Chapter 6

RUSSIA. A SUBMISSIVE CHURCH

Monologue

From my beloved Holy Mountain, I found myself in Russia. It was not in my plan, I did not want it. But I loved my mission because I loved my obedience. And that obedience rewarded me. I found myself close to a people blessed with great sensitivity, religious zeal and hospitality of spirit. There came moments when this people made me very bitter. But just as was ready to despair, she revealed a face of great humility and love to me.

I had heard a great deal about Russia. And when I arrived, I was ready to fight. I knew my mission. First translations. Then, ensure donations for Vatopedi. And finally, to do whatever I could to ignite a spark of hope for my troubled race.

When I arrived in Moscow, I wasted no time. I organised the translation of the Psalter and I gradually began to classify the riches of the ruler's deserted library. I may have been thousands of miles from my Monastery, but I wanted to keep it in my life. So, I gave no thought whatsoever to ceremonies and receptions and rejected every secular encounter. It did not take long for me to understand the incredible luxury and cheer of the Palace, where the senior clergy always held their position. I gradually came to understand that even the receptions in the Holy Monasteries were not lacing in luxury and incredible waste. The thought that the cost of such a reception could feed a Monastery on the Mount for a year saddened me. Each Russian Monastery was a small palace. The property they owned stretched further than my eye could see. Extensive lands and entire villages fed the brotherhoods with all sorts of wealth. Worst: I found that the Monasteries were systematically lending and charging interest.

What filled my soul with the deepest sorrow was what was happening outside the walls of the Monasteries: Unbelievable poverty, absolute ignorance, and the absence of any rule of honour, morality and spirituality. But where should simple people be buried in body and soul? The monks roamed the villages and desolate farmhouses like tax collectors, tyrannising the inhabitants. They even put pressure on the poor priests to give them their meagre living. But even these unfortunate priests, impoverished and ungrateful, when they performed the rites, gave their monologues from memory of falsified functional texts, without any sense or meaning. The rituals had replaced ancient pagan rituals, something which was in customs, sorcery and habits.

Frequently, the rebellious monk of Florence would come to my mind. He who did not hesitate to save the splendour and the vision of Christian life in his speech and life, despite the extremes of his character. He who had not feared the threats of the State and the Church to silence him. He who had the same end as the Christians in the persecutions. But did I not I have to consider the wisdom of St. John Chrysostomos? Was not the guiding word of the Old Testament prophets the same? So often I thought of the brave young men in Thessaly, who were martyred before my eyes for the Church of Christ. That's when I saw the temptations of faith coming at me from all around. risk was the same: more deterioration. That the Church become one with the futility and falsehood of the world.

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ΡΩΣΙΑ. ΜΙΑ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΥΠΟΤΑΓΜΕΝΗ¶
Μονόλογος¶

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Από το Όρος το Άγιο και το αγαπημένο, βρέθηκα στη Ρωσία. Δεν ήταν στα σχέδια μου, δεν το επιθυμούσα. Αγάπησα όμως την αποστολή μου γιατί αγάπησα την υπακοή. Και η υπακοή με αντάμειψε. Βρέθηκα κοντά σε λαό ευλογημένο, με μεγάλη ευαισθησία, θρησκευτικό ζήλο και πνεύμα φιλοξενίας. Ήρθαν στιγμές που ο λαός αυτός με πίκρανε πολύ. Μα μόλις πήγαινα να απελπιστώ, μου φανέρωνε πρόσωπο ταπείνωσης και αγάπης. ¶

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Όταν έφτασα στη Μόσχα, δεν έχασα στιγμή. Οργάνωσα το έργο της μετάφρασης τού Ψαλτήρα και άρχισα σιγά σιγά να ταξινομώ τον πλούτο της ερημωμένης βιβλιοθήκης τού ηγεμόνα. Μπορεί να απείχα χιλιάδες μίλια από το Μοναστήρι μου, θέλησα όμως να μην το αποχωριστώ απ΄ τη ζωή μου. Έτσι, αδιαφόρησα εντελώς …

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I could not be indifferent. It is true that it was another purpose that had first brought me here, but now I saw clearly that God had His own reasons.

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Δεν μπορούσε ν΄ αδιαφορήσω. Ναι, είναι αλήθεια πως άλλοι ήταν οι λόγοι που ξεκίνησα για να ‘ρθω εδώ. Έβλεπα όμως τώρα καθαρά πως κι ο Θεός είχε τους δικούς Του λόγους.¶

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