

THE MOTHER OF GOD RESURRECTS A NESTORIAN

—from the book *The Salvation of Sinners*—

During the first centuries, many regions in Syria were populated by a great number of ascetics, as the warm climate of this region allowed the monks to live a simple life with the few provisions. At that time, there lived amongst these ascetics a holy and virtuous hermit named Parthenios who had the habit of visiting Mount Sinai often, in order to venerate the burning bush, which symbolized the Ever-Virgin Mary. He also liked to walk along the Red Sea, which had similarly foreshadowed the ever-virginity of the Mother of God, chanting various hymns to the Theotokos, such as, “In the Red Sea an image of the unwed bride had been depicted...”

During one such pilgrimage, he came across a corpse that had washed up on the shore. Moved to compassion at this sorrowful sight, he fervently prayed to the Lord to have mercy on this deceased man, through the prayers and intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos. As he was directing his petitions to Christ, the dead man unexpectedly came back to life! The resurrected person then proceeded to prostrate himself before Parthenios, exclaiming: “I thank you, O saint of God! For on account of the great piety and love you have for God and His Ever-Virgin Mother, I the unworthy one, in addition to many others, have been saved from spiritual death.” Parthenios then asked him: “I adjure you in the name of the Most-Holy Theotokos—tell me who you are, and how you have benefited.” The man replied: “Yes, O servant of God! It is only proper that this miraculous work be proclaimed throughout the entire world—for it is an exceptionally wondrous act of the Ever-Virgin Mary, the true Mother of God.”

“I, unfortunately, had been influenced by the heresy of the impious heretic Nestorios to such an extent, that whenever I would hear people referring to the Virgin Mary as the Theotokos, I would become annoyed and would contend that it was a grave sin to call any woman Theotokos. Some days ago, I had embarked on a journey by sea to Jerusalem. On the ship, there was a certain pious individual who, upon discovering that I was a Nestorian, persistently advised me to abandon my heresy. I, however, argued with him, and attempted to prove that my belief was correct. We gradually entered into a huge debate and started to have a heated exchange of words. The sailors who were watching intervened and separated a few times us. However, we continued our altercation, which

eventually escalated into a scuffle. Unaware of our position on the boat, we both fell over into the sea. As I became submerged and slowly sank deeper into the water, there appeared a glorious woman enveloped in light. This lady grabbed the other man by the hand, and said to him: 'I will not allow you to drown because you are my faithful servant, and you were defending my name. I will take you to Jerusalem, where you will venerate the tomb of my Son, as you desired. And after three years, you will ascend to His heavenly Kingdom.' She then pulled him out of the ocean and set him on the dry land. I do not know what happened to him after that; but I assume that she took him to Jerusalem, just as she had promised. In following, as the Virgin turned to leave, the sea, which up to that point had been parted into two walls, came together again and covered me once more. In following, demons took my wretched soul to hell. There, I witnessed a vast multitude of people woefully anathematizing Nestorios, who had become the cause of their punishment. That is where I was suffering as well, up until the moment the Mother of God reappeared to me and said: 'Come! For my servant Parthenios has prayed for you. Tell him to no longer petition for my enemies. And henceforth proclaim what you have seen to the Nestorians.' Upon hearing this, my soul returned to my body."

"Therefore, I thank you, O saint of God. And I ask you to, please, through chrismation reunite me with the Orthodox Church. I now deny the fallacy of the Nestorian heresy, and wholeheartedly confess that the Ever Virgin Mary is truly Theotokos. I beseech her to accept me as her servant, and ask for her mercy to allow me to serve her for the remainder of my life, despite my unworthiness." Hearing this, the saint rejoiced greatly, and together they departed for Jerusalem, where they found the above mentioned pious man. The three of them subsequently returned to the desert, where they served the Lord together until the end of their lives, and, having led a holy and angelic way of life, they were counted worthy of the heavenly blessedness. May we all attain it. Amen.