

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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Visit stsymeon.com

✠ **July 12, 2015** ✠

St. Paisios the Athonite (+1994)

St. Veronica, healed by the Savior

Martyrs Proclus & Hilary of Ancyra (2nd C)

St. Arsenius of Novgorod, Fool-for-Christ (1570)

Live in constant glorification of, and thanksgiving towards God; for the greatest sin is ingratitude, and the worst sinner is the ungrateful person.

**St. Paisios
the Athonite**

➤ **Inquirer's Class Tomorrow - 6:30pm / Wednesday – Choir Rehearsal – 6:30pm**

✠ **Next Sunday – Divine Liturgy only – 10:00am, with Fr. Ignatius**

✠ **18th All-American Council – Begins next Sunday, from July 19-25, Hilton Downtown Atlanta – See oca.org.**

New Iconography Donations are welcome ! We have \$25,000 donated and will need closer to \$35,000, with the costs of scaffolding, travel, etc.

"When a person disobeys a commandment of God, only that person is responsible to Him. But when something which goes against the commandments of the Gospel is made into law by the state, then the wrath of God comes upon the whole nation in order to be pedagogically taught a spiritual lesson." - St. Paisios the Athonite

Staying on the Path ~ St. John Chrysostom

✠ Human beings are not consistent in the choices they make. One moment a person may choose to act in a most generous and self-sacrificing way; then a moment later the same person may act with greed and selfishness. Since God has given us freedom of will, he does nothing to prevent this inconsistency. Does this mean that human beings are actually incapable of following Christ? Will they constantly stray from the path of love which he reveals? The answer is both no and yes.

We who regard ourselves as disciples of Christ are sadly aware of our own sinful tendencies. Indeed it is precisely because we know Christ, and can see his perfection, that we are so conscious of our imperfections; the comparison between ourselves and Christ is painful to behold. Thus we will always be inclined to stray from the path of love; day by day we will make wrong choices. Yet even to speak about "straying from the path" is to show that we can see the path and can discern the direction it leads. To be a disciple of Christ is not a guarantee of always remaining on the path; rather it is a commitment, a promise, to stay as near to the path as the will allows, and to struggle back onto the path after straying. This is as much as we can undertake in our own strength; through the grace of God we hope that over the years our journey will become straighter.

St. Theophan the Recluse: On Wandering Thoughts during Prayer (from Letter 31)

Thoughts wander when one is reading spiritual works and during prayer. What should one do? No one is free from this. There is no sin in it, only vexation. Having wandering thoughts becomes a sin when one willingly allows flightiness of mind. But if thoughts scatter involuntarily, what fault can there be? There is fault, though, when one notices thoughts wandering and, taking no action, one wanders along with them. When we catch our thoughts wandering off, we must bring them back to their proper place at once.

To be free from the tendency to have wandering thoughts during prayer, one must concentrate and pray with warmth. Before prayer, one should prepare for such an effort by making prostrations and by a moment of reflection.

Accustom yourself to pray your own prayers. For instance: it is the essence of evening prayer to thank God for the day and everything that happened, both pleasant and unpleasant; to ask forgiveness for all wrongs committed, promising to improve during the next day; and to pray that God preserve you during sleep. Express all this to God from your mind and from your whole heart.

The essence of Morning Prayer is to thank God for sleep, rest and regained strength and to pray that He will help us do everything to His glory. Express this to Him with your mind and with your whole heart. Along with such prayers in the morning and evening, present your greatest needs to the Lord, especially spiritual needs. Besides spiritual needs, present your worldly cares, saying to Him as would a child: "See, O Lord, my sickness and weakness! Help and heal!" All this and the like can be spoken before God in your own words, without the use of a prayer book. Try this and, if it works, you may leave the prayer book altogether; but if not, you must pray with the prayer book, otherwise you might end up with no prayer at all.

"We must not," writes St. John Cassian, "avoid Communion because we deem ourselves to be sinful. We must approach it more often for the healing of the soul and the purification of the spirit, but with such humility and faith that considering ourselves unworthy . . . we would desire even more the medicine for our wounds. Otherwise it is impossible to receive communion once a year, as certain people do . . . considering the sanctification of heavenly Mysteries as available only to Saints. It is better to think that by giving us grace, the sacrament makes us pure and holy. Such people manifest more pride than humility . . . for when they receive, they think of themselves as worthy. It is much better if, in humility of heart, knowing that we are never worthy of the Holy Mysteries we would receive them every Sunday for the healing of our diseases, rather than, blinded by pride, think that after one year we become worthy of receiving them."

St. John Chrysostom: who more than anyone else, insisted on worthy preparation for Communion, writes: "There are cases when a priest does not differ from a layman, notably when one approaches the Holy Mysteries. We are all equally given them, not as in the Old Testament, when one food was for the priests and another for the people and when it was not permitted to the people to partake of that which was for the priest. Now it is not so: but to all is offered the same Body and the same Chalice . . ."

The Wisdom of St. Paisios (+ July 12, 1994)

More danger from within the Church than from without

Unfortunately, in our days, there are many people who upset the Church. Of these, those that are educated have understood the dogmas with their minds and not with the spirit of the Holy Fathers. At the same time, those who are unlettered have grabbed hold of dogma with their teeth; which is why they grind their teeth when they speak about ecclesiastical topics. In this way, greater harm is caused by those in the Church than by those who battle it from without.

Keep struggling, hope only in God.

We must not despair when we struggle and continuously see nothing but the slightest progress. We all do nearly nothing --- some a little more, some a little less. When Christ sees our little effort, He gives us an analogous token; and so our nearly nothing becomes valuable, and we can see a little progress. For this reason we must not despair, but hope in God.

One word from a humble and [spiritually] experienced man that is painfully born from the depths of his heart, has greater worth than a bunch of clever sayings from an external man that come quickly from his educated mouth. His words don't speak truth to the souls of men, for they are fleshy words and not the flames of the fire of Pentecost.

Why God allows temptations

God allows temptations so as to dust off our soul, for it to be purified through sorrows and weeping, so that we are forced to take refuge in God for our salvation.

Whoever is at peace in the material world, and is not concerned about the salvation of his soul, is like the senseless birds that don't make a noise from within the egg, so as to break the shell and come out to enjoy the sun - the heavenly flight in the life of Paradise - but instead remain unmoving and die inside the egg shell.

Reading from the Desert Fathers as preparation for prayer

It is very helpful to read a bit of the *Gerontikon* [i.e., the Sayings of the Desert Fathers] before beginning to pray. Then your heart will warm up, the lid will come down on your many worldly cares, and you will be able to pray without distraction.

On the conscience

Conscience is the first law of God, which He carved deeply into the hearts of the first-created. In turn, we each make a photocopy from our parents when we are born. Those who manage to heighten their sense of conscience through daily study of themselves, feel themselves to be foreigners to this world; and worldly people are baffled by their gracious behavior. Those who haven't studied their conscience, benefit neither from their spiritual studies nor from counsel from their elders. They won't be even able to keep God's commandments, for they have lost their senses all together.

What Is Important And What Is Not

✠ Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

(The following essay was originally published in Paris, France in December 1949. It was translated by Mr. Robert Parent and first published in English in Holy Trinity Cathedral Life, San Francisco, CA, in February 1994.)

When controversies are ignited and flare up in the Church, which happens and has happened often, alas, we inevitably hear appeals from Church circles to cease these controversies in the name of peace and love. Now, this would be cause for great joy, if only in these appeals there were no unmistakable different overtones: "Your controversy is not important. It is of interest to no one: only 'specialists' and 'scholars' can understand it, so all this argument leads only to seduction and harm."

And here we must point out to these accusers something very important which they have apparently forgotten. They have forgotten that peace and concord in the Church are inseparable from the Truth. An outsider who does not believe and is not part of the Church would smile and shrug his shoulders, "What is truth?" That is precisely Pilate's question to the Savior Who stood before him. And the Savior did not respond, because an "outsider" does not believe in the possibility of Truth. For him, the truth is always relative and measured according to advantage, improvement, or expedience. But for us who know and believe that the Church is founded on the Truth made flesh, that all her life is in Him Who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," for us there is nothing in the Church which is unimportant, because everything is measured by this Truth and is subordinate to it.

Yes, there have been many controversies in the Church, and its earthly history is replete with them. They occurred not only in times of trouble, like ours, but also when Church life flowered, in the golden ages of the Ecumenical Councils and the Fathers of the Church. Only then no one would have dared to acknowledge any-

thing in the Church as unimportant. So for this cause they debated, and for this cause they were persecuted and exiled for one world, for one "iota" (*an accurate assessment of the Arian controversy at the time of Saint Athanasius the Great*), that above all on earth they placed the Truth and fidelity to the Truth. And in these controversies, there was more true love for the Church and her people, whom the Lord Himself through His incarnation deemed worthy of the knowledge of the Truth – more ardor, more faith than in the lukewarm "latitude" and "tolerance" of our time, when so much in the Church has become the portion of the clergy alone and the "specialists." We should not be seduced by controversies about how to plan our Church life in accordance with the Truth, because in these controversies there burns a living anguish for the Church and its destiny, but rather by the sea of indifference among the Church populace itself which surrounds these controversies and by the skepticism with which even religious people treat these "unimportant" matters.

Of course, in our controversies there is so much human passionateness, sinfulness, and narrowness. They should and must be enlightened by prayer, love, and patience. No one person embodies the Truth in its fullness, but each one is required to aspire to it, to call upon his spiritual intellect, his will, and his heart to come to "the knowledge of the Truth." "Put everything to the test; hold fast what is good," says Paul the Apostle. And if in humility we attempt always to obey the Truth, if we try unceasingly to overcome all which is sinful and narrow for the sake of the Truth, then our controversies, born of human weakness, may lead to the glory of the Church, "for the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness." (*Taken from the November/December 2006 issue of The Orthodox Church.*)

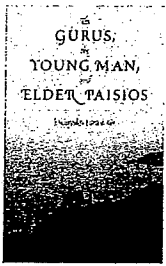
JUDGE NOT...

Fire and water do not mix, neither can you mix judgment of others with the desire to repent. If a man commits a sin before you at the very moment of his death, pass no judgment, because the judgment of God is hidden from men. It has happened that men have sinned greatly in the open, but have done greater deeds of repentance in secret, so that those who have said harsh words about them have been fooled, with smoke instead of sunlight in their eyes. So listen to me, all you accountants of other people's faults, listen well; for if, as is certain, it is true that "you shall be judged with the judgment you have used yourselves" (Matt. 7:2), then whatever sin of body or spirit that we ascribe to our neighbor we will surely fall into ourselves!

- Saint John Climacos

EXPERIENCING GOD

From the book "The Gurus, the Young Man, and Elder Paisios," by Dionysios Farasiotis.



Once I had the great honor and blessing to transport elder Paisios somewhere with my car. In the presence of his great simplicity and humility, I would forget myself and be swayed into an improper familiarity. I could see before me my father and would forget that God permanently dwelt within him. I would forget that he had realized to

the uttermost degree the capabilities of human nature and that he had become a god-bearer. I would forget that through his words, he would chase out the demons; that with one word from him, incurable illnesses disappeared; that his face shone like the sun before my eyes; that with unending gifts, he had been honored and adorned by the Holy Spirit, the Grace of God.

I know well all these things, these amazing memories, and I guard them deeply within the depths of my soul and ask God with agony and tears to not ever let my raging enemy, the Devil, steal them from me. And nevertheless, when I was with the elder, many times his simple and unpretentious behavior, full of kindness and humor, would sway me to impolite familiarity; from such familiarity I would slide down to rudeness and audacity, and I thus open my mouth with all my senselessness and my stupidity. And once, during such a moment, I asked him.

"Elder, tell me about God, speak to me, how is he?"

The elder did not speak and I continued to drive, on curvy roads further down on the mountain.

My God! I began suddenly feeling God everywhere. In the car, outside on the mountains, far in the distant galaxies. He was everywhere, He filled everything, but He was nothing of all of these things. An Essence which pierced through all the other ones, without getting mixed up or being confused with these. A Power present everywhere, which nevertheless no one perceives, outside of every viewpoint. Someone cannot discover It with his own ... haughty effort. A Power which only is self revealed. All these mountains, stars, trees, people, existed and were maintained alive thanks to His power. He could in one moment annihilate them, for them to cease existing without noise or thunder or resistance. Just as we turn the switch and in one moment the light disappears.

He's so almighty and nevertheless so courteous. He does not pressure anyone with his Almightyness or his Presence. He is so near us and so invisible simultaneously, so that we do not feel any burden, some obligation from His presence alone. So that He does not burden us at all, to not create any obligation to us, to leave us completely free, to do whatever

we want. Not for us to be forced by His beauty to some degree. He could easily impose His love, not with fears and power and strength, but simply with the sweetness of His presence, which no one could resist. Yet, He does not do it, out of an infinite... , incomprehensible respect for man's freedom. He does not do it, out of love for man. He loves us so much, He desires us so strongly that His innards are burned, out of desire and love for us. For this reason He limits Himself, He disappears from our perception and tries in a thousand ways, with infinite wisdom with dreadful attention and interest, as a "raging" lover to draw us to His love. To wake us up, to motivate our interest, to make us understand and love Him.

He sits and occupies Himself with each one of us personally, and simultaneously with the whole universe, the infinitely powerful one. And because He has interest for this infinite universe, the love and interest He has for each one of us personally is not lessened not even to the slightest degree, does not subside even in thought.

God wants our love. He does not demand it. Love is an emotion which is born and lives only in the air of freedom; outside of such freedom, it ceases to exist, it is perverted, altered, it dies. For this reason, God leaves us completely free to gain our love, which can be born only in this freedom.

What is that we have which "makes" God love us? Some beauty, some immense intelligence, some power, some virtue? Nothing of this sort! We are non-existent before Him and His gifts. And not only do we not have anything worthy of such love, but we also have so many things which reek an offensive odor, push away and strongly urge all to turn away from us and to dislike us. We are fainthearted to His generosity. We are of very slight intelligence before His vast intellect. Wicked before His goodness. Grabbers, at the moment when He wholeheartedly offers. That which He grants us richly, overflowing, we rush to grab. We respond to His kindness with grabbing and mockery. Ungrateful to His benefactions. Haughty in behavior before His Almightyness. Sly and insufficient before His Wisdom.

He wants to grant us His Grace, He wants to give us beauty, life, wisdom, power. We do not want to take them as gifts. Our ego destroys them, our pride makes them filthy. We cannot keep any of His gifts due to our evil disposition. And if a reminiscence of these holy gifts remains in our soul, we immediately get puffed up from pride, as if we obtained them on our own and through our miserable existence and value, as if it is not a gift, without toil. We lift up our eyebrow and look down upon our neighbor. The gift is lifted up and reeks a foul odor from our soul. God opposes the prideful, while to the humble He gives grace: *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* (Jas 1:17).

What more can I say? Where should I stop? A big bunch of horribleness we are. Our fallen human nature, which voluntarily remains fallen and sunk in the filth of the passions, only regurgitation and asphyxiation it calls forth from its filth.

As the prophet Isaiah says (Isa 1:5-6), ... *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.* It refers to man's wound which is rotting, the deep wound which man has wholly, from his head to his fingernails; he is one continuous wound. Where and how should one apply a gauze? Where is the medicine?

Only through God Himself. Christ was needed to restore us to our beginnings, through His birth and Holy Passion; he restored our nature which voluntarily and with rage was destroyed through our own free will. He arrived in this world, out-of-kindness and pure love to reform us back to our beginning.

This is human nature today. It was not thus always. We were not created thus, we ended up thus. Our choices formulated us accordingly. We constantly choose evil and thus destroy ourselves. And whereas we were created beautiful, bright, almighty, wise and honored, dominating the material world, immortal, we ended up today mortal, dark, subject to the needs of material life, to pain, to illness, to affliction, to corruption, to death. We do not have knowledge, we do not have wisdom; as blind people we go about in the world, we rip and fall and are wounded and don't know where we tripped. Our ancient enemy ensures we fall; he puts up obstacles to trip us and he tries to throw us into wild valleys and to kill us, so that he can laugh mockingly and celebrate in his wickedness. He is the man hater, the inventor of wickedness, the father of falsehood, the ancient dragon, our very ancient enemy, the devil.

And God loves us. He still loves us. With a love which burns, with a love which trembles with longing, with a love which overlooks the pain which we cause Him, with a love which accepts to enter into our toil, which accepts to suffer from the craziness of our evil. O my God! How much pain do we cause you! God loved us so much, that He accepted to become a man. He moderated His majesty in our humility. He accepted to ascend on the Cross. He accepted to leave the devil with his sly plots to put Him up on the Cross and there, to crush the head of the snake. Henceforth we can

defeat the devil whenever we want. And all these for our sake. For me and for you.

I continued feeling God and comprehending Him with my heart. A deep calmness flooded my existence. Every fear was annihilated. Since the Almighty God exists, since He knows everything, since He is so good, since He is so wise, since He loves me so much, what should I fear? I am in His embrace! I am in His palm. Who can do anything to me? I was certain of the beginning, the course of man's existence, and the end of the world. I rejoiced, because in the end, as always, He will be the victor, and His kindness and holiness will triumph.

God is Spirit! The world is matter. The spirit surpasses matter,

supports it in existence, brings it into existence, maintains it in existence, however it is completely different from matter. Matter is destined to disappear. The spirit always exists. Time is a result, a qualitative characteristic of matter. In the matter the spirit exists and time does not exist. Eternity is the manner of existence of the Spirit. Past and future coincide in a vast present. It is simultaneously everywhere from the infinite universe and in my car.

He is very simple in nature, however so mysterious. How deeply my soul was satisfied! How much I rejoiced! How much I was comforted! How much do I want to re-live it again! I rejoice in the thought that when I die I will begin, I hope, to live near Him. So much that... I long to die. I would like to die today, if I knew that I would meet Him. I fear my sin, my evil deeds, that they might separate me from Him. And I remember from the writings of Saint John Damascene:

We believe in one God, immaterial, unlimited, infinite, without beginning, eternal, almighty, immortal, timeless, noetic light... (St. John Damascene, "Precise Exposition of the Orthodox Faith").

I don't think that this state lasted a long time. If I judge from the length of road that the car had traveled, I would say it was approximately 3-4 kilometers, albeit I was moving somewhat slowly due to the many curves.

I certainly was not the same before, as I am now that I am writing this passage. I had suffered a change... a very distinct change. Man is altered from many things. From alcohol, from narcotics, from pleasure, from the climate, from water, from pain, affliction, fear, however... this alteration... does not have its match. It is unique.



On the Holy Royal Martyr Tsar Nicholas and Alexandra and the Russian Royal Martyr Family – *Remembered July 18*

An explanation of why we honor the martyred Russian Tsar Nicholas and his family as Saints of the Church. {Originally written some years ago.}

The Tsar of Russia, as the other Orthodox kings of Eastern European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, etc. represented the last vestige of old Orthodox Byzantium. These were the last Orthodox Christian nations to exist and were toppled by communism one by one, and today are replaced by materialistic cultures of the modern type. These Orthodox kings were the protectors of the Church and represented the Faith throughout the world. There are no more Christian nations since then, and probably won't be again. At least not the way it was in those days.

The Orthodox Church in these nations is now having to struggle to get back on its feet in the face of years of communist indoctrination and propaganda which has left men's hearts cold and empty of spiritual life and vitality. The Tsar was murdered as a representative of that old God-loving Orthodox culture, which communism opposed. He and the other Orthodox kings were more than just political figures. They were the symbols of the last vestiges of the old Christian world, in which Christ is honored above all earthly power. Now they are replaced everywhere by secular humanism, where all earthly power is honored in place of Christ. There exists now no more restraining force against the tide of materialism- no Christian conscience in national leadership. Were these men perfect? Were these societies perfect? Ofcourse, not. But they had far greater potential to create a spiritually healthy and civilized society, than do modern secularized democracies. The great Romanian King Stephen built over 40 magnificent monasteries in Romania in the 15th century. Such a spread of the Church's spiritual light can only be a great blessing to a nation, as those monasteries still are to this very day. I have visited some of them. Technically, Nicholas and his family are not being canonized as martyrs (those who died for the faith) but as "Passion-bearers" - those who laid down their lives passively in imitation of Christ, but that is a technical difference. Also canonized with them were 860 Russian Newmartyrs killed by the communists for being Christians. Nicholas and Alexandra and their children were actually very pious and faithful Christians, as one can see when their lives are examined objectively. Wherever they traveled they usually started their day by attending Liturgy at a local church. Pro-communist Western liberal history has gone through great pains to try and paint Nicholas as a bloody tyrant. The real bloody tyrants were the liberal's heroes, Lenin, Stalin, Ceaucescu, etc.!

Finally, if this was just a "political" move, there is absolutely no political advantage to be gained by honoring Tsar Nicholas. The world doesn't want this. It probably sees Russia as being foolish and nostalgic, or worse. Spiritually, the canonization of the Tsar means a once-and-for-all repudiation of communism and a harkening back to the old Orthodox Holy Russia. The glorification of the Tsar, if it means Russia is looking back to a better, more Christian vision of life, is no threat to the rest of the world, but a great blessing.

Quoting the Council of Bishops from its official statement on the Canonization:

"In the last Russian Orthodox monarch and members of his family, we see people who sincerely aspired to manifest in their lives the commandments of the Gospels. In the suffering that the imperial family bore in captivity - with meekness, patience and humility - and in their death as martyrs in Ekaterinburg on the night of 17 July 1918, the light of the Christian faith that vanquishes evil was manifested."

Holy Royal Martyr Tsar Nicholas & Royal Martyr Family, pray to God for us!

The Conversion of St. Vladimir and Russia (July 15)

"We cannot forget that beauty."

From the Russian Primary Chronicle, the AD. 988 conversion of the pagan Vladimir I, Prince of Kievan Rus, is prefaced by the following famous explanation of events leading to his decision to choose Eastern Orthodoxy over Islam, Judaism, and the Roman Catholic West:

Vladimir summoned together his vassals and the city elders, and said to them: "Behold, the Bulgars [Muslims] came before me urging me to accept their religion. Then came the Germans [Catholics] and praised their own faith; and after them came the Jews. Finally the Greeks appeared, criticizing all other faiths but commending their own, and they spoke at length, telling the history of the whole world from its beginning. Their words were artful, and it was wondrous to listen and pleasant to hear them. They preach the existence of another world. 'Whoever adopts our religion and then dies shall arise and live forever. But whosoever embraces another faith, shall be consumed with fire in the next world.' What is your opinion on this subject, and what do you answer?"

The vassals and the elders replied: "You know, O Prince, that no man condemns his own possessions, but praises them instead. If you desire to make certain, you have servants at your disposal. Send them to inquire about the ritual of each and how they worship God." Their counsel pleased the Prince and all the people, so that they chose good and wise men to the number, and directed them to go first among the Bulgars and inspect their faith.

The emissaries went their way, and when they arrived at their destination they beheld the disgraceful actions of the Bulgars and their worship in the mosque; then they returned to their own country. Vladimir then instructed them to go likewise among the Germans, and examine their faith, and finally to visit the Greeks. They thus went into Germany, and after viewing the German ceremonial, they proceeded to Constantinople where they appeared before the Emperor. He inquired on what mission they had come, and they reported to him all that had occurred. When the Emperor heard their words, he rejoiced, and

did them great honor on that very day.

On the morrow, the Emperor sent a message to the Patriarch to inform him that a Russian delegation had arrived to examine the Greek Faith, and directed him to prepare the church and the clergy, and to array himself in his sacerdotal robes, so that the Russians might behold the glory of the God of the Greeks. When the Patriarch received these commands, he bade the clergy assemble, and they performed the customary rites. They burned incense, and the choirs sang hymns. The Emperor accompanied the Russians to the church, and placed them in a wide space, calling their attention to the beauty of the edifice, the chanting, and the offices of the archpriest and the ministry of the deacons, while he explained to them the worship of his God. The Russians were astonished, and in their wonder praised the Greek ceremonial. Then the Emperors Basil and Constantine invited the envoys to their presence, and said, "Go hence to your native country," and thus dismissed them with valuable presents and great honor. Thus they returned to their own country, and the Prince called together his vassals and the elders. Vladimir then announced the return of the envoys who had been sent out, and suggested that their report be heard. He thus commanded them to speak out before his vassals.

The envoys reported: 'When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgarian bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the Germans (Roman Catholic), and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. **Then we went on to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.**' ❖ ❖ ❖