

I

On Idolization¹

G.G.: It is impossible to please a person who has been “spoiled” by too much love. This is the root of the problem. The love we have towards another person should never reach the point of idolatry. The limit where love ends and idolatry begins is something that many people fail to discern. We are, for example, parents of a child and we love it to the point of adoration. Then this child takes the place of God. I have seen it happen many times. The child becomes a small idol and for its sake we forget God. Someone felt this way for his child. God took the child. The loss was awful. The devotion too was frightening. Great caution is required.

X. Mother, what is to be done when we love a person, a friend, a companion, and one day we find out that he is not what we thought him to be? As if a mask fell off.

G.G.: It is not like that. It is not the other person’s fault, but ours. Because we love an ideal and want the other one to personify it. We admire him whereas he does not deserve admiration. After knowing him better though, come the wear and tear of familiarity. Then, one day, he falls off the pedestal on which we had placed him and we get angry at him. Yet, in principle, he is not to be blamed for our disappointment. The fault is ours’ for we put him up on the pedestal with our imagination. We turned him into an idol; we admired him; and then we brought him down. While he was, is and will be whatever he is.

2. on **Imposing** one’s Will²

G.: There are people who seem to suffer from an inferiority complex and want to impose their own will on others at all times.

G.G.: To begin with, all those wishing to impose their will have complexes.

G.: I think that if we were to show love to these persons and treat them as equals, they may get rid of their complexes.

G.G.: No, we cannot help them in this way. And you know what? Most of these persons seek employment with people who depend on others because of disability, sickness or

¹ G. Meneopoulou, Athens, 1970-80

² G. Meneopoulou, Athens, 1970-80

age. There are even some nursery school teachers who take it out on the little children. If we ever have to face such persons, we should show indifference to their behavior on the one hand and, on the other, we should pray. But first, we must love with all our heart the person for whom we shall pray.

On India³

X.: Mother, won't you, please, tell us how you started on your journey to the Himalayas?

G.G.: I set out for India, where my first stop was at a small Dispensary within the Ashram (Monastery) of Guru Sivananda – a great Guru of that time – up on the Himalaya Mountains. I made the journey by bus, because I wanted to avoid having all those vaccines and injections. So, I travelled from Beirut, to Syria, Jordan, Baghdad, Teheran, Meshed, Zahedan, the Persian Desert, Pakistan, and finally I reached my destination after a journey that lasted eleven months. I shall never forget the sunset at Khorramshahr. The greatest solar disc to be seen is there! And that time India too was like the World before the Fall. When I arrived at the Himalayas I was almost out of money. For God had sent me on my way without money, so that I could see His Glory at every step. Before long, I faced the first difficulty. My passport expired and I had to revalidate it. They told me that the Greek Consulate was in Bombay, and I sent my passport there together with a letter: "Dear Mr. Consul, you are certainly aware of the adventurous nature of the Greek Race and also the inherent dignity of the Greek people. As I am here offering my services without payment, I would appreciate the issuance of a new passport free of charge." In a few days I received my passport, stamped gratis, and a very nice letter written in English: "... it is with great pleasure, etc. etc." When, later, God guided my steps to Bombay, I went to the Greek Consulate and you can imagine my astonishment when I saw that the Consul was not a Greek but an Indian gentleman! In fact, there was never a Greek Consul in Bombay. Well, such surprising things happened all the time, from the beginning to the end of my stay there... At that time, back in 1954, India made appeals all over the world for help for persons with leprosy, for children suffering from infantile paralysis and so on. The inner voice had told me: "You will not accept payment anymore. You will not have money any more". Yet, everything is so very simple in life. Even if you know no one,

³ G. Meneopoulou, Athens, 1970-80

when you know Christ He will take you everywhere. All the doors open before you and you are considered an important person, because you take no money although you are penniless. That's how it is. But then again, what would it cost to provide food and shelter for one person? Rice and yogurt, rice and yogurt – that had been my food for five years.

G.: Did you know the purpose of your going to India?

G.G.: No. The Lord was leading the way and I followed. But you know, as soon as I arrived in India, at the first place where I was offered hospitality (note: she means the Dispensary of Guru Sivananda's Ashram where she worked first), I received something like a message – the quotation from the Gospel: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles... But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10: 5-6). Indeed, many of the foreigners, Europeans, Americans, etc. who went there were on their way to seek Hinduism, about to lose Christ. I watched them all, coming to seek the Truth. For, you know, everybody in India is still seeking the Truth. Many of their wise men asked me, "Are you a seeker of the Truth?" And I would answer, "I am of a Church called the Orthodox Church". They had not heard of it up there. They knew Catholics, they knew Protestants, but not this Church. "This Church exists in Greece and in many other countries". They would say, "We know Socrates and Pythagoras, so we welcome you as one of their descendants". Whenever they invited me to speak, I would always say, "I am particularly happy to be near you in a <Before Christ> country, because I see your quest and hope that someday like so many others in the whole world, you, too, will find the Light"...

On one occasion, a Member of Parliament stood up and said, "Well, we too need a Socrates" ... Actually, anywhere I went, I almost always came across European – and all these Christians were about to forsake Christ! I said to myself, "There's your destination. Love them and make them come back". And, with God's help, many did come back. I had such enthusiasm then, a feeling beyond words. India was my great adventure with Faith and the Love of God. I had gone there knowing nothing at all, neither where nor how I would live in a foreign land with a foreign language, without money. ... *Just God and I on Earth*... I never asked for anything. I always awaited the Call – to any field of action. Because when Christ calls you, you have no will of your own. You go wherever He takes you. And He led me to very poor surroundings – like Father Athanasios Anthidis, who is now experiencing exactly what I went through thirty years ago, and in

the same places too: at Hooghly, outside Calcutta. I know what it is like when conditions are so hard. Still, to this very day, I am so certain that there is nothing I have to think of. I am as I was the first day I set out for India: Awaiting God's Will. To anyone proposing something I say "Yes" and I go on. That is how I travelled all over India. "Come and work with us", they would say. I went, worked and left...

X. You have loved this people very much.

G.G.: What I cared about was Love. I loved the people there. I loved them for many reasons. In the first place, because if you stop loving, it is as if you stop breathing. Love is the Breath of God. Where I was, there came so many sick, so many suffering, so many hungry ones. Entire families of pilgrims came up the Himalayas after walking for six or seven days. Some had even walked fifteen days, some others as much as a month. Quite often their children died up there. My first task at the Dispensary of the Ashram was to put a dead child in a sack, together with a stone that would sink it into the river Ganges. I had such a shock and felt so sad that unconsciously tears flowed from my eyes. Then, the Head of the Ashram (Guru Sivananda) said, "Look at that! From the end of the world, a person has come to weep over this poor child"... In a short time it became known that there was someone who could help cure some ailments. Indeed, I must tell you that the Miracles of Christ are astonishing. I was amazed! You know, it is very easy for people that have not been acquainted with Medicine to have no doubts. The moment I told them that with a little massage the painful arm would feel better, they believed it. This belief and the Help of god made them well. So, the news spread around that a Greek lady who could help had arrived, and so on. It was then that they started asking, "What Church does she belong to"? At about that time, when J. Nehru was in power, I happened to meet his daughter, Indira Gandhi. She suffered from a neck that required massaging. While treating her, she talked about her life. One day, a lady came and after introductions she asked, "Is this lady a Catholic"? "Oh no. She belong to a Church you do not know at all, a Church that is **completely** different", Mrs. Gandhi replied. The difference was – and I beg forgiveness of all who think that I was wrong – that I did not talk. I never said anything. I just loved the people and worked and worked and worked. Once, a very wise man, along with some other persons, came and asked me, "Who is your God"? I said, "There is only one God and Christ is His Son. This is my God"! "I guessed as much. But why don't you say it" It is the first time that we see a European who doesn't talk, who doesn't tell us that our Gods are nothing. You

see our life, you know our philosophy, but you make no comments. How is that? Missionaries always reprove and go away, criticize and then leave". . . . "I cannot say such things," I answered, "because my ancestors were like you"! "What do you mean by that"? he asked. So, I started to talk about the Ancient Greeks and to explain how, when Christianity reached our country, it did not make us renounce our ancient philosophy, but gave us Christ as Life. Because Christ is not only a Religion. Christ is Life. Then, they asked me for Gospel books. I also gave them, even before the Gospel, the Imitation of Christ, as it is a book full of reference.

I lived on the Himalayas for a whole year. After that, I was invited to visit various centers. I could say that in five years I travelled all over India – North, South, East, West. I went to Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Langpur, Kashmir, the Himalayas, Dharasul, Uttar Kashi, and to so many other places... without a penny of my own. I had no money. The fare was paid for me and I was taken to my destination. And it was really strange. One day, I would sleep on the floor, with rats running around and scorpions crawling everywhere. The next day, the Maharajah of Patiala would send for me, to help organize a small group of physiotherapists. For the local hospital; and then, servant in liveries would come to ask what I would like for dinner! This is the way I journeyed all over India. But what impressed me most is that wherever I went, whether for a few months or for a year, I was learning the "Lessons".

G.: From your experience in India, would you tell an incident revealing God's Help in the difficult situations you had to face?

G.G.: There are so many ... At every moment of my life. At every moment. I recall that, once, I had just finished working at a Hospital, where I had taught physiotherapy for a while. The people at this Hospital were godless and very unkind. The day of my departure was very near, but I had no invitation yet from anywhere else. Nothing. They told me, "Your train leaves tomorrow morning at ten o'clock." So that was it. I took my small suitcase and with one rupee (the equivalent of one hundred drachmas) in my pocket, I went to the railway station, which was also the terminus. From this point on, I didn't know where to go. Only god knew. So, I sat quietly in the waiting room. People moved about, walking in and out, and I waited to see whom God would send. In the meantime, two beggar boys came and I gave them the rupee to share between them. They took it and went away. Apparently, they told it to some other boys and shortly two more approached me. I had no money left, so I gave them the few candies I had in

my pocket. Soon after, more children came. I had nothing to give them but they would not believe me. So, to convince them I turned my pockets inside out. And what do you think they did? They went away, climbed a mango tree and came back to offer me a beautiful mango! I took it and thanked them smiling, without saying a word. Now, what happened next? Everyone waiting at the station stood up and came to greet me, bowing to me in the Indian manner. Every single person. "What goes on here"? I asked someone, and he answered, "In our religion, when a beggar gives you something, it means that God makes you a present and grants His Blessing to you" ... You can understand how I felt. Well, after that, I sat there again and waited. And, indeed, much later, a young Indian woman carrying a professional briefcase entered the waiting room. She came near and asked in English, "May I sit next to you"? Now, as I have always had what is called "the dignity of a Christian" – no one ever knew whether I was rich or poor. So, this lady sat next to me and asked again, "Where are you from? Where are you going"? I said, "I have just finished my job at the Leprosy Hospital where I taught physiotherapy". "And what are you doing now"? she went on. Are you perhaps free? We would so much like ... You know, we have a small hospital nearby and we would like to have someone to teach". And I, who had nowhere to spend the night was taken within one hour to my new destination and everything was fine! This is what God does!

D.:⁴ Can you tell us more about your ministry in India?

G.G.: In India, when I was asked, "Are you a missionary"? I answered, "No". "Well," they would say, "who sent you then"? "Christ". "What did He tell you"? "India" and "Follow Me".

Ad. Rob.: In a way, you are one of the pioneers of Christianity in contemporary India.

G.G.: No, Because Christ was already there. He was leading the way and I was following Him. You don't know how many had come to India from Christian countries! When I was working in the small dispensaries in the Ashrams (Indian Monasteries), I was seeing them ready to embrace Hinduism and forget Christ and their own religious tradition. When they saw me there, they asked, "What have you come here for"? "Christ brought me", I would reply. "Why"? "I don't know". And then, with God's

⁴ A. Robinson, Athens, 1985

Help, we became friends. At that time I did not realize what went on. Many years later, from the letters they were sending me, I saw how the Lord had worked...

4. on the **Influence** of some Gurus⁵

G.: Mother, a so-called “guru” visited Athens. He gave lectures and initiated a number of youths. One of them, a friend of mine aged 19, is today in a mental clinic. What went wrong? What must be done?

G.G.: I have noticed that, usually, the Indians themselves are not susceptible to mental disorders from such experiences... However, I happened to see many Christians, men and women, who came to India, were initiated and accepted to forsake Christ, saying of Him, “Well, He too is someone like Buddha or Confucius, or like one of those <new prophets> of later times”... After following the practices required, some developed a squint and had trouble with their eyesight. Others suffered from mental delusions and left to go back to their country, or stayed forever there and I do not know what became of them. A few took vows in foreign monastic orders and so on. I have observed, more than once, that this way of teaching is not suitable for a Christian. This Christian young friend of yours wished to combine Philosophy, Literature and Religion and, if possible, to adapt all these to the Teaching of Christ. If he had accepted Indian Philosophy as just a Philosophy, nothing would have happened to him. But when he reached the point of wishing to become a god – for as they themselves say, the guru is the incarnation of a god – then... This was the aim of the poor youth. He strived to be like the guru. What befell Adam and Eve? They wanted to be as gods! What happens to these young people? They want to become as gods. It is to be expected therefore that they should lose their mind. Have you understood what happens? Do you remember the time I talked to that other youth and asked him, “When you concentrate and meditate, who is your guide on the Will of God, on how to overcome the wickedness in your heart? Who guides you in all that”? He answered, “The guru. It is him that I think of, him that I see, that’s what I do”... Well, dear G., if he had put aside the human guru and tried to behold with the same love Christ and His Face, this boy would have been today a chosen servant of Christ and one of His laborers. Now, the youth has come to harm and it is very difficult. It requires much praying from his fellow-Christians. It needs great effort. First, from his own mother – above all, from his mother. Because she knows him

⁵ G. Meneopoulou, Athens, 1970-80

since he was a baby. She knows how he grew up, what he met with in the past, what kind of childhood he had, his views, the way he liked to study or have fun. The mother knows all the background of her child's soul. So, if she were to try now, without "sermonizing" to give him endless love and, without letting understand that he is not well, consider him fit again, and if she were to go to a church and ask the priest to read St. Basil's Exorcisms (they are excellent exorcisms read in all churches) and mention her child's name in his prayers; and if, at the same time, she were herself with great faith and piety to [ray Christ to forgive this poor boy... for certainly, in this case, the mother too made mistakes. Sometimes, by saying something like "I have to attend a meeting this evening", at a moment when the child needed his mother's presence and advice, she may have caused some harm to the soul of the child. The soul is so delicate indeed. Above all, in seeking the help of a doctor, let her look for a Christian doctor.

G.: Oh, Mother. In our days, is there a Psychiatrist who is a true Christian?

G.G.: I do not want to mention any names, but I know a lady psychiatrist who is a true Christian. With all my heart I say that she is more Christian than me or you or any other person I know. I can add that out of her own salary she contributes generously and helps, retaining her anonymity. She lives abroad. If the parents can afford to take their child abroad, she is the one I would recommend. All those who went to her were cured. You know why? Because when the mother prays and the doctor also prays, God has mercy on those who have faith and forgive many sins. For there are sins ...

5. on her **Information**⁶

H.: Gernondissa, I am impressed by your knowledge and the information you have on all the problems of our time. Your conversations with people reflect not only what you are and how much love you offer to all, but they also reveal a person of vast knowledge, well informed, on all the subjects that preoccupy us today. I wonder how?

G.G.: Well, didn't I tell you? I become twelve different persons in a single day! These twelve persons keep me abreast of the times.

⁶ St. Andreas, Patission, Athens, 15-2-88