



The Prophet of Suffering Roman Hellenism

In Memory of Photios Kontoglou

The Life and Writings of Photios Kontoglou *

- 1895** Photios Kontoglou is born on 8 November in Aivali in Asia Minor (Kydonia). His parents are Nicolaos Apostolleles and Despoina Kontoglou, and his siblings: Ioannis, Anastasia, and Antony.
- 1896** His father dies. His mother's brother—and Abbot of the Holy Monastery of St. Paraskeve—, Stephanos Kontoglou (whose name our author would take early on), assumes responsibility for his upbringing, as well as for that of his three siblings.
- 1911** Together with his fellow students, he publishes and distributes a mimeograph edition of *The Bee*, with his own sketches and ornamentation.
- 1912** He graduates from the historic high school of Aivali.
- 1913** He arrives in Athens to study at the School of Fine Arts, where he is placed directly in the third year.
- 1914** He leaves both Athens and the School of Fine Arts and goes to Spain and France.
- 1916** While in Paris, he paints and contributes to the journal *Illustration*, by which he is awarded a prize for his illustration of Knut Hamsun's novel, *Hunger*.
- 1919** After the signing of the armistice, he returns to Aivali, where he founds the spiritual society "New People" with his friends.

- 1920** He is appointed professor of Art History and French at Aivali's old and renowned girls' school. It is here that he first publishes *Pedro Cazas* (writing "Paris" in the place of publication, in order to inform us that the work was written in the French capital before he returned to his native homeland).
- 1921** He is conscripted in the army, but after a few months returns to his position at the girls' school.
- 1922** He puts on his first painting exhibition in Mytilene. He then leaves for Athens, where he takes up residence. Impressed by *Pedro Cazas*, the literary and artistic crowd welcomes him with open arms and helps him through the first difficult period. Publishes *Pedro Cazas* with H. Ganiares.
- 1923** He visits the Holy Mountain, where he writes and paints. Returning to Athens, he publishes the first (undated) edition of *Vasanta*. Puts on his first painting exhibition in Athens. Publishes *The Art of Athos* with Ganiares; Angelos Theodoropoulos helps him with the wood engravings.
- 1924** With some other friends of his, he publishes *The Society of Friends*, a periodical for art and critical analysis. He is married to Maria (née Hatzekamboure) in the Church of St. Glykeria (in Galatsi, Athens).
- 1928** He publishes *Travels*, a descriptive account of what remains from the Byzantine Era in various regions of Greece and the East; the work would be reissued by "Asterá" in 1978.
- 1931** He becomes the curator of Byzantine Icons at the Byzantine Museum of Athens.
- 1933** He is appointed Professor of Art History and Painting at the American College. His *Frescos of the Byzantine Churches of Hymettus* is published by the Monasteries of St. John the Theologian and Caesariene.
- 1934** He writes *Astrolabe* ("in the village of Prokopi, on the island of Evia, in the month of July 1934"), which would be printed the following year in Corfu and, in 1975, in Athens (by "Asterá").
- 1935** He organizes the Byzantine Museum in Corfu. Paints the frescos for the Church belonging to the Zaimes family in

Rio, outside of Patras.

- 1936** He works in Mystras, cleaning and preserving the Byzantine frescos.
- 1937** He works in the Coptic Museum in Cairo.
- 1938** He begins the illustration (using Greek subjects) of the City Hall of Athens. Paints the frescos for G. I. Pezmazoglou's Church (in Kifisia).
- 1940** He paints the frescos for the Church of the Life-Giving Spring in Paiania (Liopesi).
- 1942** He publishes the book *Famous and Forgotten Men*.
- 1943** He paints frescos in Kapnikarea (Athens). Publishes the book *Conan the God and His Monastery, the So-Called "Sinking."*
- 1944** He publishes the books *The Tale of a Ship; Stories and Circumstances; Africa and the South Seas*; and the third edition of *Pedro Cazas*. Decides to devote himself zealously to the writing of traditional religious literature and prints *The Mystical Garden*, "written and printed in the renowned city of Athens."
- 1945** He publishes the book *The Ancient Peoples of the East*.
- 1947** His book, *Life and Conduct of Vlasios Paschal, the Fool-for-Christ*,¹ is reprinted and released by "Nea Estia," as well as his book (handwritten and illustrated by the author), *Life and Asceticism of Our Holy Father Mark the Anchorite of Athens*.
- 1949** The book, *Blossoms: An Anthology of Sayings of the Fathers*, is released.
- 1950** He begins the "Sunday Subjects" series with the Athens journal *Eleftheria*, which would be continued until his repose. Paints in the Church of Saint George, a chapel of St Constantine (Omonia); in Saint Andrew (Kato Patesia), and in St. Barbara (Aigaleo).
- 1951** He publishes the book *The Source of Life: Words of the God-Bearing Fathers explained according to one's ability*.²
- 1952** He issues (with Basil Moustakes as co-editor) *The Ark*, a "tract of Orthodox teachings," in which he publishes a large number of articles and translations. Notable is "The Holy

Gospel According to St. Matthew,” which he would also distribute independently with his own iconography, as well as “Icons of the *Panagia*.” Translates and publishes the book *Icon* by Leonid Ouspensky, a Russian painter friend of his who was then living in Paris and teaching at the Orthodox Institute of Paris.

- 1954** He begins the iconography of the Church of St. Haralampos (in Polygonos, in the Field of Mars district).
- 1955** In Thessaloniki, he issues his small book, *The Life and Conduct of the Glorious Holy Martyr Therapon*.
- 1956** He issues *Liturgical Art: Or Byzantine Painting*.
- 1957** He issues *Sanctified Greece*.
- 1958** He begins working on the frescos for the Churches of St. Nicholas (Kato Patesia) and St. George (Kypseli). Issues the book, *The Holy Mountains*.
- 1960** He is awarded the Academy of Athens Prize for his two-volume work: *Expressions of Orthodox Iconography*. Is awarded the [Cross of] Commander [of the Order] of Phoenix.
- 1961** He issues (in reprint) his small book *Saints Raphael and Nicholas* and “The Hopelessness of Death in Western Religious Art and the Peace-Bestowing and Profoundly Hopeful Orthodox Iconography.”
- 1962** He issues his book *A Great Sign, to wit, the Miracles of Therme: The Splendid Apparition of the Holy Martyrs Raphael, Nicholas, and Irene and Those Martyred With Them in 1462...*, and also the first and second volumes of his *Works*.
- 1963** While walking with his wife in Athens, he is injured by a car, which drags them along quite a few meters. Issues the third volume of his *Works* and is awarded the “Pourfina” Prize by the [Council of the] Twelve [Apostles] for the first volume of his *Works*.
- 1964** He issues (in two editions within the same year) his book *What is Orthodoxy and What is Papism*.
- 1965** He issues the fourth volume of his *Works*. Is awarded the National Prize for Art and Literature by the Academy of Athens.
- 1965** On 13 July (New Style) he departs to the Lord. He is buried

in the First Cemetery of Athens, from which his bones are later transferred to his beloved monastery in Nea Makri (on Mt. Amomon).



(*) Source: **P.V. Paschou**, *Kontoglou*. An introduction to his works of literature with an anthology of his texts in the appendix (Athens: Ekdoseis “Armos,” 1991).

¹ In 1976, it was published together with *Source of Life* in a single volume by the publishing house “Aster.”

² *Ibid.*