

# A PATRISTIC READING OF FLAUBERT'S *Madame Bovary*

## INTRODUCTION

*by Fr. Alexey Young*

One cannot visit a supermarket in America without seeing astonishing amounts of pulp romance fiction for sale. Marketers know that these cheap novels are an imitation of life for many women in our society, who over the years have made best sellers out of several of these lurid novels. But this kind of "literature" is not new. It was very well known in the Europe of the early 19th century, where, as part of the dark side of the Romantic Movement in art, such novels fed the passions, dreams, and illusions of generations of girls and young women. One such admirer was Emma Bovary, herself the protagonist of a novel, *Madame Bovary*, published in 1857.

Gustave Flaubert was 36 when this, his first novel, appeared, causing an immediate public outcry in conservative-bourgeois France. In our own time this novel has continued to receive a variety of interpretations, not least of which is the fact that the protagonist, Emma Bovary, has been co-opted by the feminist agenda (which now dominates the curriculum of most colleges and universities), as an example of the "cruel exploitation" of women by men.

However, from an Orthodox Christian standpoint the "key" to understanding *Madame Bovary* lies elsewhere. Once, when Flaubert was asked who the character of Emma was based on, he replied, "Madame Bovary, c' est moi!" ("I am Madame Bovary"). He could equally have said, "We are all Madame Bovary." In other words, Emma is neither male or female, not heroine or antagonist: she is Everyman, i.e., she is the personification of an unredeemed fallen human nature, one who has willingly become the plaything of the passions. Rooted in materialism, aggressively following only her own instincts and desires, utterly lacking in self-knowledge or sensitivity, Emma is the center of her own world, a world of coldness, chaos, and spiritual wreckage; in fact, a world very much like the one we live in today and which we still dare to call "civilized."

Archimandrite Luke's insightful study of *Madame Bovary* from a patristic standpoint is a reminder to us all of the dangerous power the passions can have over a human soul that yields itself up to them, a power meticulously explored by Flaubert, who perhaps did not himself realize the full spiritual dimension and consequences of his portrayal of the disturbing Madame Emma Bovary. Marriages today are frequently destroyed by the desire of the husband or the wife to find a diversion, something "more exciting." Emma Bovary was motivated by the same desires and met with a tragic end. Many young people could benefit by avoiding her mistakes and remaining on the narrow path which leads to eternal life described in the Gospels and the writings of the Holy Fathers.

## A Patristic Reading of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*

There are many possible readings of *Madame Bovary*. Some have suggested that the novel is about social conflict; there are feminist readings, psychological, religious, language, and an host of other studies. Flaubert was criticized for the absence of positive elements in the novel, specifically in drawing the character of Emma. The absence of the "positive" is in fact an essential element in this sweeping soul-scape of passion, degeneration, and destruction. Passion is indeed not positive; it is negative and dark. It is bound inseparably with suffering - self-inflicted. Although Flaubert was certainly acquainted with general Christian principles we cannot presume that he knew the writings

of the Fathers. Nonetheless he has created a realistic study of a sick soul amazingly similar to the pattern described by the Fathers.

The Orthodox Holy Fathers are unsurpassed masters in their understanding of the human soul. This is especially true in the realm of desires or passions. Emma Bovary is certainly a woman of desire, of passion, and "What a man loves, that he certainly desires; and what he desires, that he strives to obtain," explains Abba Evagrius.<sup>1</sup> How closely does Flaubert's development of his character (Madame Bovary) correspond to the Fathers understanding of the action and growth of desire in a soul?

Before we can approach Madame Bovary's development we need to understand some concepts in the patristic vocabulary of the soul. What is temptation, and how does it operate on a person? According to context, temptation can be viewed in two ways: either a test or trial from God for spiritual progress or, secondly, as a suggestion from the devil which will lead one into sin. The Fathers describe the process of temptation from the second definition. The process develops as follows: first "provocation" (*prosvoli*), the initial incitement to evil. According to Mark the Ascetic this is an "image-free stimulation in the heart," and as long as the provocation is without images man is not guilty. These provocations come from the outside and assail one independently of his free will. He is not morally responsible for them. Man can reject each provocation as it appears in his intellect. If he does reject it, the sequence is cut off, and the process of temptation is terminated at that moment. The next stage in the process is momentary disturbance (*pararripismos*) in the intellect which can occur "without any movement of bodily passion." This is yet more than simple provocation from which (disturbance) it is possible to obtain freedom. Total freedom from provocation is not a condition likely to occur. Following this we encounter "communion" (*homilia*) or "coupling" (*syndyasmos*). Although this is not assent, it is the beginning of "entertaining" the provocation. At this point there is hesitation whether to act or not act on the provocation. At this stage there is an image, and it has become a "thought" (*logismos*) and one is responsible for it. Following this stage we enter into "assent" (*synkatathesis*). This is no longer playing with the thought but a resolve to act upon it. Although one might be prevented from acting upon it for some reason, one is still judged for the intention of his heart. Following this is "prepossession" (*prolipsis*). As defined by Mark the Ascetic, this is "the involuntary presence of former sins in the memory." From repetition of acts one develops a predisposition to yield to particular temptations. One can resist, but with more difficulty. And finally we have "passion" (*pathos*), a state acquired from lack of resistance to a prepossession. A passion is an appetite that violently dominates the soul.<sup>2</sup> These are the stages of development from the first movement in thought to the fully active passion. In the narrative Emma moves very quickly from thought to action. There is no attempt here to closely analyze the movements of her soul using the above schema as codes, but rather to note changes in her life connected with passions and how closely these soul movements correspond to patristic writings.

We meet Emma (Bovary) at age thirteen in a convent. There we discover that Emma has a proclivity towards fantasy, illusion, imagination. She is "lulled by mystic languor"; instead of praying she is taken in by pictures, pious vignettes in her book. She becomes dreamy over these impressions. Charles Baudelaire notes:

...she becomes intoxicated with the color of the stained-glass windows, with the Oriental shades that the ornate windows cast on her schoolgirl prayer book; she gorges herself on the solemn music of Vespers and obeying the impulse of her nerves rather than her mind, she

substitutes in her soul for the real God a God of pure fantasy, a God of the future and of chance, a picture-God wearing spurs and mustaches..."<sup>3</sup>

What do the Holy Fathers write about such a state? In no uncertain terms they strenuously warn about fantasy: "...multiform fantasy is an invention and creation of the devil... it is a bridge by which the murderous demons enter our soul."<sup>4</sup> And again we read from St. Peter of Damaskos, "...the devil will fail in his purpose if we apply the counsel of the Holy Fathers: that during the time of prayer we should keep our intellect free from form, shape, and colour."<sup>5</sup> Emma does the exact opposite. The Fathers warn "...not to be enticed and led captive by these illusory appearances, whose tumult may well overwhelm the mind."<sup>6</sup> Emma is introduced to the fantasy world of the romantic novel at the convent. She becomes completely captivated by the images in the books: "They were all love, lovers, sweethearts, persecuted ladies fainting in lonely pavilions..."<sup>7</sup> The result of her infatuation with a fantasy was to drive her away from a vocation in the convent. "This nature, positive in the midst of enthusiasms, that had loved the church for the sake of the flowers, and music for the words of the songs, and literature for its passionate stimulus, rebelled against the mysteries of faith"<sup>8</sup> Rousseau in his *Confessions* lamented his introduction at an early age to the fantasy world of novels which he avidly consumed. He suffered the remainder of his life from hyper-emotionalism (over sensibility) as a result.

In a short time I acquired by this dangerous method [night long reading], not only an extreme facility in reading and expressing myself, but a singular insight for my age into the passions. I had no idea of the facts, but I was already familiar with every feeling. I had grasped nothing; I had sensed everything. These confused emotions which I experienced one after another, did not warp my reasoning powers in any way, for as yet I had none. But they shaped them after a special pattern, giving me the strangest and most romantic notions about human life, which neither experience nor reflection has ever succeeded in curing me of.<sup>9</sup>

The ninetieth century Russian spiritual writer, St. Theophan the Recluse, describes this danger in the development of a young adolescent:

He wishes to be under an uninterrupted stream of impressions... Then he throws himself into books and begins to read. He goes through one book after another, often without even understanding their contents; he is chiefly interested in finding an "effect," no matter what kind of thing it might be or what it might touch upon... The youth is only entering into life; before him there is a deceptive, enticing future. In time he will have to take part in it - but what will he be? <sup>10</sup>

Emma enters into her marriage full of fantasy, expecting an idealized romantic passion she read about and strenuously cultivated: "And yet, in accord with theories she believed right, she wanted to make herself in love with him."<sup>11</sup> Instead - disappointment and disaster. After describing her fruitless quest for distractions and dissatisfaction in present life with Charles (the ideal husband), Flaubert reveals Emma's state of soul: "...her life was as cold as a garret whose dormer-window looks on the north, and ennui, the silent spider, was weaving its web in the darkness in every corner of her heart."<sup>12</sup> This ennui, boredom according to patristic analysis, is the direct result of spiritual emptiness. Emma comes back to herself and finds nothing there, emptiness, darkness. "Why, after returning to it [oneself] after some kind of distraction, does the soul begin to grow bored? Because it finds itself robbed. A distracted person has made his soul a highway, along which, through imagination, tempting objects pass by like shadows and tempt the soul to follow them. And then,

when one is thus, so to speak, torn away from oneself, the devil [silent spider] secretly approaches, takes away the good seed, and puts a bad one in its place," comments St. Theophan the Recluse.<sup>13</sup>

Emma has her first real life encounter with the society which she had previously known only through her imagination and books. Charles and Emma are invited to spend an evening at the Chateau of a Marquis. Emma is totally receptive to impressions, and they one by one overtake her. She becomes irritated with her "common" husband and infatuated with a certain Viscount who sweeps her off her feet. Flaubert adeptly describes the spirit of the young society at the ball, "In their unconcerned looks was the calm of passions daily satiated, and through all their gentleness of manner pierced that peculiar brutality, the result of a command of half-easy things, in which force is exercised and vanity amused - the management of thoroughbred horses and the society of loose women."<sup>14</sup> Flaubert here not only describes passions in a spirit similar to the Holy Fathers, indicating passions' particular undesirability, but passions that have been totally incorporated into life as *Weltanschauung*.

At the Chateau Emma shows no restraint, she has no defense, nor any desire to exercise watchfulness, that state described in patristic literature as "literally, the opposite to a state of drunken stupor; hence spiritual sobriety, alertness, vigilance, whereby one keeps watch over one's inward thoughts and fantasies."<sup>15</sup> On the ride home she seizes a cigar-case left in their carriage, making it an object for prolonged fantasy about the Viscount. She returns home with only regrets but comforts herself by devouring novels, "...seeking in them imaginary satisfaction for her own desires."<sup>16</sup> Through a lack of discretion (*diakrisis*), that lantern of the soul by which one finds one's way along the spiritual path, Emma confuses good and evil, what is useful and what is harmful. "She confused in her desire the sensualities of luxury with the delights of the heart, elegance of manners with delicacy of sentiment."<sup>17</sup> She becomes pathologically bored. Nothing in her life corresponds to the fantasy she has cultivated in her heart. St. Hesychios comments, "Just as it is impossible for fire and water to pass through the same pipe together, so is it impossible for sin to enter the heart without first knocking at its door in the form of fantasy provoked by the devil."<sup>18</sup> She longs for something to happen that will offer her release from "misery," the painful result of her diet of passions. "Emma was growing difficult, capricious... she felt her boredom weigh more heavily than ever."<sup>19</sup> Down she descends on the ladder of vice into contempt and judgement of everyone and everything, "...finding fault with that which others approved, and approving things perverse and immoral."<sup>20</sup> She demanded more excitement and her passions developed, "she longed for violent pleasures, with all the wildness..."<sup>21</sup> Her state of soul finally manifests itself physically, and she begins to suffer a nervous illness, palpitations, frenzy, mood swings. Her infatuation with frivolity will bear fruit. "Those who love the pleasures of this present life pass from evil thoughts to actual sins," warns St. Diadochos of Photiki.<sup>22</sup>

Emma is expecting a child but does not exhibit any of the common traits of an expectant mother. "Thus she did not amuse herself with those preparations that stimulate the tenderness of mothers and so her affection was from the very outset, perhaps to some extent attenuated."<sup>23</sup> She can find some relief in the hope that the child will be a boy but only because a man might "... taste of the most far-away pleasures... travel over passions."<sup>24</sup> Even here her desire for stimulus, excitement is transferred to her still unborn child. Again she is thwarted - a girl is born!

Her initial encounter with Leon, a future temptation, is somewhat harmless, though there is a serious undercurrent of betrayal towards her husband in her imagination: "thus a kind of bond was established between them, a constant commerce of books and of romances."<sup>25</sup> Could this be the passionate love she longs for? Obviously, according to her imagination, not so: "Love, she thought

must come suddenly, with great outbursts and lightnings - a hurricane of the skies, which falls upon life, revolutionizes it, roots up the will like a leaf, and sweeps the whole heart into the abyss."<sup>26</sup> Concerning the will in man the patristic counsel is diametrically opposed to Emma's understanding. While she desires to have her will "rooted up" and her heart swept "into the abyss," the Holy Fathers advise, "In addition to training your mind to learn, you should also control your will, so as not to lean towards your own desires... we should never let our free will incline towards the desire of the lower, carnal, and passionate will, but always to follow only the intelligent, higher will... it is God's wish that you should go to heaven rather than be cast into hell [the abyss]."<sup>27</sup> The fact that she desires to surrender her will (not to God) guarantees her destruction. "If those attacked by many passions of soul and body endure patiently, do not out of negligence surrender their free will, and do not despair, they are saved."<sup>28</sup> Emma is impatient, negligent, and despairs.

Her passion for Leon increased, and although not yet consummated "she was eaten up with desires, with rage, with hate... She was in love with Leon... then the lusts of the flesh, the longing for money, and the melancholy of passion all blended themselves into one suffering." Her mental state degenerates corresponding to the growth of illicit desires, "Domestic mediocrity drove her to lewd fancies, marriage tenderness to adulterous desires... Her illness, it appears, was a kind of fog that she had in her head... a vague chasm full of darkness opened within her soul."<sup>29</sup> How reminiscent of Scripture and patristic images of light and darkness is Flaubert's description of the degeneration of Emma's state of soul. St Makarius of Egypt describes the essence of passions: "The energy of passions - which is the worldly spirit of delusion, darkness, and sin..."<sup>30</sup> As the illness of passion grows she confuses the two states, good for evil, light for darkness; "...she even took her repugnance towards her husband for aspiration towards her love, the burning of hate for the warmth of tenderness..."<sup>31</sup> St. John Chrysostom comments on this type of spiritual state, "The most dreadful thing of all is that, entangled in evil, we are pleased to hug our chains to ourselves! Dwelling in a dark prison, we refuse to come forth into the light, but rivet ourselves to evil, actually rejoicing in our malady... We are no better than madmen - or worse - because we are not even willing to be delivered from our madness."<sup>32</sup> Her behavior becomes more capricious, her health declines, she lays in bed in a stupor. It is her mother-in-law who offers a true (patristic) diagnosis and predicts the future: "If she were obliged, like so many others, to earn her living she wouldn't have these vapors, that come to her from a lot of ideas she stuffs into her head and from the idleness in which she lives." "Yet she is always busy," said Charles. "Ah! always busy at what? Reading novels, bad books, works against religion... But all that leads you far astray, my poor child. Anyone who has no religion [virtue] always ends by turning out badly."<sup>33</sup>

Flaubert has prepared the groundwork in Emma's soul for the next stage. The passions in her soul are now ripe to bear fruit in deeds. A local dandy Rodolphe plays the role of the tempter and Emma falls. He seduces her subtly with words playing on all of her weaknesses. He consciously advances by stages to break down what little resistance she has. He explains to Emma: "'Do you know that there are souls constantly tormented? They need by turns to dream and to act, the purest passions and the most turbulent joys, and they fling themselves into all sorts of fantasies, of follies...', Ah! again!" said Rodolphe. 'Always 'duty: I am sick of the word.: 'Ah! by Jove! one's duty is to feel what is great, cherish the beautiful, and not accept all the conventions of society with the ignominy that it imposes upon us.'" Emma resists for a moment; she tries to object but is quickly overcome by his answer, "No, no! Why cry out against the passions? Are they not the one beautiful thing on earth, the source of heroism, of enthusiasm, of poetry, music, the arts, of everything, in a word?" Emma is willing to concede but not entirely, exclaiming, "'But one must to some extent bow to the opinion of the world and accept its moral code.' , Ah! but there are two,' he replied. 'The small, the conventional, that of men, that which constantly changes, that brays out so loudly, makes such a

commotion here below [1], of the earth earthy, like the mass of imbeciles you see down there. But the other, the eternal, that is about us... two poor souls do meet, all is so organized that they cannot blend together."<sup>34</sup> Rodolphe again tempts her with seducing words, "One does not struggle against Heaven; one cannot resist the smile of angels...' It was the first time that Emma had heard such words spoken to herself, and her pride, like one who reposes bathed in warmth, expanded softly at this glowing language. 'God protects us!' said Rodolphe. 'Do you think so?'" she said.<sup>35</sup>

He takes her for a ride with the intention of overpowering her last, greatly weakened desire to resist the temptation. Appearing as an angel of light he exclaims, "...In my soul you are as a Madonna on a pedestal, in a place lofty, secure, immaculate." One last spark of conscience inspires her to utter, "I am wrong! I am wrong!" she said. 'I am mad to listen to you,'"<sup>36</sup> but then she capitulates. The love she had dreamed about for so long appears in reality. "She was entering upon marvels where all would be passion, ecstasy, delirium. Then she recalled the heroines of the books that she had read, and the lyric legion of these adulterous women began to sing in her memory with the voices of sisters that charmed her."<sup>37</sup> We observe an interesting combination of images (both evil) employed in the above by Flaubert: the "legion," perhaps a reference to the man possessed by a legion of devils in the Gospels and the enchanting "singing" of the Sirens in the *Odyssey*. Once again forces of evil lull Emma into the abyss. Temporarily, Emma is pleased with herself, she is still under the spell of her deceptive imaginings. "But now she triumphed, and the love so long pent up burst forth joyous bubblings. She tasted it without remorse, without anxiety, without trouble."<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless there is a recompense for wrong living, for violating the moral (spiritual) order, and Flaubert does not allow Emma to continue in her gladsome state nor does he prevent Rodolphe from exposing his true nature. Rodolphe never intended to sacrifice anything for Emma, his intention was to lie, use, and deceive (like the father of lies described in the Gospels). He begins by instilling fears into her about her reputation. Emma becomes ill with paranoia. She must find ways to cover her wrongdoing, "...racking her brain with every conceivable lying project."<sup>39</sup> Their relationship loses its former glimmer: "It was not affection; it was like a continual seduction... having succeeded in carrying out the adultery after his own fancy..."<sup>40</sup> Again she suffers in soul and makes an attempt at repentance but is not strong enough to maintain it. Circumstances also work against her. She attempts out of vainglory to advance her husband's reputation. He fails at his (experimental) orthopedic operation, and she despises him all the more. "Everything in him irritated her now... She repented of her past virtue as of a crime, and what still remained of it crumbled away beneath the furious blows of her pride. She reveled in all the evil ironies of triumphant adultery... she threw her whole soul into it, borne away towards this image with a fresh enthusiasm..."<sup>41</sup> The lustful passion is consuming her. The Fathers teach, "...of all passions two are especially cruel and grievous: lust and despondency, that is, laziness, when they take possession of a soul and weaken it... The first flourishes in the desiring power of the soul but embraces both parts of our composite nature - soul and body - spreading its voluptuousness though all our members. The second, gripping the mind - our ruler - spreads like ivy over the whole soul and body and makes our whole being lazy and enfeebled, as though stricken with paralysis."<sup>42</sup>

Above all, it is pride which motivates Emma. She refuses to be satisfied with her life, to be grateful for what she has, and the result - ruin. Her constant dissatisfaction with everything and everyone (her role as wife and the presence of her husband displease her, she hates small towns and is forced to live in them, she finds monogamy restraining, even being a woman seems to disappoint her, since men are more "free") which is hers by right, is reflected in the following patristic observation: "Those who are not satisfied with what they have to sustain life... whether it be food, clothing, position in life, etc but who seek for more, make themselves the slaves of passions which trouble the soul and induce into it ever worse thoughts and fantasies: the idea that everything is bad,

and therefore new and better things must be acquired."43 St. John Cassian also describes this prideful path, "Just as a deadly plague destroys not just one member of the body, but the whole of it, so pride corrupts the whole soul, not just part of it. Each of the other passions that trouble the soul attack and try to overcome the virtue which opposed them, and so darken and trouble the soul only partially. But the passion of pride darkens the soul completely and lends to its utter downfall."44 Rodolphe is not impressed by her renewed ardor. He, experienced in adulterous relationships, once again feels "the eternal monotony of passion, that has always the same forms and the same language."45 Flaubert exposes the folly of attempting to satisfy the eternal (heavenly) longings of the soul in human relations in his profound observation: "...no one can ever give the exact measure of his needs, nor of his conceptions, nor of his sorrows; and since human speech is like a cracked tin kettle, on which we hammer out tunes to make bears dance when we long to move the stars."46 Since there was no immediate possibility of abandoning the relationship, Rodolphe decided to develop the evil side of it. Flaubert writes, "He made of her some thing supple and corrupt. Hers was an idiotic sort of attachment, full of admiration for him, of voluptuousness for her, a beatitude that benumbed her; her soul sank into this drunkenness, shriveled up, drowned in it..."47 To maintain the fantasy Emma and Rodolphe plan to travel and settle in some far off dream-land. There is still some spark of life in her conscience although she does not recognize it. "And yet, why should my heart be so heavy? Is it dread of the unknown? The effect of habits left? Or rather-? No; it is the excess of happiness. How weak I am, am I not?"48 Could she change her mind and attempt repentance? "Never!" she cried impetuously."49

Rodolphe has gorged himself and breaks off the affair. Emma again falls ill, and turning to religion with the same lustful fervor that she formerly pursued adultery, "...she fancied herself seized with the finest Catholic melancholy [another passion, according to St. Peter of Damaskos]50 that an ethereal soul could conceive... she addressed to the Lord the same suave words that she had murmured formerly to her lover in the outpourings of adultery. It was to make faith come; but no delights descended from the heavens, and she arose with tired limbs and with a vague feeling of a gigantic dupery."51 Still seeking an effect she turns to "excessive charity." This also fails due to the confusion of her soul. "Besides, she now enveloped all things with such indifference, she had words so affectionate with looks so haughty, such contradictory ways, that one could no longer distinguish egotism from charity, or corruption from virtue."52

At the opera Emma has a moment of true revelation. "She recognized all the intoxication and the anguish that had almost killed her... why had she not resisted, implored? She had been joyous, without seeing the abyss into which she was throwing herself. Ah! if in the freshness of her beauty, before the soiling of marriage and the disillusion of adultery, she could have anchored her life upon some great, strong, heart, then virtue, tenderness, and duty blending, she would never have fallen from so high a happiness. But that happiness, no doubt, was a lie invented for the despair of all desire. She now knew the smallness of the passions that art exaggerated."53 It is here at the opera at Rouen that she renews her relationship with Leon. This will be her denouement, a finale of depravity which thrusts her over the brink of madness and into the grave. In this final act of her passion she becomes the embodiment of all her fantasies. "She was the mistress of all the novels, the heroine of all the dramas, the vague 'she' of all the volumes of verse."54 The suffering from adultery which Emma feels is aggravated by another passion of indiscrete spending she has acquired to support her life style. She can no longer hide the debts. "From that moment her existence was but one long tissue of lies, in which she enveloped her love as in veils to hide it."55 She becomes like a wild woman, laughing, crying, singing, extravagant. Leon is amazed: "Where could she have learned this corruption almost incorporeal in the strength of its profanity and dissimulation."56 Here again Flaubert makes reference to the demonic nature of her passions. Her passion reaches frenzy, "..

.consumed more ardently than ever by that inner flame to which adultery added fuel, panting, tremulous, all desire... Everything, even herself, was now unbearable to her."57 "She felt lost, sinking at random into indefinable abysses."58 She finally breaks down, "Everything in her head, of memories, ideas, went off at once like a thousand pieces of fireworks."59 In total despair she rushes to the jar of arsenic at the druggist, poisons herself and dies in agony. Some have ironically suggested that in a technical sense, "...she is not punished as an adulterous woman, but as an untidy housekeeper."60 This explanation is too simplistic, her death is the sum total of her entire passionate existence. The ancient Fathers deny the idea of punishment as many understand it in a legal framework of "crime and punishment," rather they teach that "God does not 'punish' on the basis of human standards, He corrects and chastises US."61 Her passions are a sickness and they beget sickness. She can no longer repent, or stop and reverse her life, therefore the illness increases. The suicide itself is a sickness brought on by despair for which there is no cure, eternally. Indeed, the wages of sin are death. Flaubert once more alludes to the presence of evil forces in his description of the corpse: "The sheet sunk in from her breast to her knees, and then rose at the tips of her toes and it seemed to Charles that infinite masses, an enormous load were weighing upon her."62 Her husband Charles, good natured as he is, finds it difficult to accept the discovery that she was unfaithful. He goes on trying to please her by adopting "...her predilections, her ideas..."63 Flaubert comments dryly, "She corrupted him from beyond the grave."64 The passions are what destroyed Emma. Could she have avoided the disaster? We certainly cannot condemn her, there is an impartial Judge, the Lord the Seer of hearts. St. Anthony calmly explains, "If you so wish, you are a slave of the passions; and if you so wish, you are free and do not yield to the passions."65

*by Archimandrite Luke*

## Notes

1 *The Teaching of the Holy Fathers on the Passions* (Richfield Springs: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1997) 5.

2 St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, and St. Makarius of Corinth, *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 363-365.

3 Charles Baudelaire, "Madame Bovary, by Gustave Haubert," *Madame Bovary, Backgrounds and Sources, Essays in Criticism*, ed. Paul de Man (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965) 341.

4 Theophan the Recluse, *Unseen Warfare*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky, and G. E. H. Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, n.d.) 149.

5 *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, 81.

6 *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, 359.

7 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 1996) 25.

8 Flaubert 26.

9 Jear.-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (London: Penguin Books, 1953) 20.

- 10 Theophan the Recluse, *The Path to Salvation*, trans. Seraphim Rose (Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1996) 71-72.
- 11 Flaubert 29.
- 12 Flaubert 30.
- 13 Theophan, *Path to Salvation* 73.
- 14 Flaubert 35.
- 15 *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, 365.
- 16 Flaubert 39.
- 17 Flaubert 40.
- 18 *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 170.
- 19 Flaubert 45, 44.
- 20 Flaubert 46.
- 21 Flaubert 46.
- 22 *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 292.
- 23 Flaubert 62.
- 24 Flaubert 62.
- 25 Flaubert 70.
- 26 Flaubert 71.
- 27 Theophan, *Unseen Warfare* 100-102.
- 28 *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, 161.
- 29 Flaubert 76-77.
- 30 *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, 341.
- 31 Flaubert 87.
- 32 *Holy Fathers on the Passions* 2.
- 33 Flaubert 89.

34 Flaubert 100-103.

35 Flaubert 110.

36 Flaubert 113.

37 Flaubert 114.

38 Flaubert 115.

39 Flaubert 117.

40 Flaubert 120.

41 Flaubert 130.

42 *The Philokalia* , "On Prayer of the heart," 30.

43 St. Anthony the Great, *170 Texts on Sainly Life*, as quoted in *Holy Fathers on the Passions* 14-15.

44 *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 92.

45 Flaubert 134.

46 Flaubert 134.

47 Flaubert 135.

48 Flaubert 140.

49 Flaubert 140.

50 *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, 205.

51 Flaubert 151.

52 Flaubert 152.

53 Flaubert 159.

54 Flaubert 187.

55 Flaubert 191.

56 Flaubert 196.

57 Flaubert 204, 206.

58 Flaubert 211.

59 Flaubert 221.

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