



St John of the Ladder on spiritual deception

Categories : [Holy Fathers](#)

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Let us again appeal to the wisdom of the Holy Fathers, and not to that of man, and see what they have to say about compromising "in the name of love".

<http://www.prudencetrue.com/images/TheLadderofDivineAscent.pdf>

In one of the most important books of Orthodox Christianity, **The Ladder of The Divine Ascent** by St John Climacus (of The Ladder), one which is extremely important in helping a true believer ascend the way to salvation, at Step 3 we can read the following:

"It is better to grieve our parents than the Lord. For He has created and saved us, but they have often ruined their loved ones and delivered them up to their doom.

Love of God extinguishes our love for our parents. And so he who says that he has both deceives himself. He should listen to Him who says: No man can serve two masters. "I have not come, says the Lord, to bring peace on earth (that is, love of parents among sons and brothers who have resolved to serve Me) but war and a sword" in order to separate lovers of God from lovers of the world, the material from the spiritual, the proud from the humble. For strife and separation delight the Lord when they spring from love for Himself.

*Look, beware, lest you be exposed to the deluge of sentiment through your attachment to the things of your home, and all that you have be drowned in the waters of earthly affection. **Do not be moved by the tears of parents or friends; otherwise you will be weeping eternally.** When they surround you like bees, or rather wasps, and shed tears over you, do not for one moment hesitate, but sternly fix the eye of your soul on your past actions and your death, that you may ward off one sorrow by another. **Our own, or more correctly, those who are not our own, flatteringly promise to do everything to please us. But their aim is to hinder our splendid course, and afterwards to bend us in this way to their own ends"**.*

If St John talks about one's love for the close ones (parents, brothers and sisters) being of a lesser importance to one's love for God, how much more is this applicable in relation to our neighbor, who does not share the same Faith as us and comes begging to accept his heresies in the name of love for him? If we are supposed to be this categorical even in dealing with those of the same Faith as us, how much more important is it to reject the heresies of those who have already been deceived?

St John clearly shows that separation (or schism) is not always bad, and in fact it is necessary when your brother has chosen to go down the wrong path, as he makes it clear there is a



difference between the "brothers who have resolved to serve Him" and the other brothers. St John says:

"For strife and separation delight the Lord when they spring from love for Him."

In step 4 we can also read how important it is to be careful on choosing who to listen to, and test whether they are or are not in the truth. And in these days of general apostasy and universal deception, when there are more wolves in disguise than shepherds, this discernment becomes that much more important.

"When motives of humility and real longing for salvation decide us to bend our neck and entrust ourselves to another in the Lord, before entering upon this life, if there is any vice and pride in us, we ought first to question and examine, and even, so to speak, test our helmsman, so as not to mistake the sailor for the pilot, a sick man for a doctor, a passionate for a dispassionate man, the sea for a harbour, and so bring about the speedy shipwreck of our soul. But when once we have entered the arena of religion and obedience we must no longer judge our good manager in any way at all, even though we may perhaps see in him some slight failings, since he is only human. Otherwise, by sitting in judgment we shall get no profit from our subjection."

But how does one love God? *"That who loves me, keeps My commandments"*, said the Lord (John 14:23).