

NOTE ON THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The contents of this book come from an archive of notes and recordings compiled by two women who knew Elder Porphyrios for a period of more than three decades. Throughout this time they kept a record of his conversations, his reminiscences and his words of spiritual guidance. When, some ten years after the elder's death, these two women became nuns at the convent of Chrysopigi in Chania in western Crete, the archive was placed at the disposal of the convent.

Under the guidance of the abbess of the community, Mother Theoxeni, the material that had been collected was carefully transcribed and edited in such a way as to allow Elder Porphyrios to speak for himself. The prime concern was to present the words exactly as spoken, preserving their immediacy and authenticity. At the same time, however, the material, often collected at very diverse times and in different contexts, was arranged into chapters according to subject matter in order to make it more accessible.

The English translation similarly allows Elder Porphyrios to present himself and his teachings with a minimum of introduction. The figure of the 'elder' or *staretz* in the Orthodox Church has always been seen as a source of wisdom and guidance and as possessing a gift of speaking directly to the heart. The differences which distinguish the culture of Eastern Orthodoxy from that of Western Christianity will not prevent the western reader from responding to Elder Porphyrios's simple, lucid and vivid narrative.

Scriptural and other quotations have been identified and a number of short explanatory footnotes have been added where this seemed necessary. Biblical references are given to the Septuagint version of the Old Testament as used in the Orthodox Church, followed in brackets by a reference to the numbering in the Revised Standard Version where this differs from the Septuagint numbering. Books such as the Wisdom of Solomon which are not included in the western canon of Scripture are marked as [DC] = Deuterocanonical. The English translation of Scriptural passages is indebted to the Revised Standard Version, but very frequently deviates from this where a rendering of the Greek text of the Septuagint is required.