

THIS COUNSEL IS GOOD FOR ALL OF US TODAY

St. Polycarp in his Epistles to the Philippians

Indeed, whoever does not acknowledge Jesus Christ to have come in human flesh is Antichrist; whoever does not admit the testimony of the Cross is sprung from the devil; whoever wrests the Lord's Gospel to suit his own lusts and denies both resurrection and judgment - such a one is the first-born of Satan. Therefore let us leave untouched the senseless speculations of the masses and the false doctrines, and turn to the teaching delivered to us in the beginning; let us be temperate and ready for our prayers, persevere in fasting, and fervently implore the All-seeing God not to expose us to temptation, since the Lord has said: *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

SAINTLY ADVICE ON PRAYER

St. John of Kronstadt

When you pray, keep to the rule that it is better to say five words from the depth of your heart than ten thousand words with your tongue only. When you observe that your heart is cold and prays unwillingly, stop praying and warm your heart by representing vividly to yourself your own wickedness, your spiritual poverty, misery and blindness, or the great benefits which God bestows every moment upon you and all mankind, especially upon Christians; and then pray slowly and fervently.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH IS THE SAME AS HIS

St. Patrick

For there is no other God, nor ever was before, nor shall be hereafter, but God the Father, unbegotten and without beginning in whom all things began, whose are all things, as we have been taught and His Son Jesus Christ who manifestly always existed with the Father, before the beginning of time in the spirit with the Father, undescribably begotten before all things, and all things visible and invisible were made by Him. He was made man, conquered death and was received into heaven, to the Father Who gave Him all power over every name in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell, so that every tongue should confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord and God, in Whom we believe. And we look to His imminent coming again, the judge of the living and the dead, Who will render to each according to his deeds. And He poured out His Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and pledge of immortality, which makes the believers and the obedient into sons of God and co-heirs of Christ Who is revealed, and we worship one God in the Trinity of holy name.

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ALL MATTERS OF FAITH ARE INTEGRAL AND CANNOT BE SEPARATED INTO 'PRIMARY' AND 'SECONDARY'

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

Pastors and flocks have understood that there cannot be things of primary and things of secondary importance in matters of faith, for our faith resembles a knitted object which begins to unravel when one stitch is undone.

CHRIST'S PORTRAYAL

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

In the portrait of any given man, we do not represent human nature, which is undepictable and incomprehensible; even so, in the icon of Christ, we do not portray nor represent the Divine Nature, which is inaccessible and incomprehensible. Only the *Person of Christ* (emphasis supplied), who voluntarily made Himself man, is portrayed.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION VS. RELIGIOUS MINIMALISM

St. Anthony (Khrapovitsky)

Bishop Theophan teaches us how to make one's life meet the standards of Christian perfection, while the Western Bishop (*sit venia verbo*) takes from Christianity only as much as is consistent with the standards of modern secular life. That is, the former accepts Christianity as the **eternal** foundation of normal life, and demands that we forcibly change ourselves to bring our lives into compliance with that norm; the latter accepts the realities of modern secular life as unchangeable, and only where they allow some variations does he indicate which options are **preferred** from the Christian viewpoint. The former calls for moral heroism, for a life-long struggle; the latter selects whatever elements of Christianity are suited to us in our current way of life. For the former, the true life to which man is called is the life eternal, while our current life on earth with all its historically shaped devices is all but an **illusion**; for the latter the notion of the future life is merely an uplifting, noble idea, an idea which contributes to continual improvement of our **real** life here on earth.

In the difference between these two teachers of morality is manifest the difference between the Orthodox faith and the Western religions. One is based upon the concept of **Christian Perfection**, or sanctity, and from this standpoint evaluates the present reality; the other is firmly established on the *status quo* of the earthly life and strives to determine the minimum of **religious practice** which still allows for salvation - if eternity truly exists.... And the reason for these follies is the failure to grasp the simple truth that **Christianity is an ascetic religion, a teaching on gradual liberation from the passions, on the means and conditions of gradual acquisition of virtues, conditions both internal, that is, personal struggle, and external, that is, dogmatic tenets and grace-filled Mysteries, all having one purpose: to heal human sinfulness and lead us to perfection.**