



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **September 27, 2015** ✠

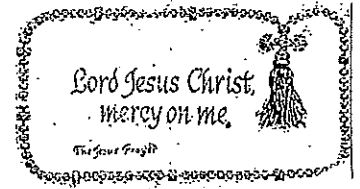
Martyr Callistratus of Carthage (304)

Apostles Mark, Aristarchus & Zenas of the 70

St. Sabbatius of Solovki (1435)

**St. Anthimus the Georgian, Hieromartyr,
Metropolitan of Wallachia - Romania (1716)**

St. Rachel of Borodino, Russia (1928)



➤ **The Annual Parish Meeting is today and it's the first day of Church School!**

✠ **Holy Baptism ~ Next Saturday, October 3 3:00pm ~**

Child Helen Morrow, daughter of Zach & Sydney Haspel Morrow

The Understanding of Humility: Metropolitan Anthony Bloom

✠ "The word 'humility' comes from the Latin humus, the fertile ground. Humility is not a condition which we try to ape by saying that we are unworthy, that we are not as good as others imagine us to be - if they do. Humility is a condition of the earth, lying completely open and surrendered: the earth which is open to all actions, of mankind, of the rain, accepting the refuse and accepting the furrow and bringing fruit, surrendered, offered and given. This is the essence of humility and this is the kind of humility which we see in the Mother of God."

✠ **Pride:** The Fathers teach that pride is the worst of all sins. Why? It is the only sin you cannot see as sin when you are captured by it. Sexual sins are considered the most human of sins. Why? You know you are sinning when you commit them. — Fr. Johannes Jacobse

The Fall: Original Sin ~ Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*

✠ God gave Adam free will — the power to choose between good and evil — and it therefore rested with Adam either to accept the vocation set before him or to refuse it. He refused it. Instead of continuing along the path marked out for him by God, he turned aside and disobeyed God. Adam's fall consisted essentially in his disobedience of the will of God; he set up his own will against the divine will, and so by his own act he separated himself from God. As a result, a new form of existence appeared on earth — that of disease and death. By turning away from God, who is immortality and life, man put himself in a state that was contrary to nature, and this unnatural condition led to an inevitable disintegration of his being and eventually to physical death. The consequences of Adam's disobedience extended to all his descendants.

We are members one of another, as Saint Paul never ceased to insist, and if one member suffers the whole body suffers. In virtue of this mysterious unity of the human race, not only Adam but all mankind became subject to mortality. Nor was the disintegration which followed from the fall merely physical. Cut off from God, Adam and his descendants passed under the domination of sin and of the devil. Each new human being is born into a world where sin prevails everywhere, a world in which it is easy to do evil and hard to do good. Man's will is weakened and enfeebled by what the Greeks call 'desire' and the Latins 'concupiscence.' We are all subject to these, the spiritual effects of original sin.

Virtues

Virtue (Greek ἀρετή; Latin *virtus*) is the habitual, well-established, readiness or disposition of man's powers directing them to some goodness of act.¹ Virtue is moral excellence of a man or a woman. The word ἀρετή is derived from the Greek arete (ἀρετή). As applied to humans, a virtue is a good character trait. The Latin word *virtus* literally means "manliness," from *vir*, "man" in the masculine sense; and referred originally to masculine, warlike virtues such as courage. In one of the many ironies of etymology, in English the word "virtue" is often used to refer to a woman's chastity.

In the Greek it is more properly called ἠθικὴ ἀρετή, or "habitual excellence." It is something practiced at all times. The virtue of perseverance is needed for all and any virtue since it is a habit of character and must be used continuously in order for any person to maintain oneself in virtue. The Orthodox Church teaches that the body, as well as the soul, must be trained and disciplined because man is a unity of soul and body. Fasting and self-control are the primary source of all good and the foundation of acquiring virtue.

Likeness of God

Genesis states that man was created in the according to the image and likeness of God. John of Damascus wrote, 'The expression *according to the image* indicates rationality and freedom, while the expression *according to the likeness* indicates assimilation to God through virtue.' All of the human virtues are attributes of God. They are the divine properties which should be in all human persons by the gift of God in creation and salvation through Christ. To acquire the virtues is to reacquire the divine likeness of God.

Unlike the image of God, which can never be lost even by the most sinful, the likeness depends upon moral choice, upon 'virtue,' and so it is destroyed by sin. The virtues are not an endowment which man possesses from the start, but a goal at which he must aim, something which he can only acquire by degrees through the grace of God.

Christian virtues

The virtues, often called the fruits of the Spirit, include:

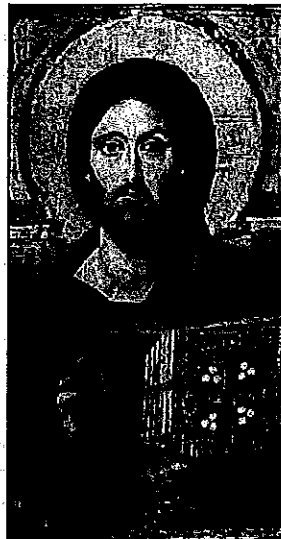
- Faith - The weakness and absence of faith in God is rooted in sin, impurity and pride.
- Hope - Hope is the assurance of the good outcome of our lives lived by faith in God.
- Knowledge - Knowledge of God is the aim and goal of man's life, the purpose of his creation by God.
- Wisdom - The wise man is the one who sees clearly and deeply into the mysteries of God.
- Honesty - To be truthful at all times and lacking in hypocrisy.
- Humility - (Meekness) To see reality as it actually is in God. It means to know oneself and others as known by God.
- Obedience - To do the will of God is glory and life.
- Patience (Diligence) - To put up with one's self and others, growing gradually in the grace of God through the daily effort to keep His commandments and to accomplish His will.
- Courage - To not be afraid, even unto martyrdom.
- Faithfulness - The spiritual person is faithful to his calling, fulfilling every good resolution, and bearing fruit patiently with the gifts and talents given by God.
- Temperance (Self-Control, Chastity) - To be moderate in all things. Like patience, it comes from the grace of God; one must seek it from the Lord.
- Generosity (Kindness) - It is shown by care and concern for the well-being of others.
- Gratitude (Contentment) - The spiritual person is the one who is grateful for everything.
- Love - The greatest virtue of all is love. If we do not love one another, we cannot love God, for God is love.

THE PAPIST HERESY & ITS DEEDS

By Vladimir Moss, from *"The Mystery of the Church: The Orthodox Church from Adam to the Second Coming of Christ."*

Papism amounted to a completely new view of the relationship between truth and authority in the Church. Instead of the Eastern view that authority is based on truth, which is the expression of apostolic tradition, the popes began to teach that truth is guaranteed by the authority of the pope alone. And this new teaching had a political dimension: the authority of the pope extended to the State as well as to the Church.

As pope Gregory VII, the real founder of the heretical papacy, put it in 1076: "The pope can be judged by no one; the Roman Church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman Church was founded by Christ alone; the pope alone can depose and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoprics, and divide old ones; he alone can translate bishops; he alone can call general councils and authorize canon law; he alone can revise his judgements; he alone can use the imperial insignia; he can depose emperors; he can absolve subjects from their allegiance; all princes should kiss his feet; his legates, even though in inferior orders, have precedence over all bishops; an appeal to the papal court inhibits judgement by all inferior courts; a duly ordained pope is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter."



It was the Crusades of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries that opened the eyes of the faithful to the true nature of the monster that had been born in their midst. And it then became imperative to cast out this teacher of what was in effect a blatant form of idolatrous man-worship, lest the warning of the Lord to the Thyateira Church be realized: *I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.* (Rev 2:20-23).

Already before the First Crusade, the previously unheard-of spectacle of wars between nations calling themselves Christian had become common. Thus, for much of the period 886-1018, the Greeks were fighting the Bulgarians; in 1043 the Russians attacked Constantinople; and between 1066 and 1081, the Normans conquered England and southern Italy and invaded Greece. Fortunately, in the East a shared religion and a com-

mon respect for the ideal of the Christian Empire ensured that the scars did not go deep. Thus, when the Bulgarians or Serbs waged war against the Empire, they did not seek to destroy it, but rather to replace the Greek Emperor with a Bulgarian or Serbian one. For Tsarigrad—"the city of the King"—remained unchallenged as the spiritual and political centre of Eastern Christendom.

In the West, however, the Norman Conquest of England, motivated as it was by religious as well as political considerations, and blessed by the pope, left deep scars which changed the religious, political, social and even linguistic character of England, and underlay the hostility between England and France for centuries to come.

And when the West as a whole marched to the Christian East during the Crusades, idealistic plans to free the Holy Places from the Mohammedan yoke soon degenerated, on the part of the knights—into lust for land and spoils, and on the part of the pope—into dreams of subduing "schismatic Romania" to himself. Thus, the only Orthodox nation really to benefit from the Crusades was Georgia, whose people under the leadership of King David the Restorer profited from the preoccupation of the Saracens with the Crusaders to liberate their land from the Mohammedan yoke.

But the ancient autocephalous Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch and Cyprus merely exchanged one heavy yoke for another, much more of a rapacious and religiously intolerant one. This process reached its bloody climax in 1204, when the Crusaders ravaged Constantinople, defiling the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia and installing a Latin king and patriarch.

The honour of being the first Westerner decisively to condemn the Jezebel of the Roman papacy belongs to Bishop Ethelwine of the North English see of Durham, who solemnly anathematized the pope in 1070, after witnessing the terrible fruits of Papism in his own land. Shortly after, a flood of English refugees began arriving in Constantinople and Kiev (the daughter of the last English Orthodox king Harold married Grand-Prince Vladimir Monomakh), and English soldiers played a notable part in the Byzantine Emperor's wars against the West.

Sadly, however, England and the rest of the West gradually succumbed to the papist machine, and only occasionally did the Orthodox consciousness of the first thousand years of Western Christianity flicker into life, as when the English Proto-Protestant John Wiclif declared in 1383: "The pride of the pope is the cause why the Greeks are divided from the so-called faithful... It is we Westerners, too fanatical by far, who have been divided from the faithful Greeks and the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ..."

A reminder of what true Catholicism is was provided by the foundation, not long before the Western schism, of the multinational monastic community of Mount Athos, whose first coenobitic community had been founded by St. Athanasius of the Holy Mountain in the tenth century. "Following the lead of St. Athanasius," writes Vasiliev, "many new monasteries, Greek and others were founded. In the time of Basil II, there was already one Iberian or Georgian monastery; emigrants from Italy founded two, a Roman and an Amalfitan. Bishop Porphyrius Uspensky, a profound Russian student of the Christian East, asserted that when the aged Athanasius died (about 1000 A.D.) there were three thousand 'various monks' on Mount Athos. As early as the eleventh century there was a Russian Lavra on this mountain..."

After the schism, however, the Latin monasteries ceased to exist; and early in the thirteenth century, when the uniate John Beccus was patriarch in Constantinople, Catalan soldiers ravaged the Holy Mountain; putting to death many monks who refused to accept the pope. From that time until now, the Holy Mountain—which today has Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian, as well as Greek, Georgian and Russian communities—has been at the heart of the Orthodox Church's struggle against the false unia with Rome.

"On October 7, 1207," writes Boyeikov, "pope Innocent addressed 'all the Russian bishops, clergy and the whole Russian people', demanding that they renounce Orthodoxy, since 'the land of the Greeks and their Church has almost completely returned to the recognition of the Apostolic see.' The Russian Church rejected the pretensions of the papacy, and the centre of Russian-Byzantine relations moved to Nicaea. The metropolitan of Kiev, who was himself a Nicaean Greek, in inspired manner led the struggle of the Russian Church in the name of the defense of Ecumenical Orthodoxy. The metropolitans of Kiev and all Russia cared for the unity and reconciliation of the warring princely groupings (of Kiev, Suzdal, Chernigov and Volhynia).

"Historians have paid a lot of attention to the Latin expansion in the Baltic. But they often forget that the other flank of the struggle in this period remained Southern Russia, while the field of battle was the Balkans. In 1205, the Bulgarians destroyed the crusading army of Baldwin II at Adrianople. The Second Bulgarian kingdom, which came into being in 1187, was historically drawn towards Orthodox Russia'. Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241) was allied to Kiev and Nicaea, for which pope Gregory IX expelled him from the Catholic Church in 1236. This was on the eve of the Mongol-Tatar invasion.

"Then came 1238: Ryazan was burned to the ground, Vladimir was defeated, and the holy right-believing Princes Yury Vsevolodovich and his sons, and Vasilko of Rostov fell in battle. It was in these circumstances that on August 9, 1238, the pope blessed the Hungarian king to undertake a crusade against Bulgaria.

"The Russian Church and the whole of the Russian land was overwhelmed by the flame of the Mongol-Tatar invasion. The prophecies of St. Avraam of Smolensk became clear. Many churches, monasteries, books and church utensils were captured and destroyed; in the taking of the Russian cities, many bishops, priests and monks were killed; the administration of the Church fell into disarray: Metropolitan Iosif disappeared without a trace, while Bishops Mitrophan of Vladimir and Simeon of Peryaslavl were killed. Kiev, the adornment and 'mother of Russian cities' was turned into ruins (1240) and lost its significance as a political and ecclesiastical centre. Russian state life became concentrated on the North-Eastern counties."

The thirteenth century represents a deep nadir in the history of the Orthodox Church. Beginning with the (temporary) fall of Constantinople to the Latins, and continuing with the (again temporary) apostasy of King John Asen of Bulgaria, the devastation of most of Russia and the second city of Christendom, Kiev, by the Mongols in 1240, and the signing of the unia with Rome by the Emperor Michael Paleologus at the council of Lyons in 1274, it shows Orthodoxy struggling to survive against enemies from East and West who were at the height of their power. Even the better rulers of the time, such as the Nicaean Emperor John Vatatzes, were forced into making alliances with heretics and infidels which would have horrified earlier generations.

Only the twentieth century can compare with the thirteenth in the depth and extent of its spiritual and physical destruction.

However, there were bright spots in the prevailing gloom. One was the gradual rise of Serbia under the inspired leadership of the holy King Stephen Nemanja and his son St. Sava. Another was the struggle of Novgorod, the last independent province of Russia, under St. Alexander Nevsky. This great prince decided, in spite of much opposition from his people, to pay tribute to the Mongols in order to concentrate all his forces in a successful war against what he considered to be his—from the spiritual point of view—more dangerous enemies, the papist Swedes and Teutonic Knights. It would have been good if other Orthodox—especially Greek—rulers of the time had imitated the priority St. Alexander placed on religious and spiritual over political freedom, and had taken heed to his saying: Not in might, but in truth, is God.



Let us strive to enter by the narrow gate. Just as the trees, if they have not stood before the winter's storms, cannot bear good fruit, so it is with us. This present age is a storm, and it is only through many trials and temptations that we can obtain an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.

St. Theodora

US and Catholicism in Crisis

By Patrick J. Buchanan, *September 21, 2015*

During the 1950s, the twin pillars of worldwide anti-communism were Dwight Eisenhower's America and the Roman Catholic Church of Pope Pius XII.

During the 1980s, the last decade of the Cold War, Ronald Reagan and the Polish pope, John Paul II, were the pillars of resistance.

When Pope Francis arrives in Washington on Tuesday afternoon, the country he enters will be a very different one from Eisenhower's America or Reagan's America. And Catholics will be welcoming a new kind of pope.

In America 2015, homosexuality, abortion on demand and same-sex marriage — shameful crimes in Ike's America, mortal sins in the catechism of Pius XII — have become constitutional rights.

...Since Eisenhower's time, Christianity, the faith that created the West, has been purged from American public life. The Bible, prayer, and all Christian art, books and symbols have been expunged from the public schools as they were in Cuba when Fidel Castro took power.

Our cradle faith cannot be taught in our public schools.

America is a different country today, a secular and post-Christian nation on its way to becoming anti-Christian. Some feel like strangers in their own land. And from the standpoint of traditional Catholicism, American culture is an open sewer. A vast volume of the traffic on the Internet is pornography.

Ironically, as all this unfolds in what was once "God's country," Vladimir Putin seeks to re-establish Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the basis of morality and law in Russia. And one reads in *The Wall Street Journal* on Monday that Xi Jinping is trying to reintroduce his Chinese Communist comrades to the teachings of Confucianism.

The world is turned upside down. Every civilization seems to recognize the necessity of faith except for the West, which has lost its faith and is shrinking and dying for lack of it.

In a *New York Times* article this month — "Are Western Values Losing Their Sway?" — Steven Erlanger writes:

"In its rejection of Western liberal values of sexual equality and choice, conservative Russia finds common cause with many in Africa and with the religious teachings of Islam, the Vatican, fundamentalist Protestants and Orthodox Jews."

Yet what Erlanger describes as "conservative Russia" does seem to share values with America, only it is the America of 1955, another country from the America of 2015.

Which raises a question: Does moral truth change?

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "The best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market."

But is this true? A decade after his beer hall putsch failed in Munich, Adolf Hitler's Nazi party won the largest number of Germans ever to vote in a democratic election.

He had succeeded in the marketplace of ideas. Did that democratic ratification make Hitler's ideas true?

Or does truth exist independent of the marketplace?

Secular America, which has purged Christianity, preaches a new gospel to the world: liberal democracy as the salvation of mankind.

Yet did not Winston Churchill, icon of the democracy worshippers, tell us that "the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter"?

The Catholic Church, too, faces a growing crisis of moral consistency and credibility.

The church of Pius XII and John Paul II taught that the truths of the Ten Commandments brought down from Sinai and the truths of the Sermon on the Mount are eternal. Those popes also taught that a valid marriage is indissoluble, that homosexuality is unnatural and immoral, that abortion is the killing of the innocent unborn, an abomination.

Yet one reads regularly of discussions inside the Vatican to alter what is infallible church teaching on these doctrines to make the church more appealing to those who have rejected them.

As the pope arrives in America, some Catholics are calling for an acceptance of contraception, the ordination of women and a new acceptance of homosexuality. Yet the Episcopalians, who have embraced all these "reforms" and more, appear to be going the way of James Fenimore Cooper's Mohicans.

In Cuba, Pope Francis declined to address the repression of the Castro brothers. Will he also avoid America's moral crisis to chatter on about income inequality and climate change and find common ground with Obama?

What has come out of the Vatican in the past two years is moral confusion. Yet as Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput reminds us, "confusion is of the devil." It is also trifling with schism.

Having emerged victorious in the 70-year ideological struggle against one of the greatest enemies that mankind has ever known, Marxism-Leninism, are the United States and the Catholic Church heading for the same desuetude and disintegration?

My sense is that we do not realize what a calamity is happening around us. The new thing - new for America, and new for history - is not homosexuality. That brokenness has been here since we were all broken in the fall of man. (And there is a great distinction between the orientation and the act, just like there is a great difference between my orientation to pride and the act of boasting.)

What's new is not even the celebration and approval of homosexual sin. Homosexual behavior has been exploited, and reveled in, and celebrated in art, for millennia. What's new is normalization and institutionalization. This is the new calamity.

~ John Piper

On a Constant State of Repentance

from Bishop Kallistos Ware's Book, *The Inner Kingdom*

But what in fact is meant by *repentance*? It is normally regarded as sorrow for sin, a feeling of guilt, a sense of grief and horror at the wounds we have inflicted on others and on ourselves. Yet such a view is dangerously incomplete. Grief and horror are indeed frequently present in the experience of repentance, but they are not the whole of it, nor even the most important part. We come closer to the heart of the matter if we reflect on the literal sense of the Greek term for repentance, *metanoia*. This means "change of mind": not just regret for the past, but a fundamental transformation of our outlook, a new way of looking at ourselves, at others and at God—in the words of The Shepherd of Hermas, "a great understanding."⁹ A great understanding—but not necessarily an emotional crisis. Repentance is not a paroxysm of remorse and self-pity, but conversion, the recentering of our life upon the Holy Trinity.

As a "new mind," conversion, re-centering, repentance is positive, not negative. In the words of St. John Climacus, "Repentance is the daughter of hope and the denial of despair."¹⁰ It is not despondency but eager expectation; it is not to feel that one has reached an impasse, but to take the way out. It is not self-hatred but the affirmation of my true self as made in God's image. To repent is to look, not downward at my own shortcomings, but upward at God's love; not backward with self-reproach, but forward with trustfulness. It is to see, not what I have failed to be, but what by the grace of Christ I can yet become.

When interpreted in this positive sense, repentance is seen to be not just a single act but a continuing attitude. In the personal experience of each person there are decisive moments of conversion, but throughout this present life the work of repenting remains always incomplete. The turning or re-centering must be constantly renewed; up to the moment of death, as Abba Sisoës realized, the "change of mind" must become always more radical, the "great understanding" always more profound. In the words of St. Theophan the Recluse, "Repentance is the starting point and foundation stone of our new life in Christ; and it must be present not only at the beginning but throughout our growth in this life, increasing as we advance."

The positive character of repentance is clearly apparent if we consider what comes just before the words of Christ already quoted, "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." In the preceding verse the Evangelist cites Isaiah 9:2, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shone." Such is the immediate context of our Lord's command to repent: it is directly preceded by a reference to "great light" shining on those in darkness, and directly followed by a reference to the imminence of the Kingdom. Repentance, then, is an illumination, a transition from darkness to light; to repent is to open our eyes to the divine radiance - not to sit dolefully in the twilight but to greet the dawn. And repentance is also eschatological, an openness to the Last Things that are not merely in the future but already present; to repent is to recognize that the Kingdom of heaven is in our midst, at work among us, and that if we will only accept the coming of this Kingdom all things will be made new for us.

The connection between repentance and the advent of the great light is particularly significant. Until we have seen the light of Christ, we can not really see our sins. So long as a room is in darkness, observes St. Theophan the Recluse, we do not notice the dirt; but when we bring a powerful light into the room—when, that is, we stand before the Lord in our heart—we can distinguish every speck of dust.¹² So it is with the room of our soul. The sequence is not to repent first, and then to become aware of Christ; for it is only when the light of Christ has already in some measure entered our life that we begin truly to understand our sinfulness. To repent, says St. John of Kronstadt, is to know that there is a lie in our heart; but how can we detect the presence of a lie unless we have already some sense of the truth? In the words of E. I. Watkin, "Sin... is the shadow cast by the light of

God intercepted by any attachment of the will which prevents it illuminating the soul. Thus knowledge of God gives rise to the sense of sin, not vice versa.”¹⁴ As the Desert Fathers observe, “The closer we come to God, the more we see that we are sinners.”¹⁵ And they cite Isaiah as an example of this: first he sees the Lord on His throne and hears the seraphim crying “Holy, holy, holy;” and it is only after this vision that he exclaims, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips” (Is 6:1-5).

Such, then, is the beginning of repentance: a vision of beauty, not of ugliness; an awareness of God’s glory, not of my own squalor. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5:4): repentance signifies not merely mourning for our sins, but the “comfort” or “consolation” (paraklysis) that comes from the assurance of God’s forgiveness. The “great understanding” or “change of mind” signified by repentance consists precisely in this: in recognizing that the light shines in the darkness, and that the darkness does not swallow it up (On 1:5). To repent, in other words, is to recognize that there is good as well as evil, love as well as hatred; and it is to affirm that the good is stronger, to believe in the final victory of love. The repentant person is the one who accepts the miracle that God does indeed have power to forgive sins. And, once we accept this miracle, for us the past is then no longer an intolerable burden, for we no longer see the past as irreversible. Divine forgiveness breaks the chain of cause and effect, and unties the knots in our hearts which by ourselves we are not able to unloose.

There are many who feel sorrow for their past acts, but who say in their despair, “I cannot forgive myself for what I have done.” Unable to forgive themselves, they are equally incapable of believing that they are forgiven by God, and likewise by other human beings. Such people, despite the intensity of their anguish, have not yet properly repented. They have not yet attained the “great understanding” whereby a person knows that love is ultimately victorious. They have not yet undergone the “change of mind” that consists in saying: I am accepted by God; and what is asked of me is to accept the fact that I am accepted. That is the essence of repentance. ✕ ✕ ✕

Elder Ephraim – *being critical of others*

“What does it indicate when we criticize others and consider ourselves flawless? This is why the Lord commands: *‘Judge not, that you not be judged.’* And He adds: *‘For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged’* [Matthew 7:1-2]. To criticize others is an extremely serious sin, although we indulge in it like bread and butter, and as a *‘sin which so easily besets us’* [Hebrews 12:1]. A besetting sin is one that takes place at every opportunity and all the time.”

“Even though we hobble along with a limp and are filled with wounds and sins, we like to speak about others. When we visit a hospital, we will observe that all the patients have some type of illness. However, we will not see anyone criticizing another sick person. Have you ever noticed this? No one says to another patient: *‘Why are you laying in bed?’* Whereas we are all sick spiritually, and yet we criticize one another. We have a problem with our eye, and we like to occupy ourselves with someone else who has lung disease. Unfortunately, we wretched people fail to realize this.”

“When I speak about another person out of sympathy, not with the intention of criticizing, blaming, or humiliating him because of my inflated egotism, but due to a certain love and concern for him (for example, we say that so and so would have been a great asset, if he did not have this particular weakness — when we express this with pain and also pray for him), this is not criticism. However, when we characterize him as evil, label him an egotist, and humiliate him in front of others, this is a sin and criticism.”