



The Path to Salvation: A Manual of Spiritual Transformation

By St. Theophan the Recluse

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Patristic literature provides an age-old, tried and tested model of spiritual life, foreign to fleeting fashions. Throughout the last two thousand years, Christ has raised up patristic writers who have defended that original model. In modern times, however, this model is being pushed aside, the taste for genuine mystical expression is disappearing, and the initial Christian impetus is being disfigured.

That is why the works of St. Theophan the Recluse are so vital for today. He keeps the ancient patristic model sharp and clear, presenting it in modern language. He speaks to contemporary people who have been exposed to new realities, and thus renders inestimable help in linking them to the original Christian impetus and revealing to them the way into the Heavenly Kingdom.

The works of St. Theophan changed the spiritual face of Russia in the 19th century. With the publication of his greatest work, THE PATH TO SALVATION, the English-speaking world now has the opportunity to benefit likewise from this powerful inheritance to the people of the modern age.

Saint Theophan the Recluse is first and foremost a Church Father for modern times. Deeply aware of the roots of the modern age, he reinterprets ancient patristic wisdom in order to adapt it to the needs of the modern unchurched mind, which has been divorced from the Orthodox philosophy of life and even from the rudimentary principles of practical Christianity.

This classic textbook of spiritual life, now being offered in its entirety for the first time in English, seems to have been sent directly to today's readers by the great Russian recluse himself. Every line breathes his profound psychological understanding, his intricate experience in spiritual struggle, and above all his love, compassion and all-consuming desire that every person might be saved. Inspiring the reader with a sober longing for acquiring the Kingdom of Heaven, St. Theophan provides an infallible system for taking the Kingdom by force, in a Christian life of grace and repentance.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #145553 in Books
- Published on: 1997-07-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x 5.25" w x .75" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 366 pages



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Editorial Review

Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Russian

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If the main goal of the repentant sinner should be total, light-bearing and blessed communion with God, then the main hindrance to this is the existence of the passions still active and working in him--the virtues being as yet unsealed in him--and the unrighteousness of his powers. Therefore his main work upon conversion and repentance should be the uprooting of passions and sealing the virtues--in a word, correcting himself.

In the kingdom of God there should not be anyone acting from himself; God should be acting in everything. This cannot happen as long as freedom stands for itself--it denies and turns away God's power. This stubborn resistance to God's power will only cease when our free, or self-acting, individual will and activity fall down before Him; when we pronounce the resolute prayer: "Do Thou, O Lord, do in me as Thou wilt, for I am blind and weak."

We must fulfill the commandments--all of them. But we do not naturally have the desire, fervor and zeal for this. This fire is kindled in our spirit by God's grace through repentance, for the sake of a contrite spirit and the promise to do God's will. This itself is the strength for keeping the commandments, and it alone is capable of keeping them all the time. If the fulfillment of the commandments is the foundation for salvation, then the spirit of zeal is our only saving power. Wherever it is present there is diligence, care, fervor, readiness, alacrity to do works pleasing to God. Where it is absent, everything ceases and falls away--there is no life of the spirit, and everything runs cold and dies. Though there may be good works, they will be only good in form, but not in power and spirit. This is that same fire that our Lord Jesus Christ came to kindle upon the earth, which lights the hearts of the faithful, through the Holy Spirit...

The principal thing is to walk before God, or under God's eye, aware that God is looking at you, searching your soul and your heart, seeing all that is there. This awareness is the most powerful lever in the mechanism of the inner spiritual life.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alan Johnson:

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