

Nino the Captive Leads a Whole Nation

A Missionary Personality



Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
One God, Amen

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THE JOYFUL CAPTIVE

Rufinus said that during the beginning of the fourth century, there was a virgin captive in Georgia. When the soldiers of king Mirian were on their way from Rome, they passed by a small village in Georgia. There was a monastery for nuns called Aghasonika. Out side the monastery they found a nun standing alone, her name was Theognosta. They liked her and therefore they abducted her.

She was not sad or worried because of the circumstances that she found herself in; but she rejoiced thankfully retaining her peace and calmness. She had trained herself since her early childhood to practice a heavenly life. Even when she worked as an aid at one of the noble houses; she was still happy. Everyone that she worked with in the castle, along with her lady, was amazed at her peaceful, joyful and smiling face. She was always content. It was a though she lived in paradise.

God had granted her grace in her lady's eyes; therefore she promoted her as a supervisor for all the aides. But her heart was busy with the heavenly life. She continued to practice her ascetic life seriously. She won the admiration and respect of everyone; including all the aides and their families. All of them found happiness in talking to her.

People began to talk about her and how they all felt like she was the happiest person in all of Georgia.



Her purity and chastity had a great influence on everyone. Whenever she was asked about her faith; she would simply answer them saying “I worship Christ my God”

THE FEARFUL GOD

With a sad heart, she watched her lady, along with all the people of Georgia, offer offerings every morning and night to the fearful god called Amazi. He carried a sword to bring victory to Georgia. The people believed that he had the power of the sun, the life giver. None of them would dare touch the statue in fear that they would die.

This type of worship had its impact on the lives of everyone including the children who made swords out of wood trying to imitate their god. This type of atmosphere disturbed family life, because they were raised with the spirit of fighting.

In spite of everything that was happening around her, she still kept her peace. People noticed that she did not offer sacrifices like them and that her face did not display fearful feelings like that on other faces especially during the ceremonies. She did not stop praying for the salvation of all the people of Georgia and the rest of the world. Sometimes she would think, how did Satan attract the hearts of all of these people to worship such a violent god and worship the sun. How she wished that they would taste the sweetness of Christ, the Giver of peace and Creator of the sun.

Whenever anyone asked her about her source of joy, she would start talking to him or her about Christ. How he fulfilled all of the godly promises, which were written in the Old and the New testaments. People were amazed at this loving God who loves everyone including them and what at the great difference between Him and their god.



A CHILD IS HEALED

One night a noble woman came crying and her heart was very bitter. She asked to see Theognosta or Nino. Nino came to the woman in all humility and humbleness. Seeing the woman weep, she wept herself sharing the woman her feelings. The woman then said to her “Oh, you blessed sister; I have heard so much about you. I wanted to come and see you for so long; but two things stopped me. I was afraid of our gods and how they might become angry with the family and me and also because your God is a strange One to our people. My only son became very ill a couple of months ago and I took him to many famous doctors in Georgia but no one gave me any hope.

We have a tradition that when a child is sick the mother takes him from one house to another in hope of finding a cure for him. I also went to the temples and the priests could not heal him either. I have heard a lot about you; so please tell me what to do. If he dies then I will die with him because I cannot live without him. Nino with her eyes full of tears said to the woman; “I have no medicine to give you. The only thing to do is to pray and Jesus Christ is capable of curing him. If you have faith then the child will be healed. Do you believe?” She then took the child and wrapped him in her shawl and kneeled before God and prayed for him and God healed him immediately. The mother believed in Jesus Christ the heavenly doctor and returned to her home feeling very happy and thankful. Nino gained honor in the eyes of her masters who felt the power of her God the Giver of health and life.

THE QUEEN OF GEORGIA INVITES NINO

News of this miracle spread all over the country. It was impossible for the mother to remain silent about what the Lord Christ had done for her son.



Soon after, the queen of Georgia became very sick. One of her friends came to visit her and said “Your majesty, didn’t you hear about the woman whose son was very sick and the Christian aid prayed to her God and He healed him immediately? Why don’t you call her to pray for you and you’ll be healed?”

Her friend’s advice gave her hope. She then said, “I have tried all the doctors our gods and none worked. I will try Nino and see what happens.”

Her aid then called upon Nino to meet the queen.

REJECTION OF THE ROYAL INVITATION

While the aid was on his way to Nino he said to himself “I wonder how this girl will react to the invitation of the queen. Truly it’s a dream that she won’t believe.

Will her friends also ask to go along to the queen with her?

What about if they were to ask her? Will the queen permit them to enter?

Many other questions were going through his mind. Finally he reached Nino’s house and asked to speak to her. She came out to speak to him. He then said to her “Dear Nino; her majesty the queen would like you to come and pray for her because she is very sick.” Nino with a smiling face said to him, “Sir, please tell the queen that I live a life of fasting and prayer in seclusion and I have no authority to leave this house. Nevertheless, she is more than welcome to see me in my humble room” The messenger was very surprised at her response and went back to the queen to deliver that message.

A ROYAL VISIT

The queen was surprised at Nino’s response, for many people would wish to be invited to visit the queen. She was



not upset with Nino but on the contrary she gained more favor in her eyes. She also realized that Nino was not seeking earthly glory. The queen then ordered to have a caravan to take her to go and see Nino. When the queen arrived she was exceedingly glad at the meeting she had with Nino. In this meeting, she was struck by Nino’s meekness. Nino kept on insisting that she is a sinner and she is not capable of doing any miracles, but with faith everything is possible and she can be cured by Jesus Christ, the Physician of the body and the soul. The queen was comforted with the words she heard about Jesus Christ. Then both of them stood up to pray and the Lord was glorified and the queen was healed

When the queen wanted to reward Nino for her recovery, Nino refused and she glorified God. The queen returned to her palace and nothing occupied her thoughts more than how she wanted everyone to enjoy the love of Jesus Christ, the Savior of all human kind.

GEORGIA’S GODS ARE ANGRY

It was a great day when the queen returned rejoicing. Everyone was speaking about how the queen was healed. At night the king met with the queen. She explained to him how God was glorified. The king did not agree with her and wanted to give gold to Nino. The queen said, “Nino does not want gold, all that we can offer her is to worship her God Jesus Christ, who cured me with her prayers.” The queen then asked him to leave the worship of his gods and open his heart to the true God, who sent his only Begotten Son and was incarnated for the salvation of everyone.

The heart of the king started to respond, but then he looked at his wife and said, “I will not stop you to worship the One



who healed you; but please do not preach His name. Because if you do, then the gods will be angry at us and their curse will fall on the people and we can not stand in front of them.”

The king did not see the necessity to worship this new God; but the queen had tasted the sweetness of this God and continued to remind her husband of Him. He commanded his wife to stop talking about Jesus and started to take a tough stand against those who believed in Him.

IN THE MIDST OF THE FOG

After a little while the king went to practice his favorite sport, hunting, he got lost and became very afraid. He then remembered Jesus Christ and said to himself, “I take an oath; if Jesus Christ guides me back to safety, then I will believe in Him.” Immediately the fog disappeared and the feeling of love filled his heart and pulled him to the love of God. He felt that he had captured the biggest catch; that is faith. Soon after he met his wife, he explained to her what had happened and how he wanted to use all of the country’s resources to preach the word of God.

NINO THE PREACHER

The queen called for Nino and told her everything that happened to her husband and how he wanted to do everything to spread the good news about Jesus Christ. He wanted to use the sword to force his people to worship the new God, but Nino stopped him saying, “The kingdom of Jesus Christ is spiritual and heavenly. Therefore it is not appropriate to force the nonbelievers to pay taxes.”

She became the spiritual advisor for the king and the queen. He then declared his new faith to all the people and



gave Nino complete freedom to go and preach to everyone. Many people wanted to help her including noblemen, for they saw the grace of God working in her life. She continued to preach in all of the villages and also outside of Georgia. Nino preached to the wealthy, the poor, masters and servants.

Finally; the king sent a letter to Constantinople requesting a bishop and priests to come to Georgia, for Christianity had spread quickly through this young virgin captive.

NINO THE NUN AND THE MOTHER

St. Nino became the right hand of the bishop, in helping him preach among the women and servicing them. Many of the virgins surrounded her and together they lived in a nunnery, where they practiced a heavenly life.

BUILDING A CHURCH

The king with a holy zeal wanted to build a church with very expensive wood. He did in fact cut a huge tree and made it the primary column in the church. Since it was so huge, not even a group of men could move this column. St. Nino prayed in her room, that God may help them and so that the king may not be sad in trying to build the first church. How amazing it was to everyone; the next morning light shone from the column and it moved on its own to its assigned spot without anyone touching it.

With great ease the church was completed. The people and the king wanted to receive the Holy Sacrament of Baptism and the Lord granted them their wish.

St. Nino did not stay long in the monastery; for the Lord permitted her to become ill for a short while. She then departed on the 17th day of Toot (1st Coptic month) when the Feast of the Holy Cross is also celebrated.



Rufinus has told this story based on what he had heard from a Spanish prince by the name of Bakur; whom he met in Palestine before the beginning of the 5th century. This story was then translated to Greek, Syrian, Armenian, Coptic, Arabic and Ethiopian.

After St. Nino had won thousands of souls and offered to them the love of Christ; she returned to Georgia where she rested in the Lord in the year 338 AD

After she departed; a church was built next to her burial where many Christians go to visit.

When the king and the queen rested also in the Lord, their son became king and the Lord healed him with St. Nino's prayers and he also was a witness to his Savior and attracted many to the faith.