

THODORIS SPILIOU

# FROM MANHATTAN TO THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF ATHOS

A TRUE STORY

THE HERO RECOUNTS



By THE AUTHOR  
OF THE BEST SELLING  
THE MONK  
WHO BECAME CEO



FROM MANHATTAN  
TO THE HOLY MOUNTAIN  
OF ATHOS



ORTHODOX LOGOS PUBLISHING

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A TRUE STORY  
THE HERO RECOUNTS

by Thodoris Spiliotis

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The book is dedicated to the hero of the true story and all those who disregarded everything in order to dedicate themselves, body and soul, to what they love and their hearts dictate, ignoring the Laistrygonians and Cyclops.





## AUTHOR'S NOTE

When a person decides to get to know – and not simply to visit out of tourist or pilgrimage interest – the Athonian Community, he will realize that the experience of this meeting will never end. There is always something left. Something starts. Something continues. It is an open invitation to new knowledge, a new experience, a new story.

That is how the story of the *Monk who became a CEO* started a few years ago – it was born from a quest for knowledge, through the puzzlement about the excellent and effective organization of the Athonian Community. However, when knowledge is acquired, it must then be shared, be socially useful, have social impact, and leave its marks on society.

Every story always teaches, puzzles, and sheds light. It lights new thought paths, usually unseen until we listen to it or read about it. It awakens. It transforms.

*The monk who became CEO* highlighted the principles of Athonian management as time-tested principles of successful management born from a thousand years of practical application.

Four years after the publication and distribution of Athonian knowledge throughout the many branches of business, I would be deeply grateful if my first book managed to re-direct the organization and focus of a modern business towards substantially human-oriented and utilitarian axes.

Knowledge, however, is a chain. There is always consecutive knowledge, which, like a safety link, complements and strengthens the already existing cognitive chain. Like such a knowledge link, a new story now takes its place in the chain.

The core subject and basic material of the new book you are holding in your hands is the true life of a man who, for years, had been facing his ambitions, anxieties, scruples and uncertainties, until he heard his inner voice clearly and followed it, until he found his destination and met essential happiness.

A true story, however, is by itself not enough to arouse the readers' interest, if it lacks honest humanitarian destination, if it cannot help people enhance their inner strength, take a step forward, re-determine their comfort zone and proceed in their lives with more secure steps.

Life is, after all, like a pair of shoes. The more comfortable we feel inside them, the more enjoyable the walk will be.

Enjoy reading!  
Thodoris Spiliotis

The main character today lives on Mount Athos

For reasons of privacy, his real name is not mentioned in the text. The same is true for the names of the co-protagonists of the story (or some of them).

After all, what is interesting about the narrative of true events is the human actions and behaviors, life choices and teachings, and not the persons themselves.

New York, January, 2020  
New York University,  
Auditorium, Honors Hall

“The President of the University is requested to take the floor, give the welcoming address and announce the guest of honor.”

“Dear students, I am impressed by your presence in today’s special event. More than a thousand students are in the hall at this moment. We tried to cover the request for seats for everybody. Some are unfortunately standing. We ask for your understanding and patience.

To be honest with you, I was not expecting such participation. Your interest was probably aroused by the guest’s personality, his status, or both. It is not the first time we have invited a graduate of our university in order to honor him for his life and outstanding activity since graduation. It is not the first time an important person’s achievements have their origin here, in these rooms, in this very auditorium. In a few minutes from now the trajectory of an exceptionally interesting life will unfold before our eyes, and I really wish that it may, through its teachings and references, serve as a beacon for all of us.

This is a special year, a milestone for our university. By invitation of the Senate, there is among us a graduate who no longer lives in the USA. He is an American and Greek citizen who, today, lives in the only self-governed part of Greece, on Mount Athos. The invitation, which was easy and unanimous to decide, was difficult and time-consuming

to accept for purely procedural reasons. But still, the formal difficulties were overcome in a few months, thanks to the common willingness for this meeting and honest and mutual good will. I am hoping that the narration of our guest's life will make us all understand that a person who has chosen to dedicate himself to the spiritual life, justifiably and consciously distances himself from anything to do with the world. This is exactly what amplifies our joy and honor for having him here among us today.

I could talk for hours about this man who decided to leave America more than 37 years ago, leaving everything behind in terms of routine and his general way of life, and has since lived in a quiet place of unique natural beauty in northern Greece, untouched by human hands, on a peninsula with an imposing mountain, Athos, known as the Holy Mount. We are, therefore, looking forward to listening to this man's life story. The story of "the happiest person in the world," as the biggest American newspaper called him recently, here to share his wisdom with us. I believe that his figure already stands out in our packed auditorium. A figure that has already lit the faces of all of us with optimism and serenity.

We welcome you, father, in the corridors and halls of our university, where you have walked for years in your student years. Today in particular, we welcome you in this Auditorium in the "Honors Hall." The entire Senate, but above all our students, are waiting impatiently to hear you.

Dear students, I am almost certain you will want to ask questions during the speech. Our distinguished guest is willing to accept and answer all of them. After all, dialogue has, over time, been better than monologue. The floor is yours."

“I honestly do not know how to start. I confess that this is the first time in my life that I am speaking from the pulpit and I will not hide that I am already nervous. I wish to publicly express my surprise and gratitude for the honor of being invited here today. I feel, however, that I do not deserve something so special; nor does my way of life justify the expectation of such recognition. What finally imposed my presence here was not my value, but your kindness and love, be assured of that. I will start, therefore, with this public confession and proceed by expressing my sincere gratitude. I would have preferred my speech to have been in Greek, as spiritual concepts are more accurately expressed in the Greek language and would have had a greater effect and be better understood, but alas.

I am deeply moved as, after almost four decades, I am visiting the academic environment which nurtured me, educated me, provided me with knowledge, turned me into a man and gave me the possibility and the wings to navigate through life, having first come into contact with the meritocratic system of America. I feel certain that, if my life had not passed through the streets and avenues of Manhattan, its course would have been entirely different. The city where I spent sixteen wonderful years has changed my life's orientation. I walked today in the streets of New York and memories of an intense student life with carelessness, hard work, smiles, anxieties, rewards, interviews, and disappointments came back to me. It is a foretaste of the life that follows. I visited my old neighborhood, and automatically my body and mind were filled with memories and feelings, as though I had not been away for even a day.

I want to thank all of you for being here today, and especially the rector for the honorable invitation. I have been preparing my speech for some time and I will not conceal my anxiety. Forgive my accent. My absence during all these years is certainly no help. I am living in a place where only Greek can be heard, from all stages of development of the Greek language: modern spoken Greek, purist Greek, official liturgical Greek, common Greek, the Hellenistic language of the Apostle Paul, even the ancient Greek of Aristotle.

Forgive me, Mr. rector, members of the Senate, dear students, for my doubts regarding my presence here today. The reason for my doubts can be summarized in just one sentence:

*I wish that my presence here is not  
Transformed in presence of the Ego*

Never in my life had I thought that I would become a monk, because I did not actually know what monasticism was. I will transport you several decades back in Athens, Greece. In the mid-1050s my large family is ready to welcome its new member. The arrival of the last-born is a great blessing, as the ninth child of the family will see the light of day. That is how my life starts in the center of Athens, the capital of Greece. The preoccupation of our parents to provide their children with social and academic education, morals and values, in order to respond to the social needs of the time, was mandatory, as it always is. The struggle of the head of the family was even harder in order to raise us in dignity. My parents were very pious and raised us during that time with spiritual values, endowing us with unforgettable moments and experiences,

despite the minor revolts of our childhood and adolescence. At school I was a good student, but an unruly one at the same time. I was drawn by trouble, a restless spirit. I remember that even then theoretical sciences were not my thing..



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UITGEVERIJ ORTHODOX LOGOS

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**“You need to get lost to find your way.”**

The protagonist of the **true** story is potentially each of its readers. The twists, surprises and thrills it has in store, it is on a micro-scale the definition of human life. And if the recording of this personal history she aspires to achieve something, it is precisely to inspire its readers with the courage to live their lives as their hearts and minds dictate.

**September 1973.** In Athens, the escalating student mobilizations against the Junta of Colonels foreshadow the great uprising of the Polytechnic University in November of the same year. The looming socio-political tension and insecurity in the country lead Petros in the decision to leave his homeland and family behind and go to study in New York, the metropolis of the world. How much does the American dream and the “sky is the limit” philosophy affect him to his personal self-actualization and happiness?

**January 2020.** After all, how many kilometers of road separate the apparent success from true happiness?

If with the story of the book *The Monk Who Became CEO* the principles of the Athonic management were contacted at business and general readership, with this book *From Manhattan to Mount Athos* the path of inner seeing (or liberation) is illuminated as the only path to our personal happiness.

**“When I was thirty, I wanted to be successful.  
Over time I realized my desire to be happy!”**

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THE NETHERLANDS



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