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VIRTUES AND PASSIONS OF YOUTH ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

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If look at our entire work as a whole, we see that its main message is this: the process of Christian perfection is possible and affordable, and theoretically has two or three large steps or successive phases: one material - *asceticism* and the other spiritual - *mysticism*, each having several steps. *Asceticism* is concerned with purification of passions and winning of virtues and *mysticism* with the advancement in union with God. In fact the two are intertwined and as we purify ourselves from passions we fill ourselves with the Holy Ghost, and get prepared for the union with God.

We have shown in the thesis which are the passions we know about from the books of the New Testament, and in the same way which are the virtues, believing that those who can recognise virtues from an early time in life, can more adequately control them, can clean-away more easily and effectively their passions, even before they occur, and virtues can be much sooner, responsibly and actively used.

The ascetic phase is synergistic, mostly bodily and active, involving help and ascetic struggle, the changes are somewhat visible, and important is the human will.

The mystical phase is also synergistic, but spiritual and contemplative, involving reaching perfection in union with God, and its evolution is discrete, this time divine will and work being more important.

St. Paul summarizes both brilliantly in a verse: "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*" (Galatians 2:20).

Between the two stages Dionysius the Areopagite sees an intermediate stage, *the phase of enlightenment*, and so ascetic wisdom can portrayed in three phases:

1. *active phase* of cleansing;
2. *intermediate stage* of enlightenment
3. *contemplative phase* of perfection.

Especially the first of these phases is characterized by a *dynamic cleansing from passions*, and it is the object of this thesis and it requires experimentation of following steps: 1. Faith; 2. Fear of God; 3. Repentance; 4. Temperance; 5. Patience; 6. Hope; 7. Liberation from passion.

Of these stages, or steps, St. Maximus the Confessor speaks when describing the human ascent toward union with God in love, not because these are all the states through which the believer passes, but because they are the only ones one can speak explicitly about in words: "*Love is born of freedom from passions; freedom from passions of hope in God; hope of patience and longsuffering; and these*

are born of all bearing self-control and temperance. Temperance in turn, is born of the fear of God. Finally fear is born faith in the Lord". So, here we can see clearly the (seven) steps to liberation from passions.

From another perspective, St. Basil the Great shows two ways of Christian life, that man is free to go, either to God or to the devil, because every word, deed or thought, necessarily direct him in only one of these two realities. And if passions ensure only a limited, apparent and temporary pleasure, through asceticism and virtue, which involve temporary hardships and struggles, one can ensure itself delight and eternal joy, so "investment" in the spiritual proves to be the most profitable.

So, liberation from passions is not only possible, but also affordable, because man is endowed with everything necessary and "God is not sin, but He gave man the knowledge, understanding, the power to distinguish right from wrong and free will. What sin gives birth to is ruthlessness and idleness of men. "

"The theology of evil" and how it can be removed from the life of the world and man, is "one of the oldest and most difficult problems that worry the man of all time. Life itself is a form of struggle waged against evil, for you cannot say that man and society have not tried throughout history to fight evil. "

In order to meet our basic needs, our Saviour Jesus Christ has shown us that the first care of man in this life is to be the salvation of the soul and acquisition of heavenly happiness by striving against sin: *For what shall*

it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36), and also gives the solution in Ephesians 6:11-12: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Therefore, Christ became Head of the Church, which is His body, and in this way He is head of every Christian. Or we know that the duties of the head are to lead, all through the power that God has given to man and help him fight against evil: *Reason, Emotions and Will*, and the Church Fathers differentiate these three powers in men as well: *the mind* (νοῦς) acts as a potency of knowledge and thinking, *lust* (ἐπιθυμία) the potency of all desires and lusting, and *fierce as irritable, impulsive potency* (θυμός) of acts of courage, manhood, anger (good or bad), that we call *reason, affection and will*. However, the Fathers consider *craving* and *impulsiveness* (as) irrational (for using default reasoning instincts and do not use conscious reason) and differentiate them from the mind, as the only rational, and directly related to the willingness, thus distinguishing **the mental**, *spiritual*, or *rational* side and **the irrational**, *instinctive*, or *temperamental*, which includes, along with other vital functions, the faculties of *anger* and *lust*. And we make this division in order to support the "*rational*" is to lead the "*irrational*", that is, more accurately, "*conscious faculties*" must lead "*unconscious faculties*", because, in the same

way Plato thought about the immortality of the νοῦς, "rational" is immortal, and "irrational - unaware" would cease at the end of earthly life. However, we cannot support that the "irrational" belongs exclusively to the body because it deals with the body, and the body's destiny as and the "rational" and the "irrational" related to the heart. It would be more accurate to say that the part called "rational" and one called "irrational" need to work together and lead the body harmoniously to serve the soul, as the angels - mainly rational - and people - mainly emotional - must work together to save man's soul.

Typically, in the process of liberation from passions, the mind is stronger and leads, along with will and emotions, obviously, because it determines the mind and nourishes the soul bearing our entire lives. *"Our mind is in the middle between two beings, who work each one's own, one virtue, the other evil; so between angel and devil. But it has the freedom and power to follow or oppose who it wants"*. There are also imbalances in which priority is not mind but another factor or combination of other factors, but those cases are covered, or subject of liberation from passions and lead us to the situation above.

Only working together harmoniously, these three powers can be effective. Or Satan struggles against these exact powers, to fighting man. Against reason, Satan supports the irrational, against affectivity he supports distorted (pathological) sensitivity and against will Satan sustains passivity. In the same time Satan supports them

through passions, and Christ fights against Satan's attacks with the virtues of every Christian.

Along with the three powers of the soul, *reason, will and emotion*, St. John of Damascus talks about the sins specific to these powers, together with appropriate remedies recommended by Christian ascetics:

- A. **Sins out of reason** are these: *unbelief, heresy, madness, blasphemy, dissatisfaction, approval of sin*.
 - a. And **the treatment and cure** for these evils are: true *faith* in God and the true, orthodox dogmas, *meditation* on the words of the Holy Ghost, pure and unending *prayer* and *gratitude* towards God.
- B. **Sins against will** are these: *cruelty, hatred, ignorance, remembering evil, envy, murder and the thought on these things*.
 - b. And **the treatment and cure**: *love, compassion, kindness, the sought for good*.
- C. **Sins against emotion** are these: *greed, insatiability, drunkenness, adultery, hypocrisy, love of wealth, seeking of pleasure*.
 - c. And **their treatment and cure** are: abstinence, poverty, sharing wealth to the poor, desiring immortal future goods, longing for God's Kingdom.

In order to accomplish the liberation from passions, one must make use of his freedom, of his free will, which, indeed, was vitiated by sin, but it can be cleansed and developed by virtues, as Christianity preaches.

Refusal and condemnation of the gift of freedom for the opportunity it gives for committing evil and the difficulty to keep the highly responsible attitude is most common today, but also the most damaging, because the drama of modern man and the world in which he lives is that this way he *"dies and not realize where destruction is coming from. He blames the economic crises, social and political community, considering these as their last and only causes of suffering, but ignores the true cause of all evil: sin."*

This is because often, the sinner, trying to exculpate and blame others or even the devil for his sins, not knowing that this is all a conspiracy cunning of Satan who *"really wants us to take upon him the guilt of our sins, and it deceive ourselves and ourselves to sleep, to commit all kinds of sins and continually multiply and magnify our punishment, losing all forgiveness. But we do not do something like this, but to come fully inform ourselves. Learning to know our wounds, and then we hit and the proper remedy; conversely, when someone does not know his illness, healing does not care about them."*

Postmodern man, the man of the consumeristic society, pays too little attention to the spiritual life. God has no place in his heart, though, the kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17, 21), or should be within us. And it is within us, when God takes place, to sit the throne within us, in our hearts, in our souls. Unfortunately, our heart is most of us invaded, conquered by many passions that God has no place in us because of the love of wealth, love of pleasure and pride.

This is why man has the moral responsibility and the duty to fight sin, because it is a traditional and realistic teaching of Orthodox spirituality, that agent of our salvation or our perfection is God, while the fall and our condemnation is our own will, free or, as Peter says Damascene, *"the good working should thank God as the One who has given us all after existence. And one who chooses and makes the hostile, to blame only himself, because nobody can pull by force, once God made free."*

Christian doctrine of *"virtue"* is closely associated with the Christian moral character, a notion which means generally human steadfastness on the path of good will, of the principles that allow it run. Generally, the term *"virtue"* has several meanings, namely: human freedom of the will and ability to turn faith into a lifestyle by updating the grace of Baptism, the ability to bring something out spiritually and morally, but also force resistance against passions, temptations and habitual good practice. In other words, the virtue, the continuous action of good deeds, the human will acquire dexterity to achieve them because the dexterity and skills required to achieve good, is a manifestation of a continuous and steady gravity, a good provision to the inner man.

(Moral) *virtues* are powers, skills, human arrangements to do good, and unlike *passions or vices*, are tendencies to hurt by deviations more or less artificial from what is normal to do, according to the nature of things. Showing the relationship between virtues and

passions, St. Dionysius the Areopagite says: *"Sin is a lack of perfection of our own virtues."*

In the fullest sense of the word virtue is *"a disposition to do good strength,"* but not an absolute right and only just thought, thinking, talking, wanting, but well-made. Other words, virtue is an effort *"to behave well"* or *"Good defined as this effort to achieve this moral value: the maximum, central and last"*.

We saw that Christian morality, virtue is not understood as a mere psychological trait, and behavioural, but also as an ontological relationship, the compliance with the will of God and participation in uncreated grace and kindness. Without this compliance and participation in Christ there is no real virtue, and as I said above, virtue, steadfast as a manifestation of the Christian for the better, proceeds from divine grace (I Corinthians 18:10, II Corinthians 3:5, Col. 1:12) but also is a result of our personal habit, without foreign and added, but their own human nature.

Following Christian teaching contained in the New Testament books, and transmitted by the Apostles and their disciples, the Church Fathers virtue given a prominent place in their ascetic concerns and trying to explain the existence of evil in the world and forms that he dress, the way to resolve and remove depending, for human conduct present in this world and in this life, and future reward or damnation.

The value chain of spiritual life, the first step is acquiring spiritual virtues of perfection and is subject to

refusal and denying of sins, which is about running away from the passions, and acquiring virtues. But this is simply *the liberation from passions*, in which the body is above matter and the virtuous spirit over the body and is the first form of update of faith and grace received in Baptism. However, physical life is necessary but we must have care how we use it because it does not exceed the essence and importance spiritual life that always has precedence.

Virtue requires a renewal of life (according to Eph 3:16), and *"obedience to the commandments of God"* (Galatians 5.6, I Corinthians 6:19), a *"longing for good works"* (Rom 2.7, Tit 3.8, Matthew 5:16) model of Christ (Philippians 3:12) and a sustained struggle against all obstacles to perfection (I Corinthians 9.25). Virtue is not merely considered knowledge as in Socrates, but no simple act according to Aristotle's conception, but a constant manifestation of the Christian for good which proceeds from divine grace (I Corinthians 15:10, II Corinthians 3.5), and at the same time is a result of our personal freedom and habit (Matthew 7:13).

The whole Christian life is a constant struggle living in a state of tension, which is *a general purpose* fighting for freedom from sin and its disastrous effects and *a special purpose* acquisition Christian virtues as ways to perfection.

Romans 12:17 says: *"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men"*; and 1 Thessalonians 5:15: *"See that none render evil for evil unto*

any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" And this because virtue involves a renewal of life (Ephesians 3, 16), a sustained fight against all obstacles to perfection. 1 Corinthians 9:25: *"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."* And as far as this battle continues, the Christian becomes a partaker of Christ and thereby full of happiness.

The goal of spiritual struggle is of course understood as acquiring full perfection or "*abundance*" of the Holy Ghost. But this state of "*perfection*" is never understood in Eastern spirituality as a Christian acquired condition that forced ascetic and finally received some "*charisma*". Rather, human nature is changeable, and one that tends to acquire full heavenly happiness, always have to turn for the better, making better all the progress daily and perfecting permanently without ever reaching the full perfection. The dynamic state in which man moves and turns his deification unlimited sense, moving towards what is divine. However, it involves a laborious and ascetic path uninterrupted by personal effort to overcome all obstacles that arise in way to acquire supreme divine perfection.

If passion is the deformation of human nature and a diversion from the true purpose of life and also a darkening of the image of God in man, we must be sure that the Christian virtues and virtuous life in general reveals the ontological vocation of man, able to Christian

bring true joy and happiness, which they are beginning to experience closer to the Source of life and happiness of God-Love. Man is endowed by God from the creation, the freedom to choose between becoming a "slave of the passions" or not to leave them, that has the power to choose between sin and virtue, knowing that virtue is the only one who will be able to man give them *"the crown of immortality"*, but souls enslaved by passions find their salvation, and even pleasure, in the love of Christ.

No doubt, Christian love is the virtue of virtues, because in Christian love experiencing all the virtues, by *"faith working in love"* (Galatians 5, 6), and *"holiness becomes not only by labour and even that comes only from facts but by His love. But in His love alone, nor only our virtues, because if it proceeds only from love that all should be saved, and if they result only from our virtues, and his presence and all that are saved for us, was not necessary. So neither the only nor the love of our own virtue only, but in both of them."*

This restoration ontological virtues, going on axis divine archetypal model is based on the harmonization of the laws of divine existential, which has four forward and achieved:

1. *Participation in the sacraments* as a means of gaining divine grace necessary for human ontological perfection.
2. *Knowledge of God's Gospel, which means:*

- *The seed* (or the writings of The New Testament) which contains the main rules of human behaviour;
 - *body* - The life of saints as followers of Christian ethics;
 - *bearing* - their writings that include their own experiences their own methods, the benefits of acquiring this "*modus vivendi*".
4. *Self-knowledge*, the effect of participation in the sacraments and the gospel of ownership that emerges as the goal of living human model and make it possible to ascertain the difference between what we are and what we should be, finding that determines the attitude of balancing these two aspects by overcoming inhibitors and taking an active approach to change. It attracts their achievement necessity of prayer as a means of activating and maintaining dialogue functions at both transcendent (divine) and immanent level (inter-human).
 5. *the Feed-back* – the consequences or effects of fulfilling commandments show us if the previous points have been applied correctly, or if it is necessary to resume their success.

Completely spiteful some people believe that virtues "*perfect the man*" and degrade vices, which for the first part of the statement is totally incorrect, because in reality, winning virtues bring man's natural size, and we

cannot say it "perfects" just figuratively, as he is fallen compared to his normal state, and these details are very important because such an "*improvement*" to the fallen, gives the default "*drop*" a status of normality, which is disallowed.

Furthermore, some compare man with animals, citing the biological being, but unduly extend the comparison to other functions, capabilities and sizes (some of which are specific to humans and animals completely alien) just in the idea of circumventing the correct conclusion that man is nothing but an animal. For example, man is the being who has himself itself, obeys freely to law, but not entirely subject to a law, as happens with things and animals of nature. Or if you like, man firstly obeys the law of his free will, for he has the moral knowledge of things that no longer meet anywhere in the animal kingdom, the human animal can also listen to postpone, reject or modify the full realization of instinct, the imperatives of morality - as the scientists say, or his conscience - as theologians say. *"Consciousness is holy because through it God speaks. But we can become accuser when not listening. In conscience shows that man is separated from God, but united by nature to him. When you no longer hear the voice of conscience, there is no God hears"*. Unlike animals and nature, which obey laws in a mechanical way, man is the only being who can obey, condition or ignore a law depending on the "*fleshly*" or "*spiritual*" interpretation of the laws. *"Spiritually contemplated it (creation) offers the knowledge of good and taken bodily*

provides knowledge of evil. For those who partake of it are made teacher of bodily passions, making them forget the divine ..." And if by reason and his free-will man is in a sense beyond nature, making it an instrument of his will, and can fill a divine spirit and his freedom very high when the same freedom, man is a slave willingly passion man is a mere part of nature, and even lower nature.

Here's how *"Christian explanation of evil in freedom is the only one that does not bind the evil or the eternal essence of reality created by God, still taking evil seriously. And it's one that saves itself in the reality of its existence. Any other explanation irreparably compromise the existence and denies freedom, that human dignity itself"* and the manner in which sin poisons human society, is fixing the evil passions which all sick souls, negating freedom, passion that obscures all the gifts that define humanity, passions that pervert everything is beautiful, right, true, good, ruthless passions digging the foundation of life and shoot all creation through suffering, pain, disappointment and disbelief to eternal death.

For all these reasons, it appears that Christian asceticism is the way of our deification, spiritualization of our sinful nature its authentic ascension, of its spiritualisation.

I said that outside Orthodoxy, the significance of *Orthodox deification*, moves between two extremes as wrong due either to limit the concept of unity only substantial in pantheistic religions and philosophies or elimination of any possibility of direct contact with God,

as the Protestants believe. Among the substantial identity and absolute separation, non-Orthodox do not conceive any kind of direct contact man-God.

In Orthodoxy, the advancement in this work, the believer discovers his true self, reveals himself as he wants to be - good, and how you want to live on his creator. Putting away of sin spiritual mud, he discovers the beauty of serene and clean life, free of passions and sinless, which alone can bring true and imperishable happiness.

We believe, however, even if only here in the conclusion, these views requires clarifications and explanations that make viable the Christian attitude in this matter. First, between man and God there can be no identity of being, that is substantially or nature, because God is the only Creator and Sovereign of the world, and the created cannot become uncreated by any development. On the other hand, every creature has in her immediate presence of God's power working through each of us from the start we are a direct union with Him. Orthodox Christian spirituality considered in addition to the union only a gradual increase, especially a referral to it by conscience. Fathers, saying this capability, consider the means by which it can achieve "clean soul and mind" from worldly concerns.

Returning to the words on the powers of the soul while the parties consider that the human soul is an indestructible unit, (whether run erratically or harmonious) passion, like virtues, are not independent,

but one is connected to the other and one operation will affect the operation of another, and if the soul remains in any of them, cannot escape nor the other, that the one who wants to return to the following threads and reach deification must fight against all passion. But, the actual process of liberation from passions must include certain steps Fathers have proven as effective. The way of the fight against passion is, "enter into thy heart and investigates it diligently for. See what thoughts, what provisions and what starts a master. Try to realize what passion attacks it and what passion terrorizes it more. Take up arms against those passions first. Fight. And since it happens to be tempted by other passions, always fighting passionately nearest you attack the right and power. Then go back to war over what supresses you more" And continuing in this way with the following remaining as the strongest passions, and thus deserve to win little by little not only the outward flesh, but the virtues within, soul. This way, soon little becomes more and stays forever.

We see in the end that regarding trouble, suffering and disease, Orthodox spirituality has developed a doctrine full of Christian hope and optimism, revealing their meanings tall and deep, urging us to transform such dramatic events of this transient life in moments of moral heroism and spiritual improvement, acquisition of holiness and salvation, offering real comfort and consolation in times of sorrow and suffering, in the

words of Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Church Fathers discovered God.

Meanwhile, suffering, sickness and troubles which God permits, are a sign that God loves us and wants us to proceed, and patience trouble man approaching him closer to God, and that from the beginning, he prays God as a stranger, as far as their patience, approaching God as a true son.

In the end, troubles and sickness, trials through suffering, are useful to men, spiritually, on whatever stage they would find themselves. Sinners need them in order to return to a normal Christian life, but they are required and the advanced in spiritual terms, to help strengthen and submit to God.

To thank God for the suffering He has sent is to have a great reverence because it was experienced that *“painful stories make the wise to remember God and troubles the man who forgot about God”*.

Typically, for a Christian, especially for a young one, the *enlightenment*, and even more *perfection*, remain perfectly possible goals, though difficult to achieve, and even harder to talk about, being accessible only by practice, i.e. what we call *asceticism*, *shunning of passions* or *liberation from passions*. But since this stage was covered, it is the strong foundation for the next stage. Even people who achieved good consider unsuitable to talk about things achieved by few people, whom any explanation is unnecessary, they already having or being in the path of true knowledge, and equally useless and

other people, who are incapable of this knowledge, how long have passed the first stage of perfection, and then leaving to talk only about the first stage of liberation, they knew enough, and can be expressed in words understandable to all believers, as Abba Pimen that although advanced in the spiritual, did not engage in scholarly discussions about the heavenly, but was concerned with practical spiritual issues.

We understand therefore that *asceticism* is an essential feature of Orthodox spirituality and refers to concrete life that is whole, a struggle and a spiritual pursuit of radical and total transfiguration of the believer to follow Christ on the path of virtue.

A question remains ultimately, even if rhetorical, because it seeks an answer, but only outlines a situation. If to the faithful, to those who fear God, to those who strive towards a life spiritual, the human body is a very big problem that without the help of Heaven, no one has managed to solve it, then how can it succeed for the unbeliever who choose the easy way of self-pleasure?

That is why those who reproach the Church do not proceed well, only to justify the removal of God from their lives, although, this attitude is very comfortable and found often, because on the way to God, many believers go through a stage of deductions, of questions, of challenges, often justified, because as St. John Chrysostom said: if right-believers would have behaved and lived properly, pagans would have converted to the Christian faith.

The nature of this study requires an analytical description of Christian passions and virtues that one discovers in the New Testament, as well as the excellent teachings that were acquired practically by the Christian ascetics. We hope that we succeeded to present enough teachings as well as efficient examples of approaching the spiritual life in the way the Church Fathers did in their pursuit of living a life in Christ.

I want to conclude this study in the hope that it will serve as spiritual food for those who seek the true knowledge of God as well as help for those who will read it for healing and deification. But first, I want to thank God and the people who contributed to the writing of this study, either in deed, in thought or in prayer.

The approach of the virtue and the passion is extended in three parts, in alphabetical order: A – The notions of virtue and passion, general information in which we tried to explain the nature of virtue and passion according to neo-testamentary references; B – References from the New Testament about passions, meaning the teachings of the Church Fathers contained in the Holy Tradition, as well as the solutions recommended in order to cleanse from such passions, and C – the classification of virtues according to the New Testament, general information about essential virtues that every Christian needs to know in order to attain spiritual perfection and consecration.

Each part contains chapters and subchapters, which I tried to compress them as much as I could, and be

exposed clearly. After the three parts numbered alphabetically with their chapters and subchapters are the **conclusions**, highlighting the severe importance of Christian therapeutics. All these parts are based on biblical texts accompanied by a rich bibliographic graphical papers, ascetic and science in general.

Undoubtedly, personal perfection, is a continuous process that is not limited to the shunning of passions and does not have an end in itself, only a step to eternal life. Because most of the time in this state peace is successfully earned, the mastery of the passions, and building virtues. But this is not the end but only the foundation of subsequent work to help neighbour and to live a clean life.

The paper will include general demonstrations at a level that is limited because subjects are secondary to the theme of this paper, however, necessary to clarify the context and reason for such topical issues.

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