



The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality

By Kyriacos C. Markides

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An acclaimed expert in Christian mysticism travels to a monastery high in the Trodos Mountains of Cyprus and offers a fascinating look at the Greek Orthodox approach to spirituality that will appeal to readers of Carlos Castaneda.

In an engaging combination of dialogues, reflections, conversations, history, and travel information, Kyriacos C. Markides continues the exploration of a spiritual tradition and practice little known in the West he began in *Riding with the Lion*. His earlier book took readers to the isolated peninsula of Mount Athos in northern Greece and into the group of ancient monasteries. There, in what might be called a “Christian Tibet,” two thousand monks and hermits practice the spiritual arts to attain a oneness with God. In his new book, Markides follows Father Maximos, one of Mount Athos’s monks, to the troubled island of Cyprus. As Father Maximos establishes churches, convents, and monasteries in this deeply divided land, Markides is awakened anew to the magnificent spirituality of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Images of the land and the people of Cyprus and details of its tragic history enrich the Mountain of Silence. Like the writings of Castaneda, the book brilliantly evokes the confluence of an inner and outer journey. The depth and richness of its spiritual message echo the thoughts and writings of Saint Francis of Assisi and other great saints of the Church as well. The result is a remarkable work—a moving, profoundly human examination of the role and the power of spirituality in a complex and confusing world.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The spiritual traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church are all but unknown to most Christians in the West, who often think of Christianity as split into two camps: Bible-based Protestantism and sacramental Catholicism. Yet in *The Mountain of Silence*, sociologist Kyriacos Markides suggests that Orthodox spirituality offers rich resources for Western Christians to integrate the head and the heart, and to regain a more expansive view of Christian life. The book combines elements of memoir, travelogue, and history in a single story. Markides journeys to a cluster of monasteries on Mount Athos, an isolated peninsula in northern Greece and one of the holiest sites in the Orthodox tradition. He also visits the troubled island of Cyprus, largely occupied by Turkey since 1974, and makes the acquaintance of a monk named Father Maximos, who has established churches, convents, and monasteries. Markides, a native Cypriot, tells the tale of this journey in a tone that's loose and light, with many excursions on Church history and Greek and Turkish politics. But despite the easygoing tone, the importance of this book is potentially immense. *The Mountain of Silence* introduces a world that is entirely new to many Western readers, and unveils a Christian tradition that reveres the mystical approach to God as much as the rational, a tradition that Markides says "may have the potential to inject Christianity with the new vitality that it so desperately needs." --Michael Joseph Gross

From Publishers Weekly

Markides, a Maine sociologist who was raised in the Greek Orthodox faith and later drifted into agnosticism, continues his spiritual journey homeward in this collection of captivating conversations with the monk Father Maximos. The book is set on the island of Cyprus, where the author and his monastic mentor spent extended periods of time together due to unexpected circumstances that moved Father Maximos from the "Holy Mountain" of Mount Athos. Markides (*Riding with the Lion*), his interest piqued by an earlier pilgrimage to Mount Athos, used a sabbatical from the University of Maine to further explore the body of Christian mysticism that Mount Athos's monks have preserved since the ninth century. Here, Markides and others pepper the charismatic Maximos with questions on a wide range of topics from angels, saints and demons to the role of icons in worship and the place of hell in Christian belief. Markides is a skillful and skeptical inquisitor whose queries surely must have tried the patience of his mentor. But Maximos rises to the occasion, providing gentle, thoughtful answers that by necessity often transcend the Western mind's reliance on logic in spiritual matters. Markides's work is an excellent resource for spiritual seekers of all levels, answering questions about Christianity in general and Eastern monasticism in particular. It will be of special interest to those who may be unaware of Christianity's deep roots in mysticism.

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From Library Journal

In a familiar, conversational style, Markides (sociology, Univ. of Maine) continues the spiritual discourse with Greek priest and monk Father Maximos begun in his earlier work, *Riding with the Lion* (LJ 1/95). In passages reminiscent of Bill Moyers's now famous interviews with religionist Joseph Campbell (published as *The Power of Myth*, Doubleday, 1988), Markides questions the monk, using his long, discursive responses to deepen his focus on Orthodox spirituality and practice, defend the monasticism of Mt. Athos (where Father Maximos resides), and explore topics like saints, the long Orthodox liturgies, faith healing, miracles, and many other mainstays of traditional Orthodoxy. Often blurring the distinction between participant and observer, Markides serves more as the spiritual seeker's muse than as a true guide to Orthodox faith and

practice: he very much believes that "the mystical and miracle tradition of the holy elders" stands as the true Christian antidote to the scientific rationalism of Western Christianity. Readers without a background in Orthodoxy will be helped somewhat by the glossary but will find this hard going. Recommended only for collections already strong in Orthodox materials. Sandra Collins, Duquesne Univ. Lib., Pittsburgh
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Roy Brown:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with good friends is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not feeling tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality, it is possible to enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh occur its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

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