

# THE PATH TO SALVATION

*A Manual of Spiritual Transformation*



ST. THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

# THE PATH TO SALVATION

## ST. THEOPHAN THE RECLUSE

*Translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose and the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood*

**S**AIN'T THEOPHAN the Recluse (1802–1894), the most popular spiritual writer of 19th-century Russia, was a modern-day interpreter of the ancient wisdom of the Christian East. A brilliant spiritual psychologist, he taught not from theory but from personal experience of the interior life of the spirit and the action of Divine Grace. In this book, his crowning achievement, he offers precise and detailed instructions on such ultimate matters as:



- How to separate from one's thoughts and emotions and thus be free of compulsive thinking and behavior.
- How to face and eradicate the evil in one's heart.
- How to gather one's spirit within the heart, thus protecting it from outside influences and allowing Christ to cleanse and heal it.
- How to acquire Grace—the uncreated Energy and Power of God—and be recreated by it into the likeness of Christ.
- How to find “the Kingdom of Heaven within you” and dwell in the Grace of Christ throughout eternity.

ST. PAISIUS MONASTERY

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St. Theophan (Govorov)  
(1815-1894)

Icon painted for his canonization in 1988.

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*Translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose  
and the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood*

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PRINTED WITH THE BLESSING OF HIS GRACE

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# Contents

PREFACE <i>A Biography by E. Sumarokov</i>	11
INTRODUCTION <i>by the Author</i> . . . . .	21

## PART I

### HOW DOES THE CHRISTIAN LIFE BEGIN IN US?

CHAPTER ONE: How the Christian Life Begins in Us . . .	27
1. Christian Life Begins with Ardor of Zeal . . . . .	27
2. The Fire of Zeal . . . . .	30
3. In the Face of Temptation . . . . .	33
4. A New Creature in Christ Through Holy Baptism .	36
5. Baptism for Infants . . . . .	38
6. Christian Upbringing . . . . .	41
7. The Influence of the Parents Upon the Child . . . .	44
CHAPTER TWO: The Chief Activities of the Body, Soul and Spirit . . . . .	48
1. Directing the Developing Powers of the Soul and Body . . . . .	48
2. Surrounding the Child With Sacred Images . . . . .	53
3. Forming Attitudes . . . . .	56
CHAPTER THREE: The Instruction and Guidance of Youth . . . . .	63
1. The Instruction of Youth . . . . .	63

## THE PATH TO SALVATION

2. Conscious Acceptance of the Yoke of Christ . . . . .	66
3. The Turbulent Period of Youth . . . . .	68
4. Two Tendencies Characteristic of Youth . . . . .	71
5. The Pinnacle of Danger for Youth . . . . .	75
6. How to Guard Against The Temptations of Youth .	77
CHAPTER FOUR: Preserving the Grace of Baptism . . . . .	80
1. Why the Grace of Baptism Is Not Preserved . . . . .	80
2. How to Correct A Bad Order of Things . . . . .	83
3. The Fruit of a Good Upbringing . . . . .	84
4. The Chief Form of Moral Perfection: Unshakability in Virtue . . . . .	86

## PART II

### ON REPENTANCE AND THE SINNER'S TURNING TOWARD GOD

CHAPTER ONE: How Does Christian Life Begin in the Mystery of Repentance? . . . . .	91
1. Turning Away from Sin to God . . . . .	92
2. The Combining of Freedom with Grace. . . . .	93
CHAPTER TWO: The Sinner's Condition . . . . .	95
1. Particulars for a Person Who Lacks Grace . . . . .	95
2. The Care and Trouble about Many Things . . . . .	96
3. The Seductions of the Prince of This World . . . . .	98
4. The Invisible Kingdom of Spirits in which Each Sinner is Immersed . . . . .	99
5. The Inner Mood and Condition of the Sinner . . . . .	99

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER THREE: The Action of Divine Grace . . . . .	101
CHAPTER FOUR: Awakening the Sinner from the Sleep of Sin . . . . .	102
CHAPTER FIVE: The Special Actions of Divine Grace in Arousing Sinners from the Slumber of Sin . . . . .	105
1. Introduction of the Divine Way through Visible Means and Through the Senses . . . . .	107
2. The Spirit is Led into the Divine Way and Perceives It Internally . . . . .	109
3. The Word of God Replaces All Methods Shown . . .	119
CHAPTER SIX: The Usual Order of the Gift of Awakening Grace . . . . .	124
1. Procrastination: A Common Ailment . . . . .	127
2. Habits and Inclinations that Imprison a Person in Sin . . . . .	129
3. Thought Processes that Keep One in Blindness . . .	133
4. Cease Making Excuses in Sins and Work on Your Blindness . . . . .	136
5. How to Soften Your Insensitive Heart . . . . .	137
6. How to Drive Away the Sleep of Indolence . . . . .	140
7. Labor Over Yourself Without Relaxing . . . . .	141
8. Reasoning With Yourself About Salvation . . . . .	142
9. God's Grace Chooses Well-known Means . . . . .	144
10. Awaiting God's Visitation . . . . .	145
11. What is Grace-filled Awakening? . . . . .	147
12. Discerning States of Awakening from Natural States . . . . .	149

CHAPTER SEVEN: Ascent to the Resolve to Abandon  
Sin and Dedicate One's Life to Pleasing God . . . . 154

1. Ascent to the Resolve to Abandon Sin . . . . . 154
2. Rising to the Promise to Dedicate One's Life  
to God . . . . . 169

## PART III

### HOW THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIVED, RIPENED AND FORTIFIED AND ABOUT THE ORDER OF A GOD-PLEASING LIFE

CHAPTER ONE: The Final Goal of Man—A Living Unity  
with God . . . . . 191

1. Various Aspects of Communion with God . . . . . 193
2. How Grace Settles in the Repentant Soul . . . . . 194
3. Two Ways of Communing With God . . . . . 198

CHAPTER TWO: Why the Grace of God Does Not Abide  
All at Once Entirely with the Soul . . . . . 202

1. The Inner Make-up of the Convert . . . . . 202
2. The Grace-filled Life is at First Only a Seed . . . . 204

CHAPTER THREE: A Guiding Rule for a God-pleasing  
Life . . . . . 208

1. The Spirit and Character of Ascetic Struggles . . . . 208
2. The Fruits of Ascetic Labors are Preserved and  
Ripened Through Grace . . . . . 210
3. The Need for a Spiritual Guide and a Rule . . . . . 211
4. Rules for the Beginner of an Ascetic Labor . . . . . 218

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER FOUR: Preserving the Spirit of Zeal for God . . .	221
1. Being Within . . . . .	222
2. Vision of Another World . . . . .	226
3. Remaining in Feelings that Lead to Resolve . . . . .	232
CHAPTER FIVE: Prescribed Exercises that Help to Confirm a Person's Powers of Soul and Body in Goodness . . .	239
1. The Three Powers of the Soul and their Curative Exercises . . . . .	242
2. Bodily Exercises . . . . .	243
3. The Outward Ordering of Life . . . . .	243
4. Forming a Spiritual Atmosphere Through <i>Govenie</i> . . . . .	244
5. General Notes about all These Ascetic Labors and Practices . . . . .	245
6. Exercises for Developing the Powers of the Soul According to the Spirit of Christian Life . . . . .	247
7. Keeping the Body in the Spirit of New Life . . . . .	261
8. The Order of External Life According to the Spirit of New Life . . . . .	264
9. Grace-filled Means of Developing and Strengthening the Spiritual Life . . . . .	269
CHAPTER SIX: Approaching Constant <i>Govenie</i> . . . . .	274
1. Concerning <i>Govenie</i> . . . . .	274
2. Concerning Confession . . . . .	275
3. Concerning Communion . . . . .	276
CHAPTER SEVEN: Rule for Struggling with the Passions, or the Beginning of Self-Opposition . . . . .	280
1. War with the Passions and Lusts . . . . .	280

## THE PATH TO SALVATION

2. Freely Choosing and Loving Good Is a Powerful Weapon . . . . .	281
3. Reviewing our Enemies to Know the Suitable Methods of Uprooting Passions . . . . .	282
4. The Rules of Spiritual Warfare . . . . .	289
CHAPTER EIGHT: The Beginning of Ascent Towards Living Communion with God . . . . .	
1. Ascent to God . . . . .	312
2. Living Communion with God Occurs in a State of Hesychia, Which Brings Passionlessness . . . . .	319
3. Dispassion is the Heavenly Palace of the Heavenly King . . . . .	324
CHAPTER NINE: Lessons by Our Holy Father John Chrysostom on Education . . . . .	
INDEX . . . . .	353

# *Preface*

## Bishop Theophan, the Recluse of Vysha

*A Short Biography by E. Sumarokov<sup>1</sup>*

### I

TO BISHOP THEOPHAN belongs an immense significance in the history of the moral development of Russian society. That thirst for complete union with God which led him into reclusion did not deprive the world and his own people of his help. Even from his remote reclusion he was a great public figure, supporting and directing thousands of people and their spiritual life.

Acquiring great spiritual experience by means of complete self-renunciation and strict daily asceticism, Bp. Theophan generously shared with all who had need of it the treasures of his spiritual experience. No one who appealed to him in writing was denied advice. But he exerted a much wider influence by means of his books. How to live a Christian life; how, amidst the slough of temptations, misfortunes, weaknesses, the weight of our sinful habits, not to fall into despair; how to desire salvation for oneself and begin the work of moral perfection; how to do battle on

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1. Translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose from *Lectures on the History of the Russian Church* (Harbin, 1945, V. 2) and printed in *The Orthodox Word*, Vol. 2 (1966), No. 9. The above version is slightly abridged.

this path step by step, and to enter ever more deeply into the saving enclosure of the Church: it is of this that the books of Bp. Theophan speak.

Behind all the spiritual wisdom that is expressed in his books stands the pure image of a great ascetic. Every word of Bp. Theophan produces all the stronger an impression for having been imprinted by his life. When he repeats: "Do not gravitate to the earth. All is corruptible; only the happiness beyond the grave is eternal, unchanging, true, and this happiness depends upon how we spend this life of ours!" — then, as a living example of this correct view of the world and the destiny of the soul stand his own self-denial, his reclusion, his desire to take nothing from life but a striving toward God.

## II

Bp. Theophan was called in the world George Vasilyevich Govorov and he was born on Jan. 10, 1815, in a village near Orel, where his father was a priest. Thus from the first impressions of his youth he lived with the Church. He studied first in the theological preparatory school in the city of Liven, then in the Orel Seminary.

From 1837 to 1841 he continued his education in the Kiev Theological Academy. Even before finishing the course he was tonsured a monk. After his tonsure Theophan, together with other newly tonsured monks, went off to the (Kiev Caves) Lavra, to the well-known Father Partheny. The Starets told them: "You, learned monks who have taken various rules upon yourselves, remember that one thing is most necessary of all: to pray and to pray unceasingly in your mind and heart to God."

Having finished the course with a master's degree, Hieromonk Theophan was assigned as temporary rector of

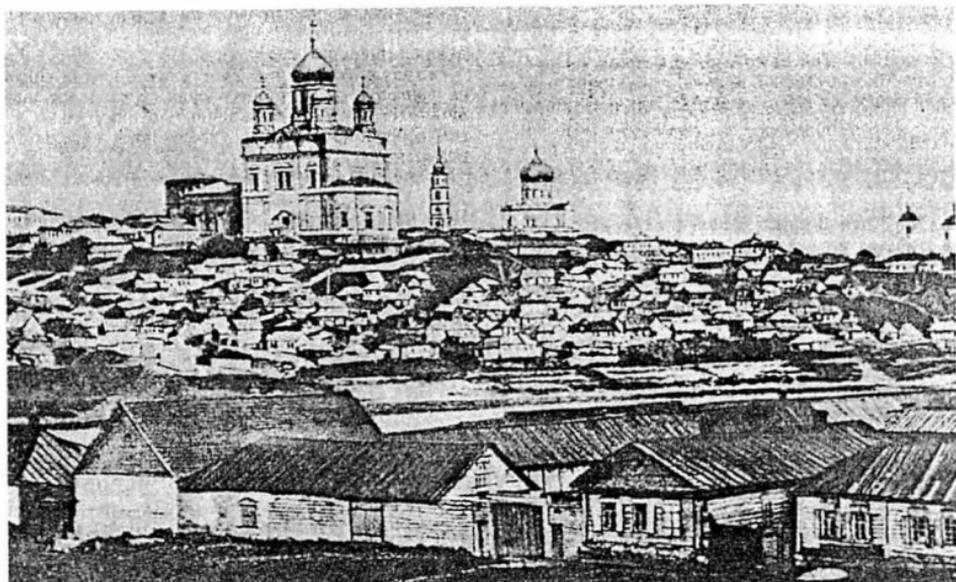
the Kiev-Sofia Theological School; later he was rector of the Novgorod Seminary and a professor and aid to the supervisor in the Petersburg Theological Academy.

This purely scholarly work did not satisfy him, and he petitioned to be discharged from academic service. He was assigned as a member of the Russian Mission in Jerusalem; then, raised to the rank of archimandrite, he was assigned as rector of the Olonets Seminary. He was soon transferred to Constantinople as chief priest of the embassy church, then called to Petersburg to be a rector of the Theological Academy and supervisor of religious instruction in the secular schools of the capital.

On May 9, 1859, he was consecrated bishop for Tambov. Here he established a diocesan school for girls. During his stay in the Tambov See, Bp. Theophan came to love the isolated Vysha Hermitage. In the summer of 1863, he was transferred to Vladimir, where he served for three years. Here too he opened a diocesan school for girls. He served in church often, traveled much throughout the diocese, preached constantly, restored churches, and wholeheartedly lived with his flock, sharing with them both joy and sorrow.

### III

In 1861 Bp. Theophan was present at the opening of the relics of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. This event must have produced a very strong impression on him, since he had so much in common with St. Tikhon. He had so loved St. Tikhon from his very childhood, had always thought of him with such enthusiasm, that when the time came for the canonization of this great teacher and protector of the people, Bp. Theophan's joy was inexpressible.



Town of Elets, in the vicinity of which St. Theophan was born.



The cells, or living quarters of his reclusion.

In 1866 Bp. Theophan petitioned to be relieved as Bishop of Vladimir and was appointed head of the Vysha Hermitage, and soon, at a new petition of his, he was freed even of this duty.

What reasons induced Bp. Theophan, full of strength, to leave his diocese and retire into solitude? Various are the characters and gifts of men. It was difficult for him in the midst of the world and those demands to which one must yield as a consequence of human corruption. His unlimited goodness of heart, a meekness like that of a dove, his trust of people and indulgence of them—all this indicated that it was not for him to live amidst the irreconcilable quarrels of vain worldly life. His trust could be abused; he could never give necessary reprimands. Besides this, he felt the call to devote all his energies to spiritual writing. As for himself personally, he wished to give up all his thoughts to God alone, Whom he loved so absolutely. He desired that nothing might disturb the complete communion with God that was so dear to him. And he left the world to be alone with God.

There was an example that he kept constantly before his eyes: St. Tikhon, to whom he had been so drawn from his youth, and who also, leaving one diocese, became a spiritual benefactor of the whole Russian people.

On Sunday, July 2, 1866, the Bishop bade farewell to his flock. After serving the Liturgy, the Bishop gave his last sermon amidst a death-like silence, in which could be heard only an occasional quiet weeping. And there began 28 years of a solitary, full life of uninterrupted labors.

#### IV

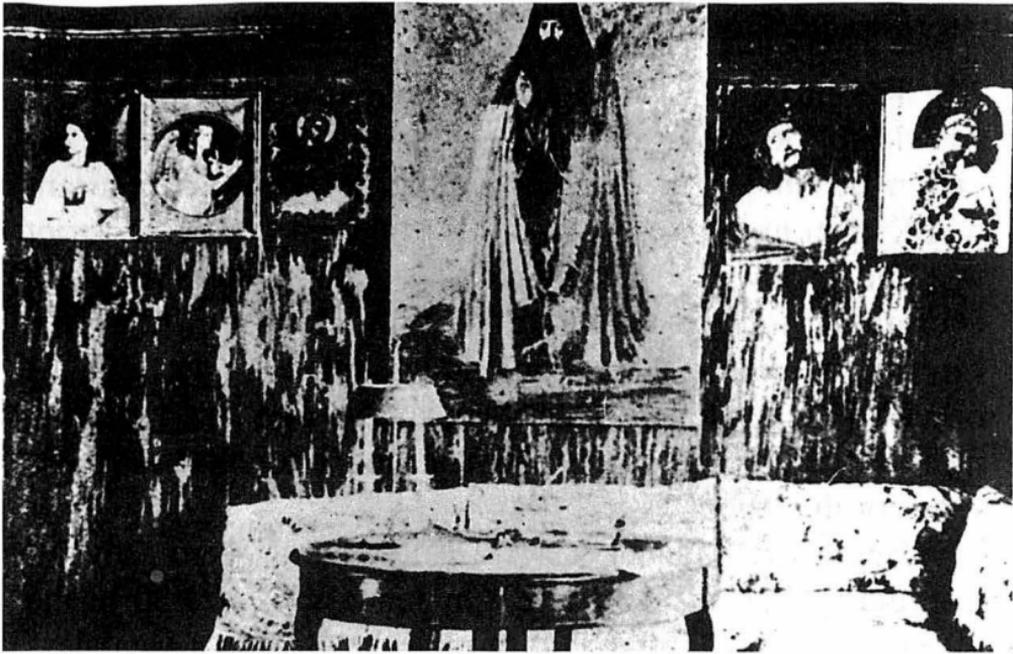
The first six years the Bishop went to all services and to the early Liturgy. In church he stood without moving,

without leaning, with eyes closed so as not to be distracted. On feast days he usually officiated.

Beginning in 1872, however, he discontinued all intercourse with people except for the chief priest and his confessor. He went no longer to the monastery church but built with his own hands in his chambers a small church dedicated to the Baptism of the Lord. For the first ten years he served the Liturgy in this church every Sunday and feast day, and for the next eleven years every day. He served completely alone, sometimes in silence, but sometimes singing.

He seemed to be no longer a man, but an angel with a childlike meekness and gentleness. When people came to him on business, he said what was necessary and plunged back into prayer. He ate only enough so as not to ruin his health. Everything that he received he sent by mail to the poor, leaving himself only enough to buy necessary books. From his publications, which were quickly distributed, he received nothing, hoping only that they might be sold as cheaply as possible. In the rare moments when he was free from prayer, reading, or writing, he occupied himself with manual labor. He painted excellent icons and was skilled in woodcarving and the locksmith's trade.

Every day Bp. Theophan received from twenty to forty letters, and he answered them all. With extraordinary sensitivity he penetrated to the spiritual situation of the writer and warmly, clearly, and in detail replied to this confession of a distressed soul. His letters, which appeared in print after his death, strike one by their freshness, sensitivity, depth and boldness of feeling, simplicity, warm concern, cordiality. And thus he lived, directing from his reclusion believers who came to him from afar thirsting for salvation.



The cell of St. Theophan—where he partook of his food.



Icon of Christ  
painted by St. Theophan.



Icon of Kazan Mother of God  
painted by St. Theophan.

The life of Bp. Theophan passed unseen by the world, and death too came to him in solitude. In his last years his vision began to fail, but he did not abandon his constant work, continuing to portion his time in the same strict fashion as always. Evenings his cell attendant prepared everything for the celebration of the Liturgy. After the Liturgy the Bishop asked for tea by a knock on the wall. At one o'clock he ate —on non-fast days an egg and a glass of milk. At four o'clock he had tea, and after that no more food for the day.

Beginning January 1, 1891, there were several irregularities in his schedule. On January 6, at 4:30 in the afternoon, his cell-attendant, noting the Bishop's weakness during these days (although he nonetheless continued to write after noon), looked into his room. The Bishop lay on the bed lifeless. His left arm rested on his breast and his right arm was folded as if for a bishop's blessing.

For three days the body remained in the small church in his cell, and for three days it was in the cathedral—and there was no corruption. When he was vested in his bishop's vestments, the face of the dead man was brightened by a joyful smile. Bp. Theophan died at the age of 79. He was buried in the unheated Kazan Cathedral.

In Bp. Theophan's cell everything was extremely simple, even meager. The walls were bare, the furniture old; a cupboard worth a ruble, a two-ruble chest, an old table, an old reading stand, an iron folding bed, sofas of birch wood with hard seats. There was a trunk with instruments for lathe-work, carpentry, book-binding; photographic equipment, a bench for sawing, a joiner's bench. There was a gray cotton undercassock, a wooden panagia, a wooden pectoral cross, a telescope, a

microscope, an anatomical and a geographical atlas. And then the books—books without number, without end, in Russian, Slavonic, Greek, French, German, and English.

In addition there were an immense number of icons, a picture of St. Seraphim of Sarov<sup>1</sup> and many icons painted by the Bishop himself.

The great hierarch is hidden from us in body, but his spirit lives in the divinely wise printed works which he left. In the person of Bp. Theophan, as Archbp. Nikander of Vilna has said, we have a universal Christian teacher, even though he did not speak; a public figure, though in reclusion; a preacher of the Church who was heard everywhere, even though in his last years he appeared in no Church see; a missionary-convictor of sectarian errors, even though he did not step out onto the field that was open to missionary activity; a bright lamp of Christ's teaching for Orthodox people, even though he concealed himself from the people's gaze; possessing scarcely a sufficiency of earthly goods, yet enriching all with the spiritual wealth of his teaching; seeking no temporal, earthly glory, yet glorified now both by people and by theological science, as well as by various institutions.

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1. Before his canonization in 1903, *transl. note.*



ПРЕОСВЯЩЕННЫЙ ТЕОФАНЪ ЕПИСКОПЪ  
ВЛАДИМІРСКІЙ.

Bishop Theophan of Tambov. Official portrait engraving  
of the writer of *Unseen Warfare* during his bishopric.

# Introduction

*by the Author*

IT IS POSSIBLE to describe the feelings and inclinations which a Christian must have, but this is very far from being all that is demanded for the ordering of one's salvation. The important thing for us is a real life in the spirit of Christ. But just touch on this, and how many perplexities are uncovered, how many guideposts are necessary, as a result, almost at every step!

True, one may know man's final goal: communion with God. And one may describe the path to it: faith, and walking in the commandments, with the aid of divine grace. One need only say in addition: here is the path—start walking!

This is easily said, but how to do it? For the most part the very desire to walk is lacking. The soul, attracted by some passion or other, stubbornly repulses every compelling force and every call; the eyes turn away from God and do not want to look at Him. The law of Christ is not to one's liking; there is no disposition even to listen to it. One may ask, how does one reach the point when the desire is born to walk toward God on the path of Christ? What does one do so that the law will imprint itself on the heart, and man, acting according to this law, will act as if from himself, unconstrained, so that this law will not lie on him, but will as it were proceed from him?

But suppose someone has turned toward God, suppose he has come to love His law. Is the very going toward God, the very walking on the path of Christ's law, already necessary and will it be successful merely because we desire it to be? No. Besides the desire, one must also have the strength and knowledge to act; one must have active wisdom.

Whoever enters on the true path of pleasing God, or who begins with the aid of grace to strive toward God on the path of Christ's law, will inevitably be threatened by the danger of losing his way at the crossroads, of going astray and perishing, imagining himself saved. These crossroads are unavoidable because of the sinful inclinations and disorder of one's faculties which are capable of presenting things in a false light—to deceive and destroy a man. To this is joined the flattery of satan, who is reluctant to be separated from his victims and, when someone from his domain goes to the light of Christ, pursues him and sets every manner of net in order to catch him again—and quite often he indeed catches him.

Consequently it is necessary for someone who already has the desire to walk on the indicated path to the Lord to be shown in addition all the deviations that are possible on this path, so that the traveller may be warned in advance about this, may see the dangers that are to be encountered, and may know how to avoid them.

These general considerations which are unavoidable to all on the path of salvation render indispensable certain guiding rules of the Christian life by which it should be determined: how to attain to the saving desire for communion with God and the zeal to remain in it, and how to reach God without misfortune amidst all the crossroads that may be met on this path at every step—in other words, how to begin to live the Christian life and how, having begun, to perfect oneself in it.

The sowing and development of the Christian life are different in essence from the sowing and development of natural life, owing to the special character of the Christian life and its relation to our nature. A man is not born a Christian, but becomes such after birth. The seed of Christ falls on the soil of a heart that is already beating. But since the naturally born man is injured and opposed by the demand of Christianity—while

in a plant, for example, the beginning of life is the stirring of a sprout in the seed, an awakening of as it were dormant powers—the beginning of a true Christian life in a man is a kind of recreation, an endowing of new powers, of new life.

Further, suppose that Christianity is received as a law, i.e., the resolution is made to live a Christian life: this seed of life (this resolution) is not surrounded in a man by elements favorable to him. And besides this, the whole man—his body and soul—remain unadapted to the new life, unsubmitive to the yoke of Christ. Therefore from this moment begins in a man a labor of sweat—a labor to educate his whole self, all his faculties, according to the Christian standard.

This is why, while growth in plants, for example, is a gradual development of faculties—easy, unconstrained—in a Christian it is a battle with oneself involving much labor, intense and sorrowful, and he must dispose his faculties for something for which they have no inclination. Like a soldier, he must take every step of land, even his own, from his enemies by means of warfare, with the double-edged sword of forcing himself and opposing himself. Finally, after long labors and exertions, the Christian principles appear victorious, reigning without opposition; they penetrate the whole composition of human nature, dislodging from it demands and inclinations hostile to themselves, and place it in a state of passionlessness and purity, making it worthy of the blessedness of the pure in heart—to see God in themselves in sincerest communion with Him.

Such is the place in us of the Christian life. This life has three stages which may be called: 1) Turning to God; 2) Purification or self-amendment; 3) Sanctification.

In the first stage a man turns from darkness to light, from the domain of satan to God; in the second, he cleanses the chamber of his heart from every impurity, in order to receive Christ the Lord Who is coming to him; in the third, the Lord

comes, takes up His abode in his heart, and communes with him. This is the state of blessed communion with God—the goal of all labors and ascetic endeavors.

To describe all this and determine its laws will mean—to indicate *the path to salvation*.

Complete guidance in this matter takes a man standing on the crossroads of sin, leads him along the fiery path to purification, and leads him up to the degree of perfection attainable to him, according to his level of maturity in Christ. Thus, it should show:

- 1) how Christian life begins in us;
- 2) how it is perfected, ripened and strengthened; and
- 3) how it manifests itself in its perfection.

# *Part One*

*How Does  
the Christian Life  
Begin in Us?*





Photograph of the young Bishop Theophan.

# Chapter One

## *How the Christian Life Begins in Us*

We must make clear for ourselves when and how the Christian life truly begins in order to see whether we have within ourselves the beginning of this life. If we do not have it, we must learn how to begin it, in so far as this depends upon us.

It is not yet a decisive sign of true life in Christ if one calls himself a Christian and belongs to the Church of Christ. *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven* (Mt. 7:21). *And they are not all Israel, which are of Israel* (Rom. 9:6). One can be counted as a Christian and not be a Christian. This everyone knows.

### I. CHRISTIAN LIFE BEGINS WITH ARDOR OF ZEAL

There is a moment, and a very noticeable moment, which is sharply marked out in the course of our life, when a person begins to live in a Christian way. This is the moment when there began to be present in him the distinctive characteristics of Christian life. Christian life is zeal and the strength to remain in communion with God by means of an active fulfillment of His holy will, according to our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the help of the grace of God, to the glory of His most holy name.

The essence of Christian life consists in communion with God, in Christ Jesus our Lord—in a communion with God which in the beginning is usually hidden not only from others, but also from oneself. The testimony of this life that is visible or can be felt within us is the ardor of active zeal to please God

alone in a Christian manner, with total self-sacrifice and hatred of everything which is opposed to this. And so, when this ardor of zeal begins, Christian life has its beginning. The person in whom this ardor is constantly active is one who is living in a Christian way. Here we will have to stop and pay more attention to this distinctive characteristic.

*I am come to send fire on the earth, the Saviour said, and what will I, if it be already kindled!* (Lk. 12:49). He is speaking here of Christian life, and He says this because the visible witness of it is the zeal for the pleasing of God which is in the heart by the Spirit of God. This is like fire because, just as fire devours the material which it takes hold of, so also does zeal for the life in Christ devour the soul which receives it. And just as during the time of a fire the flame takes hold of the whole building, so also the fire of zeal, once it is received, embraces and fills the whole being of a man.

In another place the Lord says, *For every one shall be salted with fire* (Mk. 9:49). This also is an indication of the fire of the spirit which in its zeal penetrates our whole being. Just as salt, penetrating decomposable matter, preserves it from decomposition, so also the spirit of zeal, penetrating our whole being, banishes the sin which corrupts our nature both in soul and body; it banishes it even from the least of the places where it has settled in us, and thus it saves us from moral vice and corruption.

The Apostle Paul commands, *Quench not the Spirit* (I Thess. 5:19), to be *not slothful in business; fervent in spirit* (Rom. 12:11). He commands this to all Christians so that we might remember that the fervor of the spirit, or unslothful striving, is an inseparable attribute of Christian life. In another place he speaks of himself thus: *Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (Phil. 3:13-14). And to others he says, *So run, that ye may obtain* (I

Cor. 9:24). This means that in Christian life the result of the fervor of zeal is a certain quickness and liveliness of spirit, with which people undertake God-pleasing works, trampling upon oneself and willingly offering as a sacrifice to God every kind of labor, without sparing oneself.

Having a firm basis in such an understanding, one may easily conclude that a cold fulfillment of the rules of the Church, just like routine in business, which is established by our calculating mind, or like correct and dignified behavior and honesty in conduct, is not a decisive indicator that the true Christian life is present in us. All this is good, but as long as it does not bear in itself the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, it has no value at all before God. Such things would then be like soulless statues. Good clocks also work correctly; but who will say that there is life in them? It is the same thing here. Often *thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead* in reality (Apoc. 3:1).

This good order in one's conduct more than anything else can lead one into deception. Its true significance depends upon one's inward disposition, where it is possible that there are significant deviations from real righteousness in one's righteous deeds. Thus, while refraining outwardly from sinful deeds, one may have an attraction for them or a delight from them in one's heart; so also, doing righteous deeds outwardly, one's heart may not be in them. Only true zeal both wishes to do good in all fulness and purity, and persecutes sin in its smallest forms. It seeks the good as its daily bread, and with sin it fights as with a mortal enemy.

An enemy hates an enemy not only personally, but he hates also relatives and friends of this enemy, and even his belongings, his favorite color, and in general anything that might remind one of him. So also, true zeal to please God persecutes sin in its smallest reminders or marks, for it is zealous for perfect purity. If this is not present, how much impurity can hide in the heart!

## 2. THE FIRE OF ZEAL

What success can one expect when there is no enthusiastic zeal for a Christian pleasing of God? If there is something that involves no labor, one is ready to do it; but as soon as one is required to do a little extra labor, or some kind of self-sacrifice, immediately one refuses, because one is unable to accomplish it oneself. For then there will be nothing to rely on that can move one to good deeds: self-pity will undermine all the foundations. And if any other motive besides the one mentioned becomes involved, it will make the good deed into a bad deed.

The spies under Moses were afraid because they spared themselves. The martyrs willingly went to death because they were kindled by an inward fire. A true zealot does not do only what is according to the law, but also what has been advised and every good suggestion that has been secretly imprinted on the soul; he does not only what has been given, but he is also an acquirer of good things; he is entirely concerned with the one good thing which is solid, true, and eternal.

Saint John Chrysostom says that everywhere we must have fervor and much fire of the soul, prepared to be armed against death itself. For otherwise it is impossible to receive the kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

The work of piety and communion with God is a work of much labor and much pain, especially in the beginning. Where can we find the power to undertake all these labors? With the help of God's grace, we can find it in heartfelt zeal.

A merchant, a soldier, a judge, or a scholar has work which is full of cares and difficulties. How do they sustain themselves in the midst of their labors? By enthusiasm and love for their work. One cannot sustain oneself by anything else on the path

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1. Cf. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Homily 31, pp. 195-201.

of piety. Without this we will be serving God in a state of sluggishness, boredom, and lack of interest. An animal like the sloth also moves, but with difficulty, while for the swift gazelle or the nimble squirrel movement and getting about are a delight. Zealous pleasing of God is the path to God which is full of consolation and gives wings to the spirit. Without it one can ruin everything.

One must do everything for the glory of God in defiance of the sin which dwells in us. Without this we will do everything only out of habit, because it seems "proper," because this is the way it has always been done, or the way others do it. We must do all we can, otherwise we will do some things and neglect others, and this without any contrition or even knowledge of what we have omitted. One must do everything with heedfulness and care, as our *chief* task; otherwise we will do everything just as it comes.

And so, it is clear that without zeal a Christian is a poor Christian. He is drowsy, feeble, lifeless, neither hot nor cold—and this kind of life is not life at all. Knowing this, let us strive to manifest ourselves as true zealots of good deeds, so that we might truly be pleasing to God, having neither stain nor spot, nor any of these things.

Therefore, a true witness of Christian life is the fire of active zeal for the pleasing of God. Now the question arises, how is this fire ignited? Who produces it? Such zeal is produced by the action of grace. However, it does not occur without the participation of our free will. Christian life is not natural life. This should be the way it begins or is first aroused: as in a seed, growth is aroused when moisture and warmth penetrate to the sprout which is hidden within, and through these the all-restoring power of life comes. So also in us, the divine life is aroused when the Spirit of God penetrates into the heart and places there the beginning of life according to the Spirit, and cleanses and

gathers into one the darkened and broken features of the image of God. A desire and free seeking are aroused (by an action from without); then grace descends (through the Mysteries) and, uniting with our freedom, produces a mighty zeal. But let no one think that he himself can give birth to such a power of life; one must pray for this and be ready to receive it. The fire of zeal with power—this is the grace of the Lord. The Spirit of God, descending into the heart, begins to act in it with a zeal that is both devouring and all-active.

To some the thought arises: should there be this action of grace? Can we ourselves really not do good deeds? After all, we have done this or that good deed, and, if we live longer, we will do some more. Perhaps it is a rare person who does not ask this question. Others say that of ourselves we can do nothing good. But here the question is not only of separate good deeds, but of giving rebirth to our whole life, to a new life, to life in its entirety—to such a life as can lead one to salvation.

As a matter of fact, it is not difficult to do something which is even quite good, as the pagans also did. But let someone intentionally define a course for himself of a continuous doing of good, and define the order of it according to what is indicated in the word of God—and this not for one month or for a year, but for one's whole life—and place as a rule to remain in this order unwaveringly; and then, when he remains faithful to this, let him boast of his own power. But without this it is better to close one's mouth. How many cases there have been in the past and in the present of a self-trusting beginning and building of a Christian life! And they have all ended and continue to end in nothing. A man builds a little in his new order of life—and then throws it away. How can it be otherwise? There is no strength. It is characteristic only of the eternal power of God to support us unchanging in our disposition in the midst of the unceasing waves of temporal changes. Therefore one must be filled abundantly

with this power; one must ask for and receive it in order—and it will raise us up and draw us out of the great agitation of temporal life.

### 3. IN THE FACE OF TEMPTATION

Let us turn now to experience and see when it is that such thoughts of self-satisfaction come. When a man is in a calm condition, when nothing is disturbing him, nothing is deceiving him or leading him into sin—then he is ready for every kind of holy and pure life. But as soon as the movement of a passion or a temptation comes, where are all the promises? Does a man not often say to himself as he leads an unrestrained life, “Now I will no longer do this”? But once the passions again become hungry, a new impulse arises, and again he finds himself in sins.

It is all well and good to reflect on the bearing of offenses when everything is going according to our will and not against our self-love. In fact, here it would be rather strange to have a feeling of offense or anger such as others might give themselves over to. But just find yourself in the opposite condition, and then a single glance—not even a word—will make you beside yourself! Thus you may well dream, trusting in yourself, about leading a Christian life without any help from above—as long as your soul is calm. But when the evil that lies in the depths of the heart is roused up like dust by the wind, then in your own experience you will find the condemnation of your own presumption. When thought after thought, desire after desire—one worse than the other—begin to disturb the soul, then everyone forgets about himself and involuntarily cries out with the prophet: *The waters are come in unto my soul. I am stuck fast in the mire of the deep* (Ps. 68:1-2). *O Lord, save now; O Lord, send now prosperity* (Ps. 117:25).

Often it happens in this way: someone dreams of remaining in the good, trusting in himself. But a face or a thing comes to

the imagination, desire is born, passion is aroused: a man is attracted and falls. After this one need only look at oneself and say: How bad that was! But then an opportunity for distraction comes, and again he is ready to forget himself.

Again, someone has offended you, a battle begins, there are reproaches and judgment. Some unjust but convenient way of looking at it presents itself to your mind, and you seize it. You belittle one, spread the tale to others, confuse someone else—and all this after you were boasting of the possibility of leading a holy life by yourself, without special help from above. Where was your strength then? *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Mt. 26:41). You see good and do evil: *When I would do good, evil is present with me* (Rom. 7:21). We are in captivity. Redeem us, O Lord!

One of the first tricks of the enemy against us is the idea of trusting in oneself: that is, if not renouncing, then at least not feeling the need for the help of grace. The enemy as it were says: "Do not go to the light where they wish to give you some kind of new powers. You are good just the way you are!" And a man gives himself over to repose. But in the meantime the enemy is throwing a rock (some kind of unpleasantness) at one; others he is leading into a slippery place (the deception of the passions); for yet others he is strewing with flowers a closed noose (deceptively good conditions). Without looking around, a man strives to go further and further, and does not guess that he is falling down lower and lower until finally he goes to the very depths of evil, to the threshold of hell itself. Should one not in such a case cry out to him as to the first Adam: "Man, where are you? Where have you gone?" This very cry is the action of grace, which compels a sinner for the first time to look about himself.

Therefore, if you desire to begin to live in a Christian way, seek grace. The minute grace descends and joins itself to your

will is the minute when the Christian life is born in you—powerful, firm, and greatly fruitful.

Where can one obtain and how can one receive the grace which gives the beginning of life? The acquisition of grace and the sanctification by its means of our nature is performed in the Mysteries. Here we offer of God's action, or present to God our own worthless nature; and He, by His action, transforms it. It was pleasing to God, in order to strike down our proud mind, to hide His power at the very beginning of true life beneath the covering of simple materiality. How this happens we do not understand, but the experience of all Christianity testifies that it does not happen otherwise.

*How Christian life begins in the Mystery of Baptism*

The Mysteries which primarily refer to the beginning of the Christian life are Baptism and repentance. Therefore, the rules concerning the beginning of life in a true Christian way are set forth first under the heading of baptism, and then under repentance.

Baptism is the first Mystery (Sacrament) in Christianity; it makes a Christian man worthy to be vouchsafed the gifts of grace through other Mysteries also. Without it one cannot enter into the Christian world and become a member of the Church. The Pre-eternal Wisdom has made a house for Himself upon earth, and the door leading into this house is the Mystery of Baptism. By this door not only do people enter into the house of God, but at this door also they are clothed in a garment worthy of it; they receive a new name and a sign which is impressed upon the whole being of the one being baptized, by means of which, later, both heavenly and earthly beings recognize and distinguish them.

#### 4. A NEW CREATURE IN CHRIST THROUGH HOLY BAPTISM

*If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature*, teaches the Apostle (II Cor. 15:17). This new creature a Christian becomes in baptism. From the font a man comes out not at all the way he went in. As light is to darkness, as life is to death, so is a baptized man opposed to one who is unbaptized. Conceived in iniquities and born in sins, a man before baptism bears in himself all the poison of sin, with all the weight of its consequences. He is in a condition of God's disfavor; he is by nature a child of wrath. He is ruined, disordered in himself with relation to his parts and powers, which are directed primarily towards the multiplication of sin. He is in subjection to the influence of satan, who acts in him with power by reason of the sin which dwells in him. As a result of all this, after death he is unfailingly the child of hell, where he must be tormented together with its prince and his helpers and servants.

Baptism delivers us from all these evils. It takes away the curse by the power of the Cross of Christ and returns the blessing. Those who are baptized are the children of God, as the Lord Himself has given them the right to be: *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ* (Rom. 8:17). The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the baptized person already by virtue of his baptism. He is taken away from the dominion of satan, who now loses authority over him and the power to act arbitrarily in him. By entrance into the Church—the house of refuge—satan is denied access to the newly baptized one. He finds himself here as in a safe enclosure.

All these are spiritually outward privileges and gifts. But what happens inwardly? The healing of the affliction and injury of sin. The power of grace penetrates within and restores here

the divine order in all its beauty. It treats the disorder in the structure and relationship of the powers and parts, as well as changing the chief orientation from oneself to God—to pleasing God and increasing one's good deeds.

Therefore, Baptism is a rebirth or a new birth which puts a man in a renewed condition. The Apostle Paul compares all the baptized with the resurrected Saviour, giving us to understand that they also have the same bright nature in their renewal as was possessed by the human nature of the Lord Jesus through His resurrection in glory (Romans 6:4). And that the orientation of activity in a baptized person is changed may be seen in the words of the same Apostle, who says in another place that they already *should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again* (II Cor. 5:15). *For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God* (Rom. 6:10). *We are buried with Him by baptism into death* (Rom. 6:4); and: *Our old man is crucified with Him, that henceforth we should not serve sin* (Rom. 6:6). And so, the whole activity of a man by the power of Baptism is turned away from oneself and sin, and towards God and righteousness.

Remarkable are the words of the Apostle: *That henceforth we should not serve sin*, as well as his other words: *Sin shall not have dominion over you* (Rom. 6:14). This gives us to understand that the power which, in our disordered, fallen nature, draws us towards sin, is not entirely exterminated in Baptism, but is only placed in a condition in which it has no power over us, no dominion over us, and we do not serve it. But it is still in us, it lives and acts, only not as a lord. The primacy from now on belongs to the grace of God and to the soul that consciously gives itself over to it.

Saint Diadochos, explaining the power of Baptism, says that before Baptism sin dwells in the heart and grace acts from outside, but after Baptism, grace settles in the heart and sin

attracts us from outside. It is banished from the heart as an enemy from a fortress, and it settles outside, in the parts of the body, from where it acts by means of attacks in a fragmented state. This is why there is a constant tempter, a seducer, but no longer a master: he disturbs and alarms, but does not command. And so, the new life is born in Baptism!<sup>1</sup>

Here our attention will be directed to how the Christian life begins through Baptism in those who were baptized as children—just how this occurs. For here the beginning of Christian life is put in order in a special way which comes from the relationship of grace to freedom.

You already know that grace descends upon free desire and searching, and that only by the mutual cooperation of these two is there begun the new grace-given life which is in accordance both with grace and with the nature of the free person. The Lord gives grace freely. But He asks that a man seek it and receive it with desire, dedicating himself entirely to God. The fulfillment of this condition in repentance and in the Baptism of adults is clear; but how is it fulfilled in the Baptism of infants? An infant does not have the use of reason and freedom; consequently, he cannot fulfill the condition for the beginning of Christian life on his own part—that is, the desire to dedicate himself to God. Nevertheless, this condition must absolutely be fulfilled. The particular way in which (Christian) life begins in the case of the Baptism of infants depends on the means of fulfilling this condition.

## 5. BAPTISM FOR INFANTS

Grace descends upon the soul of an infant and produces in it exactly the same result as if its freedom had participated in this, but only on the condition that in the future the infant, who

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1. *Philokalia*, vol. I, p. 279, no.76.

was not then aware of himself and did not act personally, when he comes to awareness, will himself willingly dedicate himself to God, will receive out of his own desire the grace which has shown its activity in him, will be glad that it exists, will give thanks that this was done for him, and will confess that if, at the moment of his Baptism, understanding and freedom had been given to him, he would not have acted otherwise than he did act and would not have wished otherwise. For the sake of this future free dedication of himself to God and the coming together of freedom and grace, divine grace gives everything to the infant and even without him it produces everything in him that is natural for it to produce, with the promise that the essential desire and dedicating of himself to God will be performed without fail. This is the promise which the sponsors give when they declare to God before the Church that this infant, when he comes to awareness, will show precisely that use of freedom which is demanded for grace, taking upon themselves the obligation in very fact to bring to this state the infant for whom they are sponsors.

And thus through Baptism the seed of life in Christ is placed in the infant and exists in him; but it is as though it did not exist: it acts as an educating power in him. Spiritual life, conceived by the grace of Baptism in the infant, becomes the property of the man and is manifest in its complete form in accordance not only with grace, but also with the character of the rational creature, from the time when he, coming to awareness, by his own free will dedicates himself to God and appropriates to himself the power of grace in himself by receiving it with desire, joy, and gratitude. Up to this time, also, the true Christian life is active in him, but it is as if without his knowledge; it acts in him, but it is as if it is not yet his own. But from the minute of his awareness and choosing, it becomes his own, not by grace only but also by freedom.

Because of this more or less prolonged interval between Baptism and the dedication of oneself to God, the beginning of Christian moral life through the grace of Baptism in infants is broadened, so to speak, into an indefinite period of time, during which the infant matures and is formed into a Christian in the Holy Church in the midst of other Christians, as previously he had been formed bodily in the womb of his mother.

Stop, O reader, a little longer on this idea. It will be very necessary to us to define how parents, sponsors, and educators should behave with regard to the baptized infant who is entrusted to them by the Holy Church and the Lord.

It goes without saying that after the Baptism of the infant a very important matter stands before the parents and the sponsors: how to lead the baptized one so that when he comes to awareness he might recognize the grace-given powers within himself and accept them with a joyful desire, together with the obligations and way of life which they demand. This places one face to face with the question of Christian upbringing, or the upbringing which is in accordance with the demands of the grace of Baptism, and has as its aim the preservation of this grace.

So that it might be clear how one must act with regard to a baptized infant with these aims in mind, one must recall the above-mentioned idea that grace overshadows the heart and dwells in it when there is in the heart a turning away from sin and a turning towards God. If this attitude is manifested in act, there are further given all the other gifts of grace and all the characteristics of one who is dwelling in grace: the favor of God, the co-inheritance with Christ, the dwelling outside the sphere of satan, out of the danger of being condemned to hell. But as soon as this attitude of mind and heart decreases or is lost, immediately sin again begins to possess the heart, and through sin the bonds of satan are laid upon one and the favor of God and the co-inheritance with Christ are taken away. Grace in an

infant weakens and stifles sin, but sin can again come to life and grow if it is given food and freedom.

And so, the whole attention of those who have the obligation of preserving whole the Christian child who has been received from the font should be directed to not allowing sin in any way to take possession of him again, to crushing sin and making it powerless by every means, and to arousing and strengthening the child's orientation towards God. One must act in such a way that this attitude in the growing Christian will grow by itself, even though under the guidance of someone else, and that he will more and more become accustomed to prevail over sin and conquer it for the sake of pleasing God, and will grow accustomed to exercise his powers of spirit and body in such a way that they will work not for sin but for the service of God.

That this is possible is evident from the fact that the one who has been born and baptized is entirely a seed of the future, or a field filled with seeds. The new attitude poured into him by the grace of Baptism is not only something thought or imagined, but is something actual, that is, it is also a seed of life. If in general every seed is developed according to its kind, then the seed of the grace-given life in the baptized one also can be developed. If there is placed in him the seed of a turning towards God which overcomes sin, then it likewise can be developed and nurtured as other seeds are. But one must use effective means for this, or, in other words, define a consistent means of acting upon the baptized infant.

## 6. CHRISTIAN UPBRINGING

The aim towards which everything in this process should be directed is this: that this new man, when he comes to awareness, might recognize himself not only as a rational and free man, but at the same time as a person who has entered into an obligation with the Lord, with Whom his eternal lot is joined inseparably;

and that he might not only acknowledge himself to be such, but might also find himself capable of acting according to this obligation and might see that his pre-eminent attraction is to this.

The question arises, how can this be attained? How should one act with regard to a baptized child so that when he comes to age he might not desire anything else than to be a true Christian? In other words, how does one raise him in a Christian way?

To answer this we will not undertake to examine everything in detail. We will limit ourselves to a general survey of the whole topic of Christian upbringing, having in mind to show how, in every circumstance, to support and strengthen the good side in children, and how to make powerless and crush what is bad.

Here, first of all, our attention should be directed to the infant in the cradle, before any kind of capabilities have awakened in him. The child is alive; consequently one can influence his life. Here we should think of the influence of the Holy Mysteries, and with them the whole churchly way of life, and at the same time the faith and piety of the parents. All this together constitutes a saving atmosphere around the infant. By all of this the life of grace which has been conceived in the infant is instilled mystically.

The frequent communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ (one should add, as frequently as possible) joins His new member to the Lord in the most lively and active way through His most pure Body and Blood. It sanctifies him, gives him peace within himself, and makes him inaccessible to the dark powers. People who follow this advice notice that on the day when a child is given Communion, he is immersed in a deep calm without the powerful movements of all his natural needs, even those which are most powerfully felt in children. Sometimes the child is filled with joy and a playfulness of spirit in which he is ready to embrace everyone as his own.

Often Holy Communion is accompanied also by miracles. Saint Andrew of Crete in his childhood did not speak for a long time, but when his grieved parents turned to prayer and the reception of grace, during the time of Communion the Lord by His grace loosed the bonds of his tongue, which afterwards gave the Church to drink of torrents of eloquence and wisdom. One doctor, from his own observation, testifies that for the most part when there are illnesses in children, the children should be taken to Holy Communion, and very rarely does he have need to use later any kind of medical help.

A great influence is exercised on the child by frequently taking him to church, by having him kiss the Holy Cross, the Gospel, the icons, and by covering him with the veils. Likewise, at home frequently placing him under the icons, frequently signing him with the sign of the Cross, sprinkling him with holy water, the burning of incense, making the sign of the Cross over his cradle, his food, and everything connected with him, the blessing of a priest, the bringing into the house of icons from church—the service of molebens—and in general everything from the church, in a wondrous way warms and nourishes the life of grace in the child and is always the most safe and impenetrable protection against the attacks of the invisible dark powers who everywhere are ready to penetrate into the developing soul so as to infect it by their activity.

Behind this visible protection there is an invisible one: the guardian angel placed by the Lord to protect the child from the very minute of his Baptism. He watches over him and by his presence invisibly influences him, and when necessary inspires the parents to know what they should for a child who is in danger.

But all these strong protections and these powerful and active inspirations can be dissolved and made fruitless by unbelief, carelessness, impiety, and the bad life of the parents. This is because the means mentioned here are either not used, or are

used not in the proper way; here the inward influence of the parents on the child is especially important. It is true that the Lord is merciful to the innocent; but there is a tie which we cannot understand between the souls of the parents and the soul of the child, and we cannot define the extent of the influence of the former on the latter. At the same time, when the parents exert a bad influence, to some extent the mercy and condescension of God are still given to the child. But it sometimes happens that this divine aid ceases, and then the causes which have been prepared bring forth their fruit. Therefore, the spirit of faith and piety of the parents should be regarded as the most powerful means for the preservation, upbringing and strengthening of the life of grace in children.

#### 7. THE INFLUENCE OF THE PARENTS UPON THE CHILD

The spirit of the infant has, as it were, no movement as yet in the first days, months, and even years. It is impossible to communicate anything for him to assimilate by the usual means of communication, but one may influence him in another way.

There is a certain special way of communication between souls through the heart. One spirit influences another by means of the feelings. The ease of exerting such an influence upon the soul of an infant is in direct proportion to the fullness and depth of the parents' feeling for the child. The father and mother as it were disappear into the child and put their whole soul into his welfare. And if their spirit is penetrated with piety, it cannot be that in some way this will not influence the soul of the child.

The best outward conductor in this respect is the eyes. Whereas in the other senses the soul remains hidden, the eyes open their gaze to others. This is the meeting place of one soul with another. Let the openings be used for the passage of holy

feelings from the souls of the mother and father to the soul of the child. Their souls cannot help but anoint the soul of the child with this holy oil.

It is necessary that in the gaze of the parents there should be not only love, which is so natural, but also the faith that in their arms there is something more than a simple child. The parents must have the hope that He Who gave them this treasure under their watch as a vessel of grace might furnish them also with sufficient means to preserve him. And finally, there should be ceaseless prayer performed in the spirit, aroused by hope according to faith.

When in this way the parents protect the cradle of their child with this spirit of sincere piety, and when at the same time, on the one hand the guardian angel, and on the other the Holy Mysteries and all of Church life, act upon him from without and from within—by this there is formed around the newly begun life a spiritual atmosphere akin to it which will pour into it its own character, just as blood, the principle of animal life, derives many of its characteristics from the surrounding atmosphere. It is said that a newly made vessel will preserve for a long time, perhaps permanently, the odor of whatever was poured into it at that time. This can also be said about the atmosphere surrounding children. It penetrates in a grace-giving and saving way into the forms of life just being established in the child and places its seal upon him. Here also there is a protection that cannot be penetrated by the influence of evil spirits.

Having begun in such a way from the cradle, one must continue it later, and during the whole time of upbringing: in childhood, in adolescence, and in young manhood. The Church, its life, and the Holy Mysteries are like a tabernacle (tent) for the children, and they should be under it without leaving it. Examples indicate how saving and fruitful this is (such as the life of the Prophet Samuel; the life of Saint Theodore

Sykeote (April 22), and others). These alone can even replace all the means of upbringing, as indeed has been done in many cases successfully. The ancient method of upbringing consisted primarily in precisely this.

When a child's powers begin to awaken, one after another, parents and those who are raising children should double their attention. For when, under the influence of the means which have been indicated, the longing for God will grow and increase in them and draw the powers of the child after it, at this same time the sin which dwells in them also does not sleep, but strives to take possession of these same powers. The inevitable consequence of this is inward warfare. Since children are incapable of conducting it themselves, their place is understandably taken by the parents. But since this warfare must be conducted through the powers of the children, the parents must strictly watch over the first beginnings of their awakening, so that from the first minute they may give these powers a direction in harmony with the chief aim towards which they must be directed.

Thus begins the warfare of the parents with the sin that dwells in the child. Although this sin is deprived of points of support, still it acts, and so as to find a good resting place for itself it tries to take possession of the powers of the body and soul. One must not allow it to do this, but must, as it were, uproot these powers from the hand of sin and give them over to God.

But so that this might be done with a good foundation and with a rational knowledge of the reliability of the means that have been chosen, one must make clear for oneself what it is that sin desires, what nourishes it, and precisely how it takes possession of us. The fundamental things which arouse and draw one towards sin are: arbitrariness of mind (or curiosity) in the mental faculty, self-will in the faculty of will, and pleasures in the faculty of feeling.

Therefore one must so conduct and direct the developing powers of the soul and body so as not to give them over into captivity to enjoyments of the flesh, to curiosity, to self-will and self-centered pleasures—for this would be a sinful captivity—but on the contrary, one must train the child how to separate himself from them and master them, and thus as much as possible to render them powerless and harmless. This is the chief thing in the beginning. The whole of the upbringing can later be brought into harmony with this beginning. Let us look again, with this aim, at the chief activities of the body, soul, and spirit.

## Chapter Two

### *The Chief Activities of the Body, Soul and Spirit*

#### I. DIRECTING THE DEVELOPING POWERS OF THE SOUL AND BODY

First of all, the needs of the body are aroused, and then are in a constant state of living activity until death itself. It is all the more essential to place them within their proper bounds and to strengthen them with the force of habit, so that later there will be less disturbance from them.

#### *In relation to food*

The first requirement for bodily life is food. With relation to morality, this is the seat of the passion for sinful enjoyment of the flesh, or the arena for its development and nourishment. Therefore, one must feed the child in such a way that in developing the life of the body, furnishing him strength and health, one will not ignite in the soul the pleasing of the flesh.

One should not consider that the child is small (and therefore in no need of such concern). From the very first years one must begin to restrain the flesh which is inclined to crude materiality, and train the child to become master of it, so that in adolescence and youth, and in the years thereafter, he might easily and freely be in control of this need. The first attempt made is very precious. Much that happens subsequently depends on the feeding of the child. Without noticing it, one can develop in him the love of pleasure and immoderation in

food—the two forms of the sin of gluttony, the two inclinations bound up with eating that are so ruinous for the body and the soul.

Therefore, even physicians and teachers advise: 1) to select a healthful and suitable food, depending on the age of the child, for one food is suitable for an infant, another for a child, yet another for an adolescent and a young man; 2) to subject the use of food to definite rules (again, adapted to age), in which there should be defined the time, the quantity, and the means of eating; and 3) not to depart later from this established rule without need. By these means the child is trained not to demand food always whenever he wants to eat, but to wait for the assigned time; here are to be found the first attempts at exercising oneself in denying oneself one's desires. When a child is fed every time he cries, and then every time he asks to eat, he is so weakened by this that later he cannot refuse food except with great pain. At the same time, this accustoms him to getting his own will, because he succeeds in getting whatever he asks for or cries for.

Sleep also should be subjected to the same kind of measure, as should warmth and cold, and other comforts which are necessary in one's upbringing, having unfailingly in mind not to ignite the passion for sensual enjoyments, and to train one to deny oneself. This should be strictly observed during the whole time of the upbringing of the child—changing the rules, it goes without saying, in their application (to circumstances and age), but not in essence, until the child, being firmly established in them, will take himself in hand.

#### *In relation to movement*

The second function of the body is movement. Its organ is the muscles, in which lie the power and strength of the body, the means of labor. With relation to the soul this is the seat of the will, and it very easily develops self-will. The measured and

sensible development of this function, giving to the body stimulation and animation, trains one to labor and forms the habit of stability.

On the contrary, an unsteady development, left to the will of the child, develops in some a hyperactivity and inattentiveness, and in others a slowness, lifelessness, and laziness. In the former case, self-will and disobedience are turned into a law, in connection with which are to be found also aggressiveness, anger, and unrestraint in one's desires. In the latter case, one becomes immersed in the flesh and given over to sensual enjoyments.

Therefore, one should have in view that in strengthening the powers of the body one should not thereby inflate self-will and destroy the spirit for the sake of the flesh. To avoid this the chief things are moderation, a definite schedule, and supervision. Let the child play, but let it be in the place and in the way which are indicated to him.

The will of the parents should be imprinted upon each step—of course in a general way. Without this, the behavior of the child can easily become corrupted. After enjoying himself according to his own will, the child always returns unwilling to obey even in the smallest things; and this is if it happens only once—what then can one say if this part of bodily activity is completely neglected? How difficult it is later to uproot self-will, which so quickly seats itself in the body as in a fortress. The neck will not bend, the hands and feet will not move, and the eyes will not even wish to look as they are told. But on the contrary, a child comes out ready to obey any kind of order when from the very beginning he is not given total freedom in his movements. In addition, there is no better training in being the master of one's body than by forcing it to exert itself according to orders.

*In relation to the nerves and senses*

The third function of the body is the nerves. From the nerves come the senses—the means of observation and food for curiosity; but more of this later. Here we will talk about the general purpose of the nerves as the center of the sensuality of the body, or the capability of receiving outward impressions which are unpleasant for it.

In this respect one must make a rule to train the body to endure every kind of outward influence without misfortune: whether from fresh air, water, change of temperature, heat, cold, pain, wounds, and so forth. Whoever has acquired such a habit is the most fortunate of men, capable of the most difficult actions at any time and in any place. The soul in such a man is the full master of the body; it does not postpone, or change, or leave off actions fearing bodily unpleasantness. On the contrary, it will turn with a certain desire to those things that can bring danger to the body; this is very important.

The chief evil with relation to the body is love for the body and pitying it. This takes away all the soul's authority over the body and makes the soul the slave of the body. And on the contrary, one who does not spare the body will not be disturbed in whatever he does by apprehensions born of blind love of life. How fortunate is one who is trained to this from childhood!

Here also is the place for medical advice concerning bathing, the times and places of walking, and clothing; the chief thing is to keep the body not in such a state that it would receive only pleasant impressions, but on the contrary, to keep it more under the impression of those things which cause it disturbance. By pleasant impressions the body is pampered, and by unpleasant ones it is strengthened; in the former condition the child is afraid of everything, but in the latter condition it is ready for anything and is capable of continuing patiently what it has begun.

Such an attitude toward the body is prescribed by the science of raising children. Here we will only indicate how these counsels are useful also for the development of Christian life—because the zealous fulfillment of them protects the entrance into the soul from the evil poison of sensual enjoyments, of self-will, of love for the body and self-pity; and it forms in the child the dispositions which are opposite to these, and in general trains him to be the master of his body and not to be in submission to it. This is very important in the Christian life, which by its nature is remote from sensuality and every kind of pleasing of the flesh.

Therefore, we should not leave to arbitrary decision the development of the child's body, but must keep it under a strict discipline from the very beginning, until later it may be given into the hands of the child himself as an organ already adapted to Christian life and not hostile to it. Those Christian parents who truly love their children should not spare anything, even their own parents' heart, in order to furnish this good thing for the child. For otherwise all the acts following their love and concern will either bear little fruit or be entirely fruitless.

The body is the dwelling place of the passions, and chiefly of the fiercest ones, such as lust and anger. It is also the organ through which the demons penetrate into the soul or come to settle near it. It goes without saying that in this process one must not leave out of sight the influence of church life and everything in it that affects the body, for by this the body itself will be sanctified and the greedy, animal life of the child will be restrained.

We will not discuss all this here, but only indicate the chief tone of the influences upon the body. Life itself will give the details for those who need them. In accordance with this outline one may understand also how to treat the body in all the other seasons of life, for the question is the same in all of us.

Together with the manifestation of bodily needs, the lower capabilities of the soul are also not slow in expressing themselves in their natural order. The child begins to look more closely at one object or another—at one more, at another less, as if one pleases him more and another less. These are the first beginnings of the exercising of the senses, after which there follows immediately an awakening of the activity of imagination and memory. These capabilities stand at the transition point between the activity of the body and that of the soul, and the two act together, so that what is done by the one is immediately communicated to the other.

Judging by the importance which they have at the present time in our life, how good and salutary it is to sanctify these first beginnings with objects from the realm of faith.

First impressions remain deeply imbedded in the memory. We should remember that the soul appears in the world naked; it grows, becomes rich with inner content, and undertakes various forms of activity only later. The first material, the first food for its formation it receives from outside, from the senses, through imagination. It is self-evident of what nature the first objects of the senses and imagination should be in order not only not to hinder, but even more to aid the Christian life which is just being formed. It is well known that just as the first food has a significant influence on the temperament of the body, so also the first objects with which the soul occupies itself have a powerful influence on the character of the soul or the tone of its life.

## 2. SURROUNDING THE CHILD WITH SACRED IMAGES

The developing senses furnish material for the imagination: the imagined object is preserved in the memory and comprises, so to speak, the content of the soul. Let the senses receive their first impressions from sacred objects: the icon

and the light of the lampada for the eyes, sacred hymns for the hearing, etc. The child as yet understands nothing of what is before his eyes, but his eye and hearing become accustomed to these objects, and they, occupying the heart beforehand, by this very fact put other objects far away. Following the feelings, the first exercises of the imagination will also be sacred; it will be easier for him to imagine these objects than others; such will be his first exercises. Then, in future, the beautiful, which on one side is essentially bound up with the forms of the senses and the imagination, will attract him not otherwise than under sacred forms.

And so, let the child be surrounded by sacred forms, objects of all kinds, and let everything that can corrupt in examples, depictions, and things, be put away. Later, and for all the time that follows, one must keep the same order. It is well known how powerfully corrupt images act upon the soul, no matter in what form they might touch it! How unfortunate is the child who, closing his eyes, or being left alone and going within himself, is stifled by a multitude of improper images—vain, tempting, breathing of the passions. This is the same thing for the soul as smoke is for the head.

One should likewise not neglect the manner in which these powers act. What the senses do is to see, to hear, to feel—in general to experience, to test. This is why they are the first arousers of curiosity, which later, because of them, goes over into the imagination and memory and, having acquired a seat in them, becomes an unconquerable tyrant for the soul.

It is impossible not to use the senses, for it is only through them that one may know the things one must know for the glory of God and our own good. But in doing this it is impossible to avoid curiosity, which is an irresistible inclination to see and hear without purpose—what is being done where, and how things are. How should one act in this regard?

Investigation is already inevitably curiosity. Curiosity consists of trying to know everything without order, without aim, without distinguishing whether it is needful or not. It is only necessary that one should preserve a measure and order in exercising the senses, and direct them only to what is needful and to awareness of what is needful—then there will be no food for curiosity. That is, one must train the child to investigate what is considered to be essential for him, but to refrain from and avoid everything else. Then, in the very act of investigating, one should preserve a progressive order—not jumping from subject to subject, or from one feature to another, but looking at one thing after another and taking care afterwards to picture the subject in the mind in a fitting way.

Such a method of study will save the child from distraction even in the midst of what is allowed; it will train him to master the senses, and through them—the imagination. He will not jump from one thing to another without need; nor, consequently, will he dream and be distracted by images and thereby give no rest to his soul, muddying it with the ebb and flow of his loose fantasies. One who is unable to master the senses and imagination will inevitably be distracted and inconstant, being overcome by curiosity, which will chase him from one subject to another until he is exhausted, and all this without fruit.

At the same time with these capabilities, the passions arise in a child and begin to disturb him from an early age. The child does not yet speak, does not walk, has just begun to sit and grasp toys—but already he becomes angry, envies, takes for himself, is selfish, and in general manifests the activities of the passions. This evil, which bases itself on the animal life, is very harmful; therefore, one must oppose it from its first manifestations.

How to do this is difficult to define. Everything depends on the good sense of the parents. However, one may lay down the following rules: 1) One should, as much as possible, anticipate

their appearance; 2) then, if some passion has appeared, one must hasten to quench it with well thought-out and tested means. Thus they are prevented from becoming rooted and a predisposition to them is avoided. A passion which reveals itself more frequently than others should be treated with special attention, because it can be the ruling element of one's life.

The most trustworthy way of treating the passions is the use of the means of grace. One should turn to them with faith. Passion is a manifestation of the soul, and in the beginning parents have no way of acting (directly) on the soul. Therefore, first of all one must entreat the Lord that He might do His work. Experience will be a further guide in this for a zealous father, mother, or nurse.

When the child begins to understand, the general means of fighting passions can be used. One must arm oneself against the passions from the beginning, and persecute them thereafter for the whole time of upbringing, so that the child might be able and might become accustomed to mastering them; for their disturbing attacks will not cease to the end of one's life.

### 3. FORMING ATTITUDES

If the prescribed order of action on the body and the lower capabilities is strictly kept, the soul will receive from this a splendid preparation for a truly good attitude. However, this is only a preparation; the attitude itself must be formed by a positive action on all his powers: mind, will, and heart.

#### *The mind*

In children the power of thinking is quickly manifested. It comes at the same time as speech and grows together with the development of the latter. Therefore, the formation of the mind must be begun together with words. The chief thing to be kept in mind is that there should be sound concepts and judgments,

in accordance with Christian principles, about everything the child encounters or that comes to his attention: what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. This is very easy to do by means of ordinary conversations and questions. Parents often speak among themselves; children overhear and almost always assimilate not only the ideas, but even turns of speech and gestures.

Therefore, let parents, when they talk, call things always by their proper names. For example: What is the meaning of the present life, and how does it end? Where does everything come from? What are pleasures? What value do certain customs have? etc. Let parents talk with their children and explain to them either directly or, best of all, by means of stories. Is it good, for example, to dress well? Is it pleasurable when one receives praise? etc. Or let them ask the children what they think of one thing or another, and then correct their mistakes. In a short time, by this simple means, one may communicate sound principles for judging things, and these principles will not be erased for a long time, and may remain for life.

In this way worldly thinking and evil, insatiable curiosity are suppressed in their very root. Truth binds the mind to what satisfies it, but worldly thinking does not satisfy and thereby ignites curiosity. One does a great favor to children by saving them from this worldly thinking. And this is still before they begin reading books.

Further, one must on no account give children books with corrupt concepts; their minds will thus be preserved whole, in holy and divine healthiness. It is useless not to try to exercise the child in this way, under the supposition that he is still small. Truth is accessible to everyone. That a small Christian child is wiser than philosophers has been shown by experience. This experience is repeated sometimes today, but in earlier times it was everywhere. For example, during the period of martyrdom, small children

discoursed on Christ the Saviour, on the folly of idol-worship, on the future life, and the like; this was because their mother or father had explained these things to them in simple conversations. These truths had then become close to the heart, which began to treasure them all the way to readiness to die for them.

### *The will*

A child has many desires. Everything catches his attention, attracts him, and gives birth to desires. Being unable to distinguish good from evil, he desires everything, and he is ready to do everything he desires. A child left to himself becomes untamably self-willed. Therefore, parents must strictly watch this sprout of the soul's activity.

The simplest means for confining the will within its proper bounds lies in disposing children to do nothing without permission. Let them be eager to run to their parents and ask: May I do this or that? They should be persuaded by their own experience and that of others that to fulfill their own desires without asking is dangerous; they should be put in such a frame of mind that they even fear their own will. This disposition will be most fortunate, and at the same time it is the easier one to be imprinted. Since children for the most part do address their questions to adults, realizing their own ignorance and weakness, this state of affairs has only to be elevated and placed as an absolute law for them.

The natural consequence of such an attitude will be total obedience and submission in everything to the will of the parents even against one's own will; a disposition to deny oneself in many things, and the habit or ability to do this; and, the chief thing, the conviction, based on experience, that one should not obey oneself in everything. This is all the more understandable for children from their own experience, because they desire many things, and often those things are harmful to their bodies and souls.

While accustoming a child not to do his own will, one must also train him to do good. For this, let the parents themselves furnish a fine example of good life and acquaint their children with people whose chief concerns are not pleasures and awards, but the salvation of the soul. Children love to imitate. How early they learn to copy a mother or father! Here there occurs something similar to what happens with identically tuned instruments.

At the same time, one must inspire the children themselves to good deeds. At first one must order them to do good deeds, and then guide them into doing them themselves. The most ordinary good deeds in this regard are: almsgiving, compassion, mercifulness, yielding to others, and patience. It is not difficult to train them to do these things. Opportunities for them occur every minute; one has only to use them.

From this training, the will emerges well disposed to various good deeds and in general with a tendency towards the good. Doing good must be taught just like everything else.

### *The heart*

If the mind, will, and lower powers are acting in this way, it goes without saying that the heart also will be disposed to have sound and true feelings and to acquire the habit of enjoying what is truly enjoyable and of having no sympathy whatever to that which, under the guise of pleasure, pours poison into the soul and body. The heart is the capability of tasting and feeling satisfaction.

When man was in union with God, he found delight in divine and sacred things by the grace of God. After his fall he lost this taste and thirsts for what is sensual. The grace of Baptism has removed this, but sensuality is again ready to fill the heart. One must not allow this; one must guard the heart.

The most effective means for the education of true taste in the heart is a church-centered life, in which all children in their

upbringing must be unflinching. Sympathy for everything sacred, pleasure in remaining in its midst for the sake of quietness and warmth, separation from what is bright and attractive in worldly vanity—all this cannot better be imprinted in the heart (than by a church-centered life). The church building, church singing, icons—these are the first objects of fine art in content and power.

One should remember that it is in accordance with the taste of one's heart that the future eternal mansion will be given, and that the taste in one's heart there will be the very one that is formed here. It is evident that theaters, shows, and similar things are not suitable for Christians.

A soul that has been calmed and ordered in this way will not, in accordance with its natural disorderliness, hinder the development of the spirit. The spirit develops itself more easily than the soul, and it reveals its power and activity earlier than the soul's. To the spirit belong: *the fear of God* (corresponding to the mind), *conscience* (corresponding to will), and *prayer* (corresponding to feeling). *The fear of God* gives birth to prayer and makes the conscience clear.

There is no need to direct all this to the other, invisible world. Children already have a predisposition for this, and they assimilate these feelings. Prayer is especially ingrafted very easily and acts not through the tongue, but through the heart. This is why children willingly and without fatigue participate in prayers at home and in the church services and are happy to do so. Therefore, they should not be deprived of this part of their education, but little by little they should be led into this sanctuary of our feelings. The earlier the fear of God will be imprinted and prayer aroused, the more solid will piety be for the rest of one's life.

In some children this spirit has been manifested of itself, even among evident obstacles to its uncovering. This is very

natural. The spirit of grace received at Baptism, if it has not been quenched by an improper development of body and soul, cannot but give life to our spirit, and what can prevent it from being manifested in its power?

### *The conscience*

Conscience, however, demands the closest guidance. Sound concepts and prayer, together with the good example of the parents and with other means of teaching the good, illuminate the conscience and imprint in it sufficient foundations for subsequent good activity. But the chief thing is that one should form in children an attitude of conscientiousness and awareness. Awareness is something extraordinarily important in life; but however easy it is to form it, it is just as easy to stifle it in children.

The will of the parents is, for small children, the law of conscience and of God. Let parents, in accordance with their best understanding, give their commands in such a way that children are not forced to be transgressors of their (the parents') will; and if they have already become such, they should be disposed as much as possible to repentance.

What frost is for flowers, so is the transgression of the parents' will for a child; he cannot look you in the eyes, he does not desire to enjoy kindnesses, he wishes to run away and be alone; but at the same time his soul becomes crude, and the child begins to grow wild. It is a good thing to dispose him ahead of time to repentance, so that without fear, with trust and with tears, he might come and say, "I did something wrong."

It goes without saying that all this will concern only ordinary things; but what is good is that here a foundation is placed for a future constant and truly religious character—to rise up immediately after a fall—and there is formed the capability of speedy repentance and cleansing or renewing oneself by tears.

We have given here the order of a child's life. Let a child grow in it, and the spirit of piety will develop more in him. The parents should follow all the movements of the child's awakening powers and direct everything to a single end. This is the rule: begin with the child's very first breath; begin everything at once, and not just one thing; do this all unceasingly, evenly, by degrees, without jumps, with patience and expectation observing a wise gradualness, taking note of the sprouts and making use of them, considering nothing unimportant in such an important matter. We will not go into details here, for we have in mind to indicate only the chief direction of upbringing.

# Chapter Three

## *The Instruction and Guidance of Youth*

### I. THE INSTRUCTION OF YOUTH

One cannot define just when a person comes to the awareness of himself as being a Christian and to the independent resolve to live in a Christian way. In actual fact this happens at different times: at the age of seven, ten, fifteen, or later. It may be that the time of study comes before this, as usually happens.

At the same time there is an unchanging rule: one must keep the whole previous order without change during the whole time of study also, for it proceeds essentially from the nature of our capabilities and from the demands of Christian life. The order of study must not be placed in opposition to the indicated outlook, otherwise everything will be destroyed which was created there. That is, one must preserve young students, just like infants, by means of the piety of everything surrounding them, by means of church life and the Mysteries; and likewise one must act upon their body, soul, and spirit.

At the same time, practically speaking, to the teaching itself one must add only this: Let instruction be so arranged that it will be evident what is the main point and what is secondary. This idea is easiest to imprint through a division of the objects of study and the time for them. Let the study of faith be considered the chief thing. Let the best time be assigned to works of piety, and in case of conflict let them take the first place over learning. Let approval be given not only for success in learning, but likewise for faith and good behavior. In general, one must so dispose the mind of pupils that they do not lose the conviction that our chief work is the pleasing of God, and that learning is

a secondary quality, something incidental, which is good only during the present life. This is why it should not at all be placed so high and in such an attractive form that it will occupy all one's attention and absorb all one's concern. There is nothing more poisonous or ruinous for the spirit of Christian life than such learning and an exclusive concern for it. It casts one straight into coldness and then can keep one forever in it, and sometimes it also adds to this an immoral life, if there are conditions which are favorable for this.

The second thing to which attention should be given is the spirit of the instruction or of the attitude towards the objects of study. It should be placed as an unfailing law that every kind of learning which is taught to a Christian should be penetrated with Christian principles and, more precisely, Orthodox ones. Every branch of learning is capable of this approach, and it will be a true kind of learning only when this condition is fulfilled. Christian principles are true beyond doubt. Therefore, without any doubting, make them the general measuring stick of truth. It is a most dangerous error among us that subjects of learning are taught without any attention to the true faith; one allows oneself freethinking and even lying under the supposition that faith and learning are two spheres which are quite distinct.

On the contrary, we have a single spirit. It receives learning and is imbued with its principles just as it receives faith and is penetrated by it. How is it then possible that these two spheres should not come into contact here, whether favorable or unfavorable? At the same time, the sphere of truth is one. Therefore, why pound into the head that which is not from this sphere?

If instruction will be conducted in this manner, so that faith together with life in the spirit of faith might dominate in the attention of pupils, both in the manner of studying and in the spirit of instruction, then there is no doubt that the principles placed in childhood not only will be preserved, but will increase,

be strengthened, and come to a corresponding maturity. And what a good effect this will have!

If one will put in such order the upbringing of a child from his first years, then little by little the character which his whole life should have will be revealed before him, and he will grow more accustomed to the thought that upon him there lies the obligation given by our God and Saviour to live and act according to His decree, that all other deeds and occupations are lower than this and have a place only for the course of the present life, and that there is another dwelling place, another homeland towards which one must direct all one's thoughts and all one's desires.

In the natural course of the development of one's capabilities, everyone naturally comes to the awareness that he is a man. But if to his nature there is ingrafted the new principle of the grace of Christianity at the very moment when a person's powers and their movements are awakened (in Baptism), and if then in all the points of the development of these powers this new principle not only does not yield first place—but on the contrary always prevails and gives as it were the form to everything—then when a man comes to full awareness he will find himself at the same time acting according to Christian principles and will find himself to be a Christian.

This is the chief aim of a Christian upbringing: that a man as a result of this might say within himself that he is a Christian. And if, when he comes to full awareness of himself he will say, "I am a Christian, obliged by my Saviour and God to live in such a way so as to be vouchsafed the blessed communion with Him and with His chosen ones in the future life," then in the very midst of his independent existence or the unique, rational ordering of his life, he will place for himself as his first and essential duty to preserve in an independent way and to warm the spirit of piety in which he previously walked under the guidance of others.

## 2. CONSCIOUS ACCEPTANCE OF THE YOKE OF CHRIST

It has already been noted that there must be a special moment when one must intentionally renew in one's awareness all the obligations of Christianity and place upon oneself their yoke as an unfailing law.

In Baptism they were accepted without awareness because then they were kept more by the mind and attitude of someone else and in simplicity, but now one must consciously place upon oneself the good yoke of Christ, choose the life of Christianity, and exclusively dedicate oneself to God, so that later all the days of one's life one might serve Him with enthusiasm. Here only does a man himself begin the Christian life. It existed in him previously, also, but one may say it proceeded not from his own activity, nor from his own person. Now he himself, in his own person, begins to act in the spirit of a Christian. Before this, the light of Christ was in him like the light of the first day (of creation), which came not from one central source, but was diffused. But just as centers had to be provided for the light, drawing it to the suns and planets, so also this (spiritual) light must be gathered together around the central point of our life—our consciousness.

A man becomes entirely human when he comes to self-awareness and independence of mind, when he becomes the complete master and commander of his own ideas and deeds and holds certain ideas not because others have given these to him, but because he himself finds them to be true. A man, when he becomes a Christian, still remains a man, and therefore in his Christianity he must also be rational, only this rationality he should turn to the profit of holy faith. Let him become rationally convinced that the holy faith which he confesses is the only faithful path of salvation, and that all other paths which are not

in agreement with it lead to perdition. It is no honor to a man to be a blind confessor; he must be a conscious confessor, so that acting in this way, he acts as he should. All this he does when he consciously places upon himself the good yoke of Christ.

Only here does one's personal faith, or one's good life according to faith, become firm and unshakable. One will not be scandalized by a bad example, will not be attracted by empty thoughts, because he is clearly conscious of the obligation of thinking and acting already in a definite way.

But if he has not become conscious of this, then just as previously a good example inclined him to follow it, so now a bad example can dispose him to do what is bad, can draw him to sin. And just as the good thoughts of others previously possessed his mind easily and without protest, so now evil thoughts take possession of him. In experience it is evident how precarious is the confession of faith and goodness of life in a man who previously has not become conscious of himself as a Christian. He who encounters few temptations will continue to mature longer in simplicity of heart; but one who cannot escape them will stand before great danger. We see in the lives of all who have preserved the grace of Baptism that there was in these lives a moment when they decisively dedicated themselves to God; this is indicated by such words as "he became inflamed in spirit," "he was ignited by a divine desire."

Let him who has become conscious of himself as a Christian, or has consciously decided to live in a Christian way, himself now preserve with all care the perfection and purity of life which he has received at a younger age, just as others have preserved this life before him. There is no need to offer special rules as a guide for him. In this respect he is the same as one who is repenting and, having abandoned sin, has enthusiastic resoluteness to live in a Christian way. Therefore, from now on he should be guided by the same rules already mentioned above. The difference

between this kind of person and one who has repented and is on the way to perfection is already clear without any explanation.

Now we must make several very important warnings which refer exclusively to youth. How good and saving it is not only to be directed in a Christian way in one's upbringing, but also later to acknowledge oneself and decide to be a Christian before entering upon the years of mature youth. This is essential in view of the great dangers to which a youth is inevitably subjected: 1) from the very nature of his age, and 2) from the great temptations which occur throughout youth.

### 3. THE TURBULENT PERIOD OF YOUTH

The river of our life is interrupted by the turbulent period of youth. This is the time when the life of body and spirit is boiling at full steam. A child, a boy, lives quietly; a mature man has few violent shocks; and those who are adorned with grey hairs are already inclined to repose. It is only youth that is boiling with life.

One must have a very strong foundation so as to stand firm at this time against the shocks of waves. The very disorderliness and impulsiveness of the movements of this age are dangerous.

Now there begin a youth's first movements of his own, the beginning of the awakening of his powers, and they have for him a great fascination. By the power of their influence they crowd out everything that had earlier been placed in the mind and heart of the boy. What was before becomes for him a dream, a prejudice. Only his present feelings seem true; only they seem to have actuality and significance.

However, if before these powers are awakened the boy has bound himself by the obligation of confessing and living as a Christian, then all the new impulses, being secondary, will be weaker and give way more easily to the demands of the earlier impulses he felt, because the latter are older, have already been

tested and chosen by the heart, and, the chief thing, have been made firm by a vow. A youth absolutely wants to keep his word.

But what can one say to someone who not only does not love Christian life and truth, but has never even heard of it?

In this case he is a house without protection, given over to robbery, or a dry branch given over to burning in a fire. When the arbitrariness of youthful ideas throws a shadow of doubt on everything, when the arousal of the passions is causing a mighty disturbance in him, when the whole soul is filled with tempting thoughts and movements—the young man is in fire. Who will give him a drop of dew to cool him, or give him a helping hand, if there is not a voice from his own heart that speaks for truth, for goodness, and for purity? But this voice will not come if love for it has not been sown previously. Even good advice in this case will not help; there will be nothing for it to stick to. Advice and persuasion are powerful if, entering through hearing into the heart, they arouse there feelings which already exist and have a value for us and have only been set aside for the time being, while we simply do not know how to get to them and give them their natural power. In this case advice from someone else is a precious gift to a youth. But if in the heart there are no beginnings of a pure life, such advice is useless.

A youth lives in his own world, and who will investigate all the movements and inclinations of his heart? This is the same thing as investigating the path of a bird in the air, or the course of a ship in the water! The bubbling of a fermenting liquid, the movement of unlike elements when mixed together—this is the heart of a youth. All the demands of so-called nature are in active arousal; each one speaks up and seeks satisfaction. There is present a disorder in our nature, and so the coming together of these voices is like the disorderly cries of a noisy multitude.

What will happen to the youth if he has not been trained in advance to put his movements into a certain order and has not

placed upon himself the obligation to preserve them in strict subordination to certain higher demands? If these principles have been deeply impressed upon the heart in his upbringing as a child, and then have been consciously accepted as a rule, then all these agitations will proceed as if on the surface, fleetingly, without moving the foundations or shaking the soul.

The state in which we emerge out of the years of youth depends a great deal upon the state in which we enter into them. Water falling from a cliff foams and swirls below, but then it goes its quiet way in various courses. This is an image of youth, into which everyone is thrown as water into a waterfall. From it there come out two kinds of people: some shine with virtue and nobility, while others are darkened by impiety and a corrupt life. There is also a third kind, a middle class, a mixture of good with evil, which is something like a firebrand that inclines now towards good and now towards evil, or like a broken clock that sometimes runs well but sometimes runs fast or slow.

He who has earlier made himself firm by an obligation has taken shelter, as it were, in a strong ship which allows no water to come into it, or has made a calm channel through a whirl-pool. Without this even a good upbringing will not always save a person. It may be that a young person might not fall into crude vices, but all the same, if he is not concentrated within himself and if his heart is not separated from everything by means of a vow, it will be pulled this way and that by things that attract him, and he will unfailingly come out of the years of youth in a state of coldness, without reaching harbor anywhere.

How saving it is before the years of youth not only to receive a good outlook, but also to make oneself firm with a vow to be a true Christian. Let one who has decided on this fear youth itself, like fire, and therefore let him flee all cases in which youth can easily be let loose and become untamable.

#### 4. TWO TENDENCIES CHARACTERISTIC OF YOUTH

In itself youth is dangerous; but apart from this, there are two tendencies which are characteristic of this age, and from them the impulses of youth are powerfully inflamed and acquire great power and danger. These are: 1) a thirst for impressions, and 2) an inclination to enter into contact with others. Therefore, as a means for avoiding the dangers of this age, one may advise that these tendencies be subjected to rules, lest in place of good they bring evil. The good dispositions which were aroused earlier will remain in all their power if they are not quenched and not hindered.

##### *The thirst for impressions*

The *thirst for impressions* gives a certain impetuosity, an uninterruptedness, a variety to the activities of a youth. He wishes constantly to test himself, to see everything, to hear everything, to be everywhere. You can look for him wherever there is a glitter for the eyes, a harmony for the ears, an open space for movement. He wishes to be under an uninterrupted stream of impressions, always new and therefore various. He does not like to sit home, does not like to stay in one place, does not like to concentrate on only one activity. His element is enjoying himself.

But this is not enough for him. He is not satisfied with an actual testing of himself, but wishes to assimilate and, as it were, transfer what others have felt, how others have acted by themselves or in circumstances similar to his own. Then he throws himself into books and begins to read. He goes through one book after another, often without even understanding their contents; he is chiefly interested in finding an "effect," no matter what kind of thing it might be or what it might touch on. Something new, picturesque, sharp—this for him is the best possible recommendation of a book. Here there is revealed and formed an inclination

to light reading, which is the same thirst for impressions, only in a different form. But something more is involved here also.

A youth often becomes bored with reality because it somehow binds him from the side: it ties him down and encloses him too much within definite limits, whereas he is seeking a kind of freedom. Thus he often tears himself away from reality and goes off into a world he has created for himself, and there he begins to act in glory. Fantasy builds for him whole histories, where for the most part the hero is his own person. The youth is only entering into life; before him there is a deceptive, enticing future. In time he will have to take part in it—but what will he be? Can one not draw aside this curtain and take a look? Fantasy, which is very active at this age, does not tarry with its satisfactions. Here day-dreaming manifests itself and develops in such actions.

Day-dreams, light reading, enjoyments—all these, almost one and the same thing in spirit, are offspring of a thirst for impressions, a thirst for what is new and different. And the harm from them is one and the same. There is no better way to starve the good seeds which have been placed before in the heart of a youth than by these means. A young blossom planted in a place where the wind blows on it from all sides only endures a little and then dries up; grass on which people frequently walk does not grow; a part of the body which is subjected to friction for a long time becomes numb. The same thing happens to the heart and to the good dispositions in it if one is given over to day-dreams, to empty reading or to enjoyments.

If one stands for a long time in the wind, especially a damp wind, and then comes to a quiet place out of the wind, he feels that everything within him is not quite in its place; the same thing happens in the soul that has been amusing itself, in whatever way. When he returns to himself from his state of distraction, the youth finds that everything in his soul has become distorted. The most important thing that has happened

is that everything good has been covered by a kind of veil of forgetfulness, and in the first place stand only those deceptive things which have left their impression on him. Consequently, what was before and should always be is no longer present; one's inclinations have changed, and new ones now take the first place.

Why, after returning to it after some kind of distraction, does the soul begin to grow bored? Because it finds itself robbed. A distracted person has made his soul a highway, along which, through imagination, tempting objects pass by like shadows and tempt the soul to follow them. And then, when one is thus, so to speak, torn away from oneself, the devil secretly approaches, takes away the good seed, and puts a bad one in its place. Thus the Saviour taught when He explained who it is that takes away the seed sown by the wayside and who it is that sows the tares. It is the enemy of mankind who does both the one and the other.

And so, young man! Do you desire to preserve the purity and innocence of childhood, or the vow of Christian life without reproach? With as much strength and good sense as you have, refrain from amusements, from disorderly reading of tempting books, and from day-dreams.

How good it is to subject oneself in this regard to a strict and even a most strict discipline, and to be, during the whole time of one's youth, under the guidance of others. Those youths who are not allowed to arrange their own conduct until they reach the age of manhood, one can call happy. Every youth should rejoice if he is placed in such circumstances. A young man, quite clearly, is scarcely able to come to this by himself; but he shows much sense if he believes the counsel to be more at home at his work, not to day-dream, and not to read empty things. Let him avoid amusements by love of labor, and let him avoid day-dreaming by serious occupations under guidance. Reading especially should be subject to such guidance—both the choice of books and the method of reading. Let everyone

arrange this the best way he can; but it must be done. Passions, doubts, inclinations—all are kindled in precisely this unsteady ferment in the mind of a youth.

*An inclination towards contact with others*

The second inclination in a youth, just as dangerous as the first, is *the inclination towards contact with others*. It is revealed in the need for companionship, friendship, and love. All these, if they are in true order, are good; but it is not the youth himself who should place them in this order.

The age of youth is a time of lively feelings. They are in his heart like the ebb and flow of the tide at the ocean shore. Everything occupies his interest; everything astonishes him. Nature and society have opened their treasures before him. But feelings do not like to be hidden within themselves, and the youth wishes to share them. Then he has need of a person who might share his feelings, that is, a friend and companion. This need is good and noble, but it can also be dangerous! To the one to whom you entrust your feelings you give a certain authority over yourself. How careful one must be in the choice of a close friend! You may meet someone who can lead you far, far away from the straight path. It goes without saying that good naturally strives towards good and avoids the evil; there is a certain taste for this in the heart. But again, how often it happens that simplicity of heart is enticed by cunning.

Thus, every young man is rightly advised to be careful in his choice of a friend. It is good not to conclude friendship until the friend has been tested. It is even better to have as one's first friend one's father, or a person who in many respects takes the place of a father, or a relative who is experienced and good. For one who has resolved to live in a Christian way, the first friend given to him by God is his spiritual father. Converse with him, entrust your secrets to him, ponder what he says, and learn.

Under his guidance, with prayer, God will send some other friend also, if it is necessary.

There is not as much danger in friendship, however, as there is in companionship. Rarely do we see real friends, but more often just acquaintances and "friends" in the loose sense. And here how much evil is possible, and how much there really is!

There are certain circles of "friends" with very bad ways of life. Being drawn in with them, you do not notice how you become united with them in spirit, just as you do not notice, when you are in a foul smelling place, how foul you yourself smell. People themselves often lose awareness of the indecency of their own conduct, and they quite calmly become crude in it. And even if this awareness is awakened in someone (in such a circle), he doesn't have the strength to get out. Each one is afraid to declare this, expecting that afterwards he will be persecuted with sarcasm, and he says, "So let it be, perhaps it will pass away." *Evil communications corrupt good manners* (I Cor. 15:33). O Lord, deliver everyone from these depths of satan! For someone who has decided to labor for the Lord, his only companionship is with those who are pious, who are seeking the Lord; one should avoid others and in all sincerity have no close contact with them, following the example of the saints of God.

## 5. THE PINNACLE OF DANGER FOR YOUTH

The very pinnacle of danger for a youth is contact with the other sex. While in the first temptation a youth may only stray off the straight path; here, in addition, he loses himself. In its first awakening, this matter is mixed up with the need for what is beautiful, a need which from the time of its awakening compels a youth to seek satisfaction for it. Meanwhile, what is beautiful little by little begins in his soul to take on a form, because we can find nothing more beautiful than this. The

image which has thus been formed is carried about in the head of the youth. From this time on he seems to be seeking what is beautiful, that is, ideal, not earthly, but at the same time he meets with one of the daughters of men, and is wounded by her. A youth should flee this kind of wounding more than any other, because it is a sickness, and a sickness that is all the more dangerous in that the patient wants to be sick all the way to madness.

*How to avoid being wounded*

How can one avoid this wound? Do not go on the path which leads to being wounded. Here is how this path is described in one work on psychology: it has three turning points.

1) At first there is awakened in the youth some kind of painful feeling (what it is about and where it comes from, he does not know), which expresses itself in the special feeling that he is alone. This is a feeling of loneliness. From this feeling there is immediately produced another feeling—a certain pity, tenderness, and attention to oneself. Before this he lived as if not noticing himself. But now he turns to himself, examines himself, and constantly finds that he is not bad, that he is not worse than others, he is a person of some value. He begins to sense his own handsomeness, the pleasantness of the form of his body—in other words, to be pleased with himself. This is the limit of the first movement of temptation towards himself. From this time on the youth turns to the outward world.

2) This entrance into the outward world is animated by the conviction that he must be pleasing to others. With this conviction he boldly and as it were victoriously goes out into the arena of activity and, perhaps for the first time, makes for himself a law to be neat, clean, orderly, even elegant. He begins to wander, or to seek companions, seemingly without any definite aim, but in accordance with a secret inclination of his heart, which is seeking something. At the same time, he tries to show how smart

he is, how pleasant he is in contact with others, how kind and attentive he can be, and, in general, everything by which he hopes to be liked by others. At the same time he gives free reign to the primary organ of contact with other souls—the eyes.

3) In such a state a youth is like gun powder placed next to a spark, and soon he finds something to ignite his disease. By a glance of the eyes or by a voice which is especially pleasant, as if struck by an arrow or wounded by a shot, he stands in the beginning as if in ecstasy or turned to stone. Coming to himself from this state and recovering, he finds that his attention and his heart are directed to a certain object and are drawn to it with an unconquerable power.

From this time his heart begins to be eaten up by languor. The youth becomes bored, he is immersed in himself, he is occupied with something important, he seeks as if he has lost something, and everything he does is done for the certain person and as if the person is present. He is like someone who is lost; thoughts of food and sleep don't even occur to him, his usual activities are forgotten, and he comes into a disordered state. Nothing is dear to him. He is afflicted with a fierce illness which gnaws at his heart, hinders his breathing, dries up the very fountains of life. Such is the gradual course of being wounded!

## 6. HOW TO GUARD AGAINST THE TEMPTATIONS OF YOUTH

It goes without saying that a youth should guard himself against falling into this misfortune. Do not go on this path! Banish the signs that precede it—the vague sadness and the feeling of loneliness. Go directly against it. If you have become sad, do not give yourself over to dreams, but begin to do something serious with your attention, and it will pass. If self-pity has been aroused in you, or a feeling of how good you

are, hasten to sober yourself up and banish this whim with some kind of strictness and discipline to yourself, especially by making clear a sound idea of the insignificance of whatever comes into your head. A chance or intentional belittlement or humbling in this case would be like water poured on fire.

One must take care to suppress and banish this feeling especially because it is a beginning of movement. If you stop here, you will go no further; you will have neither the desire to be especially pleasing to others, nor the pursuit of showing off fine clothes, nor the desire for constantly going out. If they break through, fight with them. The best protection in this lies in a strict discipline in everything—in bodily labor, and even more in labor of the mind. Increase your studies, sit at home, do not give yourself over to amusements. If you must go out, then guard your senses, avoid the other sex, and—the chief thing—pray.

Besides these dangers which come from the attributes of youth, there are two more. First of all, an outlook that exalts to the heavens rational knowledge, or one's own understanding. A youth considers it a privilege to place a shade of doubt upon everything, and to set aside everything which does not correspond with the measuring stick of his own understanding. By this alone he cuts off from his heart the whole attitude which comes from faith and the Church, and remains alone. Seeking substitutes for what has been abandoned, he throws himself into theories which are fabricated without any correspondence to divine Truth; he entangles himself in these and banishes from his own mind all the truths of faith. The disaster is even greater if the occasion for these theories is given in the schools, and if such a spirit is the prevailing one there. People today think to gain possession of the truth, but they only gather together foggy ideas, empty and fantastic and for the most part even contradicting common sense; but these ideas attract the inexperienced and become an idol for a curious youth.

Secondly, there is a worldly outlook. Even though it might present itself as something profitable, when this prevails in a youth it is ruinous. It is marked by a life according to the impressions of one's senses, by a condition in which a person remains very little within himself but is almost always outside of himself, whether in fact or in dreams. With such an outlook one hates the inward life and those who speak about it and live by it. True Christians, for them, are mystics who are confused in their understanding, or are hypocrites and so forth. Their understanding of the truth is hindered by the spirit of the world which is present in the circles of worldly life which a youth is allowed unhindered, and is even advised, to come into contact with. By this contact, the world with all its corrupt concepts and customs is pounded into the receptive soul of a youth who has not been warned ahead of time and has not been prepared to stand against it. He is just forming his outlook on life, and this worldly spirit becomes stamped on him as on wax, and he involuntarily becomes its child. But to be such a child is contrary to being a child of God in Christ Jesus.

And so, here are the dangers for youth from being young! And how difficult it is to resist! But for one who has been raised up well and has decided to dedicate himself to God before the years of youth, this age is not so dangerous. He needs only to endure a little, and then there will come the most pure and blessed repose. Only keep the vow of pure Christian life during this time also, and afterwards you will live with a certain holy, unshakable firmness. Whoever has gone without danger through the years of youth has, as it were, sailed across a stormy river and, looking back, he blesses God. But someone else, with tears in his eyes, turns back in regret and curses himself. You will never recover what you have lost in your youth. Will one who has fallen ever again attain what is possessed by one who has not fallen?

## Chapter Four

### *Preserving the Grace of Baptism*

From what has been said up to now, one may easily understand the reason why so few preserve the grace of Baptism. Upbringing is the cause of everything, both good and evil.

#### I. WHY THE GRACE OF BAPTISM IS NOT PRESERVED

The reason why the grace of Baptism is not preserved is because the order, rules, and laws of an upbringing which is adopted to this end are not kept. The chief causes of this are:

1) Going away from the Church and its grace-giving means. This starves the sprout of Christian life, disconnecting it from its sources, and it wilts as a flower wilts when it is placed in a warm place.

2) Failure to pay heed to one's bodily nature. People think that the body may be developed in every way without harm for the soul, while actually in the bodily members is the seat of the passions, which develop together with its development, become rooted in and take possession of the soul. Penetrating the bodily members, the passions receive in them a place to settle, or they make out of them a certain unapproachable fortress and thereby secure power for themselves for all the time to come.

3) A development of the powers of the soul which is indiscriminating and is not directed towards a single aim. People do not see the aim ahead of them, and so do not see the path to it. From this, despite all the concern for the most contemporary education, people do no more than to puff up in themselves curiosity, self-will, and a thirst for pleasures.

4) Complete forgetfulness of the spirit. Prayer, fear of God, and conscience are seldom taken into consideration. If there is outward good order, the most inward side of life is always taken for granted and therefore always left to take care of itself. During the time of learning, the most important thing is covered over by secondary things, and the one thing needed is overshadowed by a multitude of others.

5) Finally, when one enters into the age of youth without first putting in place good principles and the determination to live in a Christian way. Further, when one does not restrain the attractions of youthful life in a proper order, but gives oneself over to all the thirst for impressions, through amusements, light reading, the heating of the imagination by fantasies, indiscriminate contact with those who are like oneself, and especially with the opposite sex, an exclusive concern for learning and giving oneself over to the world by means of fashionable ideas, rules, and customs, which are never favorable to the life of grace but always arm themselves hostilely against it and strive to smother it.

Each one of these causes, and even one of them, is sufficient to quench in a young person the life of grace. But it happens for the most part that they act together, and one unfailingly draws another in its wake; and they all together so obstruct the spiritual life that sometimes not even the slightest trace of it can be noticed, as if a man has no spirit at all and was created not for communion with God, does not have the powers foreordained for this, and has not received the grace which gives him life.

The reason why a consistent order of upbringing is not kept is to be found either in ignorance of this order or carelessness with regard to it. Upbringing which is left to itself without attention of necessity will take a direction which is corrupt, false, and harmful, at first in the way of life at home and then during the time of study. But even where, to all appearances, the upbringing is not left without attention and

is subjected to the well-known rules, it turns out frequently to be fruitless and deviates from the aim by reason of the false ideas and principles upon which its order is built. The proper thing is not kept in sight and made the chief thing: not the pleasing of God, not the salvation of the soul, but something entirely different—either the development of purely natural powers, or adaptation to an official position, of making oneself suitable for life in the world, and so forth. But when the beginning is impure and false, then of necessity that which is built upon it cannot lead to good.

As the chief deviations from a proper upbringing one may indicate:

1) The putting aside of the means of receiving grace. This is a natural consequence of forgetting the fact that the person who is being brought up is a Christian and has not only natural, but also grace-given powers. But without these the Christian is a defenseless garden which is trampled by the roaring demons and broken by the storm of sin and the world, with no one and nothing to bring him to his senses and chase them away.

2) Because preparation is made primarily for happiness in temporal life, while the memory of eternal life is drowned out. This is what is spoken about at home, commented on in classes, and is the chief subject in simple conversations.

3) The prevalence of outwardness, superficiality, in everything, not excluding even the priestly ministry.

Not being prepared at home, and having gone through such an upbringing, a person will unfailingly be confused in his mind, and will look at everything in an improper way. He will see everything in a distorted way, through broken or false spectacles. Therefore he does not even want to hear about the final truth of his aim in life or the means to it. All of this for him is a secondary matter, not to be taken seriously.

## 2. HOW TO CORRECT A BAD ORDER OF THINGS

After this it is not difficult to define what precisely is necessary in order to correct such a bad order of things. One must:

1) Understand well and assimilate the principles of true Christian upbringing and act according to them, first of all at home. The upbringing in the home is the root and foundation of everything that follows. One who is well brought up and directed at home will not so easily be knocked off the straight path by a wrong teaching at school.

2) Immediately after this, one must rebuild on new, true principles the school education, introduce into it Christian elements, correct what needs correction; and the chief thing: one must at all times keep the education of the child under the most abundant influence of the Holy Church, which by the whole order of its life acts in a saving way upon the formation of the spirit. This would give no opportunity for sinful impulses to blaze up, would weaken the spirit of the world, and would banish the spirit out of the abyss. At the same time one must direct everything from what is temporal to what is eternal, from the outward to the inward, to raise up children of the Church, members of the Kingdom of Heaven.

3) Most needful of all, one must educate the *educators* under the guidance of such persons who know the true education, not in theory, but in practice. Being formed under the supervision of the most experienced educators, they again will hand on their art to others who follow, and so forth. The educator should go through all the degrees of Christian perfection in order later to know how to behave in the midst of action, to be capable of noticing which way the students are going, and then to act upon them with patience, successfully, powerfully, and fruitfully.

This should be a group of the most pure, God-chosen, and holy people. Of all holy works, the education of children is the most holy.

### 3. THE FRUIT OF A GOOD UPBRINGING

The fruit of a good upbringing is the preservation of the grace of Holy Baptism. This preservation rewards with great abundance all the labors of upbringing. For certain high advantages belong to the person who has preserved the grace of Baptism and from his earliest years has dedicated himself to God.

1) The first advantage and as it were the foundation of all other advantages is the wholeness of all that is given by nature and grace. A man is meant to be a container of extraordinarily exalted powers which are ready to be poured out upon him from the Source of all good things, if only he will not put himself into disorder. One who repents, it is true, can also be healed completely; but it would seem that it is not given to him to know and to feel as one who has not fallen; he cannot take delight in that wholeness and possess the boldness that is the result of it.

2) From this there follows naturally a liveliness, a lightness, a spontaneous doing of good. One walks in the good as in a world which is the only one akin to him. One who is repenting must for a long time force himself and train himself so as to do good, so as to perform it easily; and even after attaining this, he must constantly keep himself in a state of tension and fear. On the other hand, one who has not fallen lives in simplicity of heart, in a kind of assurance of salvation which blesses him and is not deceived.

3) Then in his life there is formed a certain evenness and uninterruptedness. There are neither sudden impulses nor weakenings in him, and just as breathing occurs in us for the most part evenly, so in him walking in good occurs in the

same way. This can happen also in someone who has repented, but it is not acquired quickly, and is not manifested in such perfection. A wheel that has been repaired frequently lets its defects be known, and a clock that has been repaired is not quite as accurate as one that is new and has not been repaired.

4) A person who has not fallen is always young. In the features of his moral character there are reflected the feelings of a child which has not yet become guilty before his father. Here the first feeling of innocence is a childishness in Christ, a kind of ignorance of evil. How much this cuts off unnecessary thoughts and the oppressive agitations of the heart! Then there is an extraordinary joy, sincere kindness, a quietness of manner. In all power there is revealed in him the fruits of the Spirit indicated by the Apostle: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, mercifulness, faith, meekness, self-restraint (Gal. 5:22). He is, as it were, clothed in the bowels of mercy, goodness, humility of wisdom, meekness, longsuffering (Col. 3:12). Then he preserves an unhypocritical joyfulness of manner or a spiritual joy, for in him is the Kingdom of God, which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Further, characteristic of him is a certain clairvoyance and wisdom which sees everything within himself and around himself and is able to make good use of himself and his deeds. His heart takes on such an attitude that it immediately says to him what he should do and how he should do it.

Finally, one may say that it is characteristic of him not to be afraid of falling, to have a feeling of safety in God. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (Rom. 8:35). All of this together makes him worthy of respect and love. He involuntarily attracts people to himself. The existence of such persons in the world is a great grace of God. They take the place of the nets of the Apostles. Just as a multitude of iron filings gather together around a powerful magnet, or as a powerful character attracts

the weak, so does the power of the Spirit which dwells in him draw to itself everyone, and especially those in whom there are the first stirrings of the Spirit.

#### 4. THE CHIEF FORM OF MORAL PERFECTION: UNSHAKABILITY IN VIRTUE

But the chief form of moral perfection which belongs to one who has preserved himself whole in the years of youth is a certain unshakability in virtue for his whole life. Samuel remained firm in the presence of all the temptations that scandalized in the house of Eli and in the midst of the agitations of the people in society. Joseph in the midst of his evil brothers, in the house of Potiphar, in prison and in glory, equally preserved his soul inviolate. In truth, *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth* (Lamentations of Jeremiah 3:27). *My son, from thy youth up choose instruction, and until thou art old thou wilt keep finding wisdom . . . . Thou wilt toil a little while, thou wilt eat of her produce* (Sir. 6:18, 19). A right outlook is converted, as it were, into nature, and if sometimes it is a little violated, soon it returns to its original state. Therefore in the lives of saints we find for the most part those who have preserved their moral purity and the grace of Baptism in youth.

#### *That which is most pleasing to God*

Above all this, one who has preserved purity and dedicated himself to God from his early years does that which is most pleasing to God. He offers to God the most pleasing sacrifice,

1) because God is pleased most of all, according to the law of justification, by what is offered *first*: the first fruits, the firstborn of men and animals, and therefore also by the first years of youth.

2) because it is a pure sacrifice that is being offered—an immaculate youth—and this is what is chiefly demanded of every sacrifice.

3) because this is accomplished by means of overcoming quite a few obstacles, both within oneself and outside, by renouncing pleasures for which, especially at this age, there is a great inclination.

*Give oneself to God in the first moments of awakening*

Such a one does the thing that makes most sense. One must dedicate oneself to God, for in this alone is salvation, unless one has given himself over to despair. There is no better and more hopeful time for this than the first moment when we have become aware of ourselves—for who knows what will be tomorrow? But if someone hopes to live longer without dedicating this time to God, he will only make it difficult for himself, becoming used to a way of life which is opposed to this. And God knows whether or not he will be able to conquer himself later. And even if he does conquer himself later, what kind of sacrifice is this to God—an offering that is sick, worn out, injured in his members, not whole? Moreover, although this does happen, it is so rare! How rarely does one who has lost innocence succeed in regaining it!

How difficult it is to be converted for someone who has not known a good life from childhood is depicted vividly, from his own experience, by blessed Augustine in his *Confessions*. He says: “The years of boyhood I spent in games and pranks, even those which are not allowed, in disobedience and lack of attention to my parents. When I entered upon youth I began to lead an immoral life, and in three years I became so corrupt that afterwards for the course of twelve years I was constantly intending to correct myself and did not find the strength to do it. Even after I had made a turn-around to a decisive breaking of the will,

I still tarried for two years, putting off my conversion from day to day. So weak does the will become from the first passions! But even after my decisive conversion and the reception of grace in Holy Baptism, what I had to endure fighting with my own passions, which drew me powerfully onto the path I had gone on before!”

Is it remarkable that there are so few who are being saved among those who have led a bad youth? This example more clearly than anything else indicates in what great danger is a person who has not received good rules in his youth and has not beforehand dedicated himself to God. What good fortune therefore it is to receive a good, truly Christian upbringing, to enter with it into the years of youth, and then in the same spirit to enter into the years of manhood.

# *Part Two*

*On Repentance  
and the Sinner's Turning  
Toward God*





St. Theophan the Writer.  
19th-century engraving of his official portrait,  
based on his self-portrait.

## Chapter One

### *How Does Christian Life Begin in the Mystery of Repentance?*

The grace-filled Christian life is supposed to begin in baptism. But those who preserve this grace are rare; the majority of Christians lose it. We see some people who are more or less depraved in their present lives, because they had poor beginnings which were allowed to develop and take root in them. Others perhaps had good beginnings, but during the early years of their youth, whether by personal inclination or through temptation from others, forgot these beginnings and acquired evil habits. Such people no longer lead a true Christian life. Our holy faith offers the Mystery of Repentance for this. *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous* (I Jn. 2:1). If you have sinned, acknowledge the sin and repent. God will forgive the sin and once again give you *a new heart...and a new spirit* (Ez. 36:26). There is no other way: Either do not sin, or repent. Judging by the number of those who have fallen away from Baptism, one could even say that repentance has become for us the only source of true Christian life.

It is necessary to know that in the Mystery of Repentance some merely have to be cleansed, and the gift of the grace-filled life, previously assimilated and operating within them, will be rekindled. For others, the beginning of this life has just been established within them, or it is being given and accepted anew. We will be examining the latter case.

## I. TURNING AWAY FROM SIN TO GOD

With regard to the second item we have mentioned, it is a decisive change for the better, a breaking of the will, a turning away from sin and a turning to God, or a kindling of the fire of zeal for exclusively God-pleasing things, with renunciation of the self and everything else. It is above all characterized by an extreme breaking of the will. If a person has acquired evil habits, he must now rend himself. If he has offended God, he must now grieve in the fire of just judgment. A repentant person experiences the pain of a woman giving birth, and, in the feelings of the heart, he encounters, as it were, the tortures of hell. To the lamenting Jeremiah, the Lord commanded *destroy and build and plant* (Jer. 1:10). *The lamenting spirit of repentance is sent by the Lord to the earth so that when it passes into those who accept it, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow* (Heb. 4:12), it destroys the old man and lays the foundation for the creation of the new. Within the repentant person there is first fear, then the lightness of hope; sorrow, then comfort; terror to the point of despair, then the breath of the consolation of mercy. One thing replaces another, and this supplies or keeps a person who is in a state of corruption or parting with life in the hope, however, of receiving new life.

It is something painful, but it saves. It is therefore inevitable that whoever has not experienced such a painful break has not yet begun to live through repentance. It is impossible for a person to begin cleansing himself in everything without having gone through this crucible. Decisive and active resistance to sin comes only from hatred of it. Hatred of sin comes only from a sense of evil from it; the sense of evil from it is experienced in all its force in this painful break within repentance. Only here

does a person sense with his whole heart what a great evil sin is; afterward he will run from it as he would from the fire of Gehenna. Without this painful experience, even if he begins cleansing himself in some other way, he will be able to cleanse himself only slightly, more outwardly than inwardly, more in actions than in disposition. That is why his heart will remain unclean, like unsmelted ore.

Such change is brought about in the human heart by divine grace. This alone can inspire a man to raise his hand to himself and bring himself to God in sacrifice. *No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him* (Jn. 6:44). God Himself gives a new heart and spirit (cf. Ez. 36:26). Man grieves for himself. Having been fused with flesh and sin, he became one with them. Only an outside, higher force can separate him and arm him against himself.

Thus, grace produces change in the sinner, but this does not come about without free assent. In Baptism, grace is given to us at the moment the mystery is performed upon us; however, free will comes later and assimilates to itself what has been given. In repentance, then, free assent must participate in the very act of change.

## 2. THE COMBINING OF FREEDOM WITH GRACE

Change for the better and turning to God must seemingly be instantaneous or sudden, and so does it happen. In preparation, however, change undergoes several stages signifying the combining of freedom with grace, where grace gains mastery of the freedom and freedom is subordinated to grace. These stages are necessary for everyone. For some, the stages go by quickly, while for others, the process continues for many years. Who can keep track of everything that is going on here, especially when the ways of action of grace within us are so varied, and the

conditions of people in whom they begin to act are infinite in number? It is necessary, however, to expect that, with all this variation, there is one general aspect of change that no one can escape. Every repenting man is a man who lives in sin, and every such man is recreated by grace. Therefore, it is on the basis of an understanding of the sinner's condition in general, and the basis of the relationship of freedom with grace that we are able to depict this process and characterize it through principles.

## Chapter Two

### *The Sinner's Condition*

For the most part, the word of God depicts the sinner, who is faced with the necessity of renewal in repentance, as being submerged in deep slumber. The distinguishing characteristic of such people is not always outright depravity, but rather the absence in the strictest sense of inspired, selfless zeal for pleasing God, together with a decided aversion for everything sinful. Devotion is not the main concern of their cares and labors; they are attentive about many other things, but are completely indifferent to their salvation, and do not sense what danger they are in. They neglect the good life and lead a life that is cold in faith, though it be occasionally righteous and outwardly irreproachable.

#### I. PARTICULARS FOR A PERSON WHO LACKS GRACE

That is the general characteristic. Here are the particulars for a person who lacks grace: Once he has turned away from God, the person dwells on himself, and makes self the main goal of his life and activity. This is because at this point, after God, there is for him nothing higher than self, especially because, having previously received every abundance from God and having now forgotten Him, he hurries and takes care to fill himself up with something. The emptiness that has formed inside him because of his falling away from God causes an unquenchable thirst inside him that is vague but constant. The person has become a bottomless abyss. He makes every effort to fill this abyss, but he cannot see or feel it getting full. Thus, he spends his entire life in sweat, toil and great labors; he busies

himself with various occupations in which he hopes to find a way to quench his unquenchable thirst. These occupations take up all his attention, all his time and all his activity. They are the highest good, in which he lives with his whole heart. Thus, it is clear why a person who makes self his exclusive goal is never himself; instead, everything is outside him, in things either created or acquired by vanity. He has fallen away from God, Who is the fullness of everything. He himself is empty; it remains for him to seemingly pour himself out into an endless variety of things and live in them. Thus, the sinner thirsts, fusses, and troubles himself with occupations and numerous things outside himself and God. This is why a characteristic trait of sinful life is, in its disregard for salvation, *the care and trouble about many things* (cf. Lk 10:41).

## 2. THE CARE AND TROUBLE ABOUT MANY THINGS

The nuances and distinctions of this care and trouble about many things depends on the kinds of emptiness that have formed in the soul. There is the emptiness of the mind that has forgotten the One Who is everything; this gives rise to care and trouble about learnedness, inquisitiveness, questioning and curiosity. There is the emptiness of the will that has been deprived of possession by the One Who is everything; this creates desire for many things, the longing to possess many things, so that everything is in our control, in our hands; this is self-interest. There is the emptiness of the heart that has been deprived of the enjoyment of the One Who is everything; this forms a thirst for the satisfaction of many and various things, or a search for an infinite number of objects in which we hope to find pleasure for our senses, both internal and external. Thus, the sinner is continually troubled about learnedness, the possession of many things, and the desire for many pleasures. He amuses himself,

he possesses, he questions. He goes around in circles his entire life. Curiosity beckons, the heart hopes to taste sweet things, and he is enticed by the will. Anyone can convince himself of this if he observes the movements of his soul over the course of only a single day.

If left alone, the sinner will continue going in circles, because this is our nature when it is enslaved to sin. However, when the sinner is in the company of others, the circles he goes around increase in number a thousandfold and become more convoluted. There is an entire world full of people who are continually doing things, questioning, amusing themselves, and scrounging about, whose every way in all of this has led to a system, placed everyone under its laws, and made these laws a necessity for everyone who belongs to this sphere. In this common alliance, they inevitably come into contact, rub up against each other, and in this rubbing succeed in elevating inquisitiveness, self-interest, and self-pleasure to the tenth, hundredth and thousandth degree, thereby placing all happiness, joy and life in this frenzy. This is the world of vanity, in which occupations, ways, rule, connections, language, diversions, amusements, concepts—everything, from the smallest to the greatest thing—are permeated by the spirit of these three fiends of many cares and trouble mentioned above. It is what constitutes the dreary going around in circles by the spirits of worldly people. Being in living communion with this entire world, each sinner is caught up in its thousandfold net, and is so deeply entangled in it that it is invisible to him. Such a heavy burden lies on each worldly person and each of his parts, that he does not have the strength to be stirred in the smallest way by anything that is not worldly, because this would seem like raising a thousand-pound weight to him. Thus, no one undertakes such an unmanageable task, and no one thinks to undertake it; instead, everyone lives on, moving in the rut into which they have fallen.

### 3. THE SEDUCTIONS OF THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD

Even worse is the prince of this world who is unparalleled in his cunning, spitefulness and experience in seduction. It is through the flesh and materialism with which the soul became mingled at the fall that he has free access to the soul. In his approach, he kindles curiosity, self-interest, and pleasure-loving self-comfort in various ways. Through various enticements, he holds the soul in these things with no escape; through various suggestions he suggests plans for satisfying them and then either aids in fulfilling them, or thwarts them through instruction of other more ambitious plans. All this is accomplished with one purpose: to prolong and deepen a person's involvement in them. This is what constitutes the change of worldly misfortune and fortune, unblessed by God.

The prince of this world has an entire horde of servile spirits of malice that are subordinate to him. At each instant they scurry along every boundary of the inhabited world to sow various things in different places, deepen entanglement in the net of sin, repair traps that have become weak and broken, and especially to guard against anyone who might take it into his mind to rid himself of his bonds and escape to freedom. In the latter case, they hurriedly gather around the self-willed person. First they come one by one, then by detachments and legions until finally, the entire horde is there. This happens in various ways and forms so as to block all exits and mend the strands and nets, and, using the other analogy, to push back into the abyss any person who has begun to crawl out along its steep slopes.

#### 4. THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM OF SPIRITS IN WHICH EACH SINNER IS IMMERSED

This invisible kingdom of spirits has special places. There are the throne rooms, where plans are drawn up, instructions arrive and reports are received with the approval or reproaches of the chiefs. These are the inner sanctums of satan, as St. John the Theologian expressed it. On earth, in the middle kingdom of people, there are leagues of evil-doers, profligates, and especially nonbelievers and blasphemers, whose deeds, words and writings pour out sinful gloom everywhere and block out the divine light. The aggregate of worldly ways, pervaded with sinful elements that stupefy and draw one away from God, is the organ through which they express their will and power here.

This is the structure of the sinful sphere! Each sinner is immersed in it, but is kept there largely on account of some particular thing. This thing, perhaps, is in appearance tolerable, even laudable. Satan has a single concern; that is, where a person is completely occupied in his consciousness, attention, and heart, that God not be the sole occupier, but that something outside Him be attached to his mind, will, and heart, so the person has something in place of God and only cares about what he knows and what he enjoys and possesses. Here there are not only carnal and mental passions, but also specious things such as learnedness, artistry, and worldliness that can serve as the bonds of satan for keeping blinded sinners in his power and not allowing them to come to their senses.

#### 5. THE INNER MOOD AND CONDITION OF THE SINNER

If one looks at the sinner in his inner mood and condition, it happens sometimes that he is knowledgeable, but is blind with regard to divine things and the matter of his own salvation. Even

if he constantly takes care and troubles over things, he is idle and careless in regard to arranging his own salvation; even if he continually experiences anxieties or pleasures of the heart, he is completely insensitive to everything spiritual. In this regard, all forces of being are afflicted by sin; and there is blindness, negligence and insensitivity in the sinner. He does not see his own condition, and therefore does not sense the danger of his situation. He does not sense his danger and therefore does not take the trouble and care to be delivered from it. The necessity to change and be saved does not even enter his mind. He has complete, unshakable confidence that he is at his proper station in life, wants for nothing and must therefore leave everything the way it is. Therefore, he considers any reminder about another kind of life to be superfluous for himself; he does not listen, and cannot even understand what it is for. He avoids and shuns it.

## Chapter Three

### *The Action of Divine Grace*

We have said that the sinner is like a person who is sunk in deep slumber. Just as a person who is fast asleep will not stir and get up on his own in spite of approaching danger unless someone comes and rouses him, so will the person who is sunk in the slumber of sin not come to his senses and awaken unless divine grace comes to his aid. By the boundless mercy of God, this grace is prepared for everyone, approaches everyone in turn, and calls out clearly to each: *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light* (Eph. 5:14).

This comparison of sinners with sleepers provides a starting point for a thorough examination of their conversion to God. For example, a sleeper awakens, gets up and gets ready to go to work. A sinner who turns to God and repents *is roused* from the lullaby of sinfulness, reaches a decision *to change* (he gets up), and, at last, *puts on strength* for his new life in the Mysteries of Repentance and Holy Communion (preparation for work). These moments are described in the parable of the Prodigal Son in this way: *When he came to himself* means he has come to his senses; *I will arise and go* indicates he has decided to cease his former life; *I have sinned* is repentance, and his father clothes him (forgiveness and absolution from sins) and prepares him a meal (Holy Communion) (cf. Lk. 15:11-32).

Thus, there are three stages in the conversion of sinners to God: 1) arousal from the slumber of sin; 2) reaching the decision to give up sin and devote oneself to pleasing God; 3) vestment with power from on high for doing this in the Mysteries of Repentance and Communion.

## Chapter Four

### *Awakening the Sinner from the Sleep of Sin*

The awakening of the sinner is that act of divine grace in his heart, the consequence of which he, as one awakened from sleep, *sees* his sinfulness, *senses* the danger of his situation, begins to fear for himself and *to care* about deliverance from his misfortune and salvation. Previously, he was like a blind man, unfeeling and uncaring with regard to salvation; now he sees, senses and cares.

However, this is still not change. It is only the opportunity for change and the call for it. Grace is only telling the sinner at this point, "See what you have gotten into; look then, take measures for salvation." It merely removes him from his customary bonds and sets him beyond them, thereby giving him the opportunity to choose a completely new life and find his place in it. If he takes advantage of this, it is to his benefit; if he does not, he will be cast again into the very same sleep and the very same abyss of destruction.

This divine grace is achieved by exposing to the consciousness and feeling the insignificance and shame of that to which a person is devoted and values so highly. Just as the word of God pierces even to the *dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow* (Heb. 4:12), so does grace pierce to the division of the heart and sin, and breaks down their unlawful alliance and relationship. We saw how the sinner with his entire being falls into a realm where there are principles, ideas, opinions, rules, customs, pleasures and ways that are completely

incompatible with the true spiritual life for which man is intended.

Once he has fallen into this place, he is not there in isolation or detachment. Instead, he is permeated by everything, mingles with everything. He is completely immersed in it. Thus, it is only natural that he not know or think about its incompatibility with spiritual life, and he has no kind of sympathy toward spiritual life. The spiritual realm is completely closed off to him. It is obvious from this that the door to conversion may be opened only under the condition that the spiritual way of life be revealed to the sinner's consciousness in its full light, and not merely revealed, but that it touch the heart; that the sinful way of life be discredited, rejected, and destroyed. This also takes place in the presence of consciousness and feeling. Only then can the care arise to abandon the old ways and begin the new. All this is accomplished in the single act of the sinner's arousal by grace.

In its course of action, the arousing divine grace is always connected not only with the bonds in which the sinner is held, but also with the overall condition of the sinner. In this latter regard, one must above all keep in mind the difference in the way the action of grace appears when it acts on those who have never been aroused, and when it acts on those who have previously experienced such arousal. For someone who has never experienced spiritual awakening before, it is given to him freely, like some all-encompassing, preliminary or summoning grace. Nothing is required from the person beforehand, because he has a completely different orientation.

However, grace is not freely given to the person who has already experienced spiritual arousal, who knows and senses what life in Christ is, and who has fallen into sin again. He must give something himself first. He must still be worthy and beseech. It is not enough merely to wish; he must work on

himself in order to attract spiritual arousal by grace. Such a person, in recollecting his previous sojourn in the virtuous Christian way, often desires it again, but has no power over himself. He would like to turn over a new leaf, but is unable to gain self-mastery and conquer himself. He has abandoned himself to helpless despair because he previously abandoned the gift and reproached and *trodden underfoot the Son of God...and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace* (Heb. 10:29). Now he is allowed to perceive that this power of grace is so great that it will not be granted immediately. Seek and labor, and learn to appreciate how difficult it is to acquire.

Such a person is in a somewhat agonizing condition: He thirsts but is not given drink, hungers but is not fed, seeks but does not find, exerts himself but does not receive. Sometimes a person is left in this condition for a very long time, to the point where he feels divine reproach, as if God has forgotten him, turned away and betrayed His promise. He feels like *the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it...but...which beareth thorns and briers* (Heb. 6:7-8). But this slow touching of grace to the heart of the seeker is only a trial. He goes through the period of trial, and thanks to his labors and agonizing search, the spirit of arousal once again descends on him as it descends on others as a gift. This course of action of salvific grace shows us two things: First, the special actions of divine grace in arousing the sinner; second, the usual way of acquiring the gift of arousing grace.

## Chapter Five

### *The Special Actions of Divine Grace in Arousing Sinners from the Slumber of Sin*

For those living a grace-filled life, it is encouraging to know these actions so that when they see the many troubles and cares that God takes over sinners, they glorify the unspeakable divine grace and are inspired by the trustworthy help from above in every good deed. For those seeking divine love and mercy, it is especially necessary to know them, because the characteristics of arousal by grace are more clearly expressed here than elsewhere. We must be well aware of and familiar with these characteristics so we may determine whether the arousal we are experiencing comes from grace. If someone is already in the process, we may determine whether he is acting through the arousal by or through self-made enthusiasm.

The true Christian life is one of grace. The self-made life, no matter how beautiful it is in appearance or how close it is to the form of Christian life, will never be Christian. The origin of the Christian life is in arousal by grace. A person who has heeded this arousal is not then deprived of guidance by grace and communion with it at all times, as it persists through proper attention to it. That is why it is necessary to determine correctly for oneself whether an arousal by grace is taking place or has taken place. In satisfying this requirement, the following may be said: Judge yourself by the characteristics of arousal by grace which are revealed in special situations. While these characteristics are the

same in both special and ordinary situations, they are revealed more clearly, definitively and distinctively only in the former.

As already indicated, during this arousal of grace, the destruction of the entire established order of self-pleasing sinful life is carried out instantaneously in the presence of the consciousness. In its place is revealed another superior divine way, the only true and satisfying one. One may briefly depict this way as follows: God, in the Holy Trinity that is worshipped, Who has created the world and takes trouble over it, saves us, the fallen, in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, under the direction and guidance of the Holy Church, and through one's life here of trials and bearing the cross, which leads to eternal, unending bliss in the future life. He combines persons, events, places, and the causes themselves through which everything is set in motion.

This divine way in its entirety is vividly impressed on the spirit of the sinner through the action of grace. By presenting the striking contrast of the sinner's own attitudes and everything that he previously lived and enjoyed to this divine way, he is then obliged to be in complete agreement and concordance with it. This overwhelms him. Each aspect of the divine way issues an accusation and reproach to the sinner concerning his previous folly and carelessness, which makes an even greater impression, because at the same time the spirit sees the miserable insignificance of its former sinful way of life. Under such action, the heart is loosed from its former bonds and becomes free, and that is why it freely selects the new way of life. This is how arousal by grace operates. It destroys everything in the consciousness and emotion that is old and bad, and vividly presents only the new and good. It leaves the person in this situation overwhelmed, free to choose the new life or to turn back to the previous one.

It is worth noting that the arousal by grace is always accompanied by this feeling of being overwhelmed and a sort of fear.

This may be because it is sudden, as if by surprise. It seizes the sinner at the crossroads of life like a criminal and presents him before the inescapable divine judgment. Or it may be because it is a new way of life, revealed to the consciousness in a completely new way that is a striking contrast to the old one. It is not just new, but also perfect in all parts, bringing happiness; whereas in the previous, miserable way of life, there was only heaviness of heart and going around in circles for the spirit.

All the same, the starting point of all the good actions of arousal by grace is a clear consciousness of a new divine way. Proceeding from this understanding, we bring to mind all past experiences of this action of grace. The consciousness of the new way of being and life comes about in two ways: a) sometimes this very way, in its entirety or in part, is introduced visibly and through the senses through the act itself to the sinner it is being bestowed upon; b) at other times, the spirit of the person is led into it and perceives it internally.

#### I. INTRODUCTION OF THE DIVINE WAY THROUGH VISIBLE MEANS AND THROUGH THE SENSES

The merciful Lord reveals to the consciousness of one who has turned to Him the divine world in which the spirit is meant to live by various means. *Frequently*, He Himself is revealed visibly, taking on some sort of form and appearing to a human being who is awake or asleep. Thus did He appear to the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, to Constantine the Great, to the Great Martyr Eustathius Placidus (September 20), to Neanias who was on his way to torture Christians (this is the Great Martyr Procopius, July 8), to Paternuthius in his sleep (July 9), and to many others.

Sometimes He has the kindness to send various persons from the other world, also in wakefulness or in a dream, in their own

form or some other form. Thus, the Mother of God has appeared many times, either alone or with the Pre-eternal Child, or with an entourage of saints consisting of one, two or many. The Great Martyr Catherine, for example, was converted by the appearance to her in her sleep of the Mother of God with the Pre-eternal Child, who gave her a betrothal ring (November 24). Angels have appeared many times, either singly or in assembly. For example, an army of Holy Angels appeared to St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ, in opposition to a horde of dark forces (October 2). Saints have appeared many times; for example, Bishop Mitrophan appeared to a Lutheran doctor, a sick girl, and others.

*Sometimes* the other world, and especially its orders and principalities, is portrayed to the ignorant mind in some sort of striking form, as seen in the example of St. Andrew already cited, and in many others. In these cases, persons turning to God saw *either* blessed communities of the righteous, as appeared to the Indian king and his brother after the king had given Apostle Thomas money to build a palace, which he gave to the poor (October 6); *or* the horrible tortures of sinners, as appeared to Hesychius the Horebite (October 3); *or* the carrying out of the judgment at death, as happened to Peter the Tax Collector, who threw a piece of bread in the face of a beggar (September 22); *or* pondering on death and one's fate afterward was impressed, as was the case with Ioasaph, the prince (November 19), St. Clement (November 25), and a debauched youth, whose father vowed to visit the room where he lay dying every night after his death.

Sometimes one is allowed to experience tangibly some invisible force among the visible forces and phenomena. It is an actual force, but strikingly different from the latter, and coming from the other world. Generally speaking, in this category are included all miracles, whose role in conversions is impossible to calculate. Even the Saviour said unbelievers could not be convinced without signs (cf. Jn. 4:48). The greater number of these

were manifested after Christ the Saviour, in the early times of Christianity through the Apostles, and later, the holy martyrs. The striking presence of the invisible divine power on earth often converted entire villages and towns, but was never entirely incorporeal. Indeed, the blood of the martyrs lies at the foundation of the Church. There were also those instances where the divine power itself was manifested, without a human agent, as during the conversion of St. Mary of Egypt, or through the medium of holy things, icons, relics, etc. Thus the Jews in Beirut were converted through the miraculous manifestation at the icon of the Lord's Crucifixion.

In all such manifestations, the mind, confused by various objects and seductions of the world and hopelessly caught in the visible, sensible, external order, is confronted with the striking, unexpected and sudden appearance to it of higher beings and powers from the invisible realm. It suddenly bursts from its bonds and is pressed into the other way of being and life and, overcome, becomes established in it. This also happens during the excitation of electricity in a body by the electricity of another body. The latter forces it from the bonds of matter, and after attracting it toward the surface, keeps it to itself.

## 2. THE SPIRIT IS LED INTO THE DIVINE WAY AND PERCEIVES IT INTERNALLY

The spirit, as we have seen, is closed up and bound by many layers. But by its nature, it is the perceiver of the divine way. Its aptitude for this is ready to appear immediately, and indeed manifests its power as soon as the obstacles holding it back are removed. Thus, for arousal of the slumbering spirit within man and the leading of it to contemplation of the divine way, divine grace either 1) *directly* acts upon it, and, in carrying out its power, gives the opportunity to break the bonds that hold it, or

2) *indirectly* acts on it, shaking the layers and meshes off of it and thereby giving it the freedom to assume its rightful position.

*Divine grace acting directly on the spirit of man*

The divine grace that is everywhere-present and fills all things *directly* inspires the spirit of man, impressing thoughts and feelings upon it that turn it away from all finite things and toward another better, albeit invisible and mysterious world. The general characteristic of such arousals is *dissatisfaction* with oneself and everything pertaining to oneself, and *anguish* over something. The person is not satisfied by anything around him; not by his accomplishments or possessions, even if he has incalculable wealth; and he walks around as if heart-broken. Because he finds no consolation in visible things, he turns to the invisible, and receives it with a readiness to acquire it for himself sincerely and to give himself over to it.

Many who have asked the question, "What does all this end with and where does it lead?" have left everything and changed not only their feelings and behavior, but also their way of life. There have been instances where such dissatisfaction was expressed primarily in the *intellectual* aspect, as with Justin Martyr, who primarily sought the light of knowledge of the Divine Essence. Sometimes the dissatisfaction is expressed in the *appetitive* aspect, as with Blessed Augustine, who primarily sought peace for his troubled heart. Sometimes, perhaps most often, the dissatisfaction is expressed in the *incensive* aspect, in the conscience, as with the robbers Moses and David of Hermopolis. There have been numerous cases where the inner abode of the spirit was suddenly illumined, and an inclination was instilled that turned the spirit onto another path. *Thou ... canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*, the Saviour said about this (Jn. 3:8).

Often the spirit is awakened by a past memory. Mary, the niece of Abraham the Recluse, was converted in this way;<sup>1</sup> so was a disciple of St. John the Apostle, who was perishing in dissolution,<sup>2</sup> and also St. Theophilus the Penitent, the church steward. From somewhere something enters within and the voice of the conscience distinctly utters: "Remember from where you have fallen," which totally overwhelms the person who has forgotten. One may attribute all conversions after youthful falls to this. There is no doubt that even these changes are prepared by divine economy in a roundabout way through various events which dispose one to accept the action of grace. That is why here, too, the spontaneity of the conversion is only relative. On the other hand, it is also necessary to know that every arousal by grace is revealed in inclinations similar to these and in awakenings of our spirit. Grace, though it be through a visible medium, is nonetheless always invisible and directly touches the spirit and draws it from the bonds that torment it into the divine light, into the realm of divine life.

*Divine grace acting indirectly on the spirit of man*

*All means* pertaining to this category are directed toward breaking spiritual bonds. Give the spirit freedom, and it will of its own accord start running toward that from which it comes, toward God. Spiritual bonds, as we saw, are interconnected, being composed of: 1) *self-indulgence*; 2) the *world*; 3) the *devil*. The destructive actions of grace when it awakens the spirit are directed against these.

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1. See "The Life of St. Mary the Harlot" in *The Desert Fathers*, translated by Helen Waddell (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1957), pp. 190-201.

2. See Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, translated by G.A. Williamson (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 128-131.

1) *Self-indulgence*. The bonds with the closest grip on the spirit are those of the comprehensive, dominating self-indulgence in our physical-mental aspect. These bonds are the point of contact for other bonds that come from the world and devil. That is why destroying them is so important, although doing so is very difficult and complicated. Because the nonbeliever lives entirely in the physical and mental, the bonds from this aspect expand and become variously and intricately interwoven to the full extent of the physical-mental life.

To understand how these bonds are broken, it is necessary to understand that *that* with which this life is affiliated, that which nourishes it, and that in which it chiefly expresses itself, constitutes a firm support for it. As the support becomes secure, this life becomes established and does not fear destruction or even contemplate it. For example, when someone gives himself up to art, worldliness, or even learning, and lives in it, he becomes dependent upon it and abides in it with all his strength, thoughts, and hopes. Because the entire self-indulgent life subsequently proceeds from this and binds the spirit, the support of self-indulgence naturally becomes a firm and strong foundation for the bonds that are imposed on the spirit, like a point to which these bonds are attached. Therefore, to reverse this and free the spirit from the bonds of self-indulgence, the divine arousing grace usually destroys the supports on which self-indulgent selfishness rests. After it has shaken the supports in the foundation, grace weakens the bonds and gives the tormented, weary spirit an opportunity to lift its head.

Our self-indulgence has many supports. It is indeed part of our nature; that is, in the body and soul, in our external life and our entire way of life in general. Such indulgence of the flesh comes in various forms. For example, there is sensuality, luxury, lustfulness, love of merrymaking, fondness for pleasure, trouble and care over everyday things, love of honor, love of power,

perceptible success in one's affairs, and prosperity. There is a desire to be outwardly attractive, have valuable connections, and be sophisticated in external relations. There is a fondness for the arts, learning, and ventures. All this in the various forms constitutes a firm support for our selfishness, which, with certainty in its reliability and solidity, calmly rests upon it and, being amply nourished, grows from day to day, in one way chiefly in one person, in another way in someone else.

By directing its power toward destruction of this support on which the sinner's selfishness has established itself and rests, divine, salvific grace carries out the following to awaken the sinner from his slumber: He who is enslaved by pleasing the flesh shall fall ill, and, by weakening the flesh, shall give the spirit freedom and power to come to its senses and become sober. He who is preoccupied with his own attractiveness and strength shall be deprived of this attractiveness and kept in a state of utter exhaustion. He who finds refuge in his own power and strength shall be subject to slavery and humiliation. He who relies greatly on wealth shall have it taken from him. He who shows off great learnedness shall be put to shame. He who relies on solid personal connections shall have them cut off. He who counts on the permanence of the order established around him shall have it destroyed by the death of people he knows or the loss of essential material possessions. Is there any way to sober up those kept in the bonds of indifference through outward happiness other than by sorrows and grief? Isn't our life filled with misfortunes so that it may assist with the divine intention of keeping us sober?

Each destruction of the supports of indifferent self-indulgence constitutes a turning point in life, which, because it is always unexpected, operates in an overwhelming and salvific manner. The sense that one's life is in danger operates strongest of all in this respect. This sense weakens all bonds and kills

selfishness at the very root; the person does not know where to run. The sense of total abandonment is of the same character and special circumstance. Both senses leave a person alone with himself. From himself, the most miserable of creatures, he immediately turns to God.

2) *The second bonds of the spirit* are imposed from the world and lie closer to the surface than the first. The world, with its concepts, principles and rules, in general with its entire system made into immutable law, lays a heavy, authoritarian hand on each of its offspring. As a result, no one dares even to think of rebelling against it or renouncing its power. Everyone venerates it and adheres to its rules with such timidity. A violation of these rules is considered as a criminal act. The world is not a person, but its spirit in some way stands firm on the earth, influences us, and holds us as if with bonds. It is evident that its power is psychological and imaginative, not real or physical. Consequently, one has only to dispel this imaginative power of the world, and the opportunity for abstaining from its charms becomes more likely for us. That is how salvific divine economy operates in us.

It is with this purpose that it continually maintains two other sacred, divine worlds in the presence of the world and ourselves. Through them, divine economy constantly reiterates the emptiness of worldly life by calling it to our attention and allowing us to perceive it more keenly. The two divine worlds are visible nature and the divine Church. Experience shows how frequently the mind, obscured by worldly ways, becomes sober through contemplation of divine creation or by entering the Church. For example, a man standing at a window and looking at a tree in the winter came to his senses. Another man, after a disturbing conversation, and having sensed the sweetness of peace of mind in a church, abandoned his former ways and dedicated himself to the service of God.

Visible nature and the temple of God have not only often brought sense and sobriety to indifferent and sinful Christians, but have converted even pagans to true worship of God and devotion to Him. The word *Hosanna* fell on the heart of one woman and made her a Christian. The conversion of our forbears<sup>1</sup> was decisively confirmed by the action of the Church on them. The contemplation of the beauties of the visible creation of God converted the Great Martyr Barbara from the flesh. Their power and influence come from the fact that they vividly and perceptibly offer the best, most blissful way of life for a spirit that is wearied, exhausted, fatigued and tortured by the vanity of the world. By suddenly infusing the spirit with the joy of such a life, they convince a person that by giving himself over to the dominion of this world, he only distresses and torments himself, that complete happiness is to be found in the other world, and that if cooperation with this world is so tormenting now, what is to be expected afterward?

The call to the divine world and the tearing away from the world of vanity is engendered by this process. Sometimes the process is in the form of a strong rupture, and sometimes it is gradual. But finally, nature and the Church completely wrench the human spirit from the bonds of the world. In this capacity, they dispel, dissipate, and oust the charms of the world of vanity with its many illusions. It is for this reason that the Lord places them in such relation with us, so they may act upon us all more often and unceasingly, presenting the contrast of one life with the other in the most striking fashion.

The *second way* of extrication from worldly bonds consists in having life presented through the grace of the Divine All-Providencer to someone in a way completely contrary to that to which he is accustomed. All conversions by means of *martyrdom*,

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1. Saints Vladimir and Olga.

of which there are innumerable examples, are particularly relevant to this. Sometimes the feat of martyrdom of a single person has converted entire villages and towns. The presence of a moral power from another world unlike our own is evident here. Sometimes defeat seemed certain, but wasn't; the one undergoing martyrdom remained invincible, of good cheer, oblivious to everything going on around him.

A sudden understanding of this contrary presentation of life strikes the mind and dispels within it the fascination of the present ways of one's life. An example of this is the conversion of the robber by the Emperor Maurice, who, instead of punishing him, treated him kindly as if he were a man worthy of such treatment. Another is the conversion of a profligate woman, who was asked by another woman to pray for and return to life her only son who had died. Another profligate woman repented after sighting monks who were humbly occupied with prayer and godly thought, while she had been giving herself up to luxury and debauchery in the very same house.

All conversions by *examples of life* belong in this category. The power of action of these lies in the fact that one encounters satisfied, peaceful persons who do not have the pleasures or soothing items abundantly possessed by others who find neither satisfaction nor peace. From this comes disillusionment and a change of life.

The *third way* of withdrawing from the world is by disgracing it in front of its children. Julian [the Apostate] exalted himself above all; he fiercely rose up against the Christians and threatened to suppress them with all his might. But then he fell unexpectedly. This not only confirmed the believers, but many nonbelievers also converted to the true God. An entire village rose up against St. Macarius [the Great] because of false witness; it beat him, tortured him, inflicted punishment on him, and the world triumphed. But then the truth was revealed, disgraced

everyone, and returned them to the reverence and fear of God. All instances of bringing people to their senses through the falls and unexpected death of the mighty and great of the world are in this category. The disgrace of the world diminishes it in front of its adherents, exposing its powerlessness. On the one hand, this turns them away from it; on the other hand, it gives them the courage to resist it.

*Fourthly*, it often happens that in the end, the world itself prods and drives one away from it seemingly of its own accord, because it does not satisfy expectations or it disappoints them. We seek happiness; but in the world there is only glory, honor, power, wealth, pleasure, none of which satisfies the seeker. The discriminating person soon notices the deception and comes to his senses. We see that many of the godly saints, after examining the vanity and confusion of the world, withdrew from it and resolutely devoted themselves to God. The Prodigal Son in the parable said, *I perish with hunger* (Lk. 15:17).

3) *The third bonds of the spirit* come from satan and his demons. They are invisible and coincide for the most part with the bonds of self-indulgence and the world, which satan strengthens with his influence, and through which he holds the mind in darkness. But there is something that comes directly from satan, a vague faintheartedness and fear which can confuse the soul of the sinner at any time, and especially when he thinks about the good. This is like when a master threatens his servant who has done something against his will or plans. From satan come various kinds of spiritual flattery. For example, some people have excessive, unfounded hope in divine mercy; this hope is not sober, but becomes more and more embedded in a love of sin. At the opposite end are people who have despair with doubt and disbelief. Such people are self-assured, and possess a self-righteousness that deadens any feeling of repentance.

Yes, there is very much that comes directly from satan, although it is difficult to pinpoint. But everything sinful must be attributed to him as the source, because he is the king of the sinful world. One of his cunning ruses is to conceal himself. That is, he gives sinners the assurance that he is not there, the consequence of which he acts willfully and with ferocity within the sinful soul. He composes and suggests sinful urges toward nature, disposing sinners to grumble about God, Who forbids what is ostensibly natural and Who decrees that their strength is not sufficient to endure it.

Divine grace, which brings a person to his senses, frequently snatches sinners from the jaws of the hell of satanic disgrace. It has exposed satan to shame and subjected him to derision, revealing his powerlessness and folly, and unmasking his guile. Thus was he shamed in the person of Simon the Magus, St. Cyprian of Antioch and many others. All such instances were accompanied by the conversion and enlightenment of many who were blind. In the days of the Lord on earth, demons, the source of disbelief and doubt, became prophets of faith. And the holy martyrs, through the power of All-Mighty God, often forced both the father and children of lies to speak the truth through statues.

This discovery of the crafty one's intrigues leads a sinner to the certainty that he is in malicious, hostile hands, that he is being duped into harming himself, that he is being deceitfully led down some gloomy path toward destruction, and that the demons want to rejoice in this. This inevitably engenders a sense of fear for one's own well-being, caution, suspicion, an aversion to the sly one and his inventions, the vices and passions, and to one's entire former life. From here it is a close transition to the Source of truth, good, and bliss: that is, to God.

### 3. THE WORD OF GOD REPLACES ALL METHODS SHOWN

These, then, are the ways and means by which divine grace acts on the human spirit, extricates it from its unnatural bonds, and brings it face to face with another, better life in which there is joy and peace. It is obvious, however, that all these ways and means are in and of themselves incomplete, as if something were being held back. For example, if the thirst for something better has been engendered, where is this something better and how may it be attained? Or if someone has been struck by the fear of death and judgment, what should he do to rid himself of misfortune?

It is the same with all other instances, too. They are not obvious. An additional method for realization must be applied to everything. That method is preaching the Word. Indeed, the Word of God in its various forms supplements all the methods shown, clarifying them and indicating their ultimate goal. Without this Word, the methods still leave a person in a somewhat uncertain condition, and therefore do not accomplish everything they are supposed to. The Apostle Paul was enlightened by a heavenly phenomenon. But the Lord did not accomplish everything in him here, and said, "Go to Ananias and he will tell you what to do." Justin Martyr, the Great Martyr Barbara, and Ioasaph the Prince saw falsehood, but in order to know the truth, they needed special guides and interpreters. That is why the following is set out by the Lord Providencer as law: *God commandeth all men everywhere to repent* (Acts 17:30). *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Rom. 10:17). This word from the Apostles is proclaimed now throughout all ends of earth through their successors.

Here it is essential to proclaim the story of the universal, divine way of salvation, to tell of well-known persons and places to which one who has been aroused should turn for interpretation, so he will not waste that arousal or stray off course from it, wasting time and energy fruitlessly. Catechistic teaching must be heard unceasingly, and indeed, is heard, in Church. True believers will become established more firmly through it, whereas the fallen and the aroused will have an immediate, true guidebook. How vitally important is the duty of priests to proclaim God's salvific ways at any time, without an overreliance on presupposed general knowledge!

The Word of God, however, not only enhances all the methods shown; it can also replace them. It arouses more fully and distinctly. Through its affinity with the spirit, which also comes from God, it passes inwardly, to the division of soul and spirit. It enlivens the latter, and inseminates it so that acts of the spiritual life may come to fruition (that is why the Word is also called *seed*). The arousing force of it is the more significant in that it acts at once on the entire person, on his entire being: his body, soul, and spirit. Sound, or the audible component of the Word, strikes the hearing, and a thought occupies the soul. The invisible energy concealed inside this thought touches the soul, which, if it is attentive, after the Word has safely passed the rough barriers of body and soul, becomes aroused, and, by exerting effort, it bursts the bonds that hold it.

The Word of God arouses through the methods shown; that is, either by a very vivid demonstration of the divine way to the consciousness, or by conveyance of the spirit into the consciousness through destruction of the obstacles that impede it. For example, an elderly servant said in simplicity to his ailing master, "No matter how much you struggle, papa, death will still come," and by this he aroused him to repentance. Another person read the following beneath a depiction of the crucified Lord: "Here

is what I have done for you; what have you done for me?" and he awoke from his slumber. St. Pelagia heard about death, judgment, and the bitter lot of sinners, and left her sinful life. Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles, was converted by a description of the entire divine way, beginning from the creation of the world to the end of all things, the dread judgment, and the eternal fate of the righteous and the evil.

What is more, the preaching of the holy Apostles, those who followed them and all preachers of the Gospel in general has consisted of a simple presentation of the truth, without any philosophizing. St. Paul the Apostle says of himself that his speech and preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the simple telling of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was crucified on the Cross (cf. I Corinthians 2:2-4). One could say that this is the most natural method of action through the Word: to depict the truth as it is, not cluttering it with intellectual concepts and especially speculation about probabilities.

Truth is akin to the spirit. When it is uttered simply and sincerely, truth finds the spirit. When it is surrounded by images and is figurative and embellished, it remains in the imagination. When it is encumbered with concepts and arguments, it is detained in the intellect or soul, not reaching the spirit, which is left empty. One could say that all unfruitful preaching is on account of the intellectualizing that fills it. Just explain the truth in a simple way; say what it is, and the spirit will be overcome. A Jew was reading the Gospel and was converted, because he saw the truth in a simple Gospel story. In general, the majority of free-thinkers were converted through a clear consciousness of divine things, by the instruction of the Word of God, living or written. The truth dispels the gloom of vain thoughts, refreshes the soul, enlightens the spirit. One could with great benefit make more often, in gen-

eral conversation, a brief examination of how everything began, how it will end, and why.

On the other hand, the spirit's barriers are often overcome by the power of the Word, and it is given freedom. Thus, St. Anthony the Great heard about the insignificance of earthly joys and left everything. A certain youth heard the parable of the Prodigal Son and he himself repented. Many married saints have turned their spouses toward a blameless, pure life through a depiction of worldly vanity.

In general, the presentation of the divine way, on the one hand, is a revelation of various wonders, and on the other hand, fills the spirit with the fullness of the *understanding of salvation*, or with a clear and persuasive knowledge of the path of salvation, against which the stubbornness of the heart resists only rarely. If very many people do not act with the proper urgency, but instead remain in slumber and unconcern, it is because they do not know the truths of salvation, or know them incompletely. The fullness of knowledge is triumphant, for then there is no place for the cunning heart to hide.

By virtue of its comprehensive general suitability for awakening sinners, the Word of God goes throughout the world and reaches our ears in various forms. It is heard unceasingly in churches at every divine service, and outside churches in every religious ceremony. It is heard in the sermons of the Fathers and in every enlightening book. It is heard in wholesome discussions and in popular, edifying sayings. It is in schools, pictures, and every visible object that represents spiritual truths. Judging by this, we are surrounded by the Word of God and filled with it from all sides. From everywhere the trumpet sounds come to us for the destruction of the strongholds of sin, as for the walls of Jericho. The Word of God has already shown and continually shows its triumphant power over the human heart. It is necessary only to take care that the paths by which the Word of God

is disseminated are maintained without interruption, so that true preaching does not cease, divine worship is fulfilled according to rite and in an edifying manner, iconography is uplifting and pious, and the singing is sober, simple, and reverent. The fulfillment of this is the responsibility of those who serve at the altars. That is why they are the most necessary and powerful weapons for the conversion of sinners in the hands of divine Providence. It is necessary for them to acknowledge this and speak out not just in churches, but also in homes, using every opportunity both to describe the divine world, and to expose the seduction of our soul by the illusions of the mind and body.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The best examples of this kind are from St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. To a greater extent than anyone else, it seems, he comprehended that the best use of the gift of writing and speaking is to turn it to the enlightenment and awakening of sinners from slumber. Almost every article he wrote leads to this. Every sermon in church and every conversation should also be like this.

## Chapter Six

### *The Usual Order of the Gift of Awakening Grace*

It has already been noted that among the many different actions of grace that awaken us, one that is particularly worthy of attention is that kind which God uses to awaken a sinner who previously experienced such an awakening but again has fallen into sin, most decisively falling into his usual mortal sins. The more often these falls are repeated the weaker the corrective impulse becomes, because his heart becomes as it were accustomed to falling, and sinful falls pass into the realm of everyday occurrences of the soul's life.

Along with such a diminution, it ceases to be an energetic feeling according to its true character, approaching ever nearer the realm of thought, and finally becoming nothing more than a simple thought and recollection. This thought is accepted for a while in agreement, but then is only tolerated, albeit without displeasure, but coldly, without any particular attention. After this it becomes tiresome, something to be removed as quickly as possible. Finally it becomes unpleasant and repugnant—the sinner not only dislikes it, but hates it, hounds it and persecutes it. Correspondingly, the conviction that a better spiritual life is even necessary begins to fall away. At first the need of change appears as only probable. Later it becomes veiled in doubts in the form of questions about its various aspects, and yet later it appears even more useless and extraneous. Finally, the inward decision is made to “live as you like—it is alright to live this way.

All of the rest is just excessive trouble." Here is where a man has fallen into the depths of evil and carelessness. His state is that of one who had never once been awakened.

Clearly this man's salvation is in great danger. God's mercy is great, but even it may not be able to do anything with him. He is like the soil that has many times drunk the falling rain yet remains fruitless, and has become *nigh unto cursing* (Heb. 6:8).<sup>1</sup> It is this result of not enduring in a well-ordered life, along with the need for grace-filled awakening, that should be particularly impressed upon the memories of those who need it. True, the movements of divine grace are not limited to measurements or definitions, but they are at times in agreement. Therefore, although we must not despair of the possibility for our conversion and salvation no matter how weak is the call for conversion to a virtuous life, we must always think timidly and fearfully of our weak condition. Might we have sunk so far that we have reached the final opportunity to receive a grace-filled awakening? Could we have barred all inroads that divine grace, ever desiring our salvation, might take to act upon us? Is this the last time that grace may be drawing nigh unto us with the aim of bringing us to our senses and putting a stop to our disgraceful condition? Thus, as weak as such a call may be, we must ever more speedily rush to make use of it with all firmness of intention, though this may require more discernment, and intensify it to the fullest extent of human freedom. Obviously, such intensification is nothing other than the opening up of ourselves to this seeking and sought-for grace. We must open up, for through our falls we have become more and more hardened and closed to grace, in first one and then another respect.

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1. *But that which beareth thorns is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.*

We will now explain how to receive the grace in order that it might reach its original energy level, for we must assume that the person will grow according to his receptivity to the spiritual stimulation coming to him. While the newly awakened one performs everything zealously, quickly, and ardently, the other's work is cold, languorous, full of difficulties. It is as if grace has abandoned him so that he might feel how precious faithful obedience to God is for the one He calls, and so that he will be more inclined to value God's aid. The Lord preserves this desire. He does not grant a sudden renunciation but holds the man in the midst of it, in a laborious state, inclining him neither in one direction nor the other, in order to test his zeal and develop his desire and resolve. Only then will the tested one truly renounce his sin.

These features we have presented with the intention of differentiating between the two kinds of actions of God's grace, one of which the Lord says: *Behold I stand at the door and knock* (Rev. 3:20), and about the other: *seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you* (Lk. 11:9). We have already described the first image. As for the second, there remains the question: How should we seek and on what must we *knock*?

In extraordinary situations the grace of God acts quickly and decisively, as we can see for example in the lives of the Apostle Paul, St. Mary of Egypt, and others. But in the usual order of things, the conversion will most often occur simply as the thought comes to a person to change his life and improve himself in his dealings with others and his inward inclinations. The thought comes—but how it needs to be strengthened so that it might prevail over the soul! The majority of the time such beneficial thoughts remain fruitless—not through any fault of their own, but owing rather to the inappropriate response of the person whose soul has been visited.

## I. PROCRASTINATION: A COMMON AILMENT

The main problem with these thoughts about one's sinfulness is that they are left unfulfilled, and are put off day after day. Procrastination is a common ailment and the chief reason for incorrigibility. Everyone says: "I will have time later," and remains fixed in old habits of unvirtuous life. Thus, when the good thought comes to change, seize it, take it up—that is why it was sent to you. With this goal in mind, first of all drive away procrastination.

*Drive away procrastination.* Never permit yourself to say: "I will do it tomorrow or some other time," but begin your task this very hour. Take up the weapon of good judgment, and to its aid:

1) Clearly imagine the senselessness, folly and danger of procrastination. You say: "later," but later it will be even harder to do, because you will become even more accustomed to the sin, and your sinful situations and connections will become even more involved. But what point is there for one who is entangled to become more and more entangled, thinking all the while that it will be just as easy later as now to disentangle oneself? If you have already understood that you must not stay the way you are, then why tarry? After all, God may finally say: *ye have become loathsome to me, I will no more pardon your sins* (Is. 1:14), and you may pass beyond the point of no return. This is such a catastrophe that no labor can be justifiably stinted in order to avoid it. If care is conscientiously taken to imagine this clearly and energetically, then all those who labor over their souls will naturally turn away from procrastination, for procrastination will have no internal proponent. You will see that it is your enemy, and you will look at it with disdain.

2) We procrastinate because the beneficial thought that had visited us still remains in us as nothing more than a thought, not yet having attracted our sympathy; and it does not motivate us.

The thought has come to us amongst all our other interests, like a strange guest, beckoning from afar, and without making any impression on us. It is your business to lead it deeper into the soul and take note of its value and attraction. Thus you must place it in the forefront, picture its veracity and the joy and loftiness that it promises, assure yourself that it is easy to accomplish. A beneficial thought is feeble and does not attract the heart because the head contains different plans and more interesting subjects, according to the thoughts previously therein entertained. So call it all into account and differentiate dispassionately. Nothing can compare with what the beneficial thought represents—everything else finds itself far, far in the background. The beneficial thought will stand alone, and being singular and beautiful, it attracts.

3) We suffer from procrastination mostly because at that moment we allow our energies to wane, indulge our laziness, our slackness, sleepiness, and indecisiveness in our powers of thought and activity. You can take hold of yourself from the other side—energetically imagine how humiliating it is to allow this in everyday affairs. It is even more so in the matter of your salvation, for which you should always prove lively and quick to act. It is shameful to allow the opposite, shameful to put off until tomorrow what can and should be done today.

Use this and similar exercises to drive away procrastination. Whoever is able to do this, do it. If a beneficial thought has come, convince yourself to fulfill it, incline yourself and force yourself to do right away as it tells you to do. It is futile to offer any further advice to one who has put off the matter until another day.

## 2. HABITS AND INCLINATIONS THAT IMPRISON A PERSON IN SIN

Let us suppose that a beneficial thought has been accepted by and occupies our attention. Now we must hasten to lead it to a level of awakening at which it will become a strong linchpin, easily and powerfully leading all our inward parts into action. For this we must give it a wide berth to pass inward, and for that we must perform, let us say, an operation on ourselves as the most necessary and most effective preparation for awakening.

Such an operation should be in opposition to those subtle nets, or against the habits and inclinations that imprison a person in sin. Sin entangles a soul by its many nets, or hides itself from the soul by its many coverings; because sin is ugly in and of itself, and one glance finds it repulsive. The covering that is deepest and closest to the heart is comprised of *self-deception*, *insensitivity* and *carelessness*; over them and closer to the surface lie *absent-mindedness* and *much-caring*, the chief players, which hide and feed sin and sinful habits and conditions. The uppermost covering is *prevalence of the flesh*, which is the most visible covering, no less strong and significant.

The first covering (self-deception, insensitivity and carelessness) is the essential one. It prevents the person from seeing the danger of his condition and undercuts his desire to change. The second two are essentially only instruments—they only magnify and support the sinful condition. When divine grace comes unto the separation of *soul and spirit*, it strikes directly against the first covering and tears it apart. Under its action the sinful person is completely uncovered and stands before his own consciousness in all his ugliness. But when the person is seeking grace-filled awakening himself, he has to begin from the outside and work his way in.

Thus, if you want to properly contemplate the thought that has been presented to you about your sinful life, begin by removing the sinful coverings as one would remove layers of earth in order to expose a treasure buried beneath.

### *The body*

First of all, go after the *body*. Refuse its delights and pleasures, restrict indulgences in even the most natural needs; lengthen the hour of vigil, decrease the usual amount of food, add labor to labor. Mainly, in whatever way you want or are able, lighten the flesh, thin its corpulence. Through this the soul will free itself of the bonds of matter, will become more energetic, lighter, and more receptive to good impressions. The material body prevailing over the soul communicates to the soul the body's lethargy and coldness. Physical ascetic labors weaken these bonds and eliminate their effects. True, not every sinner lives unrestrainedly and indulges the body. But it would be hard to find an individual in normal life who does not have something he would do well to refuse the body once the desire for salvation touches his heart. And the goal is very significant—it completely changes one's activity. What you have done previously according to habit, or in support of your usual occupations, you now begin to do with some changes and additional austerity for the sake of salvation—and there will be tangible results.

### *Cares and scattered thoughts*

The body burdens the soul from the outside; *cares* and *scattered thoughts* wear it down from within. Let us suppose that the flesh is already humbled—this, the first step, was taken. But two barriers divide the soul from its own self.

*Cares* do not leave any time to work on oneself. When they are present, you have one matter on your hands and ten more

in your head. That is why they push a person always further onward, not giving him the opportunity to look back and see himself. Therefore, you must put aside cares for a time, all without exception. You will take up your usual affairs later on, but for now let them cease, fling them from your hands and throw them out of your thoughts.

But once the cares have ceased, the whirlwind still remains in the head—one thought after another, one in agreement, another diametrically opposed. The soul is scattered, and the mind swings in different directions and thus does not allow you to retain anything lasting and steadfast. Collect your scattered children into one, like a pastor gathers his flock, or like a glass gathers scattered rays, and turn them back on yourself.

The desire to go deeper within yourself and work on yourself, to cut off your scattered thoughts and cares, of course inevitably requires the following means: solitude on one hand and on the other, cessation of usual occupations both personal and duty-related. First of all, this humbling of the flesh requires a change in the way you satisfy your natural needs. In this light, the most convenient time to change your life should be considered to be during a fast, especially Great Lent. Everything is set up for this during Lent—at home, in church, and even in society.<sup>1</sup> During this time everything is looked upon as preparation for repentance. Just the same, this does not mean that when the beneficial thought has come to change your life, you should put off its fulfillment until the Fast begins. Everything required during this time can be fulfilled at any other time, other than the fasting. But when the holy Fast has arrived it is a sin to miss the chance to take care for the salvation of your soul, as it is often missed at another time. If anyone who has had the salvific thought outside of the Fast to change his life, and whose

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1. St. Theophan is obviously speaking of an Orthodox society, as in pre-revolutionary Russia [trans.].

hinders him from carrying it out, it would be better for him to retreat for a time to a monastery. There it will be easier for him to master himself.

*Carelessness, insensitivity and blindness*

Now you stand before your heart. Before you is your inner man, sunk in the deep slumber of carelessness, insensitivity and blindness. Begin to awaken it. The beneficial thought that came has already troubled it a little. Step up to it with great good hope and mighty mental exertion, collecting all your attention, and begin to force on yourself various ideas, more or less strong and startling, accepting them all into your inner state.

First of all remove the veils from the eyes of your mind that keep your mind in a state of *blindness*. If a person does not deny sin and run from it, then that is because he does not know himself and the danger he is in for the sake of his sin. If his eyes were opened he would run from sin as he would run from a house engulfed in flames. Such blindness is the result of inattentiveness to himself—the person does not know himself because he has never entered inside himself, and has never thought about himself or his moral condition. But for the most part his blindness is supported by certain prejudices concerning himself. The person creates a net of thoughts, systematically closing himself off to himself. Perhaps these thoughts are but as spider webs—that is, they are of the slightest probability, but the mind never took them apart carefully, and the heart speaks very loudly of their reality and truthfulness. This is moral delusion or prejudice which comes from the heart's intrusion into things belonging to the reason. That is why it is necessary to unite particular soberness to deep attention at this moment, renouncing every deceit of an evil heart. If the heart needs to feel something at this moment, let it feel it under the influence of the mind's formulations, and not all by itself, sort of running

ahead. Otherwise it will again force the reason to imagine things as the heart likes; again it will force the reason to submit to the heart, again bringing disorder to the understanding and, instead of enlightening, it will only sink it into deeper blindness.

### 3. THOUGHT PROCESSES THAT KEEP ONE IN BLINDNESS

Placing yourself now in such a situation, begin to bring out onto neutral ground the various thought processes that keep you in blindness, and subject them to a severe and unhypocritical judgment.

#### *Contenting yourself with saying "I am a Christian"*

*I am a Christian*, you say, and content yourself with this. This is the first deceit—transferring to yourself the privileges and promise of Christianity, without any care to root true Christianity into yourself; or to ascribe to yourself that which can only be acquired by your strength and inner worthiness. Explain to yourself that it is illusory to hope in a name, that God can raise a son of Abraham from a stone and can take away your promise at any time if the conditions for participating in them are not soon fulfilled. Mainly, clarify to yourself what it means to be a Christian, unite yourself to this ideal, and you will see just how stable is this buttress to your blindness.

#### *"After all, we are not the worst"*

*"After all, we are not the worst; we know a thing or two, and if we judge anything we are after, we will be able to judge correctly. We conduct our matters not without thoughtfulness or tact, as others do."* This is how some are deluded by their psychological expertise. Others to the contrary are deluded by physical perfection—strength, beauty, form. Both one and the

other are more sharply blinded the higher they stand above those around them. Assure yourself:

1) that natural perfections have no moral value whatsoever, because they are not our own accomplishment, but are given to us by God; everything natural is of even less value in Christianity, because nature was corrupted by the fall. Sanctify all your good qualities with faith in Christ the Saviour and a life according to that faith, and only then view it as good.

2) Again—have you done everything you can and should according to your gifts? You are responsible for more, because you have been given more. The concern is not abilities, but their application. Do you have anything to show for them? Does the profit correspond to the expenditure?

3) As for any physical or incidental advantages there is nothing to say. St. John Chrysostom somewhere exhibits one man who praises another for his good looks, stateliness, wealth, nice house, his excellent choice horses, etc.; and then directs the following speech to him: “Why haven’t you told me anything about the man himself? All that you have described is not him.”

4) But there is no reason to look at others—let us look after ourselves. Everyone shall answer for himself. Look at your own self and, cutting yourself off from others, judge yourself only without comparing yourself to others. But if you do want to compare yourself with others, then compare yourself with the holy God-pleasers. They are the living Christian law and example for those who wish to be saved. If you judge yourself in comparison to them, you will not make a mistake.

*“We are not so bad”*

*We are not so bad:* It seems that we are not doing anything disgraceful, and others do not view us as bad, do not deprive us of their respect and attention. And at that, these are not just everyday people, but important individuals. The thickest and

murkiest veil of blindness is the good appearance of external behavior and external relationships! Make it clear to yourself more impressively that the external is worthless without the internal. External good behavior is the leaf, while internal good disposition is the fruit. The fig tree leaves promised fruit, but the Saviour, not finding any on the tree, cursed it. It is the same with any externally well-ordered person who stands before God's face without a sincerely good and God-fearing heart. *Son, give me thy heart* (Prov. 23:26), said the Lord to the Wise One [Solomon]. From the heart comes all good and all evil. As you are at heart, so are you before the Lord. If you are proud at heart, then no matter how humble you act on the outside, the Lord will still see you as proud. Thus it is with everything else. And the judgment of others is deceptive. Other people do not know us but relate to us well, either because they suppose that we are good, or they follow the rules of decency. Does it not happen that those who are near us see our badness but do not hint of this to us for their own reasons? Does it not also happen that other people, seeing the bad in others, praise them for it and thereby ascribe a certain zest to misbehavior? Their foolish listener goes on without stopping, sinking deeper and deeper into evil and badness; for when a person sees those around him smiling with pleasure at his actions, he continues in his evil ways with a certain self-satisfaction. Would we not also do the same if we should listen so carefully to other people's judgment of us?!

*"So, there is badness in me—am I the only one?"*

"Well, so there is badness in me—*Am I the only one?* So-and-so is the same way, and so is that other one, and even this other one. And there are plenty of bad people, even worse than me...." Thus do we blind ourselves with the ordinariness of sin around us. Explain to yourself that the large number of sinners does not change the law of righteousness and does not

relieve anyone's responsibility. God does not look at numbers. If everyone has sinned, He will punish everyone. Look at how many people were born before the flood, and all perished except for eight souls. In Sodom and Gomorrah five cities were consumed by fire from heaven, and no one was saved except for Lot and his daughters. The torments in hell will be no easier just because so many are being tormented there—on the contrary, won't this only intensify the suffering of each one?

#### 4. CEASE MAKING EXCUSES IN SINS AND WORK ON YOUR BLINDNESS

With these and similar thought processes, hasten to disperse the mist of prejudicial reasoning which keeps you in blindness and does not allow you to look at yourself as you should. Make this the goal of this chief work on yourself—to bring yourself to the point of realizing your dangerous condition. You will come to this naturally when you begin to take away one false support after another for your blindness. Little by little you will begin to destroy the empty hopes about your own self or anything of your own; little by little you will cease *making excuses in sins*, that is, the tendency to justify yourself always and in everything. Assure yourself that your Christianity does not mean anything; that if you are bad, your mental and physical perfections reproach you rather than justify you; that your good external behavior is but a God-hating show if your heart is not in good order; that neither the praise of others nor your wide circle of friends in sin will protect you from God's judgment and wrath. Little by little you will separate from your thoughts, and there will remain only one—one thought before the gaze of your mind and conscience, which will speak loudly against you, especially after you have united yourself with that which you are expected to be in Christ. You will find that you have

strayed far away from your first-created image. Subsequently, if your consciousness does not work evil against you, you will naturally become timid about yourself. Cut off from everyone and deprived of all your supports, you should be stunned by the sense of danger you are in. You should strive in any way you can before this extreme state to work on your blindness. The renewal of this feeling is always the threshold of sin's retreat, just as in war the wavering of enemy ranks is a sign that they will soon flee.

### 5. HOW TO SOFTEN YOUR INSENSITIVE HEART

At the very onset of even a slight sense of your sinfulness and the danger of remaining in it, delve ever deeper into yourself, and with even greater force of thought conquer yourself with threats and sobering ideas; using them, shake up and soften your insensitive heart, as a heavy hammer softens a rough stone.

#### *Remember your fate*

Remember your fate. Say to yourself: "Alas, soon will come *death*." Another man you know dies; any time it could be your hour. Do not estrange yourself from this hour of death. Convince yourself that the angel of death has already been sent; he is coming, and draws near. Or imagine yourself to be a person who stands with a sword drawn over his head, ready to cut it off. Then imagine clearly what will happen to you at the time of death and afterwards. The *judge standeth before the door* (James 5:9). Your secret sins will be reproached before all the angels and saints. There, before everyone's face, you will stand alone with your deeds. They will either condemn you or justify you. And what is *Paradise*, what is *hell*?... In Paradise is indescribable blessedness; in hell is torment without consolation or end—it bears the seal of God's final rejection. Feel all this vividly and force yourself to remain in it until you are filled with *fear and trembling*.

*Turn to God and place yourself before him*

Then turn to God and place yourself, defiled and weighed down by many sins, before the face of Him, the omnipresent, omniscient, all-gracious and long-suffering! Will you still offend the eye of God with your loathsome, sinful appearance? Will you yet turn your ignoble back to Him Who bestows all things from all sides? Will you yet close your ears to the fatherly voice that mercifully calls to you? Will you yet turn away the hand stretched out to receive you? Bring this absurdity to your senses and hasten to awaken and strengthen within yourself *godly pity and sorrow*.

*Ascend in thought upon Golgotha and crucify yourself*

Remember that you are a Christian, redeemed by the blood of Christ, cleansed with the water of Baptism. You have received the gift of the Holy Spirit; you have sat at the table of the Lord and are nourished by His Body and Blood. And you have flouted all this for the sake of sin that destroys you! Ascend in thought upon Golgotha, and understand what your sins have cost. Will you really still wound the head of the Lord with the thorns of your sins? Will you still nail Him to the Cross, pierce His side and mock His long-suffering? Or perhaps you do not see that by sinning you participate in tormenting the Saviour, and thereby share a part in the tormentors' lot. But if you abandon sin and repent you will partake of the power of His death. Choose one or the other: either crucify Him, then perish eternally—or crucify yourself, and inherit eternal life with Him.

*Consider the sin you cling to—abhor and reject it*

Consider further what that sin you cling to is. It is an evil more disastrous than all evils. It separates you from God, wreaks havoc on your soul and body, torments your conscience, brings upon you God's punishment in life and at death; and after death

it sends you to hell, closing Paradise to you forever. What a monster it is to people! Bring to your senses all the evil of sin, and force yourself to abhor it and reject it.

*Look at sin from the devil's point of view*

Finally, look at sin from the point of view of the devil, who was its first creator and propagator, and see for whom you work by sinning. God has done and will do everything for you, but you do not want to please Him. The devil has done nothing for you, only tyrannizes you with sin, but you willingly and indefatigably work for him. You befriend him through sin, and he does evil to you through it. He entices you to sin by promising its sweetness, but those who fall into sin he torments and tortures. Here he convinces you that your sins are nothing, but there he will present them to your reproach, as major points. He trembles with evil joy when someone falls into nets of sin and gets stuck in them. Realize all this and arouse yourself to hatred for this man-hater and all his works.

When you will thus press into your heart one after another contrition-producing and softening feelings—horror and fear, sorrow and regret, repugnance and hatred of sin—little by little your heart will warm up and begin to move, and after it your enfeebled will will begin to strain itself and spring into action. As volts of electricity communicate a certain tension and stimulation to the body, or as the cool, clean morning air communicates freshness and energy, so does this feeling that fills the soul awaken slumbering energy and renew the call and willingness to escape your dangerous condition. These will be the beginnings of your active care for your own salvation. Rush decisively this very instant.

## 6. HOW TO DRIVE AWAY THE SLEEP OF INDOLENCE

Drive away the *sleep of indolence*. Your will has weakened from its long lying in sin; gather about it now the thoughts that usually awaken energy. On the side of good that leads to salvation is loftiness, usefulness, ease of fulfillment and the removal of obstacles, the consolation being prepared, and mainly—necessity. On the side of sin is everything contrary to the foregoing. Sincerely explain this to yourself at length until you motivate yourself, and bring yourself to a state of vigorous tension, ready to spring into action. Tell your soul:

1) You must choose one or the other: either perish eternally, should you remain as you are, or if you do not want that, then repent and turn to the Lord and His commandments. And why should you delay? The further you let it go the worse it gets. Be aware that death is at the door.

2) Is it really so hard? Just begin, just push forward. The Lord is near, and all manner of His aid is prepared for you.

3) And what a blessing! You will throw off that yoke and those fetters, and emerge into the freedom of a child of God.

4) Why do you torment yourself like some kind of enemy? You know no peace either night or day. All around you is confusion and anxiety. Just make one turnaround within, and all of this will vanish, and you will experience the joy of life.

5) Everything around you is alive and everything calls you to life. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You too may partake of His vibrant life. Go and drink of the springs of living water.

Energy is always aroused in an enfeebled will when a person places himself between extremes—either perish, or change your life. The feeling of self-preservation immediately begins

to arouse you to action. After this, remember what a great blessing awaits you after you change your life for the better, how easy it is to do it, and how you are capable of doing it and called to do it; and you have all the means to do it at hand. Look at how all good people on heaven and on earth will be glad to associate with you. They will carry you in their arms, and the joy will come of living in common with all those who live in Christ Jesus our Lord. Remember all this and your weakened will will lift itself up, and your feeble knees will straighten.

### 7. LABOR OVER YOURSELF WITHOUT RELAXING

So labor over yourself, and you will more and more be able to cast off your blindness, insensitivity and indolence. But labor and labor without relaxing. There is deceit in a sinful soul, which tries all it can to disincarnate itself from the work of salvation. Come, take hold and carry it, it will not cross you—it simply does not want to do any work. No one can be master over your inner life besides you yourself. Enter there and break yourself: startle, instruct, carry on the work with yourself before the face of God; persuade and convince yourself. This is why we say that in the matter of conversion, reasoning with one's own self is the only way in. If you yourself do not reason and think it out, who will do it for you? That is why it is said to you: "Think about it, imagine it, delve into it."

What a great blessing it is for a sinner if his depravity has not yet been able to completely stifle all the light of the knowledge of truth in him. Say his morals are corrupted, his feelings are unclean—but if a healthy understanding still lingers in the soul, there is still something to work with for the one who has begun to think about his salvation. When even that is no longer there, when even the mind has become depraved—he

will either fall into doubts, having lost his conviction, or he will accept an entirely twisted teaching. Then there is nothing left for the man to use on himself; then he must admit that he is unwholesome from head to toe. Incidentally, few go that far. As for those who do go that far, if there is any hope for their conversion, it occurs through the extraordinary and stunning actions of God's grace.

Most sinners do not lose their faith, or healthy images—according to the Apostle, their rationality—but only become morally corrupted. For these it is enough to be cleansed by forgetting their darkened understanding, and strengthening their conviction weakened by inattention and carelessness toward everything that is good.

Sit and see for yourself what you should believe, how you should live and in what you should trust, according to the Symbol of Faith and the Lord's commandments. If you have trouble, look at the catechesis; and if you cannot do this either, talk with someone, especially with your spiritual father.

When you do this, the truth reigning within you will arise victorious, and it will begin with authority to thrust out the unrighteous deeds, dispositions and feelings that had taken you over. Then it will be easy to reason with yourself, expose your blindness, shatter your insensitivity and cast out your indolence.

### 8. REASONING WITH YOURSELF ABOUT SALVATION

When so many subjects arise about which you need to reason with yourself, you must not think that only the educated can do it. Anyone can reason with himself about salvation, even children. This is not the same as academic reasoning. Every truth that comes to mind will immediately inspire the thing it requires. Just be conscientious and renew a

sincere desire for good in yourself, with the readiness to follow the dictates of truth.<sup>1</sup>

But all of your self-instruction should be conducted in a way that will fit the aim—to act upon the soul and awaken. To this end:

1) When you reason with yourself, do not intellectualize, posing various questions, but having clarified a subject to yourself, take it to heart from the perspective that you feel will be the most impressive, and contemplate it thus.

2) Do not run quickly from one thought to another. This will sooner scatter your thoughts than gather them and influence the soul. The sun would not warm even one creature on earth if it were to run across it instantly. May the measure of reasoning about one thing or another be sympathy. Bring every thought into feeling and do not let it go until it penetrates the heart.

3) If possible, do not leave a thought naked in a reasoned form, as it were, but robe it in some sort of image and then carry it into the head as a constant reminder. It is even better if you can concentrate several striking images into one. Thus St. Tikhon, in order to impress into the mind of the sinner the thought about the danger of his condition, says: “The sword of truth is above you, beneath you is hell ready to slay you; before you is death, behind you is the multitude of your sins, to the right and left of you is a crowd of vicious enemies. Can you possibly be indolent?...” This image is easier to remember and keep in mind, and has a more powerful and impressive influence.

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1. When doing all this it is never superfluous to have soul-profiting reading at hand. All the subjects that you must study are clearly and powerfully revealed in them. Invaluable to this study among the writings of St. Tikhon [of Zadonsk] are the articles about sin, about blindness, about forgiveness, to the unrepentant, and cell letters [private letters of instruction]. To aid this self-instruction is an *Anthology Of Patristic Writings*, entitled: *Arise, You That Sleep...*

4) Fall to the ground and make prostrations—many, many—and beat your breast. Do not leave praying as long as the prayer is moving. When prayer cools, again begin to contemplate, and go from this again to prayer.

5) For prayer, just as for contemplation, make short cries and repeat them often: “Have mercy on Thy creation, O Master! God be merciful to me a sinner! O Lord, save me! O Lord, hasten to my aid!” Bring to mind the inspiring church hymns and sing them: “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh at midnight.... When I think of the many evil things I have done, I, a wretched one, I tremble at the fearful day of judgment.... O my soul, my soul, why art thou sleeping?” and other such hymns.

## 9. GOD’S GRACE CHOOSES WELL-KNOWN MEANS

Thus force yourself, beat unceasingly at the door of the merciful God. What are we searching for by our labors? The grace of God that awakens. The grace of God is accustomed, in order to have an effect on us, to choose well-known means, as was stated in the description of extraordinary actions of grace. Thus, apply these means to yourself and proceed under their sign and influence. Perhaps some ray of grace will fall on you, just as it has fallen on other sinners like you.

1) God’s grace has chosen the churches of God and church rubrics for His activity. You too should go to church, and patiently, attentively and reverently listen to the services; for the church and its structure, the order of services, the singing and reading—all of this can have an effect. It is not surprising that though you enter the church idly, you will leave it having conceived the spirit of salvation.

2) Grace has worked through the Word of God. You too should take it and read it. Perhaps you will come across a section

that will strike you as one did Blessed Augustine when he opened the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

3) The hearts of other sinners have been softened by discussions with pious people. You, too, go and have a discussion. If you hear word after word of discussion, will not one word strike you that will be unto the separation of soul and spirit, according to the thoughts of the heart? Perhaps a living word, warmed with love, will penetrate deep into your heart and shatter the stronghold of sin residing therein.

4) The prayers of the poor are powerful. You, too, go and multiply your alms: wipe the tears of the unfortunate, shelter if you can the destitute. The prayerful moans of the impoverished reach heaven and pass through the heavens of heavens. Will not these prayers bring the angelic guide to you as they did for Cornelius the centurion?

Working these and other similar works, you will come into contact with the vessels and bearers of grace. Perhaps its enlivening dew will descend also upon you from somewhere and give life to the frozen seedlings of spiritual life.

## IO. AWAITING GOD'S VISITATION

Thus, the thought has come to correct your life and morality. Having cast off procrastination, humble and lighten your flesh with physical ascetic struggle. Remove yourself from cares and distractions by ceasing your usual business and by solitude, and then, concentrating your attention on various salvific thoughts, force yourself to cast out all blindness, insensitivity

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1. *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof* (Rom. 13:13-14). This verse provided a turning point in his life, when he was finally converted.

and indolence by reasoning with yourself, or discussing with yourself, alternating this with prayer and placing yourself under the influence of such occasions as divine grace has chosen to act upon the souls of sinners.

Labor, force yourself, search—and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. Do not relax and do not despair. But all the while remember that these labors only comprise the experience of our struggle to attract grace; they are not the grace itself, which we do not yet have. We have not yet acquired the main thing: grace-filled awakening. It is very noticeable that whether we reason, pray, or do some other thing—we squeeze something somewhat foreign into our hearts from without. Sometimes it happens that according to the intensity of our struggle, a certain pressure from these labors bears down to an established depth of heart, but the heart disgorges it because of a sort of elasticity against something foreign and unfamiliar to that heart. It is similar to the way a stick inserted vertically into water is expelled upward. Right after this a coldness and turgidness begins in the soul—a clear indication that there never was any grace-filled influence, only our labor and exertion. Therefore do not content yourself with your efforts alone, as though they were what you were supposed to seek. This is a dangerous mistake! It is equally dangerous to think that there is a reward due for these labors, and grace should be automatically sent down to you. Absolutely not! This only prepares you to receive it, but the gift itself is entirely dependent upon the Giver. Thus, making assiduous use of all the prescribed methods, the seeker should go on, awaiting God's visitation, which, by the way, does not come with discernment, but when it comes no one will know from whence it came.

When this grace-filled awakening arrives, only then will real inner changes of life and morals begin. Without this you cannot expect any progress, only unsuccessful attempts. Witness to this

is Blessed Augustine, who toiled and suffered long with himself, but only conquered himself when grace came and touched him. Labor in expectancy and the hope of faith. Grace will come and arrange everything.

## II. WHAT IS GRACE-FILLED AWAKENING?

It is natural to ask: What is grace-filled awakening? Into what state does it put the sinner? And how does this state differ from other similar states? It is necessary to know the characteristic traits of awakening in order not to let it go by fruitlessly, and so that you might not accept some natural state in its place.

The state of the soul awakened by grace can be discerned by comparing it to the opposite state of a soul lost in the sleep of sin.

### *The feeling of dependence on God returns*

Sin separates man from God. A person who has left God for sin does not perceive his dependence on God, lives as he pleases, as though he is not God's and God is not his. He is like a self-willed slave who is running from his master. Now his barrier is broken. *The feeling of dependence on God* returns. The person clearly realizes his total subservience to God and his absolute responsibility to Him. Before, heaven for him was just a heavy, copper lid stretched over his head; but now some rays of light pass through this dark veil, showing him God the Master and Judge. Within him is powerfully awakened the *perception of the Divinity* in all His perfection, and the Divinity irresistibly inhabits the soul, filling it entirely. This is the foundation and potentiality for the future spiritual life.

### *One sees all his ugliness within*

Sin first enveloped man in blindness, insensitivity and indolence. At the moment of grace's influence, this three-layered, crystallized millstone falls from his fettered soul. The

person now sees well *all his ugliness* within, and not only sees it, but also *feels* it. He also realizes the danger of his condition, begins to be ashamed of himself and *takes care* for his fate. Not only does shame fall into the soul, but with the feeling of responsibility for himself before God, fear, agony, and disappointment begin to powerfully attack his heart. His conscience gnaws at him.

*One feels a certain sweetness in godly life*

Now he feels a certain sweetness in godly life. Sensing all the futility of a sinful life and nursing a revulsion for it as for a sea of evil, he also has a presentiment that joy and consolation are hidden in the realm of goodness, which is now being revealed to his spiritual eye. It comes into his view like the promised land, as a most blessed haven from all disquiet. This presentiment in a sinful soul is ultimately a manifestation that man himself cannot produce. It is God's blessing and is subject to His authority. Thinking about it is not the same as feeling it. God Himself leads man's spirit into His treasure-house and allows man to taste its blessings.

*Freed from the reign of sin the soul is free to choose*

Notice how necessary this action of grace is on the path of freeing the soul from the reign of sin. The goal of awakening grace and its power extricates man from the jaws of sin and places him on the point of indifference between good and evil. The scales of our will, on which the will leans toward one side or the other, should now be evenly weighted. But this cannot happen if the sinner is not given at least a foretaste of the sweetness of goodness. If this were not given, then the sweetness of sin, as we pointed out before, would attract him more strongly to itself than to goodness; and the choice would fall to the former, as happens with those who have contrived to change

their lives without grace-filled awakening. For this is a general law: *ignoti nulla cupido*, that is, what you do not know you will not desire. But when grace-filled awakening allows him to taste the sweetness of goodness, it attracts him to itself, as we said, consciously and perceptively. The scales are even. Now complete freedom to act is in the person's hands.

*Everything is illumined by this grace-filled awakening*

In this manner, as in a flash of lightning, everything within and around the person is illuminated by this grace-filled awakening. For one instant it introduces the heart to that state from which sin has been cast out, and places man into that chain of creation from which he voluntarily exiled himself through sin. That is why this act of grace is always signified by a sudden fright and jolt, like the way the abrupt sound of the word "stop!" jolts a person walking quickly but lost in thought. If you look at this state from a psychological point of view, it is nothing other than an awakening of spirit. It is natural for our spirit to acknowledge Divinity, and the higher world or order of things, to raise man above everything sensual, and carry him away to the purely spiritual realm. But in the sinful state our spirit loses its strength and commingles with psychological emotionality, and through it with sensuality to the point of practically disappearing into it. Now through grace it is extricated from this and placed as if on a candle stand within our inner temple, and it sheds light upon everything dwelling within and is visible from within.

## 12. DISCERNING STATES OF AWAKENING FROM NATURAL STATES

That state in which the soul is placed during grace-filled awakening is similar to many natural states with which it should not mix.

*The agonizing state of displeasure versus boredom*

During a state of grace a man finds himself in a certain agonizing, sorrowful state of displeasure with himself and his condition. But this is not the same as *boredom*.<sup>1</sup> In boredom there is no particular object—the man is afflicted and sad without knowing why or about what. To the contrary, in grace-filled awakening there is a particular reason for his sorrow, namely his having offended God and defiled himself. One is of the soul while the other is of the spirit; one is torturous, dark and murderous, which is why it is said “stifled by boredom,” but the other enlivens and awakens. In our usual daily life there are not a few of these vague boredom, each one with its own shades. Worthy of particular note among them is yearning for one’s heavenly homeland, the feeling of dissatisfaction with anything created, the feeling of spiritual peace. This is one of the natural movements of our spirit. When the passions begin little by little to quiet down, the spirit raises its own cry, distinctly calling out from the heart about its suffocating and humiliated condition in which it is held captive. It asks why is it not fed as it should be, but tormented with hunger. This is a longing for the heavenly fatherland, a sigh which the Apostle heard in all creation. Nevertheless, it is not the same as grace-filled awakening. It is one of the natural movements or functions of our spirit, and in and of itself it is mute and fruitless. Grace-filled awakening breathes upon it and communicates to it lightness and liveliness.

*Sorrow of spirit versus ordinary disappointment*

With grace-filled awakening there is sorrow of spirit, the sounding of an alarm in the conscience; nevertheless, this is

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1. This word in Russian, *tosca*, actually has no direct translation. It is a combination of boredom and sad longing or emptiness, a sense of missing something to which we are attached [trans.].

entirely different from ordinary disappointment with ourselves for more or less serious blunders in our daily life. We lacerate ourselves when we say or do something wrong; and generally in all occasions when we have, as they say, shamed ourselves, we even say: "Oh, how can I follow my conscience?" But this is not that voice of the spirit's conscience that we now hear.

In the first instance, the person is only thinking of himself and his temporary relationships. But in the other, to the contrary, the person forgets himself and everything temporary, and sees only God Whom he has offended and his eternal relationship with Him which he has ruined. In the first instance he stands for himself and human dictates, but in the second he stands for God and His glory. In the first he laments that he has shamed himself before people, while in the second that he has shamed himself before God—he has nothing to do with people or even with the entire world. The first is a sorrow without consolation, but the second is mixed with a certain joy, for the first relies only on himself and others, and when that foundation is ruined he has nowhere to turn. In the second all support comes from God, by Whom he longs not to be rejected; but he hopes in Him. Our ordinary acts of conscience imitate the action of true conscience. You could say that it is also an act of conscience, only it is perverted, lowered from its original dignity. It has fallen together with the spirit from its essential height, from the spiritual realm, and landed in the realm of the emotional-physical. It has begun to serve earthly goals and has become, so to speak, a worldly conscience which feels its offense to man more than its offense to God.

*Sensing life with God in eternal bliss versus  
"bursts of exalted yearnings"*

During a grace-filled awakening the heart is allowed to sense another better, more perfect, joyous life. This, however,

is not at all what people have who feel an awakening of bright impulses and noble yearnings (which we could call a movement of ideas). These manifestations correspond to that which is exalted over the ordinary order of things and tend toward the realization of the grace-filled suggestion, but they diverge widely in direction and goals. The latter push one into some sort of foggy area, while the first turn one to God, show the peace that is in Him, and grant a foretaste of it. The goal of the first is life with God in eternal bliss, and of the latter it is "something." Of course, it is always something great and extraordinary, but nothing more can be said about it other than that it is "something." The supreme difference between them is that the latter sort of burst in and act uniquely—the spirit inspires one person from one side and another person from another side. But the first embraces the entire spirit on all sides and placing it near the goal, satisfies it, or gives it a foretaste of the total satisfaction to come.

Bursts of exulted yearnings are essentially traces of God's image in man; it is a shattered image, and therefore it is discovered as resembling splintered and scattered rays. These rays must be gathered into one and concentrated, and this focus creates an igniting ray. This, shall we say, concentrated ray of spirit, unified within itself but broken up within the many-faceted soul, produces the grace that awakens the soul and ignites the spiritual life—not by setting the person into cold contemplation, but into a certain life-producing burning. Such a gathering of spirit corresponds to the feeling of Divinity—this is embryonic life. It is the same in nature: life does not appear until its powers act in a shattering way; but as soon as the higher powers collect into one, a living existence is manifest—as, for example, in a plant. So it is in the spirit. While its impulses are breaking things up, now this and now that, now in this direction and now in that direction, there is no life in it. When the higher, divine power of grace

concurrently descends upon the spirit, it brings all of its strivings into one and holds them in this unity—then comes the fire of spiritual life.

By these signs it is easy to distinguish grace-filled awakening from ordinary manifestations of spiritual life, in order that they not be confused, and, mainly, in order not to miss the chance to make use of them for salvation. It is particularly necessary to know this regarding those times when the grace of God acts without any preliminary effort on the person's part, or without any particular strength. The awakened state cannot go by unnoticed, but it is possible to not give it the attention it deserves and, having been some time in it, again to fall into the ordinary circular motion of soul and body.

Awakening does not complete the work of the sinner's conversion, but only initiates it; the work on himself lies ahead, and is very complicated work at that. Everything, by the way, related to this is completed in two turning points: first in the movement toward oneself, and then away from oneself to God. By the first movement the person regains the authority he had lost over himself, and the second brings him forth as a sacrifice to God—a whole-burnt offering of freedom. In the first movement he comes to the decision to abandon sin, and in the second, drawing nearer to God, he gives a promise to belong to Him alone throughout the days of his life.

## Chapter Seven

### *Ascent to the Resolve to Abandon Sin and Dedicate One's Life to Pleasing God.*

#### I. ASCENT TO THE RESOLVE TO ABANDON SIN

Whether grace has visited by itself or a person has sought and found it, the state into which it places a man and its first effect on him are the same in both cases. The awakened one is placed by grace into the middle ground between sin and virtue. Grace draws him out of the bonds of sin, depriving sin of its authority to motivate him into action as if against his will; but it does not turn him towards the good, only allowing him to feel its superiority and joy, together with a feeling of obligation to be on its side. The person now stands at the crossroads, and he has to make the final choice. St. Macarius of Egypt says that the grace which comes to a man does not at all bind a man's will with force and does not make him constant in the good, even if he wants it or does not want it. To the contrary, the power of God residing in man gives place to freedom, so that the man's will might be disclosed: does it agree or disagree with grace? From this moment begins the unification of the will with grace. Grace influenced from without and existed on the outside. It enters in and begins to possess parts of the soul in no other way than when man's desire opens the door to it, or opens its mouth to receive it. The person has the desire for it, and it is ready to help. Man himself does not have the ability to create or confirm the good in himself, but he wants it and forces himself. For the sake of this desire, grace confirms the desired good for man. It

will continue this way until the man's final mastery of himself in goodness and in pleasing God.

Everything that a man should do in this work on himself, or how he should come to a firm resolve, is the same as what usually happens when we set to any work or venture. Usually after the thought is born to do something, we lean toward that thought with our desire, remove the obstacles and resolve to do it. It is just the same with the resolve to live the Christian life. We must: a) lean towards it with our desire, b) remove the obstacles within by developing our resolve and c) resolve to do it. Although the action of grace places the spirit in an awakened state, nevertheless its suggestion to changes our lives is only a thought, though it may be more or less vivid: "Should I abandon the sin?" or, "I must abandon it." One who awakens from sleep sees that it is time to arise, but in order to arise he must use particular force, making special motions in various parts of the body. He tenses his muscles, throws off whatever is covering him and arises.

Thus, having felt a grace-filled awakening, hasten with your will to fulfill its demands. Agree with its suggestion that you, unjustified before God and impure, must correct yourself—beginning *immediately*.

For him who sought the help of grace and now feels its visitation, such a desire should already be there, for it guided him in all the prescribed labors. But to its make-up or its perfection something must now be added. There is mental desire: the mind demands and the person forces himself. Such desire introduces the preparatory labors. There is sympathetic desire. It is born under the effects of grace-filled awakening. Finally, there is active desire—the will's agreement to begin immediately the work of rising from fallenness. It should now be developed, at the awakening of grace. This is the first work of the awakened one after his awakening.

That not every awakened person actually begins to change his life for the better is a well-known fact, just as not everyone who is awakened from sleep immediately arises; sometimes he may fall asleep again several times.

*What to do when you feel the grace of awakening*

Grace-filled awakening places a person on the one hand in a light and lively state; on the other hand, however, it makes rather pressing demands. Whoever at this point tends more toward the first state may allow himself to soar in thought and give himself over before the proper time to the joy of life, as though he already has everything that he needs. This lightness that is given to him does not allow him to give the necessary attention to what has happened, and the inner scattering that this entails soon cools him; the opportune time and state is missed. Again the usual lethargy does not allow him to master himself. Whoever, to the contrary, tends more toward the second side may allow himself to free himself a little from the pressure, just as a child throws the bandage with its healing salve from a wound simply because it constricts. In this state, the person tries to disperse what seems to him to be dark thoughts by taking up some apparently innocent diversion such as conversation or reading. Another turns to investigating the torturous feeling that has been born in him so that he can learn where it came from and how it could have developed. The first seeks unrelated impressions, while for the second, the disintegrating effect of the investigation blots out the salvific change that occurred within. That is why this one also ultimately falls into the usual immoveable lethargy.

It would seem that it would be better not to be this way, but it happens because grace-filled awakenings occur in different degrees and circumstances, which can be such as to obscure the importance and value of their appearance within. All-wise grace

allows this in order to test a man's free will. This is why we say: as soon as you have come to feel the grace of awakening and are aware that it is this and not something else, hasten to urge your will to follow this suggestion. For this you must:

1) Believe with simplicity of heart that this is from God, that God Himself is calling you to Himself, that He has come closer to you in order to produce a salvific change in you.

2) Believing this, do not let yourself miss this action of God's mercy without bearing fruit. Only this awakening gives you the power to conquer yourself. It will depart, and you will not be able to do it yourself. Whether or not it will come again you cannot say. Perhaps this condescension is coming to you for the last time. After this you will fall into a hardened state, and from that state into hopelessness and despair.

3) Use all effort and force, as much as you can, to keep yourself in that salvific state into which you have been placed. Like a flammable material, if you hold it a long time before the fire it not only will become hot, but it may also catch fire. So can the desire to lead a grace-filled life be inflamed if you hold it as long as you can under the influence of grace.

4) Therefore estrange yourself from anything that might put out this igniting little flame, and surround yourself with everything that might feed it and fan it into a fire. Go into solitude, pray and think over with yourself how you must be. This order of life, occupation and labor which has already been prescribed and which you forced yourself to complete in search of grace, is also the most congenial to continuing the activity that has already begun within you. The best of these in this case are: solitude, prayer and contemplation. Your solitude will be more sober, your prayer deeper and your contemplation more effective. Reason with yourself, go through all the thoughts that you had gathered previously while trying to banish blindness, insensitivity and indolence. Even if these three are no longer present,

you still have to ignite the desire and begin the work right away. Turn all your activity to this end. Now your self-reasoning will no longer be what it was before. Without an awakening it usually tends toward generality; now to the contrary, emulating grace and under its guidance, it will all relate directly to you yourself, without any excuses or digressions, and it will bring in other aspects that are most potent to affect you. Therefore in this case you will not so much contemplate as move from perception to perception.

*Leaning in the direction of goodness and choosing it*

It is in this labor over yourself with the aid of grace that will finally pronounce in your heart the words heard both by the One God and by yourself: "I must finally do it, and so I will begin right now." It is obvious that this is a conclusion; but according to what laws and from what circumstances it is derived, no science could determine. All subjects of previous contemplation could be clearly known, but this conclusion may not be. It even happens that one person may so cogently put all these subjects into words that under their influence tens and hundreds come to that conclusion, but it is not voiced in that person's heart. And even he cannot say what is at work here—grace or freedom. For sometimes an act of grace does not have any effect, and all the person's exertion of freedom remains fruitless. Both comprise an inaccessible image for us, each preserving at the same time its own nature. It could be said that freedom commits itself while grace takes possession of it and penetrates it. From this point on, it depends upon the strength of the desire: "So, now let's get to work."

Here finally the person is leaning in the direction of goodness, is ready to set out on this holy path, ready to walk in the way of good, God-pleasing deeds. But in this moment the whole abyss of evil that has been hiding in the heart is swept up like

dust, attempting to cover the entire heart again. During the moment of awakening sin is silent, as though it has nothing to do with what is happening to the person. But now that it is about to be trampled underfoot, the thousand-headed one, as St. John Climacus calls it, releases a thousand screams on the person who has determined to trample it. It is just as an awakened person, while he only thinks about arising, his body is at peace. But as soon as he begins to arise in earnest and tenses his muscles a little, all the pains in his body which up until then had been at rest now let him know how they feel and raise their objection. So do the sinful pains keep silence when someone who has heeded the call of grace is reaching this inclination. But as soon as he resolves to begin the work, all these infirmities raise a hue and cry that is strong and confusing. One thought after another, movement after movement, strike the poor person and drag him backwards. Attacking without any order from all sides they encompass the soul and sink it into its disturbance. All the goodness in the man hangs by a thread, and he is ready any minute to turn away from what he clings to, and again sink into that medium from which he had wanted to escape. The only thing that saves him is that sweetness, lightness and joy that he was vouchsafed to taste at the moment of his awakening, and that stronghold he felt when he pronounced in his heart: "So, now I will begin."

Whoever has seen a tiny spark floating this way and that in smoke but nevertheless standing for itself, or a twig on a tree being thrown up and down and all around by a strong wind, has seen an image of what happens to a man's good intentions during this moment. Not only is there chaos in the soul, but even the blood boils; the ears may ring and the eyes fog. It is not difficult to imagine what kind of uprising there is not just of the sin that lives in a man's heart, but even more furious from the father of all sins—the devil, who can not

remain calm when such a troublemaker appears in his kingdom. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk says: "When the sinner, motivated by God's grace, begins to repent, he meets with various temptations. A man begins to approach Christ, and satan follows after him to trouble him and lure him away from Christ, to trip him up and spread out various nets." We have heard tell of ghosts—frightening ones and seductive ones, like those that lead one to dig for buried treasure chests. This psychological myth best describes all of the devil's work to divert a man from his good intention to purchase the pearl of great price, or obtain the treasure hidden in the field.

### *A decisive battle with sin*

Here a great struggle with himself lies ahead of the person; it is a decisive battle with sin. Now he must decisively take his enemy captive and conquer him, trample upon the snake, bind him and wither his strength. All hope and realization of later victories over individual attacks of sin will be founded upon the success of this battle. Due to the variation of the active parties it is impossible to determine everything that happens at this time. However, the main areas or turning points of this battle are not hard to point out, but we do so more in aid of strugglers than in the interest of science.

Apparently there is no point of support in the soul: it tosses about in its good intention, not whole but yet not shattered, aided by God's grace. And who else will support it, who will set it aright? This is why it must ever more loudly cry out desperately to God, the way a drowning man cries out. The enemy has grabbed you and wants to swallow you up—cry out, like Jonah in the belly of the whale or like drowning Peter. The Lord sees your need and your labor, and He will give you His hand in aid; He will lift you up and place you on your feet, which is how a warrior should be who goes forth to war.

*The soul's disposition in the battle*

This is the support! It is much more dangerous if the soul thinks to find support within itself—then it will lose everything. Evil will again overcome it, darken that inner light that is still so weak, snuff out that barely kindled little flame. The soul knows how powerless it is by itself. Therefore, without expecting anything from itself, let it fall into nothingness before God; let it make itself as *nothing* within its heart. Then all-effective grace will create everything out of that *nothing*. Whoever gives himself over into God's hands in ultimate self-abnegation will attract God to himself, one in pain of heart, and will be made strong in His strength.

In the midst of this self-abasement, however, the soul should not become enervated and having given itself to God, also give itself over to inactivity. No—although you expect everything from God and nothing from yourself, you must force yourself into action and act according to your strength, so that there will be something to which divine grace can come, something for divine power to protect. Grace is already present, but it will act in the steps of your own actions, filling their powerlessness with its power. Thus, tread firmly in self-abnegating, prayerful committing yourself to the will of God, and work without relaxing.

*The deeply rooted inspirers of sin—breaking their bonds*

Work against all sin, but especially against its deeply rooted inspirers. When everything in the soul is rebelling, and thoughts like phantoms take possession of it, aiming their arrows from all sides at the very heart, it is not hard to notice the main, so to say, igniters of evil. Behind the multitude of individual warriors stand, in the far rear, the chief warriors who give all the orders, directing all the strategies of war. These are the deeply rooted inspirers of sin. All attention must be directed to them, all arms

should be taken up against them; they must be fought and destroyed. When they are defeated, the petty fighters will scatter by themselves.

Just who these main inspirers of sin and chief fighters in its defense are was shown to us by the Saviour when He commanded us to follow Him (Mk. 8:34-38). *Whosoever will come after Me*, He said, *let him deny himself*—turn away from himself, consider himself to be as if foreign to himself, not worthy of attention and sympathy. This presupposes that in a sin-loving heart self-pity—which is what it comes down to—continually lives and is of a quality that is the opposite of this disposition. A sinner takes care of himself like a tenderly loving mother takes care of her little child: he is sorry to deny himself anything, to go against himself. He cannot overcome himself, or punish himself for anything. Further the Saviour obliged us to deny everything in the world in order to save our souls: *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

The world is the aggregate of things outside of us, visible, tangible, sensual. It follows that the foregoing obligation (to deny oneself) supposes that in man's heart is a tendency towards the material, a weakness for the tangible, a certain passion for feeding himself and delighting only in the visible and sensual. And truly, in the sin-lover *sensuality* is the predominant quality; he does not have a taste for the unseen and spiritual, while everything sensuous is already known and experienced. The Lord then tells the wicked and adulterous generation not to be ashamed of Him. This leaves us to suppose that in a sin-loving heart is shame before people, to the detriment of goodness and truth. That is how it is. A man usually lives by this inviolability of the established order around him, or established relationships, and therefore he is hesitant to rock them. To uphold them he may sooner be ready to twist his soul than to cross anyone, put one down or cause some unpleasantness. This is called

*man-pleasing*: "What will they say, and what shall I do if I have to cut off ties?" This must be the most sensitive bond of sin, if in order to break it he is threatened with being shamed by common judgment: *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation: of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels* (Mk. 8:38).

This conclusion directing us to the age to come shows that in the sin-loving heart there is no feeling for the future life; and it leads us to suppose that that life does not exist for the sin-loving heart, for it is completely immersed in the present life. That is how it is. A man lives as usual on the earth, as though he will live here forever, and forgets about the future life. He knows only earthly happiness, and all his goals combine into one—how to live well here. He does not have the least thought about what comes afterwards. Thus, *self-pity*, *sensuality*, *man-pleasing* and *earthliness* (that is, the belief that there is only life on earth) are the characteristic features of a sin-loving heart; they are the deeply rooted inspirers of sin and its chief warriors. We sinners ourselves would not be able to discover them, and if the Saviour did not show them to us, of course we would not know them. Now that they are disclosed, we can see that it must be so. Having fallen from God, man turned to himself, and he was punished with self-pity—this comes essentially from falling into sin. The fallen one is disturbed within; he has fallen from spirit to flesh, and torments himself with sensuality. The main field on which sin reveals itself and rages is in the society of sinning people, where rules and relationships feed and support sin. While all these claims on sin are proceeding successfully, it is called happiness. But while such a course of affairs is only in this life, the future life demands something completely different, about which not a thought is given—it does not fit into the head, even less so does it find sympathy in the heart.

Well, these roots of sin are the inspirers of all thoughts that rise up against a man when he is ready to make a move away from the realm of sin to the side of goodness. A whole swarm of tempting thoughts confuses, terrifies and disrupts. *Self-pity* cries: "What kind of life is this? I see only labors, burdens, sorrows, and deprivation ahead, and there is no end. It's like walking through thorns and thistles with bare feet—continuous wounds!" *Sensuality* raises its protest: "Give up this thing and that thing, and stop doing the other, in other words, everything that I had a taste for, and occupy yourself only with the spiritual! This is uninteresting, dry, unappetizing, lifeless." "*What will they say?* They'll think I'm strange and won't have anything to do with me. Meanwhile I'll have to break this and that tie—then what shall I do? And from other quarters I can even expect enmity." This is the cry of man-pleasing. Here is the cry of earthliness: "Of course there'll be a future; who'll argue with that? But that's a long way off. How will I live here? Other people have lived.... We know what the earthly life is like, but what is it like there? The earthly is in hand, but where is the other?"

*What to do when assailed by tempting thoughts  
after the resolve to serve the Lord*

Yes, when a man resolves to serve the Lord, all this cries out to him. It would be good if these were but light thoughts, but no—they penetrate to the depths of the soul, stun it and lure it to their side, just as a hook catches a live body and tugs it to itself. What can a man do?

Help is near.... Just use some effort and you will overcome it, but use force prudently. Prayerfully confirming yourself, as we said, in self-abnegating trust in God's will and all-powerful grace:

1) Hasten to banish all these thoughts from your soul. Push them out of your consciousness with special force of self-action, back into that hidden place from whence they came and return

the calm to your heart; for until you calm your heart, you will not be able to do anything more. First of all, do not entertain them at all and do not enter into conversation with them, even though it be antagonistic. A throng of foolish people will soon scatter if you are tough with them from the start. If you say a condescending word to one of them, to a second or a third, they will gather courage and become insistent in their demands. The throng of tempting thoughts will also become more demanding if you allow them to linger in your soul, especially if you enter into conversation with them. But if you push them away from the start with strong force of will, refusing them and turning to God, they will immediately depart and leave your soul's atmosphere clean.

2) Though this dark horde of evil thoughts may be cast out, the heart is again calm, and the soul has become light, again you need to remember that your work is not yet done. These enemies are still alive. They are only squeezed out of your attention, and, perhaps they have intentionally hidden themselves so that they might attack at a more unexpected, opportune time and regain their victory even more securely. No, you must never stop here, otherwise you will have neither peace nor success. You have to kill them, draw them out and immolate them on the altar of determination.

Thus, again confirming yourself in prayerful self-sacrifice to God and His grace, call out each of these inspirers of sin, try to turn your heart away from them and direct it towards the opposite. By this they will be cut off from the heart and should die. For this, give freedom to healthy reasoning, and lead the heart also along its tracks. Enlightened by the truth and aided by the hidden action of grace, let your reasoning a) at first remember all the ugliness of these, we can say, children of hell; force your heart to feel *repugnance* toward them. b) Then clearly imagine the danger into which they will throw you; see them as

your most evil enemies. Move your heart to *hatred* for them. c) Then fully imagine before you all the beauty and sweetness of the life that they hinder you from entering, all the charm of freedom from these tyrants. Force your heart, which already has a repugnance and hatred for them, to *turn away* from them to the other, like a deer panteth after the fountains of water. This way you will attain the goal. It is a short program, but the matter may not be finished so soon. We only indicate here the aspects that the reasoning must focus on, while the thread of reasoning itself—to lead to the goal—must be understood by each person. Individual reasoning sees an effective and strong thought in one respect or another. You must know that the reasoning is a key factor, but the important thing is the changing of the heart. You could say that as soon as the indicated changes occur in the heart, we have reached the goal.

*Redirecting the will results in a new inner order*

This is the labor most essential for breaking our will. We must energetically perform it and not stop until the heart has made the changes it needs; we must not stop until we reach the final limit. The final limit is *antipathy* to sinful inspiration—the disposition that is antithetical to the deeply rooted demands of sin. We thus need to labor over ourselves until *self-pity* is replaced by pitilessness to ourselves, mercilessness, a feeling of the thirst for suffering, the desire to torment ourselves, wear out our bodies and souls; until *man-pleasing* is replaced on the one side by *rejection* of all bad habits and ties, an enmity and irritation with them and antagonism toward them, and on the other side by *self-condemnation* to all unrighteousness and human abuse; until *taste* only for the material, sensual, and visible is replaced with *distaste* and loathing for them, and the search and thirst for only the spiritual, the pure and divine is conceived; until *earthliness*, limitation and purely earthly hap-

piness is replaced in the heart with a feeling of *foreignness on earth*, with a longing for only the heavenly fatherland.

When these dispositions are developed, all of the buttresses to sin will be broken down. They will lose their stability and directing authority, which has now passed to the person himself. Sin that has been thrown out has become external. From that minute it will be a tempting sin rather than a directing sin. Now every time it tempts he need only bring into action the feeling of antipathy in order to fend it off. From this it is apparent of what great importance is this labor we have described: through it a new person is developed within us, with a decisive repugnance to evil and a tendency for the good. The will is redirected, which should result in a new inner order.

*The last arrow of the enemy—begging us  
to have pity on ourselves*

Now the person stands on the very border of the realm of sin; nothing separates him from the land of light, freedom and blessedness. The fetters have fallen; he feels light and joyful in soul, and the soul is ready to sail up to God. But the enemy's treachery has not yet been exhausted. He still has an arrow that he has saved until the last minute. No sooner has the soul exerted its powers to take the final step out of the realm of self-pleasing sin, than the plaintive cry strikes his attention: "Just one more short day and that will be enough; tomorrow you will step across the border." This is either because in the foregoing struggle the soul has become fatigued and demands rest, or because it is simply a law of sin that only its voice is heard. This is not an opposition to goodness, only a request to relax the exertion of acquisition. This cry is the most enchanting—the enemy stands as if behind us, begging us to have pity on ourselves. But if you give in even a little to this suggestion you will lose everything that you have gained. In mysterious ways those banished inspir-

ers of sin steal into the heart to commit adultery with it without our knowledge; then they weaken and disturb everything you had thought to do, so that when the person comes to his senses he finds himself on the old track, as though he had never even begun to work on himself. Coldness, turgidity and lethargy again overcome him, and it looks as though he must start all over again from the beginning everything he had seemed to accomplish.

Therefore, do not underestimate this seemingly small demand. It appears small and insignificant, but actually it is an abbreviation of all evil, an enticing presentation of slavery in the guise of freedom, a deceitful friendship hiding an arch-enemy. Hate it with all hatred as soon as you see it, and it will fly away quickly like lightening. Hasten to erase every trace of it so that not even a sign of it remains. Place yourself again in that state before it appeared, and resolve to keep yourself always in that same state of inner and outer tension. Having struck down this enemy also, you will remain a final victor; having taken yourself in hand, you will be a complete master over yourself.

### *Conclusion*

Thus, following the grace-filled awakening, the *first* thing a man's freedom must accomplish is a *movement towards itself* which it completes by three acts: a) It leans in the direction of good, and chooses it. b) It removes obstacles, breaks the bonds that keep a man in sin, expelling *self-pity, man-pleasing, tendency toward the sensual* and *earthliness*, from the heart; in their place, awakening pitilessness for oneself, distaste for the sensual, giving oneself over to all manner of shame, and resettling the heart into the future age with a feeling of foreignness here. c) Finally, it becomes enthused about immediately stepping onto the good path, not relaxing a bit, but preserving oneself in some measure of constant tension.

In this manner everything calms down in the soul. The awakened one, freed from all the fetters, says to itself with complete readiness: *Having arisen, I will go.*

From this moment begins *another movement* of the soul—to God. Having conquered itself, mastered all the expressions of its movement, returned freedom to itself, it should now bring itself forth as a sacrifice to God. This means that the work is only half done.

## 2. RISING TO THE PROMISE TO DEDICATE ONE'S LIFE TO GOD

It would seem that everything is already done once one has resolved to abandon sin, and all that is left is the action. Precisely—one can act—but what kind of activity will this be, and what kind of spirit will it contain? The person is only left with himself so far. If he begins to act, beginning from this point, then he will be acting from himself and for himself, even though it be morally right. This will be an egotistical, pagan morality. There are people who say that they do good for goodness' sake—that is, they do it because human dignity requires it, or because it would be ignoble and imprudent to act any other way. All such people who act in this spirit retort that their education is internal, and the moral human being has not been completely formed—they have returned to themselves, but they have not turned from themselves to God and brought themselves as sacrifices to Him, which means they have stopped half way. The goal of human freedom is not in freedom itself, nor is it in man, but in God. By giving man freedom God has yielded to man a piece of His divine authority, but with the intention that man himself would voluntarily bring it as a sacrifice to God, as a most perfect offering. Therefore, if you have mastered yourself, now give yourself to God. When you

sinned, you not only lost yourself, but in losing yourself you took yourself away from God. Now, having returned from the captivity of sin, after you have mastered yourself, return yourself also to God.

It would also seem that turning away from yourself to God ought to be an easy and simple matter, like, for example, turning from west to east. But, after all, the sinner turning towards God is not an entity independent from Him, and he does not approach Him without anything trailing behind. No, like a runaway slave returning to his master, he appears as one guilty before the King and Judge. He needs to approach in such a way that he will be accepted. In human affairs a master accepts his slave, and the king has mercy on the guilty when each of them approaches admitting his guilt, repents of it and gives a sincere promise to be henceforth completely changed.

It is the same for a sinner returning to God. He will be accepted by God if he a) admits his sins, b) repents of them, and c) makes a vow not to sin. These are the necessary acts for ardent unification with God, upon which depends the steadfastness of the new life, perfection of it, and good hope for faithful action according to its demands. When the Prodigal Son returned to his father, he said: *I will say, I have sinned*—admitting the sin; *I am not worthy*—repenting; *make me as one of thy hired servants*—the promise to work (cf. Lk. 15:18,19).

### *Know your sins*

Thus, having returned to God, *know your sins*. In the inspiration of the resolve to abandon sin, you knew that you were sinful, for why else would you need to contemplate a change in your life; but this sinfulness then appeared in a confusing way. Now you must discerningly come to know that you are definitely sinful, and you must know to what degree—clearly, individually, and as if quantitatively, know your sins,

with all attendant circumstances that diminished or magnified the sinfulness of the action. Critically review your entire life with a strict and impartial judgment.

In doing this, place on one side the Law of God, and on the other side your own life, and look at how they compare and contrast. Take your deeds and place them under the Law, so that you can see whether they are lawful or not. Or take the Law and look at whether or not it is being realized in your life. So that you do not leave anything out of this important work, follow some kind of order. Sit and recall all of your obligations in relation to God, your neighbor, and to you yourself; and then look through your life with respect to all of these relationships. Or—go through the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes, one after another, with all their applications; and, look—is this your life? Or—read the chapters in the Gospel of Matthew where the Saviour sets down the law of Christian life, the Epistle of the holy Apostle James, the last chapter of the Epistles of the holy Apostle Paul, in which are briefly given the duties of a Christian. For example: in chapter twelve in the Epistle to the Romans, in chapter four in the epistle to the Ephesians, and others. The last verses are particularly important because they elucidate the spirit of Christian life. This spirit is clearly and strongly expressed in the First Epistle of St. John the Theologian. Read all of this and check your own life, whether it is like this. Or, finally, take the Prayers Before Communion and judge your own behavior according to it. Peruse your life and deeds not only as the deeds of a human being as a human being, but as the deeds of a Christian, in a certain calling or station at that.

The results of such a perusal of your life is that a countless multitude of deeds, words, thoughts, feelings, and iniquitous desires that should not have been done were allowed; a multitude of things that should have been done were not done. And a multitude of things that were done according to the law were

actually defiled due to the impurity of the motivation behind them. Once all this countless multitude is collected, perhaps the entire life was actually composed of nothing but these bad deeds. The main thing that you need to remember at this first stage of coming to know your sinfulness is that it is an exact determination of deeds. Just as a business ledger is written with mathematical accuracy, so should your mental list of each of your deeds portray them accurately—with all the circumstances of time, place, people, obstacles, etc. If our self-examination proves fruitless, it will be because we made only a general review.

We must not, however stop with these particulars, but we should continue further along the path of sin, or more deeply enter into the sinful heart. Beneath the deeds, words, personal thoughts, desires and feelings, lies a constant disposition of heart which composes our character traits. Some of our works fell through accidentally, others came from the heart with such power that we had not the strength to stop them; while others became ceaseless, and turned into something of a law. Such a review will allow us to determine which deeds are inspired by producers hidden within the heart which generate from there a constant urge. This is essentially sinful tendencies. By revealing them we expose the nature of our heart, and the quantity and reciprocity of its inclinations.

When this has been done, the chief governing passion will have nowhere to hide. We know that the root of all sin is self-love. From self-love proceed pride, mercenariness, love of pleasure; and from these proceed all other passions, eight of which are considered to be chief, while the rest are without number. Every sinner has all the passions—some in deed, others in embryo—because everyone who sins conducts his affairs with self-love, the seed of all passions or sinful inclinations. But they do not reveal themselves in everyone to the same degree. One may be possessed by pride, another by love of pleasure, a third by mercenariness. The

proud one is not a stranger to sensual pleasures, but it is all right if he does not have them. The mercenary may also think highly of himself, but it is all right if he sometimes has to lower himself for a profit. The lover of pleasure also loves possessions, but it is all right if he has to lose them in order to purchase pleasures. Thus everyone has his chief passion. All other passions stand in the shadows, in submission to and governed by the chief passion, not daring to act with authority at cross-purposes with it. All tendencies and habitual vices, revealed already by the person within himself, are colored and inspired by one passion. This is what predominantly comprises and embodies in his person the root of all evils—self-love. Knowing it should complete the confession of your own sinfulness.

Thus, finally you come to know the root of your sinfulness, its nearest offspring—inclinations—and its distant offspring—numerous deeds. You can see the entire history of your sinfulness and as it were draw a picture of it.

*Awaken the salvific feeling of sincere repentance*

Having come to know your sinfulness, do not be its cold observer, but try to awaken a corresponding salvific *feeling of sincere repentance*. It would seem that these feelings would be born in you the moment you come to know your sin, but actually it is not always that way. Sin makes the heart become coarse. Just as a manual laborer becomes coarse from his labor, so does a sinner become coarse, having sold himself to the blackening work of sin—digging through the husks and feeding on them. Therefore work is again required on yourself, in order to instigate a feeling of repentance.

You can come to this feeling through the feeling of *guilt* for sins and an inability to answer for them. The feeling of guilt stands midway between knowing your sins and feelings of repentance, and itself is mediated by *self-reproach*.

Begin first of all to *reproach yourself*—and reproach. Remove everything from your attention and place yourself alone with your conscience before the face of God the Judge All-seeing. Reveal that you knew that you should not have done it, but you wanted to anyway; you could have walked away from what you wanted, but you did not use your self-authority to your own good. Your reason and conscience were against it, and there were even external obstacles, but you disdained all of this good counsel. Do this with every sin. You will see that each sin was committed according to your own desire, with the consciousness of its sinfulness, and even with effort to overcome obstacles; and your conscience will force you to undefensively admit your guilt. The deceit of a sinful heart will begin perhaps to invent excuses—either it was due to natural weakness, or to strong temperament, or to the course of events, or to the pressures of daily life—do not listen. All of this could have intensified the attraction to sin, but no one can force you to agree to sin. It is always a matter of will. You could have said: “I don’t want to,” and that would have been the end of all temptation! In opposition to this gainsaying of *guilt for sins*, reveal more completely your personal relationship: who you are, when and where you sinned, so that you might discover how precisely sinful your sin is, in your person and in your circumstances. Then you will see in all this not causes for excuses, but points that magnify your guilt. The limit to which the work of self-reproach should bring you is the feeling of inexcusable guilt, a state in which the heart is saying: “I have no justification—I am guilty.”

In this act of reproach of conscience a person confirms one after another of his sins, and says: “I am guilty of this, and of that, and of a third, and in absolutely everything I am guilty.” He reproaches himself for all his sins and begins to feel that they are weighing upon him with all their heaviness. In coming to know your sins one can even view them from without, but in

reproaching them they can be seen inside our own selves, and they weigh on us. They weigh even more on us because we can make no answer for them. Having reached this point, what can a sinner say but: I am wretched! This is not good, and that is bad. I am myself to blame that it is not good, and that it is within me.

As soon as the person pronounces within his heart: *I am wretched*, immediately one painful feeling after another of repentance for sins is born within him. He is *ashamed* that he has given himself to such low deeds, *upset* that he has pampered himself and betrayed himself to his evil will, *pained* that he has brought himself to such a state of moral decay, and *terrified* that he has offended God and placed himself in such a dangerous position, now and for eternity. These feelings go around from one to another, and the person burns in them as in a fire. He sees himself hanging over an abyss, and in his feelings he descends to the state of the outcasts. This grievous torment provides an opening to a feeling of hopelessness. This is the moment that the demon of despair sometimes grabs a man, suggesting to him that: *your ancient guilt will remain with you*.

Every sinner experiences these feelings to a greater or lesser degree. We must not feel sorry that we are experiencing them, but rather we should desire that they come, and that they come more powerfully. The more a man burns in them and the hotter the burning, the more salvific it is. In the power of this burning is the foundation of his future correction. Now the heart knows how bitter the fruits of sin really are, and it finds the strength through this to turn away from its embrace.

*The feeling of repentance is a bridge to a vow*

The feelings of repentance obviously have a sundering effect. The Word passes unto the sundering of soul and spirit, limbs and marrow, and judges the thoughts of the heart. But the goal for which, by God's grace, this has been wrought in a

man is not simply to destroy, but so that by destroying the old the new can be created. The new is conceived by a whisper of hope in the possibility of changing. There is a possibility of changing the unchangeable and retrieving the irretrievable—just take the work in hand. It would seem that the feeling of repentance is a direct bridge to a vow: “Thus, I will turn away from sin and make a vow to work for the one God by fulfilling His commandments.” But the one who makes this vow must be sure that on the one hand his former incorrigibility may be forgiven, and on the other hand, that he can receive strength to help him keep his promise. This is why making a vow to work for the Lord is made possible through the good hope of receiving mercy and assistance from on high; and this good hope is produced by faith in the Lord and Saviour, by Whom the handwriting of our sins was torn up on the Cross, and after Whose Ascension all *divine power for life and piety* (cf. II Peter: 1:3) are given.

Without this faith and the good hope that imitates it, the torturous feelings of contrition and repentance go the way of Judas. This is when the Cross of Christ is truly an anchor for man! Tossed about as if over an abyss in painful contrition over sins, he sees it as his only salvation—all strength of faith and hope are contained in it, and from it man draws strength and enthusiasm to make a vow. Just as a drowning man grabs powerfully at a tree, so does the penitent reach for the Cross of Christ, and he feels that now he will not perish. We always knew the power of the Lord’s death on the Cross, but one who has passed through this painful regret for his sins feels it, because it becomes an element of his life.

Thus, tormented by feelings of regret and repentance, the sinner reveals in church his incorrigibility and confirms a vow to correct himself. Melted wax pours down indiscriminately, but when you pour it into a mold or press it with a seal,

something comes of it. We also need to press a seal into our inner man, so that he will take on a specific image. This happens to him during the Sacrament of Repentance<sup>1</sup>—he is sealed with the divine grace of the Spirit.

*Why the Mystery of Repentance is necessary*

What makes the Mystery of Repentance so necessary is on one hand the nature of sin, and on the other hand, the nature of our conscience. When we sin, we think that the traces of sin do not remain on the outside or the inside of us. Meanwhile it is leaving deep marks on the inside and the outside of us—on everything around us and especially in heaven, in the ledgers of divine judgment. At the hour of sin it is decided there what the one who has sinned has become; in the book of the living he is written in the list of the condemned, and that has been bound in heaven. Divine grace does not descend upon him until he is erased from the list of the condemned in heaven, until he has received absolution there. But it was pleasing to God to make heavenly erasing from the list of the condemned dependent upon the absolution of the sins that have been bound on earth. So, receive the Sacrament of Repentance, that you may be freed by absolution on all sides and open the door within yourself to the Spirit of grace. Now that the conscience has been cleansed and has regained its tenderness and sensitivity to good moral order, it will not give any peace until we are decisively ensured of forgiveness. Thus it is in the usual course of our lives: it will not allow us to show ourselves to the person we have offended until we are sure that he has forgiven us. With respect to God, the conscience is even more meticulous. Although at that time when a person has raised himself to make a decisive vow, a certain assurance that he is no longer repugnant to God comes down to him; but this assurance is his own, and it cannot be

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1. That is, Confession [trans.]

durable. It will soon be toppled by doubts: "Is it really true? Perhaps it is self-delusion?" and this doubt brings inner anxiety, and from anxiety comes a weakening. Then life will have neither firmness nor good form. Thus, a person needs to hear that all is forgiven from God so that, finally at peace in the assurance in God's mercy, he can then act more decisively and steadfastly in this assurance. Go and confess—and you will receive a pronouncement of God's forgiveness.

### *How to prepare for a salvific Confession*

For a salvific confession, one must prepare himself sufficiently. Whoever has read this narrative thus far is ready. Proceed with reverence and faith!

1) Firmly convinced of the necessity of this Sacrament, go to it—not as though it were some new part of your life or just a simple custom, but with complete faith that for you as a sinner, this is the only possible way to be saved. By skipping it, you will be numbered among the condemned, and, consequently, you will be outside of any mercy. By not entering this clinic, your spirit will not regain its health and you will remain as you were, sick and disturbed. You will not see the kingdom if you do not enter it through the door of repentance.

2) By these convictions engender the desire for this Sacrament. Go to it not as to the slaughter, but as to a fountain of blessings. Whoever vividly represents to himself the fruit born in us through Confession could not but long for it. A man goes to it all in wounds from head to toe, and he returns from it healthy in all his members, alive, strong, and with a feeling of safety from future infection. He goes there weighed down by a heavy yoke—the whole sum of past sins on him. It torments him and deprives him of all peace. He returns light, joyful, and with a consoling disposition of spirit that he has received a charter of complete forgiveness.

3) Shame and fear will come up—let them! That is why this Sacrament was created, to bring shame and fear upon us—and the more shame and fear, the more it will save us. Desiring this Sacrament, desire great shame and great trembling. If someone wants to be healed, does he not know how painful the treatment is? He knows, but resolving to be healed, he also determines to endure the attendant pain in the hope of recovering. And you, when you were tormented by the feelings of regret that came upon you and you rushed to come closer to God, did you not say: “I am ready to endure anything, only have mercy on me and forgive me!” Well, now it is happening according your wish. Do not be upset over this shame and fear; they are bound up with this Sacrament for your own good. By having burned again in them, you will become morally stronger. You burned already more than once in the fire of repentance—burn some more. Then you burned alone before God and your conscience, but now burn before a witness appointed by God, in witness of the sincerity of that solitary burning, and perhaps to complete its lack. There will be a judgment, and at it will be shame and fear without hope. Shame and fear at confession pay for the shame and fear *then*. If you do not want the latter, go through with the former. Besides, it always happens that, according to the measure of the trembling that the penitent goes through, he overflows with consolation at the confession. This is where the Saviour truly shows Himself to be the Comforter of the laboring and heavy laden! By sincerely repenting and confessing the heart learns this truth by experience, rather than by faith alone.

4) Then, again recalling all the sins you have committed and renewing the now ripened, inner commitment not to repeat them, rise up in the living faith that you stand before the Lord Himself Who receives your confession; and tell everything that burdens your conscience, without holding any-

thing back. If you have approached it with the desire to shame yourself, you will not cover yourself, but will express as fully as possible your disgraceful weakness for sins. This will serve to satiate your humbled heart. You must be sure that every sin you have told is torn from the heart, for every hidden sin remains there even more to your condemnation, because the sinner stood with his wound near the Doctor that heals all things. By hiding the sin, he closed the wound without regretting that he torments and disrupts his soul. In the story of Blessed Theodora, who passed through the toll-houses, it is written that her evil accusers did not find in their scrolls those sins that she had confessed. The angels later explained to her that Confession wipes away sin from every place that it had been recorded. Neither in the book of the conscience, nor in the book of the living, nor with the evil destroyer is it attributed to that person—Confession wiped away these lines. Tear out all that burdens you without hiding anything.

The point to which you need to bring the revelation of your sins is so that the spiritual father has a precise understanding of you; so that he sees you as you are, and, in giving absolution he absolves you and not someone else; so that when he says: "Forgive and absolve this penitent for the sins he has committed," nothing remains in you that would come under this category. He does well who, having prepared for Confession for the first time after a long period of residing in sins, finds some opportunity to have a preliminary discussion with the spiritual father, and tells him the entire history of his sinful life. This will remove the danger of forgetting or omitting anything in confusion during the confession. Everyone must concern himself with a complete revelation of his sins. The Lord gave the authority to absolve sins not automatically, but under the condition that they be repented of and confessed. If something is left incomplete, then it could happen that when the spiritual father

pronounces: "I forgive and absolve you," the Lord will say: "I condemn you."

5) Now the confession is over. The spiritual father lifts his epitrachelion, covers the head of the penitent with it, and keeping it in his hand, pronounces the absolution of all sins, making the sign of the Cross on the head. What occurs at this moment in the soul is well-known to everyone who sincerely repents. Streams of grace pour from the head into the heart and fill it with joy. This is not from human beings, not from the penitent, not from the absolver—this is the mystery of the Lord Healer and Comforter of souls. Sometimes it happens at this time that some hear clearly in their hearts a divine word to strengthen and inspire them for future works. This is a sort of spiritual weapon entrusted by Christ the Saviour to the man who now enters the ranks of those warring in His name. Whoever has heard such a word, let him treasure it later, to comfort and inspire him—comfort, because it is clear that the confession has been received when it has pleased the Lord to enter into a sort of discussion with the penitent; inspire, because in the hour of temptation all he has to do is remember it, and strength comes from somewhere to resist! With what do warriors in battle inspire themselves? With a word spoken by the commander that affected him powerfully. It is the same here.

6) With this everything is done. All that remains is to fall at God's feet with feelings of thankfulness for His unspeakable mercy, and kiss the Cross and Gospels as a sign of your vow. Go unwaveringly along the path shown to you in the Gospels, with the commitment to follow Christ the Saviour, as described in the Gospels, under His blessed yoke, only now taken upon yourself. Having completed this, go in peace, with the intention to intently act according to what you have promised, remembering that the judgment over you from now on will be from your own words. You have made a promise—keep it. It has been

sealed by the Sacrament, and therefore you must be ever more faithful to it, so that you do not fall again into the ranks of those who have wasted grace.

7) If the spiritual father gives you a penance, accept it with joy. If the spiritual father does not give you one, then ask him to. This will be not only a send-off to you as you depart on your good path, but also a shield and protection from outside enemy attacks on your new way of life. Here is what the Patriarch of Constantinople wrote in answer to the Lutherans: "We accompany the absolution of sins with penances for many respectable reasons. First of all, so that through voluntary suffering the sinner will be freed *here* from onerous involuntary punishment *there*, in the next life, for the Lord grants mercy to nothing more than He does suffering, especially voluntary suffering. Therefore St. Gregory also says that God's love is granted for tears. Secondly, it is in order to destroy in the sinner those passionate desires of the flesh which give birth to sin, for we know that opposites cure. Thirdly, it is so that the penance would serve as a bond or bridle for the soul, and not allow it to again take up those same vices from which it is still being cleansed. Fourthly, in order to accustom it to labor and patience, for virtue is a matter of labor. Fifthly, it is so that we will see and know whether or not the penitent has truly come to hate sin."<sup>1</sup>

Whoever finishes this course of spiritual treatment as given and, most importantly, confesses his sins without hiding anything, returns from the house of God the way criminals return from court who have received mercy and acquittal of their crimes instead of a death sentence. He returns with a deep feeling of thankfulness to the Saviour of our souls, with the firm resolve to dedicate himself to Him and to the fulfillment of His commandments all the rest of his life, with extreme disgust for

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1. *Christian Reading*, 1842, vol. 1, p. 244 [in Russian].

all of his former sins, and with an unrestrainable desire to wipe away all traces of his former error. The one who has received absolution feels within himself that he is not useless, that he has been visited by a special power. Divine grace, which has thus far only acted on him from without in helping him conquer himself, now with the words: "I forgive and absolve" has entered into him, mingled with his spirit and filled it with a burning and longing, with which he now proceeds into action until the evening of his life.

*The penitent approaches the Mystery of Holy Communion*

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father, having received his penitent son who has returned to him, falls on his neck and kisses him as a sign of forgiveness; after this he orders that he be dressed and a bright, joyful feast be prepared. His parental heart was not satisfied with only forgiving—it wanted to decisively assure his son of his peace with him and express more strongly his joy at seeing him after being so sorrowfully separated from him. His fatherly love gave his son what he had not even hoped for. What sinner could expect something grand after receiving forgiveness? But he is nevertheless invited to the Lord's Supper, where the Lord Himself gives him His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. This is the crown of compassion for the returning sinner; however, it is not an over-abundance, but an essential requirement for uniting with the Lord.

The Christian life is life in the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer puts on Christ and lives through Him. He who falls after Baptism loses this grace; when rising up from his fall and returning to the Lord, he has to become worthy of it again, and this he does through Holy Communion. *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him*, says the Lord (Jn. 6:56).

This is the beginning of life in Christ Jesus for the penitent. The Lord said that He is the Vine, and those who believe in Him are the branches (cf. Jn. 15:1-6). The branch does not live unless it is on the vine; so the faithful do not live unless they live in the Lord. There is no true life anywhere except on this Vine. Whatever is not on it is dead.

Therefore, whoever wants to truly live should cultivate it in himself, receive its live-giving juices and live on its nourishment. This cultivation is done through Holy Communion—here the Christian becomes one with the Lord. When the Lord guided the sinner to complete repentance, he only knocked at the door of his heart. When it is opened by contrition and repentance, He enters in and feasts with the communicant.

Now the man is born again. An entirely new life begins for him. Life cannot continue without food, and it must be customary food at that. Such food is the Body and Blood of the Lord. He himself said: *My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed* (Jn. 6:55). One who is beginning a new life should begin with this. It is especially necessary to taste this Food at the outset, at the first, so to say, movements of his new life. They say that the first food an infant eats has an effect on the character of his physical life, and from then on comprises his continual bodily requirements. What should be the character of the life of a penitent? A life in Christ Jesus our Lord. What should be his constant requirement? The need for communing with the Lord. Let him hasten in the first movement of this life to taste the Body and Blood of Christ, so that he might lay the foundation of a Christ-like life and generate a true need for constant communion with Him by means of this partaking. The partaker, after tasting the sweetness of this heavenly Manna, will ever more hunger and thirst to partake again.

Thus, having received mercy and forgiveness in repentance, come forward to Holy Communion for full revivification of your inner man.

There is no need to prescribe any particular rule of preparation for this. The repentant sinner has already done everything necessary, and he naturally continues on to Communion. Whoever has wept over his sins and confessed is ready to approach this great Mystery. The Apostle also has nothing more to prescribe. He says only: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup* (I Cor. 11:28). It could be said this way: have what there is, or, do not lose what you have, and that is enough.

According to our established order, there is usually little time between Confession and Communion, most often only evening, morning and Liturgy. During this time it is important to carefully preserve the good frame of mind with which you left the church after Confession, and apply it to your communion with the Lord in Holy Communion.

1) Preserve your attention undistracted and your heart undisturbed. Take care not to become scattered or anxious over cares, and remove yourself from everything; go within and remain there with one thought about the Lord, Who is able to come to you. Put away all thought processes, and, concentrating on the One Lord, pray to Him with undistracted prayer of the heart.

2) If your thought cannot reside only in this, occupy it with thoughts of Communion itself; and so that it will not stray too much, bind it with the words of the Lord and the holy Apostles about this Sacrament.

3) Contemplate a saying of the Lord or the holy Apostles; glean some edification from them and dispose yourself to contrite prayer. When prayer comes, fall down before the Lord and do not abandon the prayer as long as it is present.

4) Occupy the evening in this way until sleep closes your eyes. Morning comes. As soon as you come to yourself upon awaking, first of all resurrect your awareness of the greatness of the dawning day. But do not bustle about, do not be distracted with many things; and keep your attention focused on that which is necessary to be with you and in you. Beware! The enemy will be trying to tempt you in every way, to put your soul in a bad mood, to either scatter your thoughts, or generate some worry or dissatisfaction with something, or inspire some displeasure against someone. Attend to yourself, praying to God, and you will escape these stumbling blocks.

5) Entering the church, feel as though you were in the upper chamber at Sion, where the Lord communed his holy Apostles, and heed more than ever what is being sung and read, directing everything to the thought that the Lord Himself is preparing a Supper of salvation for you.

6) Warm your *faith* in the actual presence of the Lord and Saviour Himself in the Mysteries. Going from this faith and concentrating on the Lord Himself as if already approaching you, in *self-abasement* call out: *I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under the roof of my house*. From self-abasement pass to the *fear* of the Prodigal Son, not cutting you off, but bringing you to a state of reverent soberness. Inasmuch as the Lord Himself invites you and asks you to approach, be ready to approach with *good hope, desire* and *thirst*, like the deer panting after the fountains of water, and *longing* with assurance to receive the Lord Himself, together with all the treasure of life that is hidden within Him. From this longing, which will not be put to shame, again turn to yourself in readiness to meet the Lord, and fan ever stronger the flame of heartfelt *contrition*, repeating the *promise* to turn away from sin, even if you have to die doing it.

7) Work hard to stand through the whole service, passing from one of these feelings to another. In this good state finally

approach the chalice of the Lord, and upon seeing it, make a bow to the Lord Who approaches you. Opening your lips and heart, receive Him, humbly and reverently calling out with the Apostle Thomas: *My Lord and my God!*

Glory to Thee, O God! Glory to Thee, O God! Glory to Thee, O God!

Having approached the chalice of the Lord with such a disposition, and stepping away from it, you will feel in your heart: *It is truly said, that having communed of divine grace, I am no longer alone but with Thee, my Christ, the three-sunned Light that enlightens the world.* From this moment you will begin to bear Christ within yourself. Take care to zealously guard Him there and hold Him within yourself. If Christ is in you, who can be against you? And you will be able to do anything in the Lord Who strengthens you.

With this we close the lesson on spiritual life for the Christian who has fallen into sin and then returns again to a God-pleasing life.

### *Conclusion*

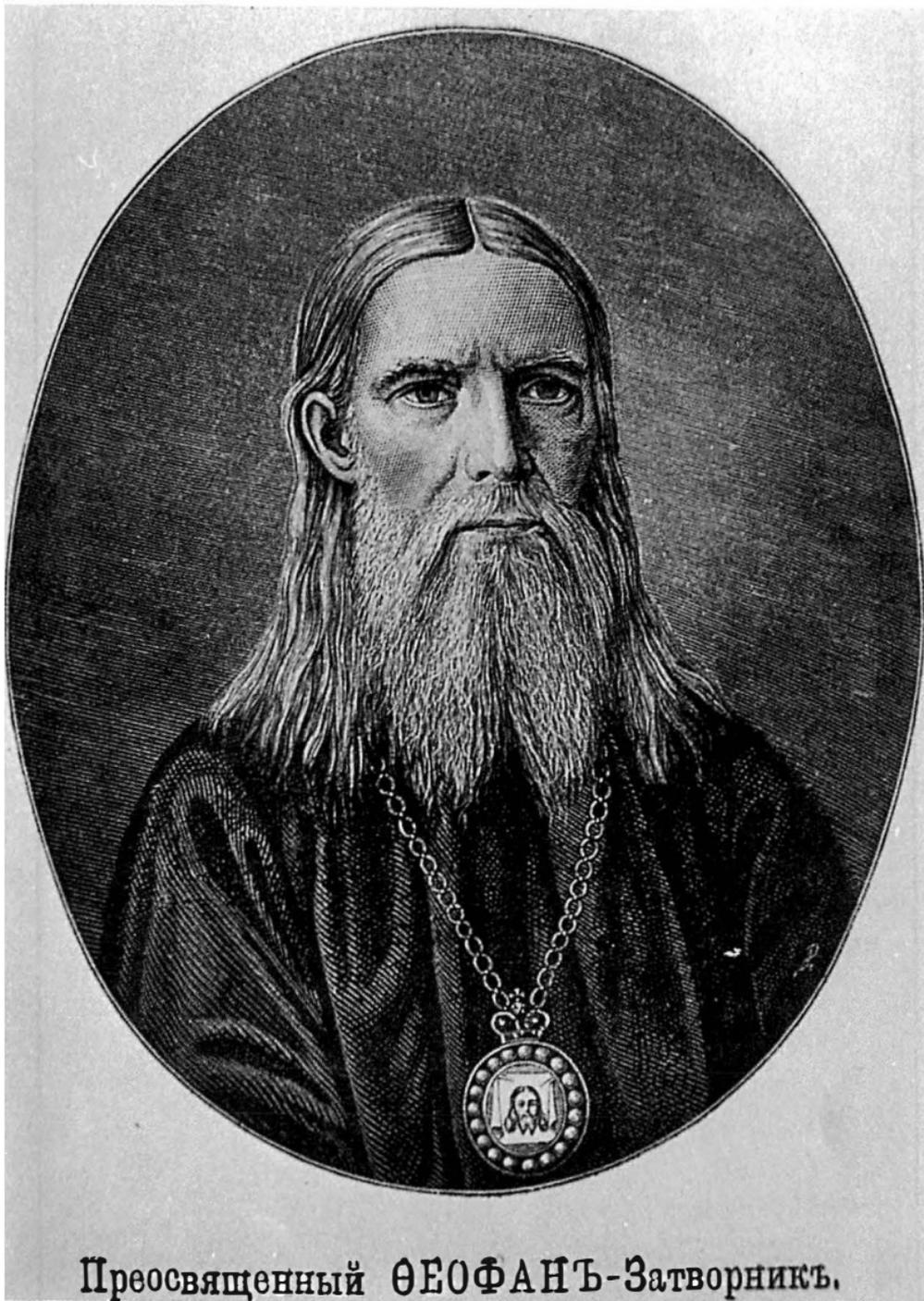
This is the order of conversion! It is presented here as a long story in order to see more clearly the turning points that the convert must make, with the mutually dependent actions of freedom and grace. Everything we have said happens to every converting sinner, but to what degree depends upon each one's personality and circumstances. For one it may happen in several minutes, during which he is awakened, repents and rises in resolve. Spiritual manifestations are instantaneous. Incidentally, this kind of conversion is very rare; most conversions happen not suddenly, but gradually. Although the inner transformations themselves may be instantaneous, penitents do not always come to them so quickly, but sometimes only after long labors on themselves. That is why for some a complete conversion may

take years. The main points where they are stymied are those where self-love must suffer, at overcoming, for example, the obstacles of the inspirers of sin, at confession, and others. The final state that must be reached is a complete renunciation of the sins and the dedication of oneself to the Lord. From this minute begins the fully true Christian Life, because then the person has reached his aim—hidden in God. Everything depends on the zeal with which he gets ahold of himself, and the conviction that he must do what is necessary. Now or later, he must—better of course to do it now. So he begins to work, and soon disposes himself to change. And disposing oneself to change is the chief work of conversion.

# *Part Three*

*How the  
Christian Life Is  
Lived, Ripened and Fortified,  
and About the Order of  
a God-pleasing Life*





Преподобный ТЕОФАНЪ-Затворникъ.

Engraving based on the self-portrait of St. Theophan,  
used as the frontispiece of all his books published by  
St. Panteleimon Monastery, Mt. Athos.

## Chapter One

### *The Final Goal of Man— A Living Unity with God*

Let us recall that the person has just turned from darkness to light, from the kingdom of satan to the kingdom of God; he just entered a new path, on which he has not yet made a single step. But he burns with zeal to do everything necessary in order to establish himself in the work he has begun and not to give in again to his former tyrants, who separated him from God and the Saviour, dragging him to destruction.

We might ask: where is he to go, and what should he do in order to arrive where he should, and to arrive surely, directly, quickly and successfully?

The goal towards which the convert should direct all his attention and labors is the final goal of man and the economy of salvation, namely: pleasing God, a living unity with God, becoming worthy of His kingdom. The searching, zealous spirit will only be at peace when he attains God, tastes Him and is filled. Therefore the first law for him is: *seek ye the Lord and be strengthened; seek ye His face at all times* (Ps. 104:4). The blessedness of this is incomprehensible to man. He himself could not even have conceived of such a height. But when it pleased God to give him this dignity, it was audacious for man to refuse it through his unbelief, inattentiveness, and neglect of it in his thoughts, even during his labors. *I will dwell in them* (II Cor. 6:16), says God, and this is all three Persons of the Most-Holy Trinity. The Lord says of God the Father and of Himself: *We will come unto him, (to him who believes in Him and loves Him) and make our abode with him*

(Jn. 14:23). And about Himself Alone: *I will come in to him, and will sup with him* (Apoc. 3:20); and even more clearly: *I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you* (Jn. 14:20). The Apostle says about the Holy Spirit: *The Spirit of God dwelleth in you* (I Cor. 3:16), or: *that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith* (Gal. 3:14).

We should note that God's indwelling is not merely mental, as sometimes happens during divine contemplation to a man by God's good will, but it is a living, enlivening thing, to which contemplation should only be considered a means. Mental and heartfelt longing for God, that has come by God's good will, prepares a person to truly receive God. It is a kind of unity in which, without eradicating human strength and personality, God manifests Himself as one that *worketh* in him *both to will and to do* (Phil. 2:13); and the person, according to the Apostle, does not live but Christ lives in him (cf. Gal. 2:20). This is not only the person's goal, but also the goal of God Himself. All is created in God and endures in God. Free creatures are given over to their own volition, but not finally and not forever, so that they would give themselves to God All-powerful, not making any particular kingdom of themselves independent of God's kingdom.

It may seem strange that communion with God must be attained when it is already present, or is given through the Sacrament of Baptism or Confession, for it is said: *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ* (Gal. 3:27); or: *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God* (Col. 3:3). Indeed, according to a simple understanding God is everywhere: *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us* (Acts. 17:27), and He is ready to abide in anyone who is ready to receive Him. Only lack of desire, coarseness and sinfulness keep us from Him. Now that the

penitent has renounced everything and given himself to God, what hinders God from dwelling in him?

### I. VARIOUS ASPECTS OF COMMUNION WITH GOD

To clear up such a perplexity, we must discriminate between the various aspects of communion with God. Communion begins at the moment of awakening. Man discovers it through searching and longing for God, and God reveals it through His good will, assistance, and protection. But God is still outside of man and man is outside of God, not commingling and not freely mutually accepted. In the Sacrament of Baptism or Confession the Lord enters a man by His grace, is in live communion with him, and allows him to taste all the sweetness of Divinity, so abundantly and perceptibly, as though it were essentially culminated in him. But then He again hides this manifestation of His communion, only renewing it from time to time—and at that only lightly, as if in a reflection and not in His original state. He leaves man in ignorance of Himself and His dwelling in man until the man has reached a specific level of maturity or education, according to God's wise guidance. After this, the Lord perceptibly manifests His dwelling in the man's spirit, which has by then become a temple of the Tri-hypostatic Divinity filling him.

Thus, there are three forms of communion with God: one is mental, which happens during the period of conversion; and the other two are actual, but one of them is hidden, invisible to others and unknown to us ourselves, while the other is obvious to us and to others.

The first form of communion, the most understandable and common, does not cease during the second or even third stages, because spiritual life is mental life. However, in these stages it differs characteristically from its first quality, which is some-

thing impossible to explain in words. All spiritual life consists in the movement from mental communion with God to actual, live, perceptible and manifest communion.

## 2. HOW GRACE SETTLES IN THE REPENTANT SOUL

In looking at a person who has repented, we are looking at a person who has actually entered into communion with God, but this communion is still hidden, secret, unmanifest. His goal is to attain communion that is complete, tangible, and perceptible. We must precisely determine all of this for ourselves and be assured, because all the penitent's labor for salvation should be built upon this foundation, namely: that in the Sacrament of Confession (or Baptism) grace descends perceptibly to the spirit but then hides itself from the awareness, although it does not in fact go away. It remains imperceptible until the heart is purified, at which time it dwells visibly and finally. It is obvious that our only instructors in this matter can be the Holy Fathers. None of them expresses it so well as St. Diadochus, Bishop of Photiki, and St. Macarius of Egypt. We present their witness to our suppositions.

*Grace settles in a person and stays with him  
from the moment he receives the Mysteries.*

“From the instant we are baptized,” says St. Diadochus, “grace is hidden in the depths of the intellect.”<sup>1</sup> Also: “For when through Holy Baptism divine grace in its infinite love permeates the lineaments of God’s image—thereby renewing in the soul the capacity for attaining the divine likeness—what place is there for the devil?”<sup>2</sup> St. Macarius says: “Grace is constantly present, and is rooted in us, and worked into us like leaven, from

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1. St. Diadochos of Photiki, *Philokalia*, vol. 1, no. 77, p. 279.

2. *Ibid.*, no. 78, p. 279.

our earliest years, until the thing thus present becomes fixed in a man like a natural endowment, as if it were one substance with him.”<sup>1</sup>

*When grace first settles in a person through a Sacrament,  
it vouchsafes that person a complete taste of the  
blessedness of communion with God*

“If we fervently desire holiness,” says St. Diadochus, “the Holy Spirit at the outset gives the soul a full and conscious taste of God’s sweetness, so that the intellect will know exactly of what the final reward of the spiritual life consists.”<sup>2</sup> Also: “At the start of the spiritual way, the soul usually has the conscious experience of being illumined with its own light through the action of grace.”<sup>3</sup>

This most perceptible illumination of grace is at first expressed by the white clothing that the newly baptized wear for *seven* days. That this is not just a formality is seen from the examples of the holy converts, for some were visibly clothed in light, upon others a dove descended, and the faces of others became bright.

In general all who have truly come close to the Lord have felt a certain leaping of spirit, similar to the leaping of the Forerunner of the Lord in the womb of Elizabeth when the Mother of God approached her carrying the Lord within her. In the lives of Sts. Symeon and John is written that they saw a light around a brother who was baptized and received the monastic habit—and it lasted *seven* days. Feeling a particular action of God upon receiving the monastic habit, they sought to preserve it forever, and immediately departed to a solitary place more suitable for that form of asceticism.

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1. St. Macarius the Great, Homily 8:2.

2. St. Diadochus of Photiki, *Philokalia*, vol. 1, no. 90, p. 289.

3. *Ibid.*, no. 69, p. 276.

*Grace hides itself from the one who is laboring  
for his salvation*

Then grace hides itself from the one who is laboring for his salvation, and although it dwells and works in him, it does so unnoticeably to him, and he is so unaware of it that he often considers himself to be abandoned by God and perishing, which causes him to fall into constrictions, lamentations and even light depression. Thus St. Diadochus continues, from the foregoing citation: "Incidentally, it hides the treasure of this life-creating gift for a long time, so that we would count ourselves as nothing though we fulfill every virtue, for we have not yet made holy love habitual in ourselves...." "But as we continue our ascetic struggles, it produces in the theologizing soul its secret activity in a manner unknown by the soul, so that it might incline us who have been called, at the first opportunity, from the unknown to the known, to enter the way of divine visions; and secondly, so that amidst our ascetic labors we might preserve our knowledge from vainglory."<sup>1</sup>

In another place he explains how grace works in general: "Grace at first conceals its presence, in those who have been baptized, waiting to see which way the soul inclines; but when the whole man has turned towards the Lord it then reveals to the heart its presence there with a feeling which words cannot express, once again waiting to see which way the soul inclines. At the same time, however, it allows the arrows of the devil to wound the soul at the most inward point of its sensitivity, so as to make the soul search out God with warmer resolve and more humble disposition..." "And I am speaking here of the struggle that takes place when God recedes in order to educate us—then grace conceals itself a little, as I have said, but nevertheless

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1. Ibid., no. 69, p. 276.

supports the soul in a hidden way, so that in the eyes of its enemies the victory appears to be due to the soul alone. This brings great sadness, humility and even some measure of despair to the soul .”<sup>1</sup>

St. Macarius of Egypt also says: “God’s grace in man (which is already present, already granted), and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is vouchsafed to a faithful soul, proceeds with much contention, with much endurance and long suffering, and temptations and trials.”<sup>2</sup> This refers of course not to the first time grace is received, but its complete indwelling and activity, as we can see from his own words, where he says that “The spiritual influence of God’s grace within the soul works with great patience, wisdom, and mysterious management of the mind, while the man for long times and seasons contends in much endurance; and then the work of grace is proved to be perfect in him.”<sup>3</sup> He explains this using the examples of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and David, who, having received great promises, were made to suffer a long time in unknowing until they finally saw the fulfillment of the promise.<sup>4</sup>

It is necessary to note that this hiddenness and imperceptibility is not all-encompassing, but is sometimes mixed with consolations, although these consolations are something entirely different from those which occur with the indwelling of the Spirit.

*Finally, God dwells in man in a special manner*

*Finally, when this period of hidden communion with God and His mysterious activity in the soul is over* (the duration of this period not being in man’s hands but in the guiding wisdom of

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1. Ibid., nos. 85, 87; p. 285.
  2. St. Macarius the Great, Homily 9:7.
  3. Ibid., Homily 9:1
  4. Ibid., Homily 9:2-6.

man-saving grace), *God dwells in man in a special manner*. He visibly fills him, unites Himself to him and communes with him. This is the goal man strives to achieve through all his ascetic struggles and labors, all the economy of salvation from God Himself, and all that happens to each person in the present life from birth to the grave. St. Macarius writes that the work of grace after long trials finally shows itself fully, and the soul acquires full sonship of the Spirit. God Himself proves the heart, and man is made worthy to be of one spirit with the Lord. According to St. Diadochus, "If a man, while still alive, can undergo death through his labors, then in his entirety he becomes the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> "Grace illumines his whole being with a deeper awareness, warming him with great love of God."<sup>2</sup> This action reveals itself or is accompanied by different manifestations with different people.

### 3. TWO WAYS OF COMMUNING WITH GOD

These two ways of actually communing with God were beautifully described by the wise Sirach, speaking of wisdom, which is the very grace of God which saves us: *For at the first she will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline, until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws. Then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and shew him her secrets* (Sir. 4:17-19).

*For at first she will walk with him by crooked ways*—that is, austere, strictly, unmercifully, with a seeming lack of love; *and bring fear and dread upon him*, the fear of God's abandonment and the ever-imminent threat of attack from vicious enemies. According to St. Diadochus, grace acts like a mother who hides from her children so that from fear they

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1. St. Diadochos of Photiki, *Philokalia*, vol. 1, no. 82, p. 284.

2. *Ibid.*, no. 85, p. 285.

would begin to cry and seek her, especially when they see strange faces before them;<sup>1</sup>

*and torment him with her discipline*—it will keep him a long time in this period of hidden and severe instruction. According to St. Macarius, grace in many and various ways, as it wills and corresponds to the person's needs, orders everything for him, keeps him in many temptations and mysterious trials of the mind,<sup>2</sup> and so on;

*until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws*—that is, grace leads him to the point where he can be relied upon completely as one tried and true. St. Macarius says that when after many temptations the will has come to please the Holy Spirit, and over a long period of time has shown itself to be patient and unwavering in this; when the soul does not offend the Spirit in any way, but is cooperative with grace and all the commandments,<sup>3</sup> then

*will she return the straight way unto him*—that is, openly, face-to-face appear to him as if after a separation. Then, according to St. Macarius, “the work of grace is proved to be perfect in him—he acquires full sonship”;<sup>4</sup> or according to St. Diadochus, grace illumines his whole existence with some kind of deep feeling, and he becomes entirely the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit—the light of God's face (cf. Ps. 4:7). Our Lord and God comes and makes his abode with him (cf. Jn 14:23);

*and comfort him. And your heart shall rejoice*, says the Lord, *and your joy no man taketh from you* (Jn. 16:22). The Kingdom of God is *joy in the Holy Spirit* (Rom. 14:17). The light that shines in man, says St. Macarius, so penetrates all the inward parts of a man, that he, immersed in this sweet and pleasant

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1. Ibid., no. 86, p. 286.

2. St. Macarius the Great, cf. Homily 8:2.

3. Ibid., cf. Homily 9:1.

4. Ibid., Homily 9:1.

feeling, is totally outside himself because of the super-abundance of love and the hidden mysteries that he himself now sees. St. Diadochus says that the soul then flames and yearns with an indescribable kind of joy and love to leave the body and depart to the Lord, and as if forget this temporary life.”<sup>1</sup>

*And shew him her secrets*—the secrets of divine wisdom, the Trinity worthy of worship, the economy of salvation, the acquisition of salvation, the secret of sin and virtue, Providence for creatures rational and material and, in general, the whole divine order of things, as described in great detail by St. Isaac the Syrian in his epistle to St. Symeon. “When the intellect is renewed and the heart is sanctified... His intellect perceives the spiritual knowledge of created things, and the divine vision of the mysteries of the Holy Trinity together with the mysteries of the worshipful economy on our behalf shines forth in him; then he becomes one through the completeness of the knowledge of the hope of future things... For if the intellect, which beholds hidden spiritual mysteries, is in its natural state of health, it distinctly beholds the glory of Christ. It does not question or receive instruction, but more than in the freedom of the will it delights in the sweetness of the mysteries of the new world...”<sup>2</sup> Such perfect knowledge comes with the receiving of the Spirit, which leads our spirit into that world, or realm of contemplation. The Holy Spirit takes the covering away from the soul, transports his soul to the future age and shows it everything wondrous.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it is now clear that the grace that comes to the convert through the Sacraments unites with him and gives him at first

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1. Cf. St. Diadochus of Photiki, *Philokalia*, vol. 1, no. 13, p. 256

2. *The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian*, Appendix B, Part II, p. 437.

3. St. Macarius the Great, Homily on “Exultation of the Mind,” sec. 13, On Freedom, 24, 20 and 21, conv. 17, sec. 4. [Russian]

a taste of all the sweetness of life in God, and then hides its presence from him, leaving him to act on his own in labors, sweat, perplexities and even falls; finally, after this period of trial is over, it abides in him obviously, actively, powerfully, and perceptibly.

## Chapter Two

### *Why the Grace of God Does Not Abide All at Once Entirely with the Soul*

One might ask: what is the reason that the grace of God does not abide all at once entirely, or likewise, it does not immediately reveal the triumph of complete communion of the soul with God? It is necessary to know this reason in order to work against it, and work successfully, for only by setting it aside can we attain the full in-dwelling of grace.

#### I. THE INNER MAKE-UP OF THE CONVERT

In order to understand why it does not happen this way, let us observe the inner make-up of the convert. Sin takes possession of a person and entices his attention, all his longing and all his strength. Acting under the influence of sin, the person permeates himself with it, and all parts of his existence, all his powers become accustomed to acting according to its suggestion. This alien activity that attaches itself to us, because of its extended stay, is so grafted onto us that it becomes as if in-born, taking on an appearance of something natural, and therefore unalterable and necessary. Thus become intertwined, for example, arrogance with the mind, greed with desires, lust with the heart, and with all our endeavors: selfishness and a certain dislike for others. In this manner, in the consciousness and will, in the powers of the soul—the mind, will and feelings, in all bodily functions, in all outward deeds, behavior, bearing, rules and customs—man becomes permeated with sin, that is, selfishness,

passionateness, self-pleasing. St. Macarius expresses it thus: that sin, which entered into us at the Fall, possesses as if the entire image of man, which is why it is called the fleshly man, the emotional, the outer man, and why sin has robed with its own parts of our nature: mind with mind, will with will and so on. And, having overwhelmed the natural functioning of our own powers, it has counterfeited for them its own unnatural functioning, meanwhile fixing us in the belief that it is natural. In the midst of this obscurity, under the yoke of sin, everyone who is unconverted, unrepentant, and has not resolved to serve God in spirit and in truth abides in the satanic realm.<sup>1</sup>

The grace of God that comes—at first through awakening, and then throughout the entire period of conversion—cuts off one man from the other, brings him to the awareness of this duality, to seeing the unnatural and what should be natural. It leads him to the resolve to shake off or cleanse away all the unnatural, so that the nature of God's image would appear in its full light. But it is obvious that such a resolve is only the beginning of the matter. Through it the person has only in consciousness and will left this realm of alien unnaturalness that functions in him; he has renounced it and applied himself to the awaited and desired naturalness. But in actual fact, in all his make-up he remains the same as he was—that is, permeated with sin, in soul and all his powers. Just as before, passionateness is present in all his bodily functions, the only difference being that before this was desired, chosen and acted by the person himself, but now it is undesired, is not delighted in, but is hated, parried, persecuted. The person has now come out of himself as if from a stinking corpse and sees what kind of passionate stench comes from which part of himself, and against his will sometimes senses to the point of mental disturbance the entire stench that he is emitting.

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1. Cf. St. Macarius the Great, Homily 2:1, 2, 4.

## 2. THE GRACE-FILLED LIFE IS AT FIRST ONLY A SEED

So the true grace-filled life in a man is at first only a seed, a spark—but it is the seed sown among thorns, a spark covered from all sides with ash. It is still a weak candle burning in the thickest fog. With his consciousness and will the man has cleaved to God, and God has received him, united with him in this consciousness and will-power, or mind and spirit, as it is spoken of by Sts. Anthony and Macarius the Great. And the good, saved, God-pleasing parts of a man are there. All other parts are still held captive and do not yet want, are not yet able to submit to the requirements of the new life: the mind does not want to think in the new way, and thinks as it did before; the will is not able to want the new, it wants only the old; the heart does not know how to feel in the new way, only in the old.

It is the same for the body in all of its functions. Consequently, it is still impure, except for the one point which comprises the conscious and free power—the mind and spirit. God is most pure and unites with this one part, while all the other impure parts remain outside of Him, foreign to Him; although He is ready to fill the entire man, He cannot grant this because the man is impure. Then, as soon as the man becomes pure, God manifests the fullness of His indwelling. St. Gregory the Sinaite writes: “If our human nature is not kept pure or else restored to its original purity by the Holy Spirit, it cannot become one body and one spirit in Christ, either in this life or in the harmonious order of the life to come. For the all-embracing and unifying power of the Spirit does not complete the new garment of grace by sewing on to it a patch taken from the old garment of the passions.”<sup>1</sup> The Lord cannot abide there fully, for the dwelling is not yet prepared; it is impossible to pour the

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1. St. Gregory of Sinai, *Philokalia*, vol. 4, no. 41, p. 220.

grace to the brim, for the vessel is still faulty. Doing that would mean squandering and killing this spiritual treasure in vain. *For what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial* (II Cor. 6:14-15)? And the Lord, promising to come with the Father and create His habitation, places the irrevocable condition for this on the fulfillment of the commandment, all the commandments of course; or to put it another way, righteousness in all action, which is impossible without righteousness of the powers [mind, will, soul]; and righteousness of the powers is impossible without divorcement from the unrighteousness that had overtaken them, or without cleansing away sinfulness and passionateness.

The following passage could be applied here: *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another* (I Jn. 1:6-7). This darkness is the darkness of passions, because later St. John uses in similar verses lack of love and the three-pronged lust<sup>1</sup> (I Jn. 1:2, 10, 11, 15, 16). Light, to the contrary, is the light of virtue, again because later light is used interchangeably with virtues. From this it is seen that it is possible to truly stand in the perfection of communion with God only when the darkness of the passions has been dispersed and the light of the virtues has dawned; when the virtues have grown in us and become a part of our existence, vested us and penetrated our powers, expelling and pushing the passions out of them, so that no longer are we merely illuminated from without, but we ourselves are illuminating lights. Until this time communion with God is so hidden, so unknown, that it would seem that it was non-existent; and to some degree it should be considered unreliable, not decisive, incomplete, or not corresponding to ourselves.

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1. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* (I Jn. 1:16).

Thus, we see that when the Lord has united Himself with a person's spirit and does not fill it all at once or come to dwell in it, this does not depend upon Him Who is ready to fill all things, but upon us, or rather our passions that are mingled with the powers of our nature, which has not yet divorced itself from them and exchanged them for virtues. St. Anthony the Great says, "It is our own sins that prevent God from shining within us."<sup>1</sup>

If the main goal of the repentant sinner should be total, light-bearing and blessed communion with God, then the main hindrance to this is the existence of the passions still active and working in him—the virtues being as yet unsealed in him—and the unrighteousness of his powers. Therefore his main work upon conversion and repentance should be the uprooting of passions and sealing the virtues—in a word, correcting himself. He must remove all unrighteousness and receive or make room for righteousness; cast out sinful passions, habits, inadequacies—even those that are seemingly natural, as well as other unrighteousness that is seemingly excusable—and adopt virtues, good morals, rubrics and in general all facets of righteousness. However, he must not withdraw his attention from the final goal, but work with all eagerness against the passions, having the eyes of his mind fixed on God. In this consists the initial work which should be maintained throughout the building of a God-pleasing life, by which he must measure the straightness or crookedness of all rules he invents and of ascetic struggles he embarks upon. This must become a firm conviction, for all active delusions seem to spring from not knowing about this beginning.<sup>2</sup> Without understanding the power of this, some

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1. St. Anthony the Great, *Philokalia*, vol. 1, no. 150, p. 352.

2. This is intentionally and expansively expressed in the writings of St. Isaac the Syrian. See the Epistle to Abba Symeon. See also the first and second discourses of St. Macarius of Egypt.

stop with external practices alone, others stop with good works and expertise in these works without reaching any higher, while yet others proceed straight to contemplation. All of this is necessary, but everything should come in the proper order. At first all of this exists in seed form, then it develops, not exclusively, but the majority of the time in one part or another. Nevertheless, a gradual process is inescapable—the rising from external ascetic struggles to the internal, and only from one to the other, to contemplation—never the other way around.<sup>1</sup>

Assured of this, we can now easily derive a guiding rule for a God-pleasing life, or for the spirit and character of ascetic struggles.

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1. St. Diadochus, 82, the end. Conv. 9, 13, 10, 11. Hom. 2, 3 and 4.

## Chapter Three

### *A Guiding Rule for a God-Pleasing Life*

#### I. THE SPIRIT AND CHARACTER OF ASCETIC STRUGGLES

Let us turn back a little and mentally stand before the person who has dedicated himself to God and given a vow to act always and in everything according to God's will, to God's glory, and to become wealthy in good deeds. Having made this resolution, what more can he do when, as we have seen, no part of him is capable of this? The spirit hates sin, but the flesh and the soul are sympathetic to it and cling to it because they are clothed in passions. Goodness or the will of God are beloved by the spirit, but the body and soul are not sympathetic to it, are repulsed by it, or if not that, do not know how to do it. Therefore one who has resolved according to his zeal to be faithful to his promise, now that he has realized the necessity, has also resolved to endure in doing good and to attach himself to some good work (he should not be doing bad deeds). He should oppose the demands of his body and soul and, denying them, force himself to do the opposite. Because the body and soul do not leave his personality but rather comprise it, this is the same as opposing oneself in the bad and forcing oneself to the good. *Self-opposition and self-forcing*—these are the two aspects of zeal born in the soul, forming as it were the beginning of asceticism. Both of these comprise the struggle of man with himself, or to put it another way, *podvig*.

From this minute of his new life, the repentant sinner commences his *podvig*, struggle, and labor, and begins to bear the burden, the yoke. This is so essential that all the saints accept

the only true path to virtue to be pain and hard work. On the contrary, lightness and ease are a sign of a false path, for *the kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force* (Matt. 11:12). Anyone who is not struggling, not in *podvig*, is in *prelest*. The Apostle says: whoever does not endure is not a son.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the zealous are eager for ascetical struggles of self-forcing and self-opposition with the aim of self-correction, or of raising themselves to primordial purity, so that they might all the more speedily become worthy of communion with God. Obviously the more eager one is, the more diligently and longingly he does this, the sooner he achieves his goal. It is the same as saying that he who opposes himself with the most hatred and aversion, who acts the most drastically and decisively, will more quickly attain purity. From this we see that all the saints who climbed to the heights of Christian perfection following their conversion embarked upon the most severe ascetic labors of self-mortification—fasts, vigils, sleeplessness, solitude and so on. This was done in a consciously chosen measure that was inspired by grace. They did it all to quickly achieve divine contemplation, and they did achieve it quickly. On the contrary, even temporary ease, pauses, and self-pity have decreased and always decrease the pace of spiritual progress.

Thus, the work of the determined one is: be fervent, take up your labors with firm resolve, labors which should also be decisive and suitable—for there are some more, some less suitable for mortifying the passions and impressing the virtues. Since this condition of suffering is inevitable, even though it may be transitory, then what is the point of drawing it out only to flounder? Lack of resolve, floundering, and spinelessness are great impediments.

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1. *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons* (Heb. 12:8).

## 2. THE FRUITS OF ASCETIC LABORS ARE PRESERVED AND RIPENED THROUGH GRACE

Now that you have decided, do not just stand there—attack. This is what one must do. But you must continually bear in mind that although zeal with no self-pity is salvific for the convert, the success and fruits of your labors and *podvigs*, that is, their effect and influence on the purification of the passions and development of truly good morals, does not come from zeal. The fruits of ascetic labors is sown and ripens under the influence of these labors, but not through them or because of them alone—only by grace. *I have planted, Apollos labored; but God gave the increase* (I Cor 3:6).

Just as the spiritual life began through God's grace, so it can only be preserved and ripened through it. *He that hath done a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ* (Phil. 1:6). The first seed of new life is made up of the combination of freedom and grace, and its progress will come from the development of these elements. Just as when the penitent gave his vow to live according to God's will and to His glory, he said: "Just give me strength and confirm me," so also throughout all the following time he should entrust himself minute by minute into the hands of God with the prayer: "Thou Thyself bring about what is pleasing to Thy will," so that in our consciousness and will, as well as in our actions themselves, *God worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (Phil. 2:13). The minute a man wishes to produce something in and of himself is the minute he stifles true, spiritual and grace-filled life. In this condition, notwithstanding the excessive labors, there are no true fruits. There are results that could not really be called bad if you take them separately, but in the scheme of things they are only a delay and a diversion, and not rarely even evil, for they

lead to arrogance and self-opinion which are the devil's seeds, sown by him and closely linked with him. In this case godly work in us becomes mixed up with ungodly work that spoils the godly.

Instead of raising up the man who had come to his senses, grace will still be preliminarily cleansing and discarding the corrupted self-inspired activity. *Know ye not your own selves*, says the Apostle, *that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* (II Cor. 13:5). Having united with the Lord in the Sacrament of Confession or Baptism, we should give ourselves over to Him, for having come into us Himself as the Lord of all, He *who knowest all things* will arrange our salvation. The Lord said: *without me ye can do nothing* (Jn. 15:5). We have to believe and ask that He would act in us, that he would cleanse us from the passions, seal in us the virtues and work all things unto our healing. This is the essential attitude of the penitent: *Thou who knowest all things, save me, Lord, and I will labor unhyprocritically and without diversions or misinterpretations, with a pure conscience doing everything that I am able to do!*

Anyone who inwardly arranges himself in this way will be truly received by the Lord Himself, Who will reign within him. Such a man's teacher is God, his prayerful intercessor is God, his desirer and agent is God, his bringer forth of fruit is God, and his master is God. This is the seed and heart of the heavenly tree of life within him. But he should have without fail a material and spiritual fortifying wall. This wall is his spiritual guide and rule.

### 3. THE NEED FOR A SPIRITUAL GUIDE AND A RULE

The penitent, having given himself to God, immediately enters into His direct guidance and is taken in by Him. Anyone who has succeeded in doing this as he should from the start, is quickly, evenly and hopefully led by God's grace into perfection.

But in actual fact, there are very few such people. These are the chosen ones of God, who, in an incredibly rapid burst away from themselves, gave themselves over into God's hands, were received by Him and led by Him. Some examples are St. Mary of Egypt, St. Paul of Thebes, St. Mark of Thrace and others. They were saved by one decisive dedication of themselves to God. St. Mary of Egypt, in all of her cruel battles with the passions, had one rule—to commit herself to God's hands; and her passions abated, as we know, according to her struggle. Undoubtedly she did the same in all situations: she turned to God for instruction and received it.

But such a path never was and never can be for everyone. It belonged and belongs to ones specially chosen by God. Others ripen under the visible guidance of experienced men. Firm in that belief that only God converts, the penitent, in order to succeed, should without fail commit himself to a father and guide. This is necessitated by the fact that we do not give ourselves totally to God—an inadequacy belonging to the majority. One must ripen for this, and ripen through much experience, and until that happens there is no point of contact for the Lord's guiding hand, no sort of handle by which He can lead. Consequently, without this condition, anyone who begins himself to do the work of salvation will inevitably take a path about which it is impossible to say that it is the true path; it is also dangerous and exhausts the spirit.

St. Anthony the Great, when he began to wonder whether his rule was true, immediately began to cry out: "Tell me the way, Lord," and was only at peace when he received assurance. Anyone who has embarked upon the spiritual life is just as one who has embarked upon an ordinary journey. Since we do not know the way, we need someone to lead us. It would be too self-reliant to think: "I can do it myself..." No, neither rank nor learnedness, nor any other thing can help. It is

no less self-reliant if someone who is not subject to extraordinary circumstances but has the opportunity to seek out a guide, yet does not choose one, assuming that God will guide him without an intermediary. It is true that it is God Who has received us and leads us to perfection, but under the guidance of a father. The father does not lift us onto the steps, but facilitates our being lifted by God. Nevertheless, in the usual order of things, God leads us, makes us understand, purifies us, and tells us his will through others. Anyone left alone with himself is in extreme danger, never mind that he will be thrashing and floundering in one place, producing very little fruit. Knowing neither ascetic feats, nor spiritual exercises, nor their order, he will do them and re-do them, like someone who has taken up a task he does not know how to do. Often for this reason many people get stuck, grow cold and lose their zeal. But the chief danger is inner disorder and satanic delusion.

Inside the beginner is fog, as from the steaming of stench and decay—from passions, unrighteous consequences and corrupted powers. Everyone has this fog in greater or lesser density, depending on his former corruption. How good and reliable is it to discriminate objects in this fog? To someone lost in a fog a small row of bushes can appear to be a forest or a village. So the beginner in spiritual activity will inevitably see much where there is actually nothing. Only the experienced eye will be able to discern and explain what is going on. If a man is sick, how can he be a doctor unto himself? He will starve and kill himself out of self-love alone—for even doctors do not try to treat their own bodies. But the chief danger in this comes from satan. Because he is the foremost self-reliant thinker, he also loves most of all those people who guide themselves with their own minds—this is how he most often throws them off and destroys them. And it could be said that this alone gives him access to us, or the opportunity to hurl us into destruction. He who does

not believe his own intellect and heart, but to the contrary, offers everything he feels and thinks to someone else for scrutiny, will not suffer even if the devil has sown something dangerous and destructive in him, because the experience and reasoning of another more experienced will disperse the delusion and warn him. This is why it is said that satan does not approach anyone who has a trusted guide, for he does not wish to be repeatedly put to shame and have all his machinations exposed. To the contrary, he is inseparably present with anyone who trusts only in himself or makes his own conclusions and relies on them. The devil uses seemingly good impressions in the imagination or the power of fantasy to lead such a one down various wrong turns until finally he destroys him completely.

The beginner should agree that these are very cogent reasons for having a guide, and he should therefore choose one and entrust himself to him. He will be safe under his guidance as under a protective veil or in a fortress, for the guide will answer for him before God and man for his mistakes. But what is truly wonderful is that anyone who sincerely seeks will be given a true guide. And that guide, no matter who he might be, will always give exact and true counsel once the guided one entrusts himself with all his soul and faith. For the Lord Himself watches over one who is so trustful. Pray, and the Lord will show you a guide. Entrust yourself to this guide, and the Lord will teach him how to lead you.<sup>1</sup>

Another thing that is indispensable to the resolute penitent is a rule. A rule is a specification or means, a manner and establishment of some kind of activity, be it internal or external. It provides direction and determines the entire journey—the beginning, the time, the place, the major turning points, and the end. For example, one must read—this is an ascetical activity. The rule should be specific: which books to read,

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1. There is more about guides in a special brochure entitled: "What is Needful to the Penitent" and other literature.

when to read them, how much to read, how to prepare to read, how to begin, continue and end the reading, what to do with what has been read. It is the same for prayer, contemplation and other works. We can see that rules encompass all activities and comprise their outer shell like a body. We must apply them to all our powers, all the expressions of our activities so that no action would be taken without the application of its respective rule.

The need for this is self-evident. An entirely new, unusual life begins for us in which we have never exercised ourselves, and to which our powers of soul are not accustomed. In order to accustom ourselves to one or another work and to become strong in it, a specific rule should be prescribed as to how and what to do, just as an army recruit is shown how to stand, take up his rifle, and so on. Without this no strength can develop, and the activity will be incorrect. If the beginner has no rule of prayer, he will not know how to pray; and without a rule for fasting, he will not know how to fast. In general, anyone who has no rule will not know how to do anything as he should, and consequently his life will be patterned after his own activities. Besides this, life without a rule cannot evenly, gradually and harmoniously unfold. Babies are swaddled so that they will not become deformed or hunchbacked; so it is with spiritual activities—everything should be conducted through rules, prudently, so that life will develop under them evenly and harmoniously. This will prevent one from inadvertently following a direction set by some other influence that would damage the whole formation, or from falling into some erroneous path, like wrong fasting, for example. A young plant is trellised or tied to a stronger one so that it would stand and grow straight. Anyone who develops himself without a rule is unlearned and untested; he does not know how to do one thing and does another thing incorrectly. Another thing he does correctly, but

out of place or to the wrong person. Finally, there is no small danger: without a rule, like without a support, falls and mistakes are inevitable. For such a one, all activity will depend upon presence of spirit, understanding and desire. But is this a dependable foundation? You cannot always preserve a presence of spirit. Understanding needs to be taught, and besides, one's understanding cannot always be keen and sharp—it can dull. And who can maintain their desire indefinitely? Therefore, when there is no rule, there will inevitably be omissions, mistakes, and pauses. With rules there is only one way: whether you want to or not, do it as you are supposed to, and it gets done. There are no pauses, and the work goes forward. Also, how else can you curb your egotistical manners and thoughts—that exceedingly dangerous disposition?<sup>1</sup>

Thus, following rules and the guidance of a spiritual father, the zealot who labors, forces himself, opposes himself, and abides in relentless struggle, will progress from day to day in perfection and draw nearer to purity by uprooting his passions and acquiring virtues. But it must be known that he cannot see this ascent to perfection. He labors in the sweat of his brow but it all seems fruitless, for grace does its work under cover. Man's instrument of vision, his eye, does good work. His fate is to see only his inadequacies. The path to perfection is the path to the awareness that we are blind, poor, and naked. Inextricably linked with this awareness is contrition of spirit, or pain and sorrow over our uncleanness that we pour out before God, or, what is the same—ceaseless repentance. Penitential feelings are the signs of true asceticism. Whoever runs away from them runs away from the true path. At the beginning of the new life there was repentance. Repentance should also grow and ripen together with the life. The

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1. There is more on rules in the aforementioned brochure.

ripening one ripens in the knowledge of his corruption and sinfulness, and deepens in his contrite feelings of repentance. Tears are the measure of progress, and ceaseless tears are a sign of imminent purification. That this is as it should be is proven by the fact that we are in a state of fallenness, in exile, outside of our Father's house; furthermore, it is our own fault. An exile weeps and grieves over his homeland—so should one who has begun his process of purification sorrow and grieve and seek tearfully to return to the paradise of purity.

Furthermore, the ascetic laborer is in a minute-by-minute struggle either with desire or against desire, with a thought, with passion or sin. Every minute these forces inadvertently obscure the purity of his mind and remind him that he harbors within himself only uncleanness, sinfulness, and what is repulsive to God. He sees himself as a stinking corpse that lies before his face, tormenting him with its stench to the point of insanity. "Place your sins before you," says St. Anthony the Great, "and look through them to God." Finally, frequent falls and blunders that beginners always have due to inexperience, ignorance, ineptitude, and sometimes even weakness, weigh heavily on his conscience and can be more onerous than the great sins committed in his former carelessness. He is like a child that falls as he begins to walk. Falls require cleansing, consequently—contrition, repentance, and tears. Therefore we are commanded to repent every day and even every minute. *God, be merciful to me a sinner!* This should be the ascetic's ceaseless prayer.

The beginner thus with fervent and speedy zeal puts everything he has into the most resolute ascetic labors, nevertheless awaiting strength and help from God and giving himself to Him, hoping for success but not seeing it. Therefore he is in a state of perpetual beginning, under the direction of a father, bounded by rules, and holding to the most humble part.

#### 4. RULES FOR THE BEGINNER OF AN ASCETIC LABOR

In this spirit and tenor the struggler can begin his work in good hope—the work of uprooting the passions, or purifying his nature from the taint of unnatural passionateness. In his soul is a *fervor* strong as death; but even the strongest fervor has need of a plan, so that it can proceed reliably toward the proposed goal. Its clarification is composed of all the rules for the beginner of an ascetic labor. This will be none other than the application of these rules, the necessity of which has been shown above. The guide should know this better than anyone—even if only in general theory—and adapting them to his spiritual child's personality, he can change the rules in whatever situations they bear changing.

In order to construct such rules, we again emphasize what has been said concerning the state of the penitent-ascetic. His spirit is resurrected within him and renewed by the action of grace that he has received in the Sacraments. But the spirit hidden in the very depths of his existence is the only part of him that has been healed. It is as if only one part of a generally decrepit body had responded to some medicine. Outwardly, all the powers of the man's soul, all his bodily functions, all his external relationships, and the man himself is filled and permeated with a passionateness that is not dead but alive and active. The main quest of his labors is to mortify this passionateness in all its shades, and to raise up his nature to its essential purity, so that the grace would radiate outward from within—according to the man's degree of purity—and wisely, gradually and prudently penetrate one member after the other.

In this light, we can quickly grasp what is needed to construct the whole order of rules of ascetic life, or the connecting thread along which to conduct and outline them. Thus:

*Guard the seed planted within you*

The seed of life has been planted—guard it with everything you have. Otherwise you have nothing to which you can apply your labors, and nothing with which to carry them. You have received the Spirit—do not extinguish it. If you are zealous, be zealous for what is great. Watch over what has been given you, what you have acquired. This acquisition is the coin which will buy you the treasure. If it is lost, all is lost. Armies at war take all care to secure their positions. It is the same here.

*Tear away passionateness by the rule of labor*

One must tear away passionateness that has fused and blended with our natural powers. Because this combination is similar to the bonding of chemical elements, the methods of expelling it should be like those applicable to chemical dissolution. Namely, in order to free an element from its forced union with another, a third outside element is introduced, with which the first element would form a stronger bond than it had with the second. When this is brought to pass, the old bonded element falls away, and the new element unites with the first, giving it a new form. In applying this method to ourselves, to all our physical, psychological and emotional powers and functions that are captive to passionateness and possessed by something forced and unnatural, we must apply something compatible that will form a very close bond with these powers and functions. Once this new element has fused with our make-up, we will correspondingly free ourselves from passionate bonds and take on a new, natural way of life. This new element is the rule of labor or occupation applied to our powers. Proceeding in these rules and guarding that inner acquisition of the Spirit of grace that has united with them and our natural powers, the person will be more and more filled with

this Spirit. Once the fire of this Spirit has been received in this way, it is freer to work within us, and the more quickly it consumes our impurity, the more our natural state will broaden.

*The ascetical labor of self-opposition*

These two points sum up the tone of the ascetic's work, or what is the same, his exercise in self-forcing. We could limit it to these two alone if the contemptible, renounced passion would facilitate goodness by leaving it alone, or would just peacefully evaporate from our nature. But due partly to the stubborn nature of sin, and partly to the support it receives from either its source—the devil—or from the receptacle of elements bound up with it—the world—a passion cannot endure peacefully and submissively surrendering. Even when it has fallen away and separated from us, it again rises up and seeks tyrannically and assertively to inhabit its first place of residence. So it is in no way possible for us to be content with this activity alone. It is necessary along with this activity to work against the passions directly, to oppose them to their faces, fight them and win—in ourselves and in their sources and supporters. To determine the guidelines for this we must envision inner, or spiritual, warfare—in the larger scheme, as well as piece by piece. This is the ascetical labor of self-opposition.

*Rules to preserve the inner order of life*

All rules should be directed towards the following primary practice: to preserve the inner spirit of life, fervency and zeal. Do such practices or exercises as will on the one hand allow your exhausted powers to be renewed, and on the other hand, mortify or muffle the passions. Thus, everything related to this should be contained in the following three sets of rules:

1) Rules for preserving the inner spirit of zeal; 2) rules for exercising the powers for the good, or self-forcing; and 3) rules for warring with the passions, or exercising self-opposition.

## Chapter Four

### *Preserving the Spirit of Zeal for God*

We must fulfill the commandments—all of them. But we do not naturally have the desire, fervor and zeal for this. This fire is kindled in our spirit by God's grace through repentance, for the sake of a contrite spirit and the promise to do God's will. This itself is the strength for keeping the commandments, and it alone is capable of keeping them all the time. If the fulfillment of the commandments is the foundation for salvation, then the spirit of zeal is our only saving power. Wherever it is present there is diligence, care, fervor, readiness, alacrity to do works pleasing to God. Where it is absent, everything ceases and falls away—there is no life of the spirit, and everything runs cold and dies. Though there may be good works, they will be only good in form, but not in power and spirit. This is that same fire that our Lord Jesus Christ came to kindle upon the earth, which lights the hearts of the faithful, through the Holy Spirit, descending in the form of fiery tongues.

The Lord says of this spirit of zeal: *I am come to send fire* (Lk. 12:49). The Apostle commands: Quench not the spirit (I Thess. 5:19) and witnesses as to himself: I press toward the mark (Phil. 3:14). The Holy Fathers called it by different names—seeking, proposing, fervor, diligence, warmth of spirit, burning, and simply zeal.

Judging by the great importance and significance of zeal, the first job of the Christian ascetic should be the preservation of this zeal and fervor as the source of power for living a God-pleasing life. To preserve it he needs to use particular

exercises that will facilitate its preservation. What are they exactly? Zeal should be preserved in the same way it was born, and it was born through inner change of heart, under the invisible influence of God's grace.

Our spirit's inner, invisible ascent to zeal began with a grace-filled awakening and ended with a resolute vow to walk unwaveringly in God's will. A most strict graduality was adhered to in this ascent. The sinner, who lives entirely on the outside and is therefore called *external*, through this grace pushes his way inside himself, and there, as though awakening from a dream, sees a completely *new world*, hitherto unknown to him. This is the first stimulus, after which, with God's help and through various thoughts and feelings, he is freed little-by-little from the first world, passes into the other world and is placed before his King and Lord, making to Him a solemn vow to forever be His servant. Thus, whoever wishes to preserve an undying zeal should: a) go within, b) view the new world and c) stand in those feelings and thoughts by which he ascends as on the steps of a ladder to the footstool of the Lord's throne.

This should be the ceaseless exercise, *podvig* and activity of the Christian ascetic!

## I. BEING WITHIN

When a brood hen has found some grain, she lets her chicks know about it, and no matter where they happen to be at the moment, they come flying over to her and gather beak-to-beak at that spot where her beak is. It is just the same when divine grace acts upon the heart of a man. His spirit delves into it with its consciousness, and after it follow all the powers of the soul and body. Now comes the law for being within: hold your consciousness in your heart and forcefully gather there all the powers of the soul and body. Being within is the locking of the

consciousness in the heart, and the forceful gathering of the powers of the soul and body is the essential means or activity of *podvig*. Incidentally, they mutually give birth to and presuppose each other, so that one does not happen without the other. Whoever is locked within the heart is gathered, and whoever is gathered is within the heart.

All the powers of the soul—the mind, the will, and the senses—should gather near the consciousness in the heart. The gathering of the mind in the heart is *attention*, the gathering of the will is *vigilance*, and the gathering of the senses is *soberness*. Attention, vigilance and soberness are the three inner activities by which self-gathering and being within are accomplished. Whoever has these, that is, all of them, is within; whoever is missing even one of them is outside. After the activities of the soul, the activities of the body with their corresponding organs should also be directed there. So in order to have attention we must direct our *inner eyes*; to have vigilance we tense the muscles all over the body in the direction of the breast; to have soberness we reign in the humors<sup>1</sup> as St. Nicephorus calls them (they are the enervating movements flowing to the heart from the lower parts of the body), and suppress pleasures and bodily comfort. This physical work, inseparable from the work of the soul, is the strongest aid to this gathering of the powers of the soul, which could not happen without it.

Thus, all the work of being within through self-gathering consists of the following. In the first minutes after awakening from sleep, as soon as you become aware of yourself, *descend* within to the heart within the physical breast. Then summon, draw in and compel toward it all your powers of soul and body—your mind's attention, the gaze of your eyes, and the vigilance of your will. With a tension in the muscles and

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1. *Mokrotny*, or literally the "moistures" [trans.].

soberness in the senses, with the suppression of pleasures and bodily comfort—*do* this until the consciousness settles there as if in its own dwelling place—clinging and attaching itself like something sticky to a strong wall. Then remain there and do not leave as long as you are conscious, also repeating often the action of self-gathering in order to renew it and strengthen it—for it weakens minute by minute and even falls apart.

It is necessary to know that being within and gathering are not the same as sinking in thought, or meditating, although it is very similar to it. The latter consists only in the issue of the mind which leaves all the other powers unoccupied; it stops with the mind. The first is within the heart, and consists in the issue of all movements. Being within is lower and deeper than everything that we have—or rather it happens in such a way that everything takes place above it, before its eyes; and some things are allowed while other things are forbidden. From this it is self-evident that being within, in its true form, is the condition for man's true lordship over himself, and consequently of true freedom and intelligence, and therefore also of true spiritual life. This is similar to the way it is in the outer world, where the lord of a city is considered to be the one who occupies the fortress. Therefore all spiritual work and all ascetical labors in general should be performed from this fortress, otherwise the work is not spiritual, and neither is asceticism, which should in that case be cancelled. *The kingdom of God is within you* (Lk. 17:21), said the Lord. He then commands concerning spiritual work alone: *enter into thy closet and...shut thy door* (Mt. 6:6). This is the cell of the heart, as all the Holy Fathers interpret it. This is what spiritualizes one who labors for his salvation, and it is called internal.

It is now clear that gathering within is the most effective means of preserving zeal: 1) He who is gathered should burn, for he gathers all his powers into one, just as scattered rays gathered into one point produce a strong heat and kindle a fire.

Truly, gathering is always connected with warmth—the spirit meets with itself, as St. Nicephorus says, and leaps for joy. 2) The gathered one is strong, like a battalion in formation, or a fastened bundle of weak sticks. Like girded loins, it signifies readiness and power to act. One who is scattered is always weak, and either falls or does not do anything at all. 3) The gathered one sees everything within himself. Someone in the center of a circle sees what is along every radius. He sees everything around him almost at the same time, while one who steps out of the center sees only that which is along one radius. It is the same for one who is gathered within—he sees all the movements of his *powers* and is able to govern them. Burning of spirit, power and clear vision make up the true spirit of zeal, which is produced by them. Therefore it is appropriate to say: only be within, and you will never cease to be zealous.

This is how significant being within is! It means that we must labor in order to acquire it, for it too does not happen suddenly, but with much time and seeking. It has been placed before everything else because it is the condition for spiritual life. Its perfection depends upon the perfection of the three activities of the soul and body that produce it, namely: attention of the mind with the inward gaze of the eyes, vigilance of will with tension of the body, and soberness of heart with the turning away of attachments and passions. But even before they are perfected it is still what it is, although it may be imperfect, unripened, and not uninterrupted.

Now it is obvious what the means are for descending within, or rather the one method: remove anything that might disrupt the three indicated activities in their joining, or anything that could distract the inner descent of the soul's powers together with their corresponding bodily functions—the mind and the feelings, the will and the muscles, the heart and the flesh. The feelings are distracted by outer impressions, and the mind by

thoughts. The muscles are weakened by the relaxation of the members, the will by desires, the flesh by comfort, and the heart by captivation or by clinging to anything. Consequently, one must keep the mind free of thoughts, the senses undistracted, the will without desires, the muscles unrelaxed, the heart uncaptivated, the flesh without pleasure or comfort. The following are the conditions for and methods of being within: in the soul—warfare with thoughts, desires and captivity of heart; in the body—restraints on it; and in order to accomplish these—changing the external order. In light of all this, we can see that all subsequent ascetic labors aimed at mortifying self-worship are to be executed in conjunction with the methods for being within.

This is why in the instructions of the Holy Fathers (their teachings on soberness and watching the mind), inner life is always placed in unbreakable connection with ascetical warfare. Just the same, gathering is not the same as warfare. It is a special spiritual activity, and a primary one. Gathering is where all spiritual work takes place—warfare, reading, divine contemplation and prayer. Whatever the ascetic does, he should always go within and work from there.

## 2. VISION OF ANOTHER WORLD

“Strive to enter the temple within yourself, and you will see the heavenly temple,” says St. Isaac the Syrian. And truly, whoever goes within himself sees a certain other world similar to the temple that is uncircumscribable, invisible and indescribable. It impresses itself into the consciousness, where man does not see himself nor what is going on inside him, for all that should have fallen silent—and he is silent. At the first toll of beckoning grace, together with the first inward motion, this world also opens up, independently from the man and whether he wants it or not. After seeing it, just as after being within,

everything is left up to man's free will and he must *do* it. Such activity can render a second change when the man ascends to resolve and zeal, and is the second means of preserving and fueling that zeal.

It consists in holding the entire structure of the spiritual world in the consciousness and senses. When someone walks into a room, he is considered to have seen it if he holds the room and its arrangement in his consciousness. It is the same for one who enters within himself; standing on the threshold of another world, he only sees it when he has impressed its entire constitution upon his consciousness. Thus, all this is fulfilled when the mind apprehends the structure of the spiritual world, when this world is impressed upon the consciousness, or when the mind consciously secludes itself there and does not leave.

The entire structure of the spiritual, invisible, mental, but nonetheless real world can be briefly expressed this way: "God is One, worshipped in Trinity, the Creator and Upholder of all things," or as the Apostle says, *the Head of all things* (cf. Eph. 1:10) in our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, active in the Holy Church, which, having perfected the faithful, transports them to another world. This world will continue until the fullness of time, or the end of time, when, at the resurrection and judgment all will receive according to their deeds—some will descend into hell, while others will dwell in paradise, and *God will be all in all* (cf. I Cor. 15:28).

This is the all-encompassing framework for everything true and existing, for all that occurs and has being. This encapsulates the entire content of divine revelation. Everything possible and real comes under this and is contained in this. It is also the Symbol of Faith. The main subjects are all here: the all-mighty reigning power of God, the paradigm of salvation, and the four *finalities*: death, judgment, Paradise and hell. It is precisely these subjects that the holy Hierarch of Christ, Tikhon [of Zadonsk],

commands all Christians to constantly remember, from infancy to the grave.

Every struggling Christian should impress this paradigm into his mind, that is, take it to a bright clarity in his consciousness, or enter deeply into it and absorb it into himself. He should blend with it, so that no consciousness or movement could occur without a sensation of it within him or on him, just as it is impossible to move one's arms without stirring the air, or to open one's eyes without subjecting them to the impression of the light that strikes them. The best way to do this is to establish oneself in this paradigm. It is the same as viewing oneself as being in an acknowledged peaceful co-relationship with everything around. This means establishing oneself within the reign of the Almighty God at His right hand, the feeling of being upheld by Him, absorbed in Him and observed by Him, or as St. Basil the Great says, remembering that we are observed. Your establishment and participation in the paradigm of salvation as a member of the Church is, according to St. Chrysostom, a feeling that you are a warrior of Christ and a citizen of His city; you are established in death and judgment, with your gaze turned either to heaven or to hell.

This establishment does not come right away; it is the goal. The search for it and any activity performed in order to acquire it is a mental *podvig* that is laborious and prolonged. However it cannot be said that it is complicated. It consists entirely in simply straining the mind's eye to see these subjects. See yourself upheld by the right hand of God and as seen by God's eye, saved in the Lord, standing after death before the judgment which will determine whether you will be received into Paradise or swallowed up by hell. We apply all our labor at first just to see this. Once this vision has been achieved for the first time, it becomes easier and more frequent. Whoever will do this forcefully and fervently without distraction will quickly attain an unceasing

vision, or, what is the same, he will stand in the spiritual world, in the presence of God, in the Church, at the hour of death and judgment, at the threshold of hell or Paradise.

The last phase of this activity is standing in the spiritual world, or sort of the feeling that you are there. More precisely, it is feeling yourself upheld in the *almighty reigning power* of God as a child in its mother's arms; to be in the presence of God's *all-seeing power* as one presented before a King; to fit yourself into the *paradigm* of salvation as a soldier in formation, or a son in his father's house, or an expert at his work, or a comrade in his circle of friends, or amongst your own family members; to relate to death and judgment as a criminal each minute awaits a sentence; to look at heaven and hell as one standing on the narrowest plank—on one side is the abyss, roiling with flames, on the other side is a lovely garden. It must be said that whoever has been vouchsafed this feeling by God has stepped out of this world and dwells in another through his consciousness and heart, and that he has entered the Kingdom of God, or received it into himself. *The kingdom of God is within you* (Lk. 17:21). This exit from the present world and entrance into the other should become your goal and the object of intense seeking.

The condition for this, needless to say, is the state of being within, in unbreakable connection with which the goal is conceived, ripens, and is attained. As a permanent state of being within develops, so also develops the state of standing in God's world. And vice-versa, the state of being within only develops reliably when the state of standing in the other world becomes stronger.

The state of *doing* consists, as we have stated, in forcing oneself to gaze upon these subjects as often as possible with the desire to gaze upon them ceaselessly. From the first minutes of awakening to consciousness, go within and with all possible force place yourself in this paradigm and order. At first it is better

to fix your gaze on one subject or another and look at it until it impresses itself, and then move on to another subject. When all have been viewed one by one, then the entire paradigm can be taken in in a moment. Some arrange this activity according to days of the week, others according to hours of the day (for example, thoughts about death may come after lunch), however one is most suited, or what the ascetical spirit recognizes. Only one law should be observed: do not change the order often, or all the fruit will be lost. It should also be kept in mind that this changing vision is only a means, while the goal is to unceasingly stand in the whole paradigm. Anyone who casts his gaze on one subject without moving on to the next has stopped on his path and deceives himself, for he imagines that he already possesses what he has actually only just barely set out to achieve. Having cast your gaze upon one subject, always proceed to another in order not to destroy the work that has been accomplished, and equally in order to prepare yourself to quickly impress the next subject. You should remember that it is not just a matter of thinking over something, but a fixed mental vision, or faith in that subject. Movement of the mind toward mere thought sometimes happens accidentally, but it is not recommended or sanctioned, and should be cut off as soon as it is recognized.

As an aid to the successful completion of this activity and perfection in it we can take a verse from Holy Scripture concerning one or another subject, and repeat it unceasingly throughout the day. For example: *Where shall I go? It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment* (cf. Heb. 9:27). ... *Treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath...* (Rom. 2:5). ... *There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved* (Acts 4:12), and so on. Have a picture of death, the Cross or the Last Judgment and put it in a place where it will often and involuntarily catch your eye. Take out books and articles that

sharply convey these subjects, and conduct discussions, if it should so happen, with those of like mind about this same thing. Remember often God's invisible and unexpected judgments, fatal accidents, relatives who have died and their condition; picture yourself also on your deathbed and see your funeral. All of this sharply effects a man's soul if he remains in these thoughts during prayer. With God's help, such a rule will impress the image upon you very quickly. Only it is necessary to keep that impression during prayer and not cast it aside later, but carry it around as long as you can, even if only for a few days, striving to support the impression with writing, reading, discussion or other means. It is good to mentally force yourself to see all the subjects of the paradigm in one instant, or at least see them one after another during the same time period. It is best of all, incidentally, to read the Symbol of Faith as often as possible, concentrating on seeing the totality of its truths in one instant. Labor, concentration and force will soon bring you to the desired goal; just do not slacken, do not interrupt yourself, but work and work, even though you may not see any fruit or acquire anything. The years may pass without any fruit, but for the sake of his constant labor and patient fervency, all may come in an instant to the indefatigable worker in the vineyard of Christ's kingdom.

This vision of the other world can hold and enkindle the spirit of zeal, in that it provides a true field for the activity of the zealous spirit. "You do not belong here," says St. Chrysostom, "but to another world"; thus you should act as if you are in the other world, and to do this you must see it. On the other hand, anyone who sees it will constantly have a sort of standard and example before his eyes that will remind him not to diverge from it or do anything twisted. This is good even for someone who has only seen these things mentally. If someone goes on to the blessedness of actually sensing them even a little, these images

will instantly awaken zeal to the point of great force. All the Holy Fathers call them "butting horns." Whenever these images are brought to feeling, they do not allow a man to sin. *Remember*, teaches Sirach, *your end, and you will not sin*. The Prophet David witnesses: *Having seen the Lord, I will not incline myself [to sin]*. St. Macarius the Great was dried up, as he himself said, remembering the fires of Gehenna. Others have wept unceasingly from remembrance of death. And there are many sayings of the Holy Fathers relating to these subjects and how strongly they force man's spirit and kindle zeal. Once you have felt them you will see yourself in dire straights, and it is well known that there is great force of will in times of extreme danger.

### 3. REMAINING IN FEELINGS THAT LEAD TO RESOLVE

But all of this is only the preparation, condition and means for kindling zeal. You can renew the most resolute zeal and strong fervency by producing those feelings and thoughts which first brought you to zeal after you awoke from the sleep of sin.

At the time of awakening, you saw yourself perishing in great danger. You were in dire need and constriction—revive now that same feeling of danger and extremity, for this is actually the case. Remain in dread and do not allow yourself to think as though the danger has been averted.

Then, renouncing everything, you spat upon and had contempt for everything, having chosen a greater good that is intangible, invisible, spiritual. Renounce now what you renounced before, tear yourself away from it and incline towards the invisible, the spiritual. Gaze upon it [the spiritual] and force yourself to love it.

Then you renounced man-pleasing; now also consider yourself to be beneath everyone. Have a readiness to bear contempt and all manner of abuse.

Then you counted all things as nothing—now also do not treasure anything [material]. Having renounced everything, be ready to be left naked.

Then you flouted self-pity—rise up even now to a readiness for the heaviest cross, and continue your self-directed wrath.

Then you understood your life—continue even now to grow in self-knowledge. Delve into the Gospel commandments and look at what you lack. A seed has been planted—now grow it.

Then, with the knowledge of your sinful life, you saw that you were unable to answer for yourself and came to contrition; do not cease now to stand mute before God's face. Judge yourself always and in everything without any self-justification or deceitful evasion. Hate your will, desires and reasoning. See yourself hanging over the abyss and unworthy to be spared.

Then you emerged spiritually, and, out of faith in the Lord and hope in His aid, made a vow to zealously work for Him all the days of your life, even unto the most merciless self-torture. Now also call out, "I am worthy of every judgment and torment, but for the sake of God's boundless desire for our salvation, out of which even His Only-begotten Son was not spared, I will not despair of my salvation. I do not know when and how, but I believe that I will be saved. Only Lord, let me struggle throughout my life, seeking salvation and Thee, in the hope that Thou wilt not neglect to help me, for the sake of Thy mercy and the intercessions of the God-pleasers. O Thou Who knowest the hearts, save me!"

This is the right feeling! These feelings can all be fittingly called *activity of spiritual life*. And truly, when they are present, it means that spiritual life is happening. When you need to ignite a slackening life, you should summon one of these feelings. The Holy Fathers all talk about them, either collectively or partially. And this is a general counsel or commandment—to without fail stand in one of these feelings. Anyone who steps out of them

has run cold and is in danger. He has died, perhaps, and will always remain as he is, that is, in death.

Thus, having gone within, confirm your vision of the spiritual world and begin to kindle activity in the spiritual life; or pass over at first to thought, in order to later feel the indicated state. All of this is a salvific state of mind and heart. The essential and inevitable preparation for this is being within and viewing the spiritual world. The first leads, while the last confirms man in a certain spiritual atmosphere that is conducive to a burning life. Therefore, it could be said, do only these two preparatory activities, and the last one will come by itself. People often complain: my heart has become hardened. This is not surprising. They do not gather themselves within and have no habit of this. They do not remain where they should, and do not know the place of the heart—how could their life activity be in good order? This is like removing the heart from its cavity and expecting life to continue. Whoever inspires faith by seeing the spiritual world, and seeing himself within it, cannot help but come to a state of fear and trembling and will not slacken. Once this has happened it is not difficult afterward to impress other feelings as well.

An aid in this is just as in viewing the spiritual world: take a passage in Scripture, briefly but strongly expressing one or another state, for example: *Spare thy people, O Lord...* (Joel 3:17); *My bruises are become noisome and corrupt...* (Ps. 37:5). *He that spared not his own Son...* (Rom. 8:32). *Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen...* (Acts 1:24), and so on. And act through them, often repeating one and the same thing until it impresses itself.

Not every feeling is always easy, but sometimes one, sometimes another comes, and you should use such predispositions for the speedy acquisition of these feelings. A feeling comes easily during morning prayers—at least you should make it so

that it comes at this time in order to remain with it all day. Open your heart and pray, and keep your attention fixed on what you are moving in your heart. Robe this feeling in Scripture and repeat it. Acting this way, you will soon be entirely in the feeling, and you will become accustomed to spiritual activity. Incidentally, you should remember that it is not always beneficial to wait for a predisposition. Sometimes you should act even though there is no predisposition in your soul. At other times when there is one, you need to force it and other ones out, for according to the condition of the soul, you may need to incline predominantly toward one or another feeling. It is obvious that the happiest tone of spirit is when one is able to pass through all of these feelings at once. You should make this your life's work and seek it. In order to do this, every time you stand at prayer, while collecting yourself within and entering the spiritual world, you should begin to produce them in order one after another—at first if only in thought, then, if the Lord grants, in feeling also. It is good to choose for this some kind of prayer that would contain them all and learn it by heart, reading it over and over again with attention. There are a multitude of prayers in the Psalter, and anyone can find one that fits himself, for not everyone needs one and the same prayer. They are briefly contained in the twelve daily and nightly prayers of St. John Chrysostom. But beyond a doubt, there is no more reliable way of impressing them upon yourself than attending Church services.

How these feelings facilitate the burning of the spirit of zeal is obvious. Let there be even one, and it is already warming, because each of them is a part of the whole. The spirit of zeal is simple and singular, but all-encompassing. The primary feeling should always be fear of God, and the conclusive one should be self-abnegating dedication of yourself to God's will, which is good and saves us. This primary feeling is born out of the vision of the spiritual world, while the conclusive one comes from all

of the others following according to faith. Incidentally, what feelings come from what and how they are born is impossible to determine—it happens to everyone in its own way. Therefore the Holy Fathers have differing prescriptions for this, or differing explanations. Most often they are offered in chopped-up instructions: have fear of God, count everything as nothing, do not love the world, place yourself beneath everyone and judge yourself in everything, see your own sins, and run to God alone. The aggregate of them all is this—with pain and fear of God, fall down before God with the words: “Lord, Who knowest all things, save me, and I will labor according to my strength.” This is everything. Whoever becomes accustomed to placing himself in spirit into such a feeling has a ready and safe harbor.

To be in one of these feelings is very meaningful in spiritual life. Whoever has it is already within himself, at the heart, for we always attend to the active part, and if it is the heart that is active, then it means we are in the heart.

The spiritual world is open to whoever is within himself. It can be seen from this that being within with the vision of the other world is the condition for kindling spiritual feelings, and vice versa. The latter presuppose the former and call them forth with their own birth. Through the collective mutual action of one and the other, spiritual life ripens. Whoever is in a feeling has his spirit bound and affixed, but whoever has no feeling hovers. Therefore, in order to more successfully be within, hasten to have a feeling, even if it has to come through forceful self-inculcation. Therefore, anyone who wants to remain with mental gathering alone labors in vain—all can fly away in one minute. It is not surprising in this light that scholars, with all their education, dream incessantly. This is because they work only with their heads.

There is no need to individually spell out the rules and qualities of each feeling. This should be the subject of personal

instructions, contemplations and reading. In patristic writings they are set forth for the most part sporadically in the form of sayings. Mainly, what the Holy Fathers sought and what they advised is to understand the spiritual tone and know how to hold on to it. Whoever achieves this remains with one rule: be within, and instruct yourself secretly in the heart. They called this secret instruction the vision of some subject or other from the spiritual world, or the awakening of spiritual feeling by means of some word from the Holy Scriptures or a fatherly or prayerful word. So they say: learn the remembrance of God, remembrance of death, remembrance of sins, self-reproach—that is, be aware of these things and talk about them ceaselessly within. For example: *Where am I going?* or *I am a worm and not a man* (Ps. 21:6). When this and the like is done with attention and feeling, it is secret instruction.

From this it follows that all methods or exercises for kindling and preserving the spirit of zeal can be briefly stated thus: after awakening, go within yourself, stand in your place in the heart, go through all the spiritual life activities and, stopping with one or another, remain there without leaving. Or, even more briefly: gather yourself and instruct yourself secretly in the heart.

By this method, with the help of the Lord's grace, the spirit of zeal in its true tone will be upheld, even warmed and flaming. This is the inner way. Know that this is the most direct path to a salvific disposition. One could abandon everything and practice only this activity, and everything would go successfully. On the contrary, even if we think to do everything else but pay no attention to this, we will see no fruit.

He who does not turn within and ignores this spiritual activity only delays the work. True, this work is extraordinarily difficult in the beginning, but it is direct and fruitful. This is why a guiding priest must as quickly as possible lead his spiritual children into this work and confirm them in it. He could even

lead them in it first of all externally, but he should comply with it however he can—and he not only may but should do this. This is because the seed for this activity was planted at conversion, during which all of this was experienced. It is left only to explain it, interpret it as something important, and lead them through it. Then the external part will also go smoothly, quickly and ripely. However, without this the external alone, like rotten threads, will all fall apart. Note the rule that it must not be done suddenly, but by degrees. Great limitations should be placed on it, for it may not lead to this inner work, which is the essential work, but to external rules. Therefore, regardless even of the fact that there are people who go from the external to the internal, there should remain an irrevocable rule—to go quickly within and there enkindle the spirit of zeal.

It would seem to be a simple thing; but not knowing about it you can labor at it for a long time, with very little fruit. This is because of the nature of bodily activity. It is easier, and therefore becomes a habit, while the inner work is difficult, and therefore is pushed away. But if you become attached to bodily labors as to the material world, you will yourself become material in spirit and therefore cold, slow, and consequently, more and more removed from the interior world. Sometimes it happens that one abandons the interior work at the very start, as if waiting until he has become ripe for it. The time comes, but afterwards he looks around, and the time has passed; and instead of preparing himself for it he has become completely incapable. Again, the external should also not be neglected, for it supports the internal, but both should proceed jointly. It is obvious that only the internal should predominate, for we should serve God in spirit and worship Him in spirit and in truth. One and the other should be in mutual submission according to each one's measure of worthiness, without doing violence to one another or causing compulsory separation.

## Chapter Five

### *Prescribed Exercises that Help to Confirm a Person's Powers of Soul and Body in Goodness*

In this way, an interior grace-filled life in the spirit will burn and flame up. For the sake of his zeal and fervency in dedicating himself to God, grace will descend upon the person and penetrate him with its illuminating power more and more, and make him its own. Incidentally, he cannot and should not stop with this. This is only the seed and the point of support. We must allow this light of life to penetrate further and fill the soul and body, thus illuminating them and making them its own, cutting away the unnatural passionateness that had entered them, and restoring them to their pure and natural form. Thus the grace will not just remain alone and inactive, but will pour itself throughout our entire existence, through all our powers. Inasmuch as these powers, as stated above, are all permeated with unnaturalness, when the all-pure spirit of grace enters the heart, it cannot directly and independently enter the powers, for they fence it out by their impurity. Therefore we must strengthen certain agents that stand between the indwelling spirit of grace and our powers. Through these agents grace will pour into the powers and heal them, as a plaster heals a sore spot. Obviously, all these agents should on the one hand be of a divine character and quality or origin, while on the other hand, they should be in perfect agreement with our powers' natural constitution and function, otherwise grace will not pass through them and the powers will not draw healing from them. Such agents, by their origin, should be also of an interior nature. Because they are applied to the powers, the distinctive nature of which is to act,

these agents in and of themselves can be none other than activities, exercises, and labors. Thus, we must now seek out the works and activities which God Himself, through His Scriptures or through the teachings of His saints, has chosen for us as a means for healing our powers and restoring to them their lost purity and wholeness.

We can easily discover these exercises or activities—only scan a few Lives of ascetics, and the activities become evident. Fasting, labor, vigils, solitude, leaving the world, guarding the senses, reading the Scriptures and Holy Fathers, going to church, frequent Confession and Communion, vows and other acts of piety and virtue—all of this together, or singly in predominant aspects, can be found in almost every Life of the Holy Fathers. The general term for them—*podvig*—rather scares people off, but their significance as portrayed in any given saint's life, that is, their ability to heal, should rather attract people. We will only show what place each of these *podvigs* and exercises has, their power, and what *podvig* should be applied to which infirmity.

In order to do this more successfully, we will show the process of our various actions, and thereby all activity. All free activity, born in consciousness and free will and therefore in spirit, descends into the soul, and through the soul's powers—the intellect, the will and the senses—prepares for fulfillment. It is then fulfilled through the physical powers at a particular time and place, and under other external circumstances. External work, for the most part, comes and goes without a trace if it is not repeated, not noticed, or not copied by someone else. When this does happen, then activity becomes a permanent rule, morality, custom, in a word—law. The aggregate of these customs makes up the spirit of that society or circle of people in which these customs are affirmed. If what issues is good, then the customs are good, and so is the society. If what

issues is bad, then the customs are bad, and so is the society. But in the second case, whoever enters this treadmill of customs and morals inevitably becomes its slave. Regardless of the slave's labor, he is still in uncritical servility. Whoever lives in a worldly way is servile to the customs and spirit of the world. But whoever goes into this world fresh inevitably absorbs its spirit and soon becomes like everyone else, for these customs are the elements that foster in us the spirit of sin, passions, and atheism; for the customs themselves are nothing other than passionate issuances.

With the goal of purifying and correcting man, divine grace first of all tries to heal all of these issuances of our activity, namely: it turns our awareness and freedom to God, so that it can then conduct a healing of all the powers through each particular activity assigned to them, or inspired in them by the issuance, which is now of healing and illumination. We have already seen how this issuance heals and how it is preserved. Now we must determine what actions should come from it with healing power in the capacity that we have already seen. Nevertheless, this does not allow for self-willed appointment of these activities. It only means that they should be apprehended through the forcing of the awareness and freedom, for otherwise the expected fruit will not come from them.

Thus, after the development and preservation of zeal with the whole proper inner disposition, exercises should be determined that have been revealed by the Word of God and writings of the Holy Fathers—at first applicable to the powers of the soul, as close foster children of everything conceived within the sanctuary of the spirit; and then to the powers and functions of the body, as foster children of what has ripened in the soul; and finally, to the external behavior, as the general emanation of all inner activity, or its field and developer. All of these exercises should be conducted in such a way so as not to extinguish, but

rather to kindle the spirit of zeal, along with the entire inner disposition.

## I. THE THREE POWERS OF THE SOUL AND THEIR CURATIVE EXERCISES

In the soul we find three powers: the intellect, the will, the heart, or, as the Holy Fathers say, the intellectual, desiring and incensive powers. Each of them is assigned particular curative exercises by the holy ascetics. These related exercises are both receptive and conducive to grace. They need not be contrived according to some theory, but rather chosen from tested ascetic labors particularly suited to a given power:

### *For the mind*

1) Reading and hearing the Word of God, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the lives of the God-pleasers. 2) Studying and impressing upon yourself all the God-given truths in brief statements (the catechesis). 3) Asking questions of those older and more experienced. 4) Mutual informative discourse with friends.

### *For the will*

1) Submission to the whole church rule. 2) Submission to civil order, or to family duty, for they are conduits of God's will. 3) Obedience to God's will as manifested in your fate. 4) Obeying your conscience in the doing of good deeds. 5) Subjecting yourself to the spirit that is zealous to fulfill its vows.

### *For the heart*

1) Attending holy Church services. 2) Prayer, as specified by the Church; home prayer rule. 3) Using holy crosses, icons and other sacred substances and objects. 4) Observing holy customs established and promoted by the Church.

## 2. BODILY EXERCISES

The body is by nature pure. Therefore we must only estrange from it unnatural cravings and strengthen it in those things which are natural to it; in other words, we must return it to its natural state. Besides this, the body should assist the soul as its constant companion. Therefore, besides returning it to its natural state, we must turn the very satisfaction of its basic needs to the benefit of the soul and spirit. In satisfying these needs, some sort of exercise should be assigned to each bodily function as another means of healing our fleshliness, thus benefitting us spiritually as well.

Here are the prescribed rules:

1) For the senses: guard the senses altogether, especially the hearing and vision (nervous system). 2) Guarding the tongue. 3) Abstinence and fasting (the stomach). 4) Moderate sleep and vigilance (the stomach). 5) Physical purity (the stomach).

For the body in general. *Wear out* (muscular), *constrain* (nervous system) and *emaciate* yourself (the stomach). It is obvious how through these ascetic practices the body little-by-little returns to its natural state, becomes alive and strong (muscular), bright and pure (nervous system), light and free. It becomes a most capable instrument of our spirit and a worthy temple of the Holy Spirit.

## 3. THE OUTWARD ORDERING OF LIFE

Our externality is the outflow of our actions, their field as well as their cause and support, their source as well as their outcome. It could be left alone if it did not work against us. But in fact, it tyrannizes us and even directs us. Therefore, as the

activities of our powers (or our inner character), are changed, our external appearance, which is their expression, will also inevitably change. The family—its duties and relationships—is the field of activity. Thus, all mandatory rules should relate to it:

1) Abandon all evil customs without exception; then: 2) Purge all relationships and acquaintances, retaining the salvific and estranging the harmful, and determine your behavior or conduct with people. 3) Rearrange or re-establish the duties of whatever occupation you may have, to fit your new way of life. 4) Establish order in your family affairs, or in general adapt your home to spiritual life.

#### 4. FORMING A SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE THROUGH GOVENIE

It is essential that your whole environment—things, individuals, and affairs—form a spiritual atmosphere around you that is nourishing and creative, and not destructive.

These are our exercises and ascetic practices! We should practice them without interruption. They should be with us always like a plaster bandaging wounded areas of our constitution. But the most effective place for them, where they appear in their purest, strictest and most perfect form, is *govenie*—the holy Church's most salvific institution, given to us for our purification and illumination through the Mysteries. By this word is meant:

1) Completing all the ascetical labors as a preparation for receiving the Mysteries.

2) Receiving the Sacraments of Confession and Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ.

This is a practice that embraces the whole person, and nourishes the spirit, the soul and the body. We will call it the *grace-filled means for educating and strengthening spiritual life*.

## 5. GENERAL NOTES ABOUT ALL THESE ASCETIC LABORS AND PRACTICES

Here are several *general notes* about all of these ascetic labors and practices. The ascetic should fulfill all such labors and practices in a form applicable to him, because in and of themselves they are only the material and framework for rules. Rules are built from practices—through their application to every time, place, individual, circumstance and so on. Every ascetical laborer should build a rule for himself, either on his own or under the direction of his guide and spiritual father. A rule is made for every practice; then together they build an all-encompassing *order of spiritual exercises* or *ascetic labors*, which designates a time and place for everything, the little and the great. The order, just like the rule, cannot be adequately outlined in written instructions, except for its beginning. We can only describe each exercise and demonstrate its healing quality and general initial use.

One might readily notice that ascetic labors and practices correspond to inner work. Particularly the rule of external behavior, along with bodily discipline, are essential for maintaining spiritual awareness and inner concentration. Pious practices are essential for spiritual life activity. That is why in spiritual life, practices are just as essential as inner work. The Holy Fathers call these practices physical or material work, or an active life, while the inner activity is called contemplative life, or spiritual and mental work. It is folly to suppose that the inner life could stand alone, without the external life accommodating it. It is equally wrong for someone to stop in one place, forgetting or neglecting the interior work as we have prescribed it. Each work should proceed in conjunction with the other. So the whole thing could be briefly stated thus:

go within and enter a state of spiritual awareness, motivate your life activity or spiritual tone, then proceed in the ascetical order you have arranged.

You should keep in mind that ascetic labors and behavior, with all their essential requirements and value in preserving and developing spiritual life and restoring the natural state, have no power to do this in and of themselves. They themselves do not create spirit and purify our nature, but the grace of God working through them does, which gains access or is channeled through them to our powers. Therefore proceed in them with all diligence, zeal, and constancy. But attribute any progress you make to the Lord, so that under their cover He Himself might create us as He wishes and knows. When commencing an ascetic practice do not fix your attention and heart on it, but pass it by as something extraneous. Open yourself to grace like a ready vessel utterly dedicated to God. Whoever finds grace finds it by faith together with assiduity, says St. Gregory the Sinaite, and not by assiduity alone. No matter how correct our activities might be, if we do not dedicate ourselves to God in doing them we will not attract grace. It will create in us not the spirit of truth but a spirit of deceit, and produce a pharisee. Grace is the soul of such activities. They are proven true if they nourish and preserve self-abnegation, contrition, fear of God, the need for God's help and dedication to God. Satisfaction and pleasure from them is a sign of their improper use or folly.

Here is the entire order of what we call positive action, or the beginning of self-forcing. We must now reveal each action separately, outlining only the general features.

## 6. EXERCISES FOR DEVELOPING THE POWERS OF THE SOUL ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

There are three powers: the intellect, the will and the senses. Corresponding exercises are given to them. They act directly to develop the powers, but in a way that does not quell the spirit—to the contrary, it ignites the spirit more and more. The latter serves as a measure and stabilizer to the former, which subjects itself to the latter to the point of speechless submission or even total cessation.

*Exercises that develop the intellect, and also  
warm the spiritual life*

A Christian intellectual development occurs when all the truths of the Faith are impressed so deeply into the intellect that the intellect's whole existence is made up of these truths alone. When it begins to reason over something, it reasons according to what it knows of the Christian truths, and would never make the slightest move without them. The Apostle calls this keeping the image of a *sound mind* (II Tim. 1:7).

Exercises or work related to this are: reading and hearing the Word of God, patristic literature, Lives of the Holy Fathers, mutual discourse and asking questions of those more experienced.

It is good to read or listen, better to have a mutual discourse, and even better to ask questions of those more experienced.

The most fruit-bearing is the Word of God, then patristic literature and the Lives of saints. Incidentally, it is needful to know that the Lives of saints are better for beginners, patristic literature for the intermediate, and the Word of God for the perfect.

All of these are the sources of Truth as well as the means for drawing from them; obviously, impressing them in the mind along with preserving the spirit of zeal also help.

Often one text will warm the spirit for more than a day. There are Lives of which the mere remembrance is enough to inflame zeal. There are also passages in patristic writings that inspire. Therefore we have this good rule: write down such passages and save them, in case you need them later to warm your spirit.

Often neither internal nor external work helps—the spirit remains sleepy. Hasten to read something from somewhere. If this does not help, run to someone to discuss it. The latter performed with faith is rarely fruitless.

There are two kinds of reading: one—ordinary, almost mechanical, and another—discriminating, according to spiritual need and advice. But the first kind is also not useless. It is, as we have said already, what is simply repeated and not studied.

It is most necessary for everyone to have someone with whom he can discuss spiritual matters—someone who already knows all our problems and to whom we can boldly reveal everything on our soul. It is best if it is only one person; two is too many. Idle conversations carried on only in order to pass the time should be avoided at all cost.

Here is a rule for reading:

Before reading you should empty your soul of everything.<sup>1</sup>  
Arouse the desire to know about what is being read.

Turn prayerfully to God.

Follow what you are reading with attention and place everything in your open heart.

If something did not reach the heart, stay with it until it reaches.

You should of course read quite slowly.

Stop reading when the soul no longer wants to nourish itself with reading. That means it is full. If the soul finds one passage utterly stunning, stop there and read no more.

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1. That is, of thoughts and cares that distract [trans.].

The best time for reading the Word of God is in the morning, Lives of saints after the mid-day meal, and Holy Fathers before going to sleep. Thus you can take up a little bit each day.

During such occupations, you should continually keep in mind the main goal—impressing the truth on yourself and awakening the spirit. If reading or discourse does not bring this about, then they are but idle itchings of the tongue and ears, or empty discussion. If it is done with intelligence, then the truths impress themselves and rouse the spirit, and one thing aids the other. But if the reading or discourse digresses from the proper image, then there is neither one nor the other—truth is stuffed into the head like sand, and the spirit becomes cold and hard, smokes over and puffs up.

Impressing the spirit is not the same as searching for it. This requires only that you clarify what the truth is, and hold it in your mind until they bond together. Let there be no deductions or limitations—only the face of truth.

The easiest method for this could lawfully be considered the following: the whole truth is in the catechesis. Every morning take the truth from it and clarify it to yourself, carry it in your mind and nourish yourself with it for as long as it feeds the soul—a day, two days or longer. Do the same thing with another truth, and continue thus to the end. This is a method that is easy and applicable to everyone. Those who do not know how to read may ask for one truth and proceed from there.

We can see that the rule for everyone is this: impress the truth in a way that will awaken you. The methods for fulfilling this rule vary, and it is not at all possible to prescribe the same one for everyone.

Thus, reading, listening and discourse that do not impress the truth or awaken the spirit should be considered wrong, as

they lead away from the truth. It is a sickness to read many books out of curiosity alone, when only the mind follows what is being read, without leading it to the heart or delighting in its flavor.

This is the science of dreaming; it is not creative, does not hasten success, but is devastating and always leads to arrogance. All your work should be limited, as we have said, to the following: clarify the truth and hold it in the mind until the heart tastes of it. The Holy Fathers put it simply: remember it, hold it in the mind, and have it always before your eyes.

*Exercises for developing the will, focusing also  
on awakening the spirit*

Developing the will means impressing upon it good dispositions or virtues—humility, meekness, patience, continence, submissiveness, helpfulness and so on—so that in blending with and grafting onto the will, the virtues would eventually constitute its very nature, and when something is undertaken by the will, it would be undertaken according to their inspiration and in their spirit, and they would govern and reign over our deeds.

Such a disposition of will is the safest and most stable. But inasmuch as it is contrary to the spirit of sin, its achievement requires toil and sweat. That is why the activity related to this is for the most part directed against the chief infirmity of the will, that is—self-will, unsubmissiveness, and intolerance of the yoke.

This infirmity is healed by submission to the will of God, with denial of your own and of any other. The will of God is revealed through the various forms of obedience that each person carries. Its first and most important requirement is observing the laws or commandments according to each person's duty or calling; next is observing the rubrics of the Church, the dictates of civil and family order, the dictates of circumstance that are wrought by providential will, and the

demands of a zealous spirit—all done with discernment and counsel.

All of this is within the field of righteous deeds which is open to anyone and everyone. Therefore, know only how to arrange this for yourself and you will not experience a dearth of means for developing the will.

For this you must clarify for yourself the sum of righteous deeds that are possible for you to do—in your station, calling and circumstances—together with an assessment of what, when, how, in what measure, and what can and should be done.

Having clarified all this, determine the general outline of the deeds and their order, so that nothing you do would be accidental. Remember at the same time that this is only an outline—details may change according to what is required under the circumstances. Do everything with discernment.

Therefore it is best to daily go over all the possible occurrences and deeds.

Those who are used to doing righteous deeds never pre-determine what they are going to do, but do always what God sends them, for everything comes from God. He reveals His own determinations to us through different occurrences.

By the way, all of this is only deeds. Doing them only straightens you out. In order to flow also into virtues through them, you must forcefully keep a true spirit of good works. To be more precise, do everything with humility and fear of God according to God's will and to His glory. He who does something out of self-reliance, with boldness and audacity, out of self-gratification or man-pleasing, no matter how righteous the works may be, only fosters within himself an evil spirit of self-righteousness, arrogance and pharisaism.

Carrying a right spirit, you should also be in remembrance of the laws, especially the law of graduality and constancy; that

is, always begin with the small and ascend to what is higher. Then, once you have begun, do not stop.

By this you can avoid:

*Embarrassment* that you are not perfect, for perfection does not come all at once. The time will come.

*Thoughts* that you have already done everything; for there is no end to the heights.

*Arrogant* aspirations, ascetic feats beyond your strength.

The last stage is when good deeds have become natural for you, and the *law no longer weighs upon you* as a burden.

The one who achieves this most successfully is one who is blessed with the grace of living with an actively virtuous man, especially if he is being taught this science. He will not have to repeat and re-do every failure he has allowed through ignorance and inexperience. As they say, even if you do not read or intellectualize, only find a reverent man, and you will quickly learn the fear of God. This is applicable to any virtue.

Incidentally, it is good to choose one outstanding virtuous work according to your character and station, and stick with it unswervingly—it will be the foundation or basis from which you can go on to others. It will save you in times of weakness—it is a strong reminder and quickly inspires. The most reliable of all is almsgiving, which leads to the King.

This concerns only works and not dispositions, which should have their own inner framework that is founded on the spirit, and are in a certain way independent of the consciousness and free will—they are as the Lord grants. All the saints accept the beginning of this to be the fear of God, and the end to be love. In the middle are all the virtues, one building upon another. Although they are perhaps not all the same, they are inevitably built on humble, compunctionate repentance and sorrow over sins, which are the essence of virtue. A description of each virtue—its nature, activity, de-

degrees of perfection, and deviations from them—is the subject of special books and patristic instructions. Get to know all of this through reading.

This kind of virtuous activity directly develops the will and impresses the virtuous into it. At the same time it also keeps the spirit in constant tension. Just as friction causes warmth, so do good works warm the heart. Without them a good spirit also grows cold and evaporates. This is what usually befalls those who do not do anything, or those who limit themselves to merely not doing evil and unrighteousness. No, we must also find good works to do. Incidentally, there are also those who make too much fuss over their works, and therefore quickly exhaust themselves and dissipate the spirit. Everything should be done in moderation.

### *Development of the heart*

Developing the heart means developing within it a taste for things holy, divine, and spiritual, so that when it finds itself amidst such things it would feel as though it were in its element. Finding them sweet and blessed, it would be indifferent to all else, with no taste for anything else; and even more—it would find anything else revolting. All of man's spiritual activity centers in the heart. The truths are impressed in it, and good dispositions are rooted into it. But its main work is developing a taste for the spiritual, as we have shown. When the mind sees the whole spiritual world and its different components, various good beginnings ripen in the will. The heart, under their influence, should taste sweetness in all of this and radiate warmth. This delight in the spiritual is the first sign of the regeneration of a soul deadened by sin. Therefore the heart's development is a very important point even in the early stages.

The work directed at it is all of our Church services in all forms—common and personal, at home and in church—and it is mainly achieved through the spirit of prayer moving within it.

Church services, that is, all the daily services, together with the entire arrangement of the church's icons, candles, censuring, singing, chanting, movements of the clergy, as well as the services for various needs;<sup>1</sup> then services in the home, also using ecclesiastical objects such as sanctified icons, holy oil, candles, holy water, the Cross, and incense—all of these holy things together acting upon all the senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste—are the *cloths that wipe clean* the senses of a deadened soul. They are the strongest and the only reliable way to do it. The soul becomes deadened by the spirit of the world, and possessed by sin that lives in the world. The entire structure of our Church services, with their tone, meaning, power of faith, and especially the grace concealed within them, have an invincible power to drive away the spirit of the world. In freeing the soul from the world's onerous influence, it allows the soul to breathe freely and to taste the sweetness of spiritual freedom. Walking into church we walk into a completely different world, are influenced by it, and change according to it. The same thing happens when we surround ourselves with holy objects. Frequent impressions of the spiritual world more effectively penetrate within and more quickly bring about a transformation of the heart. Thus:

1) It is necessary to establish a pattern of going to church as often as possible, usually to Matins, Liturgy and Vespers. Have a longing for this, and go there at the first opportunity—at least once a day—and if you can, stay without leaving. Our church is heaven on earth. Hasten to church with the faith that it is a place where God dwells, where He Himself promised to quickly hear prayers. Standing in church, be as if you are standing before God in fear and reverence, which you express through patient

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1. Such as Molebens, Pannikhidas, etc. [trans.].

standing, prostrations, and attention to the services without wandering thoughts, relaxation or crudeness.

2) You must not forget other services—personal services, be they in church or at home. Neither must you neglect your home prayers with all their churchly tone. You should remember that home services are only a supplement to church services and not a replacement. The Apostle, commanding us not to deprive ourselves of a synaxis, informed us that all the power of services belong to common worship.

3) You must observe all Church solemnities, rituals, customs, and rubrics, and cover yourself with them in all their forms, so that you would always abide in a particular atmosphere. This is easy to do. Such is the nature of our Church. Only accept it with faith.

But what gives the most power to church services is a prayerful spirit. Prayer is an all-encompassing obligation, as well as an all-effective means. Through it the truths of the faith are also impressed in the mind and good morals into the will. But most of all it enlivens the heart in its feelings. The first two go well only when this one thing [prayer] is present. Therefore prayer should begin to be developed before anything else, and continued steadily and tirelessly until the Lord grants prayer to the one who prays.

The beginnings of prayer are applied at conversion itself, for prayer is the yearning of the mind and heart towards God, which is what happens at conversion. But inattentiveness or inability can extinguish this spark. Then right away you should begin the form of activity that we have already discussed, with the aim of kindling a prayerful spirit. Besides conducting services and participating in them, as we have described, the closest thing related to this is personal prayer, wherever and however it is performed. There is only one rule for this—accustom yourself to praying. For this you must:

1) Choose a rule of prayer—evening, morning and daily prayers.

2) Start with a short rule at first, so that your unaccustomed spirit will not form an aversion to this labor.

3) Pray always with fear, diligence and all attention.

4) This requires: standing, prostrations, kneeling, making the sign of the Cross, reading, and at times singing.

5) The more often you do such prayer the better. Some people pray a little every hour.

6) The prayers you should read are written in the prayer book. But it is good to get used to one or another, so that the spirit would ignite each time you begin it.

7) The rule of prayer is simple: standing at prayer, with fear and trembling say it as if you were speaking into God's ear, accompanying it with the sign of the Cross, prostrations and falling down, corresponding to the movement of the spirit.

8) Once you have chosen a rule you should always fulfill it, but this does not prevent you from adding something according to the heart's desire.

9) Reading and singing out loud, in a whisper, or silently is all the same, for the Lord is near. But sometimes it is better to pray one way, other times another.

10) You should firmly keep in mind the limits of your prayers. It is a good prayer that ends with your falling down before God with the feeling that *Thou Who knowest the hearts, save me.*

11) There are stages of prayer. The first stage is bodily prayer, with reading, standing and prostrations. If the attention wanders, the heart does not feel, and there is no eagerness; this means there is no patience, toil or sweat. Regardless of this, set your limits and pray. This is active prayer. The second stage is attentive prayer: the mind gets used to collecting itself at the hour of prayer, and says all with awareness, without being stolen

away. The attention blends with the written words and repeats them as its own. The third stage is prayer of the feelings—the attention warms the heart, and what was thought with attention becomes feeling in the heart. In the mind was a compunctionate word, in the heart it is compunction; in the mind—forgiveness, in the heart—a feeling of its necessity and importance. Whoever has passed on to feeling prays without words, for God is a God of the heart. This, therefore, is the summit of prayer's development: while standing in prayer, to go from feeling to feeling. Reading may stop at this, just as may thought; then there is only abiding in feeling with the known signs of prayer. Such prayer comes very little at first. The prayerful feeling comes over you in church or at home.... This is the common advice of the saints—do not let this leave your attention: when the feeling is present, cease all other activity and stand in it. St. John of the Ladder says: "An angel is praying with you." Attention to this manifestation of prayer ripens the development of prayer, and inattention decimates both the development and the prayer.

12) However, no matter how perfect one has become in prayer, the prayer rule should never be abandoned but should always be read as prescribed and always begun with active prayer. Mental prayer should come with it, and then prayer of the heart. Without the rule, prayer of the heart is lost, and the person will think that he is praying, but in fact he is not.

13) When the prayerful feeling ascends to ceaselessness, then spiritual prayer begins—a gift of the Spirit of God which prays for us. This is the last stage of attainable prayer. But it is said that there is also prayer that is incomprehensible to the mind, or surpasses the limits of awareness (as described by St. Isaac the Syrian).

14) The easiest means for ascending to ceaseless prayer is the habit of doing the Jesus Prayer and rooting it in yourself. The most experienced men of spiritual life who were enlight-

ened by God found this to be the one simple and all-effective means for confirming the spirit in all spiritual activities, as well as in all spiritual ascetic life; and they left detailed guidelines for it in their instructions.

By laboring in asceticism we seek purification of the heart and renewal of the spirit. There are two ways to find this: the first is the way of activity, that is, performing those ascetic labors that we have previously outlined; and the second is that of the mind—turning the mind to God. In the first way the soul is purified and receives God; in the second God burns away all impurity and comes to abide in the purified soul. Considering the latter as belonging to the Jesus Prayer alone, St. Gregory the Sinaite says: “We acquire God by either activity, labor, or the artful calling on the Name of Jesus.” He then supposes that the first way is longer than the second; the second is quicker and more effective. Others after him have given first place to the Jesus Prayer among *podvigs*. It illuminates, strengthens, enlivens, conquers all enemies visible and invisible, and leads us to God. That is how powerful and effective it is! The name of the Lord Jesus is the treasury of blessings, strength and life in the spirit.

From this it is evident that any penitent, or anyone beginning to seek the Lord, can and should be taught complete instructions in doing the Jesus Prayer. From there he can be brought into all other practices, because through this he will become strong more quickly, ripen sooner spiritually and enter the interior world. Not knowing this, other people, or at least a large part of them, stop with bodily activities and those of the soul, and waste nearly all their labor and time.

This activity is called an “art.” It is very simple. Standing with awareness and attention in the heart, pronounce ceaselessly: “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me,*” without

picturing any sort of image or face, but with faith that the Lord will see you and attend to you.

In order to become strong in this, you should assign a time in the morning or the evening—fifteen minutes, a half hour, or more—however much you can, just for saying this prayer. It should be after morning or evening prayers, standing or sitting. This will place the beginnings of a habitual practice.

Then during the day, force yourself minute-by-minute to say it, no matter what you are doing.

It will become more and more habitual, and then it will start working as if by itself during any work or occupation. The more resolutely you take it up, the faster you will progress.

Your awareness should be kept unfailingly in the heart, and during the practice your breath should lighten as a result of the tension with which you practice it. But the most important condition is faith that God is near and hears us. Say the prayer into God's ear.

This habitual practice will draw warmth into the spirit, later enlightenment, then ecstasy. But acquiring all of this sometimes takes years.

At first this prayer is only active prayer, just like any other activity. Then it becomes mental prayer, and finally it takes root in the heart.

Some have gone astray from the right path through this prayer. Therefore it should be learned from someone who knows it. Deception comes mostly from placing the attention on the head rather than the chest.

Whoever has the attention centered in the heart is safe. Even safer is the one who falls down before God every hour in contrition, with the prayer that he be delivered from deception.

The Holy Fathers gave detailed instructions on this activity. Therefore, whoever takes up this work should read these instruc-

tions and throw out all else. The best instructions are by St. Hesychius, St. Gregory the Sinaite, St. Philotheus of Sinai, St. Theoleptus, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Nilus of Sora, Hieromonk Dorotheus, in the prologue to Elder Barsanuphius, and in the life of St. Paisius.

Whoever becomes practiced in this, having gone through everything set forth above, is a practitioner of Christian life. He will quickly ripen in his purification and in Christian perfection, and will acquire his desired peace in being with God.

This is the activity for the powers of the soul, which are adaptable to the movement of the spirit. Here we see how every one of them is adapted to the life of the spirit, or to spiritual feeling. But they also lead to the fortification of the primary conditions for being within, namely: mental activity—the concentration of attention; activity of the will—vigilance; activity of the heart—sobriety. Prayer covers them all and encompasses them all. Even the production of it is nothing other than the interior work we have previously described.

All of these activities are assigned for the development of the powers of the soul in the spirit of a new life. This is the same as infusing the soul with spirit, or elevating it to the spirit and blending with it. In fallenness they are united to a contrary purpose. At conversion the spirit is renewed, but in the soul there still remains a cruel streak of unsubmitiveness and an aversion to the spirit and everything spiritual. These activities, penetrated with spiritual elements, cause the soul to grow into the spirit and blend with it. It is clear from this how essential these activities are and what a disservice those people do to themselves who abandon them. They themselves are the reason that their labors are fruitless. They sweat but see no fruit; they soon grow cold, and then everything comes to an end.

But we must remember that all the fruits of these labors come from the spirit of zeal and quest. It conducts the renewing

power of grace through these activities and brings down life into the soul. Without it, all these activities are empty, cold, lifeless, and dry. Reading, prostrations, services and everything else are unfruitful when there is no inner spirit. They can teach vain-glory and pharisaism, which become its sole support. This is why someone who has no spirit falls away when he meets with any opposition. Why, they themselves are a torture. For the spirit transfers power to the soul, which makes the soul so well disposed to these activities that it can not get enough of them and wants to have recourse to them always.

Thus it is extremely necessary when doing these activities to always bear in mind that the spirit of life must burn within, and we must in humility and pain of heart fall down before God our Savior. This state is fed and preserved best of all by prayer and prayerful activity. We must watch that we not stop with the activities alone just because they also nourish the soul. This might cause us to remain with them in soul at the cost of the spirit. This happens perhaps most often with reading, and generally any study and integration of the truth.

## 7. KEEPING THE BODY IN THE SPIRIT OF NEW LIFE

The differentiating feature here is persecution of the flesh. Persecuting the flesh means not giving it any pleasure in lusts, or not doing anything with relish. It means accepting neither food, drink, sleep, movement, seeing, hearing, nor any other feeling or impression indiscriminately no matter how good it may be, but accepting everything as it were in passing, as something foreign, without giving it attention either before or after. Even more, they should be received with a certain restraint—not according to the measure of fleshly desire, but according to the measure set by the reason and good intentions. Give the body what it needs but deprive it a little, and, leaving

it behind, turn entirely towards the soul. The Holy Fathers call this fleeting comfort of the flesh, which is a most dangerous infirmity hateful to God. Whoever pities the flesh cannot have the Spirit of God abiding in him. Satisfying individual fleshly desires and indulging desires sporadically because of inattentiveness and distraction make one grow cold. What then can be said of those in whom fleshly delight has become a law? Fleshly comfort is to the Spirit as water to a fire. The flesh is the seat of all passions, as St. Cassian teaches and as all experience proves, and therefore our persecution of it withers the passions. Whoever pleases the flesh even in small things cannot be within himself, for he is within whatever it is that pleases his flesh. Therefore he is not concentrated, and thus he is cold. The soul presses into the flesh and commingles with it, and thus becomes burdened, weighed down to the earth, and incapable of freely viewing the spiritual with the intellect. On the contrary, how pure is the vision of persecuted flesh, how easily it is drawn within, how unwelcome are the passions to it, and in general how alive and palpable is the spiritual life in it! ... *though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day* (II Cor. 4:16). If the flesh is fortified, it is fortified at the expense of the spirit; and if the spirit ripens, it ripens in no other way than at the expense of fleshly comfort. Not a single saint had an easy life; they all lived austerely, in persecution, weakening, withering and hatred of the flesh. St. Isaac the Syrian considers persecution of the flesh to be a condition for salvation. Whoever pities his flesh stands on a path that is delusive, slippery, deceptive and suspect.

The flesh should be persecuted in all its parts, members and functions, so that these members may be presented as weapons of righteousness.

There are two branches of our physical lives—the animal/soul, the closest instrument of the psychological/emotional

activities; and the other, purely animal, the instrument of animal economy, feeding and fighting. The first has more freedom and is less bound; the second is bound, more fleshly and more coarse.

Related to the first are: the senses, the tongue, and movement; related to the second are: eating, sleeping, sexual functions and various tactile impressions—warmth, cold, softness and so on.

Next are the following rules for persecuting the flesh:

1) Govern your senses, especially sight and hearing; bind your movements; and hold your tongue. Whoever does not rein in these three things is inwardly plundered, weakened and captive. He is not even within, for the senses are essentially doors of the soul opening from the inside out, or windows through which inner warmth escapes.

2) Show your authority over the senses by forcing them to be attracted to beneficial subjects. Before, they strove uncontrollably towards what could only foster selfishness and a domination by passions. Now they must be directed toward that which engenders spirit.

3) Measure the amount of food needed by the flesh. It should be simple and healthy. Weigh its amount and determine its quality and the hour it is taken, and be content. Do the same with sleep. Mortify your sexual functions by drying out the flesh. Outwardly treat your flesh with a sort of hatred, keeping it in cold and roughness, and so on, so that it has no softness or comfort.

4) Having established all this, struggle with your flesh until it is humbled. Once it is used to this modest and rough environment, it will become your mute slave. Humility of the flesh will be granted at last. You should always keep this in sight and strive for it as a reward for your labors. Physical *podvigs* foster physical virtues: solitude, silence, endurance, vigilance, labor, patience in deprivations, purity, and virginity.

5) You should remember that this friend of yours will end up in the grave. They say: do not trust the flesh—it is deceitful. When you come to believe it is humbled, you relax, and it immediately grabs you and conquers you. This war with it continues to the grave, but it is much harder at first. Later it gets easier and easier until finally there remains only attention to its behavior, with occasional light sensations of fleshly upsurge.

6) For the most enduring success, the law of constancy must be observed in the realm of physical *podvigs*, if anywhere. Here is some general advice: at first hold all parts of the flesh to the law of restraint, turning all the attention to inner work. When the passions begin to settle down, warmth springs up in the heart. Then, according to the measure of inner heat, the bodily needs weaken by themselves and great physical ascetic feats begin naturally.

7) The most important physical ascetic labors that persecute the flesh are: fasting, vigils, labor, and purity. The last is the most effective of all, and the most necessary. That is why virginity is the fastest way to Christian perfection. Without it man cannot acquire any strength or gifts. It must only be remembered that besides physical purity there is also purity of soul, which can be lost in spite of physical purity preserved to the grave. It is more significant than the physical, thus spouses also can come very close to being virgins through purity of soul. A laborer who is devoted to God is aided by grace. Therefore we see married people also who possess spiritual perfections.

## 8. THE ORDER OF EXTERNAL LIFE ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF NEW LIFE

Everything related to the ordering of external life according to the spirit of new life can be called “leaving the world,” or casting out the spirit of the world from the entire course of our

lives. *I have chosen you out of the world* (Jn. 15:19), that is, He has taken us out of it. This is what the Lord said to the Apostles. He does the same thing through His divine grace and with all the faithful: He takes His spirit out of the world. Even conversion itself consists in turning the consciousness away from the vanity of the world and opening a new one to it—the spiritual. But what at first occurred invisibly in the soul should later in life be fulfilled in deed, and become an on-going rule. Whoever seeks the Lord must remove himself from the world.

By “world” is meant everything passionate, vain or sinful that enters into personal, family and social life, and which becomes there the custom and rule. Therefore leaving the world does not mean running away from the family or society, but abandoning the morals, customs, rules, habits and demands that are entirely antithetical to the Spirit of Christ which has entered and ripens within us. Citizenship and family life are blessed by God; therefore we should not turn away from them or have contempt for them, nor for anything belonging to their essential good order. But everything lustful and passionate that has come into them like a malignant tumor that tempts them should be held in contempt and renounced. Running away from the world means establishing yourself in the true family and citizenship. Everything else should be as if foreign to us, not our business: *And they that use this world, as not abusing it* (I Cor. 7:31).

Why it should be done this way is obvious. The vain, passion-soaked world is inevitably transmitted to our souls, and arouses or infuses passions. Just as one who walks near soot turns black, or as one who touches fire gets burned, so does the one who participates in worldly things become embued with passions hateful to God. Therefore, when the penitent comes back to the world he falls again, and innocently becomes depraved. This is almost inescapable. The mind is immediately darkened; he becomes forgetful, weak, captive and plundered. Then once

the heart has been wounded there follows passion and action, and the man has fallen. Witnesses to this whole history of depravation, as well as witnesses to how necessary and inevitable it is to abandon all of this, are those converts who flee all of these customs as if they were fire.

What exactly to abandon and how to do it is taught better by experience than by our writing.

This is the law: abandon everything that is dangerous to the new life, whatever ignites passions, brings vanity and extinguishes spirit. And how many such things there are! Let the measure of this be each person's heart, sincerely seeking salvation without deceit and not only for show. Now is the time to cease from all theaters, balls, dances, music, singing, travels, strolls, acquaintances, jokes, sarcasm, laughter, and idle time. It is time even to change the time of arising from bed, sleep, eating and so on. At other times and in different places it may be otherwise. But the measuring stick is always the same: abandon what is harmful and dangerous to life, whatever extinguishes the spirit. But what exactly is this? For some it may be the most petty thing, like a stroll around some familiar area with a familiar individual. *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient* (I Cor. 6:12).

From this it follows that leaving the world is nothing other than cleaning up your entire external life, removing from it everything passionate and replacing it with something pure, which will not disrupt the spiritual life, but rather aid it. Be it in family, personal or social life—completely re-order your outward behavior in and outside the home, with friends and associates, as the spirit of your new life requires it. Establish rules and order in every part of the home, at work, with acquaintances, and when, how and with whom you spend your time.

How can this be done? However you can, only do it with counsel and discernment, according to the guidance of your

spiritual father, or someone you trust. Some people do this suddenly, and it seems better, while others do it by degrees. Only, from the first minute you should come to hate with all your heart everything worldly and sinful, and estrange yourself from it, not wanting it or delighting in it. *Be ye not conformed to this world* (Rom. 12:2). After inwardly abandoning the world, visible departure may follow either suddenly or gradually. A man who is weak in spirit will not bear a long drawn-out abandonment—he will not stand firm, will weaken and fall. Such ones are especially overcome by passions of the flesh, which are like second nature to him. Therefore such people should always leave it all suddenly, going far away from that place where they wallowed in sin. A man strong in the spirit of zeal will bear it even by degrees. But for the former as well as the latter, it is absolutely necessary from the first moment of conversion to cease all association with the sinful world and everything worldly until the form of new life has been established. This is the same as fencing around a transplanted tree; for though the wind be soft, it could blow the tree over because its roots are still weak.

The thought that you could live like a Christian while holding on to the world and worldliness is an empty, deluded thought. Whoever lives by this thought will never learn anything more than pharisaism and imaginary life, that is, he will be a Christian only in his own opinion, and not in fact. At first he will destroy with one hand what he created with another, that is, what he gathered while away from the world will be stolen from him at his first re-entrance into it. From this it is a direct path to opinion, for what was stolen from the heart may still remain in the memory and imagination. Now, remembering and imagining how it was before, the man might think that it is still that way; meanwhile it has evaporated and only traces of it are left in the memory. He will think that he has what he has not. The judgment upon him is this: *but from him that hath*

*not shall be taken away even that which he hath* (Matt. 25:29). It is one step from opinion to pharisaism, and hardened pharisaism is a terrible state.

Nevertheless it is a frightening prospect. "How can I leave the world?" one may say. It is only frightening superficially, while inwardly leaving the world means entering paradise. From the outside there appears only hatred, sorrows and loss. So what to do? Fortify yourself with patience. What is more valuable—the world or your soul, time or eternity? Give up the small and take the measureless in full measure. It also happens that a strong push away from the world comes only at the beginning, but then it quiets down little-by-little; and the one who has left the world is left in peace, for people are rarely treasured in the world. People talk and talk and then forget. They think of the one who left the world as dead. Thus you need not be afraid of the world's displeasure, because due to its vanity and pride, it loves what is at hand and forgets the rest. It is a spectacle—it concerns itself with or grasps only those who are within it and has little concern for the others.

Thus whether it be through occupations that strengthen the soul, or by persecuting the flesh with all its members, particularly those closest organs of the soul, or by cleaning up the outer order of life, the person who seeks a good and steadfast stronghold safeguards his inner life. Having strengthened himself within by spiritual and soul-related practices in solitude accompanied by persecution of the flesh, he goes on to his family, civil or societal affairs, to works that are pure and salvific, according to God's will. And through these his spirit builds, or at least is not plundered.

Only one thing can distract him—that is constant looking upon and hearing things that are either worldly or simple which affect his soul, distracting it by drawing its attention away and then plundering it. If he would set a guard over these openings,

his inner peace would be undisturbed. Obviously the most reliable and decisive means for this is guarding the senses. But this is not possible or even right for everyone. Therefore the Holy Fathers have invented a salvific method whereby we can be subject to the impressions of external things yet not be distracted by them, at the same time building spirit. It consists in providing a spiritual substitute for everything seen and heard, and to become so strong in the remembrance of this spiritual substitute, that every time the thing is seen, its spiritual substitute impresses the senses rather than it itself. Whoever does this with everything he meets will always be as if in school. Light and dark, man and beast, rock and plant, house and field—everything to the smallest iota will be a lesson to him. He need only interpret it all to himself and strengthen himself in it. And how salvific it is! “Why are you crying?” asked the disciple of the elder who saw the beautiful, depraved woman. “I am crying,” he replied, “over the destruction of God’s rational creature, and over the fact that I do not take such care for my soul as she does over her body for destruction. . . .” Another, hearing the weeping of a woman over a grave said: “So should a Christian weep over his sins.”

## 9. GRACE-FILLED MEANS OF DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Such are the ascetic labors by which the soul, the body, and our external behavior develop in accordance with the spirit of new life. After the spirit is enlivened by the grace of God at conversion, it ascends to resolve and promise, and seals the grace with the Holy Mysteries. But just as at the beginning conversion is unreliable if it is not sealed by grace through the Sacraments, so does zeal continue to be unstable, fervor powerless, the will weak, and life empty without renewal through the Divine

Mysteries of Confession and Holy Communion. Christian life manifested by zeal is grace-filled life. Thus the attraction and acquisition of divine grace is the most powerful means of preserving, feeding and kindling Christian life. There are special elements that feed our animal nature, and there are elements that feed our spiritual life. These second elements are the Sacraments.

The Lord has given us the Sacrament of His Body and Blood for the purpose of feeding and elevating our spiritual life. *I am that bread of life*, said the Lord. *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed* (Jn. 6:48, 55). Spiritual life is the result of being with the Lord. There is no true life outside of Him or without Him. But He says: *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.... I live by the Father: so he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him* (Jn. 6:56). That means that communion with the Lord works through Communion of His Body and Blood. True spiritual life is powerful, productive and prolific. But *without Me*, says the Lord, *ye can do nothing. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit* (Jn. 15:5). *He that eateth me, even he shall live by me* (Jn. 6:57). Therefore, *except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life* (Jn. 6:53-54).

This is the grace-filled Source for preserving and strengthening our spiritual life! That is why from the very beginning of Christianity, true zealots of piety considered frequent Communion to be the chief blessing. In the Acts it appears everywhere—Christians all abided in prayer and the breaking of bread, that is, Communion. St. Basil the Great in his epistle to Ceasar said that it is salvific to partake of the Body and Blood every day, and said of his own life: “We receive Communion four times a week.” This is also the opinion common to all the saints, that

there is no salvation without Communion, and no progress in life without frequent Communion.<sup>1</sup>

But the Lord, the Source of life that enlivens those who partake of Him, is also fire to those who eat Him. Those who receive Communion worthily taste of life, but those who partake unworthily taste of death. Although this death does not occur visibly, invisibly it always occurs in the spirit and heart of the man. The unworthy communicant steps away like a charred log from the fire, or the metal remnants of a conflagration. In the body itself either the seed of death is sown, or death happens right away, as it was in the Corinthian church at the Apostle's reprimand. Therefore when receiving Communion you must approach it with fear and trembling, and sufficient preparation.

This preparation consists in cleansing the conscience of dead deeds. *But let a man examine himself*, teaches the Apostle, *and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup* (I Cor. 11:28). Confession made with hatred of sin and the promise to flee it in any way possible makes a man's soul a vessel capable of containing the uncontainable God by His grace. Decisiveness and promise are the place where the Lord communes with us in Communion, for it is the only clean place in us—everywhere else in us it is unclean. Therefore no one approaches worthily, but only through the Lord and His grace are we deemed worthy, for the sake of compunctionate confession and promise.

We could have limited it to this: confess worthily and you will be a worthy communicant. But Confession itself is a Sacrament, which requires worthy preparation; and more than that, it requires particular actions, feelings and dispositions that cannot be summoned all at once, but require time and a certain amount of exclusive preoccupation. That is why it has always been conducted according to a known office, with preliminary

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1. Monks Callistus and Ignatius, *Writings from the Philokalia on the Prayer of the Heart*, no. 92, pp. 260-264.

deeds and exercises that prepare one for it and enable one to better recognize his sins, to awaken contrition over them, and to guard the fortress of promise. All of these things together comprise *govenie*.

So for the elevating and strengthening of grace-filled life through the Sacraments it is necessary to institute *govenie* with all its components, to go to Confession, and, having thus prepared yourself, to worthily partake of the Holy Mysteries. It is necessary, that is, to institute *govenie*, or rather take it upon yourself, for it is already instituted for us by the holy Church. The four fasts are established to this aim, so that during them zealots of piety would prepare themselves, confess and receive Communion. Those seeking perfection should make it a rule for themselves to prepare for Communion four times per year, during all the great fasts. This is written in *Orthodox Confessions*. Incidentally, this should not stifle any zeal for receiving more often or even constantly, neither should it burden like a yoke anyone who is unable to fulfill it due to his circumstances. Just try to do anything within your powers to prepare for Communion four times per year. For lay people four times per year is a modest amount, moderate, and in the experience of many very salvific. He who does this will not set himself apart from others, and therefore will not get puffed up for being more exalted than they. You can also prepare twice during the Nativity and Great Lenten fasts—at the beginning and the end. This will make in all six times.

*Govenie* should be distinguished from fasting, or worthy conduct of the fasts according to the rubrics of the Church. It is part of the fast, but is stricter with respect to food, sleep, and everything else connected with other pious occupations, such as: ceasing worldly cares and affairs, reading holy books as much as possible, full attendance at church services, and so on. This time is generally dedicated exclusively to pious occupations that

are all directed towards bringing forth needed repentance and confession, and then the receiving of Communion.

Thus it is clear that the whole process of *govenie* is the cleaning up of our whole life, renewing its tone, purifying our goals, uniting with the Lord, renewing the spirit and all our existence. It is like washing out our dusty clothing or taking a bath after being on the road. A Christian will never be able to keep from getting dirty on the road no matter how careful he is. He gets covered with the dust of passionate thoughts and stained with falls into sin. Even though it be but a little dirt, it is the same as dust in the eyes or grit in a watch—the eyes do not see and the watch does not run. So we have to clean ourselves off from time to time. How wisely it is all set up in our Church, and how salvific it is to humbly submit to this institution!

This is the meaning of *govenie*! It is a means for nourishing, enkindling and preserving life in us. But mainly it is the assiduous assessment of our lives and our falls with their causes, and the establishment of methods for avoiding them. When sins become known, they are cast out of the heart by contrition and aversion, and cleansed away by Confession with the promise to change. Then the vessel is ready. In Communion the Lord comes and communes with the worthy spirit, which should feel that: *I am not alone, but with Thee.*

## Chapter Six

### *Approaching Constant Govenie*

*Govenie* is done at a certain time, but the spirit of preparation should eventually become a constant state. Certain exercises must be used that will help to root this state.

Because *govenie* includes three illuminating works: fasting, Confession and Communion, these three things should lead to as much constancy and frequency as possible. For this is needed:

#### I. CONCERNING GOVENIE

1) Observing all the great fasts, or spending all of them in fasting; that is, more than just continence, so that the flesh feels a lack, insufficiency, or a little pain. A certain number of days are set aside during the fast for preparation, when you must abandon all business and concentrate exclusively on cleansing the conscience. Otherwise during the fast business goes on as usual, fasting relaxes and other activities are determined by opportunity. Only wearing out the flesh and denying it all consolations, as in a decent mourning period, gives ease to the spirit and attracts the grace of God. What a potent means of inspiration there is in this!

2) Observing the fasts on Wednesday and Friday. This strongly reminds man from time to time that he is not free but in slavery and bears a burden. It stanches the flood of sensuality, sobers and imparts vigor. It is as a short break for the stallion from the cruel bit and bridle.

3) Besides this, voluntary fasting on other particular days, especially Mondays, as is customary. Some people deny themselves certain foods and always eat lenten foods, others alter-

nate days, and so on. There are various forms of fasting and all of them are beneficial and advisable according to one's strength and zeal.

## 2. CONCERNING CONFESSION

1) Every sin that burdens the conscience should be quickly cleansed by repentance without waiting for any particular time of preparation. It is good not to keep it in your soul for even one day, and even better for less than an hour, for sin drives away grace and deprives one of boldness in prayer; and the longer one holds on to it, the more it hardens and cools the heart. Once it is driven away by repentance, it leaves a compunctionate dew of tears.

2) Every day before you go to sleep, make a private confession to the Lord of everything in which you have sinned. Thoughts, desires, senses and passionate movements, as well as any impurity even in righteous deeds, must be revealed to God. Even though we may have sinned as it were against our own will, the sin is still within us, making us impure and indecent before God and our own sense of purity and perfection. Lying down to sleep is like departing for the other world. Confession prepares us for this. During sleep, whatever we have acquired during the day becomes part of our nature; we must cleanse it and cast out all indecency with contrition. Then we will be clean.

3) Make a confession minute by minute, that is, every impure and blameworthy thought, desire, feeling and movement confess as soon as you realize it to the all-seeing God with contrition of spirit; and ask forgiveness for it and the strength to avoid it in the future. Ask that you be cleansed from all impurity in that moment. This activity is very salvific. It is like wiping your eyes as you walk against the dust, and it requires strict attention to the heart. The concentrated man is always

fervent and zealous. But whoever does not exile thoughts and desires by contrition and repentance, leaves the wound in his heart. How many unnoticed wounds we often have, how many arrows! It is not surprising that we grow cold and fall. One thought leads to another, and they easily give birth to desire. One desire and another give birth to consent, and then an inner adultery has been committed, and we have fallen. He who constantly repents cleanses himself of all this and clears his own path.

4) Reveal every perplexity, confusion or new understanding to another of like mind with you, or to your spiritual father, so that he would decide and discern its worth, and pronounce a judgment. This is how to avoid an impasse or digression. Curtail the habit of deciding everything for yourself, and, as a result, save the time that is sometimes wasted in empty daydreaming. But mainly it is a constant safeguard, a firm, unwavering conviction which engenders firmness of will and reliability of action.

Through all of these activities confession truly becomes ceaseless. The spirit is retained in contrition, compunction, self-abasement, and prayerful supplication—which means that it is alive. It is the most suitable of all activities for preserving the spirit of zeal and the heat of fervor, so that some have even limited all spiritual work for themselves as well as for others to one thing: repenting every minute and weeping over their sins.

### 3. CONCERNING COMMUNION

1) Go as often as possible to Liturgy, and as it is celebrated stand in firm and bright faith in the sacrifice that is being made to God. The Sacrament of the Body and Blood is Divine Food for the Christian and a sacrifice. Not everyone receives Communion at every Liturgy, but the sacrifice is brought from all and for all. Therefore all should participate in it. We participate

with our faith, our pained contrition over our sins, our self-abasing falling down before the Lord Who has sacrificed Himself like a lamb for the life of the world. Concentration alone on this Mystery powerfully enlivens and awakens the spirit. Faith and contrition always bring cleansing from sins, and often also a treasured touch from the Lord upon the heart of the Christian, delighting and enlivening him as a sort of Communion in spirit.

Such a touch is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb and more fortifying than all spiritual fortifications. But it must be remembered that it is entirely a gift of God. When, to whom and how He will grant it depends on the Lord Himself. The Christian should receive it with reverence, joy, and triumph if it is granted. But he should not try to force it, or invent some method to obtain it. It is even better not to trust that it even happens, or that what does happen is truly it. This is in order to avoid getting puffed up or falling into *prelest*.

2) If it is impossible to go to church, then do not let the hour of the holy and Divine Sacrifice pass without sighing and turning to God. If possible, stand in prayer and make a few prostrations. Terrifying natural phenomena make all creatures tremble: for example, thunder, earthquakes, or storms. At the moment the Divine Sacrifice is celebrated in church, something occurs that is more awesome and greater than anything on earth or heaven; but it occurs invisibly, spiritually, before the face of the infinite Triune God, the holy angels, the entire assembly of the heavenly Church, before the eyes of faith of all who struggle and live on earth. It is invisible, but real nevertheless. Therefore the believer should not let these moments slip past his attention. When he remembers it, this remembrance alone warms the spirit and enraptures him to God, by which grace is drawn down.

This is how the work of *govenie* can approach ceaselessness, so that along with inner work, the heat of zeal and the spirit of

quest can be preserved in constant tension and power. With their aid all *podvigs* of body and soul can be turned into salvific means of growing and strengthening our inner man.

Such is the general order of guiding rules. Being based on the existence of life, they are essential to everyone who seeks the Lord. But we have only shown the beginning, spirit and power of the rules, for example, with respect to the body—not pleasing the flesh in all its bodily functions; or with respect to the external life—removal from everything that is permeated with the spirit of passions, binding the soul at each of its powers, and living under the influence of grace-filled means. These are the essential points of ascetic labor. Because of the multiplicity of personal dispositions, the application of these means should be multitudinous, and it is impossible to set one rule for all. For example, in order to heal the mind we must impress upon it the divine truths according to the understanding of the holy Church. This can be done by reading, listening and mutual discourse on the Word of God, patristic teachings, Lives of saints and sermons. The spiritual father should discern which method is best for whom, and how it can be applied. Just do it however you can. Thus, although it is all one and the same thing, asceticism appears from the outside in infinitely varied forms. Only bear in mind that any spiritual father who extinguishes the spirit of zeal by various dispensations and indulgences or comforts, and lulls those in a state of coldness is a destroyer of souls and a murderer, for there is only one way—the narrow and sorrowful.

The fullest and most successful way to accomplish all of this is monasticism. This way of life, in its best, purest and most perfect form, is the very realization of the demands of asceticism, precisely in spirit. It is the laborious and repentant path; it always consists of the guiding and the guided; it is by nature outwardly removed; by nature it restricts the bodily needs; it offers the greatest room for practicing spiritual exercises, read-

ing, divine services, prayer, and obedience; it especially enables an active uprooting of passions, in common with other laborers, through unacquisitiveness, austerity, comfortlessness, disregard of self, and by being personally under guidance. The attentive monk soon ripens in inward striving for God for the sake of his resolute self-sacrifice and renunciation of everything, for the sake of his greater possibility to be within, and for the sake of much spiritual nourishment by prayer. Therefore the attentive monk soon proceeds to hesychia and solitude of mind and retires to the desert, or reclusion.

## Chapter Seven

### *Rule for Struggling with the Passions, or the Beginning of Self-Opposition*

#### I. WAR WITH THE PASSIONS AND LUSTS

Following the order we have shown is a powerful means of destroying passionateness, purifying and correcting ourselves. Observing it consciously and freely, a person destroys passionateness by the very act of alienating it, of not giving it any food, or by placing a yoke upon it of the prescribed rules for the entire breadth of his powers and activities. The stifled passions then quiet down, like a candle under a glass. Just the same, we must not limit ourselves to this activity alone. Rules are given in order to heal our corrupted powers which are permeated with passionateness. The same power that lies in *evil* must now work for *good*. Therefore it is impossible not to meet with evil at the beginning of good works, during the first movement of our powers. If it is impossible to be both good and evil, and if we are expected to be only good without any evil taint, then we must cast out evil from every work, so that we can begin to do only good. So in uninterrupted connection with a direct and appropriate occupation of the powers, there must always be an indirect activity aimed at casting out evil and passionateness that rise up, otherwise known as *war with the passions and lusts*.

Establishing ourselves in and growing accustomed to the prescribed ascetic labors is achieved only through struggle and warfare, by victory over temptations. Who has ever become a faster without struggling against his stomach, or acquired sincere child-like faith without conquering self-opinion and

proud-mindedness? And this does not apply to one thing only, but to the whole array of related activities, from inner effluences to the final departure from the world. Everywhere is struggle; therefore the prescribed rule, being the renewer of the powers and nature, is also the field of constant spiritual warfare. Conquer the unnatural in your powers, and they will become natural; ward off and cut off evil, and you will see the good. Asceticism is ceaseless triumph.

## 2. FREELY CHOOSING AND LOVING GOOD IS A POWERFUL WEAPON

The possibility and basis for all inner victories is first the victory over ourselves—in the breaking of our will and dedicating ourselves to God, with inimical denial of everything sinful. At this time is born the dislike for passionateness, hatred, and aversion, which is itself a spiritual fighting strength and alone comprises the entire army. Where this is not present, the battle is already in the hands of the enemy; but where it is present, we often win without a struggle. From this we can see that a departure point for appropriate activity is our inner [man]; it is the departure point of warfare, only from another side. When consciousness and free will switch to the side of good and come to love it, they vanquish through hatred all evil and passionateness, especially their own. In this consists the change, or the break.

Therefore the powers that war with passions are also the intellect or spirit—the seat of consciousness and freedom—the spirit being upheld and strengthened by grace. Through it, as we have seen, healing power reaches the powers through ascetic labors; through it the vanquishing spirit passes through the passions to battle. And vice versa: when passions attack, they directly storm the mind or spirit, that is, the seat of consciousness and freedom. These reside in our inner sanctuary, at which

the enemy shoots his arrows, by way of the passions, from soul-related qualities and fleshliness as if from an ambush. And as long as the consciousness and freedom are whole, that is, as long as they are on the side of good, then no matter how fierce the attack, the victory is ours.

Nevertheless, this does not imply that all the power for victory comes from us—it only shows what comes out of us. The point of fortification for battle is our renewed spirit, and the triumphant, vanquishing power over the passions is grace. It builds one thing in us and destroys another, but again through the spirit, or consciousness and free will. The struggler relinquishes himself to God crying out, complaining about his enemies and hating them, and God in him and through him casts them out and vanquishes them. *Be of good cheer*, said the Lord, *for I have overcome the world* (Jn. 16:33). *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*, (Phil. 4:13) confesses the Apostle, precisely because without Him we can do nothing. Whoever wants to triumph by himself will undoubtedly fall into the same passion that he fights, or at least into some secondary passion. Having given himself to God, he literally goes from nothing to victory. Again, this does not negate our own opposition, but only shows that even with all our opposition, success or victory can never be our own; and if it comes, it is always from God. Therefore oppose and struggle against the passions as much as you can, but do not fail to lay all your sorrows on the living God, Who says: *I am with you in an evil day—do not be afraid*.

### 3. REVIEWING OUR ENEMIES TO KNOW THE SUITABLE METHODS OF UPROOTING PASSIONS

How should a man now act, or in general what methods are suitable for uprooting passions? In order to determine this, we

must review all of our enemies, as well as what forms they take and how they act. This itself will determine the nature of our struggle with them. Success in battle depends greatly on our vision of its formation.

There is no such thing as peaceful progress in goodness, because our passions are still alive and they are greatly fortified by this present vain, visible world, and by the dark forces that rule it. These are the sources of the movements that war against goodness in us.

Man is totally passionate until he converts. At conversion the spirit, being filled with zeal, is pure. But the soul and the body remain passionate. When the cleansing and healing has begun, the soul and body resist and fight for their lives against the spirit that persecutes them. These attacks usually come through soul-related and bodily powers; they strike at the spirit, for through it are these powers estranged. But sometimes there are movements aimed directly at the spirit. These are the fiery arrows that the enemy shoots from his physical-emotional/psychological ambush at the prisoner escaping from his tyranny. Regardless of the fact that there is a part of us which is healed and whole, the attacks of sin and passions are obvious and felt throughout our existence.

1) *In the body*: The source of passions is pleasing of the flesh, or comforting the flesh, with which the whirlwind of our bodily life and sensual delight are directly linked. Wherever they are present there is sexual lust, gluttony, love of pleasure, sloth, comfort, adulterous feelings, loquacity, absent-mindedness, restlessness, willfulness in everything, unseemly laughter, idle talk, sleepiness, daydreaming, craving the pleasant and all manner of pleasing the flesh in lust.

2) *In soul*: a) *In the mental part*—opinion, exclusive belief in one's own intellect, criticism, attacking the mind of God, doubts, puffing up and arrogance, curiosity, mental plundering,

straying thoughts. b) *In the desirous part*—self-will, un-submissiveness, love of authority, cruelty, opportunism, self-reliance, covetousness, ungratefulness, possessiveness, extortion. c) *In the sensual part*—passions that shatter peace and tranquility of heart, or various kinds of pleasantness and unpleasantness: wrath, envy, hatred, anger, revenge, judgment, contempt, vain-glory, ambition, pride, boredom, sadness, sorrow, depression, joy, cheerfulness, fears, hopes, expectations.

*The source of passions of soul and body is self-love*

The source of all these passions of soul and body is self-love or egotism which, although conquered or refused at first, attack often, and, clothed in one passion or another, wage war against the spirit. This residual egotism together with the whole army of passions comprises the now-decaying fleshly man and is that very other *law in my members* (Rom. 7:23), of which the Apostle speaks, and from which something always attacks that is contrary to the spirit's desires. The Holy Fathers, in order not to distract the attention of the spiritual warrior-Christian, strove to trace all the passions to their beginnings, in order to discern what the warrior should attack. With this goal they place three things close to the effluence of egotism: pleasure, covetousness and pride; after these are five more passions issuing from them. Limiting it to this, the Holy Fathers describe the attacks of these passions and show how to war with them. Whoever has cut off pleasure by self-directed wrath, covetousness with un-acquisitiveness, and pride with humility has conquered egotism, for it is easier to vanquish it by destroying its children than by attacking it itself.

*Forgetfulness of God leads to other sins*

All of this is in the soul and body. But the spirit, revived, or rather reviving, is not free from enemy strikes, which are all the

more dangerous because they touch the outgrowths of life and often go unnoticed due to their subtlety and depth. And it is the same in the soul and body. Working against the entire structure of inner spiritual life is an opposing array of movements and states that rout and overshadow it. Thus it often happens that instead of being within and concentrated, there is an eruption, an expulsion from within to the senses. Instead of the three acts of being within—attention, vigilance and soberness—there is a plundering of the mind, an inner storm, vain fussing, weakening, ease, letting oneself go, willfulness, audacity, captivity, passionate attachment, a wounded heart. Instead of awareness of the spiritual world, there is forgetfulness of God, of death, judgment and everything spiritual.

Because awareness is the main thing in the spirit that engenders being within, when it falls all life activity falls. From this, instead of fear of God and a feeling of dependence upon Him, there is lack of fear. Instead of choosing and treasuring the spiritual, there is indifference to it. Instead of renunciation of everything, there is self-pampering (why torment yourself!). Instead of feelings of repentance there is insensitivity and stoniness of heart. Instead of faith in the Lord there is self-justification. Instead of zeal there is coldness, fatigue, and a lack of inspiration. Finally, instead of dedication to God there is action according to self-will.

*Subtle tempting movements aided by the world and the demons*

Attacking the consciousness or free will, one or another such feeling either completely cuts off or cuts short the flow of our spiritual life and places us in extreme danger. This is when outside help is extremely necessary. Sometimes the person himself is not aware of these tempting movements, for they belong to the ranks of subtle thought processes. Passions of the soul and body are more obvious and crude, although there are

also subtle ones amongst them, such as comfort of the body, or opinion and criticism. In word they are understood, but in deed they are often hidden.

This is the horde that is ready every minute to extinguish our new life opposed to sin. Man walks the earth of his existence as along a quagmire, ready to fall in at any moment. When you walk, walk carefully, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

Incidentally, being within, under the cover of new rules and a new order and with activity of spirit, all of these unrighteous movements would not be so pernicious if they were not aided by their neighboring parents—the world and the demons.

The world is the manifestation of the world of passions, the live passions in individuals, customs and deeds. Coming into contact with one part or another of the world, it is impossible not to exacerbate your own inner wounds or passions due to their similitude and accord with it. That is why everyone who lives in the world is drawn to it because of the passions living within him, according to his motivations and temptations.

But there is a certain arousal that particularly belongs to the world. It consists in its charming appearance and progress, its power to awe—the feeling of abandonment and desertedness in the midst of a crowd; in everything—obstacles, caustic remarks, ridicule, contempt, inattentiveness, the torment of iniquitous deeds. This is followed by oppression, persecution, wrath, deprivation, and all manner of sorrows.

The demons, as the source of all evil, surround people with their horde and teach them every sin, working through the flesh, especially the senses and that element where the soul and the demons themselves live. That is why they can be considered the cause of every passion and sinful attack. But there is something in this cycle of sins that only the demons could whip up—something of which nature is incapable despite all its corruption. That is blasphemous thoughts—doubts, lack of faith, unusual

revulsion, darkening of the mind, various forms of *prelest*, and in general, passionate temptations that take over; for example: uncontrollable sexual passions, stubborn hatred to the death, and so on. Besides these invisible struggles from demons, there is also a visible attack from them that is sensed through the body: these are various kinds of specters, that even go to the extent of taking authority over the body. To learn more about the deceit of the demons it is useful to read the lives of Sts. Niphon, Spyridon and others.

This is everything that attacks the new man from within and from without. Those who are attentive say a minute does not pass without one of these movements striking. This is inevitable; for we see how the inward-looking individual who is zealous for good is surrounded on all sides by enemy forces. He is sunk in them as in a sea. Incidentally, in order to succeed in battle one needs not only to see this host of enemies, but also to know what form these attacks take.

Let us imagine where the face of a man is at conversion. It is inside, in another world; it exists and acts in another way. He has spiritual subjects on his mind and spiritual deeds in his intentions. It means that he has left the passionate and sinful. When later beneficial order and rules are developed, it can be seen that he stands entirely in the realm of spiritual light, he is holy. The sinful and passionate are estranged from his attention and are covered by rules. They speak out on rare occasions, then again run away, occupying or not occupying the attention. They only show themselves to the inner eye, remind us of themselves, wanting only that we occupy ourselves with them, think about them, contemplate them.

Therefore the chief form in which the enemy appears in us is *thought*. When the enemy succeeds in occupying our mind with blasphemous thoughts, he is already not without profit. He can often even celebrate a victory, because desire can soon

lean towards the thought; and after desire comes resolve to do the thing—and this is already sin and a fall. On this basis the Holy Fathers, attentive to themselves, to the forms and degrees of passionate attacks and attraction to them, notice the following: the onrush of thoughts, contemplation, delight in it, desire, passion, attraction, resolve, and then the deed. This process sometimes happens gradually, one step after another, and sometimes each stage comes separately and out of order, with the exception of *resolve*, which always is a direct act preceded by contemplation and the inclination of free will. Until this happens purity is intact and the conscience is clean.

Therefore all of the preliminary acts can be defined by one word—*thought*. It can be simple or with an added simple, passionate, lustful thought; because it appears in us either as a simple thought, the imagination only of a sinful object, or as lust, craving or desire, or finally, as a passion or attraction. All of these entice and tempt the mind or spirit to something passionate and sinful. But this is not evil, not sin, as long as the mind has not joined its will to them, as long as it wars with them each time they arise until they are expelled.

### *The boundaries of the battlefield*

These are the boundaries of the battlefield—from the appearance of the thought, lusts, passions, and attractions to the disappearance and cleansing of their every trace. This is what all rules of this struggle are directed towards. True, the world acts from without as well as satan; but its tempting effects reach our consciousness in no other way than in one or another of these three [the world, the flesh and the devil], for their concern is only for shaking the inner disposition and inclining it towards them. They use all of their cunning to this end, so that it is not a method or action that they use on us, but rather what they mean to inspire in us as being important and valuable in our

lives and actions which lead us into sin. For example, during persecutions and sufferings a man is healthy, but the thought arises of murmuring, despair or abandoning virtue.

Thus, with respect to spiritual warfare we can decisively say: regardless of what inspires sinfulness, turn all your attention and strength towards this very sinfulness—begin with it and fight. This law is of superlative importance. It will keep you within and thus in strength, and, to a certain extent, out of danger. That is why all the rules of the Holy Fathers are directed towards thoughts, passions, and desires, and are adapted to the essence of these same. The causes are not even mentioned, or if they are mentioned it is without giving them any particular meaning in this regard, and often without any differentiation between them. For the world, the demons and lust can and do arouse one and the same passion, but the passion does not receive from this any particular character. Thus, this is where all the ascetic's attention should be directed inside himself—at thoughts, desires, passions, and attractions. It should most of all, incidentally, be directed at thoughts, for the heart and the will are not so mercurial as the thoughts; and passions and desires rarely attack by themselves—they are most often born of thoughts. From this we can make a rule: cut off thoughts and you will cut off everything.

#### 4. THE RULES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Amongst the rules of spiritual warfare that govern a Christian's martial art, some give warning of attacks, others allow for an easier and more successful end to the struggle, another ensures a more steadfast confirmation of the fruits of victory, or of a rapid destruction of all traces of the strike. These are naturally divided into three classes: a) rules to follow before the battle, b) rules to follow during the battle itself, and c) rules to follow after the battle.

*Before the battle*

Before battle a warrior should act in such a way as to either repel oncoming attacks, to give himself the opportunity to notice them at the very beginning, or even to secure a victory in advance. Therefore he should first of all suppress the array of sinful movements and push them all into one place, for by doing this he will not only more easily be able to notice their rebellion, but it will be more apparent where he should direct his forces.

1) The external marks of the array of sinfulness are generally this: from its stronghold in the center of life—the heart—sin penetrates into the soul and body along all its functions, then passes through to all the person's external relationships, and finally throws its veil over everything around it. Now, although it is exiled from the depths of the heart, it still hovers through the surrounding area, feeding on what it always fed on. Faces, things and occurrences can easily arouse the same thoughts and feelings with which the person joined when he worked for sin.

The wise warrior should now guard himself from these external rations of the enemy. For this he must: a) Remodel his entire outer behavior, give a new appearance, new inspiration, new timing and so on to everything in him according the spirit of new life. b) Arrange his time so that not one hour remains without useful occupations. Breaks between duties should be taken up with something, but it should be something that facilitates the mortification of sin and strengthening of the spirit. Anyone can see just how useful certain bodily *podvigs* are in opposing detected tendencies. c) Bind his senses, especially the eyes, hearing and tongue, which are the most ready conductors of sin from the heart to the outside and from the outside into the heart. d) Think of spiritual substitutes for everything with which it is necessary to come into contact—things, individuals or incidents; and especially, fill his permanent living

quarters with [spiritual] things that most elevate the soul, so that living thus externally, the person would live in a sort of school of Divinity. In general we should arrange our entire external environment so that in one respect it would not demand much attention, saving us much fuss over ourselves, and in another respect, that it would not only make us safe from unexpected attacks of sin, but would feed and strengthen our newly arising life in the spirit. Under such circumstances sin will be completely warded off from the outside, and will no longer receive food and support from its old source.

2) If the person now externally uses all his strength to preserve himself in his present state following his first victory, that is, if he will continually kindle those feelings and dispositions that were born in him, then sin will be warded off from the inside and will remain forever without support or substantiality. Sin thus deprived of food and support, if it is not destroyed instantly, will at least become weaker and weaker until it completely exhausts itself. After this the war with sin will obviously cease and all concentration will center on the war with thoughts (which will especially try to disrupt the new order), and rarely on passions and tendencies where it remains only to *diligently watch* (cf. Mk. 14:38). The warrior for Christ should have two vigilant guards—soberness and good discernment. The first is turned inward and the second is directed outward. The first watches out for movements coming from the heart itself, while the second checks the movements that can invade him from outside influences.

The rule for the first is this: after various thoughts are cast out of the heart by the remembrance of God's presence, stand by the door of the heart and diligently watch over everything that goes into it and comes out of it; especially do not allow the movement to forewarn the senses and desires, for from this comes all evil.

The rule for the second is this: at the beginning of every day, sit and go over all possible meetings and occurrences, and all the possible feelings and movements that they could cause. Fortify yourself within beforehand, so that you will not be confused and fall at some unexpected attack. By the way, in order to more successfully defend yourself at the moment of attack, it is useful to arrange an intentional preliminary mental war. Mentally place yourself in one or another situation, with this or that feeling, with one or another desire, and then invent various methods for keeping yourself within the necessary limits, and observe what particularly helped you in one or another incident. Such a preliminary exercise will develop a warring spirit, teach you to meet the enemy without timidity and to conquer it without any great difficulty, using moves learned through experience.

Furthermore, before we enter into battle we should always first find out when to act aggressively, when to act defensively and when to simply walk away. Besides the fact that we use one or another method of warfare corresponding to our degree of spiritual maturity, at first it is always best to walk away, that is, to place ourselves under God's protection without trying to fight.

Later on, when we know our enemies through experience and have studied their attacks, we can repel them without losing any time. But we should never intentionally allow them to freely arouse passions in us, or place ourselves in situations where they can work with all their might, just so that we can have an opportunity to war and gain a victory. There are particularly passionate stimuli that can only be conquered by one or another method. Thoughts should be cast out without fail; but it is not always possible to do this with tendencies and passions, especially the physical ones. In both situations the victory can be lost due to ignorance alone. Finally, never go into battle without the

chief victorious thought—the sign of victory.<sup>1</sup> Just as before it decided the battle between good and evil to the advantage of the former, so now does it easily make us the victors in the struggle with every sinful movement of the soul. The enemy hosts and all defiling thoughts and desires disperse at its appearance. It has the power to inspire and exalt a man above himself—therefore we must bring it to mind and to our senses as often as possible, and confirm forever in our mental stronghold this lamp that drives away the gloom. Nothing can more effectively kindle zeal for conquering sin than this thought of zeal, this rapid flood of living water, which, stirred up but not disturbed, renders unnoticeable all the waves caused by the flying stones of temptation.

*During the battle*

With these forewarnings and rules go forth to battle with good hope, O warrior of Christ. Even during battle itself you should act according to the foregoing rules, so that you do not put your hope in a disordered defense against the attacking enemy. Often one order of action, without any particular force, can crown you with success. Having noticed the enemy approach—the beginning of a stimulus, thought, passion, or tendency—first of all hasten to realize that it is the enemy. It is a great mistake, and a common one, to honor everything that comes up in us as the property of our own blood, for which we take a stand as for our own selves. Everything sinful is something foreign to us, and therefore we should always separate it from ourselves. Otherwise we will be a traitor to our own selves.

Whoever wants to war with himself should divide himself between himself and the enemy that hides in him. Having separated the known defiling movement from your own self and recognized it as the enemy, commit it then to the consciousness and senses, and engender an aversion to it in your heart. This is

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1. This refers to the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord.

the most salvific means for expelling sin. Every sinful movement is held in the soul through the sensation of a certain pleasure it stimulates. Therefore, when an aversion is aroused towards it, it is deprived of all support and disappears all by itself.

This however is not always easy or even possible. It is easy to vanquish thoughts with anger, but harder to vanquish desire, and even harder to vanquish passions, for they themselves are movements of the heart. When this does not help and the enemy will not give up without a struggle, courageously enter the battle, but without self-exaltation or self-reliance. Timidity brings the soul to confusion, a certain instability and slackness, and if the soul is not sure of itself it can easily fall. Self-reliance and self-opinion are the very enemies with which we must war. Whoever has let them in has already fallen, and has even predisposed himself to new falls, because they lead a man to inactivity and blunder.

Once the struggle has begun, preserve most of all your heart: do not allow the arising movements into the feelings. Meet them at the soul's very gate and try to defeat them there. To do this you must hasten to build a conviction in your soul that is contrary to the thing on which the confusing thought hangs. Such opposing convictions are not only the shields in mental warfare but also the arrows. They defend your heart and defeat the enemy in the heart itself. From that point on the war will consist in this: approaching sin will always be guarded by thoughts and images that shield it, and the struggler will from his side destroy these strongholds by contrary thoughts and images.

The duration of the war will depend upon the multifarious circumstances, which are impossible to determine. If he does not relax a bit, or incline even intellectually towards the side of the enemy, victory will undoubtedly be his; for sinful movements, as we noted previously, do not have a firm support in us and therefore should naturally soon cease.

If after you have done all this in good conscience the enemy's defensive actions still linger in your soul like a specter and he does not want give to up his territory, then this is a sure sign that it is supported by outside help, and thus you should seek outside help, earthly or heavenly. Reveal it to your spiritual instructor and pray earnestly to the Lord, to the saints and especially to your Guardian Angel. Devotion to God has never been put to shame. You must, by the way, note another thing—war with thoughts is one thing, war with passions is another, and yet another is war with desires. Thought comes from thought, desire from desire, and passion from passion. Particular moves should be used against each one; these should be determined beforehand either by contemplation or ascetic experiences and instructions. But one should not always strictly start fighting—sometimes contempt alone expels the enemy, while fighting only multiplies and irritates him. The enemy should be followed until no traces of him are left. Otherwise, even a simple thought left in the heart like an evil snake brings forth its fruit, imperceptibly inclining the soul to itself. During the battle itself, one should not be using methods meant to prevent future battle. The rules devised for that are always very austere, and therefore it is always necessary to change them, and, it follows, admit the bankruptcy of experience inasmuch as it is harmful to spiritual warfare and tempting to the warrior.

### *After the battle*

The battle is over. Thank the Lord for delivering you from defeat, but do not abandon yourself to immoderate joy of salvation, do not allow yourself to grow careless, do not slacken your zeal. The enemy often pretends to be defeated so that when you have abandoned yourself to a feeling of safety, an unexpected fall will more easily overtake you. Therefore do not put down your battle arms and do not forget your preventative rules.

Always be a vigorous and vigilant warrior. Better sit and count your spoils; look over the whole process of the battle—its beginning, duration and finally what put an end to it. This will amount to a sort of tribute extracted from the loser, which will make your future victories over him exceedingly easier. This in the final analysis is how spiritual wisdom and ascetical experience are acquired.

Do not tell anyone of the victory—that would greatly irritate the enemy and make you lose your strength. Vain-glory, which would be impossible to escape in this case, would open the doors of your spiritual fortress, and after gaining a victory over one enemy you would then have to do battle with a whole mob. If you are overcome, humble yourself; but do not run away from God, and do not be stubborn. Hurry to soften your heart and bring it to repentance. It is impossible not to fall, but we can and should arise after falling. When someone who runs quickly trips over something, he quickly arises and again dashes down his path to the goal. Emulate him. Our Lord is like a mother who leads her child by the hand and does not abandon him, even if he often trips and falls.

Instead of becoming paralyzed by depression, it is better to take heart for new ascetic labors, gleaning from the present fall a lesson of humility and caution not to walk in slippery places where you cannot help but fall. If you do not iron out sin with sincere repentance, then having received a degree of strength within yourself, it will inevitably draw you downward to the bottom of the sea of sin. Sin will possess you, and you will then have to start over again from the first battle. But God knows whether this will even be possible. Perhaps having committed yourself to sin, you will transgress the boundaries of conversion, and maybe you will not find afterwards even one truth that could shock your heart. Perhaps you will not even be granted the grace. Then you will

already belong to the ranks of those condemned to eternal torment.

*The rules of warfare are not the same for all*

In general about the rules of warfare it must be noted that they are essentially nothing other than an application of all weapons to individual cases, and that is why it is impossible to describe them all. The business of inner warfare is incomprehensible and mysterious. The cases of it vary utterly, and the warring individuals are too different. What will overcome one person is indifferent to another.

Therefore it is decisively impossible to make the same set of rules for everyone. The best devisor of the rules of warfare is every individual for himself. Experience is the best teacher—one only needs to have the zealous desire to conquer himself. The first ascetics did not study from books, but nevertheless they represent the very image of conquerors. Furthermore one should not rely too much on these rules; they represent only external sketches. What makes up the essence of the matter each will know only through experience, when he begins to actually wage war. And in this work his only guides will be his own good sense and his dedication to God.

The inner path of Christian life in each individual brings to mind the ancient underground catacombs, extremely intricate and mysterious. Upon entering them, the tried one receives a few instructions on the catacomb's general features—do this here, do that there, follow a certain sign here, and another there. But then he is left alone amidst the darkness, sometimes with only the weak light of a lamp. Everything will depend upon his presence of spirit, good sense and caution, and upon invisible guidance. There is a similar mysteriousness in inner Christian life. Here each one walks alone, though he be surrounded by a multitude of rules. The promptings of the heart, and especially the hints of grace, are his

only constant, undeceiving and inseparable guides in his war with himself. Everything else will abandon him.

*War with every individual thought*

Such is the battle with every passion, desire and thought. Just like passions, desires and thoughts are all different. Consequently there is no particular need to go into the details of war with every individual thought. We will make only a few remarks:

1) There are *subtle* thoughts and very subtle thoughts; there are crude ones and very crude ones. Anyone can notice the latter himself; the former however go unnoticed at the hour of their appearance in the heart, and are revealed only later by action. Even then they are more like something else rather than themselves. This should inspire you not to trust your own tranquility, goodness and purity even one iota, but always be suspicious of it; attentively follow the course of affairs and watch what thoughts accompany them and conclude them, in order later to judge by this what initially lay within. It is best of all, by the way, to have a trusted friend—a constant eye will immediately see from the outside what hides within us, although we ourselves may not notice it. When we speak of very subtle thoughts we do not mean only spiritual ones. Thoughts can also come from the soul or body. Their distinctive quality is their imperceptibility, their hiddenness in the depths, so that the person thinks that he is acting in purity, without any taint of passion, but actually he acts out of passion. The reason for this is the as-yet-ungrounded purity of heart, or, more precisely, an undeveloped discernment between what is natural and what is foreign. When this comes, then the subtle and very subtle will become crude and very crude, for then the attention will be sharpened by experience and it will instruct the feelings of the heart to discern good and evil.

2) There are thoughts, desires and passions that come in the form of ambushes and short-lived upsets, and there are constant ones that go on for days, months and years. The first are easy, but should not be disdained. However, we must watch out not only for them but for their order. The enemy has a law—not to begin suddenly with a passion but with a thought, and to repeat the thought often. Though the first one may have been thrown out by wrath, the second or third one may be received with greater condescension, and then a desire is born and a passion; from this point it is one step to agreement and action. Continual thoughts are onerous and murderous. To them more than others belongs the name *tempting*. Concerning them it is necessary to know that they are not from nature—although they are similar to it in character—but are always from the enemy. The Lord allows them with the special intention of purifying us, in order to test and confirm our devotion, faith and constancy, and to more intelligently create our inner man. Therefore we must cheerfully endure them, even if they are too grievous for a newly grace-filled heart. These are temptations such as blasphemy, despair, and unbelief. The main thing is to never incline towards them, never adopt them, and to keep the heart free from them, separating them from yourself and your freedom of thought and faith.

3) The thoughts that must be struggled with are not always bad; often they even appear good, and very often neutral. Concerning the bad ones there is one law—immediately kick them out. The other two must be thought over or discerned. Regarding the universally praised experience in discerning thoughts, that is, which ones to carry out and which ones to turn away, there can be no rule for this. Let everyone learn himself from his own experience, for we never meet a man whose rules always apply to us. It is better to do it this way: you have an established order of things—proceed in it, and everything

new that comes along, no matter how good it may appear, kick out. Even if a thought does not represent anything bad in and of itself or in its consequences, do not immediately incline towards it, but be patient for a time, so as not to do anything rash. Some have waited five years before carrying out a thought. The most important law is: do not trust your own reason and heart, and entrust every thought to your spiritual guide. Breaking this law has always been and still is the cause of great falls and delusions.

4) A bad thought tempts, but a good-appearing one deludes. Whoever is carried away by the first is considered to have sinned or fallen, but whoever is carried away by the second is in a state of delusion. Is it possible to portray all delusions in all their beginnings and characteristics? Their foremost characteristic is that a person assuredly considers himself to be something he is not—for example, called to teach others, capable of an extraordinary life, and so on. Their source is the very subtle thought, “I am something, and something not unimportant. . . .” The zero thinks of himself as something. The enemy clings to this very subtle pride and ensnares the man. Incidentally, every subtle bad thought unnoticed by us keeps us in delusion when we think that we are being led by a good and pious thought. In this light we could say that a minute does not go by when we are not in *prelest*; we literally walk among phantoms, ensnared by them in one form or another. This is because evil is still within us, it has not evaporated away, while goodness is on the outside; wherefore our eyes are virtually cloudy with condensation.

5) It is good initially to gather information about every individual thought, that is, to have an understanding of it—its origin, consequences and ways to expel it. This will be a provisions store, very handy in case of war—namely, when the thought is not expelled by hatred and it begins to bear fruit, tempting and convincing, and it is necessary to counter it with

something that disproves it. But in order to do this we must have a supply of thoughts. Regarding this the Holy Fathers chose *eight* chief passions and described examples of what anyone can use who seeks to counter them. These are not the exclusive objects of warfare, but only the main ones. We can find descriptions of other passions and rules concerning them in other writings. The richest collection of them can be found in St. John Climacus.

6) There are bodily thoughts, there are soul-related thoughts, and there are spiritual thoughts. It is obvious to anyone that they can all happen at once, but naturally the more noticeable ones at first are the bodily, while the soul-related and spiritual reveal themselves later. The struggle should shift or change its position accordingly. One should know this so that if he has conquered the body, for example, he would not become careless from a feeling of safety, because he could then be conquered through the soul; and the placid soul could be struck in spirit. In general, as long as there is breath the battle is not over, although it may quiet down, even for a long time.

7) St. Dorotheos says: "There are those who act passionately, those who war with passions, and those who conquer them."<sup>1</sup> The first are sinning, the second are beginning to purify themselves, and the third are close to passionlessness. The more decisively one opposes a passion—not allowing it even a thought, much less a desire or delighting in it, uprooting quickly from the heart any of these that have entered in, and always introducing a contrary feeling—all the more quickly will he attain purity. The more yielding or condescending one is to himself, the longer the business goes on with uneven stops and starts. This is supported by self-pity, or not separating oneself

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1. See *Dorotheos of Gaza, Discourses and Sayings*, trans. Eric P. Wheeler (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1977), p. 167. This translation is slightly different.

from passions. By pitying himself the person coddles the real enemy and becomes his own enemy.

8) The result of warfare can be a mind free of thoughts, a heart free of passions, and a will free of tendencies. When this develops, the person has achieved passionlessness. His inner being becomes a clear mirror that reflects spiritual things.

9) Mental warfare with thoughts, lusts and passions should not be considered the exclusive means that discount and replace all others for cleansing our impurities, regardless of all its decisive necessity, inevitability and subjugating power. It should unbreakably be connected with *active warring with the passions*, or uprooting, extinguishing, and removing them by opposite activity. The reason for this is that passionateness has penetrated our powers, and it has penetrated because we have acted passionately. Every passionate act has inserted its bit of passionateness into our powers, and all of our actions collectively have filled our powers with passions like water in a sponge, or like an odor in a garment.

Consequently, in order to squeeze this passionateness out again we must use actions opposite to it, so that every act that inserts itself into the powers would squeeze out its corresponding bit of passionateness. Many such acts will squeeze out the entire passion. If this method is used in the proper way, it is so powerful that after using it several times you will already experience a diminishing of the passions, a lightness and freedom, and a certain light in the soul. Mental warfare alone casts passions out of the consciousness; however, the passion is still alive, just hidden. Contrary actions, however, crush the head of the serpent. Nevertheless, this does not mean that you can cease your mental warfare at the same time. Mental warfare should continue inseparably from the other activity, otherwise it can remain completely fruitless and can even multiply rather than diminish the passions, because one action contrary to one

passion can be attended by another passion. For example, vainglory can attend fasting. If you are not aware of this, then in spite of all your exertion there will be no fruit. Mental warfare in connection with active warfare, striking the passion from within and without, destroys it just as quickly as any enemy surrounded and attacked from the rear as well as the front.

10) In this active self-correction the familiar order and rule should be observed; and when building this structure attention should be given to the nature of passionateness in general, to one's character, and to the good works recalled in the applied activity. In the first case we should aim at the chief passions: love of pleasure, possessiveness and high-mindedness. Thus we must exercise ourselves in self-directed wrath and cruelty, in diminishing our possessions and destroying our things, in submitting ourselves to the authority of others, or considering ourselves to be nothing (see St. Barsanuphius). The saints, who actively strove to purify themselves, always saw this kind of activity as being on the first level. On the second level is one's main passion. This main passion shows itself at conversion, when one comes to know his sinfulness and repents. When a vow is made not to sin, this passion is held foremost in the attention.

Therefore even after conversion this main passion should be the closest object of counter-activity against sin that lives within us. It draws all passions to itself, just as it binds them near itself, or gives them a point of support. Other passions may be revealed in no other way than by weakening and overcoming this main one, and then unravelling them together. All forces should be armed against it from the first, especially since at the outset there is much hatred for it, which provides the strength to oppose it. And the initial passions cannot be subdued without subduing this one first. In the third respect the order of virtuous works is self-apparent. It is precisely from the first that actions proceed

against the predominating passions, later against the source of passions, and then, when all are subdued, virtue remains free to seek out the residue of the enemy horde, according to its own judgment, but more so according to its inner promptings. The passion that comes alive and shows itself is the one that should be warred against first.

These are the aims of the struggle, and they should be worked on according to the known law. Besides observing the order shown above, in your opposition itself there should be graduality and evenness, so that you do not run from one thing to another like one distracted. There will be no true fruit, and arrogance will be sown. The more decisively and energetically you act, the closer you will be to an end and to peace. Endure in the work begun until fruit appears, for the end crowns the work. And the laborer should observe what experience shows him. It seems to go like this: right after conversion there is an active war with the passions; right after that or together with it is inner struggle. Then later on they are both mutually strengthened and increased—as the inner struggle grows, so does the outer struggle, and as the outer struggle grows, so does the inner; finally, when both are sufficiently strong, thoughts come to the person about ascetic labors and works that decisively extinguish the passions, and cut them off at the root. Great ascetic labors and works should not be taken up on your own, nor should you advise them to others. You should act step by step, gradually growing and building strength, so that you will have the ability and strength to do it as the work increases. Otherwise your work will resemble a new patch on an old garment. The need for asceticism should come from within, just as medical treatment is sometimes more accurately and effectively determined by the patient's own urges and sensitivity.

11) The mental and active struggle with passions is fierce by itself; but it goes incomparably more successfully, fruitfully

and quickly when it is conducted under someone else's guidance. You may not always see the enemy in mental warfare, nor will you always be able to counteract him and preserve your zeal and determination, and, mainly, in both cases you will not be able to have one plan or preliminary sketch to refer to in your struggle. This is absolutely impossible to do by yourself. We all need someone to see our present and future from the outside.

Therefore entrusting yourself to a guide should be considered the best and most decisive means for correcting yourself. A guide uses on us and in us the same method: active/mental warfare; but, most importantly, he will use it according to his own judgment, his own outline, taking into consideration the goals, paths and crossroads. Thus, whoever desires and seeks purification, fervently pray to the Lord to find you a father and guide, and once you have found him, tell him everything about yourself that you know and see. Then devote yourself to him; commit to him everything internal and external. Give it to him like unrefined material, so that he would build from it a house of the Lord, a new man. Having done this, cast aside all care for yourself and take shelter under your father's wing. Let him lead you where and how he will; let him direct you to do what, when and where he will. Our part is to submit to him uncritically, without thinking it over, in faith and readiness, totally revealing to him our conscience or knowledge of our thoughts, desires, passions, deeds, and words—everything we do and whatever happens to us. This will enable him to see where we are and in what state we are inwardly, and will provide him a corresponding basis for counsel and for assigning us some work.<sup>1</sup>

Revelation of thoughts and submission to a father is the most conclusive uprooter of passion and vanquisher of demons. Every time something is revealed and the prescription based on

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1. The whole book of St. Barsanuphius consists of this.

the revelation is applied, it is the same as cleansing the wounds and changing a plaster. An effective treatment! The one who has revealed his thoughts casts out all uncleanness and through obedience then takes on a pure, new treasure—a healing food and pure juice. He is like one who has vomited out bad food, then takes in what is good. But most importantly, this cuts off passion at the very root—namely, egotism, the “I.” Whoever conducts warfare with himself is conducting it *himself*, and while trying to work against egotism he is in a way feeding it. With a guide our “I” and its will entirely disappear at the outset, and together with it the passions lose all support. Now they approach and act without any order, in confusion. Even so, their evil intent is outsmarted and made ineffectual by being out in the open. In general, this is a powerful means of killing the passions and brings one quickly to purity.

All the experience of the Fathers is included here, and there are countless examples. We must also note that the sooner you find a guide after conversion the better. Then zeal is alive and ready for anything, and a wise director can do anything with it, especially as long as self-directed activity has not developed, which creates stubbornness, mistrust, criticism and a tendency to correct. Whoever is already sick with these infirmities and has chosen a guide should first be healed by him, in order to achieve the rank of a good son who is capable of being educated. It is a disaster when a soul is accustomed to doing everything according to its own reasoning and desire.

12) Finally, a consummate cleansing of our entire make-up, a purification by fire, is carried out by the Lord Himself. This happens specifically from the outside by sorrows, and from the inside by tears. It cannot be said that these purifying agents only appear at the end and never before. No, they begin from the very first and accompany a person in the form of various unpleasant experiences and humblings of the heart, and the

more a man grows the more they intensify. But the Lord brings them on, allowing them, as if blessing them for our own good during the course of our inner and outer affairs. Towards the end He intentionally devises them, gives us tears, and brings sorrows—either all at once or one after another, first one or another, and even one for one person and another for another. Sorrows are the fire and tears are water. This is the Baptism by *fire* and *water*. St. Isaac the Syrian writes that this is portrayed by the lifting onto the Cross, or the final crucifixion of the outer man. This minute, as they say, is the time of great trial, like the one experienced by Abraham who brought his son as a sacrifice. In the mind is darkness, in the heart is inconsolable torment; above is the expectation of wrath, below is ready hell. The person sees himself perishing, hanging above the abyss. Some leave here triumphantly, others fall and return to the beginning in order to ascend this hill again. Whoever has climbed this rung, like ascending to heaven, is no longer earthly but heavenly; they are possessed of the Divine Spirit and are carried by it like the wheel in Ezekiel's vision. God is moving within them. Their state is inaccessible to thought. This state can only be known by experience, and that is why those who have experienced it do not speak of it—this would not be expedient, and would perhaps be even harmful.

*Other methods of purification:  
sorrows and unpleasant situations devised by God*

This is how it is at the end. Until this time, side by side with other methods as a most powerful means of purification should be constant sorrows and unpleasant situations devised by God, and a spirit of contrition, also given by Him. It is equal to a spiritual director in power, and in the absence of one, it can sufficiently replace him; in fact it does replace him for the person who is believing and humble. For in this case God Himself is

the guide, and He is undoubtedly wiser than a man. St. Isaac the Syrian portrays in detail with what gradualness the Lord leads the man being purified through more and more purifying sorrows, and how He warms the spirit of contrition in him. On our part is demanded only faith in God's providence and a ready, joyful, thankful receptivity of everything He sends. A lack of this takes away all the purifying power from sorrowful events, and does not allow it to penetrate to the heart and depth. This is in regard to sorrows.

Contrition requires attentive knowledge of our sins and disturbances, through observance of ourselves and what goes on within us, then frequent Confession with sincere repentance and grieving. Without external sorrows it is difficult for a person to stand up against pride and self-opinion; and without contrition, how could we possibly escape the inner egotism of pharisaical self-righteousness?<sup>1</sup> Whoever does not have these is considered by the Apostle to be adulterous. Because external sorrows are not within our power to produce but in God's hands, out of mistrust of our own strength to withstand them we must take care not to ask for them. Just the same, we should not be careless about contrition. The greater half of it is in our hands, and it is not forbidden to pray about it.

Thus, force yourself with all the wherewithal and wisdom you have. Humble yourself as often as possible before God in repentance, falling down before Him and praying for mercy. Seeing your labor, He will grant ceaseless contrition and, if necessary, an abundance of tears by which the face of your soul will be washed and finally become completely clean. Success should not lead to self-reliance and self-praise, but to caution—perhaps the appearance of success actually means that the Lord has already abandoned you as something unneeded. It should rather lead to great

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1. External sorrows, tears and contrition are praised throughout St. Isaac the Syrian's homilies.

zeal for heartfelt contrition, which is a sacrifice always acceptable to God. It could even be said that when you do not have external sorrow, then sorrow inwardly, for God calls you to this. By the way, the reverse is also true, that God sends consolations to whoever has external sorrows—moments of exalted joy that make you forget your sorrows, heal your wounds, and render grief impossible. There may or may not be tears with this. The main thing is grieving before God about your impurity.

### *Conclusion*

These are all the methods by which the passions are uprooted from us—either by our own mental labor or by our guides, or by the Lord Himself. It has already been noted that without inner mental warfare, external warfare cannot be successful. The same could be said of warfare under the direction of a guide, as well as of providential purification. It follows that inner warfare should be unceasing and unchanging. It is not so powerful by itself; but when it is not present, all other methods are ineffective and not beneficial. “Doers,” sufferers, weepers and people in obedience have perished and still perish from insufficient inner warfare or guarding of the mind. If you remember all the while what was said before about the application of inner work, namely, that in it lies the goal and power of external work, then the full meaning of inner work is revealed in all its power, and anyone can see that it is the outgrowth, foundation and goal of all asceticism. All of our work can be abbreviated to the following formula: having gathered yourself within, arise in spiritual consciousness and activity of life and go forth with this disposition along the blueprint of external activity under the direction of a guide or of Providence. With ever-austere and energetic attention observe and follow everything that goes on inside yourself. As soon as a passionate upsurge is born, drive it away and vanquish it, mentally and

actively, not forgetting to rekindle in yourself a spirit of contrition and grief over your sins.

All the ascetic's attention should be focused on this, so that in laboring ascetically he would not become scattered, or become as it were bound or girded about by his own thoughts. Proceeding in such inner concentration and guarding of the heart means proceeding in soberness, and the science of this is the science of soberness. Now we can understand why all ascetics considered soberness to be the chief of all the ascetic virtues, and why he who does not have it is considered fruitless. That is why it should be particularly emphasized. We have already spoken of it, but that is only the beginning. It has been mentioned before in order to show that one should go forth to the activity of self-opposition and self-forcing in no other way than from the inside out, or better, to proceed in it inwardly confirmed. Now we will take the same point and apply it to our heavenward ascent, for this is our goal, while all external work is the means. That is, we must show: the essential pull of the ascetically laboring spirit towards God, the conditions for quickly coming nearer to Him, and the state of one who has become near—or, better to say, of one who is capable of this, for nearness itself comes from God.

## Chapter Eight

### *The Beginning of Ascent Towards Living Communion with God*

Having confirmed himself inwardly, the convert directs all the strength of his zeal towards the business of correcting himself from impurity and passions, to the freeing of his powers and strengthening them in God-pleasing activities. This work swallows all of his attention, labors and time. According to the extent to which he has accustomed himself to this activity, as well as the ordering and organization of his inward state, he will naturally go more and more within himself, concentrating within and placing a beginning of unceasing inner concentration. This is the goal of primary asceticism: entering within oneself.

At the same time that the person begins to become firm in himself, little by little is revealed to him the main goal that he should be seeking and which had been previously hidden behind a multitude of activities. But according to our measure of estrangement from the realm of the passions, that goal naturally appears as the main striving and longing of our spirit, and all labor is undertaken in order to widen its circle. This goal and striving is: longing for God as the highest good. It is only possible under the condition that the sweetness of life in God is sensed, or there has been experienced a taste of how good God is—and that is why it does not come all at once. At first man is covered with fear; he serves like a slave, out of a duty and obligation he became aware of at the moment of his awakening. Then the fear subsides and, without disappearing, gives way to the sweetness of labor for the Lord and a pleasant feeling connected with it. This is the beginning of the soul's coming

alive to God, the ripening of its bright goal. Once this yearning appears, it begins to grow by itself within that structure in which it was born. Nevertheless, one should not wait for it to come in order to begin working. No, the person himself should work in the way set forth previously in order to more speedily unfold this longing. Most of the inner-applied activity is prescribed to this end. However, all such labor, to the extent that it is done without breaking inner concentration, is capable of aiding the ascetic in this yearning, of speeding his growth and strengthening him in the longing for everything from God and for directing everything to the glory of God. This activity should all be revealed in the spirit, otherwise it will remain fruitless; this is especially important because man cannot bear this burden without the inner strength that has been planted in him. Thus the foregoing ascetic labors can cultivate a yearning for God, but they need to be directed to that particular inner disposition that should be preserved during the labors themselves.

### I. ASCENT TO GOD

The mind's ascent to God, or its longing for Him, unfolds according to the degree the inner work is strengthened. It is germinated in this work like a seed, and ripens in it as in good soil. Therefore, in preserving this inner state in order to awaken a longing for God, one should:

1) Accustom the mind to living in the presence of God. Let him force himself to ceaselessly behold God, for He is near; and let him ascend to the feeling that he is seen by God. This practice is the doorway to God, the opening of heaven to the mind.

2) Do everything for the glory of God, and in no thing—either outwardly nor inwardly—intend anything other than this glory. It should be the measuring stick of every endeavor and place its seal on each one.

3) Do everything in an awareness of its being God's will; proceed in this will and submit to it in everything with the whole soul.<sup>1</sup> Acting according to God's will embraces everything that happens to a man. Whatever you do, force yourself to see that God wants this work from you; receive whatever you come across as from the hand of the Lord. An individual, a thing, an incident, joy, sorrow—everything should be received with joy, submitting yourself eagerly, peacefully, delightfully, regardless of its distastefulness.

By these spiritual activities the mind will see God more and more clearly, and confirm itself in the vision of God. You will become accustomed to mentally standing in the vision of God with His infinite perfections. This vision is given for the most part during prayerful times of standing in the presence of God, and ripens by means of this same prayerful standing in God's presence. It is the very beginning of ascent to living communion with God.

Concurrently with a vision of God is manifested and perfected a reverent worship of God in spirit, when the spirit falls down before Him, painfully crying out to Him in self-abnegation as His creature—not however in pain that he has been flouted and turned away, but with the awareness that God has accepted him, had mercy on him and been gracious unto him. This will result in an irrepressible inward pull and rapture to God.

Yearning for God is the goal. But at first it is only in intention, sought for. It should be made real, alive, like a natural pull that is sweet, earnest, and uncontrollable. Only this kind of pull can show that we are in our place, that God accepts us, that we are going to Him. When iron is drawn to a magnet it means that magnetic power has touched it. It is the same in the spiritual realm: it is only apparent that God is touching us when there is this living attraction—when the spirit disdains all and

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1. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 27:66 [Russian].

reaches for God, and is exalted in God. This does not happen at first. The zealot is completely turned in on himself, although it is for God. But this gazing upon God is only mental. The Lord has not yet given a taste of Himself, neither is the person even capable of tasting because he is impure. He serves God, so to say, untastingly. Then according to his degree of purity and correctness of heart, he begins to sense a sweetness in a God-pleasing life; he lives it eagerly and lovingly. It becomes the element of his delighting. The soul begins to turn away from everything as from the cold and draws toward God Who warms it. The seedling of this pull is planted in the zealous spirit by divine grace. It ripens by the descent and guidance of this grace, within the structure we have set forth, by which it is nourished, even beyond the knowledge of the doer himself.

Here is the sign of this birth: earnest, quiet, and unforced inner concentration before God accompanied by a feeling of reverence, fear, joy and the like. Before the spirit had to push itself within, and now it is established and stands there without leaving. The person is now happy to be there alone with God, away from all others, without paying attention to what goes on outside of him. He acquires the kingdom of God within himself, which is that *peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Rom. 14:17). Such an immersion in oneself, or immersion in God, is called mental silence or being taken up to God. This may come and go, but it should be made a permanent state, for it is the goal. God is in us when our spirit is truly in God, for this is not a mental communion but a living, silent, estranged-from-everything, immersion in God. Like a ray of sunlight carries away a drop of dew, so does the Lord enrapture the spirit that comes into contact with Him. *My spirit has been raptured* says the prophet. Many of the saints were in a state of unceasing exultation to God, and upon others the Spirit fell temporarily but often. Thus does the yearning for God, or joining with God, begin to ripen and

perfect itself through divine grace within anyone who seeks God sincerely, fervently and in good conscience.

The essential condition for this is purification of the heart so that it can accept God Who draws it to Himself: the pure in heart shall see God (cf. Matt. 5:8). Therefore all of the heretofore prescribed ascetic labors, exercises and works are necessary and indispensable to this preparation. Only they should all be carried out in the proper manner and specifically to this end. The most important thing for this is guarding the heart within, for the heart is the treasure house of a zealous spirit. The condition for true *podvigs*, practices and deeds is that they come from within, and success in battle comes only from within, for the best method for developing a yearning for God is internal. It follows that inner work is the central outgrowth of a spiritual, truly Christian life. Therefore the Holy Fathers consider it the only path to perfection. *Take ye heed, watch and pray* (Mk. 13:33), says the Lord. Soberness, or guarding of the heart, is the most important labor. Everything the Holy Fathers say is aimed at this—the heart is all-important, for whatever is in the heart will come out in deed.

The decisive step towards ascent to God, the very threshold of communion with God, is a perfect dedication of oneself to Him, after which God, rather than the person, becomes the doer. In what does all the power consist, or what are we seeking? Communion with God, so that God would dwell in us and begin to move in us, having as if put on our spirit like a garment; so that He would also guide our intellect, will and feelings; so that *whatsoever He desireth and doeth within us* would be His work; so that He would be the doer of everything in everything, and we would become His instruments, working with Him in thoughts, desires and feelings, in words and deeds. This is what the Lord seeks, the Master of all things, for He alone works everything in His creatures through His creatures. Every spirit that understands itself should also seek this.

The condition for this indwelling and reigning of God in us, or the acceptance of His acting in everything, is the renunciation of our own freedom. A free creature, according to his consciousness and determination, acts from his own self, but this should not be so. In the kingdom of God there should not be anyone acting from himself; God should be acting in everything. This cannot happen as long as freedom stands for itself—it denies and turns away God's power. This stubborn resistance to God's power will only cease when our free, or self-acting, individual will and activity fall down before Him; when we pronounce the resolute prayer: "Do Thou, O Lord, do in me as Thou wilt, for I am blind and weak."

In this moment the power of God enters the spirit of a man and begins its all-encompassing work. Thus, the condition for communion with God in us is the decisive dedication of ourselves to Him.

Dedicating ourselves to God is the most internal and precious act of our spirit. It is instantaneous just like everything else, but it is not instantly acquired. It ripens gradually, over a long or short period of time based on the Christian doer's capability and good sense. Its beginning is planted in the first conversion, for then the penitent, having made a vow, inevitably says: "I will flee evil and do good; only do Thou, O Lord, not leave me bereft of Thy grace-filled help." With this disposition the Christian steps into the field of ascetical labors and zealously works therein, with the expectation of God's help. But it is apparent that his zeal goes first, while God's help follows.

This is necessary also according to the beginner's mood, and by God's intention. The beginner wants to labor for the Lord's sake, to serve Him—and he labors. By this he develops a good hope and, as it were, a boldness to behold God. But it obviously should not remain this way. It is necessary that he not remain in his primary disposition, but, without slackening this same zeal,

he must submit himself to God, hearken to His call, and accustom himself to following His suggestions and attractions. The Lord mysteriously hints at this when he says to Peter: *When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not* (Jn. 21:18).

At first a man has zeal, but later says: "Thou Thyself O Lord, Who knoweth all things, work my salvation. I shall go as one bound whithersoever Thou willest." This is that act of resolute dedication to God. The first kind of activity is so noble and beautiful—and so fruitful! It is therefore able to attach one to itself forever. But beware of this, because it will be the same thing as sweating over ungrateful earth—much sand and rock, and no life. After moving away from it, one must strive to proceed towards dedication to God. True, it may grow by itself to a certain extent during the course of the first work. Nevertheless, one must tend this growth and facilitate it, or better, accept what has developed and grown. Then also it is God Who is the doer, for without Him we are nothing. But man says: "I chose it, I wanted it, I labored, and God helped." Wanting, choosing and labors are also good works and therefore godly; but man thinks that this accomplishment comes of his own power born of his efforts and exertion.

Thus, the inner ascent from zeal to zealous dedication to God is nothing other than the revelation and appearance to our consciousness of God's work in us, or the working of our salvation and purification. The zealot becomes enlightened about this reality through frequent failures met in spite of all his efforts, and unexpected and great successes met without particularly trying. Mistakes and falls are especially enlightening as they bereave us of grace. All of these bring a man to the thought and belief that he is nothing, while God and His all-mighty grace are everything.

This is the final point of preparation for the lesson of dedication to God. It is not possible unless the person comes to feel that he is nothing. The person can on his part apply the following: observing how different affairs and incidents come about in order to see the power of God in them; delving with strong faith into the conditions of justification to the point of crying out: *Thou who knowest all things, save me*; seeing the countless myriads of enemies, hidden paths, darkness before his face, perplexing crossroads, and God's hidden intentions. These mental preparations receive particular power from the doer, namely: giving away all possessions, subjecting oneself to common scorn (in foolishness-for-Christ), reclusion, desert-dwelling.

These are the turning points in life after which there is nowhere else to turn except to God. All such people commit themselves directly into the hands of God and are received by Him. In this case the aid of a guide is invaluable if he places the one entrusted to him, unbeknownst to him, in such circumstances from which he can escape only through God's invisible help. The ancient Fathers said: the guide should give novices opportunities to gain crowns. The feeling of one's nothingness and dedication to God unfolds best under constant sorrows and especially through extreme, providential crosses, which we have discussed above.

One who has dedicated himself to God, or one who has been vouchsafed this gift, begins to be a doer with God and abides in Him. Free will is not destroyed but still exists, for self-dedication is not a final, irrevocable act, but is constantly repeated. The person commits himself to God, and God receives him and works in him, or through his powers. In this is the life of our true and divine spirit. He who commits himself into God's hands receives something from God and acts according to what he receives. This is a living union, life in God, confirmation in Him of one's entire existence: the mind, heart and

will. It comes about according to one's dedication. But as this dedication grows gradually, even over the course of the first work, it is impossible while doing it not to be exalted to this state of God's acceptance and abiding in Him. And this is how it really is—it is itself exalted. But again, we are required to cooperate with it, or very speedily ripen. The field of communion with God, the realm in which it unfolds and grows, is mental spiritual prayer. One who prays abides in God, and consequently he is very ready and able for God to begin to abide in him. But this kind of prayer is not the same as just saying prayers. It is a special spiritual work, done only under direction, and ripening imperceptibly to the directed as well as to the director. In it, we could say, consists the final stage of the rules of asceticism.<sup>1</sup> For when this prayer comes and confirms itself, God is one with our spirit. The rules relate only to its inception, but what happens in it upon perfection is hidden, rendered invisible, like Moses behind the clouds.

## 2. LIVING COMMUNION WITH GOD OCCURS IN A STATE OF HESYCHIA, WHICH BRINGS PASSIONLESSNESS

Whoever has begun to experience these involuntary inner attractions and these raptures to God, and especially whoever has already dedicated himself to God and begun to experience unceasing prayer, is ready and able to begin hesychia. Only such a one is strong enough to bear this ascetic struggle and bring it to fruition. It is impossible to hold such a one in a coenobium and society with others.

What drove St. Arsenius the Great from people? This inner longing for God. "I love you," he said, "but I cannot be with God and with men." "The hesychast," says St. John Climacus, "is one who flees all men, though without hatred, just as another

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1. See St. Symeon the New Theologian.

hastens to them, though without enthusiasm; he does not wish to be hindered from partaking of the sweetness of God.”<sup>1</sup>

We shall present the following from *The Ladder* in order to better understand hesychia. There is external hesychia, as when one has left everyone and lives alone, and there is inner hesychia, as when one abides alone in spirit with God, not in a forced way but freely, just as the chest freely breathes and the eye freely sees. The two go together, but the first is impossible without the second. “A hesychast is one who strives to confine his incorporeal being within his bodily house.”<sup>2</sup> “The cell of the hesychast is the confines of the body; he has within a shrine of knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

Hesychia does not attract those who have not yet tasted the sweetness of God, and this sweetness cannot be tasted by one who has not conquered his passions. “He who is sick in soul from some passion and attempts stillness is like a man who has jumped from a ship into the sea and thinks that he will reach the shore safely on a plank.”<sup>4</sup>

“He who is still troubled by bad temper and conceit, by hypocrisy and remembrance of wrongs, should never dare to set foot on the way of stillness lest he become deranged and nothing else.”<sup>5</sup>

“I have seen hesychasts who insatiably nourished their flaming desire for God through stillness, generating fire by fire, love by love, desire by desire.”<sup>6</sup>

“The hesychast is an earthly image of an angel who, with the paper of love and letters of zeal, has freed his prayer from sloth and negligence. The hesychast is he who openly declares:

1. St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1978), 27:27, p. 201.

2. *Ibid.*, 27:6, p. 198.

3. *Ibid.*, 27:12, p. 199.

4. *Ibid.*, 27:13, p. 199.

5. *Ibid.*, 27:36, p. 203.

6. *Ibid.*, 27:16, p. 199.

*O God, ready is my heart* (Ps. 56:10). The hesychast is he who says: *I sleep, but my heart waketh* (Song of Songs v. 2)."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the hesychast is entirely occupied with being with the One Lord, with Whom he converses face to face, like as a favorite of the emperor speaks into his ear. This activity of the heart is surrounded and guarded by preserving stillness of thought. Good order of thoughts and an unplundered thought of Divinity comprise the existence of hesychia and disengagement from cares. "Take up your seat on a high place and watch, as only you know how, and then you will see in what manner, when, whence, how many and what kind of thieves come to enter and steal your cluster of grapes. When the watchman grows weary, he stands up and prays; and then he sits down again and courageously takes up his former task."<sup>2</sup>

He who loves blessed stillness experiences the activity of the immaterial powers and imitates their life. Throughout eternity they do not weary of praising the Creator. So he who has ascended the heaven of hesychia does not weary of singing the praises of the Creator.<sup>3</sup>

But neither earnest prayer nor inviolable activity of the heart can ever be achieved if the heart is not first completely disengaged from affairs. One cannot rightly practice these first two if he has not acquired the third, just as one who does not know the alphabet cannot study books. "A small hair disturbs the eye, and a small care ruins stillness."<sup>4</sup> "He who wishes to present his mind pure to God, and is agitated by cares, is like a man who has tied his legs tightly together and then expects to walk briskly."<sup>5</sup> Therefore he who desires true hesychia begins by

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1. Ibid., 27:17, p. 199.

2. Ibid., 27:22, p. 200.

3. Ibid., 27:28, p. 201.

4. Ibid., 27:51, p. 206.

5. Ibid., 27:53, p. 206.

dedicating himself to God and believing deeply in his heart that God takes care of us.

Only those who have united themselves to stillness in order to delight in the love of God and to quench the thirst of this love, drawn as they are to its sweetness, are true hesychasts. If such as these practice stillness sensibly, they will soon begin to taste of its fruits, which are: an undisturbed mind, pure thoughts, rapture to God, insatiable prayer, an inviolable guard, ceaseless tears and so on.

This is the inner pull towards stillness and sweet standing before God. The path to this requires purifying from the passions by means of all the ascetic labors that strengthen goodness and exhaust evil in us. The direct doorway to it is dedication of oneself to God, having disengaged oneself from all cares. Its essence is a completely undisturbed prayerful standing before God in the mind and heart, by which fire is added to fire.

The burning of the spirit from contact with God consummately purifies a man and leads him up to a state of passionlessness. Our nature melts in this fire like unrefined metal in the furnace, and it comes forth radiant with heavenly purity that makes him a ready dwelling place of God.

Indispensably waiting on the path to living communion with God is stillness. Even if it is not always the familiar image of ascetic life, it is always a state wherein inner concentration and deepening of spirit through the Divine Spirit leads to seraphic purity and burning love for God in God.

This fire is implanted at the moment of conversion and begins to work as soon as the person makes his vow and takes up his labor. But this is the primary warmth that sometimes comes and sometimes hides itself. It continues to work throughout his labors to purify the heart; otherwise he would not be able to endure these labors. But it cannot manifest in all its

power at first, due to the coldness of the passions that still dominate the man. It only appears in all its strength when the passions abate completely. The first warmth is similar to the burning of wet and soggy firewood, while the second warmth is like the burning of that same firewood after the fire has dried it out and begun to penetrate it throughout. To make another comparison, the first warmth is like the heating of water that contains ice—the warmth is present, but the water does not boil and will not boil until the ice melts. When the ice melts, the warmth penetrates the entire mass of water, heating it hotter and hotter. Then the water boils and is purified. That is what the second warmth is like. These last two images of fire's effect on matter portray the effect of spiritual burning on a man during the final stages of Christian perfection, leading up to perfect purity and passionlessness.

The material of the passions is destroyed when consumed by divine fire. And while this material is being uprooted and the soul purified, the passions all retire.<sup>1</sup>

This is the meaning of passionlessness, according to St. John Climacus: "Dispassion is the resurrection of the soul before the body."<sup>2</sup>

The resurrection of the soul should be called the exodus from the old man, namely, when the new man has come into being, in whom there is nothing left of the old man, according to the saying: *And I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you* (Ezekiel 36:26).<sup>3</sup>

This complete, but at the same time ever maturing, perfection of those who perfect themselves in the Lord so enlightens the mind and enraptures it from materiality that they are often taken up from physical life into heavenly visions.

1. Ibid., 26:63, p. 171.

2. Ibid., 29:4, p. 221.

3. *The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian*, Homily 37, p. 175.

The Apostle indicated dispassion when he wrote: *But we have the mind of Christ* (I Cor. 2:16). Also indicating dispassion was the Syrian ascetic who cried: "Weaken me with the waves of Thy grace!"<sup>1</sup>

He who is dispassionate toward all things that arouse and feed the passions has become insensitive to the point that they have no effect upon him at all, though they may appear before his very eyes. This is because he is wholly united to God. Though he enter a den of harlots he not only does not feel the movement of the passions, but even leads the harlot to a pure and ascetical life.

Whoever has been vouchsafed to be in this state, though still covered with corruptible flesh, is a temple of the living God, Who directs and instructs him in all his words, deeds and thoughts. Because of his inner enlightenment, he comes to know the will of the Lord as though he hears a certain voice, and, being above all human teaching, says: *when I come and appear before the face of God*, for I am no longer able to bear the effects of His desire, but I seek that immortal goodness which Thou didst grant me before I fell into corruption. But why say more! The dispassionate can say *not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:20), *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Orthodox faith* (II Tim. 4:7).

### 3. DISPASSION IS THE HEAVENLY PALACE OF THE HEAVENLY KING

This at last is communion with God and God's indwelling—the final goal of man's spirit's search, when he abides in God and God in him. Now is finally fulfilled the Lord's good will and prayer, so that just as He is in the Father and the Father is in him, every believer would be one with Him (cf. Jn. 17:21). Now is fulfilled the consolation of His assurance: that whoever keeps His

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1. St. Ephraim the Syrian.

commandments loves His Father, and He and His Father *will come and make their abode in him* (cf. Jn. 14:21). Fulfilled is the Apostolic determination of those who die in dispassion, that their life *is hid with Christ in God* (cf. Col. 3:3). Such are temples of God, and the spirit of God lives in them (cf. I Cor. 3:16).

Those who have achieved this are God's mystics, and their state is the same as that of the Apostles, because they too apprehend God's will, hearing it as a certain inner voice,<sup>1</sup> and having completely united their senses with God, they mystically learn His words from Him.<sup>2</sup> Such a state is indicated by the flaming love by which they boldly proclaim: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (Rom. 8:35). And love is the bestower of prophecy, the cause of wonder-working, an abyss of illumination, a fountain of divine fire; in the measure that it wells up, it inflames the thirsty soul.<sup>3</sup>

Inasmuch as such a state is the fruit of stillness when practiced sensibly, God does not leave all hesychasts in hesychia forever. Those who have attained dispassion through stillness, and through dispassion have been made worthy of most sincere communion with God and God's indwelling, are dispatched from stillness to serve those seeking salvation. They serve these seekers, enlightening them, guiding them, working miracles. St. Anthony the Great and St. John in the desert both heard a voice amidst their stillness that led them out to labors of guiding others along the path to salvation—and we all know the fruits of their labors. The same thing occurred with many others.

We know nothing higher on earth than this Apostolic state. Here we conclude our overview of the order of a God-pleasing life.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cf., *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 29:11, p. 223.

2. Ibid., 30:21, p. 227.

3. Ibid., 30:35, p. 228.

4. Those who desire to learn about the final stages of Christian perfection should read St. Isaac the Syrian, *The Ladder*, and the *Philokalia*.

## Chapter Nine

### *Lessons by Our Holy Father John Chrysostom on Education*<sup>1</sup>

1. Having children is a matter of nature; but raising them and educating them in the virtues is a matter of mind and will.

2. By the duty of raising them I mean not only not allowing them to die of hunger, as people often limit their obligation toward their children to doing. For this, is needed neither books nor rubrics, for nature speaks of it quite loudly. I am speaking of the concern for educating children's hearts in virtues and piety—a sacred duty which cannot be transgressed without thereby becoming guilty of the children's murder, in a certain sense.

3. This obligation belongs to fathers as well as mothers. There are fathers who spare nothing in order to secure for their children teachers of pleasure and to pander to their cravings as wealthy heirs. But so that the children would be Christians, so that they would exercise themselves in piety, is of little need to them. O criminal blindness! It is this very crude inattention that is responsible for all the disorder that causes our society to groan. Let us suppose that you have acquired large property for them. However, if they do not know how to conduct themselves sensibly this property will not last long with them. It will be squandered; it will perish with its owners, and will be their most grievous inheritance.

4. Your children will always be sufficiently wealthy if they receive from you a good upbringing that is able to order their moral life and behavior. Thus, strive not to make them rich, but

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1. The first part is taken from *Christian Reading*, 1838, part 4, pp. 242-253, which was taken from vol. 5, *Benedict in Mund; vidua Eligatur*.

rather to make them pious masters of their passions, rich in virtues. Teach them not to think up illusory needs, reckoning their worth according to worldly standards. Attentively watch their deeds, their acquaintances and their attachments—and do not expect any mercy from God if you do not fulfill this duty.

5. If the Apostle commands us to take more care for others than for ourselves, and if we are guilty when we neglect their benefit, then is it not a much greater guilt when this concerns those who are so near to us? “Was it not I,” the Lord will say to us, “Who gave place to these children in your family? Was it not I Who entrusted them to your care, making you masters, guardians and judges over them? I gave you complete authority over them; I placed all care for their upbringing in your hands. You will tell me that they did not want to bend their necks to the yoke, that they threw it off. But this should have been averted from the very beginning; you should have mastered their first impressions, placed the reigns on them before they had the power to break away from them. You should have bent their young souls under the yoke of duty, accustomed them to it, educated them in accordance with it, bound the wound when it first opened. You should have uprooted the tares when they first began to sprout around the young plant, and not have waited until they put down deep roots, when the passions have become uncontrollable and untamable through gradual strengthening in their formation.

6. The wise Sirach says: *Hast thou children? instruct them, and bow down their neck from their youth* (Sir. 7:25). But the Lord does not only prompt us with this command through the lips of His prophet; he even takes our side, supporting the fulfillment of this commandment with the fearsome punishment that awaits those children who do not submit to the authority of their parents: *Every man who shall speak evil of his father or of his mother, let him die the death* (Lev. 20:9). He

punishes with death those who become guilty before you, and you look tepidly at these sins that they commit against the highest possible authority. They are rebelling against God Himself, transgressing His commandments, and you look at this without the least displeasure, without the slightest criticism of your children. What does He have to lose from their offense? Nothing. But you, why should you not fear for your own selves? For whoever abandons the Lord will never respect either his own father or himself.

7. Children who are submissive and faithful to God in their obedience to His law will have found an abundant source of happiness, even in this temporal life. A poor man with Christian morals inspires respect and love from others. Meanwhile, with an evil and depraved heart, all your riches will not save you from the displeasure and aversion of everyone around you.

8. The youth to whom you give a good upbringing will not only enjoy general respect, he will also become dearer to you yourselves! Your attachment to him will not be a mere natural attraction—it will be the fruit of his virtue. For this, during your old age, you will in turn receive from him the services of his filial love. He will be your support. For just as those who do not revere the Lord also have contempt for their own parents, those who revere God, the Father of all men, will have every respect for those who gave them life.

9. Let us suppose that you fulfill the commandment of the law in every other respect, but being unfaithful in this one commandment you will be severely punished. Listen to this proof taken from the history of one ancient people. You will immediately see to what terrible punishment those fathers subject themselves who neglect their children's upbringing. Among the Jews was one priest who was respected for his meek character. His name was Eli. This priest had two sons who had given themselves over to every vice. The father did not concern

himself with this and paid little attention, or if their depravity, having reached the limit, forced him to reproach them, he did it without the necessary fervor and authority. He should have punished them severely, thrown them out of his presence, taken strict measures in order to put a stop to the outrage. He did nothing of the sort. He limited himself to giving them a form of admonition: *Nay, my sons, for the report which I hear is not good; do not so* (I Kings 2:24). Is this what he should have said? They offended the One to Whom they owe their existence, and he still accepts them as part of his family? His admonition was useless and vain. No, this demanded not an admonition, but a strong lesson, severe torments, a treatment as strong as the evil. He should have used fear to root their young hearts out of this blindness. An admonition! Eli's sons had no lack of these. O useless words! O criminal meekness by which they became victims! A war began, and the wretches became the spoils of their enemy. When their father learned of their misfortune, he fell to the ground and, smashing his head, died.

10. I have just told you that fathers who do not take care to give their children a Christian upbringing are murderers of their own children. Is it not true? Who should Eli blame for his sons' death? Himself. True, the enemy's sword slew them, but the neglect of their false father directed the blow. Abandoned by heavenly help, they appeared naked against the arrows of the Philistines. The father destroyed himself and them. Meanwhile, we see the same thing before ourselves daily. How many parents there are who do not want to take upon themselves this labor of correcting their unsubmitive and unruly children! They are as if afraid to upset their children by reigning in with stern words the vicious tendencies to which they have submitted themselves. What is the outcome? Their disorder increases; their impunity leads them to criminal offenses; they are brought to trial; and the wretches die at the hands of the executioner. You refused

your personal rights over them and committed them to the severity of civil punishment, and human justice wielded its harsh rights over them. You are afraid to humiliate them with some light punishment in your presence; but what horrible dishonor shall befall you when your son is no longer around, and the father, hounded everywhere by accusing glares, no longer dares to show himself anywhere.

11. Therefore I beg you to take care for the good upbringing of your children. First of all think of the salvation of their souls. God has placed you as the heads and teachers over your families. It is your duty to watch, and to watch continually after the behavior of your wife and children. Listen to St. Paul. If your wives, says he, want to learn anything, let them learn it from their husbands. Educate your children in the teaching and instructions of the Lord (cf. I Cor. 14:35, Eph. 6:4). Imitate Job, who continually looked after his children and offered sacrifices for mercy towards any secret misdeeds they might have committed (Job 1:5). Imitate Abraham, who concerned himself less with the acquisition of riches than with the keeping of God's law by every member of his house, and about whom the Lord witnessed: *For I know that he will order his sons, and his house after him, and they will keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment* (Gen. 18:19). David, when he was near death, wanted to leave Solomon the surest inheritance; he called him to himself in order to repeat the following wise instructions: *that the Lord may confirm his word which he spoke, saying, if thy children shall take heed to their way to walk before me in truth with all their heart, I promise thee, saying, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel* (III Kings 2:4). These are the examples that we should follow during our lives and with our final breath!

12. If good fathers would strive to give their children a good upbringing, then we would need neither laws, judges, courts, nor punishments. Executioners exist because we have no morality.

13. We spare neither labors nor means in order to teach our children secular sciences, so that they can serve well the earthly authorities. Only the knowledge of the holy Faith, the service of the Heavenly King are a matter of indifference to us. We allow them to attend spectacles, but we care little whether they go to Church and stand within it reverently. We demand an account from them of what they learned in their secular institutes—why do we not demand an account from them of what they heard in the Lord's house?<sup>1</sup>

14. Having made the necessary exhortation to children, the Apostle addresses himself also to the fathers, saying: *You fathers... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Eph 6:4). Do you want your child to be obedient? Then from the beginning bring him up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Do not think that it is not necessary for a child to listen to the Scriptures; the first thing he will hear from them will be, *Honor thy father and mother* (Ex. 20:12), and immediately you will begin to reap your reward. Do not say, "Bible-reading is for monks; am I turning my child into a monk?" No! It is not necessary for him to be a monk. Make him into a Christian! Why are you afraid of something so good? It is necessary for everyone to know Scriptural teachings, and this is especially true for children. Not knowing divine truths, they do know something of the pagan stories, learning from them about wondrous lives, about heroes in their sight, who served the passions and were afraid of death. Such an example is Achilles, inconsolably dying for his mistress; another who gives himself over to drunkenness, and on and on! Therefore your

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1. The following paragraphs were taken in part from the Twenty-first Homily on the Epistle to the Ephesians, *On Marriage and Family Life*, translated by Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), pp. 67-72.

children need remedies for these things, in the retribution and teachings of the Lord.

15. We are so concerned with our children's schooling; if only we were equally zealous in bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord! And then we wonder why we reap such bitter fruit when we have raised our children to be insolent, licentious, impious, and vulgar. May this never happen; instead, let us heed the blessed Paul's admonition to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Let us give them a pattern to imitate; from their earliest years let us teach them to study the Bible. "He repeats this over and over again," you say, "we are sick of listening to it." Never will I stop doing my duty!

16. Why do you refuse to imitate the holy men and women of old? Tell me! Especially you mothers; think of Hannah's example; look at what she did. She brought Samuel, her only son, to the temple, when he was only an infant! Who among you would not rather have a son like Samuel than one who became king of the whole world ten thousand times over? "But it is impossible," you say, "for my son ever to become as great as he." Why is it impossible? Because you *do not* really want it; you will not entrust him to the One who is able to make him great. And who is that? God. Hannah commended Samuel into the hands of God. The high priest Eli had no real ability to form him, since he even failed to form his own children. It was the mother's faith and zeal that made everything possible. He was her first and only child. She did not know if she would ever have another, yet she never said, "I will wait until he grows up; he should have a taste of worldly pleasures, during his childhood at least." No; she rejected all these thoughts, for she had only one object: how from the very beginning she could dedicate her heart's delight to God. Be ashamed, you men, at the wisdom of this woman. She gave Samuel to God, and with God she left

him, and thus her marriage was blessed more than ever, because her first concern was for spiritual things. She dedicated the first-fruits of her womb to God and obtained many more children in return. She saw Samuel honored even in this life. If men return honor for honor, will not God do much more? He gives so much even to those who do not honor Him at all! How long are we to be mere lumps of flesh? How long will we cling to the ground? Let everything take second place to our care for our children, our bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have greater wealth and glory than riches can provide. If a child learns a trade, or is highly educated for a lucrative profession, all this is nothing compared to the art of detachment from riches; if you want to make your child rich, teach him this. He is truly rich who does not desire great possessions, or surround himself with wealth, but who requires nothing.

This is how to discipline and teach your child; this is the greatest of riches. Do not worry about giving him an influential reputation for worldly wisdom, but ponder deeply how you can teach him to think lightly of this life's passing glories; thus he will become truly renowned and glorious. Whether you are poor or rich, you can do this; these lessons are not learned from a skillful professor, but from divine revelation. Do not ask how he can enjoy a long life here, but how he can enjoy an infinite and eternal life in the age to come. Give him the great things, not the little things. Do not strive to make him a clever orator, but teach him to love true wisdom. He will not suffer if he lacks clever words; but if he lacks wisdom, all the rhetoric in the world cannot help him. A pattern of life is what is needed, not empty speeches; character, not cleverness; deeds, not words. These things will secure the Kingdom and bestow God's blessing. Do not sharpen his tongue, but purify his soul. I do not mean that

worldly learning is worthless and to be ignored, but it should not be an exclusive preoccupation.

18. Do not think that only monks need to learn the Bible; children about to go out into the world stand in greater need of Scriptural knowledge. A man who never travels by sea does not need to know how to equip a ship, or where to find a pilot or a crew, but a sailor has to know all these things. The same applies to the monk and the man of this world. The monk lives an untroubled life in a calm harbor, removed from every storm, while the worldly man is always sailing the ocean, battling innumerable tempests. Although he himself (the worldly man) may not have any need (of instruction), it may be necessary to him in case he must stop the mouths of others.

19. Whoever enjoys great respect in the present life needs such an education even more. If anyone should serve in the king's palace—there, are many hellenic philosophers, people who are haughty over their temporary glory. There, everyone is puffed up and arrogant; and if anyone is not, he strives to become so. How would it be if your son should enter this company as the best possible doctor with his medical instruments, able to tame the arrogance of each one, approaching each one and discoursing, treating the sick body, applying the plaster of Scripture, disseminating wisdom-loving evidence?

20. With whom shall a monk speak? With the walls of his cell, or his blanket? With the desert or the bushes? With the hills or the trees?! Thus he does not need the same teaching, in spite of the fact that he is striving to perfect himself in it—not in order to teach others, but to teach himself. What about those people who live in this (worldly) life? They are in total need of this teaching; for the worldly man is presented with more causes of temptation than the monk. And if you please, know, that with such an education a man will be the most pleasant of men. All will begin to respect him when they see that he is not irascible

and seeking after power. Know this, educate your children in the discipline and knowledge of the Lord. And if some one be poor? Let him remain poor. It will never be the worse for him if he does not serve among the courtiers; to the contrary, he could become the object of wonder. For if the hellenists—who are a dime a dozen, cynics—who are accepted by those who cost a dime a dozen, philosophers (meaning Greek philosophers), or rather, philosophers only in name, dressed up in mantles with flowing hair, are able to put many to shame; cannot the true lover of wisdom do much more? If a false appearance alone, the mere shadow of philosophy can so exalt a man, what can be said of the love for true and enlightened wisdom? Will not everyone begin to respect such a man? Will they not entrust to him without reservation their houses, wives and children?

21. Tell me, which trees are best? Do we not prefer those that are inwardly strong, and are not injured by rainstorms, or hail, or gusts of wind, or by any sort of harsh weather, but stand exposed to them all without fences or garden to protect them? He who truly loves wisdom is like this, and his riches we have already described. He has nothing, yet has everything; he has everything, yet has nothing. A fence does not provide internal strength, nor is a wall a natural support; they provide only artificial protection. What is a strong body? Is it not one that is healthy, whether hungry or surfeited, cold or warm? Or is it something that is dependent upon restaurants, tailors, merchants, and physicians for health? The truly rich man, the true lover of wisdom, needs none of these things, and that is why the blessed Apostle admonishes us to bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

22. Therefore wealth is a hindrance, because it leaves us unprepared for the hardships of life. So, let us raise our children in such a way that they can face any trouble, and not be surprised when difficulties come; let us bring them up in the discipline

and instruction of the Lord. Great will be the reward in store for us, for if artists who make statues and paint portraits of kings are held in high esteem, will not God bless ten thousand times more those who reveal and beautify His royal image (for man is the image of God)? When we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving (all these are attributes of God), to be generous, to love their fellow men, to regard this present age as nothing, we instill virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them. This, then, is our task: to educate both ourselves and our children in godliness; otherwise what answer will we have before Christ's judgment-seat? If a man with unruly children is unworthy to be a bishop, how can he be worthy of the kingdom of heaven? What do you think? If we have an undisciplined wife, or unruly children, shall we not have to render an account for them? Yes, if this happens it is because we did not take strict measures as we should have.<sup>1</sup>

23. Neglect of children is one of the greatest sins, and it is the highest degree of impiety. And so that I might not seem to draw an unfounded conclusion, I will demonstrate this with experience itself, so that you will know that even though we may have everything we need, and all is beautifully arranged, we will nevertheless be subjected to the most extreme punishment if we do not take care for the salvation of our children. You know the story of the high priest Eli, written in the Holy Scriptures. He was an aged, well-known priest, who governed the Jewish nation faultlessly for twenty years, living during a time that did not demand great strictness (in life). Nevertheless he could not justify himself, but to the contrary, perished horribly and disastrously because he did not concern himself enough with his sons' behavior; and the guilt of his neglect, like a great fault, overshadowed all of Eli's qualities and good works. How then shall

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1. The following is taken from the Homily of St. John Chrysostom in *Christian Reading* [in Russian], vol. 3, p. 145.

we be judged, who live in a time full of much more love of wisdom, but who do not have his virtues? We not only do not instruct our children ourselves, but even take revenge upon those who wish to do so, and treat our own children more cruelly than any barbarians. For the cruelty of the barbarians leads only to slavery, to the razing and captivity of one's homeland—in general it is only a physical misfortune. But you enslave the very soul and, binding it like some kind of captive, thus commit it to the evil and fierce demons and their passions. You do this and nothing else when you yourselves do not prompt your children in anything spiritual, nor let anyone else do so.

24. Let no one say to me that there are many besides Eli who neglect their children but have not endured anything like what Eli endured. No—many have, and many endure even a good deal more for that very sin. For what is the cause of untimely death? What is the cause of our serious and long illness and of our children's? What is the cause of losses, misfortunes, distress, the innumerable multitude of evils? Is it not because we do not try to correct our vicious children? The misfortune of the elder (Eli) is enough to prove that this is not mere conjecture. But let me tell you yet another word of our wise fathers. Thinking of his children, he says this: *Delight neither in ungodly sons. Though they multiply, rejoice not in them, except the fear of the Lord be with them. Trust not thou in their life* (Sir. 16:1-3). For you will moan with untimely grief and will unexpectedly hear of their destruction. Thus, many, as I have said, endured much the same; if some have escaped (punishment), they will not escape it forever. If they have escaped it here, then the destruction will be on their heads, for they will endure very cruel punishments when they leave this world.

25. We must not act irrationally because God no longer sends prophets and does not wreak such punishments as that of Eli. Now is not the time for prophets; besides, He does send

them even now. How do we know? *They have* (it is said) *Moses and the prophets* (Lk. 16:29). It was said to them (who lived at the time of Moses and the prophets) and it is said to us; and God says it not only to Eli, but through him and his suffering to all who sin as he did. God is no respecter of persons, and if He destroyed those of a less sinful household, then He will not leave unpunished those who have committed more serious sins.

26. God Himself takes great care over the upbringing of children. That is why He placed such a natural attraction in parents toward their children—in order to put parents in unescapable necessity of caring for their children. Subsequently, He created laws concerning their care, and, establishing the feasts, commanded us to explain their meaning. He summed up the meaning of the Passover in this instruction: *And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, Therefore the Lord dealt thus with me, as I was going out of Egypt* (Ex. 13:8). He does the same in the Law. For, telling of the first-born, He adds again: *And if thy son should ask thee hereafter, saying, What is this? then thou shalt say to him, With a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beast; therefore do I sacrifice every offspring that opens the womb. The males to the Lord, and every first-born of my sons I will redeem* (Ex. 13:14-15). Through all of this He commands him to lead the children to the knowledge of God. Even to the children themselves He commands much with respect to the parents, rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient, thereby making them even more dear to their parents. Actually, when someone makes us lords over someone else, by this honor he places upon us the greatest obligation to care for him, so that this alone without anything else is able to convince us that the entire fate of this person is in our hands, and we will not lightly dare to injure the one who has been thus entrusted to us. When he also becomes even more wrathful and displeased with us for breaking this trust

than the offended ones themselves, and becomes a stern punisher, he thereby inspires us even more to fulfil our obligation. This is what God has done. To these two He has added a third, natural obligation, and if you like, it is the first. Namely, it is that parents, having received the commandment to educate their children, would not disdain His commandment by which God has bound them by natural obligation. If this tie should be held in contempt by the children, He has protected it from being broken entirely by His own punishments and by the parents'. Thus He has subjected children to their parents and inspired love in the parents for their children. But there is also a fourth method by which God has strongly and closely bound us with them. He not only punishes those children who work evil against their parents, but He also rewards the good ones. He does the same with parents, cruelly punishing those who neglect their children, while granting honor and praise to those who care. Thus did He punish the elder (Eli), who was worthy of praise in every other respect, but rewarded the patriarch Abraham for his care no less than for other virtues. For, speaking of those many and great gifts that He promised to Abraham, God names precisely this virtue as His reason for such a promise: *For I know that he will order his sons, and his house after him, and they will keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment* (Gen. 18:19).

27. I have said this so that you would know that God will not be condescending to those who are neglectful of those for whom He Himself takes such care. For it is impossible that one and the same God should do so much to save these (children), yet pay no attention when their own parents disdain them. He will not ignore this, but to the contrary, He will all the more fearfully display His displeasure and wrath, as it actually happens. Therefore the blessed Paul insistently convinces us, saying: *Ye fathers... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the*

*Lord* (Eph. 6:4). If we<sup>1</sup> are obligated to tirelessly care for their souls, *as they that must give account* (Heb. 13:17), so much more is the father (obligated to do it), who gave birth to the son, brought him up and lives constantly with him. For just as he can find no excuse for his own sins, he cannot find one for his children's misdeeds. The blessed Paul showed this same thing. Describing how those who have accepted authority over others should be, he requires care for their own children over all other requirements, so that we have no excuse for our children's unruliness (I Tim. 3, 4, 5). And this is perfectly just! If evil in people is from nature, then everyone would have a right to excuse himself; but as we ourselves are impious or honorable according to our own will, then what good excuse could one present who has allowed his son, whom he loves more than anything, to come to impiety and dishonor? That he did not want to make him honorable? But not one father will say that: nature itself insistently and incessantly inspires him toward this. Or that he was not able to do it? But this also cannot be said; for everything—that he took his son under his protection at a tender age, and that he alone primarily has been given authority over him, and that he constantly had him around—all of this makes the education of his son very easy and convenient. It means that the children's unruliness comes from nothing other than the insane attachment of the fathers to earthly cares. Paying attention only to earthly cares, and counting nothing to be more important, they involuntarily begin to neglect the souls of their children. I will say of these fathers (and let no one consider these words to be born of anger), that they are even worse than child-killers. The one only sunders the body from the soul, but the other casts them both into the fires of gehenna. Death is inevitable according to the natural order, but the second fate

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1. Spiritual instructors.

could have been avoided if the fathers' neglect had not led up to it. Physical death can be ended instantly by the resurrection when it comes, but no reward awaits the lost soul; it will receive not resurrection, but will have to suffer eternally. This means that we not unjustly call those fathers worse than child-killers. It is not so cruel to sharpen the sword, take it in the right hand and plunge it into the little child's heart, as it is to destroy and degrade the soul, for there is nothing equal to the soul.

28. If the evil were only limited to the parents' not giving their children any beneficial counsel, then the evil would not be so great. But you, parents, induce your children to do the opposite. Actually, when fathers convince their children to study sciences, you can hear in the course of their conversation none other than the following words: "So-and-so, they say, is a low-born man of meager means, who perfected himself in eloquent speech and received a very high position, acquired a large property, took a rich wife, built a marvelous house, and has become fearsome and famous to all." Another says: "So-and-so learned Latin, shines in the royal court and wields great influence there." Yet another points to someone else, and they all speak only of those who are glorified on earth. But of those who are glorified in heaven no one recounts; and even if one should recount them, he would be watched as a man who disturbs everything. Thus, when you instill this in your children from an early age, you teach them nothing other than the basis for all the vices, planting in them the two most savage passions—that is, love of money, and the even more blameworthy passion of vainglory. Each of these passions by itself can disorder everything in the child; but when they are both rooted together in the tender soul of a youth, then like two united stormy fronts, they destroy everything good and produce so many thorns, sand and dust that they make the soul fruitless and incapable of anything good. How do you think your son can escape the

devil's snares when he is young—living in Egypt, or among the devil's army, not hearing a beneficial word from anyone, and seeing that everyone, especially his parents and educators, are leading him to the opposite? How could he do it? With the help of your admonitions? But you suggest the opposite to him and, not allowing him to think about love of wisdom even in his sleep, to the contrary constantly occupy him with the present life and its gain, and only assist him in his drowning. Or does it happen by itself? Absolutely not; a youth does not have the strength by himself to perfect himself in the virtues, and if something good is born in him, then this good is more likely to perish than grow under the torrent of your words. For just as the body cannot live long if it feeds on harmful food, so also the soul, when it receives such suggestions, cannot think about something good and great; no, being disturbed and weakened as if by some infection, it will finally inevitably go down to gehenna and perish.

29. For you, as though you were intentionally destroying your children, order them to do exactly those things which make it impossible to be saved. Look first of all (at what is written). *Woe*, it is said, *unto you that laugh* (Lk. 6:25), but you give your children a multitude of causes for laughter. *Woe unto you that are rich* (Lk. 6:24), but it is your chief concern that they get rich. *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you* (Lk. 6:26), but you often spend all your living for the sake of human glory. Again, he who maligns his brother is *in danger of hell fire* (Mt. 5:22), but you consider anyone who silently bears offensive words from others to be weak and cowardly. Christ commands us to avoid fights and arguments, but you are constantly occupying your children with these evil affairs. He commanded in many circumstances to pluck out your eye if it leads to evil (cf. Mt. 5:29), but you especially befriend those who can give you money, even though they may be teaching extreme depravity.

He commanded not to put away one's wife unless it be for adultery (cf. Mt. 5:32), but when you see that money can be had, you order that this commandment be disdained. He absolutely forbade oaths (cf. Mt. 5:34), but you even laugh when you see that this ban is observed. *He that loveth his life*, the Lord said, *shall lose it*, (Jn. 12:25), but you do all you can to draw children into this love. *If ye forgive not men their trespasses*, He says, *neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses* (Mt. 6:15), but you even criticize your children when they do not want to take revenge upon their offenders, and try to bring them to a state where they will want to do this. Christ said that if you do anything out of vainglory—fasting, praying, or almsgiving—it is all done to no effect (cf. Mt. 6:1), but you only try to arrange that your children receive praise. But why enumerate everything? If these vices already named are able not just collectively but even separately to prepare a thousand gehennas, and you, having gathered them together and laid this unbearably heavy bundle of sins on your children, send them with it to the lake of fire; how can they save themselves, carrying so much food for the fire?

30. It is bad enough that you prompt your children to do what is contrary to Christ's commandments, but you also mask them in beneficent-sounding names. You call the constant attendance of horse races and theaters "social life," the possession of wealth "freedom," audacity "openness," dissipation "humanitarianism," unfairness "manliness." Then, as if this deceit were not enough, you call virtues by unattractive names: modesty is "lack of education," meekness is "cowardice," fairness is "weakness," humility is "slavishness," angerlessness is "powerlessness." It is as if you are afraid that your child might hear the true name of these virtues and vices and therefore avoid the vices like the plague. For calling the vices by their real names does not a little to inspire aversion for them. I know many

people who came to their senses this way, and, hearing these offensive names, became more modest in life. But you have deprived your children of this means of correction. And what is worse, you prompt them to do evil not only by your words but by your deeds—you build magnificent homes, buy expensive land, surround them with all manner of glitter, and by all of this, as with some sort of horrid cloud, darken their souls. How can I be convinced that they can possibly be saved when I see that you incline them toward the very things that Christ singled out as leading to inevitable destruction; when I see that you disdain their souls as something unnecessary, but concern yourself with what is truly extravagant as though it were something necessary and important? You do everything in order to provide your son with a servant, horse and the best clothing; but you do not even want to think about making him good himself. No, having stretched yourself in cares over rocks and trees, there is not the slightest portion of your care left for souls. You do everything to make sure that there is a lovely statue and golden roof on your house, but that the most precious of all sculptures—the soul—might be golden, you take no thought at all.

31. Furthermore, wishing to acquaint our children with sciences we not only remove any conflicting teachings, but give them everything that will support it: we thrust mentors and teachers upon them, give them financial support, free them from all other occupations; and even more than trainers at Olympic games, we scream at them about poverty that results from not studying and wealth from studying. We ourselves and through others do and say everything just to lead them to finishing their studies; and at that, we do not always succeed. But do modest manners and diligence over honorable behavior, in our opinion, come by themselves, regardless of all the many obstacles? What can be worse than this insanity—spending so much time and energy on what is easy as though it were

impossible to succeed in it otherwise, while what is infinitely more difficult seems to us as something empty and insignificant that will come to us even as we sleep? For exercise of the soul in the pious life is so many times more difficult than the study of sciences, so much harder to fulfill than it is possible to say; it is the difference between action and words.

32. "But why," you say, "do our children need such wisdom and strict behavior?" This is the very thing that is so all-destructive—that such an important matter, the support of our life, is considered extravagant and unnecessary. Having seen your son sick in body, no one would ask why he needs perfect and strong health. To the contrary you would take every measure to return his body to a good condition, so that the illness would not return. But when children have sick souls, they say that they need no treatment; and after such words they dare to call themselves fathers! "What?" you say, "Shall we only seek after wisdom and let everything earthly fall apart?" No, most respected ones, it is not love of wisdom but the lack of it that has destroyed and disrupted everything. For who, tell me, disrupts the present condition of things—those who live contently and modestly, or those who invent new and unlawful means of delighting themselves? Those who only try to grab other people's things for themselves, or those who are content with what they have? Those who love mankind, who are meek and do not seek honor, or those who demand honor from their brothers above all obligation, and cause a thousand annoyances for those who do not rise when they enter, do not say the first greeting, do not bow before them, or do not agree with them? Those who love to submit, or those who seek power and positions of authority, and for this are ready to do and endure anything? Those who consider themselves better than everyone, and therefore think that they may say and do anything, or those who consider themselves to be last, and thereby tame their

unreasonable self-willed passions? Those who support harlots and defile the marriage beds of others, or those who are continent even with their own wives? Are not the first in human society those who are like tumors on the body and lashing winds over the sea, who with their lack of restraint drown even those who if left alone might have saved themselves? And are not the last those who are like bright lamps amidst thick darkness, calling the shipwrecked to their safety, and, having lit on high in the distance the lamp of wisdom, thus lead those who desire it into the peaceful harbor? Is it not those others who cause disturbances, wars and fights, and destruction of the cities, and captivity, and slavery, and loss of freedom, and murder, and innumerable catastrophes in life—catastrophes not only wrought on people by people, but also everything sent from heaven, for example: droughts, floods, earthquakes, inundation of cities, famines, pestilences, and everything that is sent to us from there? They debase the social order and destroy the general good; they bring countless misfortunes on others, obfuscate people who seek peace, draw them in and then tear them apart from all directions. Courts and laws, sentences and all manner of punishment were created for these people.

33. If we wanted to educate our children from the earliest age and give them to those who wished to educate them, our children would of course be able to stand in the very forefront of battle; because God would not disdain such fervency and zeal, but would stretch out His hand to complete the sculpture. When His hand acts, it is impossible not to succeed, or rather, it is impossible not to reach the highest degree of brilliance and glory, if only we fulfilled what depends upon us. If women have been able to incline God's help in the upbringing of children, how much more so could we do the same if we so wanted. In order not to over-stretch this homily, I shall pass over in silence all other women and cite only one, though I could have cited many.

There was a Jewess named Hannah. This Hannah gave birth to a son and no longer hoped to have another, because she was barely able to conceive this one after many tears due to her barrenness. Although her rival often chided her over her barrenness, she did not do as you do, but having received the child she kept him only as long as she needed to feed him milk. As soon as he no longer needed this food, she took him and immediately dedicated him to God, not asking that he ever return to his family's house, but leaving him to live always in the temple of God. And when out of maternal feeling she wished to see him she did not call the child to herself but came herself with the father to him, treating him carefully, like a sacrifice to God. This is why the boy became so valorous and great that when God turned His face from the Jewish people for its extreme impiety and pronounced no prophecies and sent no visions, this boy again attracted God with his virtue and begged Him to grant the Jews what they formerly had—to renew the prophecy that had ceased. He did this when he was not yet a grown man, but a little child. *And the word of the Lord, says the Scripture, was precious in those days, there was no distinct vision* (I Kings 3:1); meanwhile, God often revealed His will to Samuel.

That is how beneficial it is to always give your acquisitions to God, and to refuse not only money and things, but even your own children. For if this has been commanded of us with respect to our souls (cf. Mt. 10:37), how much the more to everything else? The Patriarch Abraham also did this, or rather, he did much more than this, and that is why he received a son with great glory. We especially have our children with us when we have given them to the Lord. For He will preserve them much better than we can because He cares more for them. Have you not seen how it happens in the homes of rich people? There the low-born servants who live with their fathers are not so respected or powerful as those whom the master has taken from the

parents, appointed to his service and made guardians of treasures, giving them great good will and freedom. If men are so kind and well-disposed toward their servants, much more so will be the Unlimited Goodness, that is, God.

34. Let us allow our children to serve God, leading them not only to the temple, like Samuel, but to the very heavens to serve together with the Angels and Archangels. For anyone can see that one who dedicates himself to love of wisdom really will be serving with the Angels. Furthermore, such children will be representing with great boldness not only themselves, but us also. For if some children have received help from God for their fathers' sake, so much more can fathers receive help for their children's sake; because in the first case the right to help comes only from nature, but in the second case it comes also from upbringing, which is much more important than nature.

I will prove both to you from Divine Scripture. Hezekiah, a virtuous and pious king but having no boldness according to his own deeds to withstand the great danger which threatened him, was saved by God for the sake of his father's virtue, as God Himself said: *And I will defend this city as with a shield, for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake* (IV Kings 19:34). Paul in his epistle to Timothy said about parents: *she* (the woman) *shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety* (I Tim. 2:15). The Scripture praises Job because he *was true, blameless, righteous and godly, abstaining from everything evil* (Job 1:1), as well as for his care for his children (Job 1:5). This care consisted not in the collection of wealth for them, and not in attempts to make them glorious and famous, but in what? Listen to what the Scripture says: *And when the days of the banquet were completed, Job sent and purified them, having risen up in the morning, and offered sacrifices for them, according to their number, and one calf for a sin-offering for their souls: for Job said, lest peradventure my*

sons have thought evil in their minds against God. Thus then Job did continually (Job 1:5). What justification will we have if we behave with such neglect? For if those who lived before the time of grace and the law, who never received any teachings on the upbringing of children, had such great care for their children as to tremble even over their secret sins—who will justify us, who live during the time of grace, have so many teachers, so many examples and instructions, but meanwhile not only do not fear for their secret sins, but even ignore the obvious sins; and not only do we ourselves ignore them, but even cast out those who do not? And Abraham, as I said before, stood out for this virtue more than for his many other virtues.

35. Thus, having so many examples, let us prepare pious servants and slaves for God. If those who prepare competitive fighters for cities, or warriors for the king, are vouchsafed great honor, then what gift shall we receive if we prepare for God such valorous and great men, or rather, angels? We will do everything we can in order to leave them the riches of piety which abide permanently, accompany useven after death and can bring great benefit not only here, but there (in the other world). Worldly riches do not accompany people into eternity, and they can even perish here before their owners, often even destroying them. But the riches of piety are permanent in this and the next life, and preserve those who acquire them in great safety. This is really so: whoever prefers the earthly over the spiritual will lose both, but whoever longs for the spiritual and heavenly will probably also receive the earthly. These are not my words, but those of the Lord Himself, Who promises to give us this good: *seek, He says, first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you* (Mt. 6:33). What can compare with this honor? Concern yourself, He says, with the spiritual, and leave everything else to Me. A loving father takes all cares of the household upon himself, the governing of servants and

everything else, but advises the son to concern himself with love of wisdom. So does God. Let us be obedient and begin to seek the kingdom of God; then we shall see everywhere reverent children, and we ourselves shall be glorified with them, and delight also in present good things. Only you must love the future, heavenly things. If you are obedient, you shall receive a great reward; but if you are contrary and disobedient you will endure terrible punishments. For we cannot justify ourselves by saying: "No one taught us this."

36.<sup>1</sup> Untamed youth has need of many instructors and teachers, guides, observers and educators. Only with this effort can it be reigned in. An unbroken horse, an untamed beast—that is youth. Therefore, if we place limits from an early age we will not need to use such great force; to the contrary, habit will become law. We will not allow them to do what is pleasant but harmful; we will not try to please them because they are children, for this brings more harm than anything to youth. But most of all we will preserve chastity. We should concern ourselves with this more than anything else, and pay the most attention to this. We will take wives for them early, so that they would unite themselves to their brides with pure and incorrupt bodies. This kind of love is especially ardent. Whoever was chaste before marriage is more likely to remain so after marriage. But those who learned before marriage to fornicate will do the same after marriage. For it is written in the Scriptures: *All bread is sweet to a whoremonger* (Sir. 23:17). That is why a crown is placed on the head—as a sign of victory, that they are entering the bridal chamber unvanquished, unconquered by lust. If someone prone to love of pleasure has given himself to harlots, then what reason does he have for wearing a crown on his head, since he has been

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1. The following is taken from the ninth Homily on the First Epistle to Timothy.

vanquished? We will instill this in them, teach it to them and threaten them in various ways.

37. We have been given an important security—children. Therefore we shall take care of them, and take every precaution that the evil one may not steal them from us. Meanwhile, we do everything backward. We make every effort to insure that our fields be in good hands. We seek out the most experienced mule drivers and overseers, but we take no such precautions for what is the most precious to us and through which all other good things come, namely, that we might entrust our son to a man that would preserve his chastity. We take care to provide him with property, but take no care for him himself. Do you see what insanity has taken control of us! First of all educate your son's soul, and he will acquire possessions later. If his soul is bad he will not receive the slightest benefit from money. And vice versa, if he has been given the proper upbringing, then poverty will not harm him in the least. Do you want to leave him wealthy? Teach him to be good. For children who have not received the proper upbringing poverty is better than wealth; it will keep them even against their will within the bounds of virtue. However, wealth, even for one who does not wish it, does not allow one to live a chaste life, but lures him into a countless multitude of crimes.

38. You, mothers, look after your daughters. This should not be difficult for you. Watch that they sit at home. First of all teach them to be pious, modest, disdain money, and not worrying too much about fancy dress. Give them thus to marriage. If you raise your daughter this way, you will save not only her, but the husband who takes her; and not only her husband, but the children; and not only the children, but the grandchildren. If the root is good the branches will spread out more beautifully, and you will receive your reward for this. Therefore let us do everything as though we are caring for the

good not of one soul alone, but of many through the one. For at the time of marriage, they (daughters) should go forth from their father's house's as fighters from the place of competition; that is, they should know precisely the entire science, by which they might, like a leaven, raise all the ingredients to the increase of them.

39. Again, sons should also be so modest that they might be recognized by their good morals and chastity, and might earn great praise from men and from God. Let them learn to refrain themselves from extravagant possessions, to be thrifty and tenderly loving; let them learn to submit to authority. For they can in this way obtain a great reward for their parents. Then everything will be directed towards the glory of God and our salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom with the Father and Holy Spirit be glory, dominion and honor now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

# INDEX

## PERSONS AND PLACES

- Abraham, Patriarch, 197, 307, 330, 339, 347, 349
- Andrew of Crete, St., 43
- Andrew, Fool-for-Christ, St., 108
- Anthony the Great, St., 122, 204, 206, 212, 217, 325
- Arsenius the Great, St., 319
- Augustine, Blessed, 87, 110, 145, 147
- Barbara, Great Martyr, St., 115, 119
- Barsanuphius, Elder, St., 260, 303, 305n
- Basil the Great, St., 228, 270
- Cassian, St., 262
- Catherine, Great Martyr, St., 108
- Chrysostom, St.: *see* John Chrysostom, St.
- Clement of Rome, St., 108
- Constantine the Great, St., 107
- Constantinople, 13
- Cyprian of Antioch, St., 118
- David, Prophet, 197, 232, 330
- David of Hermopolis, St., 110
- Diadochos of Photiki, St., 37, 194-196, 198-200, 207n
- Dorotheos of Gaza, St., 301
- Dorotheus, Hieromonk, 260
- Elets, town of, 14 ill.
- Eli, High Priest, 329, 332, 336-339
- Ephraim the Syrian, St., 324
- Eustathius Placides, Great Martyr, St., 107
- Gregory the Sinaite, St., 204, 246, 258, 260
- Hannah, Prophetess, 332-333, 347
- Hesychius the Chorebite, St., 108
- Hesychius, St., 260
- Hezekiah, King, 348
- Ioasaph the Prince, St., 108, 119
- Isaac the Syrian, St., 200, 206n, 226, 257, 262, 308, 308n, 325n
- Jacob, Patriarch, 197

## INDEX

- James the Apostle, St., 171  
 Jerusalem, Russian Mission, 13  
 Job the Long-suffering, Righteous, 330, 348-349  
 John Climacus, St., 159, 301, 319-321, 323, 325, 325n  
 John Chrysostom, St., 30, 134, 228, 231, 235; lessons on education, 326  
 John the Theologian, St., 99, 171  
 Joseph (son of the Patriarch Jacob), 86, 197  
 Julian (the Apostate), Emperor, 116  
 Justin Martyr, St., 110, 119  
  
 Kazan Cathedral, 18  
 Kiev Theological Academy, 12  
 Kiev Caves Lavra, 12  
 Kiev-Sofia Theological School, 13  
  
 Liven, city of, 12  
 Lot, Righteous, 136  
  
 Macarius of Egypt, St., 154, 194, 197-200, 203, 204, 206n, 232  
 Macarius, St., 116  
 Mark of Thrace, St., 212  
 Mary of Egypt, St., 109, 126, 212  
 Mary the Harlot, St., 111, 111n  
 Mitrophan, Bishop, 108  
 Moses the Ethiopian, St., 110  
  
 Neanis: *see* Procopius, Great Martyr  
 Nicephorus, St., 223, 225  
 Nikander, Archbishop, 19  
 Nilus of Sora, St., 260  
 Niphon, St., 287  
  
 Novgorod Seminary, 13  
  
 Olonets Seminary, 13  
 Orel Seminary, 12  
  
 Paisius, St., 260  
 Partheny, Fr., of the Kiev Caves Lavra, 12  
 Patermuthius, St., 107  
 Patriarch of Constantinople, 182  
 Paul of Thebes, St., 212  
 Paul the Apostle, St., 37, 107, 119, 121, 126, 171, 185, 340  
 Pelagia, St., 121  
 Peter the Tax Collector, St., 108  
 Petersburg Theological Academy, 13  
 Philotheus of Sinai, St., 260  
 Procopius, Great Martyr, St., 107  
  
 Russian Mission in Jerusalem, 13  
 Rose, Fr. Seraphim, 11n  
  
 Samuel, Prophet, 45, 86, 332-333, 347-348  
 Seraphim of Sarov, St., 19  
 Simon the Magus, 118  
 Sodom and Gomorrah, 136  
 Spyridon, St., 287  
 Sumarokov, E., 11  
 Symeon the New Theologian, St., 260, 319n  
 Symeon and John, Sts., 195  
  
 Tambov, 13  
 Theodora, Blessed, 180  
 Theodore Sykeote, St., 45-46  
 Theoleptus, St., 260  
 Theophan the Recluse, Saint and Bishop, 2 ill., 11-13, 15-16,

## INDEX

- 17 ill.; crucialness for today, 13, 15; explains essential aspects of life, 15; answer to modern education, 15; cell of, 14 ill., 17 ill.; handwriting of, 19 ill.  
Theophilus the Penitent, St., 111  
Thomas the Apostle, St., 108  
Tikhon of Zadonsk, St., 13, 123n, 143, 143n, 160, 227  
Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles, St., 121  
Vysha Monastery, 90 ill.

## SUBJECTS

- Absent-mindedness, 129  
Abuse: readiness to bear, 232  
Activities: as a means of healing and restoring to wholeness, 240. *See* Exercises  
Almsgiving, 252; as a means of renewing grace, 145  
Angels, 108; guardian angel, 43, 45  
Anger, 52  
Angerlessness, 343  
Arrogance, 202, 211, 251  
Ascent (to God): of the mind, 312; the decisive step towards, 315  
Ascetic, the: the struggle of, 217; ceaseless activity of, 222  
Ascetic labors, 210, 304, 315; general notes about, 245-246; essential points of ascetic labor, 278  
Ascetic practices: *see* Ascetic labors or Exercises  
Ascetic struggles: spirit and character of, 208  
Asceticism, 224, 304; beginning of, 208; signs of true asceticism, 216; most successful way to accomplish, 278; goal of, 309, 311; final stage of, 319  
Attention (of the mind), 223, 225, 260  
Audacity, 343  
Aversion, 281  
Awakening, 149, 153, 159, 203, 232; states of awakening discerned from natural states, 149; communion with God begins at moment of, 193; exercises for awakening the spirit, 250  
Baptism, 65, 93, 183, 192-195; how Christian life begins at, 35; one's state prior to, 36; privileges and gifts of, 36; rebirth as inward effect of, 37; the power of, 37-38; for infants, 38-41; a decisive moment in all who have preserved the grace of, 67; why the grace of Baptism is not preserved in a young person, 80-81; advantages of those who have preserved the grace of, 84-86. *See* Sacraments

- Battle (spiritual): point of fortification for, 282; rules before, during, and after, 289; before the battle, 290; during the battle, 293, 295; after the battle, 295
- Battlefield: boundaries of, 288
- Beatitudes, The, 171
- Behavior (external), 241, 245; worthless without the internal, 135
- Being within, 223-225, 229, 234, 236-237, 260; the law for, 222; as a condition for man's true lordship over himself, 224; conditions for and methods of, 226
- Blasphemy, 299
- Blindness, 141-142, 145, 147; how to remove the state of, 132; thought processes that keep you in, 133, 135; how to work on your blindness, 136-137
- Body, the: 51, 222-223, 241; directing the developing powers of, 48; in relation to food, 48; in relation to sleep, 49; in relation to movement, 49; in relation to nerves and senses, 51; chief evil is love for, 51; result of proper attitude toward, 52; strict discipline of the child's body, 52; as dwelling-place of the passions, 52; in seeking grace-filled awakening, 130; in conversion, 202, 204; three activities of the soul and body, 225; bodily activity in relation to inner work, 238; exercises applicable to powers and functions of, 243; source of passions in the body, 283
- Bonds: *see* Spiritual bonds
- Boredom: reason for in youth, 73; versus displeasure, 150, 150n
- Byzantine (philosophy of life), 11
- Carelessness, 129, 132
- Cares, 129-131
- Catechesis, 142, 249
- Chastity, 350-351
- Children: Christian upbringing of, 326-352
- Christian: the need to clarify to oneself what it means to be a Christian, 133
- Christian life, 21-24, 52, 183-184, 188, 260; begins with zeal, 27; consists in communion with God, 27; is not natural life, 31; the desire to live, 34-35; how it begins, 35; for those baptized as children, 38, 40; exclusive focus on learning is ruinous to, 64; conscious acceptance of and the beginning of true Christian life as a man, 66; the only source of, 91; is one of grace, 105; resolve to live, 155; the law of Christian life in the Epistles and Gospels, 171; the inner path of, 297; the central outgrowth of, 315. *See* Spiritual life
- Church, The: conversion through entering, 114; going to church as vehicle for God's grace, 144; is heaven on earth, 254

- Church-centered life: acting upon the child, 45, 59-60
- Church rubrics, 255; as a vehicle for God's grace, 144
- Church services, 235, 253-255, 261
- Citizenship, 265
- Commandments (of the Lord), 142, 205, 221, 233, 339, 342-343; to be obeyed by children, 327-328
- Communion, Holy: 270-272, 276; frequent, for infants, 42; accompanied by miracles, 43; preparation for, 183-187
- Communion (with God), 21-24, 27, 192-195, 197, 205-206; three forms of, 193; two ways of, 198; beginning of ascent to living communion with God, 313-315; condition for communion with God, 316; occurs in a state of hesychia, 319, 322, 324
- Compunction, 276
- Confession (The Mystery of Repentance), 192-194, 270-271, 275-276, 308; why it is necessary, 177; how to prepare for, 178-181; and Communion, 185
- Confessions* of Blessed Augustine, 87
- Conscience, 60, 151, 177; guiding the child's, 61
- Consciousness, 202, 204, 223, 281-282
- Constancy: law of, 251; in relation to physical *podvigs*, 264
- Contemplation, 157, 209
- Contempt: readiness to bear, 232
- Contrition, 186, 216-217, 233, 276-277, 307-308; of heart, 18; contrition-producing feelings, 139
- Conversion, 126, 141-142, 153, 187-188, 193, 203, 238, 255, 260, 265, 267, 283, 287, 303-304, 322; three stages of, 101; examples of, 107-111; through experience of creation and the Church, 115; by means of martyrdom and examples of life, 115-116; through the Word of God, 119-123; the main work upon conversion, 206
- Convert, 311; inner make-up of, 202
- Covetousness, 284
- Creation: conversion by, 114-115
- Cross of Christ, 138, 176, 230; as a weapon of victory in battle, 293
- Crucifixion: of the outer man, 307
- Curiosity: defined, 54-55
- Customs, 240-241
- Daughters: instruction of, 351-352
- Day-dreaming, 72
- Death: remembrance of, 137, 227-230, 232
- Deception: good order in one's conduct can lead to, 29
- Dedication (to God), 169, 316-319, 322; of one's child to God, 347-348
- Deeds (good), 251-253
- Delusion, 206, 213-214, 300. *See* Blindness
- Demons: how they penetrate into the soul, 52; unrighteous move-

## INDEX

- ments aided by, 285-286; deceit of, 287
- Depression, 296
- Descending within: means of, 225
- Desire (for God), 186; mental and active desire, 155
- Desires, 202, 299
- Despair, 299
- Devil, 111, 288; sin from the point of view of, 139; at the moment of awakening, 159-160. *See* Satan
- Disappointment: versus sorrow of spirit, 150
- Discernment, 291
- Discipline: for children, 333, 335
- Discourse: spiritual, 248-249
- Discussion: as means of awakening, 145
- Dislike: for others, 202
- Disorder: inner, 213
- Dispassion, 324-325. *See* Passionlessness
- Displeasure: versus boredom, 150
- Dissatisfaction: with oneself in conversion process, 110; examples and forms of, 110
- Dissipation, 343
- Distractions: the effect of the state of distractions on youth, 72
- Divine (order of things), 200
- Divine Sacrifice: *see* Communion, Holy
- Divine Way: defined, 106; how consciousness of this comes, 107; introduction through visible means and senses, 107; perceived internally, 109
- Earthliness, 163-164, 166, 168
- Economy, Divine, 114
- Education: build on true principles to correct bad order of things, 83; educate the educators in true education, 83; St. John Chrysostom on education, 326-352.
- Egotism, 284, 306
- Endurance: virtue acquired through *podvig*, 263
- Enemy: tricks of, 34
- Evil, 280-281
- Excuses (or justifying oneself), 136
- Exercises: that confirm a person's powers of soul and body in goodness, 239, 242; bodily, 243; forming a spiritual atmosphere, 244; a rule in relation to spiritual exercises, 245; that develop the intellect and warm the spiritual life, 247; for developing the will, 250
- Exile, 217
- Experience (ascetical): how acquired, 296
- External life: according to the spirit of new life, 264
- Faintheartedness, 117
- Fairness, 343
- Faith, 186, 276-277
- Fall, the: affect on man, 203
- Falls, 217, 296, 317
- Family Life, 265; adapted to spiritual life, 244
- Fasting, 243, 264
- Fasts (of the Church), 274

## INDEX

- Fathers: responsibilities in relation to their children's upbringing, 326, 328-331, 340-341, 345, 348
- Fear: 117, 139, 179; of God, 60, 235, 252; of the Prodigal Son, 186
- Feelings: distracted by, 225; that lead to resolve, 232-236
- Finalities: the four finalities, 227
- Fire (of zeal), 221
- Flesh, the, 226, 288; prevalence of the flesh as a veil of sin, 129; persecution of, 261-264
- Food, 263; seat of the passion for sinful enjoyment of the flesh, 48; how to feed a child to be master of it, 48
- Forcing oneself, 23, 161, 208-209, 220, 229; the beginning of, 246
- Foreignness on earth, 167-168
- Forgetfulness (of God): leads to other sins, 284-285
- Freedom, 281-282; or grace, 158, 187; condition for true freedom, 224; renunciation of one's own freedom for God's indwelling, 316
- Free will, 93, 281-282, 318
- French Revolution, 12
- Gathering: three inner activities of self-gathering, 223; as most effective means of preserving zeal, 224-226; mental gathering by itself unfruitful, 236
- Glory (of God): measuring stick of every endeavor, 312
- Gluttony, sin of, 49
- Goal: final goal of man, 191, 229; of man and God, 192; of ascetic labors, 198; of repentant sinner, 206
- God, power of, 227
- God-pleasing life, 206-207, 325; guiding rule for, 208; source of power for preserving, 221
- Good, the, 280-281
- Goodness: what happens the moment of choosing goodness, 158-159; that which wars against, 283
- Govenie*, 244, 274, 277; definition of, 272-273
- Grace, 129, 144, 146, 161, 187, 202-203, 216, 218, 221-222, 239, 241, 246, 281-282; produces zeal, 31-32; the necessity of, 32, 34-35; how to receive, 35; produces change, 93; the relationship of freedom with, 93-94; a person who lacks grace, 95; awakening action of, 102-103; action on one newly awakened vs. those who experienced awakening before, 103-104; characteristics of arousal by, 105-107; acting directly on the spirit of man, 109-111, acting indirectly on the spirit of man, 111, 113, 118; to awaken a sinner who has fallen again, 124; the need to open up to, 125; how to receive it and two kinds of, 126; drawn out of bonds of sin and placed between sin and virtue by grace,

## INDEX

- 154; or freedom, 158; how grace settles in the repentant soul, 194-200; fruit of ascetic labors ripens only under grace, 210-211; guarding the inner acquisition of, 219
- Grace-filled awakening, 146, 151, 153, 155-157, 168, 222; what it is, 147, 149
- Grace-filled life, 204
- Graduality: in spiritual struggle, 304
- Great Lent, 131
- Greed, 202
- Guarding (of the heart): *see* Heart
- Guide, Spiritual: the need of, 211-212, 214, 214n, 218, 305-306, 318. *See* Father, Spiritual
- Guilt: for sins, 173-174
- Hatred: dislike for, 281
- Heart, 202, 222-224, 226, 236-237, 260, 290, 294; disposing the child's heart toward sound and true feelings, 59; emptiness of, 96; in overcoming blindness, 132; how to soften your insensitive heart, 137, 139; turning away the heart from evil thoughts, 166; hardness of, 234; curative powers for, 242; development of, 253; passions that shatter peace of heart, 284; guarding and purification of, 315
- Hell, 227-228
- Hesychia, 319-320
- Hesychast, 319-322, 325
- High-mindedness, 303
- Holy Fathers, 226, 232, 236-237, 240-241, 284, 289, 301, 306, 315. *See* Patristic Literature
- Holy Spirit, 197, 199-200, 204
- Horror: contrition-producing feeling, 139
- Humility, 284, 343
- Imagination: awakening of, 53
- Indolence, 141-142, 146-147; sleep of, how to drive away, 140
- Inner work, 245, 309, 312, 315; in relation to bodily labor, 238
- Insensitivity, 129, 132, 141-142, 145, 147
- Instruction: of youth, 63; subjects should be penetrated with Orthodox Christian principles, 64. *See* Discipline
- Intellect, 200, 281; exercises that develop the intellect, 247
- Intelligence: condition of true intelligence, 224
- Jesus Prayer, 257-259
- Judgment, 227-229; last judgment, 230
- Kingdom of God, 229; acquired within, 314
- Labor: over yourself, 141; virtue acquired through *podvig*, 263. *See* *Podvig*
- Ladder of Divine Ascent, The: see* John Climacus, St.
- Law: *see* Customs
- Law of God, 13, 18, 21, 171

## INDEX

- Light, 199; and virtue, 205
- Longing, 186; for God, 192-193, 319; as the highest good, 311-312. *See* Yearning
- Lordship over oneself: condition for, 224
- Love, 252
- Lust(s), 52, 202, 205, 205n, 350; war with lusts, 280
- Lutherans, 182
- Man-pleasing, 163-164, 166, 168, 251
- Marriage, 350-352
- Martyrdom, conversion by means of, 115
- Meekness, 343
- Memory: awakening of, 53
- Mental activity, 260
- Mind, 202, 225-226; inculcating sound concepts and judgments in a child, 56; emptiness of, 96; in the heart, 223; curative exercises for, 242
- Modesty, 343, 351-352
- Monasticism, 278
- Money: love of, 341
- Mother of God: appearance of, 108
- Mothers: in upbringing of their children, 332, 351
- Movement: seat of the will in the soul, 49
- Much-caring: *see* Cares
- Muscles, 225-226
- Mysteries, Holy: related to beginning of Christian life, 35; acting upon the child, 45
- Mystery of Repentance: *see* Confession
- Natural life: different than Christian life, 22
- Natural perfections: have no moral value, 134
- Nature, visible: *see* Creation
- Necessity: leads to salvation, 140
- Neglect: of children, 336-337, 340-341, 349
- Nerves: how to train the body in relation to, 51
- Paradise, 227-228
- Parents: influence upon the child, 44-46; responsibility in relation to children's upbringing, 327, 329, 338-339, 341-342, 348. *See* Christian upbringing
- Passionateness, 203, 218-219, 281, 302. *See* Passions
- Passionlessness, 302, 319, 322-323. *See* Dispassion
- Passions, 205-206, 210, 220, 286, 289, 298-299, 301-304, 306, 309, 323-324; resolve in the face of, 33; opposing first manifestations of, 55; how to treat, 56; chief governing passion, 172-173; war with, 280-282; attacks of, 283; source of passions of soul and body, 284; source of passions of spirit, 285; forms and degrees of attacks and attraction to them, 288
- Patience: in deprivations, 263

- Patristic literature, 247. *See* Holy Fathers
- Penance, 182
- Penitent: essential attitude of, 211
- Penitential feelings: *see* Repentance
- Perfection, Christian, 209, 264; path to, 216, 315; final stages of, 323
- Philokalia*, 13, 325n
- Pitilessness for oneself, 166, 168
- Pleasing of God: is the path to God, 31; our chiefwork, 63; in youth, 86-87; final goal of man, 191
- Pleasure, 284; love of, 303
- Podvig*, 208-210, 223, 240, 315. *See* Labor
- Possessiveness, 303
- Prayer, 60, 144, 157, 235, 255-261, 319; personal rule of prayer, 255-256
- Prayers: of the poor, 145; before Communion, 171; how to pray in morning prayers, 234-235; learn by heart, 235
- Preaching: true preaching, 121-123
- Pre-eternal Child: appearance of, 108
- Prelest*, 209, 300
- Pride, 284, 308
- Priests: duty of, 120, 123
- Prince of this world: seduction of, 98. *See* Devil
- Procrastination, 127-128, 145
- Prodigal Son, 183, 186
- Prostrations, 144, 254, 256, 261
- Providence, 200, 308
- Purification, 23, 217, 306, 315; other methods of, 307
- Purity, 209, 217-218, 264, 298, 323; preserved in youth, 86-87
- Rationality, 142
- Reading, Spiritual, 214-215; rules for, 248-249; without the inner spirit is fruitless, 261
- Regret: contrition-producing feeling, 139
- Renunciation: of one's freedom for God's indwelling, 316
- Repentance, 216-217, 221, 275-276, 296; the beginning of the Christian life begins with, 35; teaching the child, 61; the crucible of, 92; awakening the salvific feeling of, 173; what arises from repentance in a sinner, 175; bridge to a vow, 176; main work after repentance, 206
- Repugnance: contrition-producing feeling, 139
- Resolve, 288; lack of, 209; feelings that lead to, 232
- Revelation of thoughts, 305-306
- Revelation, Divine, 227
- Riches: *see* Wealth
- Rule, Spiritual, 211, 214-216, 245; prayer rule, 256-257
- Rules: for the beginner of an ascetic labor, 218-219; to preserve the inner order of life, 220; guiding rules, 278
- Sacraments: grace that comes to the convert through, 200

- Sacred Images: the effect upon the child, 53-54
- Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 19
- Saints, Lives of, 247-249
- Salvation, 212; in dedicating oneself to God, 87; proclaiming the divine way of, 120; filling the spirit with understanding of, 122; in danger, 125; in relation to the body, 130; thoughts leading to, 140; acquisition of and economy of, 200; the foundation for, 221; paradigm of, 227-231; most direct path to salvific disposition, 237; condition for, 262; path to, 325; of our children, 336
- Sanctification, 23
- Satan, 22-23; his single concern, 99; third bond of the spirit, 117; in relation to self-reliance, 213-214. *See* Devil. *See* Prince of this world
- Scattered thoughts, 130-131
- Sciences, 344-345
- Scripture: as aid to viewing the spiritual world, 234-235; for children, 331, 334
- Secret instruction, 237
- Selfishness, 202
- Self-abasement, 161, 186, 276
- Self-deception, 129
- Self-forcing: *see* Forcing oneself
- Self-gratification, 251
- Self-indulgence: spiritual bond of, 111-113
- Self-instruction, 143
- Self-interest, 96
- Self-knowledge, 233
- Self-love, 188; root of all sin, 172-173; source of passions of soul and body, 284
- Self-mortification, 209
- Self-opinion, 211, 294, 308
- Self-opposition, 208, 220, 310. *See* Forcing oneself
- Self-pity, 162-164, 166, 168, 209-210, 301
- Self-pleasing, 203
- Self-reliance, 212-213, 251, 294
- Self-reproach, 173-174
- Self-righteousness, 251, 308
- Self-will, how it develops in a child, 49; how to avoid its development, 50; activity directed against and healing of, 250
- Senses, 51, 53, 226, 263, 269; receiving first impressions from sacred objects, 53-54; first arouasers of curiosity, 54; training to master the senses, 55; gathering of, 223; guarding of, 243; cleansing the senses of a deadened soul, 254
- Sensuality, 163-164, 168; the predominant quality in a sin-lover, 162
- Shame: in Confession, 179
- Silence: mental, 314
- Sin, 147, 167, 202-203, 275, 290-291; understanding how it takes possession of us, 46; turning away from, 92; habits that imprison a person in sin, 129; rejecting the sin you cling to, 138;

- look at sin from the devil's point of view, 139; a decisive battle with, 160; breaking the bonds of the inspirers of sin, 161-165, 168, 188; know your sins, 170; when the secret of sin is revealed, 200; attacks of, 283; most salvific way of expelling sin, 294; neglect, one of the greatest sins, 336
- Sinner, 101, 141-142; condition of, 94-95; what he is troubled about, 96-97; the life of, 97; inner mood and condition of, 99-100; awakening of, 102-103; state of one who has fallen repeatedly, 124; returning to God, 170
- Sirach, 198, 232
- Sleep, 49, 263, 275
- Soberness: of the senses, 223; of heart, 225, 260, 291; the science of, 310; the most important labor, 315
- Solitude, 157, 263
- Sons: *see* Children
- Sorrow: contrition-producing feeling, 139; of spirit vs. ordinary disappointment, 150-151; purification through, 306-309
- Soul, 260; in relation to memory and imagination, 53; preparation for a good attitude, 56; disposition in battle, 161; powers of, 202, 218, 222-223; three activities of the soul and body, 225; exercises applicable to the powers of the soul, 241; three powers of the soul, 242; first sign of regeneration of a soul, 253; source of passions in the soul (mental and desirous part), 283-284; resurrection of the soul, 323; enslaving the soul of a child, 337, 340-341, 344-345
- Spirit (of man), 281-282; qualities of the spirit, 60; ways of awakening, 109-111; attacks on the Spirit, 284-285
- Spirits, invisible kingdom of, 99
- Spiritual bonds: composition of, 111; of self-indulgence, 112-113; of the world, 114
- Spiritual life, 187, 194, 210, 224; condition for, 225; activity of, 233
- Spiritual Father, 216, 276, 278. *See* Guide, Spiritual
- Stillness, 321-322; fruit of, 325
- Submission: to a father, 305
- Suffering: inevitable, 209
- Supplication, Prayerful, 276
- Symbol of Faith, 142, 227, 231
- Tears, 217, 306-307
- Temptation, 299; in the face of, 33-34
- Ten Commandments, 171
- Thoughts: what to do when assailed by tempting thoughts, 164-165; blasphemous thoughts, 286; the chief form in which the enemy appears in us, 287-288; attention of the ascetic directed at, 289; war with individual thought, 298-302

- Tongue: guarding of the, 243  
 Trinity, 200; dwells in man, 191  
 Trusting in oneself, 34, 214
- Unacquisitiveness, 284  
 Unbelief, 299  
 Unfairness, 343  
 Unity with God, 191  
 Upbringing (Christian), 326-328, 330, 338, 349, 351; for the baptized child, 40; the aim of, 41-42; of chief importance in the beginning, 47; the chief aim, 65; why it isn't kept, 81-82; indications of deviations from, 82; how to correct deviation from, 83-84; the fruit of a good upbringing, 84-88
- Vainglory, 296, 341  
 Vanity: world of, 97  
 Vices: teaching basis of vices to children, 341, 343  
 Vigilance, 263; of the will, 223, 225, 260  
 Vigils, 264  
 Virginity, 263-264  
 Virtue(s), 206, 342-343; when the secret of virtue is revealed, 200; and light, 205; only true path to virtue, 209; impressing upon the will, 250; how to learn, 252; instilling virtue in our children, 336  
 Vision (of the other world), 226, 231, 234-236; of God, 313
- Warfare (inner or spiritual), 220, 281, 289; relation to inner life, 226; rules of, 289, 297; result of, 302; mental warfare, 302-303, 309
- Wealth, 326, 328, 333, 335, 343-344, 349, 351  
 Will of God, 313  
 Will, 202, 204, 226, 260, 281; training the will in a child toward the good, 58-59; weakened by the first passions, 88; breaking of the will to turn to God, 92; emptiness of, 96; arousing energy in an enfeebled will, 140-141; unification with grace, 154; redirecting the will, 166-167; gathering of, 223; curative exercises for, 242; for developing the will, 250-251
- Wisdom, 198, 200, 333, 335, 342, 345; how acquired, 296  
 Word of God: 241, 247, 249; how it replaces all methods for realization, 119-123; grace working through the Word of God, 144
- Works (good): *see* Deeds (good)  
 World, 111, 288; second bond of the spirit and how to be released from, 114-117; leaving of, 264-268; definition of, 265-266; unrighteous movements aided by the world, 285-286  
 World, spiritual, 227, 229, 236  
 Worship, 123  
 Wrath: self-directed, 233; self-directed to cut off pleasure, 284

## INDEX

- Yearning for God: is the goal, 313-315. *See* Longing
- Youth, 342; turbulent period of, 68; tendencies characteristic of, 71; thirst for impressions, 71-72; an inclination toward contact with others, 74; how to preserve purity and innocence of childhood or vow of Christian life, 73, 79; the pinnacle of danger, contact with the other sex, 75; how to avoid being wounded by the opposite sex, 76; guarding against temptations of youth, 77; the danger of exalting rational knowledge or one's own understanding, 78; the danger of worldly outlook, 79; quenching the life of grace in youth, 80-81; that which belongs to one who has preserved himself, 86; few saved from bad youth, 88; with a good upbringing, 328; need of instructors, 350
- Zeal, 210, 260, 316-317; the ardor of, 27; visible witness of Christian life, 28; penetrates our whole being, 28; must be fervent, 28; result of the fervour of, 29; wishes to do good in all fullness and purity, 29; persecutes sin, 29; the fire of, 30; gives the power to undertake labors, 30; without zeal one is a poor Christian, 30; how zeal is produced, 31-32; is the grace of the Lord, 32; kindling of, 92; two aspects of zeal born in the soul, 208; preserving zeal, 221-222, 224-225, 231-232, 235-238, 276; method for kindling and preserving zeal summarized, 237; exercises to kindle zeal, 241-242



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