

# THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

## PREFACE



I truly came to know Father Kosmas or Kosmas Aitolos, the "Apostle of the Poor," while preparing materials for my course in the History of Modern Hellenism (the period of Ottoman domination) which I have taught at Hellenic College for the past decade. I was overjoyed to discover an amazing and extraordinary personality in a period of history not known for its outstanding individuals.

The discovery was confirmed in part by the positive response of my students to many passages that were quoted in the course of my lectures from the Teaching of Kosmas' extant sermons.

I therefore proceeded to prepare an English translation of Father Kosmas, also known among Orthodox Christians as "Equal to the Apostles."

The decision to publish my efforts was further encouraged by the favorable response to the publication of Kosmas' First Didache (teaching) in a recent number of *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*.

The credit for introducing Father Kosmas to English-speaking readers, however, belongs to Dr. Constantine Cavamos, who published a slim volume entitled *St. Cosmas*

*Aitolos*. In it Dr. Cavamos presented a translation of the life of Kosmas, written by Sappheiros Christodoulides, Kosmas' disciple and first biographer, a small number of

excerpts from his Teaching, together with an introduction.

The Teaching of St. Kosmas, who was considered a saint even by his contemporaries, deserved, I felt, to be treated more fully, for as the reader will come to recognize, he has much to say even with the passage of nearly two hundred years.

Although Kosmas' writings have often been printed in their entirety in Greek (the bibliography on Kosmas now numbers well over six hundred items), no one has produced a complete critical edition of his work. For this reason there can be no definitive study or translation of Kosmas until this is done. Moreover, I have a grave suspicion that Kosmas may have been "embellished" since he personally did not write anything except for some letters.

For my translation I have used the Greek text that was printed as an appendix in the excellent study of Markos A. Gkiolas, *Ho Kosmas Aitolos kai he Epoche tou* (Athens, 1972), who relies on Sophronios Papakyriakos, *Kosma tou Aitolou, hieromartyros kai isapostolou, didachai, epistolai kai martytion* (Athens, 1953) and Augoustinos N. Kantiotes, *Kosmas ho Aitolos, didachai, vios kai akolouthia* (3rd ed., Athens, 1966), both of whom I consulted.

Except for some 122 one or two-line "Prophecies and Sayings" attributed to Kosmas (of these I present only a select few), I have fully translated Kosmas' extant writings. The only other exceptions are four omissions indicated by a line of spaced periods on pages 50, 74, 93, and 128, three of which repeat the same story.

In these omitted passages, Father Kosmas is quoted as having made some rather uncharitable remarks and characterizations of Jews. If I were producing a scholarly text from a critical edition, I would have felt duty bound to include those portions as well. But since my effort is aimed at the general reader and, hopefully, for the young people of our Church, with the idea of provoking discussion on the many social and religious themes Kosmas presents and deals with, I felt it would be unedifying and rather destructive to include these brief anti-Jewish passages. The latter would greatly detract from the otherwise very positive and enlightening ideas Kosmas has to offer and would probably lead the discussion into areas that are totally unproductive.

It gives me great pleasure to thank a number of people to whom I am greatly indebted and who have made my task much easier:

His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos for his continued moral and financial support; my colleague, Dr. Costas Proussis, who read most of the translation, for his helpful suggestions and assistance in clarifying numerous obscure passages (needless to say, any errors still to be found are mine alone); Mrs. Vasiha Laskaris for graciously preparing the drawings in the present volume, based on the various ways in which iconographers have depicted St. Kosmas; Nk. Constantine Youssis for the Icon of his fellow Epirotes on the cover; Mr. Constantine Vaporis for carefully preparing the manuscript for the printers; and Mrs. Sophia Caparisos for reviewing the entire volume with great care and affection and for making numerous stylistic suggestions. To all the above I owe more than I can repay. N.M.V. , Easter 1977,

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### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important and attractive individuals to appear among the Greek people during the period they were subject to the Ottoman Turks was a diminutive monk named Kosmas. Because he was a native of the province of Aitolia in western Greece, he is best known as Kosmas the Aitolian, although among the people of his time he was simply referred to as Father Kosmas.

His love, concern, and tireless labor among ordinary people, his honest and forthright preaching, his unassuming character, his sterling and uncompromising personality, and his great love for and dedication to Jesus Christ earned for him the titles of 'Equal to the Apostles,' 'Teacher of the Greek Nation,' and the 'Apostle of the Poor.'

The impact Father Kosmas had on the people—both lay and clergy—was such that he was considered a saint many years before he was cruelly put to death by the Turks. The secret of his great success was due, above all, to the fact that he not only preached the Gospel but lived it in such a way that many who heard him were moved to follow in his footsteps.

According to Kostas Loverdos, a writer of the past century:

The anchorite and hieromonk Kosmas arrived [in Kephallenia] in 1777. Initially, he preached in the rural areas and then in the city, being followed by thousands of inhabitants of every class and sex. The austerity of his character, the evangelical simplicity of his words and the power of his arguments brought about such a transformation of life that families that were enemies were seen living together as brothers, having exchanged the kiss of peace and asking of each other forgiveness. Men who had committed serious crimes were seen crying bitterly over their sins. Broken marriages of long standing were restored again. Prostitutes abandoned their shameful work and returned filled with repentance and prudence. Rich upper class young ladies gave away their valuable jewelry to the poor or to churches. Court trials ceased. Stolen articles were returned. Insults were forgiven. Depraved men took up the monastic habit and followed the preacher. In a few words, the appearance of the island was transformed." (See *Historia tes nesou Kephallenias*. . . [Kephallenia, 18881, pp. 171-72.]

Kosmas, who was baptized Konstas, was born in a mountain village named Mega Dendron (Great Tree) in 1714 to parents who hailed from Epiros but had moved to the province of Aitolia, where they worked as weavers. Kosmas remained and worked with his parents until the age of twenty. He had received little or no formal education during this time, although his brother Chrysanthos had given him the rudiments, of an education when he was much younger.

Unhappy with his life and with his inability to understand the Gospel which he loved to hear in church, Kosmas decided to leave his village and his parents to receive an education.

Kosmas first attended the school in the village of Segditsa. Later he moved on to the School in Lompotina, where he studied with the teacher Ananias Dervisianos. In four years, Kosmas had made such progress in his studies that he was appointed an assistant teacher in the same school.

Kosmas, however, did not confine himself to teaching; he often preached in the church as well, thus giving an early expression to what would be his life's work.

From the village of Lompotina Kosmas moved on to the school in the village of Gouva, in the area of Vragiana, whose school was directed by his brother Chrysanthos. There Kosmas studied Greek, theology, and even some medicine. The latter would prove very

useful to him during his ministry among the poor and often illiterate mountain populations he felt called to serve.

How long Kosmas remained in Vragiana is not known. Nor do we know many details of his life for the next ten years, for Father Kosmas rarely spoke of himself, and his biographer and disciple, Sapheiros Christodoulides, adds few facts. Father Kosmas was too modest, while Christodoulides was more interested in the Teaching of Kosmas and in the miracles that accompanied his preaching and work than in biographical details.

Once, feeling the need to introduce himself to his audience, Kosmas said:

My false, earthly, and fruitless homeland is the province of Arta, in the district of Apokouro. My father, my mother, my family are pious Orthodox Christians. However, I too am, my brethren, a sinful man, worse than anyone. But I'm a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified - . . . Leaving my homeland fifty years ago, I traveled to many places . . . and especially to Constantinople. I stayed the longest on the Holy Mountain, seventeen years, where I wept over my sins. (See page 157)

We know that Kosmas went to Mount Athos in 1749 to attend the Theological Academy established there in the same year by Patriarch Kyrillos V (1748-51; 1752-57) at the Monastery of the Great Lavra. At Athonias, the name by which the Academy was known, Kosmas studied under such well-known clergymen-teachers as Neophytos Kafsokalyvites, Panagiotes Palamas, and especially Evgenios Voulgares, who was the school's most distinguished director and teacher.

Unfortunately for theological education, within ten years trouble and conflict arose in the Academy which resulted in Voulgares' departure. Months later, Kosmas also left (the Academy would close within the next year) and entered the Monastery of Philotheou where he became a monk, changing his name from Konstas to Kosmas.

In Kosmas' own words: "I stayed the longest on the Holy Mountain, seventeen years, where I wept over my sins. Among the countless gifts which my Lord has granted me, he made me worthy to acquire a little Greek learning and I became a monk." (page 15)

Months later, Kosmas the monk responded to the invitation of his fellow monks and was ordained deacon and then priest. But the life of a cloistered monk was insufficient for Kosmas. He felt the very strong need to leave the quiet of the monastery to enter the 'world' and serve his fellow Christians. "Studying the holy and sacred Gospel," he said, "I found in it many and different teachings which are all pearls, diamonds, treasures, riches, joy, gladness eternal life. Among the other things I also found this teaching which Christ says to us: no Christian, man or woman, should be concerned only with himself, how he can be saved, but must be concerned also with his brethren so that they may not fall into sin." (pages 15-16)

Convinced that he had a call to preach, Kosmas received permission from Patriarch Sophronios II of Constantinople (1757-61). For the next nineteen years, beginning in 1760, Father Kosmas became an itinerant preacher, spending most of his time among the poorest and most unfortunate of his fellow Orthodox Christians. Traveling on foot, by donkey and by ship, followed by scores and often by hundreds and even thousands of men and women, priests and monks, Kosmas undertook three 'apostolic' journeys. The first took him from Mt. Athos to Constantinople (Istanbul), through European Turkey and Macedonia, Thessaly, and Aitolia, crossing over to the island of Kephallenia. On his second journey he covered much of the same provinces except that he visited the islands of Skiathos and Skopelos instead of Kephallenia and spent much additional time in Aitolia, going northward into Epiros and southern and central Albania. His third and final journey was spent primarily in Albania, Epiros, Aitolia and Thessaly, but also included the Ionian Islands, the Kyklades, and even some of the Dodecanese Islands.

Among the factors contributing to Kosmas' enormous success as a preacher were his humility and his identification with the people among whom he moved and worked.

"Not only," he said of himself, "am I not worthy to teach you, but not even worthy to kiss your feet, for each of you is worth more than the entire world." (page 14) On another occasion he said: "I'm a servant of our Lord God Jesus Christ who was crucified. Not that I'm worthy to be a servant of Christ, but Christ condescended to have me because of his compassion." (page 15)

He spoke in their language, taking his illustrations from the experiences and surroundings with which they were familiar. He was selfless, expending all of his time and energy in the service of others, while never accepting any payment for his services.

Hearing, my brethren, this sweetest teaching which our Christ spoke, that we should labor among our brethren without charge, it seemed to me in the beginning to be very hard. Later, however, it seemed very sweet, like a honeycomb, and I glorified and glorify my Christ a thousand times because he guarded me from the passion for money. So with the grace of our Lord and God Jesus

Christ, the Crucified One, I have neither purse, nor house, nor chest, nor another cassock from the one I am wearing." (pages 16-17)

Although he was a monk who believed monks could only be saved if they remained in monasteries, Father deliberately took Ms chances:

A monk can't be saved in any other way except to escape far from the world . . . But you may say, you too are a monk. Why are you involved in the world? I too, my brethren, do wrong. But because our race has fallen into ignorance, I said to myself, let Christ lose me, one sheep, and let him win the others. Perhaps God's compassion and your prayers will save me too." (page 111)

In addition to feeding the soul, Father Kosmas attempted to feed the body as well as the mind. He spoke out against social injustices, against the abuse of the poor and uneducated and against the inequities that existed between men and women. Moreover, Kosmas was a great foe of illiteracy and a strong advocate of education.

Against social injustice and the abuse of the poor by the economically more affluent he said:

We too, my brethren, if we wish to call our God father must be compassionate, and cause our brethren to rejoice, and then we can call God father. If, however, we are merciless, hardhearted, and we cause our brethren to be poisoned, we put death in their hearts." (page 22)

On another occasion he urged:

You elders who are heads of the villages, if you wish to be saved, should love all the Christians as your children and should apportion taxes according to each person's ability to pay and not play favorites. (page 53)

Against what today we could call male chauvinism, Kosmas boldly preached to the mountaineers of Epiros and Albania:

Don't treat your wife like a slave, because she is God's creature as you are. God was crucified for you as he was for her. You call God father; she calls him father too. You have one faith, one baptism. God does not consider her inferior. (page 28)

On another occasion he said:

There are women who are better than men. If perhaps you men wish to be better than women, you must do better works than they do. If women do better works they go to paradise and we men who do evil works go to hell. What does it profit us if we are men? It would be better if we were not born. (pages 97-98)

On the subject of schools and education, Father Kosmas said:

It is better, my brother, for you to have a Greek school in your village rather than fountains and rivers, for when your child becomes educated, then he is a human being. The school opens churches; the school opens monasteries. (page 77)

He advised the people of the town of Parga: "Take care to establish without fail a Greek School in which your children will learn all that you are ignorant of." Kosmas believed that our faith wasn't established by ignorant saints, but by wise and educated saints who interpreted the Holy Scriptures accurately and who enlightened us sufficiently by inspired teachings." (page 145)

Father Kosmas was persuasive enough so that in over two hundred towns and villages he was instrumental in establishing schools where none existed before. His moral authority was such that he was able not only to raise the money needed to establish the schools and to maintain them, but with the consent of the inhabitants to appoint teachers and overseers for those schools, as illustrated from his letters.

I appointed, with the consent of all, Mr. Ioannes, son of Panos, trustee; and Mr. Demos, son of Ioannes the priest, and Mr. Stavros, son of Demos, overseers and his assistants to govern the school as the Lord inspires them. '(page 150)

Kosmas' invaluable and fundamental contribution to education has caused the Greek people to regard him as a 'National Saint' and

a 'Teacher of the Nation.'

"My beloved children in Christ," he said, "bravely and fearlessly preserve our holy faith and the language of our Fathers, because both of these characterize our most beloved homeland, and without them our nation is destroyed." (page 146).

Father Kosmas' primary interest in education, however, was religious. He saw in education an indispensable tool for the understanding of Orthodoxy. "Schools enlighten people. They open the eyes of the pious and Orthodox Christians to learn the Sacraments." (page 91 ) In another Teaching he said: "Schools may open the way to the church. We learn what God is, what the Holy Trinity is, what an angel is, what virtues, demons, and hell are." (page 108) Elsewhere he noted: "Blessed Christians, a large number of churches neither preserve nor strengthen our faith as much as they should if those who believe in God aren't enlightened by both the Old and New Testaments." (page 145)

In the eighteenth century the Orthodox Church was faced with a growing number of defections among the poor and illiterate Orthodox to Islam, especially in the areas of Albania and western Greece. There the Orthodox were under especially severe social, economic, and religious pressures by the dominant Moslems. It was Father Kosmas' belief that the establishment of schools where the Orthodox faith would be taught would be able to stem the tide.

So, my children, [he advised the people of Parga] to safeguard your faith and the freedom of your homeland, take care to establish without fail a Greek School. (page 145)

But Father Kosmas was realistic enough to know that this was not enough. "How can our nation be preserved," he asked, "without harm in its religion and freedom when the sacred clergy is disastrously ignorant of the meaning of the Holy Scriptures which are the light and foundation of the faith?" (page 145)

The only schools available at that time, besides the Moslem schools, were those conducted in Greek. This is why Kosmas discouraged the use of other languages (Albanian and Romanian) and strongly urged the Orthodox to use Greek. "Teach [your children] their letters, and especially Greek, because our Church uses the Greek language." (page 80)

Perhaps the most significant of Father Kosmas' teachings is his treatment of Christian love. For this 'Apostle of Love,' love is not something a person theorizes about, but something that one practices.

Kosmas never tired of saying:

God has many names ... but his principle name is love ... All Christians must have two loves, one for God and one for our fellow human beings. Without [these two loves], it is impossible to be saved. (pages 90-91)

Standing on a low pulpit a gift of one of the local Turkish officials-in front of a large wooden Cross, as was his custom, Father Kosmas was not content merely to repeat the above words concerning love, but he immediately challenged people to love and translate this love into effective and meaningful assistance to those in need. Agreeing that love was important and necessary was meaningless for Father Kosmas unless one was willing to prove it with deeds.

"How can I determine, my son, whether or not you love your brethren?" he challenged someone in his audience.

"Do you love that poor boy?" "I do," was the reply.

"If You loved him you would buy him a shirt because he is naked ... Will you do it?"

"Yes." (page 22)

Father Kosmas was able to challenge his listeners to respond Positively to the call to love because he himself was an example of that kind of love. Therefore, when he said: "Perfect love is to sell all your possessions and to give alms, and even to sell yourself as a slave, and whatever you get to give in alms," and "whoever has wronged any Christian, Jew or Turk, return what you have taken unjustly because it is cursed and You'll never get ahead," his listeners responded immediately and Positively. (pages 46, 63)

Father Kosmas took his vow of poverty very seriously and never accepted anything for himself. But money was given to his

followers and disciples. This money, however, was used to buy various articles which were distributed by the thousands among the people: kerchiefs, combs, crosses, prayer ropes, candles, booklets, and even baptismal fonts.

Consequently, when he advised men to allow their beards to grow, he provided them with combs which they could not buy for themselves. When he urged women to cover their heads, he gave them kerchiefs. When he advised parents to baptize their children, he helped provide various churches with baptismal fonts, and finally, when he counseled Christians to practice the Jesus Prayer he distributed prayer ropes to aid them in their concentration.

Any preacher who deals with social issues is bound to alienate some people whose interests are threatened. This happened to Father Kosmas as well. This attempt to elevate the educational level of the people and to eliminate illiteracy displeased those who preferred people ignorant. Village elders, landowners, and wealthy merchants felt their interests threatened when Father Kosmas called for just taxation, fair prices,

and equitable rents.

The atmosphere created by the unsuccessful revolution of the Greeks in the Peloponnese in 1770, inspired and led by the Orlov brothers, together with the real and imagined presence of Russian agents among the Orthodox people of the Balkans, made it easy for the Ottoman Turks to believe that Father Kosmas was himself an agent. Undoubtedly, the thousands of people who left their fields and jobs to follow Father Kosmas from place to place added to the uneasiness of the Turks and raised grave suspicions about his activities.

Father Kosmas waged a strong battle against the desecration of the Christian Sabbath. Town fairs and country bazaars were often held on Sundays, something Kosmas opposed and did everything in his power to change. He insisted that they be held on Saturdays. In this he was opposed by Jewish merchants, who naturally did not wish to engage in commerce on their own Sabbath. Allied with them were Christian merchants for whom Sunday was also more convenient. Consequently, Father Kosmas' death was fashioned by many interests: Christian, Jewish, and Turkish.

On 24 August 1779, Father Kosmas was in the city of Berat, Albania. Permission to seize him was secured from the local governor, Kurt Pasha, who was generously bribed and who heard Kosmas falsely accused of various crimes. To prevent any demonstration on the part of Father Kosmas' followers, he was apprehended in secret and many of his closest friends were imprisoned in a neighboring monastery.

Father Kosmas was taken to the neighboring village of Kalinkontasi, where he was hanged. After he died, his body was thrown into a nearby river from which it was retrieved a few days later by the priest Markos of the same village. Father Kosmas was buried in Father Markos' church with Metropolitan Ioasaph of Velegrada in attendance.

It is interesting to note that the initiative for the first church to be built in memory of Father Kosmas was taken by the Moslem ruler of Albania, Ali Pasha, who held Father Kosmas in high esteem not only because he believed Kosmas to be a holy man but also because Kosmas had earlier predicted great success for him.

In 1810 Ali Pasha became master of the city of Berat and its environs. Within four years he succeeded in raising the money required to build the first church in honor of St. Kosmas. Moreover, he personally contributed not only toward the building of the church but paid to have a silver reliquary made in which Kosmas' skull was placed and saw to it that the Saint's service (akolouthia) was composed. It was later printed in Venice by the Epirot printer Nicholas Glykys.

The people whom Father Kosmas loved and served did not wait for any official proclamation of his sainthood (this took place almost two hundred years later on 20 April 1961) to honor him as one of God's special servants. Father Kosmas became one of the most popular saints among Greek and Albanian Christians, a popularity which has increased as time has gone by.

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### **FIRST TEACHING**

"In whatever city you enter, say peace to that city."



OUR LORD AND GOD, JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, the sweetest ruler and master, the creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation, was moved by the great goodness which he has for our race and granted us and continues to grant us every day, hour, and moment an infinite number of gifts. In addition to these, he condescended and became perfect man by the Holy Spirit and from the purest blood of our Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, so that we might escape from the hands of the devil and become sons and heirs of his kingdom, to rejoice forever in paradise together with the angels, and not to burn in hell with the impious and the demons.

#### The Mission of the Apostles

JUST AS A RULER HAS VINEYARDS and fields and hires workers, so the Lord who has the entire world as a vineyard took twelve Apostles and gave them his grace and blessing and sent them to the entire world to teach people how to live well here on earth, in peace, with love, and later to go to paradise to rejoice forever. [He sent them to teach people] to repent, to believe, and to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to have love for God and for their brother. Wherever the Apostles went and were made welcome by people, the Lord instructed them to bless that land, and whatever place they went and were not received, the Lord instructed them to shake off the dust even from their shoes and to depart.

Thus receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, the holy Apostles, as wise and faithful servants of our Christ, ran as lightning throughout the entire world. With that grace they healed the blind, the deaf, the lepers, and those possessed by demons. And the greatest of all, in the name of our Christ they commanded the dead and they did rise.

In whatever land the holy Apostles went and were received by people, they made them Christians, they ordained bishops and priests, they established churches, and they blessed that land so that it became an earthly paradise, filled with joy and gladness, a habitation of angels, a dwelling place of our Christ. But in whatever place they went where they were not received by people, he instructed them to shake off the dust from their shoes, and a curse instead of a blessing remained in that land, a residence of the devil and not of our Christ.

#### The Life and Mission of Father Kosmas

IT IS MEET AND PROPER FOR A TEACHER, when he wants to teach, to first know who his audience is, and similarly for them to examine what kind of teacher he is.

I, my brethren, who have been found worthy through the compassion of our Christ to stand in this holy and apostolic place, have first inquired about you and I've learned that with the grace of our Lord and God Jesus Christ you are not Greeks [i.e., pagans I ; that you are not impious, heretics, godless; but that you are pious Orthodox Christians who believe and have been baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; that you are sons and daughters of our Christ. And not only am I not worthy to teach you, but not even worthy to kiss your feet, for each of you is worth more than the whole world. Your nobility should know about me also. And I know that some people have told you other things, but if you wish to learn the truth, I'll tell it to you.

My false, earthly, and fruitless homeland is the province of Arta, in the district of Apokouro. My father, my mother, my family are pious Orthodox Christians. However, I too am, my brethren, a sinful man, worse than anyone. But I'm a servant of our Lord God Jesus Christ who was crucified. Not that I'm worthy to be a servant of Christ, but Christ condescended to have me because of his compassion. Therefore, my brethren, I believe, glorify, and worship our Christ. It is our Christ that I beseech to cleanse me from every spiritual and bodily sin. It is our Christ that I beseech to strengthen me so that I may conquer the three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. I beseech my Christ to find me worthy to spill my blood for his love as he spilled his for my love.

If, my brethren, it were possible for me to climb up into the sky, to be able to shout with a great voice, to preach to the entire world that only our Christ is the Son and Word of God, true God and the life of all, I would have done it. But because I can't do such a big thing, I do this small thing: I walk from place to place and teach my brethren as I can, not as a teacher but as a brother. Only our Christ is a teacher.

How I was moved to do this, my brethren, I'll tell you. Leaving my homeland fifty years ago, I travelled to many places, forts, towns, villages, and especially to Constantinople. I stayed the longest on the Holy Mountain, seventeen years, where I wept over my sins.

## The Treasures of the Gospel

AMONG THE COUNTLESS GIFTS which my Lord has granted me, he made me worthy to acquire a little Greek learning and I became ' a monk. Studying the holy and sacred Gospel, I found in it many and different teachings which are all pearls, diamonds, treasures, riches, joy, gladness eternal life. Among the other things I also found this teaching in which Christ says to us: no Christian, man or woman, should be concerned only with himself, how he can be saved, but must be concerned also with his brethren so that they may not fall into sin.

Hearing this sweetest teaching spoken by our Christ, my brethren, to concern ourselves with our fellows, that teaching gnawed at me inside my heart for many years, just as a worm eats away at wood. Considering my ignorance, what could I do?

I sought the advice of my spiritual fathers, bishops and patriarchs, and I revealed to them my thinking, and I asked if such work was pleasing to God to do it. Everyone urged me to go ahead and they told me that such work is good and sacred.

In fact, urged on by his Holiness Patriarch Sophronios may his blessing be upon us-and receiving his sacred blessing, I abandoned my own, advancement, my own good, and went out to walk from place to place to teach my brethren.

Grace is Free

MAKING A START TO TEACH, a thought occurred to me to ask for money (aspers) as I travelled about because I was avaricious and I loved dollars (grosia). Yes, and gold coins (florins) even more, not like your nobility who scorn money, or don't you?

But studying the holy and sacred Gospel, I found another teaching where our Christ says: "I give you my grace free of charge, you too must give it the same way to your brethren; teach without charge, counsel without charge, hear confessions without charge, and if you ask and receive any payment for teaching, great or small, or even a penny (asper), I shall put you to death and place you in hell."

Hearing, my brethren, this sweetest teaching which our Christ spoke, that we should labor among our brethren without charge, it seemed to me in the beginning to be very hard. Later, however, it seemed very sweet, like a honeycomb, and I glorified and glorify my Christ a thousand times because he guarded me from the passion for money. So with the grace of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the Crucified One, I have neither purse, nor house, nor chest, nor another cassock than the one I am wearing.

And I still beseech my Lord to never allow me to acquire until the end of my life a purse, for if I ever begin to take money, I have immediately lost my brethren. I cannot serve both; it is either God or the devil.

It is meet and proper, my fellow Christians, as we learn from the holy Gospel and the sacred Scriptures, to begin our teaching with God. And when we finish [it is proper] to thank God, not because I am worthy to utter the name of my God, but because he has permitted it out of his compassion.

So we leave aside, my brethren, the prattlings of the impious heretics, the atheists, and we speak only of what pious, the Holy Spirit has inspired the holy Prophets, Apostles, and Fathers of our Church to write for us. On the other hand, we shall not speak of all the teachings because it is not possible, we would need years and years, but a few, however, do seem more necessary. And whoever is a lover of learning, let him seek to learn the rest.

Understanding the Holy Trinity

THE MOST GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD, my brethren, is one and anyone who says that there are many gods is a devil. He is also a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one nature, one glory, one kingdom, one God. He is incomprehensible, an inscrutable Lord, omnipotent, all light, all joy, all compassion, all love. We have no example to compare with the Holy Trinity because there is none in the world. But so that our minds can get some small help, the theologians of the Church give us a few examples. Among others, they use the sun. We all know that the sun is one as God is one also. And just as the sun illuminates this perceptible world, so does the Holy Trinity, God, illuminate the intelligible world.

We have said, my brethren, that the sun is one but it is three at the same time. It has rays which come to our eyes like lines, like threads. It also has light which spreads throughout the entire world. We liken the eternal Father with the sun, the co-eternal Son

with the rays, and the consubstantial Spirit with the light.

There is still another way in which you can understand the Holy Trinity. How? Confess candidly, receive the holy Sacraments with fear and reverence, and then the grace of the Holy Spirit will enlighten you so that you will understand better. It is this Holy Trinity that we pious and Orthodox Christians glorify and worship. He is the true God, and all others except for the Holy Trinity who are called god, are demons. And it is not only we who believe, glorify, and worship the Holy Trinity, but prophets, apostles, martyrs, ascetics, as numerous as the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky, who have shed their blood for the love of the Holy Trinity and have attained paradise and rejoice forever.

Similarly, men and women have denied the world, have gone off into the deserts and practiced asceticism all their lives and have gone to paradise. In addition, men and women lived in the world with prudence and virginity, with fasting, prayers, alms, and good works, and lived well here on earth and went to paradise to rejoice forever.

There is no place from where God is absent. We pious Christians should consider that God is in our hearts when we wish to commit some sin, that he is present everywhere, and that he sees us. We should be ashamed before the angels, the saints, and especially before the angel who guards our soul and observes us. We are embarrassed before a young child when we commit a sin, so how can we not be embarrassed before so many saints and angels?

### The Names of God

THE MOST GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD, my brethren, has many and various names. He is called light, life, and resurrection. But God's chief name is, and he is called, love. If we

wish to live well here also and to go to paradise, and to call our God love and father, we should have two loves: love for our God and for our brethren. It is natural for us to have these two loves and unnatural not to have them. And just as a swallow needs two wings to fly in the air so do we need these two loves, because without them it is impossible for us to be saved.

### Our Two Loves

FIRST, IT IS OUR DUTY TO LOVE our God because he has given us such a large earth here to live on temporarily: so many thousands of plants, springs, rivers, seas, air, day, night, sky, sun, etc. For whom did he create all of these if not for us? What did he owe us? Nothing. They are all gifts. He made us human beings; he didn't make us animals. He made us pious Orthodox Christians and not impious heretics. Although we sin thousands of times an hour he has compassion for us like a father, and he doesn't put us to death and place us in hell. But he waits for our repentance with open arms, for the time when we shall repent, when we shall stop committing evil and do good, to go to confession, to be restored so that he will embrace us to put us in paradise to rejoice forever. Now, shouldn't we too love this sweetest God and master? And if there is need, [shouldn't we] shed our blood a thousand times for his love as he shed his for our love?

A man invites you to his home and wants to treat you to a glass of wine. For the rest of your life you will respect him and honor him. Shouldn't you honor and respect God who gave you so many good things and who was crucified for Your love? What father was ever crucified for his children? But our sweetest Jesus Christ shed his blood and ransomed us from the hands of the devil. Now shouldn't we too love our Christ? But we not only don't love him, we insult him every day with the sins that we commit.

But whom do you want us to love, my brethren? Should we love the devil who put us out of paradise and brought us to this accursed world where we suffer so much evil? Moreover, the devil is so disposed that if he could this very minute cause our death and put us into hell, he would do it. Now I ask you, my brethren, to tell me what we should do: to love the devil, our enemy, or to love God, our author and creator?

"[God] of course, O saint of God; you speak well."

May your blessings be upon me. I agree too, but God also needs a couch to rest upon. What is that couch? Love. Let us, therefore, also have love for God and plant in our and then God will come and gladden us, and plant in our hearts eternal life. We then shall live well here on earth and we will go to paradise to rejoice forever.

But we not only don't have love but have hatred and malice in our hearts and we hate our brethren. The cunning and plants death in our soul, devil comes and makes us bitter and plants death in our soul, and we live badly here on earth and go to hell and burn forever.

## Love is Natural

IT IS NATURAL FOR US TO LOVE our brethren because we are of one nature, we have one baptism, one faith, we receive the same holy sacraments, and we hope to enjoy paradise. He who has been found worthy and has received these two loves in his heart, love of God and love for his brethren, is fortunate indeed. Because whoever has God in his heart possesses all that is good and can't bear to commit sin. And whoever doesn't have God in his heart has the devil and always commits evil and every kind of sin.

## Love and Works

EVEN IF WE PERFORM THOUSANDS upon thousands of good works, my brethren: fasts, prayers, almsgiving; even if we shed our blood for our Christ and we don't have these two loves, but on the contrary have hatred and malice toward our brethren, all the good we have done is of the devil and we go to hell.

But, you say, we go to hell despite all the good we do because of that little hatred? Yes, my brethren, because that hatred is the devil's poison, and just as when we put a little yeast in a hundred pounds of flour it has such power that it causes all the dough to rise, so it is with hatred. It transforms all the good we have done into the devil's poison.

## Love in Action

HOW ARE YOU GETTING ALONG HERE, my brethren? Is there love among you? If by chance you want to be saved, don't ask for anything else in this world except for love. If there is anyone here among your nobility who has this love for his brethren, let him stand up and tell me so that I may pray for him also and ask all the Christians to forgive him. He'll receive such forgiveness that he couldn't buy it for thousands gold coins.

"I O saint of God, love God and my brethren."

"Good, my child, you have my blessing. What is your name? "

"Kostas."

"What is your trade?"

"I tend sheep."

"Do you weigh the cheese you sell?"

"Yes, I do."

"You, my child, have learned to weigh cheese, and I to weigh love. Is the scale ashamed of its master?"

"No."

"Now I'll weigh your love and if it is true and not false, then I'll pray for you too and I'll ask all the Christians [here] to forgive you. How can I determine, my son, whether or not you love your brethren?"

Now I who walk about and teach in the world can say that I love Mr. Kostas as dearly as I love my own eyes. But you don't believe it. You want to test me first and then you'll believe.

I have bread to eat and you don't. Now if I were to give YOU some since you have none, this shows that I love you. But if I were to eat all of the bread and you went about hungry, what does that show? It shows that this love I have for you is false.

I have two glasses of wine to drink; you have none. If I were to give you some to drink, then I show that I love you. But if I don't give you any, then the love is false.

You are sad. Your mother and father have died. If I were to come to console you, then my love is true. But if while you cried and mourned I ate, drank, and danced, my love would be false.

"Do you love that poor boy?"

"I do."

"If you loved him, you would buy him a shirt because he is naked so that he too will pray for your soul. Then your love will be true, but now it is false."

"Isn't that right, my Christians? We can't go to paradise with false love. Now if you want to make your love true as gold, take and clothe the poor children and then I'll ask that you be forgiven. Will you do it?"

"Yes."

"Fellow Christians, Kostas has learned that the love he had up to now was false and he wants to make it true as gold. He will clothe the poor children. And because we have taught him, I beg you to say for Mr. Kostas three times: 'May God forgive him and have mercy upon him.'"

The 'Our Father'

THE MOST GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD is and is named love; he is and is named Trinity. Moved by compassion, the Lord first created ten orders of angels. The angels are fiery spirits, immaterial as is our soul. Each order is as numerous as the stars in heaven. What moved God to create them? His compassion. We too, my brethren, if we wish to call our God father must be compassionate, and cause our brethren to rejoice, and then we can call God father [and say] : "Our father who is in heaven - - ." If, however, we are merciless hard-hearted, and we cause our brethren to be poisoned and we put death in their hearts, we shouldn't call God our father but the devil, for the devil and not God wants us to cause our brethren to be poisoned.

The Devil

AND SO, MY BRETHREN, the first order of angels of which we spoke earlier fell because of pride and sought to be glorified equally with God. From a luminous and most brilliant being, the angel became the darkest devil and the enemy of people. He is in hell where he burns forever. When we hear the word devil, it is he who was once the first among angels; it is he who moves people to pride, to murder, to theft; it is he who enters into a dead person, causing him to appear living, and we call him a ghost. [Finally,] it is he who enters a living person who takes on the image of Christ, of the Panagia, or some Saint, and running up and down like a person possessed, says he performs miracles. It is the devil who enters into a person and causes him to become an epileptic and demoniac. But may God be glorified, for he's given us three weapons with which to fight him.

If there are some here who are possessed and wish to learn the cure, it is easy: confession, fasting, and prayer. The more a person goes to confession, fasts, and prays, the more the devil burns and flees.

Pride and Humility

WHEN THE FIRST ORDER OF ANGELIC GLORY fell away and became demons, the other nine orders humbled themselves and fell prostrate, and worshipped the All-Holy Trinity, and stood in their place to rejoice forever. We too, my brethren, should reflect on what a great evil pride is; it brought down the devil from angelic glory and caused him to be in hell where he burns forever. Humility kept the angels in heaven to rejoice forever in the glory of the Holy Trinity.

We should reflect further that the most gracious God hates the proud and loves the humble, and not only God, but we too. When we see a humble person, we see him as an angel. He makes us want to open our heart and put him inside, but when we see someone proud, we look upon him as a devil, and we turn our face away so as not to look at him.

Let us then avoid pride, my brethren, because it is the eldest daughter of the devil; it is the road which leads us to hell. Let us have humility because it is angelic and the road which takes us to paradise.

"How are things here? Do you love pride or humility? Whoever loves humility let him stand up and tell me so that I can pray for him."

"I love humility, O holy one of God."

"Take off your clothes, put on some poor clothes and walk through the market place. You won't do it, you're ashamed? Do something else. Cut off half of your mustache and go to the bazaar. You won't do this either? I'm not saying this to you only, but in order that the others will hear as well, so that you won't say that you are humble."

Do you see me with this beard? It is filled with pride, and may God uproot it from our hearts. A Christian needs two wings to fly and to go to paradise: humility and love.

### The Eggs of Easter

WHEN THE FIRST ORDER of angels fell and became demons, the most gracious God commanded and this world came into being. And it is 7,288 years from the time that the world was created. This world is like an egg. And just as the yolk is in the center of the egg, so is the earth made by God to stand without touching any other place. And just as the egg white surrounds the yolk, so does the air the earth. And just as the shell encloses everything, so does the sky the earth, The sun, the moon, and the stars are attached to the sky. The earth is round and wherever the sun goes it becomes day; night is the shadow of the earth.

Here it is night, somewhere else dawn - And just as there are people here on earth, there are some under the earth. This is why the holy Fathers have ruled that we should color our eggs red for Easter: because the egg symbolizes the world, while the red color symbolizes the blood of our Christ which he spilled on the Cross to sanctify the whole world. We too should rejoice and be glad a thousand times, because Christ has spilled his blood and purchased us from the hands of the devil. But we should also weep and mourn because our sins crucified the Son of God, our Christ.

### The Sabbath

GOD COMMANDED and seven days were created. The first was the Lord's Day, which he kept for himself. The other six he gave us to work for our false and earthly [needs]. On Sunday we are to rest and to go to church, to glorify God, to stand with reverence, and hear the Holy Gospel and the other books of our Church.

What does our Christ instruct us to do? Meditate on our sins, on death, on hell, on paradise, and on our soul, which is more precious than the entire world. We are to eat and drink moderately, similarly, to clothe ourselves moderately, and to use the remaining time for our soul-to make it a bride for our Christ. And then we can call ourselves human beings and earthly angels. But if we concern ourselves with what we shall eat and what we shall drink, how we shall commit sin, how to dress up this stinking body which tomorrow will be eaten by worms, and do not concern ourselves about our soul which is eternal, then we can't be called human beings, but animals. So make your body a servant of the soul, and then you can call Yourselves human beings.

### Creation

ON THE FIRST DAY GOD COMMANDED and light was made. On Monday, the sky, the earth, the wind, etc. On Tuesday, the grasses and plants. On Wednesday, the sun, moon, and the stars. On Thursday, the sea, fish, and birds. On Friday, he commanded the earth to bring forth all the animals.

There was no man or woman on earth. God took dirt from the earth and formed a man like us and breathed into hi, and gave him an eternal soul. And just as we human beings take flour and water, and knead dough, and make a loaf of bread, so did God. We too must reflect on what is the body and what the soul. The body is dirt and tomorrow will be eaten by worms. It is necessary for the soul to rejoice forever in paradise if it does good, but to burn in hell if it does bad. This body which you see, my brethren, is the garment of the soul. The soul is man. It is the soul which sees, hears, talks, walks, learns sciences, gives life to the body and doesn't allow it to stink. But when the soul comes out, then the body stinks and becomes wormy.

The body has eyes but doesn't see, it has ears but doesn't hear; it is the same with the other senses of the body. They are all

activated by the soul.

### Mourning the Dead

"Do you mourn the dead?"

"We do."

"It seems you feel pain for them. How many days do you keep the dead?"

"Two, three hours."

"Is that how much love you have for the unfortunate man?"

From today on, don't bury him, but keep him for twenty-four hours. Gather yourselves together, young and old, and reflect upon him well because there is no better teacher than death. And don't mourn for the dead because you do injury to yourself and to them. And you ladies who have on dirty kerchiefs [because of mourning], throw them away.

### God Created Women Equal to Men

WHEN GOD MADE MAN, he took a rib from him and made woman and he gave her to him as a companion. God created her equal with man and not inferior.

"How do you regard your women here?"

"Inferior."

"My brethren, if you want to be better than women, you must do better works than they, otherwise what does it profit us if women do better works and go to paradise while we go to hell?"

We are men and we act worse. I see that wherever I travel and teach and speak a word about women, they immediately listen to me and discard their earrings and rings as superfluous. I see them rush to confession.

### Men and Beards

I ALSO SAY A WORD FOR MEN. It is natural for a man who is going on fifty years to wear a beard. But here I see old men who are sixty and eighty years old and still shave. Aren't you ashamed to shave?

Doesn't God who gave us beards know better? Just as it is unseemly for an old woman to deck herself out and put on cosmetics, so it is for an old man to shave.

"When wheat grows and becomes white what does it signify?"

"Harvest."

"The same with man. When he grows up and becomes White, what does this signify?"

"Death."

"Is there anyone here who wishes to let his beard grow? Let him stand up and tell me so we can become brothers, and I shall pray for him and ask all the Christians to forgive

"I, Teacher."

"Good, you have my blessing. Pray to God for me, a sinner, so that I will pray for you too for as long as I live. Will you do it?"

"I will, O saint of God."

"I beg you, my fellow Christians, say three times for all those who let their beards grow: 'May God forgive and have mercy upon them.'"

Let Your nobility also ask for forgiveness. And may God enlighten you to let go of your sins as you let your beard grow - You, young men, honor those with beards. And if there is a man of thirty with a beard and one of fifty, or sixty, or a hundred who shaves, place the one with the beard above the one who shaves, in church as well as at the table.

On the other hand, I don't say that a beard will get you to heaven, but good works will. And \_your dress should be modest, as well as your food and your drink. Your whole conduct should be Christian so that you will be a good example for others.

Eve's Debt Paid by the Theotokos

MAN, MY BRETHREN, gave birth to woman from his side without the aid of a woman and remained whole afterwards. Woman borrowed that side from man and owed for it. Many women were born, as many as the stars in the heaven, but none was found worthy to give birth to a man to pay back that side which she owed except for the Lady Theotokos. She was found worthy because of her purity to give birth to our sweetest Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, without man; a virgin who remained a virgin and who paid for that side.

The Treatment of Wives

LISTEN, MY BRETHREN, what joyful mysteries our holy Church has. But she has them covered and they need uncovering. That is why you must all get some education, so you will understand where you walk. And you, man, don't treat your wife like a slave, because she is God's creature as you are. God was crucified for you as he was for her. You call God father; she calls him father too. You have one faith, one baptism. God does not consider tier inferior. This is why he made her from man's middle, so man would be like the head and woman the body. But he didn't make her from the head, so she wouldn't have contempt for man. Similarly, he didn't make her from the feet, so that man wouldn't have contempt for woman.

Adam, Eve, and the Devil

GOD NAMED MAN ADAM and woman Eve. He created a paradise in the area of the East full of joy and gladness. There was neither hunger, nor thirst, nor illness, nor anything sad. He adorned them with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and placed them in paradise to rejoice as angels.

God said to Adam and Eve: "I, who have created you human beings brighter than the sun, have placed you in paradise to enjoy all the good things of paradise. But so that you I ill know that God is your author and creator, I give you one commandment. From this fig tree alone don't eat. But know this too, if you transgress my commandment and you do eat, you will die." And so God left them in Paradise and they rejoiced like angels. For this reason God adorned them with shame which would protect them from every sin, and especially the woman. This is why, my fellow Christians and daughters of Christ, be covered with shame as much as possible and you will look like gold.

And so, my brethren, the devil who hates all beautiful things, seeing the great glory which Adam and Eve received from God, envied them. What does he do, this evil spirit who is the devil? Knowing that it would be easier to deceive Woman than man, he thought to himself: "If I deceive the woman, then through her I'll easily deceive the man." So he entered a serpent and went to Eve and told her: "What did God tell you to do here in paradise?"

Eve replied: "God told us to eat from all the good things in paradise, but not to eat from one fig tree, because the day we transgress his commandment, we'll die."

The devil answered her and said: "You won't die, but if You eat You'll become like God. This is wily he has prohibited you. So

take, you eat first, and urge your husband to eat so You'll become gods."

The woman took and ate. She induced her husband to eat also. And as they ate, they immediately were stripped of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and they acquired foolishness and fear.

A person who keeps God's commandments, my brethren, becomes wise and isn't afraid of anything in the world. But he who doesn't keep the commandments of God becomes foolish, and is afraid of his shadow even if he's a king and rules over the entire world. Take care, my dear Christian

women, keep God's commandments as much as possible and don't do the will of the devil.

And if you as human beings happen to commit some evil, don't induce your husbands to do as Eve did. Similarly, men too shouldn't listen to the advice of women as Adam did.

Wishing to forgive them and to allow them to remain in paradise, God pretended he didn't know what happened, and said to Adam: "Adam, where are you? Why are you hidden? Where is the glory that you had before, when you were like an angel? Now you have become like a foolish child."

Adam answered and said: "Here I am Lord. I heard you coming and became afraid and hid."

God said to him, "Why were you afraid and hidden? Am I, perhaps, fear? Perhaps you ate from the figs which I told you not to eat?"

Adam answered with pride: "Yes, Lord, I ate, but it isn't my fault. The woman you gave me, she deceived me and I ate."

God said to Adam: "I gave her to you as a companion and not for her to deceive you. I told you not to eat because you would die. You should have obeyed my word and not your wife's. Well, all right, you ate. You were deceived. [But] why is it difficult to say, 'I did wrong, my God, I have sinned, my Creator?' I would have forgiven you and allowed you into paradise again, but by blaming woman, you blamed me because I made woman."

Do you hear, my brethren, what an evil thing it is to blame someone else? So if we want to be saved, we should always blame ourselves and not throw the blame on someone else.

Then the gracious God said to Eve: "Why did you eat the figs which I told you not to?"

She replied with pride and said: "Yes, Lord, I ate them, but it isn't my fault. The serpent deceived me."

Seeing their pride, God expelled them from paradise and cursed Adam to work the earth, to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, and to weep without consolation so that God might have compassion upon him and put him back into paradise. This is why, my brethren, you should rejoice, all of you who earn your bread with your labor, because that bread is blessed. And if you want, give a little of that bread to a poor man so that thereby, you gain paradise. Again, in the Same way, weep and mourn with heavy tears, all of you who live by stealing and injustice. God will put you to death and Will place you into hell.

How are you getting along here, my fellow Christians? Do you all live by your labor or by injustices? If you are Christians, you should live by your labor. God blesses that, but curses that which is gained through injustice.

Woman was also cursed to be subject to her husband and to give birth to her children with labor, pain, and tears, and to weep without consolation so that God would have compassion on her and restore her to paradise. You can see plain! Yes, how when animals give birth, they don't suffer the pains which a woman does when she gives birth, for they don't have the woman's curse.

The Loss of Paradise

GOD CURSED ADAM AND EVE and exiled them from paradise. They lived nine hundred and thirty years with dark and bitter tears, and gave birth to children, and their children to other Children. And the whole earth was filled. All human beings are from one father and from one mother. This is why all human beings are brethren. It is only our faith which separates us.

Adam and Eve died and they went to hell and burned for five and a half-thousand years because of one sin. But what about us who commit so many, and especially me? What is to happen to us? God is compassionate but also just. He also has an iron rod, and as he punished Adam and Eve, he will punish us too if we don't do good.

Adam and Eve transgressed God's commandment and were exiled from paradise. Now what are we doing, my fellow Christians? Know that in those five and a half-thousand years all who died went to hell. But the Lord had compassion upon the race of humans and came and became perfect man from the Holy Spirit and the purest blood of our Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and took us out of the hands of the devil.

Know that the Annunciation of the Theotokos took place on the Lord's Day. Christ was born on the Lord's Day and revealed to us the holy Faith, the holy Baptism, and the holy Sacraments. He was cursed, beaten, crucified in his human nature. He arose on the third day and went to hell and brought out Adam and Eve and their race. There was joy in heaven, in Hades, and in the entire world. For the Jews and for the devil it was poison and a double-edged sword. He ascended into heaven and sat on the right hand of the Father to rule with him forever and be worshipped by the we expect the end of angels. Know that today, tomorrow, the world. You are prudent and wise; you understand by yourselves what is good for you and do it.

#### Father Kosmas' Compensation

NOW WHAT SEEMS REASONABLE to you for us to do? I have two thoughts. One tells me: "You've said enough to the Christians here, and tomorrow morning get up and go to another place to teach." The other tells me: "Don't go. Stay and tell them the rest and you can leave on the next day. What do you say? Shall I leave or stay?"

"Stay, O saint of God."

Good, my children, I shall stay. But is it good for a man to work in a vineyard or to tend sheep and not to eat from the products? Now is it right for you not to give me, who have come here and have labored for you, some consolation, some payment? And what kind of payment do I want? Money? What would I do with it? Through the grace of God I have neither a purse, nor a house, nor another cassock, and the bench that I have to stand on and teach is yours. It represents my grave. This grave has the authority to teach kings, patriarchs, bishops, priests, men, and women, young and old,  
and the entire world.

If I were to travel about for money, I would be crazy and foolish. But what is my payment? It is for you to sit in groups of five or ten and discuss the divine teachings, to put them inside your heart so that they may bring you eternal life. The words I spoke to you, my brethren, are not my own, but those of the Holy Spirit from the Holy Scriptures. What I have told you is the same as if God himself came down and told them to you. Now if you were to do these things and put them in your mind, my labor would seem to me to be nothing. But if you don't do them, I shall leave saddened  
with tears in my eyes.

#### The Importance of Schooling

DO YOU HAVE A SCHOOL HERE, here in your village to teach your children?"

"We don't, O saint of God.

You must all get together and establish a good school. Appoint a committee to govern it, to appoint a teacher to teach all the children, rich and poor. Because it is in school that we learn who God is; who is the Holy Trinity; who are the angels, demons; and what is paradise, hell, virtue, evil; what is the soul, body, etc. Without a school we walk in darkness. The school leads to the monastery. If there were no school, how would I have learned to teach you?

I studied about priests and about unbelievers, heretics, and atheists. I searched the depths of wisdom, but all the faiths are false. I learned this to be true, that only the faith of the Orthodox Christians is good and is sacred: to believe and to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, I tell you this. Rejoice that you are Orthodox Christians and weep for the impious and heretics who walk in darkness.

The Time for Repentance is Now

WHAT ARE WE, my fellow Christians, just or sinners? If we're just, we're of good fortune and thrice-blessed; if we're sinners, now is the time to repent, to cease from doing evil and do what is good, because hell waits for us.

When will we repent? Not tomorrow or the day after, but today, because we don't know what will happen to us by tomorrow. Take care, my brethren, don't be infected with pride, don't commit murder, don't fornicate, don't swear, don't lie, don't slander, don't betray another, don't deck out your body because it will be eaten by worms. But adorn the soul which is worth more than the whole world. Pray, fast, give alms, keep death before you. And hope for the time when you'll leave this false world and go to that eternal one.

Listen, my brethren, just as a rich man has ten servants and when one makes a mistake, he dismisses and replaces him, so with our Lord. When the first order of angels fell, God commanded and the world was made and he made vis human beings to put us in the place of the angels.

Our True Home

WE, MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS, have no home here on earth. This is why God made us with an upright head and put our brain on the upper part of our body, so that we can always reflect the heavenly kingdom, our true home. So, my brethren, I'll teach and counsel you, and I'll dare again to beg the sweetest Jesus Christ to send his grace and blessing from on high to this village and to all the Christians, men, women, young and old, and to bless the work of your hands.

First of all, my brethren, may God have compassion on you and forgive you your sins, and may he find you worthy to live well here and in peace in this fruitless life, and after death in paradise which is our true homeland, to rejoice forever, to glorify and worship the Holy Trinity to the ages of ages, Amen.

I beg you, my brethren, to say for me too, the sinner, three times: "Forgive me and may God forgive you." Forgive one another too.

## THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### SECOND TEACHING



Behold a sower went out to sow his seed, and while he was sowing, some seed fell by the roadside and was trampled down., and the birds of the sky gobbled it up. Some fell on the rock, and as soon as it sprouted, it withered because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns and they choked it. Some fell on good soil and grew up and produced a crop, some thirty times, some sixty times, and some a hundred times.' And when he had said this, he called out, 'Let the man who has ears to hear use them'

writes Matthew, the holy Apostle and Evangelist, in his holy and sacred Gospel.

The Parable of the Sower

THERE WAS A FARMER who went out of his house, took seed, And went to plant his fields. And as he planted, some seed Fell on the road, some on stone, some among thorns, and some on good ground. The seed that fell on the road didn't grow because the ground was hard and had been trampled upon, and birds came and ate it. So the road remained barren.

Some seed fell on stone that had some dirt. It sprouted, but as soon as the sun came out, lacking roots, it dried up. And this seed also produced no crop. Some fell among the thorns; it too sprouted, but the thorns also came up and choked it. The seed that fell

on good earth was fruitful. For example, he planted a pound and it produced a hundred. Other [seed] fell on inferior soil and it reproduced sixty; some on even more inferior soil produced thirty.

It seems to me that you have understood this parable. But so that you will understand it better, we'll say the following, and take care to listen to the words of the holy Gospel.

Our Lord and God Jesus Christ has many and different names. He's called God, Son of God, Son of Man, wisdom, life, resurrection, and farmer. The Lord, therefore, came out of his house, that is, out of the paternal bosom, by the incarnate dispensation. The Son and Word of God condescended and took on flesh in the womb of our Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, [and became] perfect God and perfect Man.

He was present totally within the womb of the Theotokos and totally everywhere. And just as a man who is God's creation can have his mind totally in the city and totally in his home, and again his mind can be totally within his head, can't God be totally in heaven and totally in every place?

So, my brethren, the Lord came out of his house and took seed to plant his fields, the hearts of people. What is the seed? The holy Gospel; to believe in him and be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to have love for God and for our brethren. What is the road? It's the proud man whose heart is hard and trodden upon by worldly concerns. He hears the word but it doesn't enter his heart, and the demons come and take it away and it remains barren, that is, without any spiritual benefit.

Rock is the heart of the person who hears God's word and accepts it with joy but has little reverence for Christ, and when he's tempted, he denies Christ and goes with the devil.

The thorns represent the person who hears God's word and to whom evil passions later come and choke and who remains barren. The good earth is the person who is perfect, who brought forth a hundred fold; the middle person who brought forth sixty fold; and the lesser person who brought

forth thirty fold. But you haven't understood the hidden mining of the parable, so we should cite an example about part.

#### Manasseh the King

IN OLDEN TIMES there was a king of the Jews named Manasseh who tormented them with many tortures. The prophets and teachers counseled him to rule the people with gentleness, but listen to the word of God and didn't repent. Seeing his evil mind, what did God do? He raised up a king from the fought him and made him a slave. He locked him inside a large kettle to burn him. What did Manasseh do inside the kettle? He remembered his sins, he wept, he begged him and he would no longer sin.

Seeing his good disposition, God heard his repentance, tears, and sent an angel to free him from that danger. Later, Manasseh sold his possessions, gave alms, and an ascetic life the remainder of his days with fasts, vigils, and prayer. He went to paradise and rejoices forever.

If, my brethren, there's someone among you who is as hard-hearted as Manasseh, let him remember his sins, repent, and weep. Let him be certain that God accepts his repentance as he did Manasseh's.

#### St. Peter

ABOUT THE ROCK we have a lot to say, but we'll only give one example, that of St. Peter. On Holy Thursday evening, the Lord as God who knows the hearts of men, knowing everything that was to happen and especially knowing the hearts of the Jews and of Judas, sat and taught the holy Apostles varied teachings. Among other things he told them this word: "You should know that one of you will sell me to the Jews for thirty coins and I shall be mocked by the Jews; they will curse me; they will beat me; and they will crucify me. But don't be sad, because I want to be crucified so that I can crucify sin and the devil, and give life to the people. On the third day I will be raised up and will bring joy to you, to heaven, and to earth, and I will poison Hades and the Jews, and especially the devil. Learn this too, my disciples. At that time you will all abandon me and you will flee."

Peter answered and said: "Lord even if everyone denies you, I'll never deny you."

The Lord said to him: "Peter, don't boast."

"No, Lord, I'm ready to shed even my blood for your love."

The Lord replied: "Fine, Peter. Time will tell."

Peter responded: "May it never be, Lord, that I'll ever deny you."

The Lord said to him: "You who say you love me will deny me tonight; before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times."

For the Lord knew Peter's heart better, than he did himself.

"No Lord," Peter said again, "all others may deny you but I won't."

The Lord answered: "When the sun beats down upon the wheat and it doesn't dry up, then it can be said to have struck roots."

It is the same with every Christian; when he is tempted and he doesn't deny Christ, then he's a true Christian.

The time came and the Lord voluntarily surrendered to the Jews; the Apostles left immediately as the Lord said they would. The Jews took Christ and brought him to the palace of Annas and Caiaphas and began to question him about his origin.

Peter went and stood afar to see our Christ's passion. A Jew came up to him and said: "Are you also with Christ?"

Peter answered: "No. I don't know the man."

Do you hear, brethren, what Peter did? He denied Christ went with the devil. Earlier he stood by to see what they doing to Christ; later he looked for a door to escape.

Another came and said to Peter: "You too are with Christ."

Peter replied again: "I don't know what you're saying."

When he approached the door to leave another Jew caught to him and said: "Are you also his disciple?"

Peter said: "May I be damned if I know the man."

Do you hear, brethren, he who said that he would shed his blood for the love of his Christ, denies him now. And as he the third time, behold the miracle! The rooster crowed as the Lord said it would. Hearing the rooster, Peter the Lord's word and went outside and wept the rest of his life, whenever he heard a rooster crow, he wept remembering his denial.

Christ was crucified. He rose on the third day and appeared to the myrrh-bearing women and said to them: "Go and tell s and Peter that I have risen and I await them in Galilee."

Why did he single out Peter? So that Peter would learn Lord had accepted his repentance and had forgiven him.

The Apostles went to Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter went too but was downcast. The Lord said "Do you love me, Peter?"

And he asked him three times to correct the three denials to bring him back to his former self.

Later Peter traveled throughout the East and West and made thousands of Christians. He was apprehended by an emperor in Rome who asked him to deny Christ and to worship idols.

Peter said to him: "I won't deny him."

So they crucified him with his head down, and he surrendered his sacred soul into our Christ's hands and went to Paradise.

Mary of Egypt

LET US SAY something about the thorns. Blessed Mary of Egypt was twelve years old when she fell into the hands of the devil. She lived in sin day and night. But the merciful God enlightened her and she abandoned the world and went into the desert. There she led a hermit's life for forty years. She was cleansed and became like an angel. God wished to give her rest, so he sent the holy ascetic Zosimas to hear her confession and to give her holy communion. Then He received her holy soul into paradise, where she rejoices with the angels. If there is anyone here like Blessed Mary, let him immediately weep and repent, now that he has time, and let him be assured that he will be saved as was Blessed Mary.

St. Paraskeve

LET US SAY something about the good earth. St. Paraskeve was a twelve-year-old maiden from a noble house. Left an orphan, she divided up all her possessions among the poor, and with these she purchased paradise. In place of cosmetics, she wore tears, remembering tier sins. In place of earrings, she kept her ears open to hear the sacred Scriptures. In place of a necklace, she fasted often, which made her neck shine like the sun. In place of rings, she acquired calluses on her fingers from the many prostrations she made. In place of a golden belt, she had her virginity which she guarded all her life. In place of a dress, she was covered by modesty and fear of God. This is how the saint decked herself.

If there is any maiden who wishes to adorn herself, let her consider what this saint did and let her do the same if she wishes to be saved.

In this way, brethren, St. Paraskeve acquired learning and became very wise. Because of her purity, God found her worthy to perform miracles. She cured the blind, the deaf she raised the dead.

Two Jews, sons of the devil, seeing the saint perform miracles, envied her and betrayed her to King Antoninus as Christian. So the King summoned her and asked her to deny Christ and to worship the gods and she would become queen.

The saint replied: "I am not foolish like you to deny my Christ and to go to the devil; to leave life and go to death. you leave the darkness and come to the light." you hear, my brethren, how outspoken a young girl a king?

Whoever has Christ in his heart fears nothing in the world. If we too wish not to fear either people or demons, let us have God in our hearts.

King said to the saint: "I'll give you three days to obey; if you don't you'll be put to death."

The saint replied: "O King, what you wish to do in three days time, do it now, for I will not deny my Christ."

The King then ordered a big fire to be lighted and over it was placed, filled with tar and sulfur. Seeing the pot, the saint rejoiced, for she was to depart from this false world and to go to that which is real and eternal.

The King ordered the saint to be put into the pot to be boiled. The saint made the sign of the Cross and got in the pot. The king waited two, three hours and seeing she was not being boiled, he said: "Paraskeve, why aren't you burning?"

The saint said: "Because Christ cooled the water and I don't burn."

The King replied: "Sprinkle me with the water so I can see whether it burns or not."

The saint took some water in her two hands and threw it, into his face, and immediately behold the miracle - he became 'blind and his face was flayed. The King then shouted: "Great is the God of the Christians. In him I also believe. Come Out and baptize me."

The saint got out and baptized him and his entire kingdom. 'Later another king beheaded her and she went to paradise to rejoice forever. This woman yielded a hundred, according to the Lord's word.

SS. Andronikos and Athanasia

LET US SAY something of him who yielded sixty. On October 9, our Church celebrates the feast of St. Andronikos and his wife Athanasia. God had given them two male children. One day they both died. While crying over her children Athanasia was visited by an angel of the Lord who said to her: "Why are you crying, Athanasia? Your children are rejoicing in paradise and you will enjoy them during the second coming, so don't be sad."

In this way he comforted her. Athanasia then said to Andronikos: "Master, thousands of men and women have preserved their virginity for their entire lives. We got married and have enjoyed physical pleasure. Why don't we join a monastery and work for our soul? We'll also go to paradise."

The blessed Andronikos answered her and said: "Sister, may God's will be done."

From that time on they lived as brother and sister. They gave away their possessions and both entered monasteries and lived by fasting and mortification and went to paradise. They produced the yield of sixty because first they enjoyed physical pleasure and then spiritual. They, of course, are inferior to St. Paraskeve. If any of you wishes to produce a yield of sixty, let him strive as St. Andronikos and St. Athanasia and he'll be saved. Again, if you can't produce sixty, imitate him who produced thirty.

A Priest Named John

IN THE EAST there was a priest named John who was married and had twenty children. One day a bishop visited his home and saw the children and asked whose they were.

"Mine," said the priest, "God gave them to me."

The bishop asked him: "How long have you been married?"

"Eighteen years," answered the priest.

The bishop replied: "You've had twenty children in eighteen years? You should be unfrocked."

"Allow me to explain to you, bishop," the priest answered, "and if then you find it proper [to unfrock me] , let God's will be done."

The priest began his story: "I, bishop, have had some education. At the age of eighteen I became a reader, at twenty-five a deacon, and at the age of thirty a priest, without paying a dime. I married in accordance with the divine canons. First, my wife and I went to confession, then we went church and were married and received holy Communion. After three days we came together. As soon as my wife became pregnant, we separated until she gave birth. We came together again only after the forty-day churching service."

"Again we separated after she became pregnant and came together after the forty-day churching. In this way, your Sacredness, we had twenty children."

The bishop then said: "May you be forgiven and blessed. Go ahead have fifty and even a hundred children."

So the Blessed John taught his children their letters and instructed them with counsel. He lived well here [on earth] paradise. He produced thirty [fold]. Do you, my brother, also want to produce thirty?

This is the meaning of the parable. The Jews are the road and they are destined for hell, the ungodly are the rock, and the pious Orthodox Christians are the earth and are saved. But how are they saved? Each, according to whether he has done good or evil,

goes to paradise or hell.

## **THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS**

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### **THIRD TEACHING**

"Search the Scriptures, for in them is found eternal life."

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, the sweetest master and creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation moved by compassion and by his great goodness and love which he has for our race, has granted us and continues to grant us each day the dawn, and we glorify him. We read the service of Holy Unction and we have been anointed for our gain. And may the Lord have compassion on us through the intercession of our Lady, the Theotokos, and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, to forgive our sins and to find us worthy of the kingdom of heaven, to rejoice, and glorify the Holy Trinity.

In olden days, my fellow Christians, people were pure and spoke with God. But later they fell into sin and were not worthy of speaking with God. First, the Holy Spirit inspired Prophets and they wrote for us the sacred Scriptures. Second, he inspired the holy Apostles. Third, he inspired the holy Fathers and they explained to us the books of our that we might know where we walk.

#### The Two Greatest Gifts

IN THOSE DAYS there was a man who was called Moses. As child he received two gifts in his heart: love of God and love for his brethren. Therefore, we pious Christians also must have these two loves. This is the commandment of the Lord: This is my commandment, that you love each other just as I have loved you.

Do you hear, my brethren, what Christ says? "Just as I was cursed, beaten, [as I] hungered, thirsted, and was crucified, and shed my blood for your love, to free you from the hands of the devil, so must you also love God and your brethren. And if the need should arise, [you must] shed your blood for the love of God and your brother."

Perfect love is to sell all your possessions and to give alms, and even to sell yourself as a slave, and whatever you get to give in alms.

In the East there was a bishop from whose province a hundred slaves were taken captive. He sold all of his possessions and ransomed them. Only a child of a widow remained enslaved. What did the bishop do? He shaved off his beard and went and begged the master who held the child to free it and to keep him in its place. And so it happened.

The bishop lived a life of great hardship, but because of his patience God found him worthy of performing miracles. Later his master freed him and he returned to his episcopal duties. It is this kind of love that God wants us also to have. Is there anyone here who has this kind of love? No! Don't sell yourself, sell only your possessions and give alms. You can't do this? Give half, a third, a fourth. You can't even do this? [Then] don't take your brother's bread, don't persecute him, don't slander him.

How do we expect to be saved, my brethren? One thing seems too much for us, the other too bitter. It's true, God is compassionate, but he's also just. He also has an iron rod. So if we want to be saved, we should have love for God and for our brethren.

#### Fasting and Education

MOSES FASTED for forty days and nights and became like an angel. So let us also fast on Wednesdays because our Christ was sold on that day, and on Friday because he was crucified. And just as Moses became educated, so should we become educated so we'll know God's law. And if you parents haven't received an education, your children should. Can't you see how savage our race has become from ignorance? We've become like animals. This is why I counsel you to build schools so that you may understand the holy Gospel and the other books.

Moses

THE GRACIOUS GOD, seeing Moses' good disposition, found him worthy to become king of the Jews, and he reigned for forty years. He also became a prophet. And what is a prophet? One who knows the past and the future. We too, my brethren, when we do good works, are found worthy by God and he gives us whatever we ask for with faith. But if we do evil and we don't have love but hatred, then we have no place with God but with the devil in hell where we burn forever.

Noah

IN OLDEN TIMES, my brethren, the devil, who hates good, marshalled all of his evil and incited people to be proud, to murder, to fornicate, to commit adultery, to do things that weren't done even by animals lacking reason. And worse, they worshipped the sun as god, some the moon, others the sea.

Wanting to destroy the world, God ordered Noah to build a ship on earth so that people might ask him: "What are you doing?"

And he would answer: "God will destroy the world."

And they would make fun of him, but Noah wasn't to pay them any heed. Noah began to build the ship. People asked him: "Why are you building a ship?"

Noah would say to them: "Because God will destroy the world."

They would tell him: "You're crazy. What's the matter with God to want to destroy the world?"

Noah minded his own business and finished the ship in a hundred years.

In those days eight people were found to be good; Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. Wishing to save these eight, God commanded Noah to tar the ship so that the rain wouldn't enter it, and to place in it all the animals, male, and female, clean and unclean. Then, after he and his wife and his children and their wives got in, he shut the ship well.

[Meanwhile,] the people outside ate, drank, conducted business, and did other devilish acts. Then God opened the cataracts of heaven and rain fell like a river on the earth. The people shouted: "Noah, open up for us so we can get in."

Noah answered them: "Where were you for the last hundred years when I told you that God would destroy the earth? What can I do for you now? In Hades there is no repentance!"

Then the earth was flooded and water covered all the mountains, and all the people drowned except for Noah and his family. But again the earth was filled from them, as Christ says in the holy Gospel: "As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man," that is, just as in Noah's time, the people didn't believe but made fun of him until suddenly God's wrath came the flood and drowned the world. Similarly today, my fellow Christians, people won't believe during the Second Coming of the Lord, they won't believe as they didn't then. The words I speak to you aren't mine, but those of the Holy Spirit, and whoever wants to, let him believe. I've done my duty.

Sin and Youth

BRETHREN, WHEN I was young I believed in a falsehood: "Let me commit sins now, and when I get old I'll do good and I'll be saved."

Now I have grown old, but my sins have sprung roots and I can't do any good. So you be careful not to suffer the same fate, but now that you have the time, do good works to be saved.

The Christian Kingdom and the Turks

THREE HUNDRED YEARS after the Resurrection of our Christ, God sent St. Constantine who established a Christian kingdom. The Christians held it for one thousand-one hundred-fifty years. Then God took it [the Christian kingdom] away from the

Christians and brought the Turks and gave it to them for our own good. They've held it for three hundred and twenty years. Why did God bring the Turks and not another race? For our own good, because the other nations would have harmed our faith, while the Turk will do anything you want if you give him money.

The Lord, wishing to protect us from condemnation, granted us a word which if we keep we'll be saved. What is that word? Whatever you hate don't do to another. That is, whatever you don't want someone else to do to you, don't you do it to another. Just as you don't want to be stolen from, to be slandered, to be insulted by others, don't you steal, don't you murder others.

#### The Jesus Prayer

NOW I ADVISE YOU ALL - young and old - to make a prayer rope and to hold it in your left hand, and with your right make the sign of the Cross and say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of the living God, through the intercessions of the Theotokos and of all the Saints have mercy upon me, your sinful and unworthy servant."

#### The Holy Cross

THE MOST GRACIOUS GOD has granted us the holy Cross with which to bless, and the holy Sacraments. With the Cross we open paradise, with the Cross we drive out the demons, but we must keep our hands free from sin. Then the devil is consumed in flames and departs. Therefore, my brethren, keep this word and the Cross with you whenever you are eating, drinking, or working. And it is a good and holy thing to always pray at dawn, in the evening, and at midnight.

#### The Sign of the Cross

LISTEN, MY BRETHREN, how the sign of the Cross is made and what it means. First, just as the Holy Trinity is glorified in heaven by the angels, so should you join your three fingers of your right hand. And being unable to ascend into heaven to worship, raise your hand to your head (because the head means heaven) and say: "Just as the angels glorify the Holy Trinity in heaven, so do I, as a servant, glorify and worship the Holy Trinity. And as the fingers are three and separate, and are together, so is the Holy Trinity three persons but one God." Lowering your hand to your stomach, say: "I worship you and adore you, my Lord, because you condescended and took on flesh in the womb of the Theotokos for my sins." Place [your hand] on your right shoulder and say: "I beg you, my God, to forgive me and to put me on your right with the just." Placing [your hand] again on your left shoulder, say: "I beg you, my Lord, don't put me on the left with the sinners." Then bending down to the ground [say] : "I glorify you, my God; I worship and adore you, for just as you were put into the grave, may I also be." And when you stand up straight, you reveal the resurrection and say: I glorify and worship you, my Lord, for you rose from the dead to grant us eternal life." This is what the Cross means. Let us give just one example so you can see the power of the Cross.

#### The Power of the Cross

THERE WAS A MAN named Julian, the reader who studied with Basil the Great and wanted to be king. So he went and found a Jewish magician and said to him: "Can you make me emperor and I will make you my chief deputy?"

The magician said: "Deny Christ and I will make you emperor.

Julian replied: "I deny him."

The magician then wrote a letter and said to Julian: "Take this paper and go to a pagan grave. Then throw it up high and demons will come. But whatever they do to you, don't be afraid. And don't make the sign of the Cross because they will leave."

Julian went to the grave and when he threw the paper, the demons came. Frightened, he made the sign of the Cross and they left.

He immediately went to the magician and told him what happened.

The magician then said to him: "Go and kill a child and bring me its heart." Then the magician called forth the demons once more, but again Julian, from fear, made the sign of the Cross. However, the demons were not frightened because he had infected himself by the murder.

The magician fulfilled his wish and Julian reigned for two years and went to hell where he burns forever. We too must be free from sin and then the devil departs.

### Worthy and Unworthy Priests

I WISH, MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS, that we could be together always, so that I could tell various things. But what can I do since there are thousands of villages where they have never heard the word of God, and they are awaiting for me. So I beg you, holy priests, and I counsel you to concern yourselves with the laymen, how they - and you - are going to be saved. Similarly, you laymen should honor your priests. And if you chance to come upon a priest and a king, you should give preference to the priest. If you chance upon a priest and an angel, prefer the priest, because the priest is higher than even the angels.

The priest who wishes his own good should read the law so he'll understand his obligations. Concerning holy priests I have nothing to say to you. It is my duty when I meet a priest to bow and kiss his hand and to ask him to beseech God for my sins. The entire world can beseech God, but cannot perform the holy Sacraments. But a priest, even a sinner, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, can perform the holy Sacraments.

I only say this: whoever wishes to become a priest should be as pure as an angel. He should be educated so he can explain the holy Gospel and the sacred Scriptures. And when he becomes thirty years of age, and the laymen and the bishop ask him, then he should become a priest without paying any money. He should live near the church so that whatever hour he is wanted by the laymen they will find him. He should observe who is angry with his wife, which brother with his brother, which neighbor with his neighbor, and reconcile them. He should sacrifice himself for his flock.

And when he celebrates [the Divine Liturgy] and completes the reading of the Gospel, he should explain to the Christians what Christ commands them to do. He should recall that the tassels which are on his stole represent the souls of the Christians. And if one soul is lost he'll have to account for it on the day of judgment. He should recall that the chasuble he wears has no sleeves. This means that the priest should keep his hand clear of worldly affairs and should always have his mind on heaven. And when he folds the chasuble and it becomes like two wings, this shows that if he does good works he will fly to heaven like an angel.

If, on the other hand, he is unworthy, uneducated, infected with sins, pays money and uses intermediaries to become a priest, he buys hell. Woe to the priest who reads the Gospel and then tells lies.

In olden times, when people wanted to punish someone, they swore and said, "May God place him among the priests of the eighteenth century." This is why, my brethren, it is difficult today for patriarchs, bishops, priests, etc., to be saved.

This is why I advise you, holy priests, now that you have time, repent so you may be saved.

### Human Relationships

YOU ELDERS who are heads of the villages, if you wish to be saved, should love all the Christians as your children and should apportion taxes according to each person's ability to pay and not play favorites. Similarly, you who are subordinates should honor your betters. Husbands should love your wives. If your wife is bad, you should be patient with her and advise her. You will have wages from God. You women too should love your husbands and be subject to them because patience and obedience to a good husband earn a good wage for your soul. And if he has some fault, you should overlook it because a husband has more responsibilities than a wife. So, both should love one another. Similarly, you children should honor and respect your parents because whoever doesn't honor and obey his parents in what is good, sins.

### The Example of Abraham

AGAIN, IF YOUR PARENTS happen to deny Christ and they urge you, too, to deny him, then don't obey. You will have wages from God just as Abraham did when his father, Thara, the pagan, sent him to bring a sheep to be sacrificed to the idols. On the way, Abraham thought to himself: "Doesn't this world which remains new always have a master? So why should my father worship idols which are deaf and dumb and not worship the true God who created heaven, earth, etc?"

And immediately, he heard a voice from heaven: "Your thinking is good. Go to the promised land and remain there until I tell you what to do, for if you return to your father and tell him what you have been thinking, he will put you to death. So leave."

Thus Abraham left and God made him as rich as a king. And God blessed his seed and his descendants became as numerous as the stars in the sky. He also had three hundred and eighteen servants whom he treated as his brothers.

#### Monks and Saints

YOU SEE, MY BRETHREN, whoever has his mind on God, God finds worthy to live well here and to go to paradise. And when your sons wish to become monks, don't prevent them from doing so, but rejoice because they are following the good road. But when you see them on a bad road, then prevent them from taking it.

Have reverence for all the saints of the Church, and especially for the Lady Mary, because all the saints are servants of Christ, while the Theotokos is queen of heaven and of earth. She prays to the compassionate Christ for our sins. This is why we too should honor our Lady by fasting and alms.

#### A Thief Named John

A MAN NAMED JOHN was defeated and he became a thief. He became the captain of a band of one hundred thieves, but he had great reverence for the Theotokos. Each morning and evening he read the service of Supplication to the Theotokos.

Wishing to save him because of the great reverence he had for the Theotokos, the gracious God sent a holy monk who was immediately captured by the thieves.

The monk said to them: "I beg you to take me to your captain because I have something to tell you for your own good."

They took him to the captain and he said: "Ask all the men to come so that I can tell you something."

The captain called them and they came. The monk said: "Aren't there any more?"

"I have a cook," the captain replied.

"Ask him to come." But when he came, the cook was unable to look at the monk and turned his face aside.

The monk then said to the cook: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I command you to tell me who you are, who sent you, and what you are doing here."

The cook replied and said: "I'm a liar and I always speak falsely. But since you have bound me with the name of Christ, I can't but tell you the truth. I'm the devil and I was sent by my superior to work for the captain and to wait for the day when he wouldn't read the service of Supplication to the Theotokos to put him into hell. I have been watching him now for fourteen years and I have never found a day when he hasn't read the service."

The monk said: "I command you in the name of the Holy Trinity to disappear and no longer tempt Christians." And immediately the devil disappeared like smoke.

The monk then taught the thieves. Some became monks, others married and did good works and were saved. This is why I advise you all, men and women, to learn the service of Supplication and to use it in your prayers. And if you wish, take the book, The Salvation of Sinners, which contains the seventy miracles of the Theotokos, of which I told you one so that you might understand.

#### A Maiden Named Mary

THERE WAS A MAIDEN named Mary whose father was a Christian and sought to have her married. But she didn't want to, wishing to preserve her virginity. He placed her in a nunnery and handed her over to the abbess to keep her as her child. After her father had died, a new ruler took over that land. One day he went to the monastery where Mary was, and as soon as he saw her, he immediately was overcome by a satanic love for her. Returning to his home, he sent a letter to the abbess which said: "Send Mary to me immediately, because I have seen her and she has seen me. She has fallen in love with me and I with her."

The abbess read the letter and called Mary and said to her: "My child, what good did you see in the Pasha which made you look upon him with love? Look what he writes to me here."

Mary answered: "I don't know anything about it. I looked at him with a different purpose in mind. I said to myself: 'My God, will the Pasha have the same glory in the next world which he has in this one?' But he looked at me with a diabolical purpose. If I wanted marriage, my father would have given me [in marriage], and I would have married a Christian."

The abbess then wrote to the Pasha: "I would prefer to send you my head rather than send you Mary."

The Pasha sent another letter which said: "Either you send me Mary or I will come and take her myself and I will burn down the monastery."

Mary heard this and said to the abbess: "When the Pasha's men come, send them to my cell and I shall answer them."

When they came to Mary's cell she asked them what they wanted. They replied: "The Pasha sent us to take you because he saw your eyes and he desires them."

She asked them to wait for her to go to the church. She then took a knife and a dish and, standing before the icon of Christ, she said: "My Lord, you gave me earthly eyes so that I might walk along the good road, and for me to go voluntarily along the bad road is not right; and because these earthly eyes will take out my spiritual eyes, see how I take them out for your love, so that I can escape from the mire of sin."

And she immediately put the knife to her eye and plucked it out and placed it in the dish. She then went before the icon of the Theotokos and took out the other eye and put them together. She then sent them to the Pasha. When he saw them his satanic love was transformed into contrition and reverence. He immediately got up and went to the monastery and begged the nuns to pray to God to heal Mary.

All the nuns accompanied the Pasha. They fell on their knees, and begged Christ and the Theotokos to return Mary's sight.

The Theotokos then appeared as lightning to Mary and said to her: "Hail, Mary. Because you preferred to put out your eyes for the love of my Son and for me, behold take back your eyes and no longer will you be tempted."

Seeing the miracle, those who were present rejoiced greatly and glorified God and the Panagia. Then the Pasha gave the monastery a lot of gold and he was forgiven by the nuns. He left and did good things and was saved.

Did you hear, my brethren, what Mary did with the power of the Panagia? This is why we too must honor the All-Holy Theotokos by doing good works.

Causing Scandal

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, among all the good things he teaches us in the holy Gospel, tells us this word also: "Woe to the person who scandalizes his brother and doesn't ask for forgiveness before the sun sets, because he has fallen into sin."

Now, is it possible that I who have come here have not scandalized some of you? So I have no other way but the following. I beg your nobility to say three times: "Forgive us and God will forgive you." Now if you want Christ to rejoice, our Panagia, the Theotokos to rejoice, and all the saints, and for the devil, our enemy, to be grieved, now that you are all gathered here together, say among yourselves three times: "Forgive us, brethren, and God will forgive you."

## **THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS**

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### **FOURTH TEACHING**

OUR LORD AND GOD Jesus Christ, the sweetest master, the creator of angels, my brethren, moved by the compassion and great love which he has for our race, has granted us and continues to grant us each day his immeasurable gifts. Behold how he's made us worthy this evening to glorify and honor him and our Lady the Theotokos. And if the Lord were to forgive us our sins through her intercessions and make us worthy of his kingdom to worship and glorify the All-Holy Trinity, we would rejoice and be glad always.

The Lord, my brethren, found me, a sinner, worthy to come here to your blessed village and to tell you some teachings of our holy Church. Moved by his great compassion, our Lord first created ten orders of angels. The first order fell due to pride and became demons. Then the most gracious God commanded this world into being and he made one man and woman similar to us, with an earthly body and an angelic eternal soul. He named the man Adam and the woman He also created a paradise in the direction of the East, filled with joy and gladness.

Adam and Eve

GOD PUT ADAM AND EVE in paradise and they rejoiced as angels. He instructed them not to eat the fruit of a particular fig tree. But they disobeyed God's command and they ate and they did not repent. God expelled them from paradise and they lived in this world for nine hundred and thirty years, shedding black and bitter tears. And after they died, they

went to hell and burned for five thousand five hundred years.

The gracious God had compassion for our race and he came down and became flesh by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Ever-Virgin Mary, and became perfect man without sin, and he redeemed us from the hands of the devil he revealed to us our sacred Faith, holy Baptism, the sacred Sacraments so that we know where to walk. On Holy Thursday night the Lord took bread and wine and blessed them and he made the holy Sacraments - his all-holy Body and Blood - and gave communion to the twelve Apostles. Up to here, we have related the story in two teachings and left off. Now, hoping in the compassion of our Christ, and as the Holy Spirit inspires us, we'll begin and tell you the remainder in brief.

The Gospel

FIRST, MY BRETHREN, you must pay close attention to all the teachings of the sacred Gospel because it is all diamonds, treasures, joy, gladness eternal life, and especially to the sacred Sacraments. First, observe what our Christ has done. He didn't allow hatred and hostility to prevent him from giving communion to Judas, his enemy, but just as he gave communion to the eleven disciples, his good friends, so he gave to Judas his enemy.

Saprikios and Nikephoros: the Question of Forgiveness

THERE WAS A MAN named Saprikios who always fasted, prayed, provided money for poor brides, built churches; he never did a harmful thing but loved justice. There was also another man named Nikephoros who never did anything good. In fact, he stole, cheated people, fornicated; he did everything that was bad. He also wanted to murder his brother Saprikos.

One day, the king sent for Saprikios and asked him to deny Christ and to worship idols. Saprikios said: "I'll never deny my Christ.

The king tortured him a great deal, and when he saw that there was no way to defeat him, the king decided to put Saprikios to death. He was handed over to the executioner, who took him to the place of execution

Nikephoros learned of this and went along the way and said to Saprikios: "Brother, I have done You wrong and I have learned that they're putting you to death. So, I beg you brother, forgive me; I have wronged you."

Nikephoros bent low, begged him again, and kissed his feet.

"Brother," he said, "forgive me for God's sake."

But his brother wouldn't forgive him.

They reached the place of execution where Nikephoros begged Saprikios again, with tears in his eyes, but he wouldn't forgive him.

Once more Nikephoros said to him: "Behold, brother, they're about to kill you, why don't you forgive me? You'll be damned. I forgive you with all my heart."

Saprikios replied: "I'll never forgive you."

And as the executioner lifted the sword to cut off his head, the most gracious God, observing the scene, lifted his grace, and Saprikios asked the soldier: "Why do you want to kill me?"

The soldier said: "You mean to say that after all this time you don't know why? Because you will not worship the idols."

"Is that why you are torturing me?" said Saprikios. "I deny Christ and I'll worship the idols."

As soon as he said this, they stopped the execution. He denied Christ and went with the devil. Nikephoros, seeing the angels who stood by holding a golden crown, said to the executioner: "I'm a Christian and I believe in my Christ."

Then he said to Saprikios: "Forgive me, my brother, and God will forgive you."

And immediately the executioner cut off Nikephoros' head and it was received by the angels who took it to paradise. This is why we also, we who are pious Christians, should love our enemies and should forgive them. We should feed them. We should give them drink. We should pray to God for their souls and then say to God: "My God, I beg you to forgive me as I forgive my enemies." But if we don't forgive our enemies, even if we shed our blood for the love of Christ, we'll go to hell.

#### The Question of Anathema

DO YOU PRONOUNCE anathemas here? Be careful, my fellow Christians, never pronounce anathemas, because anathema is separation from God, from the angels, from paradise, and leads to the devil and to hell.

It was for that brother's sake that Christ was crucified, to get him out of hell; and you, for an insignificant thing, pronounce an anathema against him? You put him into hell to burn forever? Are you so hard-hearted? But just think how many sins you have committed from the day of your birth; how many sins have you committed with your eyes, your mouth, or in your mind? Do you think you are sinless?

The holy Gospel tells us only Christ is without sin. We human beings are all sinners, so don't pronounce anathemas. This is why, my fellow Christians, if you wish God to forgive you of all your sins and to put you into paradise, let your nobility say three times for your enemies: "May God forgive and have mercy upon them."

#### The Virtues of Forgiveness

THIS FORGIVENESS, my brothers, has two properties: it illuminates and it burns completely. I told you to forgive your enemies for your own good. And you who have harmed your brethren and have heard me tell them to forgive you, don't rejoice, but indeed weep because your forgiveness has become a fire on your head if you don't make restitution. You should weep and beg God to forgive you your own sins. If all of the spiritual 'men, patriarchs, bishops, the entire world forgive you, you remain unforgiven. For who has the power to forgive you? He who has suffered your injustice.

If we examine the issue carefully, you should return four for one as the holy Gospel says. Only then will you receive forgiveness. If you don't have the money to return it, go and sell your possessions, and whatever you receive give to those you have cheated. If you don't have enough, go and sell yourself into slavery, and whatever you receive give that. It would be better for you to be a slave on earth for five or ten years and to go to paradise rather than be free on earth and tomorrow to go to hell and burn forever.

So, my brethren, whoever has wronged any Christian, Jew or Turk, return what you have taken unjustly because it is cursed and you'll never get ahead. What you have gained unjustly you use to feed yourself, but it will cause your death and God will put you into hell.

Whoever is willing to make restitution of what he has taken unjustly, let him stand up and tell me and I'll ask all the Christians to forgive him. If you put a stolen sheep among one hundred of your own, it will pollute them all because it's accursed and anathematized. I beg you, my fellow Christians, to say to those who are willing to make restitution three times: "May God forgive them and have mercy upon them."

Our first teaching is this: whoever among us has suffered injustice, let us forgive our enemies for our own good; and whoever among us has committed an injustice, let us make restitution.

### Confession and the Sacraments

THE SECOND TEACHING is this: if we too wish to benefit from the sacred Sacraments like the eleven good Apostles, and not to blaspheme like the bad one, Judas, we should make a clean confession and receive communion with fear, awe, and reverence. Then we'll be blessed. But if we go to receive holy Communion without confession, polluted with sin, we put fire into ourselves and we burn.

Who can tell me, my brothers, is the sun bright or dark? I believe that all of you know that it's bright and that it illuminates everything. There are, however, some animals called bats and others, owls, who when the sun comes out are blinded and are made dizzy and can't see. They see when it becomes dark. It's the same with the sacred Sacraments. They enlighten the good person and make him like an angel. On the other hand, they confuse the sinner and he becomes like a devil.

Just as fire doesn't burn all things - indeed, gold is brightened and cleansed - while it burns other things, let us too become gold to be cleaned, and not like wood to be burned.

Here where I have come, my fellow Christians, I received a great joy and a great sorrow. I received a great joy from seeing your good disposition and your good repentance. I received sorrow from thinking of my own unworthiness because I don't have time to hear all of your confessions one by one, so that each of You might tell me his sins and so I can advise you as God inspires me. I want to do it, my children, but I can't.

[I am] just like a father who is ill and is visited by his son [who asks] to be comforted, but being unable to do so, the father sends him away. But how does he send him away? With a burning heart. He wants to comfort him, but can't. But again, if you don't want to be deprived completely, I will tell you this. If you wish to heal your souls, you need four things.

Shall we make a bargain? Let me take upon myself all the sins you've committed from the time of your birth until now, And let your nobility hold four hairs. And what will I do [with your sin] ? I have a deep hole and I will throw them into it. What is the deep hole? It's the compassion of our Christ. The first hair is your confession, the first foundation of what we have said: forgive your enemies. Will you do it?

"We will, O saint of God."

You have taken the first hair. The second hair is to find a good confessor, educated and virtuous, so that you can confess to him all your sins. If you have one hundred sins and confess ninety-nine to the confessor and hide one, all of your sins are unforgiven. It is when You commit a sin that you should be ashamed, but when you confess you should feel no shame.

A woman went to confession to an ascetic. The ascetic had a virtuous disciple. The ascetic said to his disciple: "Go and hear the woman's confession."

The disciple went close enough to see her, but didn't listen. The woman confessed and left. Later, the disciple returned and said: "Elder, I saw a strange miracle. When the woman was confessing, I saw small snakes coming out of her. I saw a large one hanging out and it tried to come out but it withdrew again."

The ascetic replied: "Go, and ask her to come back quickly."

The disciple went and found her dead. He returned and told the elder what happened. Unable to understand the miracle, he prayed to God to make known to him if the woman was saved or damned. A black bear appeared before him and said to him: "I'm the woman who came to confession, but I didn't confess one of the mortal sins I committed. This is why all my sins weren't forgiven. And the Lord ordered me to go to hell and to burn forever."

And immediately there came out of her a stink in the form of smoke and she disappeared before him. That's why, my fellow Christians, when You confess, tell all of your sins Completely. First say to your confessor: "Confessor, I'll be damned because I don't love God and my brethren with all my heart as I love myself."

And then tell him everything that pricks your conscience: if You have committed murder, or fornicated, or swore falsely, or lied, or haven't honored your parents, or similar things. Behold, You have taken the second hair

The third hair is when you have confessed and the confessor asks you: "Why, my child, have you committed these sins?" You must be careful not to condemn anyone else but yourself and say: "I did these things due to my evil disposition."

Is it a hard thing to accuse yourself? No. So you have taken the third hair. Now the fourth. When the confessor gives you permission to leave, depart with the firm resolve that it would be better to spill your blood rather than to sin.

Will you do this?"

"Yes."

You have taken the fourth hair.

The four hairs are your medicine as we have said. The first is to forgive your enemies; the second, to forgive completely" the third, to condemn yourself; the fourth, to decide not to sin again and if you can, to go to confession every day. If you can't every day, then once a week, or once a month, or at least four times a year.

#### Children and Confession

GET YOUR CHILDREN in the habit of following the good road, of going to confession from an early age. Those penances which the confessor gives you, the forty liturgies, repentance, fasting, and others are not medicine, but [are given to You] so that you won't fall into sin again. And whoever puts into his heart these four things is saved even if he dies that moment. But without them, even if he does good a thousand times, he'll go to hell.

#### Peter and Paul

ONCE, MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS, two men came to confession to me: Peter and Paul. Now see whether I helped them or not. I bare my heart to You. Peter said to me: "I have, confessor, from the time of my birth until now fasted, prayed, given alms to the poor, built monasteries, churches, and have done other good works. But I won't forgive my enemies." I sent him to hell.

Paul came and said to me: "From the time of my birth I have never done anything good, but, indeed, I have committed murders, I have fornicated, stolen, I have burned down churches, monasteries; I have done all that is bad, but I forgive my enemy." Look what I did to him. I immediately embraced him and kissed him. I gave him permission to receive communion. Did I do right or wrong? Of course you want to condemn me and tell me: "You sent Peter to hell for such a small thing just because he couldn't forgive his enemy? And Paul, who did so much evil, and because he forgave his enemies you forgave him and gave him permission to receive communion?"

"Yes, my brethren, that's what I did."

Do you want to know what Peter is like? He is like a hundred pounds of flour in which you put a little yeast, which has so much strength that it can turn those one hundred pounds of dough and make it rise. That's what all those good acts Peter did are like. That small dose of hatred, which doesn't allow him to forgive his enemy, changes the flour and transforms it into the devil's poison. That's why I sent him to hell. On the other hand, what's Paul like? He's like a pile of kindling wood. You put a small lighted candle to the pile and it all burns. Paul's sins are like that pile of kindling wood. The forgiveness which he granted his enemy was like the candle which burned all the wood, that is, his sins. And I sent him to paradise.

#### Fasting and the Hungry

THE LORD, MY BRETHREN, was surrendered into the hands of the lawless Jews. He was cursed, beaten, crucified according to the flesh. On Holy Wednesday the Lord was sold and on Holy Friday he was crucified. We too, my good Christians, should always fast, but more so on Wednesday because our Lord was sold on that day, and on Friday because he was crucified. Similarly, we are obligated to fast during Lent. The Holy Spirit inspired the holy Fathers of the Church and they legislated that we should fast to put our passions to death, to humble the body, and especially so that we can live easily with little. I can live on six ounces of bread. This bread is blessed by God because it is necessary, but not six and one-half ounces. That extra half ounce is cursed because it is wasted and it belongs to him who is hungry. Do you keep the four lents, my fellow Christians? What do you do here? If you are Christians you must keep them, especially Great Lent. Do you keep the three day (fast)? It is a good and holy thing to observe Clean Monday.

Abraham

ABRAHAM ALWAYS KEPT his door open and all the poor found refuge there. Abraham never sat down to eat without a stranger at his table. The devil was filled with malice and went into the street and stopped passers-by from coming to Abraham's tent. Abraham went out and waited on the street for three days without eating. Seeing his good disposition, the most gracious God [caused] three men to appear. Abraham took them into his tent and he kissed them. Later they disappeared in front of him. He then realized that it was the Holy Trinity, and he glorified God under the typos of the Holy Trinity. Whoever fasts for three days has a reward for his soul. But I don't tell you to do more than you can. There's benefit even if you fast for one day.

The World is Like a Jail

WISHING TO SHOW what a great evil the children of the devil, the Jews, tried to do, God shut off the sun from six o'clock to nine o'clock in the whole world. The rocks split, the whole world trembled. The Lord was placed into the grave and immediately thousands of dead rose, many of whom were dead for thousands of years, and they declared that only Christ is the Son and Word of God and true God, and the life of the dead. We too, my good Christians, must from now on not mourn for those who have died as do those who are irreverent and without faith - those who have no hope in the resurrection. This world, my brethren, is like a jail. When must one rejoice, when he enters jail or when he is freed from jail? It seems to me that when one enters jail he should weep and feel sorrow and when one leaves jail he should rejoice.

Mourning the Dead

O, MY BRETHREN, don't be sad for the dead, but if you love them, do everything you can for their souls: liturgies, memorial services, fasting, prayers, and alms, And all of you women who are wearing dirty clothes because of your dead, take them off because you harm yourselves and your dead. It is natural for a person to be born and to die. We should cry when we are born and rejoice when we die.

The Death of Children

INDEED, DON'T CRY FOR THE death of small children, who are like angels in paradise - Your child belongs to God, and when he gave it to you, he honored you. When he has taken it from you, be honored that your child is rejoicing in paradise forever. It is unseemly for you to sit there and cry.

A king asks for your child to make him a vizier and you rejoice. How much more should you rejoice when the most gracious God found you worthy and took the fruit of your stinking womb and placed your child in paradise, and keeps it to present it to you during the Second Coming, more glorious than the sun, so that you can receive your wages and rejoice with him always?

There are some who have the devil in their heart and say that there is no resurrection and that they have never seen anyone rise from the dead. Wasn't everyone here dead before he was born? Just as the Lord was able to raise us from our mother's womb, so he can raise us from the womb of the earth. What difference is there between our mother's womb and the grave? Can't we see the resurrection plainly? When we sleep, aren't we like dead? What is' sleep? A small death.

Death is a great sleep. Wheat that falls to the earth, if it doesn't rain for it to spoil and become like jelly, won't grow. So are we who die and are buried in the earth.

If our Christ hadn't been buried in a grave, he wouldn't have watered eternal life and the resurrection. Can't you see clearly how God raises the grass from the earth each year? We don't have the knowledge, my fellow Christians, to see everything. God has given us everything. So for the present, I beg you, my brethren, to say for all the dead three times: "May God forgive them and

have mercy on them."

## The Lord's Day

THE LORD WENT TO HELL and brought out Adam and Eve and our race. He rose on the third day. He appeared twelve times to his Apostles. There was joy in heaven, joy on earth, and in the entire world. It was poison and a two-edged sword in the heart of the Jews, and especially of the devil. This is why the Jews don't hate any day as much as Sunday, when they hear our priest say: "Christ, our true God, who rose from the dead." Because that which the Jews planned to do in order to erase Christ's name turned against them. We too, my brethren, should always rejoice, but especially on Sunday which is the day of our Christ's resurrection. For Sunday was the day of the Annunciation of our Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. It is on Sunday that the Lord will raise the entire world. We, too, should work six days for these earthly, fruitless, and false things, and on Sunday we should go to Church and meditate over our sins, death, hell, paradise, and over our souls which are more valuable than the whole world. We should not overeat nor drink excessively nor commit sins. Nor should we work or do business on Sunday. The profit made on Sunday is cursed and damned, and you put a fire and a curse in your home and not a blessing. God may either cause you to die prematurely, or your wife, or your son, or your animal, or he may do some other evil to you. Hence, my brethren, so that no evil may befall you, either spiritual or physical, I advise you to respect Sunday, since it is dedicated to God. What do you do here, my fellow Christians? Do you respect Sunday? If you are Christians respect it.

Do you have sheep here? What do you do with the milk on Sunday? Listen my child, collect it and divide it into seven parts. Keep six for yourself, and the seventh part give as alms to the poor, or to the Church, so that God will bless your possessions. And if you find it necessary and wish to sell your products on Sunday, don't put that profit with the other in your purse because it defiles the rest. Give it as alms so that God will watch over you.

On the fortieth day (after the Resurrection) the Lord blessed the holy Apostles. He ascended into heaven and sat on the right hand of the eternal Father to co-reign eternally and to be worshipped by the angels.

## The End of the World and the Last Judgment

THERE'S ONE THING I'll reveal to you, my fellow Christians. I know that I'll make your heart bum. It's terrible and sad, my heart trembles for me to say it. But what can I do since our Christ tells me if I don't reveal it, he will put me to death and place me in hell. The Holy Bible, the holy and sacred Gospel, reveals to us that the end of the world will take place in the eighth century and this world will be destroyed. And God will send the prophet Elias to teach Christians to guard the faith. The Antichrist, my brethren, is a person who has an evil mind, an evil disposition, and has the devil in his heart. He says he is God and he will put to death the prophet Elias. Having examined the subject, my brothers, I learned and I understood that the prophet Elias and the Antichrist have come and that the latter has killed the prophet. Elias, my fellow Christians, has been alive all these years, and God knows where he has kept him hidden until today. If you wish to know where he is, he is near here, and the words I speak to you belong to him. When the prophet Elias comes to teach, he will not reveal himself to the world, as the Holy Spirit says, so that by coming he will not turn everything upside down.

Thus says the Holy Spirit, so that he'll frighten and shake the world and the earth. I don't want to reveal it to you Christians. But what is there to reveal, my children? His zeal and his teaching. These, too, the most-gracious God has made me worthy to reveal because of his compassion. And don't expect another Elias to teach you. But what can we expect? It is sad for me to tell you! Today, tomorrow, we can expect thirst, great hunger, when we will offer thousands of gold coins and we will not be able to find a little bread or water. Today, tomorrow, we can expect mortal illnesses, when the living will not have time enough to bury the dead. A world-wide earthquake will take place and the whole earth will become a plain. All the mountains will fall, all the homes, and the sea will rise five yards higher than the highest mountains. The stars will fall from the sky; the sun and moon will be extinguished; the sky which is visible, the earth, everything the entire world will be destroyed. When will all of this take place? Our Christ tells us the time is approaching soon. The knife is touching the bone.

Everything will happen suddenly. It may even happen tonight. Maybe it has begun already? Don't you see that your crops have failed and your animals have died? The rivers and springs have dried up. Today you are deprived of one thing, tomorrow another. God is giving it to us a little at a time, and we stupid people don't understand.

I say this to you and I counsel you, even if the sky were to fall down, even if the earth would rise up, even if the whole world were destroyed, as it is due to do so, today, tomorrow, don't be concerned with what God is going to do. Let them burn your body, let them fry it, let them take your possessions - don't concern yourself. Give them away - they are not yours. You need your soul and Christ. Even if the whole world were to fall apart, no one can take these two things away from you against your will. Guard these two, and don't lose them.

## Expected Signs

NOW, My BRETHREN, what sign do we expect? We expect no other signs than to see the holy Cross shine in the sky brighter than the sun, and our sweetest Jesus Christ and God to shine seven times brighter than the sun, together with thousands upon thousands and tens-of-thousands upon tens-of-thousands of angels with divine glory. And the Lord will raise up the whole world, the good as angels and the bad as demons. First, the children of the devil, the Jews, who not only didn't believe in Christ, but crucified him as well. Then they will see our Christ's glory and will believe and worship him, but the faith will not benefit them then at all. Faith is required now. That's why, my brethren, You Christians are the fortunate ones and thrice-blessed, You who believe now. But woe to those unbelievers. It is better for them not to have been born into the world.

Then Christ will separate the just from the sinners as a shepherd separates the goats from the sheep, and he will put the just on his right and the sinners on his left. And he will say to the just: "Come, blessed of my Father, to inherit Paradise. Rejoice with the angels always because you have kept my faith and my commandments." To the sinners the Lord will say: "Go, you accursed, to hell to burn forever together with your father the devil because You have not kept my faith and my commandments."

Then the Lord will open a fiery river, like a sea, and throw in all the impious, unbelievers, heretics, godless, and sinners to burn forever. And he will put the Pious, just, and Orthodox Christians in paradise to rejoice forever.

Therefore, we too, my brethren, should consider what we are, just or sinners. And if we are just, we are of good fortune and thrice-blessed, but if we are sinners we must repent from evil and do good now that we have time. Hell awaits us, when will we repent? Not tomorrow, the next day, or next year, but this moment, because we don't know what awaits us tomorrow. Our Christ tells us we must always be ready. What an evil thing it is, my fellow Christians, for a person to fall into sin and not to repent! Think about it!

## Faith and Nation

Enough now, my fellow Christians, I can't tell you any more. I've told you what God has inspired me to say. Let your nobility seek to learn more. You are sober and knowledgeable, you understand your own good and do it. Now what shall we do, my fellow Christians? I advise you but won't your nobility advise me too? My work is your work, it is of our faith, of our nation. I have two thoughts. One says for me to bless you and for you to bless me and then for me to get up and go to another place so that others who wait for me might hear me. My other thought tells me, no, don't go, but stay as you did in other villages and complete the remainder of the work because what we have said in three talks was brief. It is like a man who builds a church without a roof. What is left to be said is like that roof. What is the roof?

I see our nation which has fallen in many bad ways; these are curses, excommunications, anathemas, oaths, blasphemies and others such as these [of which it is necessary] for Christians to cleanse themselves, to sanctify their villages, and be cleansed in body and soul. The second thing that I urge Christians to do is to make crosses and prayer ropes, and I pray to our Christ that he bless them so that they might serve as the protection of Christians. Third is when I make Christians forgive everyone - living and dead. These then are on my mind. And now do I have your blessing to leave, and will your nobility complete the others?

"No, holy teacher. We beg you to stay with us and finish because we don't know how."

"Good, for the love of our Christ and you I'll stay."

## Unction and Free Grace

ARE THERE MANY PRIESTS HERE? Please take the trouble, holy priests, and stand up so I can see how many there are of you here. Holy priests, will you do me a favor and let us perform a service of holy Unction so that our Christian brothers can be anointed?"

"At your command, O holy one of God."

"I have money to pay you but I won't give you any. I want grace because the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, doesn't operate with money. Because this is what our Christ says: I give you my grace free, you too must give it freely to our brethren. Will you do it, holy priests?"

"Of course, O holy one of God."

"I shall ask the Christians here to forgive you because of this grace. Do you want me to ask the Christians to forgive You, or don't you have any sins? And tomorrow I shall make you a gift of a book - not for money, but for a blessing."

"At Your command."

"I beg you, my fellow Christians, to say three times to the holy priest who will perform the holy Unction for you: 'May God forgive and have mercy upon you.' And if your holiness wish also, ask for forgiveness.

"Holy pastor, this evening I need you to get twenty cups and six pounds of oil. My boy has anointers and he will give them to you. And if You will, my priests, go to the various houses and collect about thirty pounds of oil. Use three pounds for the Unction and give the rest to your wife to use. Isn't this satisfactory? Will you do it?"

"I'll do it, O holy one of God."

"If you don't do it tomorrow, I shall declare you a liar and I will shame you. Let ten of You stand up and listen. Five of You make fifteen sacks and you women bring some bread and wheat tonight. And you five will be the committee and you will cut the bread and put it in the sacks. Will you do it?"

"We will, O holy one of God."

"You other five bring five Pots of water this evening so that they will be ready in the morning when we will pray to Christ, so that he will bless them and the faithful may drink holy water. Will you do it?"

"We will, O holy one of God."

"Good, my children, sit so we can finish talking about the rest. Be careful, my children, and don't have pride."

## **THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS**

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### **FIFTH TEACHING**

#### **FIFTH TEACHING**

##### **The Importance of Education**

IN THE BEGINNING GOD created heaven and earth and everything in it, says the prophet Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit in the holy Scriptures. In olden times, my fellow Christians, people were made good. Among the many there was a man named Moses. As a young child, my brethren, Moses received two things in his heart, love of God and love of his brethren. Have these two loves, [which produce] joy, glory, exultation, riches, treasures. Let us rejoice with these two loves always.

The Prophet Moses studied for forty years to learn his letters in order to understand where he walked. You too should study, my brethren; learn as much as you can. And if you fathers haven't, educate your children to learn Greek because our Church uses Greek. And if you don't learn Greek, my brethren, you can't understand what our Church confesses. It is better, my brother, for you to have a Greek school in your village rather than fountains and rivers, for when your child becomes educated, he is then a human being. The school opens churches; the school opens monasteries.

Moses

FOR FORTY YEARS MOSES prayed to God to free his brethren, the Jews, from Egypt. You too, my brother, should pray to God as much as you can for the good of your brother and not, my brother, to steal from him, to murder him, and to wish him evil.

For forty days and nights the Prophet Moses fasted until he was cleansed spiritually and bodily from every sin. Hear, my brethren, what good things the Prophet Moses did and see what a great good the most gracious God granted him. He ordained him king and he reigned for forty years.

He also made him a prophet throughout the world; to know all future and past things. God made him like Himself

Moses lived for a hundred and twenty-eight years; he lived well here and he went to paradise to rejoice forever. This is the way we too should labor, my brethren. Let us believe as much as possible; let us cleanse ourselves from every spiritual and bodily sin, and become angels. And if we don't labor, my brethren, and instead we eat and drink and enjoy ourselves, and dance, we cannot be called human beings but dumb animals.

### Creation of Man and Woman

GOD, MY BRETHREN, inspired the Prophet Moses and he wrote for us many and different truths. What we said yesterday was from the Prophet Moses. Yesterday we said, my brethren, that God is one, incomprehensible, omnipotent, that he is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that he first created ten orders of angels; that one order became devils because of their pride. Then God made us human beings to put us into paradise to replace the first order of angels. And God created one man and one woman. Just as we mix flour and water and make a loaf of bread, so did God take earth and mixed it and made a man. He breathed upon him and gave him an angelic, immortal soul. There was no woman in the world. And God took from man a rib which he owed and created woman.

Later there were thousands upon thousands of women on earth. But none could be found to repay the rib taken from Adam except the Lady Theotokos, who was found worthy to give birth to Jesus Christ and God due to her purity. She was a virgin and she remained a virgin, and she became queen of heaven and of the angels and of all creation both intelligible and perceptible.

The most gracious God created paradise in the East filled with joy and gladness. He put man and woman in this paradise and gave them all the good things that were in paradise. And so that they might know the most gracious Lord, so that they might know God, so that they might know the creator, he gave them a small order, saying to them: "Don't eat figs from one particular fig tree. But if you don't keep my commandment and you do eat the figs, I shall put you to death."

### The Loss of Paradise

MAN AND WOMAN treated God's command with contempt and ate. You should abstain therefore, my brethren, and not do as Adam and Eve did, to have contempt for God's word, because, brethren, the most gracious God is compassionate, but he is also just. He also has an iron rod in his hands. You women especially should watch out and not suffer the fate of Eve: to do the will of the devil and disregard the commands of God. You women should abstain and not urge your husbands to do evil as Eve did.

Man and woman treated God's command with contempt and ate. God exiled them from paradise and they came to this accursed place. It is said that they had thirty-three male children and twenty-seven daughters and that they lived nine hundred and thirty years. They went to hell and were in flames and burned for five and one-half thousand years. This is the place we reached in our discussion yesterday.

### Evil in the World

ALL MEN AND WOMEN were born from one man and one woman, and we are all brothers and sisters. But the devil, my brethren, our enemy who hates good, seeing that the world was multiplying, became envious and designed in his heart to destroy the world. He put hatred in the heart of men so that they would hate one another and not marry and give birth to children to increase the earth. He caused men to become homosexuals, and to perform bestialities and other obscene acts which even the dumb animals never did. The most gracious God, seeing that the devil planned in his heart to end the world, commanded that whoever didn't have children, would be cursed. From then on men began to marry. Listen, my brother, you who don't have children, are you cursed? You do wrong to be sad. The most gracious God did this to put an end to that evil. You, my brother, who are sad because you can't have children, do you complain that you are cursed? [You shouldn't], for you have no curse.

### Spiritual Children

THOUSANDS AND TENS of thousands of men and women have preserved their virginity and didn't have children. So if you are cursed, so are they, as I am who am a monk. And what prevents you from giving birth to all of these people spiritually? My brother, take two poor children into your home and make them your spiritual children and acquire wages from God and honor among men. Give birth to humility, fasting, prayer, charity, love for God and for your brethren, then you will be saved. On the other hand, you, my brother, who have children, should cry and be sad, for all the sins that your children commit are credited to your soul, too. Are you unmarried? You have one responsibility. Are you married? You have the responsibility of saving your wife and your two, three, five or ten children. The more children you have the greater the responsibility. Don't you hear what people say about your children? 'Cursed be the father who begot them?' I hear many who say this. That's why, my brother, you who have children, train them, teach them their letters, and especially Greek, because our Church uses the Greek language. I won't tell you more because you are wise and understand.

#### Joakim and Anna

IN OLDEN DAYS there was a man named Joakim who had a wife named Anna. He was a good husband and she a good wife. They were both of royal lineage but the wife was superior. There are many women in the world who are better than men. What does it profit you to boast that you are a man and be inferior to a woman, and go to hell and bum forever while your wife goes to paradise and rejoices forever?

Joakim and Anna were, my brethren, pious, prudent, virtuous, and humble. Their home was like a hotel, but they had no children. Knowing that the most gracious God was the author of all good, they beseeched him to grant them a child, male or female, and they would dedicate it to the temple. Seeing their good intention, the most gracious God [willed] and immediately Joakim's wife became pregnant, and she gave birth to the Lady Theotokos, the queen of heaven and of earth. He named her Mary, which means queen.

Do you hear, my brethren, now Joakim and Anna had their hope in God and he granted them the gift which they asked for?

The martyrs purchased paradise with their blood, the ascetics with their ascetic life, and we, brethren, who have children with what are we to purchase paradise? With hospitality. We must entertain our poor, our blind, our lame brethren, as Joakim did, and not the rich, for they have the means on earth, so the most gracious God does it in paradise a hundredfold. You, my brethren, who can't have children, have your hope in God as Joakim and Anna did and not in sorcery and magic and other devilish acts. Neither look for your fortune or fate in magic. I believe that some children are born from the devil and they walk about on earth, and Say: "Give me a dollar and I will give you a talisman so that you can have a male child." But don't believe them because they perform devilish acts and harm people.

#### The Theotokos

WHEN THE LADY THEOTOKOS reached the age of three, Joakim and Anna remembered their debt, that is, that they had dedicated her to the temple. So they took the Lady Theotokos and went to church where the Prophet Zacharias was, the archpriest and father of the Holy Forerunner [John the Baptist] Immediately the archpriest perceived that she was to give birth to the Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ, by the Holy spirit and without man. She would conceive as a virgin and after giving birth would remain a virgin. Zacharias received her and kissed her and placed her in the sanctuary because he knew that the Lady was to become the throne of our Lord. The Theotokos spent twelve years in the sanctuary where no one entered except the high priest who went to see her once a year. She was fed with heavenly bread and became superior to the angels. So, my brethren, the holy sanctuary reveals the throne of God, the nave [of the church] paradise, and the narthex reveals the door of paradise.

#### Priests and Laymen

YOU SHOULD REJOICE and be glad, reverend and holy priest, because God has granted you the holy sanctuary where the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ is located. You laymen should refrain from entering the holy sanctuary. No one should enter except the priest who is celebrating the liturgy and the deacon.

Rejoice, my brothers, and you laymen, too, because God has given you the nave which reveals paradise. Rejoice, too, you ladies, my sisters, for God has granted you the narthex which reveals the door of paradise. Enter, my brethren, men and women into the church with fear and awe and don't converse. Men shouldn't go to church to look at the women, nor should women go to look at the men, but enter to make the sign of the Cross with fear and awe and to listen to the Divine Liturgy and to be enlightened and cleansed from your sins.

My brethren, you laymen should be careful not to accuse your priests, not to swear at them, and not to neglect them because you put fire [in your breast] and you will be burned, because priests are even higher than angels and kings. This is how my mind tells me, my brethren, to act. If I were to meet a priest and a king, I would put the priest to sit higher than the king. If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I would first greet the priest and then the angel. Because, my brethren, [the priest] is higher even than the holy altar, higher even than the holy chalice, because the holy chalice is without a soul, but the priest receives the holy Sacraments daily, the holy Body and Blood of our Lord and God Jesus Christ. I, my brethren, have no charges to make against the priest, because they are priests, and they have Christ who punishes them, and whatever mistake they make, our Christ has an iron rod to apply to them.

### Those Who Would Be Priests

NOW I WOULD LIKE to talk to those who would become priests. You, my brother, who wish to become a priest, you should at the age of eighteen become a reader, at twenty a subdeacon, at twenty-five a deacon, and at thirty a priest. And you should learn Greek well enough to be able to explain the holy Gospel, to close it [after reading it] and then to explain it to the Christians. Then, my brother, you can become a priest. If you wish to become a priest so you can take it easy, or for the glory, or through illegal means, God will cut your life short and your soul will go to hell to burn forever. When the laymen ask you, my brother, to become a priest without payment of money, then you are blessed and thrice-blessed, then you are superior to the angels.

### The Annunciation

AFTER TWELVE YEARS, God inspired the father and mother of the Theotokos and they affianced her in accord with divine dispensation. Later the most gracious God sent the angel who said to the Theotokos: "Mary, you should rejoice more than anyone in the world. you will give birth to the Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, without man, as a virgin. And you will remain a virgin so that Jesus Christ can save Adam and Eve and the entire human race."

The Lady Theotokos replied and said: "My Lord, I wonder, and glorify you, I honor and worship you because you have condescended to be born of me, your servant. I am ready, therefore, and let your will be done." And immediately the Theotokos became pregnant and she gave birth to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son and Word of God, without man, a virgin, who remained a virgin.

### Virginity

OUR LORD WAS BORN of a woman so that women would be blessed, because women first received the curse and we were expelled from paradise. And so woman had to receive the blessing so that she would put us back into paradise. Our Lord was born of a virgin so that virginity would be preferred. You, my brother, who want to preserve your virginity, hate the world. Then you are good enough to become thrice blessed; then you will safeguard your virginity; then you will become like an angel. Our Lord was born of one affianced to bless marriage.

### Marriage

REJOICE, MY BRETHREN, and be glad that our Lord has given us a blessed marriage. And God commanded that a man should marry one woman and likewise a woman should marry one man. And after they have become affianced, they should go to confession with pure faith, with fear and awe, and with reverence partake of the holy Sacraments. After they have received Communion, they should be crowned in church and after three days then they should come together with awe and reverence.

And if you want to celebrate a wedding, my brethren, bring the chanters to sing [hymns] all day to glorify our Lord. Then, my brethren, is the wedding blessed; then even if thousands and tens of thousands of magical acts are performed to harm you, nothing will stick. Then, my brethren, that couple will have blessed children, and will be blessed by God. And He will allow them to live in this vain life well and in peace and they will go to paradise. But if You men marry two or three women, and similarly you women two or three husbands, the wedding is not blessed, but that marriage is called fornication and adultery. The Most gracious God made man to marry one woman to have children. Have You married, my brother? Did you have children? You didn't have children? Did your wife die? No matter, don't marry again but become a monk. Work for your soul so that you can go to paradise rather than marry many times and gain the whole world and go to hell. If You go to hell what do you gain? You will gain nothing else, my brother, except that you will burn forever in hell. Don't You see in the menologion, on the ninth of October, which contains the lives of St. Andronikos and St. Athanasia, what a struggle they had? What fortunate people they were!

There was a couple who had two children. The most gracious God wanted to test them, so one day he took their two children from them. What did the blessed couple do, my brethren? Immediately they divided their Possessions and both entered monasteries.

They lived well and in peace here, and went to Paradise to rejoice forever with their fortunate children. But if You celebrate Your weddings with songs and play violins and drums and do all those things that the devil loves, the most gracious God curses that couple and they will not prosper. Either the husband dies, or the wife prematurely, and the children will be all girls, blind, lame, mad, misshapen - I won't say anymore.

#### God's Creation

THE MOST GRACIOUS GOD made us, my brethren, human beings, and not animals. He made us more honorable than the whole world. The most gracious God gave us, my brethren, eyes to look at the sky, the sun, the moon, and the stars so we can say: "O my God, if the sun which is your creation is so bright, how much brighter are you, O Holy Name, you who are the creator of heaven and earth, the author and fashioner? O my God, find me worthy to enjoy you."

God, my brethren, put the mind in our heads. Our mind is like a dish in which we should put all the teachings of the Gospel and not myths and idle talk, which are the art of the devil. He gave us ears to hear the Divine Liturgy which is celebrated by the priest in the church. He gave us a mouth to glorify our Lord, for us to say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of the living God, through the Theotokos and all the angels, have mercy on us and forgive us who are sinners and your unworthy servants." We should confess with pure faith and receive the holy Sacraments with pure faith and fear and awe. That is how God wants us, brethren, and not to swear, not for one to betray another, not to take oaths and lie, not to steal from one another, not to take something belonging to another, not to take the name of God in vain for the smallest reason. Do you want to say, my brother: "By God"? Why don't you say: "By the truth"? Instead of swearing so your brother will believe you, tell him the straight truth, and if he doesn't believe you, go on your way. We should refrain, my brother, from swearing in the name of God or from taking oaths, and citing our saints. Some insignificant people even swear by the name of the Holy Trinity. Woe to them; a flaming tire will burn them and enflame them. Do you know, brother, how God wants you to be? Just as you don't want your wife to have anything to do with another man, so God doesn't want you to have anything to do with the devil. Do you enjoy having your wife fornicate with another? Of course not. For someone else to kiss her? Neither do you want this. That is what God wants of you too, not to have anything to do with the devil.

#### Swearing

AND HOW IS IT that You dare, O foolish and evil man, to blaspheme and take God's name in vain? The same with that of the saints. Aren't you afraid, You most wretched one, that the earth might open up and swallow You? The devil doesn't dare to curse the name of God because he is afraid that lightning might fall and bum him, and You, insignificant man, open your damned mouth and take God's name in vain? Woe to those who curse the name of God, because a river of flaming fire will burn them forever.

God gave us hands to make the sign of the Cross with a pure faith, with fear, awe, and reverence and not to take up a rifle and kill our brother. Neither are we to steal from him or to persecute him or to murder him or to shame him. He gave us feet to take the good road and not to take the path that leads us to doing evil to our brother.

#### Baptism

OUR LORD AND GOD Jesus Christ was baptized in the river Jordan by the honorable John the Forerunner to show us holy Baptism. You, holy priests, should baptize the children of your parish according to the teaching and purpose of our holy Eastern and Apostolic Church. Immerse them in the holy font. Have plenty of water and immerse them and lift them up thrice, saying the names of [the persons of] the Holy Trinity.

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*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### **SIXTH TEACHING**

May the Holy Trinity have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.

Most holy Theotokos, help us and save us. Amen.

OUR LORD AND GOD Jesus Christ, my brethren, our sweetest Lord and Master, the creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation, moved by his infinite compassion and by the great love he has for our race, condescended, among the infinite and many gifts he has granted us, to become perfect man by the Holy Spirit and the purest blood of our Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. He became incarnate to free us from the hands of the evil devil and to make us sons and heirs of his kingdom, to rejoice and to be glad with the angels forever, and not to be burned with the wretched demons.

### The Apostles

JUST AS A RULER who has fields and vineyards hires workers, so our Lord Jesus Christ has us as a vineyard. He took twelve Apostles and blessed them and sent them to the whole world. And if men wish to live well and in peace here in this vain world, the most gracious God will have compassion on them and put them in paradise. He counseled them to believe and be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and to keep our God's commandments. In whatever land the holy Apostles went, the Lord said for them to bless that land. And in whatever land the Apostles went and were not received by men, the Lord said for them to shake the dust from their shoes and to depart.

Receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, they ran as lightning, and with that grace of the Spirit they cured the lame, the crippled, the blind and those possessed by demons. And with the command of our Christ, they raised the dead. It is meet and proper, brethren, for me, the unworthy and sinful servant, to have a clean heart like that of the pure Apostles and to have that grace of the All-Holy and masterful Spirit, I who have been found worthy to come to your land. But because I am a sinner and I don't have the grace of the Holy Spirit, I beg our Lord Jesus Christ to send his grace from on high and to bless your land and your possessions and the work of your hands. And first, to have compassion on us, to forgive us our sins, and to make us worthy, my children, to live here well and in peace and to put us in paradise to glorify the Holy Trinity. And in whatever land the Apostles went, they ordained bishops and priests. They blessed that land and it became an earthly paradise: joy and gladness, a residence of angels, a residence of our Christ. And in whatever land they were not received, it became a curse and not a blessing, a residence of the devil and not of our Christ. It is meet and proper, my brethren and fellow Christians, to begin my teaching and to thank God when we finish.

### The Gifts of Love

GOD HAS MANY NAMES, my brethren. The principal name of God is love. He is a Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one nature, one glory, one kingdom, one God. We should first love God, my brethren, because he gave us such a large earth to live in, so many thousands of people. And he gave us plants, fountains, rivers, oceans, fish, birds, night and day, sky, sun, stars, sun and moon. He made us human beings and not animals; he made us pious Christians and not heretics. Now I ask you, my brethren, tell me whom do you want, God or the devil?

"We want God."

Yes, that's very good, my very prudent children. May Your blessing be upon me. But let us see this love. Is this love perhaps faithful; is it complete or does it lack anything? We must understand it for ourselves. You, MY fellow Christians, have a son, and I honor You and say Your child is good but I beat it, I despise it, I take its bread and I eat it. What do you say, is this love? Love, it seems to me You are saying, is not that. And we, just as we love our God, we must love our brother, because it is natural to love our brother and unnatural not to love him. We must love our brother because we have one faith, one baptism; we receive the [same] holy Sacraments; we hope to enjoy the same paradise; we have one head, our Christ. My brethren, love has two characteristics, two qualities: one strengthens man toward the good and the other weakens him for the bad.

I have bread to eat and I have [enough] to drink, but you don't. Love tells me: "Don't eat it alone and don't drink alone, but give also to Your brother." I have clothes, but You don't. Love tells me: "Give one suit to Your brother." I open my mouth to condemn you, to lie to you, but love deadens my mouth and I shut up. I stretch out my hand to take something of yours but love won't allow me. You see, my brethren, what gifts love has?

### The Need for Schools

BECAUSE YOU DON'T know what love is, my children, you must establish schools, for people learn everything in school. They learn who God is, who are the holy angels, who are the accursed devils, and what is the virtue of a just man. Schools enlighten people. They open the eyes of the Pious and Orthodox Christians to learn the Sacraments.

### The Last Days

READING THE SACRED SCRIPTURES my brethren, I find that Prophet Elias is alive and God has kept him for thousands of years and intends on sending him when He destroys the world. And again searching in the holy Scriptures, I find that Prophet Elias and the Antichrist have come - the latter we have on our heads and I don't have to tell you [who he is], for you know him. And now we no longer expect either the Prophet Elias nor the Antichrist.

It is sad for me to tell you, my brethren, but the holy and sacred Scriptures command me to tell you. Today, tomorrow we can expect such famine, thirst, droughts, epidemics, and plagues that we won't have time to bury the dead. Today, tomorrow we can expect a great earthquake to take place, for all the people to die. And afterwards the all-holy Cross will shine brighter than the sun, while our sweetest Jesus Christ will shine seven times brighter than the sun. The entire world will be raised up both with body and soul (he who is good will be like an angel and he who is evil will be like the thrice-cursed devil). And he will say to the just: "Come to me, the blessed of my Father, to inherit the kingdom of my Father, because you have kept my commandments and my faith."

Then the Lord will say to the sinners: "Go, you who are accursed, to hell to be with your father the devil because you have not kept my commandments and my faith." And then the Lord will open a fiery river, like an ocean, to burn the sinners and the impious, and he will put the just on the right, and the sinners on the left.

The Jesus Prayer

WHAT ARE WE, MY BRETHREN, just or sinners? If we are just, we are of good fortune and thrice-blessed; if we are sinners, we should know now that we have time to repent, to correct

ourselves. I counsel you, therefore, to do this. All of you should get a prayer rope which will have one hundred and three knots. And at each knot say, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Lord of the living God, through the Theotokos and all the saints, have mercy upon me a sinner and your unworthy servant." Therefore, I plan to leave you healthy, spiritually and bodily.

In Jesus Christ, my brethren, You can see the Holy Trinity and all the saints together with the precious Cross. The saints were crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ physically and spiritually. We, my brethren, should bless the earth, the sky, the sea, and we will go to paradise to rejoice and be glad forever.

My children, here where I have come, I experience joy and sadness. Christians come to me singly to tell me their complaints but a servant cannot work for two masters. I cannot confess them, so I individually ask them to leave, and my heart is broken. It is as if one had a child who is ill and one rejects it. But I should confess to You openly. If, my children, you were to take four hairs from my beard, I would take all the weight of your sins. From the time I was born I have borne everything. And you should explain the four meanings and learn them. And if, MY children, You want me to tell them to You, find a confessor, a man of virtue, and go to confession and tell him all of your sins. Don't omit any, for if you do you have gained nothing. Forgive your enemy and don't concern yourselves only with yourselves but look out for your brethren and your children. And You will have my blessing and the blessings of the Panagia and that of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified, of the true God whose might and glory be to the ages of ages. Amen.

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*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### **SEVENTH TEACHING**

OUR LORD AND GOD JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, our sweetest ruler and master, the creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation, moved by his compassion, by his great purity, and by the great love which he had for our race, has given us and continues to give to us each day, hour, and minute many and an infinite number of gifts. In addition, he has made us worthy this day to glorify and honor him and our Lady the Theotokos. And may it come to pass that the Lord will have compassion on us, forgive us our sins and make us worthy to spend our time here well, and to go to paradise to glorify the All-Holy Trinity.

God has also found me worthy, my brothers, me the sinner, to come here yesterday in your blessed land and to enjoy you. We spoke of a few teachings in your holy church, as the Holy Spirit inspired the Prophets, the holy Apostles, the holy Fathers of our Church to write for us. Among the many things we said, we spoke about our God who is one, love, a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Lord, moved by his great compassion, first created ten orders of angels. The first order fell because of its pride and became demons. Then the gracious God commanded and this world was created. And he made one man and one woman like

us, the body from mud and the soul angelic and eternal. He named the man Adam and the woman Eve. God created a paradise in a region of the East, filled with joy and gladness. He put Adam and Eve in paradise and they were glad as angels. He instructed them not to eat from one fig tree. But Adam and Eve scorned God's commandment and ate. They did not confess what they did. God expelled them from paradise and they lived in this world for nine hundred-thirty years, shedding black and

bitter tears. Adam and Eve died and went to hell where they burned and were on fire for five and a half thousand years because of only one sin, as we mentioned in the story last night and stopped. Now, hoping in our Christ's compassion, as the Holy Spirit inspires us, we shall begin to tell you the rest. In brief, we will not tell everything because that isn't possible, for we would need much time, but some seem to me very necessary.

### The Opening of Paradise

FOR A THOUSAND-FIVE HUNDRED years people went to hell when they died because paradise was closed. The most gracious God had compassion on the race of men and finding

our Lady the Theotokos a worthy subject, the Son and Logos of God, the true living God and life of everything, the sweetest Jesus Christ and God, condescended and became perfect man by the Holy Spirit from the purest blood of our Lady the Theotokos, Ever-Virgin Mary so that he could remove us from the hands of the devil.

### Giving Birth to Children

FOR FIVE THOUSAND-FIVE HUNDRED years the devil tried his worst and decided to destroy the world. He urged some men to worship as God the sun, others the moon, others the earth, others the sea, others birds, and other land animals. The devil planted in the hearts of men to hate women, and women to hate men, so they would not marry and have children and increase the population. In this way men didn't take care to have children, and even more, the devil caused them to fall into homosexuality and other filthy acts which even dogs and donkeys don't commit.

Wishing to end the evil, the most gracious God commanded that whoever doesn't have children will be cursed. Hearing this, and fearing God's curse, they began to marry, one man taking one woman, and one woman one man. If perchance there is anyone here who can't have children, let him not be sad, for God doesn't mean for you to be cursed, because you can't have children. I too don't have children, and if I'm cursed, so are you. God spoke this curse to stop the evil purpose of the devil. So don't be sad; you have no curse. But again if you want to have a child, it is easy. Take a poor child and make him your spiritual child. You will rejoice and be glad and he will rejoice too. God owes you nothing for the child which your wife presents you because it resulted from the passion of flesh. But for that poor child you have wages a thousand times from God for your soul and honor from people because you so willingly made it your spiritual child.

And you who are a man must be careful not to look upon your wife with anger because she has not conceived any children. Your wife has no fault in this; it is God's will. And don't do as someone crazy and foolish did. Because his wife couldn't have children, he divorced her and married another. And another, because his wife didn't give birth to boys but only to girls, divorced her. It is the devil who wants a husband and wife to separate and not God. As the laws says, nothing can cause them to divorce except if they commit adultery, and whoever leaves his wife and takes another, he will be judged an adulterer.

### Women Are Better than Men

AT THAT TIME WAS a man named Joakim who had a wife named Anna. Both the husband and wife were good people, both from a royal race, but the woman was better. There are many women who are better than men. If perhaps you men wish to be better than women, you must do better works than they do. If women do better works they go to paradise and we men who do evil works go to hell. What does it profit us if we are men; it would be better if we were not born.

Joakim and Anna opened their home and treated it like a hotel where the poor, the lame, the blind went and rested. Your nobility should be similarly hospitable, because it is with hospitality that you extend to the poor that you purchase paradise.

Joakim and Anna had no children. As prudent and sensible people they understood that it is God alone who gives and takes children. They beseeched the most gracious God to give them a child, male or female and they would dedicate it to him. Seeing their good mind, God blessed them and they had a child, the Lady Theotokos, and they named her Mary. Just as Joakim and Anna sought a child from God and not from man so should your nobility ask for whatever you wish from God and not from man.

### Seeing the Future

THE DEVIL HAS PRODUCED many sons and daughters. Someone comes to you and says: "Give me a dollar or two and I will give you an herb which will give you a male child, and I will give you a talisman to predict the future, to bewitch you so you can see your future, your fate, your destiny, etc."

Those things which the holy Fathers commanded and those of our Church are good and sacred, spiritual, and physical. All that takes place outside of the Church belongs to the devil. And often the devil performs illusionary miracles so that you are putting fire inside of you and are being burned spiritually and bodily. And if you want to see your future or your fate, get up at dawn and go to Church and look at the graves of the dead. Think and ask yourself, weren't they men too like me, and they died? I too am were destined to die tomorrow, and I shall not dare to. do these devilish things because I'm lost, and destroy myself. The law says that whoever does these things or urges others to do them shouldn't receive holy Communion for twenty years.

#### Give Your Child a Saint's Name

JUST AS JOAKIM AND ANNA didn't prefer a boy over a girl, so should your nobility not prefer male children over female because they are creatures of God. Just as Joakim and Anna gave the Theotokos the name Mary which has meaning, similarly, when your nobilities baptize your children give them names of saints which have meaning. Mary means lady, for the Theotokos was destined to become queen of heaven and earth and of all intelligible and perceptible creation to pray for your sins. Nicholas is the name of one who has been victorious over people, demons, and passions. George means cultivated plant, adorned with fruit, with Christian virtues. Paraskeve is one who has prepared for Christ.

#### Your Child and Christ

MAKE AN ICON OF CHRIST, of the Panagia, of the Forerunner, and of the saint whose name your child bears. And when your child rises from sleep and asks for bread, don't give him any, but take the bread and place it before the icon of Christ and tell him: "My child, I don't have any bread, Christ has. Get up and make the sign of the Cross and ask your saint to pray to Christ to give you some." In this way the child is moved by his love for bread and immediately upon arising sees his saint. And when the devil sees that the child has placed his hope in Christ and in his saint, he burns and leaves. This is how you should accustom your child and teach him early to get into the habit of taking the good road. And if you want your child to live, I shall tell you what to do. Buy your son a suit and one for that poor child, and for the sake of that poor child God will grant life to your child

Love the poor child better than your own. But if you concern yourself to give your child food and drink, to have beautiful clothes, and not concern yourself about that poor child, tomorrow you may see your child dead and your heart is on fire. And while you see the poor child, barefoot, naked, hungry, and despised, at the same time, you see it looking well fed like a young pig and your own son becomes sick with consumption.

#### Your Child and Its Feast Day

ON THE DAY WHEN YOUR child's saint has his feast and you want to hold a feast and honor the saint, I shall tell you what to do. The feast can be sacred and it can be demonic. It is sacred when you, wishing to give three dollars to buy a lamb, give one to the priest to celebrate so many liturgies for your health. With the other buy some wax, incense and oil, and go to church, burn them before the icon of the saint, and distribute the other coin secretly in alms so that no one will know it. This is a sacred feast. And read the life of the saint so that your child may hear it. And tell him: "Did you, hear my child, what your saint did? You should do the same."

The child, hearing of such miracles, becomes jealous and says: "When will I too become like my saint?"

A demonic feast is to take sheep, to cook it, and to invite your friends and your relatives to eat, to drink, to get drunk, and to vomit like dogs. This is a demonic feast. We hope to save ourselves in the name of our Christ and not in that of the sheep, as the impious and unbelievers do now. Which does your nobility prefer, the sacred or divine feast? The sacred then, if you prefer. Do it in that way.

#### Parents and Children

WHEN YOU CUT A TREE, its branches immediately dry up but when you water its roots the branches remain fresh. Parents are like that tree. When a father and mother, who are the roots of their children, are watered by fasting, prayer, alms, and good works, God guards their children. When parents dry up with sin, God brings death to their children and puts the parents into hell with them,

An apple tree gives forth sour apples. Now what should we do, blame the apples or the tree? The tree. So you parents should do good, you who are the apple tree, so that your apples might be sweet.

### What We Owe God

FROM THE TIME THAT GOD created the world, three thousand five hundred years had gone by and no child died before his father. At that time there was a man named Tharras. He put the devil in his heart and set up idols for men to worship instead of God. And from that time on children began to die before their parents.

When the Lady Theotokos became three years of age, her parents remembered the debt which they owed God. What was that debt? They had promised the Theotokos to the temple. They took her and dedicated her. And as Joakim and Anna remembered their debt and paid it, similarly we too, as faithful Christians, should always remember our debt which we owe God. We should pay it, and then we can ask for paradise as payment. And what is our debt? We want paradise but don't know what we owe! I shall tell you a little bit of it and if your nobilities ask you will find out more.

The gracious God has given us eyes so that we can look at the sky, see the stars, the sun, the moon, everything; to glorify God and to say: "My God, if this sun which is your creation is so bright, how much brighter are you who created it? O my God, make me worthy to enjoy you. This is our debt, my brothers. God didn't give us eyes for men to look at women and women to look at men, or for us to look at our brother's possessions and to steal them, or to murder our brothers or to play cards, games of the devil, or to live by blood and injustices against our brothers.

God has given us feet. It is our duty to go to church, to stand with reverence, and to walk the good road. He didn't give us feet to wander about the mountains like dogs, and like beasts to take away the clothes of others, oppress them and deprive them of their possessions.

God has given us wealth. We have a duty to eat and drink sufficiently, to have enough clothes, and to spend the remainder on the poor for our soul's sake. God didn't give us riches to overeat or to buy expensive clothes, or tall palaces in which mice will dance about tomorrow, and to have the poor die of hunger. This is our duty, my brothers, and you know it. Do it from today onward if you wish to be saved.

Do you wish to know, my brothers, our debt to God? You, my brother, have a wife? Are you happy to have someone else kiss her in a month's time. No. In a year? No. In ten years? No. In a hundred? No! To have someone fornicate with your wife is not pleasing to you, nor do you wish for someone to lay his finger on her. Just as you will not allow someone else any share in your wife, so God doesn't want you to have any part of the devil. God didn't create us for the devil and for hell, but for himself and for paradise. This is our obligation, my fellow Christians.

### Our Place in Church

IN THE CHURCH WHERE Joakim and Anna took Theotokos, the high priest at that time was Zacharias, the father of the honorable Forerunner. And as he saw her, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit and he understood that she was the one who would give birth to eternal life, to Christ. And he immediately embraced her and kissed her, and he took her and placed her in the holy Sanctuary because the holy Sanctuary also signified the holy tomb of our Christ. Do you sometimes go to the holy tomb of Christ to worship? You go to other worldly and demonic places, but where Christ was put for our sins you don't go? Is that how much love you have for Christ?

Once a year the high priest would enter the holy Sanctuary and see the Theotokos. You should rejoice and be glad, reverend priests. Together with so much that the precious God has granted you, he gave you the holy Sanctuary which means the throne of God. And you lay people should take care not to enter the holy Sanctuary because you put fire in yourself and are burned. You men should rejoice and be glad also, because among all the good things that the gracious God has granted you, he gave you the nave of the Church which means paradise. Similarly, you women should rejoice and be glad a thousand times, for among the many good things which the gracious God has granted you, he gave you the narthex of the Church, which means the door of paradise.

We faithful Christians should also stand with reverence, with fear and awe when we go to church to receive forgiveness for our sins. And as when we enter a grave we forget all worldly things, we should forget in the same way everything evil when we stand in our pew. What is a pew? An upright grave which God has given us, as a teacher, to enter it and to reflect on our sins, on death, on hell, and on paradise. If you do this, you do very well, but if you go to church all dressed and you scrutinize each other, and talk in church, you put fire in yourself and are burned.

## The Responsibility of the Clergy

"HERE, MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS, what do you do? Do you talk in Church?"

"We do, O holy one of God."

"But your holiness, reverend priests, what do you tell them?" "We tell them not to talk in church but they don't listen. "And what is the reason why they don't listen? It seems to me that you are the reason, your holiness. Let one of the priests stand among your holiness so that I can ask him a question."

"Do you have children, my priest?"

"I do."

"When you set up the table so that your children can eat, where do you set it up? In the center of all your children so that all can reach or on one side so that half will be able to eat and the other half will not?"

"In the middle so they all can reach."

But if you happen to put it on one side and half eat and the other half don't, shouldn't your children blame you?"

"They should."

"Let us see now, my master, who is the father, the table, the food, and the children."

You, your holiness, are the spiritual father and trustee, made by God, and the mother is the Church. The table is the reader's pulpit, and the food is the books of the Church and the Gospel, while the spiritual children are the Christians. Now, doesn't it seem that your holiness should do the same (I don't say it to you alone, but so that others will hear as well), that is, place the pulpit in the center of the church, and read clearly and in a loud voice so that all the Christians can hear? And when they can hear they don't talk. But when you read in front of Christ's icon, so softly that only you can hear, Christ knows what you are saying, but the faithful, men and women, having no spiritual food to eat because they cannot hear, begin talking in church. One woman talks to another about who has a better dress and jewelry. They then leave and don't feel like coming again. And you become the reason for them to sin and for you to sin also. But what must you do, my priest, so that you don't sin? Have you ever sung a song? Once I saw a fornicator who was passing below a tall house with a young girl in the window. The fornicator saw her, but not well. So he climbed up a higher place and saw better. He began to sing and said: "O what black eyes, what black eyebrows, (let me go on) in the window of the priest's house. " What was his purpose? To drive Christ out of the girl's heart and to bring in the devil, to drive out virginity and bring in fornication. Now shouldn't your holiness do the same? Climb up high and say with contrition and in a loud voice: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your great compassion and according to the multitude of your mercies wipe out my transgression."

And if you can, cry so that you can drive out the devil from the heart of your Christians and bring in Christ; to drive out fornication and to bring in virginity; to drive out pride and bring in humility. If you want to be saved, priest, and want your Christians to be saved, do this.

## Christian Marriage

THE LADY THEOTOKOS REMAINED in the sanctuary for twelve years. An angel of the Lord fed her with heavenly food, and she conversed with angels, and she became even better than angels. At the completion of twelve years, the merciful God inspired her father and mother and they betrothed her in accord with divine dispensation.

And the angel of God came and said to her: "Mary, you should rejoice more than the whole world and more than us angels, for you are to give birth to the Son and Word of God, and truly God, the Christ, by the Holy Spirit without man, as a virgin. And you will remain a virgin so that Christ may free man from the hands of the devil as the prophets proclaimed."

Then, the Lady Theotokos arose, glorified God, and said: "I glorify you, Lord; I worship and adore you, for you have condescended to become man from me, your servant. I, your servant, am ready; let your holy will be done."

She immediately conceived our sweetest Jesus Christ and God. The Lord was born, my brothers, from a woman to bless women, because it was woman who first received the curse in paradise. Woman tore down the world and took it to hell, and woman gave birth to Christ and again received

the blessing.

Christ was born from a betrothed maiden in order to bless marriage. And because the betrothal is which a man first gives to a woman should be gold, and to place it on her finger a woman should be as pure as that gold. Then you may accept it, and put it on your finger, and you should prefer to lose your life and your head rather than destroy your husband's honor. Similarly, you too, woman, send to the man a silver ring so that you can teach him: "If you as a man are as steadfast as silver, then accept it and put it on your finger, and be ready to offer your life and your head for your wife." This is the significance of the betrothal.

You, honorably married woman, should rejoice and be glad a thousand times for the many good things which the gracious God has granted. He also gave you an honorable marriage. You should weep for the impious and unbelievers who, among the many evil things they have, also have a despicable marriage. How is it that marriage of Christians is blessed and the other is despicable, that is, accursed, is not for me to know and to teach. I need to master my monastic life to be saved.

It is not proper for a monk to teach about marriage. But from what is improper we sometimes benefit. That which I wanted to tell you, my child, should have been told you by your father and mother, But because they don't know to tell you, I should tell you a few things, and you should inquire yourself to learn more.

#### The Marriage Service

LISTEN, MY CHILD, WHEN you wish to marry, make certain that the woman is not related to you, which is prohibited by the law of the Church. Second, let her have fear of God in her soul, and third, let her be graced with modesty. If you have married a poor woman, you have married a slave. If you have married a rich woman, you have become a slave, if you have taken a rod to your head. First, you should go to confession and then get married in church. How should you get married? The priest should take the best man, the groom, the bride, and one or two people, a loaf of bread, two crowns, two rings, and two candles. They should go to church, where he places the man on the right and the woman on the left. The priest then enters the sanctuary where he lights the two candles and he hangs the crowns in front of the holy altar; he places the two rings on top, the one facing in and the other out. This signifies that when he turns and looks at the bride, she will look the other way; he should do the same.

When the Divine Liturgy has ended, the priest will take a table and place it in the middle of the church and place upon it the holy Gospel, the rings, the crowns, and then place the groom and bride together. Then he takes the censer and the two lighted candles and he censures the groom three times in the form of a cross.

The censer signifies the Lady Theotokos; the coal is inside the censer but it does not burn; in the same way the Lady Theotokos accepted Christ and was not burned, but on the contrary was illuminated. The incense is a sign of the Holy Spirit; the cover of the censer, the protection of the Holy Spirit; the three chains, the Holy Trinity; the bells, the teaching of the holy Apostles. In this way the priest censures the groom and teaches by saying: "I worship this and if you wish, too, and you are an Orthodox Christian, worship this." And so he and the priest bow and worship. This is what the incense means, and the priest asks the groom. "Do you want Mary for your wife?"

If he says he does, he gives him the candle. In the same way he asks the bride: "Do you Mary, want John for your husband?"

If she wants him, she doesn't answer, but only bows her head. If she doesn't, and it is against her will, she shouts: "I don't want him." And when she says: "I don't want him," the priest may not marry them, for they sin. But if it is the will of both, then he may marry them. After the marriage he should give them holy Communion. But if they are inhibited from receiving, let them drink from the common cup. Then, accompanied by the singing of hymns, he takes them home where he prays and blesses the table and leaves. When three days have gone by, well then they can come together. But they must abstain on Sunday, holy days and with nobility as befits Christians.

#### Sex in Marriage

GOD DIDN'T CREATE WOMAN for prostitution, but for her to bear children. Don't sleep in the same bed on Sunday and especially on feast days, for the devil will pull you down.

You men must avoid other women just as you avoid a snake. And not only other women, but there is a time when you should avoid your own as well. If it happens that your wife is menstruating or pregnant, you should abstain, or if she has given birth and has not been church'd yet, she is not clean.

And if you wish to come together with your wife, take an example from the farmer; ask him how many times a year he sows his field. Once, and he lets it alone until it grows, then he harvests it, then when he wishes, he sows again. You should do the same, my brother. Have you come together with your wife? Has she become pregnant? Then, stay apart from her until she gives birth. When she is church'd and is clean, then you can sow another. Have forty, fifty children!

I want to tell you something but it is a bit obscene and you will condemn me. Don't you see the animals that come together until the female becomes pregnant? And when she gives birth, then they come together again. But we humans aren't ashamed to be worse than the animal. But if you can't do this, if it's too much for you, do something else. Humble yourself and say that you are unworthy, a sinner, worse than an animal; and condemn yourself and in this way God may have compassion on you and save you. On the contrary, if you sin and brag about it, and say that you are a saint, can this be so?

As my spiritual children, I counsel you, I've told you that for me it isn't proper to speak of these things, but again what can I do? Seeing what condition in which our race finds itself I forced myself and I have said them to you to benefit you somewhat.

Man should be like a king and woman, like a vizier, that is, man as the head and woman as the body. Then God blesses the man, the woman, and the children, and doesn't lay upon you any evil thing, neither magic knots nor any spell. In this way you will live well here on earth and you'll go to paradise and rejoice forever.

#### Divorce and Adultery

YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY to divorce; only death and adultery can separate you. And if it happens that a wife falls with some other man, or if the husband with some other woman, they are under obligation to go to the bishop to be divorced. But, again, he who has been injured by his wife and doesn't divorce her acquires a spiritual reward. But is there a way to forgive her? There is. How?

You, my child, travel to a foreign country or go out to your field and your wife falls with another person. You return home. What should the wife do? She should take an ax and a piece of wood, and bow before you, kiss your hand and tell you: "Master, I beg you to do me a favor. Take this ax and piece of wood, put me on it, and cut me to pieces. Throw me to be eaten by dogs because I'm not worthy to look upon you in the face, because I've trampled upon your honor, and from a daughter of Christ I've become a daughter of the devil."

What do you say, my son, do you have it in your heart to kill her or to forgive her? It seems to me that you'll say: "May you be forgiven, but never do it again."

But when should you divorce her? When upon returning from abroad you learn of it from your neighbor. Then you are forced to divorce her. In the same way the Lord, during his second coming, will be forced to put us in hell if he finds us unconfessed, unrepentant, and incorrigible. But if he finds us repentant, he has compassion on us and puts us in paradise to rejoice forever.

#### Prohibited Marriages

MARRIAGE AGAIN BECOMES A curse when you marry someone related to you in a way prohibited by law. And when at your wedding you use drums, violins, dances, songs, (shoot) rifles, wear ornaments, and do other devilish acts, then the marriage is cursed, the children are born blind, dumb, deaf, lame, wretched, epileptic, and you parents see them, and your heart is broken. And God causes your death prematurely and puts you in hell.

And don't get married on Sunday, but on any other day of the week. Not because it is against the law, but because of the disorders which take place, and because you absent yourself from the Liturgy. Moreover, the Liturgy should be celebrated separately for the bride and groom.

## Virginity, Monks, and Women

OUR LORD WAS BORN, my brethren, on that day, Sunday, to give preference to virginity. Just as we prefer gold to silver, so does the Lord love marriage. Yes, but he prefers virginity more in order to give you an example, so that if you can keep your virginity and you wish to become a monk or a nun, you are of good fortune and thrice-blessed. You are free from these worldly affairs; you are like an angel. But if you want to preserve your virginity, the first foundation which you must lay is that of poverty; you must have no purse, you must have no chest, and must fry your body as you fry fish, with fasting, prayers, vigils, hardships - to put it to death. You must humble the flesh which is a wolf, a pig, a beast, a lion, and flee from the world, but especially from woman. But you must not hate woman, because she is a creature of God; but note the passions which people follow.

If by chance you are walking down a street and on one side there is a woman and on the other the devil, don't walk where the woman is, but where the devil is because you can make the sign of the Cross and he leaves, but the woman doesn't. And just as it is difficult for sheep to keep company with a wolf and not be eaten, or kindling wood with coal and not be burned, so it is difficult for a monk to keep company with women, and a nun with men, and not be defiled and tempted. A monk can't be saved in any other way except to escape far from the world. Is anyone a monk here? Leave, monk, go to the wilderness if you wish to be saved. But you may say, you too are a monk. Why are you involved in the world? I too, my brethren, do wrong. But because our race has fallen into ignorance, I said to myself, let Christ lose me, one sheep, and let him win the others. Perhaps God's compassion and your prayers will save me too.

## Holy Baptism

WISHING TO SHOW US the way to remove that curse which our father Adam and our mother Eve received in paradise, the Lord was baptized in the river Jordan by the honorable Forerunner John the Baptist. We too, my fellow Christians and brothers, should rejoice and be glad a thousand times for the many good things given to us by the Lord, and especially for holy Baptism. We too should keep our baptism as pure and immaculate as possible. If by chance we err, as human beings, may the gracious God be glorified, he who has granted us a second Baptism, holy Confession, because it is impossible for a person to be saved who hasn't been baptized and one who is unconfessed. It is better, my brother, to kill a hundred baptized persons than to allow one child to die unbaptized. And if by chance a child is about to die and the priest hasn't baptized it yet, let anyone baptize it, father, mother, brother, neighbor, and especially the midwife. Take a lot of water and oil, make the sign of the Cross over the child, and baptize it, saying: "The servant of God is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." If the child lives, the priest will complete the service.

If it happens that you have no water, take three handfuls of sand and spill it over the child's head and repeat as I have said. If again you happen to have no sand, baptize it in the air and repeat the same. Don't do what one crazy and foolish man did. He said that he would become the godfather but allowed the child to die unbaptized so that he wouldn't leave his wife's bed. If necessary, they shouldn't become godparents, and when he wishes he can join with his wife; there are no obstacles. Similarly, if it happens that someone is dying and the priest hasn't reached him in time to hear his confession, let him confess to anyone and die having confessed. There is hope that he'll be saved. If, however, he receives communion without having confessed, it profits him naught.

Holy priests, you must have large baptismal fonts in your churches so that the entire child can be immersed. The child should be able to swim in it so that not even an area as large as a tick's eye remains dry. Because it is from there (the dry area) that the devil advances, and this is why your children become epileptics, are possessed by demons, have fear, become unlucky; they haven't been baptized properly.

Whoever among your nobility wishes to donate a baptismal font for your soul's sake, let him stand up and I'll tell him how he is to have it made. And I'll ask all his fellow Christians to forgive him. He'll receive such forgiveness that he couldn't find even if he paid one thousand purses. You, my son, listen, you who want to give a font. Tell the craftsman to construct it two spans deep in the inside, one span wide at the base and two spans wide at the top. It should have a base of two fingers deep to rest upon. Have two handles put on it so that it can be carried, and make a covering so that it can be covered. It should be entirely of copper and galvanized. And tell the craftsman to inscribe your name on it so that you will be commemorated.

You, my children, look forward to baptizing children, but isn't it better to donate baptismal fonts so that thousands of children can be baptized, so that you will have greater reward for your souls? You should ask to find out what churches don't have one and donate one. Even if it is for a city church or anywhere else, you receive the same reward.

I beg you to say three times for Mr. John, who wishes to donate a font: "May God forgive and have mercy upon him."

## The Lord Performs Miracles

WHEN THE LORD, MY BRETHREN, was baptized in the river Jordan by the honorable Forerunner, he began to teach the world to repent, to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Wishing to uproot every disbelief and every evil from the hearts of men, the Lord didn't take up the practice of giving money as the heretics and especially the Antichrist did. On the contrary, he began to perform miracles as it became him as God. He cured the blind, the deaf, the lepers, those possessed by demons, and the greatest of all, he began to command the dead to rise. He raised Lazarus, who had been in the grave for four days and lived thirty years after the resurrection and became a bishop. People, seeing our Christ performing miracles openly, understood that he was God because only God has the power to command the dead to rise.

Thousands of people gathered there, believed, and were baptized. Even a few Jews believed, but the leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, not only didn't believe, but put the devil in their hearts as they have him still to this day. And they planned to crucify our Christ.

On Holy Thursday night, the Lord, who as God knows the hearts of men and the future, and, indeed the evil of the priests and of Judas, washed the feet of the Holy Apostles to show you also an example. Even if you were a king, you should always humble yourself and pay honor to the man who is poor and treat him better than yourself. You shouldn't feel contempt for him, for tomorrow you may see that poor man who is naked, hungry, and despised in paradise enjoying himself, and you'll go to hell and bum.

The Lord sat and taught the Holy Apostles many and various teachings. Among the many which he taught, he also said this: "You should know, my disciples, that one of you, Judas, wants to sell me to the Jews for thirty silver coins, and they will mock me, they will curse me, they will beat me, they will crucify me. But don't be sad, my disciples, because I want to be crucified willingly so that I may crucify sin and the devil. And on the third day I shall rise to give life to people. My resurrection will bring joy in heaven, joy to the entire world, poison and a two-edged sword in the hearts of the Jews and especially to the devil."

#### The Last Supper

WISHING TO GIVE US eternal life, heavenly food, the Lord took bread and wine, blessed them and made the holy Sacraments, his holy body and blood; and the twelve disciples received communion.

As soon as the eleven disciples received communion with a good mind and a good heart, they were illuminated and became wise teachers of the world. With this joy they spoke all the languages of the world, and they lived well here and then went to paradise to rejoice forever.

Judas, who took communion with a bad mind and a bad heart, became dizzy, and the devil entered his heart and he swelled up so much that he was unable to pass through an alley which was wide enough for two wagons. He died a bad death and went to hell, and he is burning together with the devil forever.

#### The Story of Judas

THERE WAS A TOWN named Iskaria near Jerusalem. A Jew lived there with his wife. She saw in a dream that she would give birth to a devil who would burn the entire world. She revealed what she had seen to her husband. Finally she gave birth to Judas. They kept him for two months, and then put him in a trunk and threw him into the sea and said: "If God wills, let him be saved; if not, let him be lost."

Near the harbor there were some passersby who, seeing the chest in the deep, went and pulled it out. They opened it and found the child and took him to their town, Iskaria. But they didn't tell anyone they found him in the sea, but that he was an orphan. His [real] parents said: "Why, don't we take him and make him our own?"

So they took him and he grew up. In the same year his mother gave birth to another child. When the children became twelve years of age, they quarreled and Judas beat the true son. The parents said to Judas: "Why did you beat our child? We have adopted you. We, my child, plan to make you both our heirs, to divide everything equally."

Hearing that he would receive an equal share with the other boy, what do you think Judas was moved by the devil to do because of his avarice? One day he took a stone and killed his brother. What did the father do? Kill him? No. He felt sorry for him. When Judas killed the boy, he became frightened and left and went to Jerusalem, where he took service with a king who gave him charge of the treasury, that is, to receive and pay monies. Why did he take service with the king? Because of his avarice he believed he had much to gain. Where ten pennies were needed to buy fish, he would give only five.

Since his parents had no children, what could they do? They went to Jerusalem to worship Zion, which was built by Solomon.- And when they went there, they liked the place and bought a farm and lived from it. Judas used to go there and buy vegetables. Time passed and one day the farmer said; "Why do you deprive me of my just due? The greens which you bought cost ten dollars and you gave me five. I will tell the king that you are unjust."

Hearing that he would be reported to the king, Judas drew a knife and killed him. The wife shouted: "What am I to do, O King? Your servant killed my husband!"

The king replied: "What can I do?"

The woman answered: "What do I have to live on? Who is going to support me since I am so helpless?"

The king said: "Marry Judas and he'll support you."

What could the unfortunate woman do? She married him. One day they were talking about where each of them had come from. And, asking and inquiring, they discovered that they were mother and son. Then they said: "Woe to us."

At that time our Christ was traveling about teaching. Judas and his mother, that is, his wife, heard that he performed miracles and refused money. So Judas said: "Now is my chance to go with him and prosper." They went to Christ and confessed and he forgave them. He told them to go back, but Judas remained and became a disciple.

Our Christ immediately perceived that he was avaricious, and he gave him the money bag to control. Because of his avarice he sold our Christ for thirty pieces of silver to the Jews, and went to hell, and is burning together with the devil forever.

Do you see, my brethren, what an evil thing avarice is? The same thing was done by some priest in a village. He sold Christ because of his avarice - for money. And God cut his life short with a bad death like Judas' and he went to hell and is burning with the devil. Did you understand, my brethren, the message of what happens to whoever is afflicted with the passion of avarice? He suffers the same fate as Judas.

Be Glad and Rejoice that You are Orthodox

I'VE TOLD YOU ENOUGH, my fellow Christians. I have two thoughts, as I did yesterday. One tells me to bless you, and for you to bless me, and for me to be on my way to another place so that other Christians may hear me, those who never hear the word of God. My other thought says, since you are already here, don't go; stay and tell them more this evening and then leave. Now what seems right to you, my brethren, for me to do? Go or stay?

"Stay, O saint of God."

Fine, my children, so be it. I shall stay for the love of Christ and for your love. But gather together at eight o'clock so we can do vespers and a supplication service to our intercessor, the Lady Theotokos, who intercedes with Christ for us, because her son is enraged with us because of our many sins and wants to drown us. What do we expect, my brethren? Today, tomorrow, the end of the world is approaching. So take care to correct yourselves.

In conclusion, I tell you this. Be glad and rejoice because You have been found worthy to be pious Orthodox Christians. Similarly, cry and mourn for the impious, the unbelievers, the heretics who walk in darkness and in the arms of the devil. Take care, my brethren, don't be vain, don't murder, don't steal, don't swear, don't lie, don't cheat one another, don't slander, don't adorn this filthy body which tomorrow will be eaten by worms, but adorn your soul which is more precious than the entire world.

Fast as much as you can, pray as much as you can, give as many alms as you can, and always keep death before your eyes. There is no better teacher than death.

I'm not worthy, my brethren, to teach you and to counsel you, except that I dare to beseech my sweet Jesus Christ and God to send from heaven his grace and blessing, to bless this village too, and all the Christian villages, to bless your homes and possessions and the work of your hands. And first, my brethren, I pray that the Lord has compassion and forgives you your sins and finds you

worthy to live well here, peacefully, and with love in this false life, and afterwards that you go to paradise, to our true homeland. Rejoice and be glad, glorify and worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, an undivided and consubstantial Trinity.

If there is anyone among you who'll let his beard grow, let him stand up and tell so that I may give him a comb, and I'll also ask all the Christians to forgive him and we'll be brothers.

Whichever woman is willing to make a veil so that she can cover herself when she goes to church, let her tell me and I'll ask all the Christians to forgive her. And I'll pray to God for her soul as long as she lives and for her children. Whichever Christian man (or woman) promises not to speak Albanian in his home, let him stand up and tell me, and I'll take upon myself all of his sins from the time of his birth. And I'll ask all the Christians to forgive him and he'll receive a forgiveness which he couldn't find even if he were to pay thousands of purses. I beg you, my fellow Christians, to say for me, a sinner, three times: "May God forgive him and have mercy upon him." Forgive me, too, the sinner, and God may forgive you.

## **THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS**

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### **EIGHTH TEACHING**

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, the sweetest master and Lord, the creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation, saw that the human race didn't know him to believe that he is both in heaven and on earth, and lord and governor of all things. Moreover, without the will of our Christ nothing can be established. And [he] saw that people were being deceived by the devil, who hates good, who had them all under his will and made them his own together with their families. So the compassionate God wanted to embarrass the devil and to free man from him, so that man would receive a great gift from his compassion. Consequently, from the great love which he had for our race, among the many and infinite gifts that he gave us, he condescended and became perfect man from the Holy Spirit and the purest blood of our Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. This is why he became flesh and became perfect man, so that we may see him and learn about him; that there is no one else beside him in whom we can believe, who'll free us from the abominable hands of the devil and make us sons and heirs of his kingdom to be glad and rejoice together forever with the holy angels in paradise, and not to burn in the accursed hell together with the accursed demons.

#### Christ's Vineyard

AND YOU, My CHILDREN, should know that this earth in which we live is ruled over by our Lord Jesus Christ as king. He gathers all the royal debts and collects from the fields, from the vineyards, and from men. And he sends his own men and they collect each year. And when they bring the collection before the king, the king is happy and gives them great gifts and has them as beloved friends.

In the same way the earth and the entire world are Christ's vineyard. And he placed in it the twelve Apostles as workers. He blessed them and gave them the grace of the Holy Spirit. They immediately became educated, and learned all the languages, for initially the Apostles were illiterate and they only knew one language.

#### The Mission of the Apostles

AFTER HAVING BLESSED THEM and having breathed on their mouths, they received grace, and all learned languages. And our Lord Jesus Christ, the true God, sent them to the entire world and he said to them: "Go to every place, to the whole earth, forts and villages, and tell them if they wish to live well on earth and in peace, and for me to put them into paradise, they must believe and be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and keep the commandments of the Holy Gospel."

And in whatever land the Apostles would go, the Lord told them to bless it. But in whatever land the Apostles would go and the people wouldn't accept them, the Lord said to them to shake off the dust even from their shoes and to curse the land and leave.

When the Apostles received the grace and blessing of the Holy Spirit, they immediately ran like lightning into the entire world, and with that grace of the Holy Spirit they cured the blind, the lepers, the sick, and those possessed by demons; and the greatest of all, they commanded the dead in the name of our Christ and they rose. And in whatever land the Apostles went and people received

them, they ordained bishops, priests, deacons, readers, and [built] churches. They blessed that land and it became an earthly paradise, a great joy and delight, a home of the angels, and of our Christ. But in whatever land the Apostles went and people didn't receive them, that land was not blessed. A curse remained and not a blessing. It became a home of the devil and not of our Christ.

#### Father Kosmas' Blessing

IT IS RIGHT AND PROPER, my brethren, for me also to have had a pure heart like that of the Holy Apostles, so that I would shout in a loud voice that would be heard as far as heaven. But behold how I was found worthy to come to your blessed land and to enjoy you. But because I am a sinner and don't have the grace of the Holy Spirit, I, nevertheless, dare and beseech our Lord Jesus Christ to send his grace and blessing from heaven to bless your land and all the Christians, to bless the men and women and your children, your possessions and the work of your hands. And first, my brethren, may our Lord Jesus Christ have compassion on you and forgive you your sins, and find you, my children, worthy to live well here and in peace, and place you in paradise to glorify the Holy Trinity. It is right and proper, my brethren, to begin my teaching from God. And I beg your lordships to listen to my words with great willingness, as I heard them from the Holy Gospel and from the Holy Apostles. When we finish we can thank God.

#### Translating Love

GOD HAS MANY NAMES, my brethren. The principle and holy name of our God is love. He is called Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one nature, one glory, one kingdom, one God. But we must love God, my brethren, because he gave us such a large earth for so many thousands of people to live on. He gave us grasses, springs, rivers, the seas, fish air, day, night, fire, sky, stars, sun, moon, and he made us human beings and not animals. He made us pious Christians and not heretics. Now I ask you, my children, tell me in all truth, whom do you love, God or the devil?

Right now you love God in your mind. You know this very well my children, and you wish it since you are good and wise. May your blessing be upon me. Only let us see whether this love for God is correct or not. Is it complete or is it defective in any way?

How can we determine this? You have a child, my brother, and I love you, I honor you and speak well of you, but I beat your child, I despise it. I speak ill of it, and I take the bread from its mouth and I eat it. I take its clothes and I wear them. It seems to me that this kind of love isn't love. In order to love the father, we must love the child also. Because whoever loves God loves his brother, his fellow Christian. For we have one Father, God, one faith, one baptism, the holy Sacraments, which we receive. We have one head, our Christ, one faith, one law, one worship, and we are all brothers. You should also know, my brethren, that love has two characteristics, two graces. One strengthens a person in good, the other weakens him towards evil.

Know, my children, that I have a loaf of bread to eat and I have enough to drink, but you don't. What does love tell me? Don't eat alone. Give some to your brethren and you eat the rest. I have two suits of clothes. What does love tell me? Give one to your brother and wear the other. I open my mouth to condemn you, to tell you lies, to trick you; but immediately I remember love and it stops my mouth and doesn't allow me to tell you lies. I stretch out my hand to take your possessions, your money, your entire fortune, but love doesn't allow me to take them from you. You see, my brethren, what characteristics love has.

Why, my children, aren't you educated, to learn what is good and what is evil? What characteristics love has and what evil hatred, and enmity? You should know, my children, that in whatever country, place, village, house there is love, there you will find our Christ's grace. You will find a blessing, health, joy, and gladness and all the good things of the earth. And people live [well], their children, and their animals, their crops of grain, grapes, and every kind which nourish people prosper. And our Christ guards them from every physical and spiritual danger. And when someone dies, his soul goes to paradise.

#### Hatred's Consequences

BUT IN WHATEVER PLACE, village, house, there is enmity and hatred, people don't prosper, they don't live. Neither do they have children, nor do their animals (give birth), nor do their crops grow. And they plunge into heavy debt. They have no grace and everyone in and around the villages laughs at them, and God sends them hot winds, or hail or little water and the place suffers ruin. Do you see, my brethren, what a great evil hatred is and to how many offspring it gives birth? I beg you not to have any hatred at all, for it is the devil's mother, while enmity is his sister. And whoever loves them will live here on earth badly and despicably, and his soul will be damned.

#### Education and Faith

WHY, O HOLY PRIESTS AND honorable elders, don't you counsel our blessed brethren to establish and build a school in each

village, so that the children will receive an education to learn what is good and what is evil? Because I too learned, my brethren, the alphabet in school with the help of our Christ. I also learned a little ancient Greek and a lot of other things: Hebrew, Turkish, French, and something from all the nations with the grace of our Christ. I read a lot and I found all secular knowledge to be false, all inventions and seeds of the devil. In truth, my brethren, I studied as diligently as a jeweler weighs silver and doesn't allow any impurities to remain and then it is shiny and clean and it is bought by people willingly. Similarly, I found the words and commandments of Christ pure, holy, true, bright, and more brilliant than the sun. And whoever believes in Christ and calls him God, and does everything as the holy Gospel tells him, he will be of good fortune and thrice-blessed. He will never be ashamed. This is why you must establish Greek schools, so that people will be enlightened because by reading Greek I found that it enlightens and illuminates the mind of the student as the sun illuminates the earth. Then it is clear and we can see far. In this same way the mind can see the future, all that is good and evil and it is protected from every kind of evil and sin. Schools open the way to the church. We learn what God is, what the Holy Trinity is, what an angel is, what virtues, demons, and hell are. We learn everything in school.

School enlightens people and they are able to open their minds and learn the mysteries of our faith. Brethren are able to read the holy and sacred Bible, the Gospel, and we find that the prophet Elias is alive and that he has been with God for thousands of years. And God means to send prophet Elias to teach the entire world and then the Antichrist will come and kill the prophet. Then the whole world will be destroyed. And by examining, my brethren, and searching the Scriptures and the holy Gospel, we find that prophet Elias has come and that the Antichrist has come and has put prophet Elias to death, and now we wait for neither the prophet Elias nor the Antichrist.

### The Antichrists and the End of the World

THE ANTICHRISTS ARE: one, the pope, and the other one, the one who stands over our heads. You understand whom I mean without my saying so. It is sad for me to say this to you, but these Antichrists are lost as they stand now. We practice abstinence, they perdition. We fast, they indulge in gluttony. We practice virginity, they fornicate. We are just, they are unjust.

As the Scriptures tell us to say: today, tomorrow, we can expect hunger, thirst, plagues, deathly events, so that the living won't have time to bury their dead. Today, tomorrow, we can expect earthquakes, wars, and disruptions; the mountains will fall and the entire world will die. Then the all holy Cross will shine in the sky three times brighter than the sun, and the gracious God, the sweetest Jesus Christ, will shine a thousand times brighter than the sun. He will raise the whole world from the grave, bodies and souls. And we'll all be the same age, thirty-three years old.

All the faces of the just will be bright and beautiful like the sun and the angels, while the faces of the sinners will be black, like bogymen and even uglier. He will call the just in a very sweet and very loving voice, like a father who only has one son whom he loves very much. [He will call] the sinners as a frightful judge and will expel them from his presence in a most terrible way. The Lord will create a fiery river as big as an ocean to inflame the impious and sinners who will burn there forever.

He will then say to the pious and just Christians: "Come, my children, enjoy paradise, rejoice and be glad together with the angels, for you have endured many evils for my love." Now, by the way, what are we, just or unjust? if we're just, we are of good fortune and thrice-blessed. If we're sinners, we must repent now that we have time; we must reform.

### The Jesus Prayer and the Sign of the Cross

NOW I TELL YOU TO do this. - Let all of you take a prayer rope. Let it have thirty knots, and pray. Say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Logos of the living God, through the intercessions of the Theotokos and of all your saints, have mercy upon me, a sinner and an unworthy servant." What does one see in the "Lord Jesus Christ," my brethren? The Holy Trinity, our God, the incarnate dispensation of our Christ and all of the saints. With the Cross and the "Lord Jesus Christ" they went to paradise. And whoever says this prayer and makes the sign of the Cross, whether man or woman, he blesses the sky, the earth, and the sea. With the sign of the Cross and with the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ" all illnesses are cured. With the Cross and the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ" the Apostles raised the dead and cured every illness. With the Cross and the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ" a person is blessed and goes to paradise to rejoice and be glad as angels.

So you see, my brethren, how much the honorable and holy Cross helps a person. Whoever makes the sign of the Cross never suffers a loss but is protected from every kind of poisonous thing and from every demonic temptation. And a person has the Cross marked on him. Let him unite the three fingers of his right hand and place them first on his forehead, then on his navel, then on his right breast, then on the left breast, and bow low and then rise.

### The Meaning of the Cross

LEARN, MY BRETHREN WHAT is the meaning of the sign of the Cross. When we put our hand on [our] head, it reveals God who is in the sky. When we put it over [our] navel, it reveals that he descended to earth and became incarnate. When we put [our] hand on the right breast, it reveals that he is just and eternal and that he will place the just on his right hand. And when we put it on [our] left side, it reveals that he will judge all the nations and they will stand on his left side and he will put them into hell.

The holy Cross, my brethren, is the wellspring of the whole earth. The holy Cross blesses the entire world, all that is divine and holy in the churches. The Cross blesses the Divine Liturgy and every service. The Cross blesses the saints. The Cross blesses and strengthens baptism. The Cross blesses couples. The Cross chases away demons who flee like lightning. The Cross is a bright weapon, and whoever makes the sign of the Cross is illuminated and is blessed. It is like a double-edged sword to which the demons don't draw near to urge people to commit sin.

Wherever a person sets out to travel, he should first make the sign of the Cross and say the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ." Whether you go to the fair or to the field, or to the vineyard, or when you eat bread or fruit, or drink wine or water, when YOU go to sleep, worship God. Make the sign of the Cross over your body and then lie down to sleep. You will then sleep and will rise in the morning strong and happy. So, my brethren, you have understood and now know.

#### Confession and Confessors

HERE WHERE I HAVE COME to your blessed village, my children, I am both happy and sad. Christians come to me individually and tell me their complaints. But it is not possible for a servant to serve two masters. Therefore, I send them away and my heart breaks like that of a man who has only one child that is intelligent and good and is sick and cannot talk. This is how I am, my brethren. I can't hear all of your confessions one by one, but I shall confess you publicly. Take four hairs from my head and I shall take upon myself your sins. And you explain the four meanings that I tell you and learn them. I'll explain them to you.

First, find a confessor who is practiced and good to confess to, so that you can wash away the filth and sins from Your body. Second, have love [among yourselves] and don't take refuge in the courts of Moslems where you suffer injury. Third, worship God and don't separate yourselves from the Church. Ask the priest to celebrate the Liturgy in church every day so that your land may be blessed and your sins may be forgiven, and Christ will grant You health and progress.

Priests shouldn't be obstinate. They shouldn't give an ear to accusations. They shouldn't cause scandals, or act as witnesses in every affair. [Nor should they become] landowners or captains, or butchers, or merchants, or tax collectors, for priests pray for your souls. They baptize you, give you communion, burn incense before you, evangelize you, give you blessed bread, they betroth you, marry you, bless you with various services: holy Water, holy Unction, supplication, prayers; they uplift you. When sick, they pray for you. They bear the burdens.

Don't require them to pay the poll tax or saddle them with heavy debts. They, in turn, should be humble, prudent; they shouldn't pronounce anathemas, or become enraged, or curse, or hate, or get drunk, but be as bright as the rays of the sun.

#### Avoid Alien Contacts

HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER, rich and poor. Don't go to alien courts and be betrayed by the judgments of the Turks. The traitor will be punished by being excluded from communion for twelve years. If you have something against a brother, another Christian, take him to the bishop and not to the Turkish court, because you are committing a grave sin and you'll be damned forever. And you won't be accepted in church because you've gone outside [the Church] and not according to [ecclesiastical] law.

#### The Sabbath

DON'T WORK AT ALL ON Sundays, neither sell nor buy, nor take care of your vineyards or field, nor should you sweep out your barns. Only read books, learn what is good and about the end of your lives. That is, that we shall all die as we see daily, and whatever we possess, my brothers and sisters, we'll leave behind. Only whatever alms you give will help your soul, and whatever you give to the poor for the love of God, you'll receive one hundred for every one from Christ. Alms, love and fasting sanctify a person, they enrich him physically and spiritually, and he'll have a good end. The body and soul become holy, [so] be rid of pride and become humble. Don't you young and old ladies, or rich and poor, put silver and gold ornaments on your head, nor red and yellow handkerchiefs but only white.

#### God Visits Abraham and Sarah

THE FOURTH MEANING IS to give alms to the poor and to give comfort to strangers. Give them bread to eat and give them some when they leave with your blessing. Because, listen my brethren, to what the Old Testament says: Patriarch Abraham didn't have a son to inherit his possessions and had a great complaint. What could the blessed man do? He went and built a house and opened three doors. He began to bake bread and whoever passed by he offered them hospitality. It was his habit that on whatever day no stranger came to eat, he wouldn't eat either. And the more alms he gave the more his possessions increased. What did the thrice-cursed devil, who always hates, do? He transformed himself into a beggar and went into the streets and whoever walked toward Abraham's house he would tell him: "Where are you going, brother?" He would tell him and the devil would prevent him from going. He would say: "I am a poor man and I heard that in this land of Mamre there is a great man named Abraham. And I was told that he gives alms and that he is very hospitable. And I, poor man, went also to him to give me something, but my luck was such that he didn't have a chance to give me something. Today I went to Abraham's house and asked for a piece of bread. But because of the great many alms that the unfortunate man gave, he became very poor and had neither bread nor water. He became very angry because of his great poverty. And he beat me so much that the whole neighborhood gathered and they saved me. And I am ill from the beating. So don't anyone go."

Hearing this, no one went for three days. And Abraham didn't eat bread for three days, nor did he drink water. Sarah did the same. They were sad because no person came to eat bread. So they worshipped and prayed with all their heart. And they said: "We believe in one God, the Father who created heaven and earth, the sea, sun, stars, and who governs all the elements, all that our eyes see and all that we don't see, and who governs the souls of men. We beg you, our God, don't deprive us, but bid people to come to our house so that we can be hospitable and give them alms so that we can be repaid in heaven. For we are without children and our relatives and neighbors will quarrel over our possessions."

Blessed Abraham and Sarah spoke these things, and behold a miracle. God, who loves those who love him and doesn't allow them to be sad, what did he do? Abraham sat in front of his door and Sarah in front of another, they looked to see if perhaps someone would come to eat so that they could eat also. They saw three young handsome men coming towards them and they entered their home by the three doors. From their joy they said to each other: "God still loves us. Let us slaughter the best and fattest calf."

They did so immediately and placed it in an oven to be baked. The mother of the calf began to moo and went around the oven. Shortly afterwards she stopped and they saw the calf sucking from its mother. They looked into the oven and saw the pan filled with food and they were amazed. Abraham went to speak to the young men and while talking with them the young men told him: "From now on Abraham you will have every joy and you will give birth to a son Isaac." Abraham went to prepare the table to invite them to eat and turning he didn't see them. He realized that God appeared and he kissed the spot where the young men sat. They were the Holy Trinity, God. You see and hear, my brethren, the miracle and you hear of it to the present.

### Separation from Christ and the Church

YOU TOO SHOULD DO THE same if you want God to enter your homes and for you to prosper in life. Don't separate yourselves from Christ and from the Church. Listen when the priest rings the bell. Get up immediately, wash, and go to church and listen to the service with attention. Do likewise for the Liturgy and teach your children to avoid sin as much as possible and to go to church to be blessed so that they can have life and prosper. And whatever brother, my brethren, hears the bell -and is too lazy to go to church, he will drown in his sins, as they drowned in the great flood.

Learn this too, my brethren, after building the ark and gathering all the animals into it, Noah would open the ark and they would go out to graze. In the evening he would ring the bell and they would all gather into the ark. The bell that the priests ring dates from that time. The bell is a flag for the people. The priest is the preacher of the ark and the holy Church is the ark. And whatever brethren gather into the church will have their sins forgiven and will not drown from their errors.

### The Church is Our Mother

OUR HOLY CHURCH IS like a mother. When her son makes an error she scolds him and then loves him again. Our holy Church is a source which waters all those who thirst. Priests should celebrate the Liturgy each day so that Christ will bless the people and guard their land from every illness and every abuse; so that God will bless your land, your fields, your vineyards, your place, and all the work of your hands. You should all, young and old, pray that the elders of your village live a long time, that God blesses them so they will take care of you well, for an elder is like a father. You should honor your priests and your betters. Wives, honor husbands; husbands, love your wives and your mothers. Daughters-in-law, honor your fathers-in-law and your mothers-in-law. Sons-in-laws, love your in-laws also and with this respect you will, prosper bodily and spiritually and you win partake of all the good things of the earth. And as long as you live on this earth, this temporary and brief life, you will gain all the blessings of paradise in the eternal life. Don't indulge yourselves, don't anathematize, don't curse. Brethren, may your blessing be upon me, and forgive me so God will forgive you, so that he will find us all worthy to enjoy paradise, to rejoice with the holy angels, and all of the saints. Amen.

# THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

## PARABLES AND STORIES

### The Priceless Diamond

A merchant named Irrational had been in business for forty-fifty years. He never had any success. Then he found a purse. He opened it and found some counterfeit coins, some false pearls, and in the middle of the purse a diamond. He took the purse with the money and went to a money changer to see if it was genuine. Examining it, the money changer told the merchant that the money was counterfeit and that only the diamond was real. The merchant didn't believe him but took them and left and went to another money changer. He too said that all was counterfeit except for the diamond, which was valuable. The merchant was sad and took the diamond in his hand and with it the purse with the coins and he left.

On the way he met a blind man and said: "I want to see what power the diamond has."

And, O wonder of wonders! When he touched the eyes of the blind man with it, they immediately opened and the blind man saw. The merchant was then happy.

He continued on and met a man who was deaf and dumb, and as soon as he touched him [with the diamond] he began to speak and hear. He met a man who was retarded, and when he touched him he was healed. He touched a poor man with it and he became rich. He touched an old man with it and he became young and robust. He touched a dead man with it and he immediately came to life.

Seeing such miracles, the merchant's heart was ablaze with joy, and so he took the purse with the coins and went and threw them into the sea. He kept only the diamond and went home.

It came time for the merchant to die. So he called his family together and told them: "My children, I have been in business in the world for forty-fifty years. I never had any success. Later, I found a purse in which there were some counterfeit gold coins, pearls, and in the middle of the purse I found a diamond with so much power that it raised the dead, made the poor rich, the blind to open their eyes, the deaf to hear, and healed all manner of illness. But soon I'll be leaving you and I shall die. I have no other inheritance to leave you except this diamond. But your nobility should find a place to put it-somewhere as it deserves-for it will not stay just anywhere.

The time came and the merchant died. The diamond remained for his family. They tried to find a place to keep it as the merchant had instructed them. So they found a marble triangle with equal sides and they put the diamond on top of the marble, but it wouldn't stay. They were sad because they couldn't find a place to put it. They placed a white cloth on the marble to serve as a cushion, but the diamond wouldn't stay. Again they were sad. Later, they spread another cloth on top of the first and put the diamond on top of that. The diamond stayed. Then they were happy and glorified God.

Now we should see who is the merchant; second, what is the purse; third, the dollars; fourth, the gold coins; fifth, the pearls; sixth, the diamond; seventh, the money changers; eighth, who are the merchant's relatives; ninth, what is the marble; tenth, what the first cloth signifies; and eleventh, what the second cloth signifies. These are the eleven subjects that we'll explain.

First, I am the merchant Irrational, drunkard, idler, and lazy. I have been in business for forty-fifty years, and God found me worthy to find a purse. What is the purse? It is the sacred and holy Gospel. I open it and inside I find counterfeit gold coins. What are the gold coins? They are the Jews who say they believe but their faith is counterfeit, of the devil.

In the purse I find counterfeit dollars. What do the dollars signify? They are the irreverent who say that they believe, but their faith is counterfeit, of the devil. I find in it false pearls. What do the pearls signify? They are the heretics who say they believe in the Holy Trinity but [their faith] also is false, and it too is of the devil. What is the diamond? It is our Lord Jesus Christ and God. Who are the money changers? They are the prophets who had proclaimed the Son and Logos of the preexistent and omnipotent Father. Who are the relatives of the merchant? They are the reverent and Orthodox Christians, the sons and daughters of our Christ. What

is the triangular and equal-sided marble? it is the person who says he believes in the Holy Trinity but his faith is insufficient for him to be saved; the diamond does not stay put. What else is needed? The first cloth is needed, but the diamond, that is, Christ, doesn't stay. A person who says he believes in the Holy Trinity has the first cloth, love for God which each person has, but this is insufficient, for the second cloth is needed. Then the diamond stays. What does the second cloth signify? It is the person who believes in the Holy Trinity and loves God and his brethren; that is [they are] the second cloth. Then the diamond, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ and God, stays.

The person who has God in his heart has everything good and can never sin. And when he doesn't have the diamond in his heart, love, that is, Christ, he has the devil. And whoever has the devil has all that is evil and commits all the sins. So, my brethren, I am about to leave you health, and then I shall depart, and I don't know if God will enable me to enjoy you again in person or not. I have nothing else to leave you as consolation, as a shelter, as a guardian, except the diamond. But you must have someplace to put it. This diamond contains all the Christian virtues, spiritual and physical, and he who has been found worthy to have it in his heart will be of good fortune, for he has a valuable treasure.

#### The Lesson of the Ascetic

An ascetic prayed to God to reveal to him many mysteries. Leaving his cell to go to another village, he met an angel on the way, but he didn't recognize him. He thought the angel was a human being. On the way they came upon a dead horse. The ascetic held his nose, the angel did not. They went on further and they passed a dead cow which stunk. Again the ascetic held his nose, the angel did not. They went on and came upon a dead dog; the ascetic held his nose, the angel did nothing.

When they were about to come to the village, they met a beautiful girl dressed in beautiful clothes and jewelry. Then the angel held his nose. Seeing this, the ascetic said: "What are you - angel, human, or devil? We met a dead horse which stunk and you didn't hold your nose. The same was true with the cow and the dog. I didn't see you hold your nose. Now that we've met such a beautiful girl, you hold your nose?"

The angel then revealed himself and said: "Nothing stinks to God more than pride." And saying this, he disappeared.

The ascetic immediately turned back to his cell and cried for his sins, praying to God to guard him from the snares of the devil and not to allow him to fall victim to pride and be lost.

#### The Wise Confessor

There was a man who went to confession to one confessor for fifteen years. Going once again to confess, he discovered the confessor fornicating with a woman. He said to himself: "O! Woe to me. I have been confessing to him for so many years and now I'll be damned. No matter how many sins he has forgiven me, they're all unforgiven."

Saying this, he immediately left. On the way he became thirsty. Proceeding farther, he found some running water so clean that he remarked: "If the water here is so clean, how much cleaner must it be at the fountain where it originates?"

He bent down and drank. Going on, he came to the fountain and he saw that the water was coming out of the mouth of a dog. He sighed and said: "Woe to me! I have been polluted."

Then an angel of the Lord said to him: "Why were you not polluted when you first drank the water, and now that you have seen it coming from the mouth of a dog, you abhor it? I wonder, isn't the dog from God who created the sky, the earth, and everything? If the dog is unclean, don't be sad; the water isn't his. It is the same with the confessor who heard your confessions. Was the forgiveness perhaps his? It belongs to the Holy Spirit. Because he possessed the office of the priesthood, he was superior to kings and angels. What does it matter to you if he committed fornication? He is the mouth of the dog, so don't be sad. Whatever he forgave you is forgiven. Only go and prostrate yourself before him and ask for his forgiveness. He'll be judged by God."

Then the angel disappeared. The man went back to the confessor and told him everything the angel had advised him. Hearing the whole narrative, the confessor wept, repented, and was saved.

We must find fault with ourselves, and then we'll be saved.

#### The Spiritual Doctor

A rich ruler collected much treasure. He never wanted to go to confession, nor did he ever give alms. He had a son about ten years old. There came a time when the ruler became ill. His family told him to confess His sins, to do something for his soul. He answered them: "As long as my son is well, he'll do something for my soul." He was completely on the side of the devil and wouldn't change his mind.

In the same place there was a very virtuous confessor who shaved off his beard, put on secular clothes, and went to the house of the ruler. He knocked on the door. Someone came out and asked him what he wanted. He answered: "I'm a stranger and happen to be in your village. I learned that the ruler is ill and I came to see him because I'm a doctor."

They let him in immediately. All of his relatives were around the ruler and were assisting him. The doctor said: "How is the patient?"

The patient answered: "I'm very bad, master."

The doctor asked: "What do the doctors of your village say?"

The patient replied: "They say I'm very bad and on the verge of death."

The spiritual doctor took his hand and said: "I too say that you are dying. But if a medicine that I know were to be found, you wouldn't die."

He asked for a cup of water and some flour. He mixed them and pretended to add something else to it and said: "The medicine is ready; all that's needed is for your son to come here and for me to prick his small finger with a needle so that three drops of blood will drip out. Then I'll give it to you to drink and you'll get well."

The boy was playing with some other children. They immediately sent for him and said to him: "Come, son, a doctor has come to make your father well." The boy wanted to continue playing, but they brought him in. As the doctor saw him, he said: "Come, my son, I want to prick your finger with a needle to take three drops of blood to place in this medicine so your father can drink it and become well immediately."

The boy said: "Am I stupid or crazy to hurt my finger?"

The doctor replied: "It's up to you, my son, whether your father lives or dies. Don't you realize how much he has accumulated to give to you?"

The boy answered: "Whether he lives or not, I won't hurt my finger." Then he left.

The confessor said to the patient: "I'm the confessor of the area, and I did this to show you that you shouldn't expect anything to be done for your soul by your son."

The patient then arose. "I," he said, "have damned my soul for my son to leave him a great deal. And he didn't have it in his heart to give me three drops of blood to save my life? You're quite right, confessor."

He immediately asked for his account books, his promissory notes, and he tore them up. He divided all of his Possessions and left nothing. He thus made his son a pauper but won paradise and rejoiced forever.

Now all of you who have sons, don't hope and say: "My son is good and he'll concern himself with my soul." It's whatever a person does by himself that he'll be repaid for in the next life.

The Choice

Once there was a Greek who said: "I want to become a Jew." Now there are three rules of life: the natural law of the Jews, the carnal law of the Turks, and the spiritual law of the Christians.

The Greek said: "Let me look at the natural law."

He read it: "Whoever takes your cloak, take his also. Whoever defrauds you of ten dollars, defraud him of twenty. Whoever murders your brother, murder him also."

The Greek said: "I walk along a road. Someone comes up to me to take my cloak. I, according to that [natural] law, want to take his. He won't let me, so I should either murder him or he should murder me."

The Greek said: "The law of the Jews is no good. Now I want to become a Turk (Moslem)." He took up the carnal law, read it, and found that it permits the seduction of women and other indecent things.

The Greek said: "I don't like this law either; it's for pigs."

Again he changed his mind: "Instead of a Turk, I'll become a Christian." He took up the spiritual law, read it, and found that it teaches: "Whoever takes your cloak, give him your other one as well, and whoever takes ten dollars from you, give him another ten, and whoever hits you on your right cheek, turn your left cheek so he can hit you again."

The Greek then said: "I'll try it. I'll walk along the road, and when someone comes to take my cloak I, according to this law, should say to him: 'Wait, brother, I give you my other one too.'

"He comes to take my ten dollars. I'll tell him: 'Wait, brother, I'll give you another ten.' He comes to give me a blow; I'll turn so he can hit me on the other side as well.

"It seems to me that no matter how evil or wild a man is, if I talk with him in a peaceful manner [and use] humble and sweet words, he'll be moved and he'll either return my possessions to me or at least he'll not murder me. But if I resist him, he'll either kill me or I'll kill him. So this law, the spiritual law, is good, and I'll become a Christian."

On the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation

Without a stone, a flint, and kindling wood, you can't have fire. Just as the three must be present, so it is with the Holy Trinity; it is three and one. Or just as water is [liquid], hail, and snow, yet all three are of one nature. The soul is one; one person gives birth to the logos. Then there is breath; it belongs to the soul and not to the body. The soul is the typos of the Father, the logos of the soul is the typos of the Son and Logos of God, while the breath of the soul is the typos of the Holy Spirit.

The soul gives birth to the logos through the mind and, second, he is given birth by the lips. Just as the logos is born of the soul first and does not reveal himself, and then is revealed through the lips, so was the Son and Logos of God born before all ages from God the Father. But he would not reveal himself to people, but remained in the bosom of the Father.

In the same way, he was born again from the lips of the Prophets and from the all-holy Mary, the Ever-Virgin, and then became manifest to the entire world. The birth from the flesh, when he revealed himself and when his human nature suffered on the Cross-the matter of his body-while his divine nature remained impassive is called the second birth. And as when the sun illuminates a tree while the treecutter is cutting it with an ax, the tree suffers being cut but the rays of the sun which are on the tree remain uncut and unharmed, so is our Christ's divinity. Even though at the time of his passion his divinity was united with the body and was not separated from it, as the sun wasn't separated from the tree and didn't suffer, so his humanity suffered as did the tree, while his divinity remained unharmed like the sun.

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*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

**FRAGMENTS FROM THE TEACHING**

I

Blessed Christians, a large number of churches neither preserve nor strengthen our faith as much as they should if those who believe in God aren't enlightened by both the Old and New Testaments. Our faith wasn't established by ignorant saints, but by wise and educated saints who interpreted the holy Scriptures accurately and who enlightened us sufficiently by inspired teachings.

Today, however, because of the dreadful state in which we find ourselves due to our sins, such wise and virtuous men, who can preserve unaffected our Orthodox brethren, are absent or at least extremely rare. For how can our nation be preserved without harm in its religion and freedom when the sacred clergy is disastrously ignorant of the meaning of the holy Scriptures, which are the light and foundation of the faith? When a shepherd doesn't know which grass is nourishing for his flock, he can't cure its possible passions; he can't guard them from the wild beasts and thieves. How can that flock be preserved for very long? So, my children of Parga, to safeguard your faith and the freedom of your homeland, take care to establish without fail a Greek school in which your children will learn all that you are ignorant of.

II

My beloved children in Christ, bravely and fearlessly preserve our holy faith and the language of our Fathers, because both of these characterize our most beloved homeland, and without them our nation is destroyed. Don't be discouraged, my brethren; Divine Providence will one day send heavenly salvation to gladden your hearts and eliminate LETTERS this dreadful state in which we find ourselves

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**LETTERS**

I

To Georgios Kladas, the Locum Tenens of the Metropolis of Kephallenia

To the Reverend and Learned Georgios Kladas, Grand Oikonomos and Head Teacher of Kephallenia at Kastron:

Most wise, most sacred, holy Grand Oikonomos (Steward), Lord Georgios, kissing your hand I greet you. I, my brother, am a sinful, ignorant man, an unworthy servant of our Christ and God. Urged by the patriarchs of the Eastern Church, by bishops, abbots, and especially by the Lord Sophronios to teach the Christians in accordance with my ability, I find myself here on this blessed island. Receiving their permission and that of the governor in Assos, it seemed proper and right for me to report to your sacredness and ask for your permission, because you are the oikonomos and counselor of the hierarch and because you are a brother born and raised in this place, and you know best how matters stand. Advise me, therefore, whatever God inspires you either directly or indirectly by letter so that I may perform my duty.

Be well. I pray for you and all of the Christians.

Your brother in Christ,

Hieromonk Kosmas

13 June 1777

II

To the Inhabitants of Zalongo

My most noble beloved brethren and spiritual children, inhabitants of the village of Zalongo, I greet you, praying and beseeching the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health.

I, my brethren, as an unworthy servant of our Christ and God, travel about and teach the Christians according to my ability. I have also come here to your village, and seeing that you don't have a school, I urged the Christians and they gave for the school according to their ability and will.

You, too, should always help your school from your own resources or those of the village or from the religious endowments so that you may receive wages from God and honor from men. I too am a debtor and I beseech the Lord to bless your land, your school, your children, so that you may live well and pleasing to God here (on earth), and to put you in paradise to rejoice and be glad and glorify the Holy Trinity.

This much for now. Stay well in the Lord.

Your unworthy servant,

Hieromonk Kosmas

January 1779

III

To His Brother Chrysanthos of Aitolia

My most sacred and beloved brother Lord Chrysanthos:

I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health. Thanks to divine grace, brother, I am somewhat well, but spiritually the Lord knows. What has happened to me appears unbelievable to many and even cannot understand it. I say only this so that you can glorify the Lord and rejoice. There is much repentance among the people. I have traveled through about thirty provinces. I have established ten Greek Schools, two hundred grammar schools while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word by the signs that attended it. But glory to him who says: my power is made perfect in weakness.

I am now traveling through Paramythia and Margarite; I hope shortly, God willing, to come and see you. I also passed through our village and all our relatives and friends send their respect.

I greet you and the most holy bishop and I pray for all the brethren in Christ. Be well in body and soul. Ten thousand Christians love me and one hates me; a thousand Turks love me and one doesn't; thousands of Jews want my death and one doesn't.

Your brother,

Hieromonk Kosmas

2 March 1779

IV

To the Inhabitants of the Village of Papadates

My most noble brethren, inhabitants of the village of Papadates, I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health. I, my brethren, as an unworthy servant of God, travel about and teach the Christians according to my ability. I have also come here to your village, and seeing that you do not have a school, I Urged the Christians and they gave according to their ability and will for your school.

You, too, should always help your school from your own resources or from those of the village or of the religious endowments so that you may receive wages from God and honor from men.

I too am a debtor, and I beseech the Lord, who blesses all things, to bless your village, your school, and your children, and to find you worthy to live well and pleasing to God here (on earth), and to put you into paradise to rejoice and be glad and to glorify the Holy Trinity. Amen.

I appointed, with the consent of all, Mr. Ioannes, son of Panos, trustee; and Mr. Demos, son of Ioannes the priest, and Mr. Stavros, son of Demos, overseers and his assistants to govern the school as the Lord inspires them.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

March 1779

V

To the Inhabitants of the Village of Variades

My most noble beloved brethren, inhabitants of the village of Variades, I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health.

I, my brethren, as an unworthy servant of Christ our God, hoping and teaching the Christians according to my ability, have also come here to your village. Seeing that you do not have a school, I urged the Christians and they gave according to their ability and will for the school.

You, too, should always help your school from your own resources or from those of the village or from those of the religious endowments so that you may receive wages from God and honor from men.

I too am a debtor [and] I'll beseech the Lord, who blesses all things, to bless your village, your school, your children, and to find you worthy to live well and pleasing to God here (on earth) and to put you into paradise to rejoice and be glad, glorifying the Holy Trinity.

I appointed, with the consent of all, Mr. Georgios, the son of Demos, trustee; and the entire village as his assistants, particularly Mr. Georgakes, son of Panos, to govern your school as the Lord enlightens them. In addition, (I also appointed) the priest Apostles as overseer.

Unworthy Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

March 1779

VI

To the Inhabitants of Preveza

My most noble beloved brethren, inhabitants of the village of Preveza, I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health.

I, my brethren, as an unworthy servant of God, travel about and teach the Christians according to my ability. I also came here and seeing that you don't have a school, I urged (the Christians) and they gave according to their ability and will for your school.

You also should always help your school from your own resources or from those of the village or from those of the religious endowments, so that you might receive wages from God and honor from men.

I too am a debtor and I beseech the Lord, who blesses all things, to bless your village, your school, your children, and to find you

worthy to live well and pleasing to God here (on earth) and to put you into paradise to rejoice and be glad, glorifying the Holy Trinity. Amen.

I appointed the priests, Mr. Nicholas Keramidas and Mr. Anastasios Rizos, trustees to keep and govern the above school. In addition, (I appointed) Mr. Demos, son of Chrestos; Mr. Spyros, son of Georgios Lampros; and Mr. Chrestos, son of Georgios, overseers to assist this school as the Lord enlightens them. And if you encounter any obstacle from the rulers of the village, expel them from the boundaries (of the village) if it seems fair to you. So much for now. Stay well in the Lord.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

April 1779

VII

To the Inhabitants of the Village of Syrakates

My most noble beloved brethren, inhabitants of the village of Syrakates, I greet you and beseech the Holy c for your spiritual and physical health.

The priest of your village came here to Krogkous and complained to me that you don't do what he counsels v and what the Church commands. This, my brethren, saddens me a great deal.

The trustees and overseers of your village, whom I 1 pointed with the consent of all, should try very hard deal) with the complaints of your priest and with the f will assistance of the monastery and of the rulers of your village so that the school will be built and your child will learn and you may receive from the All-powerful wages and honors from men.

I too am a debtor and I beseech the Most High God, who blesses all things, to bless your school and your children to learn.

This much for now. Stay well in the Lord.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

10 July 1779

VIII

To The Inhabitants of the Village of Droviane

My most noble and beloved brethren, inhabitants of the of Droviane, of the neighborhood of Upper Machala, et you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual physical health.

I, my Christian brethren, as an unworthy servant of Jesus t our God, travel about and teach the holy Gospel ,ding to my ability to the Christians with the permission of the local bishops. I have come here to your village, and that you do not have a school for your children to without paying, I urged the Christians and they gave according to their ability and will for the school.

But you too should help the school, all of you Christians, from your own resources or from those of the village or from of the churches so that you may receive wages from id honor from men.

I, to am a debtor and I beseech our Lord Jesus Christ, blesses all things, to bless your village, your school, and your children, and to find you worthy to live well and g to God here (on earth), and to put you into paradise to rejoice and be glad forever and ever and to glorify the Holy Trinity. Amen.

I have appointed, with the consent of all the Christians ar village, the reverend priest Mr. Kyriakos trustee, overseers and assistants everyone in the village to the school as the Lord enlightens them.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for all the Christians

15 July 1779

IX

To the Inhabitants of the Village of Chalion

My most noble and beloved brethren, inhabitants of the village of Chalion, I greet you and I beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health.

I, my brethren, as an unworthy servant of Christ our God, travel about and teach the Christians according to my ability with the permission of the local bishops. I came to your village, and seeing that you don't have a school for your children to learn without paying, I urged the Christians and they gave according to their ability and will for the school.

You also should help the school from your own resources or from those of the village or from those of the religious endowments so that you may receive wages from God and honor from men.

I too am a debtor and I beseech the Lord, who blesses all things, to bless your village, your school, and your children to receive an education, and to find you worthy to live well and pleasing to God here (on earth) and to glorify the Holy Trinity. Amen.

I appointed, with the consent of all, Mr. Rizos, son of Demos, trustee, and as overseers and his assistants everyone in the village, and in particular, Mr. Kyriazos, son of Zeses; Mr. ioannes, son of Gkikas; Mr. ioannes, son of Zotos; Mr. Kyriazos, son of Demetrios; Mr. Konstas, son of Stavros; and Mr. Pantos, son of Demos, to govern the school as the Lord enlightens them.

This much for now. Stay well in the Lord.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

July 1779

X

To the Inhabitants of the Village of Mouzina

My most noble and beloved brethren. inhabitants of the village of Mouzina, I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health.

I, my brethren, as an unworthy servant of Christ our God, travel about and teach the Christians according to my ability with the permission of the local bishops. I have come here to your village, and seeing that you don't have a school to teach your children without paying, I have urged the Christians and they have given according to their ability and will for the school. You too should all help your school always from your own resources or those of the village or those of the religious endowments so that you may receive wages from God and honor from men.

I too am a debtor and I beseech the Lord who blesses all things to bless your land, your school, and your children, and to find you worthy to live well and pleasing to God here (on earth) and to put you into paradise to rejoice and be glad and to glorify the Holy Trinity.

I appointed, with the consent of all, the priest, Mr. Diamantes, trustee, and everyone in the village as trustees and his assistants, and in particular, the priest, Mr. Ntente; and Mr. Athanasios, son of Zeses; and Mr. Nikos, son of Kyriakos, to govern the school as the Lord enlightens them.

This much for now. Stay well in the Lord.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

July 1779

XI

To the Inhabitants of the Village of Semitsa

My most noble and beloved brethren, inhabitants of the village of Semitsa, I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health.

I, as an unworthy servant of our God, my fellow Christians, travel about and teach the Christians according to my ability with the permission of the local bishops. I have come to your village, and seeing that you have no school for your children to learn without paying, I urged the Christians and they gave according to their ability and will for the school. You all should also help the school from your own resources or from those of the village or from those of the religious endowments so that you may receive wages from God and honor from men.

I too am a debtor and I beseech the Lord who blesses all things to bless your village, your school, and your children, and to find you worthy to live well and pleasing to God here (on earth), and to put you into paradise to rejoice and be glad and to glorify the All-Holy Trinity. Amen.

I appointed, with the consent of all, Mr. Lekas, son of Kyrkos, trustee, and the entire village as overseers and his assistants, and particularly the priest, Mr. Nikos; Mr. Gkenos Demos; Mr. Spyros Ntenes; and Mr. Spyros Athanasiou to govern the school as the Lord enlightens them.

This much for now. Stay well in the Lord.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

28 July 1779

XII

To the Inhabitants of the Village of Cheimarra

My most noble beloved brethren, inhabitants of the village of Cheimarra, I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health.

I, my brethren, as an unworthy servant of Christ our God, travel about and teach the Christians according to my ability with the permission of the local bishops. I have come here to your village, and seeing that you do not have a school for your children to learn without paying, I urged the Christians and they gave according to their ability and will for the school [and you also should help the school] from [your] own resources or from those of the village or from those of the religious endowments so that you may receive wages from God and honor from men.

I (too) am a debtor and I beseech the Holy God who blesses all things to bless your village also, your school, your children, and to make you worthy to live well and pleasing to God here (on earth), and to put you into paradise to rejoice and be glad and to glorify

the.Holy Trinity.

I appointed, with the consent of all, the priest, Mr. Michael, trustee, and the entire village as trustees and his assistants, and particularly Mr. Zachos, the priest Spyros, and Mr. Ilias Demetriou to govern the school as the Lord enlightens them.

Hieromonk Kosmas

who prays for you

August 1779

XIII

To a Turkish Judge

Most glorious, most wise (may you live many years) Lord Judge, I greet you and beseech the Holy God for your spiritual and physical health and happiness.

I, my Lord, as a Christian and an unworthy servant of the holy God and a slave of my emperor, Sultan Haniid, have been commanded by my patriarchs and bishops to travel about and teach the Christians to keep God's commandments and to obey the divine imperial commands.

Approaching your domain, it seemed proper for me to greet you with this present humble letter and to seek your permission to travel about your domain. I await your command.

Stay well in the Lord.

Your unworthy servant,

Hieromonk Kosmas

1779

## **THE LIFE OF ST. KOSMAS AITOLOS TOGETHER WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF HIS TEACHING AND LETTERS**

*Translated by Nomikos Michael Vaporis*

### **PROPHECIES AND SAYINGS**

You will see people flying in the sky like blackbirds and hurling fire on the earth. Those alive then will run to the graves and shout: "Come out, you who are dead, and let us who are living in."

The cause of the general war will come from Dalmatia. Austria will be dismembered first and then Turkey.

That which is desired [i.e., freedom] will come in the third generation. Your grandchildren will see it.

France will liberate Greece, [while] Italy (will liberate) Epiros.

The villages of the plain will suffer destruction, while people at the foot of (Mount) Kissavo will go to sleep slaves and will awaken free.

The time will come when your enemies will take away from you even the ashes from your fires, but don't give up your faith as

others will do.

The red hats [i.e., the French] will come here [Kephallenia], and then the English for fifty-four years, and then this place will become Roman [i.e., Greek Orthodox].

The time will come when people will speak from one far place to another, for example, from Constantinople to Russia, as though they were in adjoining rooms.

A time will come when the harmony that exists now between clergy and laymen will not be.

Clergymen will become worse and more impious than everyone.

People will become impoverished because they will have no love for trees.

You will see in the plain a carriage without horses which will run faster than a rabbit.

The rich will become poor and the poor will die.

The time will come when the Romans [i.e., the Greek Orthodox] will fight among themselves. I recommend harmony and love.

A foreign army will come. It will believe in Christ, but it will not speak the (Greek) language.

After the general war, the wolf will live with the lamb.

People will become poor because they will become lazy.

They will ask for your rifles. Retain two. Give one and keep the other. A single rifle will save a hundred souls.

Out of schools will come things which your mind can't imagine.