

The Shepherd

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FROM THE FATHERS

“THE TIME will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

HOLY APOSTLE PAUL (2 TIM. 4:3-4)

“THE UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE of mankind has learned that falsehood and truth are incompatible, and cannot be reconciled or made coherent; that by their very nature they are among those opposites which are eternally repugnant, and can never combine or agree.”

ST HILARY OF POITIERS, + 367 A.D.

“IN INVESTIGATING the truth, we must observe that which is seemly. We ought to look for what is true with the greatest care. We must not put forward falsehood for truth, nor hide the truth in darkness, nor fill the mind with idle, involved or doubtful matters.”

ST AMBROSE OF MILAN, + 397 A.D.

“MARK whatever lies rumour spreads, for the fruitless conversations excited by fabricated hearsay are always idle. What conversation is to be deemed idle, if not that

which is ignorant of reason and the messenger of falsehood, which has as its aim either to fabricate ridiculous tales or to expound dubious ones as if they were certain? There are men of this type, too, while they thrive on fiction, they do not know how to beware of a lie. Let them listen to the Lord saying: ‘The mouth that lieth destroyeth the soul’ (Wis. 1:11).”

**SAINT PETER CHRYSOLOGUS, ARCHBISHOP OF
RAVENNA, + 450 A.D.**

“TRUTH ITSELF proves that they are not worthy of glory who, bringing forth words of wisdom from their mouth, bear bitter zeal and eagerness for unfruitful strife in their heart.”

VENERABLE BEDE OF JARROW, + 735 A.D.

“DO NOT KEEP COMPANY with those who enkindle in you suspicions about your fellow beings, for such suspicions are false, destructive and utterly deceitful. They are ploys through which the demons try to engulf the souls of those progressing in virtue. For there is only one way in which the demons can thrust them into the pit of perdition and active sin, and that is by persuading them to harbour evil suspicions about the outward behaviour and inner state of their neighbour.”

**NIKITAS STITHATOS, DISCIPLE OF ST SIMEON
THE NEW THEOLOGIAN, C11TH**

“TRUTH without humility is blind. That is why it becomes contentious: it tries to support itself on something, and finds nothing except rancour.”

**VENERABLE ELIAS THE PRESBYTER, ELEVENTH /
TWELFTH CENTURY**

A HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREATMARTYR DEMETRIUS

An Account of the Passion of the Holy
Greatmartyr, and About Our Sacred Duty of
Obedience to the Civil Authorities

Protopresbyter Thomas Marretta

Brothers and sisters!

Last Sunday, we commemorated one of the greatest saints of modern times, the holy, righteous archpriest of Krondstadt, John, and today we celebrate the memory of one of the greatest saints of antiquity, the holy, glorious greatmartyr Demetrius of Thessalonica. Saint Demetrius was governor-general of Thessalonica, a position that gave him authority not only over the city, but over all of Macedonia, as well as other parts of Greece and some areas of modern Bulgaria. The emperors at that time were the brutal Diocletian and Maximian, who presided over the most ferocious persecution of the Church in history, except for the one perpetuated by the Bolsheviks in Russia during the twentieth century.

As military governor, Demetrius was responsible for apprehending and executing the Christians of the region, but the young general was himself a secret Christian and instead used his lofty position to further the faith of Christ, becoming a new Saint Paul to the Thessalonians. Word of this of course reached Emperor Maximian, who at that time had just concluded a campaign in the northern Balkans. Learning that Maximian was on his way to deal with him, Demetrius freed all his slaves and gave his

possessions to the poor. Then he prepared himself with intense prayer and fasting for the coming ordeal.

Maximian imprisoned Demetrius in the lower rooms of a public bath, which have survived to this day as the crypt of the great church of the saint in Thessalonica. Meanwhile, the Emperor sought to win the people's favour by holding violent games of the sort to which the Romans were so addicted. Among these were wrestling matches featuring Maximian's Vandal lover Lyaeus, a huge German. A platform was set up, surrounded by spears pointing upwards, and the barbarian would hurl his opponents onto the spears. Many Christians were among the unfortunates forced to wrestle with Lyaeus. The tyrant and most of the soldiers were delighted when the brute skewered his victims, but the Thessalonians were horrified, for the better part of them had been converted to Christ by Saint Demetrius.

One of the soldiers who had been under Demetrius' command, a teenager called Nestor, visited the saint and asked his permission to take on Lyaeus. Although it seemed a hopeless mismatch, Demetrius blessed him to do this. Nestor miraculously prevailed over the barbarian and threw him to his death on the spears, for which Maximian had the youth beheaded. Then, having learned that Demetrius had blessed Nestor to contend with his favourite, the Emperor sent soldiers to the bath, and they ran through Saint Demetrius with their spears.

During those days, brothers and sisters, things could hardly have looked darker for the Christians, but only God, not man, can know the future. Soon the Lord raised up a ruler very different from Diocletian and Maximian. This was the renowned Emperor Constantine, and he put an end to the Great Persecution and legalised Christianity. A chapel was built over Saint Demetrius' grave, and many miracles were worked there. Later, a grand church dedicated to Saint Demetrius would cover the area, a building which exists to this day and is visited by every

devout pilgrim to Thessalonica. For centuries, vast quantities of healing myrrh poured out of the greatmartyr's relics. The ducts that carried it to the basin from which pilgrims drew it still survive. So copious was the flow that the Thessalonians were known to baptise babies in it!

Alas, because of our sins the city, for centuries kept inviolate by Saint Demetrius, eventually proved unworthy of his constant protection, and experienced a series of terrible sackings. Yet despite these calamities, even now the pious citizens of Thessalonica remain devoted to Saint Demetrius, and every day come to his basilica to pray, or simply to be in his presence. Anyone who has visited the church senses that the Thessalonians continue to love this saint above all others, and still trust and put their hope in him.

Brothers and sisters, Roman history is filled with the reigns of persecutors and deranged tyrants, men like Diocletian and Maximian, Caligula and Nero. By comparison, most of our contemporary American politicians would seem to be paragons of uprightness. Yet, Saint Demetrius and the other early Christians submitted to the authority of such rulers and obeyed it, except when these men were specifically commanding something that indubitably contravened incontrovertible principles of faith. This is difficult to comprehend for many modern-day Christians, whose inclinations tend more to suspicious and insubordinate, not to say fantastical, political theories than to the devout spirit of subordination, cooperation, respect, and obedience. Yet the early Christians were acting precisely in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures here, the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testaments.

In a brief sermon, I cannot quote you every relevant scriptural passage, but let us review at least portions of some of the more important:

From Exodus: *Thou shalt not speak ill of the ruler of thy people.*¹

¹Ex. 22:28; Acts 23:5

From Ezra: *Whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the King, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to chastisement, or for a fine of his property, or casting into prison.*²

To these lines from a letter of the Persian King Artaxerxes, the holy Ezra adds this comment: *Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who hath put it thus into the heart of the King.*³

From Ecclesiastes: *Observe the commandment of the King, and that because of the word of the oath of God.*⁴

Also, from the same book: *Even in thy conscience, curse not the King.*⁵

From Romans: *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power, but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*⁶

From Titus: *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.*⁷

And from First Peter: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the King, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*⁸

It is noteworthy that both authors of the New Testament texts adduced, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, were put to

² Ezr. 7:26

³ Ezr. 7:27

⁴ Eccl. 8:2

⁵ Eccl. 10:20

⁶ Rom. 13:1-2

⁷ Tit. 3:1-2

⁸ 1 Pet. 2:13-15

death, namely by a Roman emperor, the depraved Nero, who reportedly used Christians as torches to illumine his banquets. Perhaps when they wrote, the saints did not know every crime Nero would commit, but the All-Holy Spirit, Who inspired their epistles, most certainly knew! Nevertheless, their epistles command obedience to the civil authorities – pagan, even antichristian civil authorities – in the strongest terms.

Why so, dear Christians? Saint Paul, the mouth of Christ, explains: *Rulers, he writes, are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*⁹ In other words, even pagan governments are frequently motivated by an interest in furthering the public good. Besides this, we must obey government for conscience sake; that is, we must have a spirit not of indiscriminate complaining, criticism, and disobedience, but of purehearted subordination and obedience to government, in order to have a pure conscience before God – the prerequisite to pleasing Him. Since we Christians are forbidden to judge with undue harshness private individuals (our equals) in respect to private matters, much more are we obliged to extend to the civil authorities (our superiors) all possible benefit of the doubt with regard to their basic good intent in the exercise of their governance.

Of course, all governments do act at times in an unwise, unjust, or ill-intentioned manner, and certain governments act in extremely evil ways, with varying degrees of consistency. But this does not void the scriptural principle of Christian subjection for conscience sake. Rather, in the specific situations in which the civil authorities attempt to compel disobedience to the higher law of God or create a profoundly impossible moral dilemma, the Christian is relieved of the general obligation to submit and obey, but for that instance only. We see this in the life of Saint

⁹ Rom. 13:3,5

Demetrius, when the Emperor expected him to massacre the faithful, but instead he spread the faith among the people. In modern times we have seen it in Russia, when the Catacomb Church refused to collaborate with the murderous anti-religious campaign of the Bolsheviks.

These exceptions notwithstanding, it is abundantly clear from the language of the scriptural texts cited that God has delivered to us a command, not an option, to obey the civil authorities. After all, Saint Paul states plainly that those who resist the power of the government, *ordained of God, shall receive to themselves damnation*.¹⁰ Therefore, a heavy burden of proof rests, not on the civil authorities, but on those who frivolously impute evil motives to them or foster a spirit of inward or outward rebelliousness against them. We must never fall back on the exceptions to the rule lightly, for they are indeed a “court of final appeal”.

Also, it is important to remember that God works His purposes through the secular powers as through all creation, and that our ultimate citizenship is not earthly, but heavenly. This means that things not to our liking – including onerous or even cruel actions of the government – may nevertheless be to our benefit. In difficulties and hardships, Christ calls us to maintain the spiritual perspective and to endure gladly for His sake, because, as He says, *In your patience possess ye your souls*.¹¹

Obedience is not so much doing what we want to do, as doing what we would rather not. Except in the most exceptional of circumstances, it is not submission and obedience to the secular powers that is reprehensible, but the spirit of insubordination and disobedience. Sacred Scripture shouts this aloud. Unless we are being forced to sacrifice to idols or perform some other heinous deed, insubordination and disobedience to the civil authorities are not signs of an Orthodox mindset or conscience, but of ignorance, or sin, or misbelief, or unbelief.

¹⁰ Rom. 13:2

¹¹ Luke 21:19

It is no accident that heretical and unbelieving commentators and historians routinely pillory the Orthodox Church for subservience to the civil authorities, whether under ancient Rome, Byzantium, the Ottomans, or Tsarist Russia. The Orthodox Church, precisely because it is the Church of Christ, the Church of the apostles and martyrs, teaches submission and obedience to the government and cooperation with it, except when this would be the clearest, most blatant, most unquestionable betrayal of Christ and His truth.

Here there can be no question of personal, much less political prejudices entering in. All such opinions lie outside the realm of the Church's teachings. All of them are fallible. None of them are dogmas of the Church. Even bishops must obey the government, except when the government attempts to compel obedience in a matter that flagrantly and indubitably contravenes the law of God or interferes with the Church's purely internal affairs. The apostles do not except bishops from their command that Christians obey the civil authorities. If this be so, then what of us ordinary Christians?

Besides this, we must be especially careful to avoid bringing in theories connecting current political situations and events to the reign of Antichrist. The Holy Chief Apostle Peter says plainly: *No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*¹²

Many people over the centuries – occasionally even holy people – have forgotten this warning, with the inevitable result that, having misled others, they were always proved wrong in the end. If this were not enough, we have Christ Who, although omniscient as the Son of God, as the Son of Man tells us: *Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*¹³ After this, who would presume to speculate on the subject!

¹² 2 Pet. 1:20

¹³ Mark 13:32

Unfortunately, in our time the Internet and social media have made possible the unprecedented proliferation of misinformation and ill-reasoned, ill-supported, yet *cunningly devised*¹⁴ theories regarding all sorts of topics. Worse, some of this is being propagated by persons in clerical rank. No sooner does a new event occur or a new trend emerge, than the self-anointed pundits rush to provide their glib explanations, the ingenuity of which is often bounded only by the limits of the inventors' imaginations. Intellectual circumspection and integrity demand that we view their explanations in every case with considerable scepticism, but the more so when accepting them might well incite our base passions and put us at variance with the clear, age-old teaching and ethos of the Church of Christ.

This is why, dear Christians, we must be especially wary when demagogues attack the basic good intent of the secular authorities. Such unsparing criticism has become the norm, not the exception in our society, and modern technology is likely to make this pernicious trend ever more prevalent for the foreseeable future. But in many, if not most cases, these assaults do not meet strict standards of proof, or even plausibility. In any case, if the authorities have in fact acted with poor judgment or bad faith in one instance, this in no wise necessarily establishes that they have done so in another. For this reason the overstretched theories in question, with their saltations in evidence and logic, but rarely stand up to serious scrutiny.

It will be readily understood that the complexities of administering public health care in the era of the novel Coronavirus provide a field day for these attacks of demagogues and conspiracy theorists.

Again, to accuse falsely *the powers that be* – which, according to the Apostle, are *ordained of God*¹⁵ – is intrinsically a graver sin than to accuse falsely a private

¹⁴ 2 Pet. 1:16

¹⁵ Rom. 13:1

individual – itself a serious transgression. Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, in his wonderful book, *On True Christianity*, expresses this clearly. “Although it is a sin to condemn anyone,” he writes, “and a grievous sin at that, speaking evil of the authorities is a far greater sin.”¹⁶ So, let us tread with extreme caution and not rush to judge those set over us with civil authority, but offer them the willing obedience that is their due, in all except the most extreme circumstances. So doing, we shall prove ourselves followers of the blessed ancient Christians such as Saint Demetrius the Myrrh-gusher, of the inspired authors of the divine Scriptures, and of our Saviour Himself.

We shall prove that we have the mindset, not of the world, but of the Holy Church of Christ, which teaches us to judge our own faults, and not to *judge them that are without*.¹⁷ We have courts to judge governmental and medical malfeasance. And where these have not established criminal wrongdoing, we have, in this country, the ballot box and the free-market system to express our sympathies and preferences.

If we humble ourselves and put away political and secular prejudices, discerning spiritual things spiritually,¹⁸ and maintaining proper balance and moderation, as the people of God should, we are certain to choose the right approach here. This means always remaining intensely focused on our own personal spiritual life, which is vastly more important than our political notions.

May God help us to maintain true inner peace and thereby to assist others in maintaining theirs, by the prayers of the Holy Greatmartyr Demetrius and all the saints. Amen.

¹⁶ On True Christianity, Vol. 4, Article 4, Ch. 4:11

¹⁷ 1 Cor. 5:12

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14

WOMAN AS A SYMBOL OF CHRIST

By

Saint Nicolas Velimirović

CAN YOU BELIEVE that Christ the Saviour portrayed Himself in the guise of a woman in two of His parables? One is that of the woman who took three measures of flour and made dough. But first let us speak of the other one where the Lord tells us about the woman who had ten drachmas and lost one. These are the most mysterious of all the Saviour's parables. As the parable of the lost drachma is short, we quote it in full.

The Ten Drachmas

Luke 15:8-9

What woman, having ten drachmas, if she loses one, does not light a candle and sweep the house and look diligently till she finds it? And after she has found it she calls in her friends and neighbours and says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma that I lost."

At first glance this parable seems so simple, or even naive, that it does not impress the reader of the Gospel. But in reality the mystery of the universe is revealed in this simple parable.

If we take it literally, it evokes bewilderment. The woman lost only one drachma. But even ten drachmas do not represent a great sum; in fact a woman who has got only ten drachmas must be very poor indeed. Let us assume, first of all, that the finding of the lost drachma meant a great gain for her. Yet it still presents a paradox, for how is it that if she is such a poor woman she lights lamps and sweeps the house and – strangest of all – calls

in all her friends and neighbours to share her joy. And all because of one drachma! Such a waste of time, – lighting a candle and setting the house in order first of all! But then if she invites her neighbours, according to Eastern custom, she is obliged to offer them something to eat and drink, no small expense for a poor woman. To fail to do so would be to ignore an unalterable custom.

Another important point to note is that she did not invite only one woman to whom she might have offered sweets which would not have involved great expense. But she invited many friends and neighbours and even if she entertained them modestly the expense would far exceed the value of the drachma she has found. Why, then, should she seek the drachma so diligently and rejoice at finding it, only to lose it again in another way?

If we try to understand this parable in its literal sense, it does not fit into the frame of everyday life but leaves the impression of something exaggerated and incomprehensible. So let us try to discover its mystical or hidden meaning. Who is the woman? And why is it a woman and not a man when a man is more likely to lose money in the ordinary routine of life? Whose house is it, that she sweeps and fills with light? Who are her friends and neighbours? If we look for the spiritual instead of the literal meaning of the parable, we shall find the answers to those questions. The Lord said, Seek and ye shall find!

The woman represents Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God. The ten drachmas are His. It is He Who has lost one of them and sets out to look for it. The drachmas are not coins of gold or silver. According to Orthodox theologians, the number ten represents fullness. The nine un-lost drachmas are the nine orders of angels. The number of angels is beyond the grasp of mortals, for it exceeds our power of calculation. The lost drachma represents mankind in its entirety. Therefore Christ the Saviour came down from heaven to earth, to His house, and lit a candle, the light of the knowledge of Himself. He cleaned out the

house - that is, He purified the world of diabolic impurity - and found the lost drachma, erring and lost humanity. Then He called His “friends and neighbours” (after His glorious Resurrection and Ascension), that is to say all the countless hosts of the Cherubim and Seraphim, Angels and Archangels, and revealed to them His great joy. *Rejoice with Me. I have found the lost drachma!* That means: I have found men to fill the void in the Kingdom of Heaven caused by the fall of the proud angels who apostatised from God. At the end of time the number of these found and saved souls will have grown to billions or, in the language of Scripture, will be as countless as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.

Our Lord described Himself as a woman because women are more careful than men in looking after property, in keeping the house in order and in receiving guests. If this short parable, which consists of only two sentences, is explained in this way, whose heart will not flutter? For it contains the whole tragedy of the world, visible and invisible. It explains why the Son of God came to earth. It sheds a bright ray of light on the history of mankind and the tragedy of every separate individual's existence. It confronts us with an urgent decision, because our life is swiftly passing – a decision as to whether we want to be the lost drachma found by Christ or not. Christ is looking for us. Are we going to hide from Him or let ourselves be found by Him before death hides us from Him, from the world and from life?

It is a vital question and it lies within our will to accept or reject Him. After death it will cease to be an open question, and then no one will expect an answer from us.

The Three Measures of Flour

Luke 13:20, 21

And again Jesus said, To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till the whole was leavened.

This is another of Christ's mysterious parables that many find hard to understand. The actual theme, taken from everyday life, is simple and clear. From the earliest times housewives have been bakers; they take flour, put it in bowls, prepare leaven, knead the dough, and bake it. It has been the daily task of the housewife in East and West for thousands of years. But it occurred to no one to take this simple work as a figure or symbol of the Kingdom of God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom nothing was too simple or unimportant, took this familiar chore, and used it to explain something stupendous and extraordinary. He could picture to Himself His own Mother at her work.

I will put the following questions to the reader of the Gospel. Why did Christ take woman as His example instead of man when men have also been bakers throughout the centuries? And why the leaven, while unleavened bread was also in wide use? And why did the woman take three measures and not one or two or four? Finally, what connection or similarity is there between the Reign of God and the kitchen work of a housewife?

If these questions cannot be answered, how can we understand the parable? Yet to answer them without a spiritual key would only lead to further difficulties. All the parables deal with the superficial, but their real meaning lies deep down. They appeal to the eye and seem obvious but they concern the spirit and the spiritual.

This parable has a twofold spiritual interpretation. The first has to do with the three principal races of mankind, the second with the three main faculties or powers of the human soul. In brief, what is outstanding and unusual in this parable is the historical and personal process of man's salvation.

After the Great Flood, there stemmed from the sons of Noah – Sem, Cham, and Japhet – three races of mankind: the Semites, Chamites and Japhetites. These are the three measures of flour into which Christ puts his heavenly

leaven – the Holy Spirit. That means He came as Messiah and Saviour to all the races and nations of mankind without exception. Just as with leaven a woman can transform natural flour into bread, so Christ through the Holy Spirit transforms natural men into the children of God, into immortal inhabitants of the Heavenly Kingdom. That is why according to Orthodox teaching, holy men are called earthly angels or heavenly men, because being leavened by the Holy Spirit they are no longer common flour or unleavened biscuits that lie on the earth, but they are leavened bread that has risen. According to the Bible unleavened bread was the bread of slaves while leavened bread was for free men, God's children. So, for that reason, the Orthodox Church uses leavened bread at Holy Communion.

The process of leavening began on that first Trinity Sunday of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven on the Apostles. From that day on, this process has been continuing down to the present day and will continue till the end of time when all will be leavened. This, then is the historical interpretation of the enigmatic parable about the woman baker.

The second interpretation is psychological and personal and concerns the three main faculties or powers of the human soul: intellect, heart and will, or in other words, the power to think, the power to feel and the power to act. These are the three unseen measures of the soul of the inner man. These three powers either remain totally unleavened, like the bread of slaves, or they are leavened with the leaven of malice and hypocrisy. Therefore, Christ told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy because that is the worldly and human leaven, which weakens all the powers of the soul and leaves it crippled and sick.

But Christ the Saviour brought to earth a new leaven to raise the powers of the soul. Those who receive this new heavenly leaven through baptism in the name of the Holy

Trinity are called the sons and daughters of God, the heirs of the eternal Kingdom. They will not die, for even when they leave the body, they will be alive and will live for ever. This heavenly leaven fills them with the light of reason, the warmth of divine love, and the glory of good works. All three powers of the soul grow together in harmony and ascend to heaven, to perfection. As the Lord said, Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Woman has been taken as the paragon and not man and Christ has compared Himself to a woman baker, because woman as wife and mother lovingly prepares the bread for the family, whereas the male baker bakes bread to sell for gain. But everything that Christ has done for mankind was done out of pure love. Hence, He compares Himself to a woman baker. This is the second interpretation, but both interpretations of this parable are true. The historical and psychological meaning derived from this simple parable is like a branching oak that grows out of an acorn, for it is truly majestic in its historical breadth and profound in its psychological depth.

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POINTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

“Can you tell me why the New Calendar Churches and those in communion with them are so sensitive about the calendar issue? why are they so quick in condemning traditionalists?” **J. C. by e-mail.**

Of course the true answer to your question is that you should ask them! Because only the New Calendarists and those in communion with them can really answer for themselves, but I think I can hazard a couple of ideas which may not be far off the mark.

First of all, some of the Old Calendarists are so extreme, so intent on condemning others and on constant vigil to see their faults, that I think that many New Calendarists think that all traditionalists are tarred with the same brush. This is not a very intelligent conclusion, but it is an understandable one. We all tend to fall into similar errors, judging whole peoples en bloc, rather than looking and listening to see what their true position is.

Again, many New Calendarists and “those in communion with them” (you were wise to add that phrase!), especially out here in the West where they are in a majority, have been treated unkindly and rudely by Old Calendarists, who think that harshness and rudeness are manifestations of righteous zeal. They are not. However, once bitten, as the proverb says, twice shy, and thereafter they are wary that all Old Calendarists might be the same or assume that they might be.

Thirdly, I believe that many New Calendarists understand that their position is a wrong one; they understand that the involvement of their leaders and hierarchs in ecumenical activity is contrary to Orthodox tradition, but they go along with these things for a variety of reasons: convenience, family connections, failure to apply themselves to study those things which pertain to their salvation, false loyalty to clergymen, comfort, and so on. However, in doing this they also feel a little guilt, and one of the things that we tend to do when we feel our own position is unsound or when we feel guilt about something is to strike out at others, deflecting, we think, attention from ourselves.

Then again, there is herd-mentality; one wishes to be “in” with the crowd, and so one adopts the views and opinions one hears from them. (This, of course, can also apply to Old Calendarists). Often the leaders, – and I do not necessarily mean their leaders in the hierarchy or clergy, but often just those who become vocal proponents of their position, – are not adverse to spreading false

rumours about the stance of the traditionalists. I remember years ago, when we were in ROCA, which was then part of the traditionalist movement within Orthodoxy, a lady from the Moscow Patriarchate parish visited us. She was surprised that we would allow her to go inside the church, but said: “I would not be allowed to come to a service, though, would I?” Well, of course she would have been and would have been welcome to do so, but somewhere someone had told her that we would not accept her in Christian love.

All this may raise the question, why the New Calendarists, and those in communion with them, are so particularly vehement in their attacks on the moderate traditionalists, and I think the reason for this is that it is easy to dismiss the extremists as fanatical, and therefore they pose no threat. But those that are moderate, understanding of the difficulties, willing to show, as far as lies within them, Christian love, and yet are firm in their adherence to the Church’s traditions perhaps seem more of a threat to their chosen position because they cannot be easily dismissed as nut-cases.



THE COMING MONTH

OCTOBER begins with the festival of the Protection of the Mother of God (1st/14th). The celebration was inaugurated to give thanks for an event recorded in the life of Saint Andrew the Fool for Christ. The Imperial City of Constantinople had been besieged by barbarian forces, and the faithful resorted to the Church at Blachernae to beseech the aid of the Mother of God in their plight. Saint Andrew was among those people, and he looked up and saw a vision of the Theotokos holding her veil, as if it were

a protection, over the congregation. He pointed this vision out to a young lad, Epiphanius, who stood near him in the church. The enemies were put to flight and the City was delivered. Over the generations, the feast, which was thus inaugurated by an event in the reign of the pious Emperor Leo the Wise (886-912 A.D.), has taken on a wider significance and is now celebrated as a thanksgiving for all the occasions when the Mother of God has manifested herself as our protectress.

After the Protection, the two most important feasts in October are those of the Optina Elders on 10th/23rd, and of the Great Martyr Demetrius the Myron-Streaming of Thessalonica on 26th October/8th November. Both of these festivals are celebrated with a Vigil service on the preceding evening. Among the other saints, we have:

The **Venerable Ammon the Egyptian** (4th/17th) is one of the Great Desert Fathers, a contemporary and close spiritual friend of St Antony the Great. When he was very young, he was orphaned and so was entrusted to the care of an uncle, who brought him up. The uncle in due time arranged a marriage for him, but when the bridal couple retired to their chamber, they opened the Scriptures and began to read from St Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, in which they saw portrayed some of the pitfalls that the married can encounter, and so they decided that they would live in virginity and take up the ascetical life. For a short period they settled in a hut on Mount Nitria, but they soon realised that living together, even though not as man and wife, was a cause of temptation rather than one of mutual help and support and so they separated. Ammon lived a very austere life, eating only sparingly and that only every two or three days. As he grew in spiritual virtue, disciples gathered around him, and a community was formed. Whenever a new aspirant arrived, Ammon would move out of his own cell, and build a new one for himself, leaving his and everything in it to the new brother. In this way he gave an example of non-possessiveness and

detachment. In time the whole mountain was covered with the cells of his disciples. In time some of the brethren wanted to live in greater quietness, and when once St Antony visited Nitria, St Ammon asked him what should be done about this. After eating at the customary ninth hour (three in the afternoon), the two elders walked out into the desert and continued to walk until sundown. At the place which they had reached they planted a Cross in the ground, and at that place a new community was founded, which became known as the Cells, because, as at Nitria, each of the fathers there had his own separate hut or cell. When Abba Ammon died, St Antony was far away on his mountain, but he broke off the conversation that he was having with the monks there, and told them that he perceived the soul of Abba Ammon being accompanied by a host of Angels, going up into Heaven.

The **Venerable Martyr Bercharius** (16th/29th) was born in Aquitaine, and in his childhood came to the notice of St Nivard, the Archbishop of Rheims, on account of his intelligence and modesty. The Archbishop undertook the education of the child and eventually ordained him a priest. He also permitted the young cleric to seek monastic training under various experienced elders. When he had trained in the monastic discipline, he returned to serve his benefactor, St Nivard. It is said that the Archbishop wished to found a monastic house within his diocese, and set out with the young priestmonk to find a suitable spot. As they rested on their journey under a tree at Hautvilliers, they saw a white dove hovered round the tree, and accepted this as a sign that they should found their monastery there. St Bercharius became the first abbot of the house, and not long after its founding the aged Archbishop died. In addition to this first house, St Bercharius founded other monasteries at Moutier-en-Der and at Louze. Before his end, he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He died as a martyr. One of the younger monks in his monastery, Dagwin by name, chafed under the obedience required of him, and having once been rebuked for his disobedience,

he resolved to murder his master. He entered the abbot's cell at night and stabbed him. As he fled from the scene of his crime, he threw the knife into the monastery fishpond, but was horrified to see that it did not sink but floated. This miracle so moved him that he himself sounded the alarm, and he was brought before the dying abbot, who pardoned him his sin. Two days later, as a result of the injury he had received, St Bercharius died (26th March, 685 A.D.). He was buried in the monastery church, but later his relics were found to be incorrupt and were enshrined at Moutier-en-Der.

Saint Bessarion Sarai of Romania (21st October/3rd November) was born in Bosnia in 1714. In his youth he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and joined the Monastery of St Sabbas the Sanctified there, being tonsured a monk with the name Bessarion. On his return to his home country, he visited Mount Athos, but then entered the Monastery of Pakrou in Slavonia. While here he was ordained deacon and priest. At this period the peoples of Banat and Transylvania were living under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and strenuous efforts were made to convert the Orthodox faithful to the Unia. In 1742, the Serbian Patriarch Arsenius IV, seeing the gifts granted to Father Bessarion, sent him to Banat and Transylvania to care for these people and to confirm them in Orthodoxy. Arriving there, he travelled from village to village urging the faithful to remain faithful to Orthodoxy. For his efforts he was apprehended by the authorities and imprisoned and subjected to torture. He was taken from prison to prison, and eventually to Kufstein in the Tyrol, where, it is believed, he died as a result of the sufferings and torments he had endured. Along with St Bessarion, we also commemorate St Sophronius of Ciorara, a monastic father who also contested against Roman Catholic proselytism in the eighteenth century; and the Martyrs Oprea Milaouch, Moses of Sibiu and John of Gales, who all died confessing the Orthodox faith in defiance of the pressures brought upon the faithful by the Hapsburgs.

NBS from the Richmond Diocese of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece

CHRISMATIONS

On Sunday 25th August/7th September, **Yiannis and Revveka Papacharalambous** were received by Holy Chrismation into the Church of the GOC by their pastor **Presbyter Evangelos Liassi**. They both partook of the Holy Mysteries at the Divine Liturgy.

VISIT OF METROPOLITAN AMBROSE

Metropolitan Ambrose arrived at the Brotherhood on Saturday 31st August with **Fr. Evangelos**, having first visited Gunnersbury Cemetery to serve a memorial service for the sisters of the former Convent of the Annunciation, Brondesbury Park. Later that day, His Eminence chaired the meeting of the COCOA trustees. On 1st/4th September, the Feast of the Indiction, His Eminence celebrated the Divine Liturgy assisted by **Archimandrite Daniel, Priest Gabriel Lawani, Priest Borislav Popov, Priestmonk Sabbas, Priest Evangelos Liassi and Deacon Ioan Turcu**. On 3rd/16th September His Eminence **Metropolitan Gerontios of Piraeus and Salaminos** arrived to celebrate the Feast of the Saint Edward the Martyr. On the feast, the aforementioned clergy were joined by **Priestmonk Loukas and Priest Eugeni Doroshine** from Lyons. In his sermon Metropolitan Gerontios commended Metropolitan Ambrose for his work in making the lives of the western saints known to those in Greece.

VISITORS TO THE BROTHERHOOD

On Sunday 7th September **John Clarke** brought a group of visitors to see the Church.

SAINT TRYPHON GARDENING GROUP

On Saturday 24th August and 20th September, a number of volunteers spent a day helping in the garden and grounds surrounding the church. We are extremely grateful to them for their assiduous labours.

GIFTS FROM SWEDEN

Dymphna Thompson returned from her recent visit to the Convent of St Philothei in Sweden with a supply of icons kindly mounted by Mother Magdalene and Sister Lydia for our new catechumens. The sisters also kindly donated a mounted icon of St Isidora of Tabenna for the church.

Practical Tip

There is little so off-putting to new comers to a church as the over-zealous, smiley greeting of the “come-and-join-us” enthusiast. People often want a little time and space to acclimatise, and do not want to feel that they are going to be pounced upon. But regular churchgoers should not forget their ministry to newcomers, and should be ready to welcome them and to help them. Here we sometimes see people left stranded at the church door because no one (unless they are volunteered) bothers to show them the way over to the house for refreshments, or then left on their own in the hall because everyone is too shy (a form of pride), or too involved in their own ready-made clique, to try and make them feel at home. If we treat people who do manage to find their way to our churches like this, we are certainly falling far short of going out into the highways and byways and compelling them to come in!