



Brief Patristic Messages



The Three States

*His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

THE DIVINELY-INSPIRED Holy Fathers teach us that Christians fall into three categories:

- a) those who exercise their passions;
- b) those who restrain their passions; and
- c) those who uproot their passions.

There are pitiable people who groan under the heavy burden of their passions. In no way whatever do they counteract their sinful passions and that which the Devil, by means thereof, evokes in them. Their sin thus becomes a formidable habit and an inhuman tyrant. These are those who exercise their passions.

In the second category belong all of those who sorrow because they are impassioned, withstand their passions, surmount the dangers, but do not cut off the passions—that is, they do not act in opposition to them; they do not employ a therapeutic treatment.

Finally, there are those who, by the Grace of our Lord, consciously fight the spiritual fight without concessions or compromises, who uproot their sinful passions with the work of unceasing prayer and, in general, by the Divine virtues; and they, by means of purification, proceed towards illumination and deification.

One simple example:

- Someone insults and humiliates us without reason. We become agitated, flare up, return the insult, constantly remember the evil which he has done to us, and judge him. In this way, we are held in the clutches of resentment and hatred of our brother.

- It could be the case, however, that though we are inwardly sorrowful, we struggle not to answer back. We are possibly defeated in the struggle or carried away by habit, but then we let it go at that. We would, in that case, belong to the second category of those who restrain themselves.

- If, on the other hand, we rejoice that we have been insulted, and if we condemn ourselves and are sorrowful that we were the reason that our brother was troubled and upset, then we are in a God-pleasing spiritual state.

Abba Dorotheos of Gaza says that he who exercises his passion resembles a person at whom the enemy is shooting arrows, and he takes them and thrusts them himself into his heart. As for the one who restrains his passion, he resembles the person at whom the enemy is shooting, but who has put on a breastplate and is not wounded by the arrows. But he who uproots the passions resembles the person who takes the arrows and breaks them, or returns them into the heart of his enemy.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ: now that we are in the midst of the Light of the Resurrection, let us resolve at least not to exercise our passions in the future; that will constitute a sure foundation such that, with the help of the *Theotokos* and our partaking of the Immaculate Mysteries, we may arrive at the state of those who uproot the passions for the Kingdom of Heaven.

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