

GEORGIA ON MY MIND

Or
The South Shall Rise Again!
by
Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston

On this beautiful Spring day, the feast of the Holy Great Martyr, Saint George, I was thinking about the land of Georgia, and I recalled an incident that happened fourteen years ago, and I wanted to share it with you. There was to be an exhibit, "The Glory of Byzantium," displaying Byzantine art at the Museum of Fine Arts in New York City. So, a carload of monks from Boston headed south on a four-hour trip to the Big Apple to see it. I, too, went along, because this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to see ancient icons from so many countries, all in one place!

Well, we were not disappointed. There were icons from many Mediterranean countries, Serbia, Bulgaria, the Sinai desert, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Georgia, and even Spain. What a feast for the eyes and the soul!!

As I was making my way around the exhibits, I came to one modest display, featuring icons from the ancient land of Georgia. Two elderly ladies were standing in front of me, looking at the same exhibit. Then, after a few moments, one of the women turned to the other, and said to her companion in a puzzled voice: "Gosh, I wonder how the Byzantines got all the way across the Atlantic!"

I suppressed a chuckle (In my mind I could see a Byzantine sea captain exhorting his exhausted crew: "Keep on rowing, boys, Dixie has to be here someplace!")

At this point, I leaned over and said to the ladies: "I think they mean the Georgia south of Russia." The ladies turned and said, "Oh, thank you so much!"

So much for the study of geography in the United States!

Then (since this year is also the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the American War Between the States), there is also the incident that occurred when I finally visited the Republic of Georgia in the late 1990's.

The fall of the Soviet Union was on everybody's mind, and pro-American sentiments were running high among the Georgian peoples. So, one Georgian gentleman asked me pointedly, "Your Eminence, isn't there any way Georgia could become a part of the United States?"

A delicate question for an Orthodox bishop from America!

So, tactfully and cautiously, I answered: "Well, I think it might be a little difficult. You see, we already *have* a Georgia, and furthermore, I believe our neighbors to the north might get a little nervous."

Ah!, those Northerners are always nothing but trouble for the Georgians!

But, take courage! The South shall rise again!

And so will everybody else.

Christ is risen!