

# ORTHODOXY AND PRACTICAL LIFE

Anba Moussa

**Beloved I pray that you may prosper in all things, and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, as you do walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:2-4).**

It is important for us to have an integrated personality, and by this we mean being successful in all areas of human nature. The human personality is the combination of a person and society. Human beings consist of five important components : the SPIRIT with which we communicate with God, the MIND with which we study, think and analyse, the PSYCHE with which we feel, have desires and instincts, the BODY, and the RELATIONS which we have with those around us.

The outcome of these components = your personality.

If these five ingredients are not satisfied in the right way, then there will be a disturbance and imbalance in the personality. The Orthodox personality is one that has all these five components functioning together in harmony.

## SPIRIT

with the spirit we communicate with God and with the metaphysical, and if we come into contact with God and possess God, then we will be divine human beings, just as Pope Athanasius once said, "One with God is the majority". The spirit is the most important component in a personality, because it adds infinity to you and adds God Himself to your life, and through prayer you are going to open your small heart to the heart of God, and your limited life to the life of the Lord, and your finite being to the infinite God. Sometimes we may feel weak, but we must never forget that God is with us, and just as St. Paul the Apostle wrote, "...when I am weak, then I am strong..." (2 Cor. 12:10). By this he meant that in weakness I am going to ask for the power of God to help me and strengthen me. We can obtain this power through reading the Bible, reading spiritual books, receiving the Holy Communion, praying from the Agbia as well as free prayer, and through repeating over and over, "My Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me!" This small prayer is called the 'arrow

prayer' because it pierces the heavens and reaches the Lord, and we receive a reply on the spot. Do not neglect your spirit or else it will be atrophy - you must nourish your spirit.

## MIND

human beings differ from animals because they have a mind and a spirit as well as a body and psyche, whereas animals only have body and psyche. Therefore we must utilise our mental ability through reading and studying and thinking, or else our mind will stop functioning and will be completely void of general knowledge. Sometimes, due to the age of technology and media, our thinking becomes redundant because all our thinking is done for us. But this is very dangerous because eventually our minds will become stagnate and will not be willing to think. The orthodox personality is prosperous both spiritually and mentally, just as St. Peter says, "...grow in grace and knowledge..." (2 Peter 3:18), otherwise our life will not be balanced.

## PSYCHE

The biggest problem with instincts and emotions is how to control them. Sexual desires are heavenly and holy because through them you are going to receive the sacrament of marriage and then bear children; thereby increasing the number of saints on earth as well as in heaven. Also, the desire to eat is important because without this desire, you will die. Likewise, curiosity is very important because without it we would not have been able to discover or invent. Emotions are also important for expressing and experiencing love for your family and friends. But one thing is required in all these things : CONTROL.

## BODY

It would be useful to face yourself simply, to answer honestly, and to take your ideas to your father confessor who has a lot of experience, so that he may help you and so that your life may be pure and clean.

The young man who asks these questions might be about to graduate or might be one of those who are starting out on their working lives. Here, the case is different and needs different advice.

+ I imagine you to be a religious youth who is kind and of good character.

+ I imagine you to be serious in what you do and what you think.

+ I imagine the bitter struggle that is taking place in your spiritual life.

You may conduct yourself well where your sexual instincts are concerned; you neither descend into the mire nor do you exploit anyone.

Your assessment of the situation could be right. Your perception that this girl would make a good wife for you could be right. Or it could be wrong.

In accordance with your circumstances, your situation, your life, your social level:

+ Who will think with you and reassure you that what has awoken inside you will run its normal course?

+ Who will share with you in realistic and wise thinking about the requirements of the next stage?

+ Who will help you to come to a decision, either yes or no, someone who is far removed from cheap emotionalism or recklessness?

I therefore beg you that you do not remain alone. Thoughts can overcome you and end your spiritual life. I beg you to involve your spiritual guide, who may be your father confessor, with you. Place your thoughts before him and do not hide anything from him, even the feelings in your heart. Talk to him frankly and discuss all the details of the situation with him. Do not go to a friend for advice, for he is in the same boat as you are, perplexed and inexperienced. If you cannot find a guide or a father confessor, go to an older and more experienced man who has experienced life and who honors the holy and noble life so that you can trust his judgment. Don't be hasty, but have patience and don't jump into anything. I want also to remind you of the prayer chamber where you ask for God's advice; His guidance guarantees that you will have a holy spiritual life here, and a happy eternity.

Ask the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is near you, near your young man's heart. By His grace, He will lead you to the sources of salvation and joy.

## RELATIONS

It is important for us to lead a happy life: at home with our family, at church through being an active and participating member, and in society, where we must have a sociable personality that can socialise without being lost - interacting with strong flexibility and always being a good example.

**"...add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control; perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and do abound, they keep you from being either barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-7)**