

Dead Reddit / The "Isms" Thread

Post by "Elli" of December 9, 2019 at 10:52 AM

"Ionic", by C.P Cavafy

That we've broken their statues,
that we've driven them out of their temples,
doesn't mean at all that the gods are dead.
O land of Ionia, they're still in love with you,
their souls still keep your memory.

Cavafy will write in his poem Ionic. A statement of the eternally Greek Cavafy who invariably perceived christians as the plague of Greece. Christians should not hasten to count Cavafy as one of their own. For they will be deluded. Everybody and his dog will laugh at them. Cavafy is a stranger to christianity, as strange as a midnight sun. In 1929, four years before he died, he will declare his final verdict in the poem Myris:

I felt that he, a Christian, was united with his own people
and that I was becoming a stranger, a total stranger... and had always been a stranger.

Three times he underlines that word. Even marking it with that irrevocable always. Three cries [Τρὶς ἄχεν]. Thrice did Achilles raise his mighty cry over the trench, and thrice did the Trojans and their horses shudder and turn back. When Cavafy underlines something there is a good reason. In his entire body of work he has only underlined a total of eight words. Now, on the other hand, there are many passages in his work where he declares his christianity in a genuine and telling manner. I love the church, he says. And he speaks of the glory of Byzantium. About chalices and grails, incense burners and chants, the cross, the invocations, the litanies and the candelabras. His verses are awash with mitres, priestly tiaras and the robes of monks.

Deviousness, dear reader. Deviousness and pretence. All such references are like the ink of a squid, to muddle the water. Like Themistocles and his servant, so that the Medes would think he had joined them. In order to gain a "free pass" he had to pretend to be one of them. Yet he is always on the side of the Lacedaemonians, as he makes it known at their Thermopylae.

The issue of what kind of relationship Cavafy maintained with christianity can only be understood only when considered from its very beginnings. Cavafy differentiates himself at the root from all other Greek poets who profess the Greek orthodox spirit. Solomos, for example, Kalvos, Palamas, Seferis, Elytis, and other notable individuals. Even in the asymmetrical and

inadequate case of Kazantzakis. Because the writings of Kazantzakis, with Jesus and christianity as a reference point, when compared to the work of Cavafy, are nothing but the scribblings of a toddler. Literally.

Liantinis Dimitris from his book "Gemma"

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