

Holy Hatred

by Fr Lawrence Farley

Lately I came across an interesting bit of theologizing. The author (who shall remain nameless) spoke of his love for Psalm 139 (“one of my absolute favorite psalms”). In it he said that “right smack dab in the middle of this Psalm, King David calls for God to slay his enemies and declares that he has nothing but hatred for them.” He refers, of course, to verse 21: “Do I not hate them who hate You, O Lord? And do I not loathe them that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.” The author contrasts this attitude with Christ’s words about loving one’s enemies, and characterizes the voice of David in this verse as “the sinful voice of a human.” Though he says we ought not to “throw the Old Testament out, nor read it flatly without any discernment,” and though he asserts that while “Psalm 139 is full of inspiration,” he still says, “David’s own paradigm comes through. It’s all [David] knows in his time. He can’t yet apply the awareness of his divine belovedness [sic] to his enemies.” The upshot is that we must “pick and choose in the Bible. Always pick and choose Jesus.” That is, for him some bits in the Scriptures are devoid of inspiration or authority, and ought to be jettisoned since they are merely the voices of sinful humans, men incapable of rising to a divine standard. If something in the Old Testament mirrors the Gospel counsel in the New Testament, it may be allowed to stand. If not, out it goes. It is not the sinful Old Testament author’s fault however; “it’s all he knows in his time.” It is an extraordinary bit of exegesis, worthy of the heretic Marcion himself—or perhaps of the Biblical sceptics that made German theological liberalism so famous in the last century.

It is difficult to deal with the author’s exegesis in any depth, since his thought is not clear. Since he may or may not be capitalizing pronouns referring to God (e.g. “David calls for God to slay his enemies”), it is hard to be sure of his meaning: does he assert that smack dab in the middle of the Psalm King David calls for God to slay *David’s* enemies, or *God’s* enemies? The immediate contrast with Christ’s counsel to love one’s own personal enemies would suggest the former, in which case his exegesis is simply wrong. King David declares his hatred not for his *own* foes, but for *God’s* foes—that is the point of saying that he regards them as if they were his own enemies. If he was talking about his own personal enemies, the verse would make no sense—of course one regards one’s own foes as foes. The point was David’s zeal for God, which impelled him to make God’s cause his own. Though those men were not David’s personal enemies, he regarded them as if they were in his zeal for God.

This bit of confused theologizing is significant because many people fall into the same trap of regarding bits of the Old Testament as unworthy, unspiritual, immoral, and

(frankly) as rather embarrassing. No less a thinker than C. S. Lewis looked at the cursings in the Psalter as something unfortunate, embarrassing, and to be explained away (in his otherwise wonderful book *Reflections on the Psalms*). But a view of Old Testament Scripture which declares that “whoever relaxes one of the least these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven,” and that “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void” [Matthew 5:19, Luke 16:17] will not so easily jettison chunks of those Scriptures. Neither ancient Marcionism nor modern Biblical liberalism are live options for the Orthodox.

And make no mistake: the offending bits are indeed large chunks. Our unnamed author spoke of his favorite Psalm 139, but similar citations could easily be multiplied. Many other parts of the Psalter extol holy hatred of unrighteousness and disgust at those who promote it. Take for example Psalm 119, so valued by the Orthodox that it is constantly used in Matins. Look at verse 53: “Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked who forsake Your Law.” Or look at verse 113: “I hate double-minded men, but I love Your Law.” Or verse 136: “My eyes shed streams of tears because men do not keep Your Law.” Or verse 139: “My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget Your words.” Or verse 158: “I look at the faithless with disgust because they do not keep Your commands.” Such an abundance of antipathy in a psalm which has won such a place in the liturgical tradition of the Church cannot be so easily dismissed by simply suggesting that “it’s all the Psalmist knows in his time,” as if the Holy Spirit found the task of inspiring a sinful Psalmist too daunting. We cannot jettison it as unworthy. The solution to our perceived dilemma must lie elsewhere.

One thing the unnamed author never did was to inquire what the word “hate” meant in the offending verse. He apparently assumed that it meant “to plan to hurt, to retaliate, to strive to inflict pain and misery, to slay.” Christ indeed forbids such a lust for revenge and for gleeful infliction of pain upon one’s personal foes. We must not try to hurt our personal foes—bashing them over the head or keying their car—but simply pray for them and commend them to God. But there is no evidence that the Psalmist in Psalms 139 or 119 was talking about that kind vengeful action.

We may begin by asking what the word “hate” actually means in its Biblical context. Briefly, it means to categorically and emphatically reject. Thus Christ tells us to “hate” our father and mother and wife and children and even our own life if we would truly be His disciples [Luke 14:26]. Obviously He does not mean one should entertain personal loathing for our family or try to hurt them. He means that if it comes down to a choice between family and Christ, we must categorically and

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emphatically reject all the members of our family and their appeals to family loyalty, and choose Christ instead. To hate means to reject. That is also the meaning of God's declaration in Malachi 1:2-3 (quoted in Romans 9:13): "I loved Jacob but I have hated Esau." God did not loathe Esau personally. He "hated" him in that He rejected him as bearer of Abraham's covenant, and confirmed that covenant to his brother Jacob instead.

Understanding this allows us to return to the Psalter with fresh eyes. David (and the author of Psalm 119) were not declaring that they personally loathed wicked and evil men and wanted to hurt them so much as they decisively rejected their evil ways. David was declaring his decision to shun their wicked ways however attractive they might have been and to choose righteousness instead. That is why immediately after saying that he hated God's foes with perfect hatred, he went on to say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the everlasting way." He hated wickedness when he found it in wicked men, and also when he found it in himself, which is why he asked for God's help to root it out from his heart.

The odd exegesis with which this article began provides a cautionary tale. We do not have the liberty to "pick and choose in the Bible." It is all God's Word and must be accepted as "inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" [2 Timothy 3:16]. If something seems to be unfortunate and embarrassing, that is almost certainly a sign that we are missing something and not understanding what it is really saying. The Psalter contains many examples of holy hatred (as do the letters of Saint Paul—see for example 2 Corinthians 11:13f, Galatians 5:12, Philippians 3:2, 18f). Let us imitate this holy hatred and reject decisively the wickedness that abounds in our world. Such a wicked way may also lurk in our own thoughts and hearts. Let us pray that God may search us and root it out.

Minneapolis Cathedral Choir releases new Christmas CD

Saint Mary's Cathedral Choir is pleased to announce the release of its new recording featuring selections of hymns and carols celebrating the Great Feast of our Lord's Nativity. The nearly 60-minute disc includes settings of many popular favorites from the Nativity services celebrated in the Orthodox Church, along with some hymns never before recorded in English. According to Deacon Gregory Ealy, the Cathedral's Music Director, "this recording does something other Christmas
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Venerable Daniel the Stylite of Constantinople

Commemorated on [December 11](#)

Saint Daniel the Stylite was born in the village of Bethara, near the city of Samosata in Mesopotamia. His mother Martha was childless for a long while and in her prayers she vowed that if she had a child, she would dedicate him to the Lord. Her prayers were heard, and Martha soon gave birth to a son, who was without a name until he was five years of age.

The boy's parents desired that since he was born through the good-will of God, he should also receive his name from God. They took their son to a monastery located nearby and approached the igumen. The igumen gave orders to take down one of the service books, and unrolled it at random. He found the Prophet Daniel (December 17) mentioned in it. Thus did the boy receive his name. The parents asked that he might remain at the monastery, but the igumen would not accept him, since he was still only a small boy. At twelve years of age, saying nothing to no one, the child left home for the monastery.

His parents were happy when they learned where their son was, and they went to the monastery. Seeing that he was still going about in his worldly clothes, they besought that the igumen should clothe him in the angelic garb. That Sunday the igumen fulfilled their request, but permitted them often to visit their son. The brethren of the monastery were astonished at the saint's ascetical efforts.

Once, Saint Simeon the Stylite (September 1), visited the monastery. He foretold to the young monk, that he too would undertake the feat of pillar-dwelling. Saint Daniel continued with his ascetic life in seclusion. When the place of a new exploit was revealed to him in a vision, he withdrew into the Thracian wilderness together with two disciples. They set up a pillar, upon which Saint Daniel dwelt for 33 years. People thronged to the pillar, the unfortunate and those who were sick, and all received help and healing from Saint Daniel. Byzantine emperors also sought the prayers of the holy ascetic. The most notable of the saint's predictions was about a great fire in Constantinople. Saint Daniel possessed also the gift of gracious words. He guided many onto the path of correcting their lives. The monk reposed in his eightieth year.

Finding “Snatches of Silence”

By Fr. Steven Kostoff

Several years ago, *Newsweek* magazine carried an article written by Julia Baird under the rubric of psychology, titled “The Devil Loves Cell Phones”—a rather unexpected and somewhat jarring title considering the secular orientation of such a mass media journal as *Newsweek*. The article was a one-page commentary based upon a review of a new book by Sara Maitland, titled *A Book of Silence*. Baird begins by reminding us that “in the Middle Ages, Christian scholars believed that Satan did not want human beings to be alone with God, or with each other, fully alert and listening.” She then quotes Maitland, who makes the provocative statement that the mobile or cell phone is a “major breakthrough for the powers of hell.” We are further informed that Maitland “spent more than a decade pursuing silence like a hunter its prey.” As part of this pursuit, Maitland spend 40 days—a perfect choice of time period!—“in an isolated house on a windy moor” in Scotland. Maitland writes, “I am convinced that as a whole society we are losing something precious in our increasingly silence-avoiding culture, and that somehow, whatever silence might be, it needs holding, nourishing and unpacking.” She claims that her physical sensations were heightened—her porridge tasted better and she “heard different notes in the wind, was more sensitive to temperature, and emotional.” Beyond that, she “experienced great happiness, felt connected with the cosmos; was exhilarated by the risk and peril in what she was doing; and discovered a fierce joy, or bliss.”

Baird then comments on the over-all impact of the book. “It is a strikingly refreshing book to read, in the midst of the clamor and din, ever-mounting distraction, yelling TV pundits, solipsistic tweeting, and flash-card sentiment of our Internet age,” she writes. “It made me realize what a profound longing many of us have for silence, how hard it is to find, and how easily we forget how much we need it.” A contention from Maitland sounds like something I would read in an article about Orthodox Christian hesychasm from Metropolitan Kallistos Ware: “Maitland rails against the idea of silence as void, absence, and lack—insisting it is positive and nurturing, and something more profound that must be actively sought.” Silence, for the saint, allows us to hear “the still, small voice of God,” as did the Prophet Elijah on Mount Horeb. This is the key to genuine prayer.

Julia Baird rails a bit more against our noisy culture, observing how “we often talk about distraction, and the banality of a culture that seems to smother deep thought or time-sucking contemplation—we tweet sneezes, we blink and record it for our friends, we sprint to be the first to speak. The anonymity of the Internet has been replaced by hyper-identity; the idea of shutting up and staring at a rock, piles of sand, or blinking stars for hours, if not weeks

seems profoundly countercultural.”

I would add that a 40-day fasting period before the Great Feast of our Lord’s Nativity sounds real countercultural! The volume will intensify in the days leading to Christmas. And not a whole lot of that noise will be in praise of the mystery of the Incarnation. Perhaps we can find some snatches of silence amidst the cacophony of sounds that will swirl around us. We may begin by limiting our cell phones to necessary calls, and not allow it to be a toy in our fidgety hands combined with a need to be distracted. The cell phone is fast becoming a “security blanket.” Baird includes in her article this passage from C. S. Lewis’ fascinating work, *The Screwtape Letters*, in which we “hear” of hell’s furious noise—“the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless and virile.... We will make the whole universe a noise.... We have already made great strides in this direction regards the earth. The melodies and silences of heaven will be shouted down in the end.”

It may prove to be difficult, but maybe we can find a way not to add to that ungodly din.

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recordings have not attempted. It presents Orthodox hymnography from the liturgical year that foreshadows and prepares the Church for the incarnation of Christ.”

The disc includes hymns from the feasts of the Annunciation, Saint Andrew and Saint Nicholas and selections of prefestal chants. Tracks are also included from the festal Vigil and Divine Liturgy, including the troparion (cathedral chant), kontakion (Bortniansky) and communion hymn (Carpatho-Russian chant).

“In a very real way, this recording takes the listener on a liturgical journey from the Annunciation to Christmas by way of the Church’s hymnography,” Deacon Gregory said.

The disc also features a variety of carols – many familiar to those of Slavic ancestry – and concludes with four carols written by American Orthodox composers, reflecting the beauty and richness of Orthodox Christianity in 21st century North America.

According to Dr. Vladimir Morosan of Musica Russica, “this enjoyable CD is a marvelous documentary of the venerable traditions of Saint Mary’s Choir, one of the longest-standing Orthodox church choirs in North America.”

The choir is celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2016, and the recording is the newest in a long line of recordings and public performances from the 70-plus **con’t Page 10**

Metropolitan interviewed con't

Towards this end, the faithful of North America place their hope, not 'in princes or sons of men,' but in prayer which purifies the heart. As Saint Theophan the Recluse writes, 'Prayer is the test of everything; prayer is also the source of everything.... If prayer is right, everything is right.' May the intercessions of Saint Herman, the first saint to be glorified in North America, and all the monastic saints of Russia and all the world continue to inspire Your Holiness with this spirit of prayer in your faithful service to our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ as the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for many years."

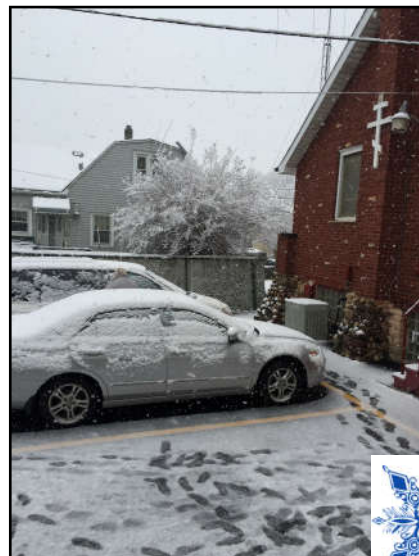
Before returning to the US, Metropolitan Tikhon was received at the US Embassy by Honorable John Teft, US Ambassador to the Russian Federation, and Mr. David Horn. Ambassador Teft offered his condolences on the repose of Archimandrite Alexander and discussed prospects for the appointment of his successor. After discussing with Ambassador Teft a wide range of topics, including the US presidential election, the current role of religion in American life, and related topics, Metropolitan Tikhon presented a copy of the recently published book, *Saint Tikhon of Moscow: Instructions and Teachings for the American Orthodox Faithful*, and an icon of the Mother of God to Ambassador Teft.

"Our visit made it possible for me to meet and speak with the Primates and representatives from the Sister Churches—a rare yet highly welcomed opportunity," said Metropolitan Tikhon upon his return to the US. "I was especially happy to speak with His Beatitude, Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland about the possibility of organizing a pilgrimage of OCA faithful to the relics of Saint Maxim Sandowicz in southeastern Poland and others who extended similar invitations."

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member mixed ensemble. The choir's men's chorale recently presented a benefit concert for Saint Vladimir's Seminary, and the full choir will be presenting its annual Advent concert at the cathedral at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 10, 2016. The concert is free and open to the public.

A [sampler of the CD is available](#) along with a link to purchase the disc for \$18.00 plus shipping and handling. Bookstore discounts are available by emailing choir@stmarysoca.org for a promo code.



First Snow fall

