

## **The more you progress in the spiritual life, the more the temptations and spiritual mistakes increase within you**

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Today, it's more necessary than ever to remind people that the final source of evil is in the spiritual life. Spirituality isn't simply purity and moral stature. In the most hidden-away region of the spirit, there are always two sides: one light and one dark, as the Russian theologian Vassili Zenkovski so clearly set out (*The Problems of Education in the Light of Christian Anthropology*, Paris 1934, p. 110). This dualism in the essence of the spirit isn't immediately obvious to those who aren't completely familiar with the spiritual life, to those who are still concerned with the external, superficial life. But the more you progress in the spiritual life, liberated from submission to the external life, the more the temptations and spiritual mistakes increase within you. The further we scale the spiritual heights, the more the wheat of good intentions is intermingled with the chaff.

And it's very common for the chaff to come out on top. The further we rise above common sins, in the body, the more we feel tempted to deify ourselves because of

our personal victory, which we think is so great; the more we offer incense to our personal powers; and the more we're estranged from God. If perfection rested on everyday spirituality, on self-control until the lower, external enticements were killed off, how many philosophers and sages, how many atheists and how many adherents of man-made systems for organizing our external life, would have been saved, despite the fact they scorned the very idea of God and presented themselves as examples of proof that people can be saved without the help of God. But even if the leap from a life full of bodily abuses to one of extreme spirituality without divine providence does exist, protection from spiritual evil is still impossible without God. This internal improvement of a person alone is enough to justify the teaching that, without God, we can do nothing.



The bright side of spirituality is the dominion of humility before God; on the dark side it is pride that is main demand, together with abandonment of God. So it's clear why the bright side of spirituality within you cannot defeat the dark until you accept God, until you bow to His majesty, until you seek His aid. The more humble you are, humble before God, and the more your pride falls away, the more the bright spirituality casts out the dark. Perfect humility means total acceptance of God, the conviction that everything you achieve, you achieve with God's help. Perfect humility means a complete eradication of pride, of the conviction that *you* do what you do, that you're superior to others, that you have no need of God and other people for your own beatitude, for the task you wish to accomplish. Excessive

pride means denial of God, rejection of other people and the complete victory of the dark side of the spirit.

Apart from anything else, humility is the most productive virtue of the bright side of spirituality, of moral beauty. It is what produces love of God and of other people, expelling from within us the great enemies of love, pride and contempt, and showing us God and our neighbours as being worthy of our attention and love.

Humility experiences a moment of sublime elevation into the mystery of repentance. Then it achieves a splendid victory over our own pride. But it's a costly one. Hesitantly, stumbling over our expression and words, we raise the cudgel to deal the final blow to our pride, to our reputation in our own eyes. We perform a painful, harrowing operation, as if we were extinguishing our very self.

Herein lies the importance of repentance, in this seismic shift in our spirituality through the most difficult operation: the death of our pride and the encouragement of humility. The most precise and technical enumeration of our external transgressions has no value in itself, but only if, by doing so, we accomplish this seismic shift which shakes the whole of our being. This is why it's not only those who commit particular sins who are in need of the mystery of repentance, but, even more so, those 'spiritual' people who, no matter how closely they examine their past, find nothing in it to condemn. It's precisely in these people that pride has swollen most and therefore humility has to effect an even greater shake-up. An intellectual is no less in need of the mystery of repentance than any ordinary person. Spiritual evil is more pervasive than corporeal.

The wisdom of the Church has placed the mystery of repentance at the end of the fast. This shows us that, after our elevation above our bodily excesses, we have to heal the spirit, too. Because it's not the body alone that sins. It may be that some, after strict observance of the commandment to fast, believe that they're purified of their sins. The Church reminds them that there's a sin of the spirit, against which we strike the heaviest blow with the mystery of repentance.

Only after the victory of this bright side of spirituality does the Church allow us to approach the new age of the world: life after the Resurrection.