

A Selection of Writings by the Metropolitan of Aleppo, Paul Yazigi -2

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



C. Providence

No matter how many turbulences we face in life, we ought to remain steadfast and peaceful. The more these difficulties go beyond our strength the more the Lord's providence overcomes them on our behalf. Nietzsche declared that 'if couples lived apart, more marriages would remain intact'. Yet Psalm 133 says: *"how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity"*.

In the original language, Hebrew, the word 'together' does not just mean 'one with the other' but *'each for the other'*. In other words, we ought to work in unity and peace for a common future. Contrary to Nietzsche, the Christians believe that "if we live for each other and we remain united, there is no discord or disagreement or disparity which can harm the success of our common life".

D. "Repent. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"

The first week after Epiphany a passage from the Scriptures is read in which the lantern disappears and the Light is revealed, the morning star sets and the sun rises, John the Forerunner departs and Christ comes. When Jesus heard that John the Baptist was put in jail, He came to Galilee and revealed Himself to the people. He began teaching, having first been baptized by John. Thus the Forerunner disappears and Christ is revealed.

Today as in the past, life has been linked with the light in people's minds. For this reason Jesus called Himself *'the light of the world'* and declared that He is *'the life of the world'*. Again it is for this reason that Epiphany is also called the Feast of Light. As the hymn says: *"You appeared to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has left its mark upon us"*. Thus Isaiah's prophesy was fulfilled: *"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined"* (Isaiah 9, 2).

Yet when the light shone to the world it was not received by all. People loved the darkness more than the light because their deeds were evil, as John the Apostle says in his Gospel. Therefore, if one is to receive the Light two conditions must be met: Firstly, that It is indeed revealed (this has been fulfilled) and secondly that we receive It (this is what we hope for).

The Beatitude in the Scriptures is very clear: *"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"*. Normally our passions and our material and fleshly needs become like a shroud which prevents us from seeing the light. Our passions force us to turn away from the light and look instead towards the den of some of our desires, since the light harms them.

Generally speaking, people love the light for many important reasons. Light is life. As the Scriptures say, life was created out of water and light. The light also causes warmth and health. Living beings can flourish in the light. We can safely walk when there is light... Darkness has always been a place of fear, of worry and of waiting. The light designates the seasons and conveys vivacity and motion. The light is the starting point of life. In John's Gospel, when one refers to life one uses the image of light, since life is derived from the light in people's minds.

At the same time however, one objects to the presence of the light when darkness prevails in his life and deeds. The human tragedy has already been unfolding, because people loved darkness more than the light, since it was annoying to them.

The light reveals to me who some else is. Whoever sits in a dark place cannot see anyone but himself. This pleases whoever is selfish. As a modern day philosopher said: 'The other person is my hell'. He, who only loves himself, hates the light because he is forced to realize that someone else is beside him. The light shows that there is someone else who may be in need. This bothers those who do not want to share someone else's pain. The light forces me to see the hardships and pain that people face. This does not suit those who are lazy. He who lives in the darkness rests in his complacency and his introversion and places himself on a high and mighty pedestal. To ascend there becomes the only purpose in his life. Yet the light reveals who he really is by shining on the lies he has lived on. The light assures us that true life does not rest on selfishness but on self-sacrifice and that the other person is my master and my lord... Therefore a man's life ought not to concentrate on him being isolated but on him coming out of his selfishness.

Therefore, my hell is my selfishness and paradise is the other person, my neighbor. The light calls me and I come out of myself towards the other person, even though

this motion is painful. Yet it is the only path towards the true life. Darkness means indifference while the light is my responsibility and my care for others. The light makes someone else's need as my own.

The light is also unpleasant because it sometimes reveals something of me which I have always tried to ignore. Man is drawn towards praises and egocentricity, thinking highly of himself. Then light shines and demolishes his large ego and reveals his wretchedness. There is no pride, arrogance or conceit in the light. On the contrary, humility sits on the throne of the heavenly light and causes self-knowledge. All my weaknesses and my strengths come to light. I come to recognize that I am the true cause of many hardships and troubles and no one else.

Have you ever heard a snob and an arrogant man to confess that he is proud? The haughty person thinks that he is humble and the humble one thinks that he is selfish. The light surprises us, because it reveals what St Paul describes as 'the old-man'. Only then do I realize that I ought to change. The light teaches me the language of love and convinces me to truly blame myself and no one else.

We have promised to become '*sons of light*' and walk '*while the light is with us*'. We have promised to live in the light, accepting criticism and loving humility, sacrificing ourselves for the other person. Yet, what are the weapons and the means which steer us on the path towards the light?

The life of the saints is the light. They shed ample heavenly light on our lives. The gospel is the light. The life of Christ is the light. Yet the holy mystery of confession is the best instrument which reflects the divine light.

One comes to deal with his relationship with the Lord and his neighbor through confession. He recognizes his rights and his responsibilities, sees himself in the light of humility and discards pride. Therefore, confession, spiritual guidance and the Holy Scriptures assist us in facing our reality.

The Church has established this holy mystery as the base of Christian life. Confession makes us '*pure in heart*' in order to be able to see the Revealed God as the Light of the world. God gives us His light, but it is up to man to receive It. The light is the expression of God's love. Our enlightenment is our response to His love. It is our decision to permanently live for Him inside the light.

It is not a coincidence that when Jesus revealed Himself as the Light, He had begun His mission with the words: '*Repent. For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*'.

Source: fdathanasiou.wordpress.com

Translated by: Filothei