

An Address on Pietism (Grigoris Tzivelekis)

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We conceal a serpent in our hearts, a great heresy, the other side of the coin called Ecumenism, and it's known as pietism. Its parents are fear and wickedness. Its beloved is faithlessness and its offspring hardness of heart. You see lots of Christians who really believe and go to church, people with the fear of God, but who are hard and heartless. People who'll judge you harshly, with their own criteria. They're people who see you as a traitor if your mind strays during the Divine Liturgy. Who'll have something to say about your appearance. Who'll give a rule book for the whole of your life, as if you're a robot, but won't ever ask you how you've got here.



They're your neighbour who swear at you, the mother who doesn't give you a hug but wags a finger at you. They're believers who'll make a fool out of a priest before

God and other people so as not to scandalize him [in confession]. This is a heresy. They want your life. They want to tell you what to do. They want to play God. Overly pious people are actually more like the devil. They don't accept the will of God, Who gives us free will. They want to take the place of God, which is why they'll fall and be humbled.

How will you recognize them? When they criticize every aspect of your life. When they try to instil fear into you as a way of concealing their own fear. When they won't hurry to help you when you're in difficulties. When they won't jump into a fire to save you. But Christ our merciful Lord was crucified for us. He suffered the mockery, the blows and the spitting. He showed us that He's the Light Who'll bring us out of darkness. That the face of the Father is present in Him. That where He is, there too are the Father and the Holy Spirit. That those who follow Him will be saved. He encouraged. He never pressurized. On the contrary, He was crucified.

True faith in Christ urges us to experience Him. Our life should manifest Christ. The characteristic feature of God is real love- 'God is love', not 'love is God'. So let us allow the love of God to well up within us, to transfigure us. 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. (Jn., 9-11). Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows Him. Those who don't love, don't know God, because God is love.

God showed His love for us by sending into the world His only-begotten Son, so that we might live through Him. This is where love comes in. Not that we've loved God, but that He loves us and sent His Son as atonement for our sins. If God so loves us, we have a duty to love one another. If we love one another, God dwells within us and His love is perfected in us. This is how we know that we dwell in Him and He in us: that He's given us His spirit.