

## **Love: A Cradle of Faith**

*By Metropolitan George Khodr of Mount Lebanon*

**You can't talk about faith, except in the way a swimmer talks about the sea. Faith cannot be acquired like mathematics are taught, nor it can be studied as one of the applied sciences, but rather, faith is assimilated like music—through a higher path—surpassing the mind, or more profound than the intellect. In itself being a vision—faith—installs you in the midst of what you're looking for. You are only able to see what you're contemplating through ecstasy. Ecstasy is bliss. Bliss is a promise of a delightful drunkenness. Drunkenness prepares for soberness [consciousness], and soberness might deploy some logic but it certainly surpasses it since it is more global.**

**Consciousness uses the mind as much as needed but is never limited to it, especially when it feels the approach of its own doom. The spirit's faculty understands its tools, and knows when to start off this and discard that tool. This faculty is master of its utensils, and when it renounces these tools, it becomes cohesive to that which it did not comprehend, without even recurring to an intermediary.**

**The mind is useful as far as you are not cohesive to whom you love. If you love, you become knowledgeable. No one can ever claim that love is the 'end-result' or the 'set-atmosphere' of knowledge. Love is Knowledge because love is the profoundness: "*And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son*"—For this reason, there is no meaning to all what was written about the relation between mind and faith. This issue was never taken into consideration among all those that dealt with theology in Eastern Christianity. This theology never relied on the mind as a stable footstool, and never considered it unwounded by sin or untainted through passions. The mind, as everything else in us, is fallen. The comparison between mind and faith always starts from that the mind is perfect and that the journey of faith needs support, encouragement and reinforcement— that it needs a 'testimony' from the mind—as if the mind is reliable while the faith is shaky!**

**Through faith you know the power of mind, but also its limits. As a result of the afflictions of passion, the mind becomes bewildered and somber and only faith can alert you against the passion and its damage. Somber mind is capable of seeing great power and glory in vices. How many books and letters were written to glory the passions? You, at first, adopt good or evil—and then you seek argument for your decision.**

**The human being is a complete person, greatly complex, but can be simplified to refer him as a whole, to mind, desire or passion. The great inter-correlation between our inner powers and between what we can perceive—enables us to call ourselves 'beings'—connected to the existence. Faith is the movement of existence within yourself—the direct consequence—of the descending of the inspiration upon you.**

**Indeed, you must earn knowledge: all what you can assimilate of education. You must, before anything else, immerse yourself into art and beauty, and read all the books. After doing this you will know that you don't know anything! You must train yourself all the means of the mind, exhausting it with excess of knowledge, and instructing yourself to become a visionary. Having done all this, and having integrated your world you will then recognize your own incompleteness and you will acknowledge this world's incompleteness. After this, you will understand that knowledge is vanishing and that you are, as human, more knowledgeable than what you know, and above what you know. You can't lift up yourself above knowledge, unless you have attained knowledge in the first place. Following this, you will realize that there is something greater than all your education, you will realize that you still hunger for a vision, for cohesiveness, and for adherence to what is greater than that you know and greater than you.**

**The heart is our preparedness for inspiring the descending truth upon us. This assumes the purity of heart, its deliverance from passions, and its freedom from its selfishness and its interests. Without this purity the heart will be tainted and will become a field of deadly reactions. Again, this should assume a harmony between the heart and the truth. Truth is not**

existent if it cannot be descended. The heart is not a heart if it did not become a cradle of the truth.

In other words, there is a bond between God and our inner being. But is this a proof that God, which we long for, is existing? The deepest question is that: does God "exist" in the same manner as the tree, the house, the sea and the mountain exist? For us [Orthodox], you can't give proof of Him in the same way you give proof for the existence of any other subjective object; (Which brings us to the question of the possibility of existence outside the human being: You know your surrounding through your senses, but says who, that these things are the same as perceived through your senses?) By all means, there is no such thing as a 'subjective object', fully independent from one's perception—no real differentiation is possible between subjective and personal, between the external and the internal. God is independent from you and within you at the same time. If He was not in you, then He will become an object like any surrounding item, a part of its "subjectivity".

One question remains: is He, Whom you long for, a "being" in reality? I doubt that—apart from the inspiration that guides you to the harmony between your inner being and the Lord—that an answer can be found. Your heart is the last evidence, the last revelation. We might have many evidences for the existence of God on a mind-base level, which I read all, and wasn't much sensitive to. There are some universal verses out there but again, cannot be used as evidences, for you should start from your faith in God in order to discern His prints in the universe. You can't attain God if you start from the creature. You discover the creature starting from its creator. This is what appears to me, to be the spirituality of Eastern Christianity.

Certainly, this 'universal' god, which Aristotle named the 'reason' that initiates movement and itself is static, is by no mean the Christian God—who is the originator of the movement and Himself moving at the same time—because He dwells in the heart. I don't want to talk about the sufferings of God as depicted by the contemporary Catholic "Sufi" Maurice Zendel, God have mercy upon his soul, and by others because

of the intellectual confusion that this sentence may cause. But I don't see any connection between the god of the philosophers with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as noted by Blaise Pascal.

The God that I worship in my heart, in my repentance and weeping; His qualities and character were descended unto me, exclusively through the inspiration—which was revealed to the Prophets of the Old and was exploded in the fullness of time in Jesus the Nazarene—the same inspiration that was finally declared in His passion, death and resurrection. I don't know anything about God apart from Christ—in the way He lived, in what He based His teachings upon, and in the way He taught—He is the revelation [transfiguration] of God.

In other words, He is God, transferred to me through testimony. This is the lieu of faith, as it is written: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life; the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness." (1John1: 1-2). God pitches His words into your heart—words that reveal Him completely—and if accepted, these words will reform you (and be reformed in you); no chasm can separate you from Him any longer, and the question becomes invalid. How do I reach Him, whom my brain only knew some things about Him, but did never acquire Him and will never do? The truth is that you will not reach Him because He reached you, and you will not see a separator between Him and you for He is not subdivided between reaching unto you and dwelling in you; in the same manner you can't divide or annul yourself to attain the grace which has descended upon you. You can't either differentiate between the grace you received and His face that you yearn for. All the questions become meaningless; concerning what is subjective and what is personal, between what is higher and what is lower, concerning the veil between the lover and the beloved, and the possibility of existence outside love—for you have no means of perception outside this last local of understanding—that is Love.

No differences can continue existing then, between faith, hope and love. The theologians may write letters concerning

**each of these virtues, but all this, will be an apology written in the purpose of instruction. But for him who have 'seen' [been illumined]: all differences have disappeared, all barriers have vanished, and the vision was unified until "*God may be all in all.*" [1 Cor 15:28] The discourse and the erudition will also be abandoned, since God will institute us in the 'observer's seat.' The face of the Father is my fulfilling aspiration.**