Chapter 5

RUSSIA. IGNORANCE AND THE THIRD ROME

Monologue

I was born in Arta, I studied in Italy, At Vatopaidi, I wanted to become a monk. So far, I had been grateful to God, and I wholeheartedly surrendered every moment to His will. But when the invitation arrived from the great Duke of the Kingdom, the Tsar's son and heir, something within me rebelled, whispering to me: "This is not of God." And on the other hand, I thought "Is there anything that is not of You, Lord?".

The invitation was not initially for me, of course, but for my elder brother, Monk Savva, who knew Russian. That was who the great Duke was asking to go to Moscow and take over the correction of ecclesiastical books. But when it turned out that the trip would exhaust his meagre strength, everyone turned to me.
I refused, twice, three times. It was not the journey that frightened me. I had made many travels but there was always the sweet hour of return. I had a bad feeling about this trip. And then, there were so many tasks I had on the Mount! But above all, I did not know Russian. These were my arguments. The Holy Abbot of the Monastery, Anthimos, and all the representatives of the Holy Monasteries, listened to me with understanding, but when they spoke, I realized that there was a greater purpose hidden behind the invitation;
Everyone believed that great Russia was the big hope for our Order. For this reaon, her ruler should not be displeased with a denial. But Russia itself had to do it intellectually. I knew from what I had learned from Russian monks that she suffered from ignorance, a short age of books and mental blackout. Throughout Russia, hidden Bibles revealed with incredible teachings and events carrying the signatures of the so-called Fathers of the Church Paganism had infiltrated all the Christian feasts. Magic was raging. Last but not least; a great opportunity is given, I was told. In the eyes of Tsar and of all the Russian clergy, Romiosini will regain the prestige he lost with the fall Constantinople.

"You do not go as Maximus," they told me. "You go as a follower of Cyril and Methodius, carrying on your shoulders the continuation of the glory of our Order and in the role of our Patriarchate. There is much to do on this journey. The Tsar is the only hope of our Order against the Agarians. Only he can give us back our freedom. But only he can preserve the Mount. And Vatopedi.".
How could I resist such arguments? I started my preparations. I had been assured that my only work would be the correction of ecclesiastical books and possibly the translation of a few more. Then I would return to the Mount with rich gifts for the monastery. I also prepared a large load of books. We started in the summer of 1516. We were a large group, including representatives of the Holy Monasteries. Our first stop was at Constantinople, to take the blessing of the Patriarch of Theoliptos the first. We took longer than expected there. It seems the Sultan wanted to demonstrate his power and authority to the Tsar. Eventually, we were given permission to leave shortly before the winter. It was granted by God, this journey was to last for almost two years, with incredible suffering and many

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Κεφάλαιο 5¶
ΡΩΣΙΑ. Η ΑΜΑΘΕΙΑ ΚΙ Η ΤΡΙΤΗ ΡΩΜΗ¶
Μονόλογος¶
Στην Άρτα γεννήθηκα. Στην Ιταλία σπούδασα. Στο Βατοπαίδι θέλησα να γίνω μοναχός. Γιαόλα μέχρι τώρα υπήρξα στον Θεό ευγνώμων και κάθε στιγμή ολόψυχα παραδινόμουν στο θέλημά Του. Όταν όμως έφτασε η πρόσκληση του μεγάλου Δούκα Βασιλείου, υιού του Τσάρου και διαδόχου του, κάτι επαναστάτησε μέσα μου και μου ψιθύρισε:¶
«Αυτό δεν είναι εκ Θεού».¶
Κι απ' την άλλη, ¶
«Υπάρχει κάτι να μην είναι από σένα Κύριε;», σκεφτόμουν.¶
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Η πρόσκληση βέβαια δεν ήταν στην αρχή για μένα, αλλά για τον γέροντα αδελφό μου, μοναχό Σάββα, που γνώριζε Ρωσικά. Αυτόν ζητούσε ο μεγάλος Δούκας να μεταβεί στη Μόσχα και να αναλάβει τη διόρθωση των εκκλησιαστικ ...

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detours. But I did not waste that time. Within my carriage, I began to unlock the language of the people of the place where I was to spend the rest of my life.

It was spring of 1518 when we arrived in Moscow, I was welcomed like leader Vasilios (the King) received me at the Palace and, in the presence of a noble and superior clergy, effectively assigned me with the task of supporting the revival of Russian spirituality through corrections and translations. He announced me as his personal guest and that I would be supported by the Palace Fund. Then he gave be a guide to his excellent personal library, the spiritual legacy of his mother, the Tsarina Sophia Palaiologina.

I saw! I understood! The Grand Duke appreciated me. All this, the show of power and luxury, was directed at my poor homeland and our humiliated Patriarchate. Moscow, which the Russian authorities had for Rome, was sending a message: "The two Romes have fallen, the third is standing. A fourth Rome will not exist.". Lord, give me the strength to remain humble and to firmly defend your Church's stability!

I also saw the faces of the higher clergymen. I had no illusions. There are always enemies and victims of change, I knew that even the ruler's favour would provoke reactions and envy. Lord, Lord, support me! Whoever is touched by Your grace and Your truth, can endure, I promise you, my Christ, I will not step back from Your truth. I did not bow to the West. Now I must keep the salt of Your Church alive. And I shall! My witness again, this pen, that of the swan's feather.

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Όταν φτάσαμε στη Μόσχα, ήταν Άνοιξη του 1518. Με περίμενε υποδοχή ηγεμόνα. Ο Βασίλειος με δέχτηκε στα Ανάκτορα και, με την παρουσία ευγενών και ανώτερου κλήρου, μου ανέθεσε ουσιαστικά να στηρίξω την αναγέννηση της Ρωσικής πνευματικότητας, μέσω διορθώσεων και μεταφράσεων. Μου ανακοίνωσε πως θεωρούμαι προσωπικός του προσκεκλημένος και θα συντηρούμαι από το ταμείο των Ανακτόρων. Κατόπιν με ξενάγησε στην εξαίρετη προσωπική του βιβλιοθήκη, πνευματική προίκα της μητέρας του, Τσαρίνας Σοφίας Παλαιολογίνας. ¶

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Έβλεπα! Καταλάβαινα! Με εκτιμούσε ο Μεγάλος Δούκας. Όλη αυτή όμως η επίδειξη δυνάμεως και πολυτέλειας απευθυνόταν στη δύσμοιρη πατρίδα μου και στο ταπεινωμένο Πατριαρχείο μας. Η Μόσχα, που η Ρώσικη εξουσία είχε για τρίτη Ρώμη, έστελνε μήνυμα: ¶
«Οι δύο Ρώμες έπεσαν, η τρίτη όμως στέκεται, τέταρτη Ρώμη δεν θα υπάρξει». ¶
Δωσ' μου Κύριε δύναμη να παραμείνω ταπεινός και να υπερασπιστώ με σταθερότητα την τάξη της Εκκλησίας Σου! ¶

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Κύριε, Κύριε, Στήριξέ με! Όποιος ακούμπησε στη Χάρη Σου και την αλήθεια Σου, όλα μπορεί να τα αντέξει.Χριστέ μου στο υπόσχομαι, βήμα πίσω δεν θα κάνω απ' την αλήθεια Σου. Στη Δύση δεν φράγκεψα. Τώρα πρέπει να κρατήσω ζωντανό τ' αλάτι της Εκκλησίας Σου. Και θα το κάνω! Μάρτυράς μου πάλι, η πένα αυτή, αυτό του κύκνου το φτερό.¶

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