

Can you explain some of this. I have seen a lot of people dying, and I've never seen anything that would indicate that they saw any demons.

REPLY:

Evidently, some people do see demons and/or angels, as they near the moment of death, others, it would seem, do not. Why? I cannot tell you. It is obvious that in the cases of some Saints and others, this happens for the sake of either bringing them to full repentance, or as a warning to others. This was, perhaps, the case with the monk Stephen, about whom we read in Step 7 of THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT. He saw demons standing about his bed accusing him of various sins. In this case, we read that they accused him of many sins which he had never committed. From this, we know that the demons do not even know for certain what sins we have or have not committed or repented of. They make "educated guesses". We read of many other cases of such incidents, but, as you know, they are certainly not universal.

That God allows such things to happen is obviously from His mercy, to bring us to complete repentance before the soul departs the body.

St Abba Dorotheos mentions this in his INSTRUCTION NUMBER ONE, and St Hezikiah of Jerusalem tells us, too, that the "prince of the air" will try to accuse one at the hour of our repose (while we are approaching death) (Text 161, On Sobriety and Prayer). However, the fact that this accusing "prince of the air" will not necessarily be seen by us is clear from the prayer of Saint Eustratios (for Saturday Nocturns), where we pray, "May my soul not see the gaze of evil demons, but may it be accepted by your radiant angels..." And, of course, our prayers are not merely some "vain repetitions", the Church does not command us to repeat a prayer which She knows has no hope of fulfilment. This is made even more clear from the fact that we ask the same thing of the Most Holy Theotokos in the "Prayer Before the Aka-

thist," where we ask that the departing, or, "procession" of our soul out of the body will be calm and without the sight or troubling of the "aerial enemies."

Indeed, our holy and God-bearing father St John Chrysostom has taught us that the deathbed is a comfort to those who have struggled to live the faith, but fearsome to those who have acquired vices and sins:

"Do you not know how, on the day of death, sins make the soul shrink back? how they agitate the heart from beneath? At that time, therefore, when such things are happening, the remembrance of good works stands before us like a calm in a storm and comforts the perturbed soul.

"If we are wakeful during our life, this fear will be ever present within us; but no matter how insensible we are, it will surely come upon us when we are being brought out from here [departing this life]...For the same sort of reason, most persons may then [at the hour of their death] be heard relating horrors and fearful sights, the sight of which the reposing-one may not be able to endure...not enduring the sight of the coming angels...when we see angels...and stern powers among our visitors, what shall we not suffer, the soul being forced from the body and being hauled away...

"And these things let us picture to ourselves and consider, lest we suffer the same." (HOMILY ON MATTHEW, 53:7).

"Lest we suffer the same," the Saint says, indicating, together with the two prayers just cited, that such visions are avoidable if we struggle in this life to repent of our sins and acquire virtues. Indeed, it is not at all certain, from these words of St John Chrysostom, that demons are even seen here. The term "stern powers," and similar names are very often used to describe God's angels, and St Andrew of Crete, in a similar passage of his HOMILY ON HUMAN LIFE AND THOSE FALLEN ASLEEP, mentions angels more than once, but says not so much as a word about demons.

As to demons seen after the soul has departed the body, or some kind of aerial toll-houses or demonic judgments, etc, the fathers teach no such thing. Indeed, when a monk who was ill and expecting to die asked St Varsonuphios the Great to "escort" him "through the air and along that way which I do not know," the Saint simply commended the brother to God, "so that the fear of death be quelled within you, that the ascent of your soul be unhindered, and that you may worship the Holy Trinity with boldness...and that you may be put to rest with the Saints" (Question 146 — 145 in the Rus. Edn.)

From this, it is clear that Saint Varsonuphios had no idea of any sort of "demonic gauntlet" which the soul might have to run, but understood that death ought not to be feared and that the soul is carried by God's angels, unhindered, to the state which God has assigned to it. Similarly, St Hezekiah of Jerusalem, "the Presbyter", assures us that after the complete separation of our soul from its body, it is in the hands and care of Christ, it does nothing of or for itself, but Christ does everything:

"When by means of death¹ the soul soars into the air to the gates of heaven, it will not be ashamed by its enemies even there, if it has Christ with it and for it; but then as now, it will boldly 'speak with its enemy in the gates' [Prov. 1:21, Orthodox Bible]? So long as it does not grow weary of calling to our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, day and night till death itself, He will avenge it speedily according to His true promise, given in the parable of the unjust judge: 'I tell you that he will avenge them speedily' [Lk.18:8] both in this life and after leaving the body." (Texts on Sobriety and Prayer, para.149).

This is a remarkable passage, because it is clear from this that the soul does absolutely nothing once separated from the body, but will be confident through its unashamed hope in the Lord. For, the Saint makes reference to the sacred Proverb that, "Wisdom speaks boldly at the city gates, and says, 'so long as the simple cleave to justice, they shall not be ashamed'." Moreover, he says that, so far from our enemies being able to judge us or terrify us, they will suffer and we will be avenged "speedily" of all the evil they have done to us. It is they, the demons, then, who must fear and mourn at the departure of the believing soul, as St John Chrysostom says of the believer's death:

"Why, if there must be mourning, it is the devil who ought to mourn... This lamentation becometh his wickedness, not you...yea, for death is a fairhaven." (HOM. 31:2-4, ON MATTHEW.)

Moreover, as you will see from the chapters of the Lecture Series in this issue, these supposed after death experiences and adventures are quite impossible.

Your question about the judgment of the soul will be answered in the next issue of this journal, in the "Letters to the Editor" section.

5

QUESTION:

In your articles on the soul after death, you say that after death, one cannot function, see, hear or speak. You are teaching that the Saints cannot intercede for us and pray for us, since, not being able to see and hear, they can't receive our prayers and not being able to speak, they cannot pray for us. The Saints are already in the kingdom of God and they have all the bodily senses they had in this life. Otherwise, why do we ask for their prayers and intercessions?

-
1. this part is mistranslated in the English Philokalia as, "when after death," but the above rendering is the correct one. Unfortunately, very many of these texts are also mistranslated into the Russian, which accounts for many of the misunderstandings found in Russian writings.
 2. This expression has been rather fancifully interpreted by some as meaning the "aerial toll-gates". But this is a very fanciful interpretation indeed.

REPLY:

Can it be that the Saints need neither carnal tongues nor eyes, in order to intercede for us, because their minds are ever upon the Kingdom and upon the welfare of the Commonwealth? And that they are already, in this life, communicating and communing with God in a way which passes not only all human understanding, but also all the limits of nature (so-called)? Can it be that they are "living miracles", in whom the laws of nature have been overcome, even reversed? Can it be that the Saints, insofar as they dwell in that Kingdom of God which is within themselves, are already, in there, living outside the laws of nature?

What laws of nature are there for souls departed from the body? Communication between God and man is already outside the laws of nature. When the soul departs the body, carnal sense is left behind and decays, and then the soul can depend only upon that spiritual sense which it has developed, or rather, striven for, in this life already. True, the soul cannot see, hear, experience or have adventures. But that is not to say that it cannot perceive and communicate in the realm of Grace. Who is to say, in fact, that that "eternal praise of God" in the Kingdom is to be sensually audible? Is not the whole aim of hesychasm noetic prayer, and the spoken "Jesus Prayer", but a tool in this? There is a place deep within the heart of a person into which Satan cannot see, neither penetrate (for, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God). And there, the troubled soul can find a peace which passes all understanding; there, the wounds from the arrows of the evil-one can find balm and healing, and the arrows cannot penetrate there to wound one again. Here, one does not pray with words or even with actions, but one weeps and the tears themselves are prayer and confession and rejoicing and hope fulfilled. Here, there is already a communication between God and the soul which is outside the realm of the laws of nature. Here, every thought is known and every movement of the heart is incense rising up to the Creator. Here, one finds the Holy Spirit and understands something of the potential of the soul which longs to cooperate with God's Grace, and perceives that only its sins form a barricade to that complete cooperation which it so earnestly desires. Here, one cannot remain, no matter how one longs to — longs even to die if, by that, it could remain in this deep place in the heart, being "this day in paradise with Me." And this, of course, is only a shadow of what is yet to come for those who persevere to the end.

But leave it one must. No-one is without sin, and the passions and sinfulness of each person drag them as if a prisoner being led into captivity, back out of those precious depths. And one sins again, and cannot re-enter that beloved nativeland in the heart until he repents and struggles to exhaustion back along the path. One sins, but one does not forget. And the bare memory of that gate to paradise which is within the heart is suf-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ficient to induce one to endure all things and rejoice even in martyrdom just in order to visit it once again — if only the passions did not dominate one's life, if only one did not himself erect a barrier of sins, of self, of ego, of pride, along the path. And this, of course, is only a hint of what the Saints and the saints experience in their souls after repose and before the resurrection. What will come after the resurrection! Even to have a conception of it, I think, would cause the soul to leave the body, because the fallen nature would no longer be able to endure.

How do the Saints intercede for us after their repose? Ask as well how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father; ask as well by what process of thought God designed the universe. But this much is clear: that the Saints intercede for us constantly precisely because they are no longer capable of seeing, hearing, experiencing, speaking, or doing any of the other things by means of which we sin and deprive ourselves of the experience of that Kingdom of God which is within us already. Why else did the fathers teach us to pray in such a manner that all those senses are nullified and forgotten, if only for a little while? Because the "star" which leads to the King is noetic and the bodily senses cannot see it. Because the bodily senses and their fruit (because of the fall) now are used by us, and by the evil-one, to keep us out of that Kingdom. This is why, for example, the four-part operatic church-singing deprives one of the experience of the Kingdom of God.

The souls of the Saints intercede for us, and even without ceasing, because they are now "compressed within themselves," because of their very "reflective state within themselves". They have entered now into that deep place in the heart wherein communion with God is taking place within the Kingdom itself, wherein the Holy Spirit has made Its temple. Only, now, they are free of the sensual perceptions and sensations which (on account of the fall) could lead them again like a prisoner out of that deep place within themselves and back into the realm of the fallen nature. Thus, there is no longer anything to interfere with that "peace which passeth all understanding," and nothing else to look forward to than ascending from Glory unto Glory, when the body is restored, and in the restoration, the bodily senses are no longer those of the fall, but those of the Creation, and better. Then, the bodily senses will be able to perceive, to hear, to speak those words which before it was impossible for them to speak. They will see what before only the spiritual eyes of the purified soul, escaping only occasionally into the very precincts of the "temple of the Holy Spirit" within the heart, could see — but they will see in its fulness what was previously only seen in a shadow and foretaste.

There is no mystery as to how the Saints intercede for us constantly after their repose, and yet, this is an extremely great mystery. To speculate would lead to confusion, perhaps even to despair. But to accept it simply as a matter of fact is

a very comforting and even joyous thing.

And for all this, Glory to God, Glory to the Father, and Glory to the Son and Glory to the all-Holy and Life-Giving Spirit, always, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

QUESTION:

6

There sometimes seem to be contradictions in the works of the fathers. I don't mean just contradictions between different fathers, but sometimes one of the fathers seems to contradict himself. How can this be, and how can one be guided in such cases?

REPLY:

There are several reasons for this. Sometimes one of the fathers may say something rhetorically, or as an allegory and later, either someone may point out the inconsistency of his terms, or the father will come to the same subject later, and express the matter in a more theological and correct way this time. There are occasions also, when the fathers have used metaphors or allegories stated in their contemporary terms, and understood for what they were. Later generations — especially people who read these allegorical statements in translations — may take them literally. An example would be the "vision" of St Niphon of Cyprus relating to aerial demons which would like to get their hands on one's soul after it departs the body. St John the Almsgiver repeats a similar story that he had heard once, and in it, he sharply contradicts a very central and important element of St Niphon's story. The reason is simple: both were speaking completely allegorically about something which was never intended to be taken at all literally, but was supposed to inspire people to struggle to cleanse their souls. This is evident not only from the important mutual contradiction of the two stories, but also from the theological contradiction with the bulk of the teachings of the fathers on the state of the soul after death and from the ghastly results obtained by those who did use these allegories in a literal sense later.

Then, too, sometimes one of the fathers simply made an error or carelessly repeated something that had been handed down to him without first examining it, as St Varsonophios the Great explains in the case of St Gregory of Nyssa's important error on the subject of apokatastasis.

Another such situation occurs in the case of apocryphal literature not being traced back to its roots. For example, from Egypt came certain fabulous works attributed to St Makarios, which were contradictory in nature, and some of which contain certain Gnostic and Osirian ideas. From the East, there came a number of false works attributed to St Ephraim the Syrian,

some of which contain Nestorian or even Mazdean ideas. Evidently, most of these were of Nestorian origin. There are quite a number of such, and it seems that before their apocryphal nature was discerned, many of them had been translated into other languages — Latin, Russian, Serbian, etc. Certain other, probably authentic works had been translated into Greek from Nestorian sources, and contained many editorial distortions and even additions or deletions. Of course, a long process of correcting these errors and weeding out these apocryphal works has been going on, and still is. In the case of St Ephraim's works, scholars are checking and verifying texts with ancient Syriac texts. That way, people who have not given themselves over to abject arrogance and pride will be able to correct any false ideas they have gotten from these questionable texts. What is even more unfortunate and infinitely more difficult to correct, are the locally composed hymns used in Divine Services, which were directly inspired by or even taken from such apocryphal texts. If one studies Patriarch Nikon's attempts to correct Russian service books, for instance, one can see how broadly and disasterously such corruptions can spread.

Of course, the best guidance in such situations is simply the one which the Church has given us: the Divine Scripture and the consensus of the fathers. We also have a firm guidance from St Mark of Ephesus, and this is especially important in the case of more recent writings (those of the past three centuries) which seem not to agree in certain places with the Scripture and the ancient fathers, or which have inadvertently built some of their teachings on apocryphal works or mistranslations of genuine patristic works. In this regard, St Mark of Ephesus says:

"We say that there is a great difference between that which is recorded in the canonical Scripture and surrendered to the Church and that which each of the teachers [of the Church] by his own hands has written down or has taught. For we are obliged to believe that the Scriptures are surrendered to us by God and that they agree with one another, though some might appear to disagree; but we are not necessarily obliged to believe the second (that is, the writings of the fathers), nor to accept them without investigation. For it happens that one and the same teacher does not say all things with exactitude; or again, what need was there for the fathers to call the Ecumenical Councils if no man should on any wise fall away from truth?" (Second Oration, para. 15).

The Latins were teaching that we must accept whatever has come down to us from our teachers, including very recent mystics and teachers who were highly respected. That, of course, is one of the very ways in which the Latins became heretics and apostates from Christ. Thus, you see, we study the fathers as a whole, and seek the consensus of the fathers on a given subject, and at the same time, we search the scriptures and the canons of the Councils, and those hymnologies of the Church which are univer-

sal throughout the Church.

We had said that the one or two references to after death demonic gauntlets in the occasional work — the life of St Niphon and the story which St John the Almsgiver had heard from someone or the other, were allegories and not to be interpreted literally. This is, of course, exactly what Saint Mark of Ephesus tells us to do with regard to strange and contradictory tales about such matters (and here, he is speaking specifically about such matters:

"...they [those fathers who spoke about fire purifying the soul] spoke of fire allegorically, or by way of economy for some special need of the times and for the profit of their hearers. For we are accustomed to ascribe such causes to novel and strange doctrines which are not confessed by Scripture." (ibid, para. 11)

Thus, you see, the Divine Scripture is our criterion, of course, it always has been, and the fathers conform to the Scripture. The Councils, after all, have been called largely to ensure that what is being taught is in conformity with the Scripture itself, as pertains to doctrine.

You make reference in your letter to the words of Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov and some others concerning the myth of the aerial toll-houses (which they taught as if they were firm doctrines of the Church). St Mark of Ephesus had also answered this question, saying of such:

"It is not good to be completely persuaded by such words, but we should either consider them falsified, or if [they are] genuine, we should not receive them, since they are opposed to the Scriptures and the general dogmas" (ibid, para. 17).

This is what we have said about the toll-house myth from the beginning — and which you yourself point out seems to contradict so many of the doctrines and dogmas of the Church and such a vast consensus of the fathers. After all, Bishop Ignaty also taught the doctrine of the "Saving Merits of Christ," which no-one would now assert was in any way Orthodox. St Gregory of Nyssa taught the doctrine of apokatastasis, which, of course, no-one is obliged to accept (and, indeed, we are forbidden to accept it), and on a less significant scale, St Gregory the Great of Rome not only taught the Hellenic notion that hades was an existing place or location beneath the earth, but he taught that Mount Vesuvius was the gate to hell. And, of course, no-one would accept either of those propositions just because he taught them.

Thus, our guides in these matters are, first of all the Divine Scripture, with which everything must conform, and the consensus of the fathers, the Sacred Councils, and the doctrines and dogmas of the faith as set down by the Councils and agreed upon together by the fathers.

This is what we are now presenting in the question of the soul after death, which is the subject of your letter. It is interesting that some people, together with the Latins, seem to think that the Scripture need not necessarily be conformed with.

TWO: RELATIONSHIP OF THE SOUL AND BODY

To a very large degree, the root of the errors being taught concerning the judgment of the soul, "out of body experiences," the state of the soul after death and prayers and intercessions offered on behalf of those who have fallen asleep, would appear to be an erroneous understanding of the relationship between the soul and the body.³⁰ It is, therefore, necessary to arrive at a correct perspective on this subject.

The notion that the soul can exit the body, move about, have experiences, receive visions, revelations, wander from place to place, make progress or be examined and judged without the body, or, indeed, function in any sensual manner without the body, is essentially Origenistic, and is derived from the philosophies of the pagan religions of Greece and elsewhere. These notions were current in the teachings of Augustinian scholasticism, which was based on Plato, and which dominated Western Christian religious thought — being later blended with Aristotelianism, to form that peculiar Latin theology which places little more than a veneer of Christianity over a structure of pagan philosophy and mythology. Such teachings of the soul and body, called *dualism*, because they gave the soul an actual function apart from the body, were refuted in the patristic works against Origen and against the Manichean and Gnostic heresies.

One of the principal agents of the transfer into Christianity of this heretical view of the relationship of the soul and body was Origen, the third century heresiarch.

Origen was a very famous teacher in Alexandria, Egypt. In many of his writings, he reflected and taught correctly the Orthodox faith. He began to enter into heresies primarily because of his attempts to rationalize everything which is incomprehensible. He sought to create a definite explanation to every event and idea, and ended up completely "spiritualizing" everything including the resurrection of the dead, to such a degree that he actually denied a real physical resurrection itself. His followers had to resort to considerable sophistry in order to try to cover the fact. In his efforts to give definitive explanations of things Divine and incomprehensible, Origen, like Augustine of Hippo and his scholastic successors, entered deeply into the realm of pagan philosophy and adapted many of its concepts to his own teachings. Origen ended up "spiritualizing" the things he wanted to explain, while many of the later scholastics, following the same rationalistic course, ended up "anthropomorphizing" much of what they desired to rationalize. Both introduced a teaching of a radical dualism in the relationship between the body and the soul. Scholastic rationalists of this bent, demanding a rational explanation of, for example, why we pray for the souls of the reposed and why the Saints intercede for those who have fallen asleep, found and adapted all manner of fabulous stories, "dream-visions" of a highly questionable nature, and a few patristic parables, upon which to build a highly complex,

legalistic system of purgatories, semi-purgatories and aerial soul-stations. These things, they claimed, explained why prayers were offered for those who have fallen asleep, etc.

We will discuss these matters in due course. First, however, let us look at the Orthodox teaching concerning the relationship of the soul and the body.

Man was created both body and soul. The body alone is not a human being, and neither is the soul alone.³¹ Man became a living human being when body and soul were united together.³² Neither the body nor the soul possess immortality in themselves.³³ Immortality is a property of God alone, and mankind can only hope to participate in God's immortality by means of Divine Grace.³⁴

The soul and the body are not two separate entities, they are together a single psychophysical whole, mutually serving one another, and completely dependent upon one another for life and functions, or, in the words of St Ephraim the Syrian:

*"...that the soul is unable to see without the body, the body itself gives proof; for when it is blind, with it the soul also is blind...Behold how both the soul and the body look and attest to one another: even as the body must have the soul so as to live, so must the soul have the body to see and hear."*³⁵

The soul is not a prisoner of the body, rather the two were created and bound together in a mutual life, each one harmoniously deriving functions and qualities of existence from the other.³⁶ If the soul departs from the body, the body dies. And the soul, when separated from the body, is no longer able to function, as our holy and God-bearing father St Anastasios of Sinai says:

*"Accordingly, when the soul is separated from the entire body, it no longer is able to operate, because it operates through the members of the body. The soul can neither speak, nor remember, nor discern, nor desire, nor think, nor be roused, nor see, but it exists in a certain reflective state within itself..."*³⁷

Of course, the soul does not die with the body. It is kept in existence by God's Grace. It does not die, but it does not really function either. It remains in this hesychastic "reflective state" until, as St Anastasios continues, *"it again receives its own incorrupt body; and thenceforth, the functions which it accomplishes therein shall be incorrupt."*³⁸

Thus, the soul and the body mutually depend upon, fulfil and provide life and functions to one another. It is sheer carelessness and a great error to misrepresent certain passages of Apostle Paul, using them out of context to establish an idea of a direct conflict between body and soul, and a need for the soul to be liberated from the body. When, for example, the Apostle says, *"O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death,"*³⁹ he is referring not to the physical body, but to the power of sin lodged parasitically in the "flesh".⁴⁰

To understand the Orthodox Christian anthropology in this respect, one must refer to the Scripture and understand Apostle Paul's teachings, not according to the ideas and conceptions of pagan Greece,⁴¹ which made a sharp distinction between body and soul, but rather to the uniform concepts of the entire Old and New Testaments in which "flesh and soul" denote the whole living person, and not independent parts of him. The Manicheans held the contrary view, and St Titus of Bostra, in refuting them, observes:

*"When the living body is dissolved by death and we should look upon its dust or its bones, or wish to say something about the soul, we say that these things are of a man, but we do not say that they are the man."*⁴²

And Saint Methodios of Olympus, refuting Origenism, says:

*"Man, with respect to his nature, is most truly said to be neither soul without body nor, on the other hand, body without soul; but a being composed out of the union of soul and body into one form of the beautiful."*⁴³

In both Old Testament Scripture and general Hebrew thought, and in New Testament Scripture and Orthodox Christian thought in general, a living person is consistently regarded as a composite entity of body and soul. Death is an unnatural shattering of this psychophysical entity. As our holy father St Titus of Bostra says:

*"But though the soul be immortal [by Grace], yet it is not the person, and so the Apostle does not consider [death] to differ in any wise from destruction..."*⁴⁴

It was clearly understood in Old Testament Scripture that that which survived in death maintained a continuity of identity, but existed in a state of wordless, sightless repose. The soul evidently had some consciousness of future destiny, some hope, and thus it was neither dead nor devoid of spiritual sensations.⁴⁵

Old Testament anthropology, like that of the New Testament, never conceived of an immortal soul inhabiting a mortal body from which it might be liberated, but always conceived a simple, non-dualistic anthropology of a single, psychophysical organism. An active, intellectual life or functioning of the soul alone could never be conceived in either Old or New Testament thought. For the soul to function, its restoration with the body as the "whole person" would be absolutely necessary.

The sharp conflict between the two concepts: the Scriptural and the Hellenic, was clearly brought forth in the reaction to Paul's sermon of the resurrection to the Greeks, found at Acts 17:16-34. Apart from the Stoics and a few others, few of the Greeks would have questioned a concept of the soul continuing to exist, and even being rewarded, after death, but the idea of a bodily resurrection astounded them. Their astonishment was logical. In general, with some exceptions, they conceived that the soul was a prisoner of the body and escaped, or was liber-

ated, from the body by death, and that it gained its highest knowledge and awareness only then. Why, therefore, would anyone want to have the soul reunited with the body in a resurrection.⁴⁶

By contrast, there is a parable in the Talmud (the Hebrew commentaries on the Torah) which gives a good example of the Old Testament understanding of the subject. This parable was given to explain the matter to the simple Jewish people. In it we read:

"There was a ruler who had an orchard. When he saw that the choice firstfruits were ripening, he set two watchmen over the orchard gate. The one was crippled in his legs, and the other was blind. The cripple, seeing the ripe and choice firstfruits, submitted to temptation. He said to the blind man: take me on your shoulders, I will guide you, and we will go to the best tree and take of the firstfruits and eat them. This they did. When the ruler came and saw that the choice firstfruits were gone, he questioned the two watchmen. The blind one replied, 'Have I eyes that I could see to take the fruit?' The cripple replied, 'Have I legs that I could go and get the fruit?' The ruler, perceiving the matter, made the cripple to sit on the shoulder of the blind man, and he judged the two as one. Even so shall the Holy-One, blessed be He, do on the last day. He will cast the soul back into its body, and He will judge the two as one."⁴⁷

The fathers of the Church have taught the same thing, telling us precisely that the soul cannot undergo judgment without the body, as Saint Ambrose of Milan makes clear, saying:

"And this is the course and ground of justice, that since the actions of body and soul are common to both (for what the soul has conceived, the body has carried out), each should come into judgment...for it would seem almost inconsistent that... the mind guilty of a fault shared by another should be subjected to penalty, and the flesh, the author of the evil, should enjoy rest: and that that alone should suffer which had not sinned alone, or should attain to glory not having fought alone, with the help of Grace."⁴⁸

Saint Irenae of Lyons is like-minded when he says:

"For it is just that in the very same condition in which they [the body and the soul] toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering..."⁴⁹

St Titus of Bostra, rebuking the Manicheans, confirms this in words quoted by St John the Damascene:

"For the soul cannot enjoy anything, or possess, or do anything, or suffer, 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. This state is lost in death through the disobedience of Adam, and again through the obedience of the one Christ, through hope it receives [in the resurrection] again

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the state of being a person."⁵⁰

It is manifest, therefore, that the soul does not undergo purgatory, aerial toll-houses, or any other sort of tribunals after death, until the day of the resurrection, when it is once more united with the body, and together, the two awaken to the countenance of the Judge, and the radiant flame of Divine Love, by which they are self-judged. As to the meaning of the term, "the particular judgment," we shall discuss this in due course.

THREE: STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

We have heard a host of stories in recent times, purporting to give reports of the activities, adventures and experiences of the soul after it leaves the body. There are stories of "out of body experiences," of the soul hovering or floating along over the body as it was moved from one place to another. In these stories, the soul exalts in the discovery that it can see, reason, speak, remember and move about freely after it has departed from the body. These things are, in fact, a combination of rather standard and common "intensive care unit hallucinations" and demonic delusions of the type Apostle Paul warned against.⁵¹ (We will touch upon this later).

We said earlier that when the soul departs from the body, it enters into a condition of repose, a condition in which it no longer functions or reasons in the sensual realm. In the Divine Scripture, we find many testimonies of this, and the simile or metaphor of sleep is commonly used to describe this state — Christ Himself and Apostle Paul use it, as do the Old Testament prophets.⁵²

Thus, the Holy Prophet Isaiah teaches us that when the righteous man perishes, "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds,"⁵³ and the Prophet Job, teaching about the resurrection of the body and its reunion with the soul, informs us that while he waits in death for his "transformation..." the "grave is my house: I have made my bed in darkness..."⁵⁴ That the soul ceases to reason, function or have knowledge when it departs from the body, the Prophet David declares: "His spirit shall go forth, and he shall return unto his earth. In that day all his thoughts shall perish."⁵⁵ The Prophet King Solomon likewise testifies, "The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything...for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave..."⁵⁶ Yet, he also affirms to us that the soul continues in existence, it does not die with the body, for, "it shall return to God Who gave it."⁵⁷ And he closes his book with the admonition that the soul must be prepared for the judgment of the last day.

Those who have fallen asleep do repose in hope — or, doubtless in fear if they have rejected God in this life. For, the Prophet Job declares, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my transformation...and where now is my hope?...I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and...in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself..."⁵⁸

The New Testament Scripture repeats this theme constantly,⁵⁹ and the New Testament prophets and fathers speak in agreement with the Old Testament prophets (though one must bear in mind that the advent of Christ and His Resurrection have changed many things). Thus, for example, our Holy and God-bearing father, Anastasios of Sinai says:

"Accordingly, when the soul is separated from the entire body, it is no longer able to operate, because it operates through the members of the body. The soul can neither speak, nor remember, nor discern, nor desire, nor think, nor be roused, nor see, but it exists in a certain reflective state within itself, remaining immortal, until it again receives its own incorrupt body; and henceforth, the functions which it accomplishes therein shall be incorrupt...As for the souls which have acquired the Holy Spirit and have become as it were one body and organism with Him, it seems to me that through His illumination they rejoice even after death, and noetically glorify God the Word and intercede for others, as we learn from the Scriptures..."⁶⁰

Our holy and God-bearing father Isaak of Nineveh instructs us that at death God "suddenly translates us' from hence...and keeps us...in insensibility and motionlessness."⁶¹ The holy confessor Athenagoras of Athens concurs also, saying: "Some call sleep the brother of death...because those who are dead and those who sleep are subject to similar states, as regards at least the stillness and the absence of all sense of the present or the past, or rather of existence itself and their own life."⁶²

Our holy father Aphraat the Persian says exactly the same thing, adding only that the righteous, "even though he is soundly sleeping, in his dream he sees something like what his Lord is about to give him...and he rejoices in his dream...the righteous sleep, and their slumber is pleasant to them."⁶³

Moreover, St John Chrysostom speaks the same, saying:

"Nor indeed is it possible for the soul, once torn from the body, to wander here any more", and he shows that the soul cannot function without the body, adding, "whence it is evident that our souls after their departure hence are led away to some place, having no more power of themselves, but awaiting that awesome day."⁶⁴

St Gregory the Theologian declares the same thing, and, like St Aphraat, he adds:

"...it [the soul] departs hence [and] at once enjoys a perception of the blessings which await it...of which it even now has some conception..."⁶⁵

Thus, both the Old and the New Testaments, and the holy prophets and fathers of both the Old and New Israel are of one mind and agree together in this: That the soul and the body are together a single organism; that neither is naturally immortal, but hope on God for the gift of resurrection, reunion and immortality; that when the soul departs the body, it immediately enters a state of repose, or physical and sensual insensibility, in which it knows nothing except a noetic awareness which is in the realm of Grace.

If some difference is to be noted, it is this: that Christ has conquered the dominion of death already, and that hope which before was known only as a shadow of the future is now a present reality. Christ has risen, He has filled His Church with the joy

and hope of certainty, and the Church is itself a manifestation of Divine Love. It unites the living and the dead together, and this bond of Divine Love cannot be severed by any means — certainly not by that death which Christ Himself has already conquered. Thus, the faithful, whether living and in full awareness of all things, or the reposed, asleep and having only a dreamlike, noetic awareness of the Kingdom to which they are the heirs, continue in a life of mutual love and prayer. This is a mark of the victory of Christ, a seal of the "Age of Grace," and a testimony that our bodies have truly become "temples of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁶

We understand, therefore, that the soul of a reposed person is taken by God's angels, *immediately and suddenly*, to the state of its repose. In this consists the so-called "particular judgment", and nothing more.⁶⁷ The soul of the righteous are taken to "paradise" as St Ephraim the Syrian says,⁶⁸ where it reposes in a sort of hesychastic state, unable to actually perceive paradise until it is reunited with its body, but yet having an internal, noetic perception and communion with Christ and with His whole Body, the Holy Church. This perception and communion takes place within the realm of Grace, and is removed from and devoid of all sensual perception and sensation. It is in the nature of revelation. (See Saint Mark of Ephesus, ORATIONS AND REPLY TO THE CARDINALS ON THE ORATIONS, in appendix one of this work).

What all this involves or, indeed, what it actually means is simply beyond our comprehension, and we can neither know nor understand it, and if we are not foolish and seeking spiritual delusion, neither will we seek to speculate on the matter. We must here accept the testimony and injunction of our holy and God-bearing father, Andrew of Crete, who instructs:

*"But do not investigate the state of the soul after its departure from the body, because it is not for thee or for me to inquire of these things. Another is He Who knows this. For, if we are unable to know the essence of the soul, how should we understand its repose."*⁶⁹

FOUR: OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCES

This brings us to the point of the reports and stories of "out of body experiences" and the adventures, visions and revelations had by souls which have supposedly departed from the body and later returned to it.

We have read a considerable number of such stories recently, both in popular, pseudo-scientific, occult and religious sources, and note that both the notion of "out of body experiences" and the conclusions reached from them by various authors, philosophers and theologians, are related directly to the pagan mystery cults and to Hinduism, all of which are demonic religions.

In fact, St Gregory Palamas says of those who strive for such experiences (they cannot actually have them):

"To cause the mind to abide...outside the body itself,⁷⁰ so as there to chance upon noetic spectacles, is the root and source of the very worst of Hellenic [i.e., pagan] errors and of all heresies, an invention of demons, an instruction engendering folly and an offspring of senselessness..."⁷¹

In fact, such "out of body experiences" are not merely based in Western and Origenistic heresies, but are integral parts of not only Hinduism, but of Shamanism and other clearly pathological spiritualities, and do not at all depend upon an actual nearness to death in order to occur. This is of great importance, and we will speak of it later.

The question of "out of body experiences" has far deeper theological ramifications than might at first be surmised. In the first place, the idea that an "out of body experience" might occur presupposes the radical dualism of Origen's teachings concerning the soul and the body (or that of Manicheanism),⁷² and diametrically contradicts the teachings of the fathers on the relationship of the soul to the body, the condition of the soul without the body,⁷³ and the teachings concerning the nature of prayer. In the second place, the idea that revelations could be given to the soul outside the body, or that the soul would leave the body in order to obtain enlightenment or revelation is simply the heretical spirituality of Barlaam the Calabrian and his milieu, opposed to the whole body of the teachings of the hesychastic fathers.⁷⁴

Before setting forth on an examination of the teachings of the fathers in relation to these matters, let us set forth the three basic points we wish to make:

[1] All revelation or true spiritual experience takes place within the body, in the Kingdom of God which is within one. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and one seeks truth, enlightenment and revelation, not outside the body, in the realm of demonic powers and delusion, but within the temple of the Holy Spirit. A person who accepts, seeks or teaches about "out of body experiences," has either been merely mis-instructed, or is under heavy Latin-Scholastic-Hellenistic influence, in a state of spiritual delusion, a practitioner of the occult, or

simply abysmally ignorant of the basic spiritual teachings of the fathers.

[2] "Out of body experiences" are never real. They are either demonic hallucinations, phantasies or delusions, medical hallucinations or manifestations of mental illness. When one thinks to project the soul out of the body, what one really does is to project the imaginations and emotions outward into the realm of the demonic spirits and powers of the air, who accept them and fill them with all manner of ideas, revelations and apparitions.

[3] The experiences of those few, highly developed and Spirit filled fathers — including Paul — which Latins, occultists and spiritually Latinized Orthodox writers have interpreted as "out of body experiences" are precisely the opposite: they are noetic experiences which take place within the very depths of the being — where the Kingdom of God is to be found. Those complex experiences reported by various mystics as "out of body experiences" in which they reveal matters concerning departed souls, or any other such things, are simply demonic delusions (plani; prelest).

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"Nor shall they say it is here! or it is there! For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk.17:21).

"God appears to the mind in the heart"
(St Nikiforos the Solitary)⁷⁵

We have discussed the relationship of the soul and the body in chapter two. From what we read there, it should be obvious that the idea that the soul can leave the body, hover around here or there and then later return to the body, is blasphemous as a concept and patently heretical as a teaching. For, it suggests (as in the Kuebler-Ross phenomena which we will discuss later) that God is some sort of confused being Who cannot make up His mind whether to take the soul or leave it, that He occasionally calls and sends the soul back and forth with fallen-human indecision or accidentally removes a soul before its time and has to send it back,⁷⁶ or, as a theological teaching, that the fathers of the Church were in error in their teachings of the relationship of the soul and body, the nature of prayer and delusion (plani; prelest) and the condition of the soul once it is outside the body at death.⁷⁷

The soul departs the body at the moment God determines, and He sends His holy and terrible angelic powers to rend it from the body. The power of God alone can remove the soul from the body and neither the efforts of man nor of demons, nor even of the angels by themselves can do this.

Our first point concerns the nature of true spiritual experiences and vision. The fathers have been so clear and explicit in this regard that there is little left to say in applying their words to the present question. Moreover, if we were to present a comprehensive survey of the fathers on the subject, we would end up with countless volumes and would quote a majority of the *Philokalia* itself.

Nowhere is the question more thoroughly examined than in the Palamite dialogues and councils of the 1300's. The Palamite councils took place as a result of the visits of the Latin mystic Barlaam of Reggio-Calabria to Mt Athos in the 1340's. Here he encountered, for the first time, Orthodox Christian spiritual theology — called *hesychasm*. Balaam, a disciple of Augustinian scholasticism, began a campaign against the Orthodox teachings with regard to the manner of prayer, the nature of the soul and body, Divine vision and the nature of revelation. St Gregory Palamas promptly responded to Barlaam's heresies, and the famous "Palamite Controversy" began. We will not discuss this epic theological event here, for it is well covered in a number of books and writings already.⁷⁸ Our point is to demonstrate the place of true prayer, revelation and contemplation, as opposed to the realm of demonic delusion obtained by those who advocate "out of body experiences" (and here, let us point out that mind [*nous*] and soul are occasionally being used interchangeably, as the mind is the soul's faculty of spiritual awareness).

Barlaam, along with the Western mystics, taught that the mind is to be sent outwards, outside the body, where it may behold visions, revelations, etc, and he was greatly scandalized by the Athonite fathers who spent their efforts trying to bring the mind into the depths of the body and keep it there, within the heart. This prompted St Gregory Palamas' words, partially quoted before:

*"However, to cause the mind to abide...outside the body itself, so as there to chance upon noetic spectacles, is the root and source of the very worst of Hellenic errors and of all the heresies, an invention of demons, an instruction engendering folly and an offspring of senselessness. For those who speak by the inspirations of demons are outside themselves and do not even comprehend what they say. But we, on the contrary, not only send our mind within the body and the heart, but even back within itself."*⁷⁹

Saint Gregory of Sinai was clear on the same matter, when he said:

"Take heed, therefore, O lover of God, with great care and discretion: if, when you are practicing the work [of prayer], you should see...an apparent form of Christ, or an angel or of something else, do not accept it, lest you suffer injury...For everything of this sort taking form outside [the body] comes to pass in order to delude the soul...And even if you perceive your mind being drawn outwards or upwards by some invisible power, do not trust it, nor allow your mind to be thus drawn away, but straightway, bring it back to its work [of prayer]." ⁸⁰

The point is certainly obvious. The mind (nous), the soul's chief faculty of spiritual awareness, must remain inside the body, the temple of God in order to be delivered from the wiles of the demons and their delusions and phantasies. The revelations which the Saints received, they received within, in the Kingdom of God, not without, in the realm of demons. For, the Kingdom of God and the vision, therefore, of that Kingdom is within. All these other things, "out of body experiences," psychic phenomena, astral projection, etc, all have as their chief step, the exit of the mind from the body — where they are subject to diverse demonic phantasies. As we have already said, the soul (or, the mind, the meaning here is the same) cannot exit the body, but the imagination and emotions can be projected outward, and are easily subject to demonic influences which are then brought into the mind.

What shall we say then of those fabulous and complex revelations brought to us by certain mystics or stories of mystics, concerning things yonder, beyond death? St Isaak of Nineveh ("The Syrian") has already answered for us, saying of those writings and revelations:

"Indeed, he wrote that he [Apostle Paul] saw divine visions and said that he heard words, but he was unable to describe what were those words or the figures of those divine visions. For when the mind in the Spirit of revelation sees these things in their own place, it does not receive permission to utter them in a place which is not their own. And even if it should wish, it could not speak them, because it did not see them with the bodily senses. Whatever the mind receives through the senses of the body, this it can express in the physical realm. But whatever the mind perceptibly beholds, hears or apprehends within itself in the realm of the spirit, it has no power to express when it turns again toward 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 writings called "revelations" which, being composed by the originators of the corrupt heresies under the influence of demonic phantasies, describe the celestial dwelling in the sky...the pathways to Heaven, the places set apart for judgment, the manifold figures of the hosts of the sky, and their diverse activities. But all these things are shadows of a mind inebriated by conceit and deranged by the working of demons. For this very reason the blessed Paul by

one word closed the door in the face of all theoria and the exclusion thereof he anchored in silence, where even if the mind were able to disclose that which belongs to the realm of the spirit, it would not receive permission to do so. For he said that all divine visions which the tongue has power to disclose in the physical realm are fantasies of the soul's thoughts, not the workings of Grace.

"May your holiness, therefore, keeping these things in mind, beware of the fantasies of profound thoughts. This warfare especially assaults monks who are keen-witted, who inquire into empty opinions, yearn for novelties and are superficial."⁸¹

Indeed, what treasures of knowledge or pathways would one seek out there, outside the body, when so great a father has instructed us:

"Try to enter your inner treasure house and you will see the treasure house of heaven. For both the one and the other are the same, and one and the same entrance reveals them both. The ladder leading to the Kingdom is concealed within you, that is, in your soul. Wash yourself from sin and you will see the rungs of the ladder by which you can ascend thither."⁸²

For, "A hesychast is he who being 'bodiless,'* strives to retain his soul within the bounds of its bodily home...close the door of your cell to the body,* the door of your lips to conversation and the inner door of the soul to evil spirits,"⁸³ because, "He who always remains in his heart is remote from this world*...Truly did the holy father speak when he said that the wiles of the enemy fail as long as we abide in a certain place in the depths of our hearts, and the more so the more firmly we hold there."⁸⁴

Thus, according to the fathers, to become "bodiless" one enters into the depths of the body, of one's being, and there, the Saints experience something like what they will experience at death: that is, they are asleep and insensitive to things corporeal and free of all sensation and all sense perception, they are asleep to the flesh, but awake to God. And this is something of what St Basil the Great tells us also, saying:

"And when discoursing of Himself, He says, 'Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me;' again, in this passage, calling the world those who being bound down by this material and carnal life, and beholding the truth by the physical eyes alone, were through their unbelief in the resurrection no more to see the Lord with the eyes of the heart. And He said the same of the Spirit. 'The Spirit of truth,' He says, 'Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him for He dwelleth in you.'" ⁸⁵

For, of that Spirit which is to be found not "out there" outside the body, but "dwelling in you," the Saint further says

* that is, "outside the corporeal manner of thought." See St Gregory Palamas, Against Barlaam, para. 4.

that when one beholds the light and energies of God, "*the image of the invisible God...the Spirit of knowledge is somehow there inseparably present, in Himself bestowing on them that love the vision of the truth, the faculty of beholding the Image, not making the exhibition from without but within, Himself leading on to full knowledge."*⁸⁶

Moreover, those who would seek the vision of God, illumination, vision or participation in Divine Grace (the energies of God) outside the body, have departed the temple of God, entered into a place of worship foreign to the Spirit and kindled incense upon strange altars. For, St Basil says,

"But concerning the Spirit, it is said, 'Behold there is a place by Me, and stand upon the rock.' What else could He mean by 'place' except divine vision in the Spirit...This is the special and peculiar place of true worship; for it is said, 'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place...but in the place the Lord God shall choose.' Now what is a spiritual burnt offering? 'The sacrifice of praise.' And in what place do we offer it? In the Holy Spirit...So it follows that the Spirit is verily the place of the Saints and the Saint is a proper place for the Spirit, offering himself as he does for the indwelling of God, and called God's temple."⁸⁷

The fathers here warn against anything which seems to be an "out of body experience," and they censure and warn against anyone who teaches that revelation or "noetic spectacles" can be experienced in an "out of body" state, or that "out of body experiences" ought to be sought, or believed in, or indeed, that an actual one could really occur. For as we have seen already, the soul cannot remain or wander here once it is separated from the body (St John Chrysostom), and the soul without the body cannot speak, nor remember, nor discern, nor think, nor be roused, nor see (St Anastasios of Sinai), and without the body, the soul "*is found lacking in perception and knowledge*" (St Ephraim the Syrian) and separated from the body, "*the soul cannot enjoy anything, or possess or do anything...*" and it is not even a person, but only something "of" a person (St Titus of Bostra) (see chapter two of this work).

We have, therefore, learned already that experiences of the soul out of the body, "out of body experiences" are completely impossible, and everything which claims to be one is a demonic delusion, and those who claim to have had them are suffering from spiritual delusion (plani; prelest).

What, then, of those great and wondrous revelations vouchsafed through those few, rare, Spiritfilled fathers — such as St Seraphim of Sarov's famous conversation with Motovilov,⁸⁸ St Andrew the Fool's experience of the Divine Light, which he described metaphorically as "three heavens," Apostle Paul's identical experience of the Damascus road, or the vision of Blessed Gabriel of the Seven Lakes Hermitage? Here, too, we have not been left to idle speculation which leads to delusion,

but our Saviour, in order to protect us from those who would be interpreters of such things, has given us a clear disclosure of the matter. In the Life of our Holy and God-Bearing Father, St Symeon the New Theologian, by his disciple St Nikitas Stethatos, we have this revelation, which refutes the absurdities engendered by those who claim that "out of body experience" can ever really occur:

"He himself [St Symeon] also became illumined by that light, and it seemed to him that he was outside his dwelling...and he totally forgot about his own body...He was in ecstasy for a long time, and, as he himself said, could not perceive whether he was in the body or out of the body. Only as the light diminished little by little did he understand that he was in his body and inside his cell, and that his heart was full of joy and that his mouth was crying aloud: 'Lord have mercy'." And another time, "Being entirely in ecstasy, he fixed his whole mind upon that light which had appeared. This light gradually grew and made the air to appear more and more radiant, and he perceived that his whole being, body and soul, was removed from things of earth. But as this light continued to grow in brightness and intensity, shining above him like the midday sun, he perceived that he stood bodily in the midst of that light, and he was filled with tears and joy...He beheld how this same light united itself in a strange manner to the flesh and gradually entered into his members...He began to see how this light little by little was given to his entire body... As formerly with his dwelling, so now with his body, he became unaware of its form, posture, density or appearance; his tears then ceased. Whereupon, there came to him a voice from that light, which said: 'In this manner shall the saints which shall live and remain upon the earth at the sounding of the final trumpet be transfigured, and in this state shall they be caught up, as Paul has said'⁸⁹.

"...He [St Symeon] then began to think and say within himself, 'Shall I once again return to the previous form of my body...' No sooner had he completed this thought when suddenly, he realized that he still bore the form of his body...he perceived that he, together with his body [which] had remained with him, having somehow become bodiless*..."⁹⁰

Such are the revelations which the Saints receive, but all those things which take place "outside the body" are demonic delusions, since the experience of God and the things of God take place in the depths of the body, for "know ye not that your bodies are become temples of the Holy Spirit,"⁹¹ and it is a true rule of all godly prayer that, "Wisdom moved by the Spirit is, according to theologians, the power of mental, pure, angelic prayer; a sign of this is that during prayer the mind is free from forms, with no image either of itself or of any-

* see footnote on page 43.

thing else appearing for an instant, since it is drawn away from the senses by the light acting within. For then the mind is removed from everything material and is like lights, being ineffably merged with God into one spirit."⁹²

Where and how does one thus become so close to God? Saint Abba Dorotheos replies:

"To the degree that the saints enter into the things within, desiring to come near to God, in proportion to their progress in the things within, they do in fact come closer to God and to their neighbour."⁹³

Here, we have touched upon a wondrous source of edification and spiritual instruction. Let the reader not be satisfied with only the few words of the Spirit-bearing fathers cited here. Rather, let everyone be moved to seek more, as a thirsty man in a desert craves water, let us seek for spiritual sustenance and edification by reading whatever is to be found of the Orthodox fathers, and prepare ourselves to receive the light of Grace like the wisemen of the East to whom God revealed the noetic vision of the light like a star, seen within themselves. For it was, as Saint John Chrysostom says,⁹⁴ a noetic vision, and not a real star, and it was seen within themselves, and not by anyone else. They saw it well enough to follow it, but it was obviously not visible outside themselves. For with the faculties of the physical body, no-one beheld it. Sensual vision is never enough to see with in any case. How many saw Christ and His mighty deeds as a "threat" and how many saw and beheld the Son of God, "that Messiah that is to come?" How many of the things of God and eternity are ever seen with the sensual vision? The sensual vision, it seems, only presents some evidence of what reality actually consists in, and unless we see that evidence in another light, through different "eyes," then we never perceive it at all. The epic of the Magi is like the life of the Prophet Moses, and it seems to me that it is also a testimony about the spiritual life of all believers. The Magi saw the light of God's Kingdom within themselves — with the eyes of the mind, those special "eyes" of the soul. And they saw it because their souls were open to this perception when the Grace of God should bring it to them. They saw the evidence of the manifestations of the Kingdom of God, which was beginning to grow within them, and with no little difficulty and struggle, they followed with unshakeable faith, that evidence until it led them to the King Himself. Yet, when they saw the King, there was nothing in his appearance or surroundings (to those carnal eyes) which would commend belief or reverence to Him. Still, they not only worshipped Him, but even adored Him. They could not have revered Him, they could not have recognized Him, except for that Divine Light, that evidence of the Kingdom which was manifested within them, and which the eyes of the soul perceived. When they set out and struggled to reach the King of that Kingdom, they were led by the Light of God's Grace to Him, and they were able to recognize the King on account of that

Kingdom which was already manifested by the Spirit within them. The perception was noetic — within them. The vision of the "star" was noetic — within them. The recognition of the King was noetic, by means of spiritual eyes opened and enlightened by the Grace of God, operating in a soul willing to co-operate with it.

Now, the Saints (indeed, all believers) have "seen His star shining..." and followed it, the light of this Grace accepted into the soul which is willing to co-operate with it. They have struggled, set out on the path, to follow that light. Howbeit, the "world" does not see this light, this "star", and thinks those who are following it are bereft of good sense. And if the world seeks confirmation of the testimony of those who are following this "star," it is only so it can slay the offspring of this faith, so it can "dash the children" of faith "against a stone."

Let the world seek its spiritual goals "out there," outside the body, in the realm of the Prince of this World. But let us, Orthodox Christians, hearken diligently to the fathers, with all sobriety and discretion, and in Orthodox fashion, struggle to keep our mind within ourselves, striving to cleanse and make ready the temple of our bodies, that our souls may find the Holy Spirit and the things of God, there in His Kingdom in the depths of ourselves, where they are to be found.

(this chapter continued).

CHAPTER TWO

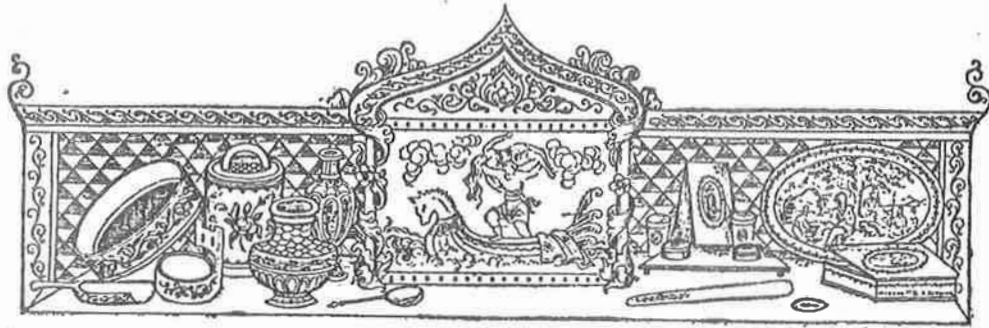
30. There is also a basic misunderstanding of the dogma of redemption involved in many erroneous teachings. When one penetrates to the essence of such mythologies as purgatory, toll-houses, etc, one finds a basic presupposition that God either cannot or will not forgive sins, but that He must rather obtain some sort of satisfaction for them, please Himself with some sort of punishment for each transgression. This self-pleasing may take the form of physical torment (as in the purgatory myth) or mental torture (as in the toll-house myth). The Latin doctrine of the "saving merits of Christ" is such a teaching also. Here, God does not actually forgive anyone of anything, He only agrees to be satisfied by Christ's suffering, and He is bribed by the excessive merits earned by Christ through His sufferings, and appropriated to a sinner in return for the sinner's having fulfilled some legal obligation.
31. see, for example, Saint Titus of Bostra, HOMILY ONE AGAINST THE MANICHEANS, para. One (P.G.96:489B).
32. Gn.2:7. cf part one of this work.
33. see parts one and four of this work.
34. 1Tm.1:10; 1Tm.6:16; Rm.2:7; 1Cor.15:51-55; 1Jn.5:12; Jb.4:17; etc.
35. HYMN 8, ON PARADISE (see Appendix 1)
36. Some misread Eccl. 7:1, "...the day of death is better than the day of one's birth." The Hebrew understanding of this verse is expressed in the Talmudic writings thus: "Why rejoice when a ship leaves harbour and sets forth on a perilous journey: rather rejoice when it safely returns." This, of course, also points out the belief in the soul's continuance after death. Taken in connection with related verses and writings, we get a picture of the Old Israel's concept of the nature of the soul and its repose. It is, of course, identical to that of the New Israel, the Orthodox Church, except that the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ have not only given us a fuller knowledge, but have also changed many things. It is interesting that some people think the teaching of the Hebrews on this subject should be dramatically different from that of the New Testament Church, as if there were two different Gods, giving two different revelations. The Orthodox Church is, after all, the fulfilled and continued Israel.
37. "Answer 89" (see Appendix 1).
38. *ibid.*
39. Rm.7:24
40. see St Gregory Palamas, FIRST TRIAD, para. 2, answer 2; St Methodios of Olympus, ON THE RESURRECTION, part 1; Fr John Romanides, "The An-

cestral Sin", Athens, 1971.

41. cf Romanides, *ibid.* Apostle Paul was a Jew, and his concepts and word imagery were Hebraic. The West interpreted Paul with Hellenic, especially Platonic, preconceptions.
42. HOMILY ONE, AGAINST THE MANICHEANS, P.G. 96:489B.
43. ON THE RESURRECTION, AGAINST ORIGEN, 1:5.
44. *ibid* fn. 42, para 1.
45. e.g., "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my transformation comes. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands... If I wait, the grave is my house: I have made my bed in darkness... and where is now my hope... For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though... worms destroy this body, yet, in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another..." (Jb.14:14; 17:13; 19:25-26. cf. Jn. 5:28-29); "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it" (Eccl.12:7); "...the soul shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord your God" (1Ki.25:29). "God made man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity" (Wis.2:23:24); etc. See also part three of this work.
46. This was one of Origen's quandries once he had adopted the radical dualism of Hellenism and its disdain of the body. He tried to solve it with his theory of "material substratum" (see part four of this work). This is also the quandry of the doctrines that souls can be examined and judged at death by demons, aerial toll-houses and the like. Indeed, St Titus of Bostra poses this very question in refuting the radical dualism of the Manicheans (HOM. ONE), and Sts Irenae of Lyons and Ambrose of Milan both refute the idea that the soul can be judged or suffer without the body, in their works against heresies.
47. Sanh. 91a, b.
48. ON BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION, para. 88.
49. Book Five, para. 32.
50. HOMILY ONE, AGAINST THE MANICHEANS, para. 1.

CHAPTER THREE

51. 2Cor.11:14.
52. The term "sleep" is used about 54 times in Scripture to describe death. See, e.g., Ps.12:3; Jn.11:11; 1Ts.4:14; etc.
53. 57:1-2.
54. Jb.17:13.
55. Ps.145:4 (but the hope of the resurrection follows, see vs. 5, etc).
56. Eccl.9:5-6, 10.
57. Eccl. 12:7.
58. Jb.14:14; 17:13; 19:25-26.
59. In the New Testament, the knowledge that those who die sleep in the hope (or fear) of the resurrection is made very clear — though perhaps no more clear than it was made in the Old Testament. However, the mystery of the resurrection is really only revealed in the New Testament.
60. Answer 89.
61. Homily 35.
62. The Resurrection of the Dead, para. 16.
63. Select Demonstrations, 19.
64. Homily 27, on Matthew.
65. PANAGYRIC FOR ST CAESARIOS, 7:21.
66. 1Cor.3:16; 6:19.
67. see chapter five of this work.
68. Hymn 8 ON PARADISE.
69. HOMILY ON HUMAN LIFE AND ON THOSE FALLEN ASLEEP.



FIVE

THE UNEXPECTED MEETING



RIDING ALONG the bank of the River Moscow, one could look over the palisade and see the whole Morozov garden. Flowering lime-trees cast their shadows over a limpid pond, which supplied the Boyarin with an abundance of fish on fast days. Further away could be seen the fresh green or apple, cherry and plum trees, and narrow little paths ran through the unmown grass. The day was a hot one. Golden-coloured chafers circled around the honeysuckle; bees hummed in the lime-trees; crickets chirruped in the grass. Tall sunflowers lifted up their heads from behind the red currant bushes, and looked as if they were revelling in the noon-day sun.

Boyarin Morozov was resting in his bedroom, where he had been for the past hour. Elyena was sitting with her maidens under the lime-trees near the palisade. She was wearing a blue summer dress with sapphire buttons. The wide muslin sleeves, gathered into small pleats, were pulled together above the elbow by diamond bracelets. Diamond ear-rings hung down to her shoulders and on her head she wore a pearl kokoshnik, a sign of her married state; and her tiny leather boots shone with gold-embroidered threads.

Elyena seemed in a light-hearted mood. She laughed and joked with all her maidens.

"Boyarina," said one of them, "try on this bracelet just once more! It suits you so well!"

"Now, girls! No more trying on!" said Elyena kindly. "You have been adorning and dressing me for a whole hour! No more, please!"

"Do just put on this necklace! Put it on, and really, you'll look just like a picture — even like a holy ikon in its frame."

"Now that's enough, Pashenka! Shame on you for such sinful words!"

"Well, if you don't want any more dressing up, Boyarina, shouldn't we play catch, or throwing pebbles? Or wouldn't you like to feed the little fish, or swing on the swing? Or perhaps I should sing a song for you?"



"Yes, do sing, Pashenka! Sing me the song you sang the other day when you were all picking berries!"

"Oh, Boyarina, my sweetheart, what's merry about that song? That's a sad song, not a song for holidays."

"That can't be helped. I do so want to hear it. Go on, sing it Pashenka."

"Very well, Boyarina, if that is really what you wish, I will sing it, but don't blame me if you feel gloomy afterwards. Come on, girls, you accompany me!"

The girls grouped themselves into a circle, and Pashenka began to sing in a plaintive voice:

"Oh, if only there were flowers, but no frost,
and in winter flowers blooming;
Oh, if only I did not sorrow,
Grieved I not for anything,
Sat I not with head on elbow,
Looked I not to open fields..."

I walked in the parlour new,
lifting up my sable coat, so
that it would make no swishing noise,
nor would the buttons tinkle,

Father-in-law would not hear me then,
Would not tell his boy, his son,
Would not tell his son, my husband!"

Pashenka looked at the Boyarina. Two large tears were running down her cheeks.

"O what a little idiot I am!" exclaimed Pashenka, "What have I done! Why did I take it on myself to listen to the Boyarina! Boyarina, you must not grieve over such songs!"

"Well, then why even learn such songs?" broke in Dunyasha, a lively-eyed girl with black eyebrows. "Now I will sing a different kind of song! See, now, if I do not cheer up the Boyarina!"

And, jumping to her feet, Dunyasha tucked a hand into her hip, flung up the other, leaned sideways, and swaying gracefully began to sing:

"Panteley the lord goes about his court,
Panteley Kuzmich walks his spacious court,
A coat of marten fits him to the ground,
A sable hat sits high upon his head,
Grace of God he has for ever and ever.

Through the curtains his bride is looking,
ing,

From the town the boyars are looking,
From the tower the boyarinas are looking,
The boyars are asking: Such a one, whose
is he?

The boyarinas are asking: Whose lord is
he?

And the bride replies: He is mine, my
dear one!"

Dunyasha finished the song and began to laugh. But Elyena became even sadder. She tried and tried to restrain herself, but then she covered her face with her hands and burst out sobbing.

"There's a song for you!" said Pashenka. "What shall we do now? Druzhina Andreyevich will be angry with us, when he sees the Boyarina's tear-filled eyes. You can't even amuse her, you stupid girls, he'll say!"

"Girls, darlings!" Elyena suddenly said, throwing herself on Pashenka's neck, "Let me weep! Help me to cry!"

"But what's the matter with you, Boyarina? What made you break down so suddenly?"

"It is not so suddenly, my dears. I have been sad ever since the morning. I felt gloomy when the bells began ringing for matins, and I saw from my window all the good, happy Christians streaming to church...even now my heart still aches...and the day has turned out bright too, so sunny, and besides, all these adornments you have put on me...Girls, do remove these bracelets, take off this kokoshnik, and plait my hair like yours, in the way that maidens wear it."

"Boyarina, how can you! That is a sin! To plait your hair as maidens wear it! Heaven forbid! Druzhina Andreyevich would be angry if he knew."

"Girls, he won't know! I will put on the kokoshnik again afterwards!"

"No, Boyarina, it's a sin! It is your will, but we won't take it on our conscience!"

"Is it really such a sin even to remember the past?" thought Elyena.

"Well, so be it", she said. "I will not take off the kokoshnik, but come here, my Pashenka, and I will plait your hair just as mine used to be plaited."

Blushing with pleasure, Pashenka knelt down in front of the Boyarina. Elyena undid her hair, divided it into two equal parts, and began to make a broad Russian plait of ninety strands. This required a great deal of experience. It was necessary to plait as loosely as possible, so that the result, looking like a net, covered the whole back of the head, and then gradually tapering, fell down between the shoulders. Elyena diligently set to work, and as she plaited the strands of hair, she artistically wove in threads of silver.

At last the plait was successfully completed. The Boyarina wove in the small triangular end-piece, and stuck several gems into it.

"There, it is ready, Pashenka", she said, pleased with her work. "Get up, and walk in front of me. Look, girls, isn't that plait more beautiful than a kokoshnik?"

"There is a time for everything, Boyarina," said one of the girls, and they all laughed. "Now Dunyasha here, she wouldn't mind a kokoshnik."

"That's enough, you gigglers!" exclaimed Dunyasha. "It will be a long time before I unplait my hair! But I know of some here who can't take their eyes off the Boyarin's steward!"

The girls burst into loud peals of laughter, and some of them blushed as they laughed. Evidently the steward was a very handsome fellow.

"Lean down, Pashenka," said the Boyarina. "I will weave in a ribbon too, with beads...Oh, girls, today is John the Baptist's day, and all the nymphs are plaiting their hair too!"

"Not today, Boyarina. Holy Trinity Day is when the nymphs plait their hair. On John the Baptist's day they run about with loosely streaming hair, and lure people away, so that no one shall pick the fern flower."

"God be with them," said Pashenka. "There's enough done on John the Baptist's day; Heaven help us not to see it!"

"And you, Pashenka, are you afraid of nymphs?"

"Of course I'm afraid of them! During these days it's frightening to go into the forest, never mind whether it's on Trinity Day or in the week of nymphs. They'll tickle a girl to death, and turn a brave young man to stone with love."

"You say that, but you don't really know yourself!" interrupted another girl. "What nymphs are there around Moscow? None! Now in the Ukraine, that is another matter: there are thousands of them there. They say that not a few fine fellows have been driven mad by them. Look at a nymph just once, and you will yearn for her till you die; if you're married, you will abandon wife and children, and if you're a bachelor, you will forget your sweetheart!"

Elyena fell into a reverie, and after a long silence, she said, "Girls, do you think there are any nymphs in Lithuania?"

"That's where their home is, there and in the Ukraine..."

Elyena sighed. At that moment, they heard the clattering of a horse's hoofs, and Serebryany's white cap appeared over the palisade.

Seeing that it was a man, Elyena wanted to hide herself, but casting yet another glance at the rider, she suddenly became transfixed. The Prince abruptly stopped his horse. He could not believe his eyes. It seemed as if a thousand conflicting thoughts struggled into his mind at once. He was seeing before him Elyena, the daughter of Pleshcheyev-Otchin, that same Elyena whom he had loved, and who, five years ago, had sworn to love him in return. But by what chance was she now in the garden of Boyarin Morozov?

Only then did Nikita Romanovich notice that on her head she wore a pearl Kokoshnik. He grew pale at the sight.

She was married!

"Is this a nightmare?" he thought, staring at her with a fearful look. "Am I dreaming?"

"Girls!" begged Elyena, "please go away, I will call you. Please go away and leave me alone. Oh my God, my God! Holy Mother of God! What shall I do? What shall I say?"

Meanwhile, Serebryany had pulled himself together.

"Elyena Dmitryevna," he pronounced firmly, "answer me with but one word. Are you married? This isn't a trick? A jest? Are you indeed and truly married?"

Elyena searched deperately for words, but could not find them.

"Answer me, Elyena Dmitryevna. Don't mystify me any longer! This isn't a charade!"

"Listen to me and hear me out, Nikita Romanovich," whispered Elyena. The Prince trembled with emotion.

"It's no use my listening," he said. "I've understood it all. Don't waste your speeches on me; goodbye Boyarina!"

And he wrenched his horse backward.

"Nikita Romanovich!" Elyena desperately cried. "For the sake of Christ and His immaculate Mother, hear me out! Kill me afterwards, but first hear me!"

She had no strength left with which to continue; her voice just died away; she sank down to her knees upon a mound of turf, and held out her hands imploringly to Serebryany.

The Prince's whole body began to quiver, and pity stirred within his heart. He stayed his going.

Choking with tears, Elyena began to describe how Vyazemsky would not leave her alone; how finally the Tsar took it upon himself to betroth her to his favourite, and how in desperation she gave herself to old Morozov. Interrupting her story with sobs, she reproached herself for her involuntary faithlessness, insisted that she should have taken her own life instead of marrying another man, and blamed herself for her weakness.

"You cannot love me, Prince!" she said. "It's not your fate to love me! But promise me that you won't curse me; at least assure me that I will have your forgiveness in my great guilt!"

The Prince listened, frowning, but answered not a word.

"Nikita Romanovich," whispered Elyena fearfully, "for the sake of Christ, say but one small word!"

And she cast her eyes to him, eyes full of fear and expectation, and all her soul went into that eloquent and pleading look.

Serebryany was experiencing a great inner struggle.

"Boyarina," he said at last — and his voice was trembling — "it seems to have been the Will of God...and you are not so much to blame...indeed, you are really blameless...there's nothing to forgive, Elyena Dmitryevna... I do not curse you, no, as God is my witness, I do not curse you, as God is my witness I...I love you still, as ever before!"

These words were forced out of Serebryany as if involuntarily.

Elyena cried out, and sobbing, rushed toward the palisade.

At that instant, the Prince rose up in his stirrups and grasped the pickets of the fence, Elyena on her side was already standing on a bench. Without premeditation, or any self-awareness, they threw themselves into each other's arms, and their lips met.

Oh, Elyena Dmitryevna, she kissed the young Boyarin! The wicked wife, she deceived her aged husband! She forgot the oath she swore in front of God! How will she now appear before Druzhina Andreyevich? Will he guess it all when he looks into her eyes? And he is not the kind of husband who forgives! It is not his life the old Boyarin values, but his pride! He will kill them both, the old one, he will kill his wife and the young Prince!