

True Orthodoxy and the Modern World

Archbishop Averky of Syracuse



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A few words from the author....

Responding to the insistent requests of my spiritual children and of the Russian Orthodox people close to me in spirit, I have decided, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of my priestly service this year, to publish here a collection of articles I have written at various times on the most topical and contemporary subjects, as well as some of my speeches delivered at various solemn church gatherings. All of these words and speeches date from my recent twentieth year of service in the United States of America.

All that I have written here-all the thoughts and feelings expressed in these articles and speeches-have been borne and, one might say, suffered in the depths of my heart for many years, ever since I was a young almost child. With horror and unspeakable sorrow I have always recalled and experienced what happened before my eyes during the terrible years of the bloody catastrophe that befell her for her sins. Perhaps these memories and put on my soul that special imprint, which determined my further fate, predisposing me in my early years to accept monasticism. And now, more than fifty years later, all my thoughts and feelings are there - with our native Orthodox Russian people who are suffering cruelly for their faith! And it is so painful when here in exile we encounter completely different attitudes and a complete lack of understanding as to why our unhappy homeland has been struck by such a terrible catastrophe.

I wish that all Russian people would finally have a spiritual enlightenment and understand what seems so easy to understand after all we have been through these years. And not only understand, but feel deeply! Otherwise, not only are our hopes for the resurrection and rebirth of our homeland futile and pointless, but the entire world will inevitably face a terrible general catastrophe, for which the servants of the coming Antichrist are preparing it. Is it possible, with all that is now being done in the world, to remain so hopelessly spiritually blind as not to see what the modern world is heading toward? "O Lord, send your light and your truth..."

Chapter 1: Address by Archmandrite Averky on his accession to the episcopate of Syracuse and Trinity, May 10/23, 1953

Most eminent archpastors!

In this solemn hour, when the grace of God, through you, calls me, a poor man, to the highest office of bishop in the Church, which is the continuation of the apostolic office, what shall I say or what shall I say?

"Fear and trembling have come upon me, and my heart is troubled within me" (Psalm 54:6), and it would be more convenient for me to love silence. But since, according to the established custom, I am required at this hour to confess the thoughts and feelings with which I am approaching the service that lies ahead of me, I am also compelled to open my mouth.

I confess, first of all, the immeasurable goodness of God toward me, a sinner, which has been so clearly and abundantly poured out on me in all the ways of my life.

I also confess all my weakness, all my unworthiness. In moments of spiritual enlightenment, I see nothing in myself but sins and manifold weaknesses.

But I know and remember the words of the Lord, said to the great apostle of tongues: "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Therefore, I dare not deny the ministry to which I am called. I have always thought it best to seek nothing and deny nothing, relying in all things on the will of God. I accept this great ministry with fear and trembling, and with gratitude for the trust and honor bestowed upon me, for this ministry is not only fearful and responsible, but also blissful and joyful.

In your call, Most Reverends, I cannot fail to see the will of God, which has wonderfully guided me throughout my life. Even in my early childhood, my favorite book was the Holy Book of the Gospels, and my favorite pastime was serving in the Holy Altar and reading in the choir. Ordinary worldly life did not appeal to me, my soul was looking for another life. And so, two great hierarchs, both bearing the name of Theophanes, which means "manifesting God," truly "revealed" God to me in the marvelous imperishable beauties of the intimate, spiritual life in God, disposing me to renounce the secular life and accept monasticism. The most precious book by St. Theophan the Hermit of Vyshensk, "What is the Spiritual Life and How Can I Attune Myself to it?" revealed to me the treasures of the spiritual life and aroused an unquenchable desire to partake of them. "The Invisible Combat" and "The Way to Salvation" fostered in me a taste for reading the writings of the Holy Fathers. "The Spiritual Exhortations of Abba Dorothea, the Ladder of St. John, the Abbot of Mount Sinai, and many other writings of the Holy

Fathers became my favorite readings. And the lofty images and examples of Sacred and Ecclesiastical History fascinated my thought and feeling and urged me powerfully to devote my life to the service of God and His Holy Church. I was especially inspired by the sublime image of the "apostle of love" - the beloved disciple of Christ, the custodian and virgin St. John the Theologian - and then by the images of the tireless fighters for the truth of holy Orthodoxy: St. Athanasius of Alexandria and the great universal teachers and saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom. At the same time, it was joyful to belong to the Russian people, this authentic "New Israel," to whom, in the words of our great saint, Fr. I was touched and moved by the idea of Holy Russia, inspired by the images of the great pillars of our native Church, "the pillars of the faith and of the Russian land," St. Sergius of Radonezh, "the pillars of the Russian land. Sergius of Radonezh, "the Hegumen of All Russia", the hierarchs of Moscow Peter, Alexius, Jona, Philip, the holy martyr Patriarch Hermogenes, "our joy" - St. Seraphim of Sarov, the Optina elders and the ever memorable "Batiushka" father John of Kronstadt.

My meeting with my unforgettable Abba Theophanes, the Archbishop of Poltava and Pereyaslavl, in whom I saw the living embodiment of the ideals of a monk and saint that had formed in my mind and heart, made everything completely clear: I was irrevocably on the path of monasticism. Having finished the course of theological sciences in obedience to my Abba, I took monastic tonsure with his blessing in the Carpathians, where at that time was going on a missionary work to return the Uniates to Orthodoxy. However, it pleased God, soon afterward, to put me to a difficult test. Instead of the monastic solitude to which my soul had yearned since childhood, I had, in the most adverse conditions and surroundings for the spiritual life, to carry the very hard for a young monk obedience of the parish pastor, which then lasted for a full twenty years. Many consolations and purely spiritual joys in this blessed service itself, but oh, how difficult it is for a monk, amid the vanities and passions of this world, lying in evil, to keep his soul untarnished, undefiled, how difficult not to ruin himself in the end. I thank the Merciful Lord that He helped me to pass through this abyss and find a quiet refuge here in this holy cloister!

Praise be to Almighty God, and thanks be to You, beloved High Priest, and to You, my present Abba, who have placed me here at the manger of the work dear and dear to my heart: the training and education of new pastors of the Church! I will try with all my strength, God willing, to justify your high trust and love.

It is blessed and joyful to know that I am entering henceforth into the glorious ranks of the Apostolic successors, I am becoming a successor and continuer of the work of the great Church Fathers, the work of Christ on earth. But, at the same time, I cannot help realizing that, blessed as this service is, in accepting it, I am truly ascending to the cross,

as if I were a shepherd like Christ the Pastor. In our time, which, by many indications, cannot but be regarded as the eve of the end times, this is especially deeply felt. Christian life is more difficult now than ever before, for the intrigues of the enemy of human salvation have multiplied and become more sophisticated. The pastoral exploit, which, according to the words of the Apostle, is "the work of ministry for the work of the saints, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the connection of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of Christ's fulfillment" (Eph 4:12-13) has become many times more difficult and responsible. So great is the corruption of sin, so perverted are all the concepts, even among people who call themselves Christians, that there is nothing more difficult than to call to the ideal of holiness, the ideal of Christian perfection. The genuine faith of Christ is now undergoing persecution, not less, but more dangerous and destructive than in the days of early Christianity. This persecution is, in fact, already universal, the only difference being that in some places it is carried out openly and explicitly, by bloody violence, while in others it is less explicitly and in a more "peaceful" way, by creating conditions and conditions of life that encourage the introduction into society of the principles of godlessness and immorality. These persecutions are much worse and more dangerous than those of the pagan period, for then the Church was persecuted by people who did not know Christianity, but now it is persecuted by fierce apostates from Christianity, conscious enemies of the Church, the true servants of the coming Antichrist. More than ever, all kinds of false christs and false prophets are appearing! But the worst of all is that within the Church itself there are more and more people rising up who speak untruthfully (Acts 20:30) - apostates from true Christianity, rejecting its very essence and at the same time not ashamed of hypocritically presenting themselves as ministers of faith and the Church of Christ. The prophetic words of St. Theophan the Recluse about the end times are beginning to come true: "Then, although the name of Christianity will be heard everywhere, and everywhere will be seen churches and church ranks, but all this is only appearance, but inside is true apostasy" (Commentary on 2Sol. 492). Hence, in addition to always, in the first place, the necessary example of personal high spiritual and moral life, the most important and responsible task for the modern pastor is to teach believers to recognize the true Church among the multitude of false churches, and by a word filled with spiritual power and wisdom, to keep them in the fold, and to attract those who go astray.

But how difficult it is in this age of lukewarmness and indifference to faith!

It is not on my own weak strength that I hope. My only hope is in the grace of God that was given to the apostles at Pentecost, which made them, unsophisticated and unreadable, "wise fishers" of the universe. The fact that I, a sinner and infirm man, receive this great

apostolic grace on the day of Pentecost fills my soul with a particularly high spiritual joy and hope in God's almighty help.

Come unto me, O good Comforter, and cleanse me from all uncleanness, making me a partaker of Thy holiness, and of the light of the night, and of the Divine life, and of the sweetest of dispensations (6th hymn of the Canon to the Holy Spirit).

Hierarchs of God! Calling upon my sinful head this fiery grace of the Spirit, beseech the Lord that it may smite in me all uncleanness of sin, sanctify me, enlighten me, guide me to all truth, and make me worthy of this great and fearful, blessed and glorious service.

Chapter 2: What is true Orthodoxy, and do we keep it?

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any more than we preach unto you, let there be anathema" (Gal. 1:8).

"Deny the heretic man by the first and second punishment" (Titus 3:10).

On the first Sunday of Great Lent, our Holy Orthodox Church joyfully celebrates the "triumph of Orthodoxy" - the victory of the pure and unadulterated Orthodox Christian teaching over all its perversions, deviations from it and errors - wicked false teachings, heresies and schisms. This solemn celebration was established in the IX century, in connection with the final overthrow of the last terrible heresy, which shook the Church at that time, the heresy of the iconoclasts and the restoration of the veneration of icons, which occurred in the Byzantine Empire in 842 A.D., under Theodore, "the holy and most blessed queen" and the Constantinople patriarch, St. Methodius.

Since that time, it has been customary for the Holy Church, on this first Sunday of Great Lent, after the conclusion of the Hours or before the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, to perform a special, very majestic and deeply edifying and touching "Rite of Orthodoxy" in the cathedrals. This rite consists of the chanting of a prayer for the conversion of all apostates and strayers to the True Faith and the Church, for the confirmation in Holy Orthodoxy of those who believe, and for the proclamation of the terrible "anathema" (as clearly expressed in 1 Corinthians 16:22). 22 commandment of the Holy Apostle) to all persistent false teachers and apostates, "eternal memory" to all deceased confessors and fighters for the true faith, and long life to all the living zealots and defenders of the true faith and the Church.

What is the significance of this rite, and why is true Orthodoxy so dear to us?

It has always been, and in these exceptionally difficult times for Holy Orthodoxy, is of the utmost importance and extreme importance.

After all, Orthodoxy (which few in our time know and understand) is nothing other than the true doctrine of Christ, preserved in all its purity and intactness, as expounded by the Apostles in the books of the Holy Scriptures. The apostles in the books of Holy Scripture, explained and carefully interpreted by their legitimate successors, the apostolic men and the holy Fathers, in Sacred Tradition, sacredly and invariably preserved by our Eastern Church alone, which, therefore, to this day alone, in all fairness, is called the "Orthodox Church."

The Divine Founder of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, said clearly and precisely: "...I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). And to this Church, which He founded on the day of Pentecost through sending down to His Apostles the All-Enlightening Holy Spirit - "the Spirit of Truth" (John 14:16-17), Who was to "instruct them in all truth" (John 16:13), the Lord entrusted the custody of His Divine Truth, for the sake of the revelation of which, in His own words, He came to earth (John 18:37).

That is why Apostle Paul in his letter to his disciple Timothy, whom he ordained as bishop, so solemnly and expressively says: "...the Church of God is alive, a pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1Tim.3:15).

Can we doubt the immutability of Christ's words that "the gates of hell," that is, all the powers of hell will not prevail against the Church?

Certainly not!

But if so, then the true Church of Christ, which, of course, is one, for Christ founded only one Church, has always existed on earth and will exist to the end of the age, for to her belongs the comforting promise of Christ: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age..." (Matthew 28:20).

Can there be any doubt as to what kind of Church this is?

There can be no doubt in the mind of one who is honest and sound, who knows the history of the Christian Church and the pure, unbroken Christian faith and doctrine, that this one true Church, founded by Christ the Savior, is the one which has kept holy and steadfast the Truth Christ committed to it.

Where the spiritual and gracious connection with the Apostles and their successors, the apostles and the holy Fathers, is broken, where various innovations of faith and morals are introduced in order to "keep up with the times," to "progress," to keep up with the times and adapt to the requirements and fashion of this world, which lies in evil - there can be no talk of a true Church.

"Not of the world," said the Lord to His disciples at the Last Supper, "but I have chosen you from the world ('have taken you from the world', as the Fathers interpret these words), for this reason the world hates you" (John 15:19). These words of the Lord must always be remembered by those who wish to remain faithful to the true Church, the true Church of Christ has always been, is and will always be not of this world, which,

according to the beloved disciple of Christ, St. John the Theologian, "lies entirely in evil" (1 John 5:19).

And just as the Doctrine of God, committed to the custody of the Holy Church, is unchangeable, just as God Himself is unchangeable and eternal, so the true Church of Christ must remain unchanged in all things.

This so-called scholarly "conservatism" is one of the most important and most characteristic attributes of the true Church.

Truth is given to us once and for all, and all our labor must be directed only to assimilating it, not to discovering it. The only thing that is required of us is to establish ourselves in the Truth and to establish others in it, leading everyone to the true faith, or to Orthodoxy.

But in our time - it's scary to say! - already in the depths of our Orthodox Church and even among its hierarchy itself, other tendencies and attitudes have emerged, expressed by a great many "popular figures of Orthodoxy.

Wishing to "keep up with the times" and fearing to be seen as insufficiently "cultural," "liberal," and "progressive," these modern apostates from Orthodoxy are as if "ashamed" to confess that our Holy Orthodox Church is the very Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ, to which belongs the great promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against it, and to which the fullness of Divine Truth is entrusted.

They, in false, supposed humility, thereby slandering our Lord and Savior, together with those who have long since fallen away from the true Church, agree to acknowledge that the gates of hell have supposedly overcome the Church, that our Holy Orthodox Church, together with those who have long since fallen away from the true Church, is not the Church. The Orthodox Church is supposedly also guilty of the division that has taken place among Christians, and "must repent of her sin" and "reunite," by various concessions, with the other "Christian Churches," after which only the One Church of Christ will be restored, as it were.

This is the real, unconcealed ideology of the so-called "ecumenical movement" that has become so fashionable of late, whose leaders (alas, even the hierarchs!) on our Orthodox side have only recently begun to speak so frankly, and who earlier were just shamelessly "blowing dust in the eyes," declaring that they were part of the "ecumenical movement" for the purpose of "witnessing to the truth of Holy Orthodoxy" before other Orthodox.

Now, as is evident from their public speeches frequently reported in the international press, they (God knows for what motives - hardly always strictly ideological!) are becoming traitors to this holy truth.

In this "ecumenical movement," united by the so-called "World Council of Churches" (originally a purely Protestant organization), almost all of the Orthodox local churches (with the exception of our Russian Church Abroad) have now joined, not only from the so-called "free world" (thereby ceasing to be free!), but also from behind the "Iron Curtain," even though the Moscow Soviet Patriarchate, not so long ago, boasted of the purity of its Orthodoxy by officially expressing its quite negative attitude toward the "ecumenical movement" hostile to Orthodoxy.

What are we to do, left alone in the midst of today's "Orthodox world"?

Do not be embarrassed by this, remembering that this "must be so" (Lk.21:9), that the "departure" was foretold with all clearness by the Word of God (2Sol.2 (2Sol. 2:3-12), that it is "permitted by God," as Saint Ignatius (Bryanchaninov), who observed the first signs of it over a hundred years ago, wrote, and later also Saint Theophan Vyshensky, our other great spiritual guide and visionary, who bitterly denounced the growing apostasy in contemporary Russian society.

We cannot and do not have the power to stop this apostasy, as St. Ignatius emphasized: "Do not try to stop it with your weak hand..."

But what, then, is to be done?

"Remove yourself from it, guard yourself from it, and that is enough for you. Get acquainted with the spirit of the time, study it, in order to avoid its influence as much as possible," to which the same Saint Ignatius instructs us.

And is it not true prophetic inspiration, doubtless illumination from on high, that his words breathe, written more than 100 years ago and so obviously referring to our time: "Judging by the spirit of the time and by the ferment of minds, we must assume that the building of the Church, which has been trembling for a long time, will be shaken terribly and quickly. There is no one to stop and oppose it. The measures of support taken are borrowed from the elements of a world hostile to the Church, and will hasten her fall rather than halt it. May the merciful Lord cover a remnant of those who believe in Him. But the remnant is meager: it is getting scarcer and scarcer.

Here we are, apparently, before this "fearful and rapid shaking of the building of the Church"! The enemy of the human race is using every effort and every method to bring it down, with the wide cooperation of overt and covert apostates from the true faith and the Church, including clergymen who have betrayed their high calling and oath, and even the hierarchs who head some individual churches.

Truly a terrible time we are living through-a time like never before in the history of Christianity, in the history of mankind! A time of almost universal vacillation! And this, because we wish to remain faithful to true Orthodoxy, binds us to many things.

We must, as St. Ignatius instructs us, remove ourselves from the retreat that is taking such rapid steps in the world, to protect ourselves from the pernicious spirit of time, in order to avoid its influence.

And to do this we must first of all understand and firmly remember that in the present time not all that is really Orthodoxy, which bears this most holy and dearest name - that there is now also false Orthodoxy, which we must fear and flee as fire.

That true Orthodoxy is only that which does not accept or tolerate in anything - neither in teaching nor in the practice of the Church - any innovations that are contrary to the Word of God and the decrees of the Universal Church.

That true Orthodoxy does not indulge in the modern fashion, the manners and habits of the modern corrupted world, which, even more than in apostolic times, lies in evil, as an apostate world.

That true Orthodoxy thinks only about pleasing God and the salvation of souls, and not about the arrangement of temporary earthly well-being, about careers and earthly gains and gains.

That true Orthodoxy is spiritual, not spiritual and fleshly, and is not tied to the earth - to earthly feelings and experiences.

In order to protect ourselves from the "spirit of the times" and to remain faithful to true Orthodoxy, we must first of all strive with all our strength to conduct ourselves impeccably in everything: with all our heart to be jealous of the strict and unswerving fulfillment of the commandments of God and all the statutes, rules and regulations of the Holy Church.

At the same time, we must have no communion, especially, of course, prayerful and spiritual communion with all modern apostates from the true faith and the Church, with all corrupters of our holy faith, false teachers and schismatics, even if some of them call themselves even Orthodox.

Let them go their way, and we will go ours. But we must be honest and consistent - keep a straight line, not wiggle here and there, not please for fear of losing something, ours and yours - not sit between two chairs, for to behave otherwise is, in the words of the great saint of the Church of Christ, St. Gregory the Theologian: "To partake of the evil leaven and be attached to the infected" (Writings, Part I, p. 192).

Worst of all and most pernicious of all is the modern indifference and unprincipled attitude, which is commonly called "broadmindedness" and contrasted with strict ideology, which is not at all fashionable in the modern world and is usually branded with the "shameful" title of "narrowness" and "fanaticism". From the point of view of these modern intellectuals, therefore, both the Holy Martyrs, on whose blood the true Church of Christ was founded, and the greatest Holy Fathers of the Church, who fought heretics all their lives, must be regarded as nothing more than fanatics or men of narrow-mindedness!

May God protect us from this modern broad-mindedness, which, just as the "wide and spacious path" condemned by God Himself, leads directly to hellfire! But what is hell fire for these modern "liberals" and "advanced people" when they do not believe in its existence, although some of them are able to "theologize" very pompously and self-confidently, or rather, to be more exact, to rant brazenly about "new paths in Orthodox theology," and they even win many admirers, who seriously consider them the pillars of modern Orthodox theology, purified from "medieval scholasticism," and high authorities in the knowledge of Orthodoxy?

It is not the way for us to go with such "progressives" - let us repeat this once again with all determination. For their way is, in essence, the deceitful way of a gradual and not visible to all (which is terrible!) departure from Christ and His true Church, the way of departure from true Orthodoxy, the way that has the ultimate goal of making all of us Christians "salt of the sea". This is the terrible way, cunningly invented by the enemy of human salvation, the devil, the liar and murderer of men from time immemorial.

For us there can not be and should not be any new way, except the old and proven, straight and honest way, which walked for almost two thousand years, all true Christians who have pleased God.

Our way is the way of total fidelity to the original, not "modernized" faith of Christ and to the Church, with all its dogmas and canons, accepted and confirmed at the Ecumenical and Local Councils, with all its pious customs and traditions, - with all that genuine spiritual wealth, which the Apostles of Christ and the great Fathers of the Church have passed on to us, and which we have inherited from our pious fathers and grandfathers.

"This faith is apostolic, this faith is fatherly, this faith is orthodox, this faith establishes the universe!" (Chin of Orthodoxy).

This faith is true Orthodoxy, in contrast to the false Orthodoxy invented by the enemy. Let us hold fast to this faith firmly and steadfastly, cherish it and keep it holy.

Chapter 3: On the Situation of the Orthodox Christian in the Modern World

The position of the Orthodox Christian in today's world is, without any exaggeration, resolutely grave to say the least. All modern life, in all its manifestations, is directed against him in one way or another. After all, everything in it is essentially a total denial of true Christianity. And if in apostolic times beloved disciple of Christ St. John the Theologian could write that "the whole world lies in evil" (1 John 5:19), so with greater right we can say the same about our time. To be a true Orthodox Christian, willing to be faithful to Christ the Savior to the point of death, is more difficult in our day than it was in the first centuries of Christianity. At that time, Christians were persecuted by foolish enemies who had no knowledge of the faith of Christ, who had perverted and often absurd ideas about it. And these persecutions were mostly external. While they did not harm the soul, they condemned the bodies of the first Christians to torture and death. And the Christians of that time, well remembering Christ's commandment: "Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul" (Matthew 10:28), and being strengthened by the grace of God, were glad to be tortured and gave their lives for Christ. These persecutions not only did not dampen the spirit, but, on the contrary, encouraged and fomented it more, and the blood of martyrs, as one of the apologists of that time aptly put it, really became the seed of Christianity.

Not so now. The modern world, with a few exceptions (we are referring to the bloody persecutions of the faith that took place in Soviet Russia), does not so obviously and openly threaten the bearers of the name of Christ with bodily torment and bodily death. He himself, even in large part, still carries on the name "Christian," builds temples, invokes the Name of Christ, and swears on the Holy Bible.

But all of this is just appearance.

Under the guise of this deceptive, misleading, and plausible appearance, in reality there is now an intense hidden persecution of Christianity everywhere, manifesting itself in many different forms and forms. This persecution is much more dangerous and terrible than the former open persecution, for it threatens the complete devastation of souls - spiritual death. Now is happening exactly what Christ the Savior warned about and warned against most of all, when He exhorted His followers not to be afraid of bodily torment, because it does not threaten the soul: "More afraid than him," He said, "who can destroy soul and body in Gehenna" (Matt.10:28).

What is it that is going on in the world and how can the modern world, which for so many centuries seems to have lived in Christianity, persecute Christianity?

There is nothing unexpected in all this: we have long been warned of all this by God's Word. But woe to him who stubbornly closes his eyes to it, unwilling to see what the Word of God calls us to be ready for. In the world, according to St. Paul, "there is a mystery of iniquity" (2Sol.2:7) - there is an increasing process of "Departure" of Christians from Christ, a process, which eventually must lead to the revelation of the "man of sin, the son of perdition" - the Antichrist (2Sol.2:3). This terrible process of "Departure" in recent times is so clearly and obviously manifest in all aspects of life, that only a blind man can fail to see where it leads: everything happening now in the world is nothing but a careful preparation for the kingdom of the Antichrist, in which take an active part, both those who openly denied Christ, and those who continue to outwardly wear the name of "Christians".

The first important step in this "Departure" was the fall from Orthodoxy of the Latin West with the papal throne at its head. Is not the antichristic beginning the basis of the papal claim to be the infallible "vicar of the Son of God" on earth? Does not the spirit of the antichrists make itself felt in this aspiration to replace, as it were, Christ for all those who believe in Him? And the spirit of anti-Christian arrogance, which so obviously leads to betrayal in the spiritual life, the excessive ambition to control the whole world, - aren't all these things characteristic of the Antichrist?

Such a perversion of the spirit of Christ in Western Christianity, which broke away from Orthodoxy, led to a number of false teachings and terrible moral corruption. All that remained was the appearance of Christianity, the appearance of Christianity, devoid of the true spirit of life in Christ.

All this brought to life the second pernicious stage of the "Retreat" - the emergence of so-called "humanism," which gave birth to a new era in the West - the era of the "Renaissance. The Age of Humanism, or "Renaissance," which emerged as a reaction to the perversion of Christianity in the West, was essentially a rejection of Christianity and a return to the ideals of paganism. It proclaimed the cult of strong, healthy, beautiful human flesh, and contrasted the spirit of Christ's humility and obedience with the spirit of conceit, self-confidence, and the deification of the human mind.

As a protest against perverted Christianity, on the basis of the same humanistic ideal, which recognized "reason" as the highest criterion of life, there was a religious movement in the West called Protestantism. Protestantism, with its innumerable offshoots - all kinds of sects - not only fundamentally distorted the entire teaching of true Christianity, but also rejected the very dogma of the Church, making man himself the highest authority for

himself, and even went so far as to deny belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Church.

The pride of man, which has come to an end, finally gives up on God altogether, begins to defiantly reject even the very existence of God, and man himself declares himself to be as if a god. Enraptured by pride, conceit, confidence in his unlimited strength, abilities and capacities, man, brought up on the ideals of the "Renaissance," no longer sees any need for himself to strive for the commanded Gospel of spiritual perfection, and naturally descends deeper and deeper into the abyss of spiritual fall and moral depravity. The service of the flesh comes to the fore, so that spiritual needs are more and more stifled and suppressed, and finally, to put an end once and for all to the unpleasant voice of conscience that lives in the human spirit, the spirit itself is declared non-existent.

This is how "materialism," the brainchild of "humanism," appears, a natural and logical development of its ideas. The ideal of a well-fed stomach, under the loud scholarly name of "the ideal of social justice," "social truth," has become the highest ideal of humanity, which has renounced Christ. And this is understandable! Could the so-called social question have arisen if people had remained faithful to true Christianity as embodied in life?

On the ground of materialism, in turn, the doctrines of "socialism" and "Marxism-communism" already naturally arise, by direct logical necessity. Humanism and materialism, which rejected the spiritual element in man, proclaimed man himself a god and thereby legitimized the self-assertive human pride and animal egoism, led to a fierce struggle in human life, on the basis of the constant clash of egoistic human interests. As a result of this so-called "struggle for existence," the stronger, more intelligent and cunning, more agile people naturally began to oppress and oppress the less powerful, less intelligent and cunning, less agile ones. For the law of Christ, which commanded to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal.6:2) and "not to please oneself" and "not to do unto another that which thou wilt not do unto thyself" (Acts 15:29), but "to love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt.22:39), was driven from life. This is why the so-called social evil began to grow and expand, and social wrongs and social evils began to increase and multiply. And since life was becoming more and more unbearable because of the increasing selfishness and violence of some people over others, it was natural to think of something to try to establish an equally bearable and acceptable order of life for all. And so "socialism," and then the extreme expression of it, "communism," became fashionable doctrines that promised people a deliverance from all social wrongs and the establishment of a peaceful and serene paradise on earth in which all would be happy and contented. But these doctrines set out to cure the ills of human society by unprofitable means. They did not want to see that the evils of our time were rooted in the very depths of the human soul,

which had fallen away from the only saving evangelical teaching, and they naively thought that it was enough to change the imperfect, in their opinion, state and society, so that common prosperity would immediately be established on earth, and life would become a paradise. For this necessary, they claimed, and beneficial change, the most extreme socialists, such as the communists, even proposed violent measures, up to the spilling of blood and the physical destruction of people who disagreed with them. In other words, they thought to defeat evil with evil, an evil that was even worse and more unjust in its cruelty and ruthlessness.

The "Great French Revolution," which spilled whole streams of human blood, was their first experience. It showed clearly how powerless men are to arrange their lives on earth without God, and the terrible consequences of man's turning away from Christ and His saving teachings.

But there was no going back; the process of "Retreat" had already gone too far.

The third and most important stage in the "Departure" that is now so rapidly developing before our eyes was the terrible bloody catastrophe that befell our unhappy homeland Russia in 1917. Played out along the lines of the "Great French Revolution" of 1789, our Russian Revolution can, in all fairness, be seen as the greatest achievement of the servants of the coming Antichrist. In Orthodox Russia, the most important obstacle in the way of victorious marching, by the grace of God, "The Departure" has been broken: a powerful bulwark of a truly Christian faith and the Church in the world has disappeared, and the Antichrist, in the person of his servants, in the words of our native interpreter of the apostolic letters of St. Theophanes, the Vyshensky Conventor, has "become spacious to act.

Since then, as we observe it now, the "Retreat" has gone forward without any serious obstacles, by giant strides.

Terrible upheavals, unheard of in history since the first centuries of Christianity, our Russian Orthodox Church has endured and continues to endure to this day. But it was not so much the bloody persecutions that likened it to the primordial Church that were terrible in themselves, as the internal decay that began within it, and with it in the entire Orthodox Church, after the Bolshevik revolution. We are referring to the corrupting spirit that began to make itself known, first in the so-called "Church of Christ" and "Renewal" movement, and then in the pernicious concordance with the God-fighting Communist authorities. It was the spirit of "Retreat" in the very depths of the Orthodox Church itself that gave rise to all kinds of divisions and schisms, both there in the homeland, enslaved by the godless, and here abroad. This spirit of "Retreat" is, of course, far more dangerous

and devastating to souls than open bloody persecutions. It is, after all, an inward betrayal of Christ the Savior while retaining only outward apparent fidelity to Him.

Wasn't it just this that St. Theophanes of Vyshensk said in his treatise on the Second Epistle to the Solonians more than 80 years ago: "Although the Christian name will be heard everywhere, and church churches and ranks will be seen everywhere, yet all this is only in appearance, but inside is true apostasy" (P 491-492). As Christ Himself in His Sermon on the Mount clearly said that "no one can serve two masters" (Mf.6:24); it is impossible to serve simultaneously God and "mammon", that is "this world which lies in the evil", it is impossible to please at the same time, both Christ and Veliar, that is the servants of the coming Antichrist, in the face of open or secret godless power (2 Corinthians 6:15).

With the fall of Orthodox Russia really was no more "holding back" (2Sol.2:7), as repeatedly predicted about it by Saint Theophanes, and our great all-Russian righteous man Fr. John of Kronstadt, and many other spiritual visionaries of our time - and everything in the world is shaken, being shaken in its age-old foundations. With unusual cynicism and shamelessness, the spirit of "Retreat" began to manifest itself everywhere in the world in all areas of personal, family, social and public life as never before. Whole millions of people who were Christians by birth are no longer ashamed to declare openly and publicly their unbelief and godlessness, and the state authorities officially register them as not belonging to any denomination. Depravity and pornography are not only not prosecuted but even cultivated by those in power, including the systematic depraving of the young generation in schools; the former concepts of duty, honor, nobility, and conscience have almost disappeared; the first place is given to selfishness, egoistic calculation, material gain, and carnal pleasures. It is especially bitter for today's youth, who are quite devoid of spiritual ardor and that high enthusiasm for sacrificial service to others and enthusiasm for high moral ideas which distinguished the former youth. The aim of life for many has become merely career aspirations, materially well-supported service, external comforts, and base carnal pleasures. And the incredible growth of juvenile delinquency, as constantly reported in the newspapers, inspires the greatest apprehension for our immediate future.

In a word, the world, scary to say, the Christian world is now a dreadful, bleak picture of the deepest religious and moral decline.

And now, at the same time, in such a sharp contrast to all this dreadful reality, repeated calls for peace and unity are heard more and more often, more and more insistently.

Is it possible to believe, under such circumstances, seeing everything that is happening, in the sincerity and, most importantly, in the goodness of these appeals?

In the east, these appeals come from the god-fighting Soviet government, which poured blood into our homeland, and from the Moscow Patriarchate, which is its obedient instrument, which rightly deserves the name of "Soviet Church". (In the west, from papal Rome, so compromised in history by its deceitful and anti-Christian policy of enslaving dissenters, and from the Protestant world, which is responsible for the religious chaos that characterizes the present supposedly Christian world, which has reached the point of utter godlessness.

In order to promote this peace and unity the representatives of the God-fighting authorities and their obedient servants in cassocks travel all over the world, sowing the seeds of falsehood and trying to deceive and mislead the naive and credulous people. For the same dubious purpose, the papacy has created the so-called "Eastern Rite" to mislead the Orthodox, who know little of their faith, and now has even announced the convening of an "Ecumenical Council" in which all supposedly "separated brothers" can participate, although at the same time the encyclical issued by the pope leaves no doubt about the true purpose of this council - the unconditional submission of all to papal authority. Not far behind this desire for peace and "unity, which itself has continually created so many divisions in the form of a great many sects, is the Protestant world, which is now promoting its ecumenical movement, into the net of which it is trying, not without success, to lure the Orthodox, mainly those infected by the corrupting spirit of the Church of Christ and Renewalism.

How should an Orthodox Christian respond to all this?

Should he strive for all peace and unity?

Should any peace and unity be in his eyes valuable, dear and close to his truly Christian soul?

Not at all, decisively answers this important question - the question of Christian conscience - the great universal teacher and saint, the pillar of our Orthodox faith, St. Gregory the Theologian. "Not every peace," he says, "must be treasured, for there is beautiful discord, and the most pernicious unanimity, but only the good peace, which has a good purpose and unites with God" (Word 6, vol. 1, p. 192).

All that is most precious to the Christian is the Truth, for the testimony of which the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth, as He Himself said to Pilate (Jn.18:37). And for a true

Christian there can be only one unity desirable - unity in Christ's Truth - the Truth undistorted, undefiled, pure Truth, without any admixture of diabolical falsehood, not poisoned by any compromise with it. From this point of view, all these appeals to "peace" and "unity" are unacceptable to the Christian, because they come from people who infringe on our main treasure, the pure and unadulterated truth of the holy teaching of Christ, and who want to replace it with a lie, which comes from the devil. The "unity" now being plotted by the enemies of the pure truth of Christ is not unity in Christ. It is that unity, which seeks to create for himself, wishing to subjugate all people and establish his kingdom on earth the Antichrist.

Everything that is happening now at the summit of religious, governmental and social life of people, since our Orthodox Russia has fallen to dust, is nothing less than the intensive work of the servants of the coming Antichrist to prepare his future kingdom.

Therefore, more than ever in the past, it is necessary for everyone who wishes to be a true Christian and remain faithful to Christ, to remember the admonition of the Apostle: "Watch how you walk dangerously: not as foolish, but as wise, redeeming the time, as evil is the day" (Eph.5:15-16).

And so, seeking to protect ourselves from the corrupting influence of the modern world, we must first of all cherish our belonging to the Russian Church Abroad. How should we thank God that we still have our Russian Church Abroad, which is not tainted by its submission to the dark anti-Christian forces at work in the modern world! Let us give ourselves a full account of this salvation advantage.

The great significance of the Russian Church Abroad consists in the fact that it alone is at the present time the freely acting, independent of any god-fighting and anti-Christian forces, and therefore an undeniably legitimate Orthodox Church. Its existence is firmly grounded canonically in the wise decree of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, dated November 7/20, 1920, No. 362. This decree had in view the organization of a special Higher Church Administration for all those parts of the Russian Orthodox Church which would happen to be "outside all communion with the Higher Church Administration" or "if the Higher Church Administration itself, headed by His Holiness the Patriarch, should for any reason cease to function. The Supreme Church Administration in Russia, which was lawfully elected at the last freely convened All-Russian Church Council of 1917, ceased to exist because of the severe persecution by the Bolsheviks, and therefore it is quite natural and lawful that that our ecclesiastical life abroad has since then been guided by a special, temporarily independent supreme ecclesiastical authority, which is at liberty, beyond any submission to the god-fighters, who have taken possession of our motherland and are setting for themselves the open task of destroying not only the Church and

Christianity itself, but also all religion in general. A united Russian Church Abroad, governed in a conciliar manner, must therefore exist until such time as a higher ecclesiastical government, free from all enslavement and pressure by the enemies of our holy faith, can be legally elected in Russia.

It seems to be clear to all reasonable people that, in wanting to preserve our fidelity to Christ the Savior, we cannot be subject to that ecclesiastical authority, which has been placed by theomachists and which is an obedient instrument in the implementation of their hellish plans in the world. Nor can we be in any dependence whatsoever on any other ecclesiastical authority outside our enslaved homeland, which recognizes this enslavement as lawful and has prayerful communion with the minions of the god-fearing hierarchs of the Soviet Church. We dare not forget that the anathema proclaimed by His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon on January 19, 1918, against the godless communist government and later confirmed by the entire Holy Council of the Russian Orthodox Church on January 28 of the same year, has not been annulled ever since, and still weighs upon it and upon all those who recognize it as legal and who in one way or another have open and friendly communion with it.

Only the utter levity and extreme unscrupulousness, as well as the wicked wisdom with which the present age is so distinguished, allow the rulers of modern states to recognize this truly anti-Christian power as legitimate, And hierarchs of local Orthodox Churches - to travel to Moscow, to lay wreaths on the tombs of the leaders of militant atheism, and to enter into canonical and liturgical communion with the leaders of the Church, which gave itself in service to the anti-Christian power.

We do not understand or accept such a "higher policy," condemning it with all the strength of our inner conviction, which does not permit such compromises, a conviction based on the words of St. Paul: "What light has in common with darkness? What harmony between Christ and Belial? Or what is the complicity of the believer with the unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Likewise, we cannot hold any confidence in those representatives of the Orthodox Church hierarchy who, under the plausible pretext of the same notorious "peace" and "unity", join institutions and organizations hostile to true Christianity, Orthodoxy, or at least have a close, friendly communion with them. We resolutely reject any manifestation of the spirit of the Church of Christendom or of Renewalism, in whatever form this malignant spirit may manifest itself. We can have nothing in common with the "Eastern Rite" or with "ecumenism" or with any secret societies or organizations, no matter how lofty the slogans they may hide behind. We must know and remember that, according to the prophecy of a number of St. Fathers, who wrote about the end times, Antichrist will

appear in the form of the greatest benefactor and benefactor of mankind, for how else can he attract people to his side?

"Depart from their midst and be afar off, saith the Lord, and touch not their uncleanness" (Isaiah 52:11) - this is the advice of the holy prophet, quoted in the 2 Corinthians letter of St. Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 6:17) must always be followed by an Orthodox Christian, living in the contemporary world, so clearly marked by the stamp of the Apostasy. Watching vigilantly over himself, so as not to be drawn into this rapid stream of "Retreat," the modern Christian must cling firmly to that Church which has not stained her vestments with any fellowship with the servants of the coming Antichrist. At the present time, this is our Russian Church Abroad, which is the only legitimate successor to the former pre-revolutionary Russian Church, the guardian of the sacred legacies of St. Vladimir, the enlightener of the Russian people, and the bearer and preacher of the high idea of Holy Russia. It is quite characteristic that all the best people from the other local Orthodox churches and even from those of a different faith, seeking in her salvation from this evil age, are so attracted to her. Therefore, there is no doubt for us that this Church, in spite of all attacks, explicit and implicit persecutions against it, in one form or another, must and will exist - either until the restoration of the legitimate Supreme Church Authority in Russia, freed from the yoke of the god-fighters - or until the end of this world and the second coming of Christ.

But, of course, such a purely formal affiliation with the true Church is not enough. It is necessary to try to be a living member of the Church, not a dead one. To do this, one must "churchify" one's personal and family life: one must zealously and without neglect fulfill all the Church's rules and regulations, customs and traditions; one must preserve our original Orthodox life in every possible way, not allowing oneself to merge with the environment of a non-Orthodox environment, yielding to its influence.

Above all, in order to preserve a genuine living connection with the Church, one must be a member of a parish of the Russian Church Abroad, most conscientiously performing all his parish duties, diligently and lovingly offering, on his part, as much spiritual and material sacrifice as he can for the good and prosperity of his parish, feeling and conscious of himself as a truly living member of the common family.

Our children should be taught from an early age the Law of God and the Russian language, educating them in the correct religious and national consciousness in a strictly Orthodox Russian spirit, by means of corresponding conversations with them at home, and by sending them to take a systematic course in the Law of God, the Russian language and Russian History in parochial schools, where they exist, and striving in every way to assist in the opening and maintenance of such schools, where they do not. It is necessary

to remember firmly that forgetting the Russian language and the resulting break with Russian culture, which is based on Holy Orthodoxy, inevitably leads to falling away from the Orthodox faith and the Church. At the same time, we must carefully guard all our younger generation from the spiritual corruption to which young people everywhere are now exposed through morally unhealthy entertainment and obscene immoral amusements in the form of indecent fashionable dances, movies, television, and theaters. It is absolutely inadmissible, in particular, to attend performances at which Soviet films, which always in one form or another contain an element of evil propaganda, and the so-called Soviet "festivals" are shown: we must remember that those who attend such spectacles are not only exposed to their malign influence, but also sin by supporting with their money the godless communist propaganda throughout the world.

Orthodox Russian people who wish to be living members of the Russian Church Abroad, faithful and devoted members of it, must at the same time be missionaries of it, fighters for the true faith of Christ, both among the people surrounding them from a foreign faith, and among Russian people who have fallen away or are falling away from it, who forget their spiritual values and sacred things and who disregard the rules and regulations of the Holy Church.

It is necessary to stand firm for one's faith and in no way succumb to the corrupting environment in which one must live and work. Not our Church should be "modernized" and "reformed," as unreasonable Russian people often demand now, who are completely unaware of what they want, but we must adapt ourselves and try to adapt our lives to the rules, regulations, and traditions of the Church.

Now is the time of confession - a firm stand, if necessary even to death, for our Orthodox faith, which is subjected everywhere to explicit and covert attacks, oppression and oppression by the servants of the coming Antichrist. And there is nothing insignificant in our holy faith - everything in it, down to every seeming detail, has its meaning, its significance, its value. Therefore, nothing should be neglected, and no concessions or compromises should be made in anything. Every concession or compromise in matters of faith and ecclesiastical regulations leads to a greater and greater loosening of the age-old foundations of our Holy Orthodoxy, to a gradual falling away from it and to a transition to the camp of the servants of the coming Antichrist.

This is the latter we should fear the most in our age, full of cunning, deceit and betrayal.

We must also fear that from which the Word of God so carefully warns us by the mouth of Christ the Savior Himself: "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that that day come upon

you suddenly" (Luke 21:34). The enemy of man's salvation knows how people are addicted to the craving for material prosperity, and that is why the servants of the coming Antichrist are trying most of all to influence this weak side of the people. All kinds of welfare, luxury and abundance of material goods now represent the greatest and most dangerous temptation, which they are trying to exploit extensively. For nothing fosters spiritual blindness as devastating as the seduction of earthly goods, pursuit of them, immersion in them, delight in them. This spiritual blindness prevents us from recognizing the "signs of the times," as Christ the Savior Himself teaches us, prevents us from correctly evaluating everything that is happening in the world today - it will prevent us from recognizing the Antichrist himself when he comes. "Mankind, guided by carnal reason," the holy fathers assert, "will not only not recognize the Antichrist, will not see in him his insidious enemy, but on the contrary, will recognize him as its benefactor and will proclaim him its god" (Bishop Ignatius Bryanchaninov).

This is why, in these times, all who wish to remain faithful to Christ the Savior must especially guard against any fascination with earthly goods, against their seduction. It is extremely dangerous to succumb to every desire to make a career for oneself, to create a glorious name, to acquire power and influence in society, to amass wealth, to surround oneself with luxury and comfort. One must fear and run away from people who offer to help in all this, to give their assistance. Especially dangerous are large donations of money from unknown or little known persons and organizations, for they are always binding and binding in one way or another. What does not a person sometimes do, prompted by a sense of gratitude to his benefactor? It is better to live modestly, even in want and in want, but only to keep your freedom and independence from anybody, remembering the saying of St. Apostle: "You have been bought with a high price: do not become slaves of men" (1 Corinthians 7:23).

The most frightening thing in today's life is not even the explicit and fierce rebellion against God, which repulses many, but total religious indifferentism, forgetfulness of God and indifference to faith and the Church. Servants of Antichrist are trying most of all to completely oust God from people's lives, so that people, satisfied with their material well-being, would not feel any need to turn to God in prayer, would not remember God, and lived as if He does not exist at all. Therefore, the whole way of life today in the so-called "free" countries, where there is no outright bloody persecution of the faith, where everyone is recognized as having the right to believe "as he wishes," is an even greater danger to the Christian soul, because it chains him wholly to earth, making him forget about heaven. All modern culture, aimed at purely earthly achievements, and the whirlwind of life associated with it, keep man in a constant vanity and distraction, under which there is no possibility for him to go any deeper into his soul, and the spiritual life in him gradually dies out.

That is why the Orthodox Christian living in these difficult conditions of modern life must struggle with all his strength to maintain his spiritual life, and the main means for this is not only daily prayer at home and obligatory participation in public church prayer. Despite of all obstacles, he must make it a rule to pray at home, morning and evening, at least briefly, taking as an example at least the prayer rule of St. Serafim for laymen, and not to miss Sunday and Sunday services in the church, not only the Liturgy, but also the All Night Vigil. From this point of view, it is absolutely inadmissible, and unfortunately widespread in our country, to have all sorts of fun and entertainment on the eve of Sundays and holidays. This is also a sure ploy by the servants of the coming Antichrist to distract Orthodox Christians from such non-permissive attendance at church services, which is absolutely necessary to sustain their spiritual life.

And no excuses can be taken into account here. The human soul is more precious than everything in the world - it is, according to Christ the Savior, more precious than all this corruptible world (Matt.16:26), and deprived of the grace of church prayer it dies. "A Christian without the church, like a fish without water, cannot live a true life," taught the ever-memorable Father John of Kronstadt, "the church is his element" ("Thoughts on the Church" p. 114).

We need a correct spiritual life according to the precepts of the Holy Orthodox Church, and this requires constant guidance from the Word of God and the writings of the Holy Fathers. Most pernicious of all is the widespread habit in our time of seeking fashionable teachers and following so-called public opinion. All of these fashionable teachers are none other than those "false christs" and "false prophets", against whose deception the Lord Jesus Christ warned Himself (Matt. 24:4, 5, 23-25). And the so-called public opinion, through the press and by other means, is created by the same servants of the coming Antichrist, who have gained great power and ability to act on the minds and hearts of modern people.

Finally, and most importantly, we must resolutely abandon the fleshly life of sin peculiar to most modern people, frivolous and careless, and as often as possible, purifying his soul by sincere repentance, with his whole soul to strive for union with Christ in the greatest Christian sacrament of Communion.

Only in this way will the living Orthodox Christian be able to avoid the nets cunningly spread everywhere by the servants of the coming Antichrist. Only such a Christian will be able to fight for his soul and for the souls of those close to him against the kingdom of darkness increasingly looming over the world, ready to embrace all mankind. The most

dangerous thing in this struggle is indecision, hesitation and compromise. The smallest compromise can make the struggle harder and more difficult, can even be devastating.

It is a fight to the death, not to life.

It is criminal to lull ourselves into a rainbow of hopes for some kind of "progress" of mankind, for some better future here on earth. This is, after all, the main seduction of the servants of the Antichrist, to distract us from thinking about heaven. The Lord clearly said that not progress awaits us, but more and more trouble and distress, because of the "multiplication of iniquity" and "depletion of love" and that when He comes, we will hardly find faith on earth (Lk.18:8). But the Lord's words are immutable, as He Himself solemnly testified: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

What kind of progress can we talk about?

The true Christian should not think about imaginary anti-Christian progress in our time, but about how best to prepare himself for the coming of the Lord, who is coming to judge the living and the dead.

There is a direct command from the Lord for this.

"Watch... Be ready... (Matthew 24:42-44) be like a man waiting for his master to return from his marriage... Blessed is the servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes" (Lk.12:40-43).

And vice versa: a bitter fate awaits the one who will lull himself saying, "My master will not come soon" (Luke 12:45).

The spirit of constantly waiting for the Second Coming of Christ is the spirit of early Christianity, which prayerfully cried out to the Lord: "Hey, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). And the opposite spirit is undoubtedly the spirit of Antichrist, trying by all means to divert Christians from the idea of the return of Christ and the subsequent retribution. Those who succumb to this spirit are in danger of not recognizing the antichrist when he comes, and falling into his net. This is the worst thing in our modern world, which is full of all kinds of deceptions and temptations. The servants of the Antichrist, as the Lord warned us, will seek to "deceive, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24).

The thought of it, however, should not depress and overwhelm us, but on the contrary: "Bow down," says the Lord Himself, "and lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand" (Luke 21:28).

No matter how wicked and terrible are the servants of the coming Antichrist, so thoroughly preparing now for his coming, no matter how terrible his coming himself, when the appointed time for it will be, but our Lord is stronger than all of them, and the main thing for us is to remain faithful to the Lord, who, as we well know, "will kill the Antichrist with the spirit of his mouth and abolish him by the appearance of his coming" (2Sol.2:8).

For this faithfulness to the Lord we must fight with all our might, even if we have to give our lives for it. A great and incomparable reward awaits us for it. "Be faithful unto death," says the Lord Himself, "and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Chapter 4: True Orthodoxy and Counterfeit Orthodoxy

Everyone knows what a counterfeit coin is. It is a coin that looks very similar to a real coin, so similar that it is accepted as real. But in reality it is only a deceptive appearance - in fact it is a fake, a counterfeit coin that has no real value.

It is in this very sense that we can speak of false Orthodoxy. It is frightening to say, but we seem to have reached such times that, along with many other false values, there is also a false Orthodoxy, which has only the appearance of the true faith of Christ, an ostentatious appearance, devoid in reality of true inner value, which is only a counterfeit that deceives the eye.

It is not at all true, as the apologists of such "Orthodoxy" claim, that the essence of Orthodoxy consists only in the bare, cold, formal recognition of a known body of doctrines. Orthodoxy is not a conglomeration of abstract truths divorced from life. Orthodoxy is spirit and life, as witnessed by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who said: "The words which I have spoken to you, are spirit and life" (John 6:63).

From this very point of view, in the present evil age, we must distinguish between true Orthodoxy, which is "spirit and life," and false Orthodoxy, which is only a more or less successful counterfeit of true Christianity without a corresponding inner content.

More and more often, the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as some other organs of the Soviet press, carries reports about some "sect" calling itself "true Orthodox Christians" and "followers of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon," which refuses to recognize the official Church legalized by the Soviet authorities and is clearly hostile to the Soviet authorities themselves. Already by the few traits that characterize this "sect," we can easily conclude that we are talking here about that secret Church that we are used to calling "catacomb," the existence of which many of us abroad, for all sorts of reasons, deny. The testimony of the enemies themselves, however, cannot fail to be particularly convincing to us, and therefore there can be no more doubt about the existence of the Catacomb Church in Soviet Russia.

It is characteristic that the followers of the Catacomb Church call themselves "true Orthodox Christians," thus wishing to distinguish themselves from the official Church, which was legalized by the godless communist authorities and was an obedient instrument of them. Knowing the history of this official Church, which, having sullied its soul, betrayed the truth, and assimilated to itself a lie that is by no means typical of the true Church of Christ, went into the service of the wicked God-fighters, placing itself at their complete disposal for the realization of their truly hellish plans in the world, we cannot but agree with the correctness of this name, which the "Catacombites" have adopted for themselves. But beyond this, the life of this official church itself has recently undergone such dramatic shifts, which clearly testify to its growing

departure from true Orthodoxy. As early as 1948, when in Moscow, with the permission of the godless, a solemn celebration of the 500th anniversary of the autocephaly of the Russian Orthodox Church was organized, a book was published under the title "Proceedings of the Meeting of the Heads and Representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches in connection with the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the autocephaly of the Russian Orthodox Church. In this book we find a number of articles that testify to how this church, then legalized by the Soviet authorities, emphasized its strict orthodoxy. But just a few years later, the picture has changed. Certainly, it was not but at the demand of the godless Soviet authorities, who wanted to spread their influence everywhere in the world, including through the Church and non-Orthodox organizations, that the Moscow Patriarchate, first practically and then formally and officially joined the trendy ecumenical movement. Something extraordinary, almost unprecedented in the past, is beginning to happen. In Soviet Russia itself the unrelenting persecution of the faith, of the Church, the persecution of the clergy, the oppression of believers, the propaganda of atheism, and at the same time, Moscow Patriarch Alexis and some of the higher representatives of the legalized Church occupy a special privileged position, like high Soviet dignitaries, are awarded Soviet decorations and hold lavish receptions for those who come to Soviet Russia. Representatives of the local Orthodox Churches and non-Orthodox religious organizations, and they themselves travel abroad freely, often staying in the most luxurious hotels and enjoying the attention and support of Soviet "ambassadors," who arrange grand banquets in honor of them and their foreign and non-Orthodox guests. A special "Department of External Church Relations" was even established under the Moscow Patriarchate with the obvious support of the atheistic Soviet government. The first Chairman of this Department, who mysteriously fell out of service and soon died, Metropolitan Nicholas of Krutitsy, traveled to many countries, and ceremonial meetings and receptions were held in his honor everywhere, not only by Orthodox Christians, He also received doctoral degrees and various honorary titles from non-Orthodox institutions of higher learning, and he himself received countless non-Orthodox delegations in Moscow, while Patriarch Alexy put on the Protestant pastors, who were mostly dressed in secular jackets, Orthodox Archimandrite crosses with adornments.

Now his successor, 33-year-old Metropolitan Nikodim, who has made an extraordinary, dizzying spiritual career, is developing this same feverish activity.

The local Orthodox churches in the so-called "satellites" of the Soviet Union, especially in Romania and Bulgaria, are in a similar state of total enslavement by the godless Communists. The Serbian Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia is in a somewhat easier situation, but even there, according to information coming from there, Patriarch Herman does not enjoy the confidence of the faithful people, as the protégé of Communist Tito. Both the Moscow Patriarchate and the rest of the churches in the countries behind the Iron Curtain must play a political role in accordance with the plans of world communism, serving it as obedient instruments. It reaches a ridiculous point: the Synod of Moscow, headed by Patriarch Alexy, and immediately followed by the

Synod of Bulgaria, headed by Patriarch Kyrill, meet and sharply condemn every act of American policy that the Communists do not like, which has nothing to do with the Church or the life of the Church. Thus, for example, both the Synod of Moscow and the Synod of Bulgaria have spoken in the press very strongly condemning the "aggression" of the United States against Korea, and then even against "peaceful Cuba. All of these Communist-controlled local churches are obliged to participate actively in the Soviet Peace Action by sending their representatives, clergymen, to the so-called "Peace Conferences" organized by the Communists in various countries. There is even a special section in the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate very typical of Soviet peace propaganda, both in content and in the style and language of the articles printed in it, under the heading "In Defense of Peace.

And so, knowing, undoubtedly knowing, in what humiliating position of total slavery to the godless communist authorities are the Moscow Patriarchate and the other local churches of the satellites, constantly proclaiming to the world the lie that the Church in their countries is completely free, all the other local churches in the communist-free countries of the world, apparently enjoying complete freedom, instead of publicly voicing their strong protest against this situation - against this violence of the godless, - pretend that in these enslaved churches all is normal, canonical, and communicate with them, represented by their hierarchy, as canonical churches, and our Russian Church Abroad, the only free part of the Russian Church, They do not recognize the Russian Church Abroad as a canonical Church and often refuse to have communion with it (a typical example is the attitude of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem toward our bishops who come to the Holy Land).

But it is not just this attitude - not only this hypocritical lie - toward the godless communists who persecuted the faith and the Church that points to the spiritually unhealthy, essentially anti-Christian condition of all the contemporary Orthodox Churches, except our Russian Church Abroad, but much else as well.

This is the spirit of secularism, of rejection of the spirit of Christ and fusion with this evil world, which poured out in Russia during the early years of Bolshevism in the movement of the so-called "Believers" and the Renewalists, and then immediately spread to the other local Orthodox Churches, under the leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarchs of Constantinople, who set themselves the task of convening an Eighth Ecumenical Council to reform the Orthodox Church.

In Russia, the faithful people themselves rejected this movement, but in 1927 the Russian Church very soon came under the total power of the god-fighting Communist Party, which is forcing it to walk not along the path of the true doctrine of Christ, but along the paths laid before it by those fierce persecutors of the faith and the Church.

The situation is no better in the countries of the free world, where Orthodox local churches have fallen under the authority of liberal, modernist ideas that fundamentally abolish true Orthodoxy and bring them closer to Protestantism. Of course, all of this is covered by the most plausible slogans, in the hope of somehow deceiving the vigilance of the zealots of Orthodoxy.

The Constantinople cathedra, the first in the Orthodox Church, traditionally called "Ecumenical," became the leader of a movement that is essentially akin to our Russian Belief-Church and Renewalism. Is it not for this reason that Patriarch Gregory VII of Constantinople recognized the deposition of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, which was carried out by the members of the Church of Christ, and our Archbishops Anastasy and Alexander banned the commemoration of Patriarch Tikhon in Constantinople and even imposed a ban on them from priestly service? And Patriarch Meletios IV vigorously undertook the implementation of the Church's life-church reforms in the entire Orthodox Church, convening in 1923 an "Ecumenical Congress" with the following "reforms" outlined by him:

1. The introduction into the Orthodox Church of a married episcopate,
2. The introduction of the second celibacy of the clergy,
3. The curtailment of worship,
4. Reduction in fasting,
5. Simplification of the clothing of the clergy with the abolition of the wearing of beards and long hair, and allowing the clergy a secular way of life, and
6. The introduction of a new calendar.

Not all Eastern Patriarchs and Autocephalous Church leaders responded sympathetically at the time, there were serious objections. Our present chief-hierarchy, then Archbishop Anastassy, who represented the Russian Church, also spoke out against such "reforms," which prompted a special sympathetic letter from Patriarch Gregory IV of Antioch. As for Patriarch Meletios IV of Constantinople, he received his due retribution for his modernism from the faithful people of his own flock: a crowd of a few hundred Greeks stormed into the Patriarchate, caused a real pogrom and demanded his resignation from the Patriarchal see, giving him two minutes to think.

But none of this had any effect. Both Patriarch Meletios IV and his successors chose the anti-Orthodox path of ecclesiastical unrighteousness and transgression of the canons, to which our blessed Metropolitan Anthony, with whose authority then still all the Eastern Patriarchs were very much concerned, firmly pointed out in his epistle to the newly elected Patriarch of

Constantinople, Constantine VI. Referring to the decree of the Ecumenical Council (IVth) that, if anywhere a bishop disobeys the rules of the Church, the neighboring bishops should fraternally rebuke him, Metropolitan Anthony, "for physical impossibility to our Russian Patriarch (Tikhon) to raise his voice," as "second to him," in recognition of the great All-Russian Council that was held in Moscow in 1917/18, As well as by the recognition of all 32 Russian bishops residing abroad, he considered it "his grave but inescapable duty" to remind the newly elected Patriarch Constantine VI "of the illegal acts of his predecessors, Patriarch Meletios and Patriarch Grigory VII, who intervened in the internal affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, alienating entire regions from it. Particularly iniquitous was the consecration by Patriarch Gregory VII of the priest Aav, without any monastic ordination or even cassock, as bishop for Finland. "This dubious bishop Hermann," according to Metropolitan Anthony, "in worldly garb, shaven and trimmed, struts about the streets of the city to the temptation of the Orthodox and to the gloating of foreign believers," while the legitimate Archbishop of Finland, Seraphim, grossly insulted by his own false brother, drags on sad days in exile in the close quarters of a monastery on a desert island in the rough Ladoga Lake. "The history of the Church," writes Metropolitan Anthony further, "has hardly ever known such gross violations of the universal canons and rules of universal justice by Patriarchs for the joy of heretics.... "It was only since the sad Pan-Orthodox Congress that the former Patriarch Meletios began that anti-Church vandalism which projected many things forbidden by the Church with terrible curses, such as "married bishops, second-marriage of clergy, abolition of fasts. True, this non-Orthodox congress did not dare to declare officially all the impious violations of the ecclesiastical laws, but only proposed to introduce a new style and to move all the fixed holidays 13 days earlier, leaving the Easter Holidays untouched. This unreasonable and aimless concession to masonry and papism, which had long been calling for such a change in the calendar with the aim of completely overtaking union with Latinism, violates the apostolic establishment of Peter and Paul, for with the introduction of the new style the feast of St. Peter and Paul would be held before the week of All Saints, if Easter falls on April 21st century or later, and then the fast would be annulled altogether.

"It is not, however, that we wish now to mention," writes further in the same letter, Metropolitan Anthony (4/17 February 1925), "but that the late Patriarch Gregory VII, having yielded to the influence of the Lutheran government of Finland, agreed and even St. Easter, notwithstanding the curses imposed by St. First and Antiochian Right Sessions. 1 and St. Apostle's Right. 7, "by way of exception" to celebrate it with heretics and even with Jews, whereas the effort of the Holy Church in establishing this feast was only directed to "let us not celebrate it with Jews. And now the government of Finland persecutes morally and physically those monks and laymen faithful to Orthodoxy, who wish to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). The Hellenic Greeks prove the same in their petition to the National Assembly, signed by hundreds of thousands of believers, who begged the people's deputies to protect them from their own Archpastors.

Who were the main perpetrators of this horror? Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory VII, surrounded by impious advisors. He, just as, alas, some other hierarchs, is forcing the flock and other local churches to adopt the new calendar style, threatening those unruly to this madness, but obedient to the Holy Tradition, with bans and epithets. At the same time he is not ashamed to assert, contrary to the truth, as did the Russian pseudo-Archbishops, who in 1923 assembled the Council of the Robbers (who sent 80 confessor-bishops to prison and exile, and 30 to the death penalty), that the Eastern Patriarchs also switched to the new style. The lawless enemies of St. John Chrysostom and St. Nikon, Patriarch of Russia (1681), would scarcely have dared to lie so unashamedly, to deceive the flock so, to slander their eldest brethren so.

The flock in Finland, in Poland, in Romania, and in modern Turkey, and in Hellas lost their peace, as if divided into fallen and confessors. The latter will receive the crown of incorruption, but let the former be reared in good time together with their foolish archpastors and shepherds!

Deeply has piety fallen! Only the grace of the Lord can rectify the situation of the Church, for which we do not cease to tearfully beseech God and His Immaculate Mother, the Angels and the Saints.

The new Ecumenical Patriarch, Metropolitan Anthony, concludes with a prayer: "To stop with his influence the terrible destruction which Patriarchs Meletius IV and Gregory VII have begun, who have 'outraged the Church,' viz:

- 1) lead to the annulment of the decree of the Ecumenical Congress,
- 2) to renounce their claims to the borders that have been torn away from the Russian Patriarchate,
- 3) to abolish the new style,
- 4) to return to Finland the canonical celebration of Easter Day,
- 5) To call upon all congregations to observe peace and to protect the Holy Canons and Traditions.

We have cited such large passages from this meaningful message of Mgr. Anthony on purpose, in order to make it clear, what decisive stand our Russian Church Abroad took in the spontaneous striving of the Orthodox local Churches for the modernization of Orthodoxy, or, simply put, as our Blessed Metropolitan Anthony also sees it, for a retreat from true Orthodoxy, which is so unfortunate for true Orthodoxy.

The voice of Metropolitan Anthony remained, however, "a voice crying in the wilderness. Since then, the modernization of the Orthodox Church throughout the world has taken rapid steps forward. The "reforms" outlined at the 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress have not yet been fully implemented, but sympathy for them has been growing. And the introduction of the new style has caused incredible upheaval and turmoil, leading to a schism, for example, The Hellenic Church where the faithful people did not want to accept this innovation, bearing in mind the terrible warnings imposed on those who wished to follow the Gregorian calendar as early as November 20, 1583 by the Council of the Eastern Patriarchs - Jeremiah of Constantinople, Silvestre of Alexandria and Sophronius of Jerusalem - and the second even more formidable oath to accept the new style pronounced by Ecumenical Patriarch Kyrill in 1756. Both of these two "sigilions" are still preserved in the library of the Great Lavra of St. Athanasius on St. Athos. Here is their full text:

Sigilion Patriarchal and Synodal.

Jeremiah, by the grace of God Archbishop of Constantinople - New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch.

Since, once again, the Church of old Rome, as if to gratify the vanity of its astronomers, has carelessly altered the beautiful statutes of the holy Pascha, which are decreed and established by the holy Fathers of the Holy and Ecumenical Council of Nicaea 1, respected by Christians throughout the world and celebrated as decreed, - for this reason becomes a cause of temptation. For the Armenian men have appeared before our measure, asking about the practice of the feast, because they too are forced to accept these innovations.

For this reason we had to say that the holy Fathers had decreed these things. Our Mercy, having considered together with the Blessed Patriarch of Alexandria and the Blessed Patriarch of Jerusalem and the other members of the Synod "in the Holy Spirit," determines and clarifies the decision of the Holy Fathers.

It is marked 1583 from the Incarnation of the Word, November 20, Indictment 12.

Jeremiah of Constantinople, Silvestre of Alexandria, Sophronius of Jerusalem, and the other Hierarchs of the Synod (Council).

The decision of this Saint's Council with penance, chapter Z.

Those who do not follow the customs of the Church and those things which the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils have decreed about Holy Pascha and the Monthly Calendar and have good lawfully commanded us to follow, but who wish to follow the Gregorian Paschal Calendar and

the Monthly Calendar, are, like the godless astronomers, opposed to all the resolutions of the Holy Councils and wish to change or weaken them, let them be anathema, excommunicated from the Church of Christ and the assembly of the faithful. As for you Orthodox and devout Christians, abide in what you have learned, in what you were born and brought up, and when the need arises, shed your very blood to preserve your fatherly faith and confession; be watchful for these things, so that our Lord Jesus Christ may also help you and the prayer of our Mercy may be with you all. Amen.

Second Sigilion.

of the Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril in the year 1756, issued on the occasion of the new temptations which have taken place, produced by the papists concerning the alteration of our sacred Pascha and the Monthly Calendar. Excommunication from the Church.

Cyril, by the grace of God Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch.

Most honorable clerics of our Christ's Great Church and other most reverent hierarchs and venerable hieromonks, singers in the churches of our city, followers of the nebotain Paul, who says: "If anyone preaches to you anything contrary to what we preached to you, even if it were an angel from heaven, let him be anathema; whether a priest or a layman, let him be excommunicated from God, cursed, and at death let him not be corrupted and remain in eternal torment. Let stones and iron crumble and disintegrate; but these never and never will. Let them inherit the leprosy of Gizziah and the smiting of Judah; let them be on the earth as Cain, and stand and tremble; and let the wrath of God be on their heads, and their lot with Judah the traitor and the god-fighting Jews; Let the earth swallow them up, as Dathan and Abiron were once swallowed up; let the angel of God pursue them with the sword all the days of their lives; and let them be exposed to all the curses of the patriarchs and councils, to be forever deprived and tormented with everlasting fire. Amen."

There arose in Greece a whole movement of "Old Testamentists," embracing the broad masses of the people, the most steadfast in the faith, who instinctively felt in the introduction of the new style the first step toward a gradual and growing departure from true Orthodoxy. At present, only the Russian Church, the Bulgarian Church, and the Serbian Church still cling to the old Orthodox calendar, and the Jerusalem Patriarchate, for reasons that are not of an ideological nature, has retained it.

In recent years, however, something has happened in the life of the local Orthodox Churches that cannot be regarded other than as the beginning of a definitive departure from Orthodoxy and the merger of Orthodoxy with the Protestant world. This is the entry of almost all the local Orthodox Churches with the Ecumenical Patriarchate at their head into the so-called ecumenical

movement, formally united into one powerful organization called the "World Council of Churches".

The ideologist of ecumenism, which was a natural consequence of the Protestant world's longing for its lost Church, was the German pastor Christoph Blumhardt, whom Protestants therefore call "the great prophet of our time. He called for the unification of all Protestants to "build the kingdom of God on earth," but he died before the ecumenical movement was even formed, in 1919. His basic idea was that "the old world was crumbling and the new world was rising on its ruins. He posed three problems to Christianity: 1) the realization of a better social order, 2) the overcoming of confessional contradictions, and 3) cooperation in the formation of a complete peaceful coexistence of peoples with the complete elimination of wars.

In the same three points, the current Secretary General of the Council of the Ecumenical Movement, Visser-et-Huft, formulates the tasks of ecumenism, and he sees the way to fulfill them in the service of the Church to the social tasks. To do this, first of all, it is necessary to overcome confessional differences and create a unified Church. A renewed united Church will be able to prepare the way for the peaceful triumph of socialism, which will lead to the creation of a single world state as the kingdom of God on earth.

Much of what the ecumenists say might be considered a dreamlike utopia, but all indications are that they are pursuing very real goals. There can be no doubt that the ecumenical movement is joined and supported, if not led, by secret world organizations. That is why it is so powerful and has enormous material means and, consequently, opportunities.

The entry of Protestant, as they say here in the U.S. "denominations" into the ecumenical movement is understandable, since they, broken into many sects, seek unity, and therefore can somehow be justified. But for the local Orthodox Churches, their entry into this supra-church organization, which dreams of creating some new unified "church," can have no justification whatsoever. Initially, representatives of the Orthodox Church who joined the ecumenical movement tried to justify themselves by saying that they had joined for a "missionary purpose" in order to witness to the truth of Orthodoxy there. But it soon became clear that these were just pretty words. Being part of the ecumenical movement absolutely rules out any kind of proselytizing and, therefore, any conversion of Protestants to Orthodoxy. The resolutions of the ecumenical conference held not long ago in New Delhi, India, indicate quite clearly the true aims of the ecumenical movement, as the unification of all the presently existing Christian confessions into one church. Not only that, as is evident from § 2 of this resolution, this church is to unite not only the presently existing confessions, but all "in all places and in all times. And Par. 3 states that "the attainment of unity will involve no more and no less than the death and rebirth of many forms of church life known to us."

And so, instead of confessing the truth of Orthodoxy, the Orthodox delegates to the ecumenical conference, out of the blue, subscribe to such definitions! Is this not already a clear and obvious betrayal of Holy Orthodoxy, a denial of Orthodoxy?

This inclusion of the local Orthodox Churches in the orbit of ecumenism has been going very quickly, especially since the chair of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople was occupied by the current Patriarch Athenagoras I, who can be considered one of the most important ideologists and figures of the ecumenical movement on the part of the Orthodox. From time to time his statements appear in the press, statements of the kind that horrify us, so far removed from true Orthodoxy and seem simply impossible from the mouth of the head-hierarchy of the Orthodox Church, as Athenagoras considers himself to be. Here, for example, are the views which Athenagoras expressed in his interview with the press in Istanbul on November 4, 1959: "The complete fusion of the Christian Churches will come in a few decades, which will be marked by a new cosmogony - the third. The first began with the creation of the world, the second after the incarnation of Christ, then there will be a third, when the borders between religions and peoples will be erased and there will be peace on earth. Now is the time of preparatory work.

It is only natural, therefore, that Patriarch Athenagoras warmly welcomed the convening of the Ecumenical Council proclaimed by Pope John XXIII. John XXIII, congratulated him on his enthronement and sent the Vatican an expression of sympathy after his death. In a conversation with a Catholic journalist, he expressed his joy that relations between Catholics and Orthodox had softened, that Pope John XXIII no longer called the Orthodox "schismatics" but "separated brethren." "But if we are brethren," he said, "why are we 'separated'? Don't we think alike, don't we understand the Word of God alike? Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, we are all Christians by baptism and faith in Christ the Savior. This is our unity. It is up to theologians to overcome our differences. That is what they are working on. Let us leave them alone. As for us, let us seek practical unity as children of God. Unity has never been more needed than now. Let us be united, or we will perish... Disagreements among Christians have existed since early apostolic times. But they should not stand in the way of unity now. The Lord left His will for Himself before He died: "Be one, love one another. This should guide us Christians. Oh, how good it would be if on some day we could recite the Lord's Prayer together in one voice. Where? In Rome? Why not? All around the throne of St. Peter, around the pope, the first of the bishops. How can we be Christians and be divided?" When it came to the World Council of Churches, the Patriarch said, "We hope that in due time all the Orthodox churches will take an active part in it." (Catholic Jubilee Magazine, 1961).

It is common for proponents of ecumenism to claim that they think of the unity of Christians as the formation of a united front of all Christians against the godless communism coming against Christianity. But again, this is a lie. The ecumenical conferences never speak of any opposition

to godless communism. Rather the opposite! The Evanston Conference accepted a Hungarian Communist under the name of Bishop Peter as a Church representative, and that conference accepted the ideology of "coexistence" based on a report by Dr. Nolde. The conference in New Delhi protested against the Portuguese way of doing things in Angola, but did not express one word of protest or indignation against the persecution of the faith and the Church in Soviet Russia. At the Rhodes Conference, at the demand of the Soviet Church delegation, the paragraph on the struggle against atheism was even crossed out of the program, and in New Delhi the Moscow Patriarchate was accepted into the World Council of Churches with a complete silence on communism (November 1961).

In all things, his "alter ego" and protégé, Archbishop James, head of the Greek Church in North and South America, follows the example of Athenagoras in his ecumenical statements. For example, at a meeting of bishops of the Episcopal Church in Cooperstown on Oct. 21. 1959 he said that the work of uniting the Christian churches could not come about by discussion, but that it was a common duty to which everyone must give himself or herself. It is not a matter of doctrinal conspiracy or of compromises and concessions of a sacramental and ritual order. The unification of the churches is, in a sense, already in motion. If all Christian churches believe in Christ, Christ is already uniting them. Any other unification is superfluous. But if in principle we are all one in Christ, we should always remain one. What is most needed for church unity now is unity of hearts, increased respect and trust in our relationships, a united front in the face of domestic and international difficulties, humility in Christ, and self-giving in the service of His gospel to establish God's kingdom on earth!

On March 11, 1961, in Manchester, Archbishop James spoke on "The Unity of Christian Churches," as printed in his own official organ. It is hard to imagine anything more opposed to true Orthodoxy. "If the Christian churches are really concerned about restoring a long-standing broken unity, they must give more convincing evidence of their intentions. They must come resolutely into motion, some in the direction of others. This is the only way in which they can truly return all to Christ and to His one and only Church. The Orthodox in particular must realize that the time has come to stop talking about their "ecumenical attitude" and the democratic structure of their Church, and start really meeting with their brethren... Endless theological reasoning has never helped to heal the wounds that we divided Christians have inflicted on the unity of the Church... The bottom line of all reasoning is: 1) We must repent and ask for the Lord's sympathy and forgiveness, for we have tried to make Him our possession - instead of making ourselves His possession. 2) We must understand unity as an organic unity between man and Christ and therefore try to incorporate ourselves into the life and body of Jesus... Only such unity can lead to the unity of the Church. 3) If we are truly concerned about unity, we must learn to love; this is the hardest art; to be compassionate, understanding, tolerant, brotherly. We will gain much from such an approach to unity. Unity can arise from such an attitude. Humility, obedience, and prayer are the only things that can strengthen our church relationships. Living

together and praying together, without any walls dividing us, whether racial or religious prejudice, is the only way that probably leads us to unity, for unity in its last analysis is a work of God, not of man. Unity will by no means separate us from our traditions; on the contrary, it will strengthen our common traditions, which come from the Holy Spirit."

It is frightening to read the expression of such freethinking, which is a genuine insult to true Orthodoxy! How infinitely far away all this is, and diametrically opposed to our original Orthodox identity and worldview, so well and clearly set forth as recently as 1895 in the "District Patriarchal and Synodal Epistle of the Patriarchal See of Constantinople", in the "District Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848" and in the "Epistle of the Patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic Church on the Orthodox Faith of 1723".

Where is all this now? All is flouted, all is forgotten! Treason against St. Orthodoxy has been committed openly, and only a blind man can fail to see it!

Until recently, Roman Catholicism stood far away from any ecumenism. But there again something new and unexpected happened: Pope John XXIII, presiding over a mass in the Church of St. Paul on January 25, 1959, announced his decision to convene an Ecumenical Council. Council. This caused great excitement in both the Orthodox and Protestant worlds, for many thought that this was a welcome change in papism which had been steadfastly Latinizing itself for centuries, a step perhaps toward the reunification of papal Rome with Orthodoxy. But already the first session of this Vatican Council showed that this is not so, that this is not primarily an Ecumenical Council, but a purely "Catholic Council," only called "Ecumenical" by the Roman Catholics, like all their previous councils after Rome had fallen away from Orthodoxy. But the new was indeed there. This newness was in the unusual liberalism and modernism for Roman Catholicism, which had already appeared so vividly in the first session. But the convening of this council was warmly welcomed by the same Patriarch Athenagoras, who sent his representative to the pope in the person of Archbishop James. This sensational visit of the Greek Orthodox hierarch to the pope took place on March 17, 1959 and was specially noted by the world press, as the first since 1600. On this occasion, Patriarch Athenagoras made the following statement to the press: "The rapprochement of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches is not only possible, but necessary... We must realize, Orthodox and Catholics, that we are two branches of one true Christian Church... We must affirm on both sides what we have in common: we share the same faith, the same dogmas, the same sacraments. We are brothers, but not divided brothers. Brothers are always brothers. We are brothers in Christ. Unfortunately, I do not know St. John XXIII personally... I have great respect for him... I sent the new Archbishop of America, James, to him and asked him to tell the pope that if he promises to pay me a return visit in Constantinople, I will visit him at the Vatican immediately... As for the pope's cathedral plans, we have accepted this initiative of the pope with satisfaction. It is quite possible for us to return to the position we had before the schism, so that the pope will be first among equals, the first of the five old

Patriarchs. We will leave them their "Filioque" and they will leave us what we have. We are both, after all, churches of the immediate apostolic tradition - Rome had Peter and Paul, we have the Apostle Andrew.

It is simply hard to believe that the oldest hierarch of the Orthodox Church could speak this way, completely ignoring all the departures of papal Rome from true Christianity!

A date between Pope Athenagoras and Pope John XXIII did not take place, but, as we know, his date with his successor Pope Paul VI took place last year on our Orthodox Christmas Eve, December 24, 1963 A.D., in the Holy Land. Patriarch Athenagoras behaved like a true ecumenist: his embraces and kisses with the pope made a very unpleasant impression, which was compounded by the cunning, typically Jesuit expression on Pope Paul VI's face at the time. By the way, Pope Paul VI gave a remarkable speech in Bethlehem, which clearly showed that, despite all its ecumenical manifestations, the Vatican remained faithful to itself: the Pope in this speech said that "their door is wide open, and everyone can enter it". From this it is clear that under all conditions of unification, the pope is still the pope. From this point of view, Patriarch Athenagoras' embrace involuntarily reminds us of the embrace of Judas, the betrayal of true Orthodoxy to the apostates from Orthodoxy to the papists. It may be no coincidence that it took place, for a more vivid reminder of Judas' betrayal, in the Garden of Gethsemane, as reported by the press.

What will happen now? It's scary to think about. None of the East. Patriarchs has so far not expressed any strong protest against this betrayal of Orthodoxy, which is clearly being plotted by the head-hierarch of the Orthodox Church. But silence is a sign of agreement. At the same time, the Moscow Patriarchate, undoubtedly on the orders of the Soviet authorities, also took the road of rapprochement with the Vatican by sending its observers to the Vatican Council, even without prior agreement with the Eastern Patriarchs.

Ecumenism is complete, now embracing almost all of Orthodoxy, except for our Russian Church Abroad!

Isn't there approaching a time when outside the Soviet Union, enslaved by the godforsaken of our miserable homeland, a catacomb church of true Orthodox Christians, calling themselves thus in contrast to false Orthodoxy, which has betrayed true Orthodoxy and only wears the outer shell of it, should also arise?

And that such a time must once come, about this clearly says, on the basis of the teachings of the ancient Church Fathers about the end times, our great Russian Saint Theophanes, Vyshensky the Hermit, in his remarkable interpretation of the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Solunians:

"Then, although the name of Christianity will be heard everywhere, and everywhere will be seen temples and church ranks, but all this is only appearance, but inside is true retreat.

Isn't that time already coming?

Chapter 5: Have we kept the precepts of St. Prince Vladimir?

On this high-denominational day of our national holiday - the Feast Day of the Enlightener of Russia, Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Grand Duke Vladimir - it is timely for each of us to ask ourselves the question: do we keep the sacred precepts of our Enlightener?

The answer to this question is extremely important. Made in good faith it will be the same answer and to torture us all the question: why, forty years already, so suffers our unhappy country, pouring tears and blood, under the yoke of a fierce godlessness, and why has not yet seen any light, no signs of approaching freedom?

However, do all Russian people in our time know these precepts - the precepts left to us, the sons and daughters of the Russian Orthodox people, our Enlightener, our Spiritual Leader and Father, the Holy Prince Vladimir?

And it is necessary to know them! They are clearly enough expressed in a remarkable prayer, which was pronounced by the Holy Prince in the solemn moment of baptism of Russian people. This prayer, saved for us by the Monk Nestor, Chronicler Pechersky, every Russian person should know by heart.

Here it is: "O God, Creator of heaven and earth! Look upon these new people and let them guide Thee, the true God, as the nations of the peasantry have seen, and establish in them righteous and irreconcilable faith; and help me, O Lord, to my adversary, that I may rely upon Thy power and upon Thy might, and overcome his plots.

Brief, but comprehensive in its inner content, this prayer encapsulates the entire program of a truly Christian life. In the words of this inspired prayer poured out the whole soul, already revived by the bath of baptism Christian prince, deeply experiencing with all his being a marvelous spectacle of a renewed grace of holy baptism of all his people. And since in the words of this prayer the Prince prayed for his people and for himself as their spiritual leader, from the words of this prayer we can clearly see, what exactly the Prince of Exaltation wished for the newly baptized Russian people, that is, in other words: this prayer includes the precepts of St. Vladimir for the Russian people.

What are these precepts?

"...And let them, O Lord, lead Thee, the True God..." - These are the words of the first sacred covenant of our Illuminator.

It is the covenant of God-knowledge, the covenant of knowing God in His relationship to the world and to man, God as our Creator, Provider, Savior, Redeemer, Sanctifier and Provider. On such a knowledge of God is based the whole true Christian life: faith in God, hope in God, love for God and neighbor, for God's sake. Such knowledge of God leads to the ultimate goal of Christianity--the communion of God, through prayer and the sacraments of the church.

"...And establish in them faith in righteousness and unrighteousness..." - This is the second covenant - the covenant of the inviolable keeping of the right, that is, of the Orthodox faith and of standing firm in it, despite all temptations and trials, even to the point of being ready to give one's life for it.

The Third Testament speaks of the need for relentless struggle against the "surrogate enemy", until the final victory over him, with the help of God: "...help me, O Lord, against the surrogate enemy, that I may hope in you and in your power and overcome his intrigues.

Who is this enemy?

This is the enemy of God and "enemy of man's salvation the devil and all kinds of evil that comes from him. Through our own feeble human strength to defeat the devil, to overcome the evil that comes from it, we can not, and therefore says St. Vladimir: "... trusting in Thee, and in Thy power ...".

This is the covenant of ceaseless, never ceasing struggle with evil, nesting first of all in the human soul - with its own sinful passions and lusts - and then with the evil in the surrounding life. A true Christian is irreconcilable to the evil of the devil. All his life he must fight it, why he is called a soldier of Christ. Not for a single moment does he dare to lay down his arms, but all hope of victory in this struggle must be placed solely in the grace of God: any self-confidence, any arrogance in this battle is always shamed and punished by our defeat and the triumph of the enemy.

Needless to say, how well Russian people, in the person of its many best representatives, remembered and performed these sacred precepts throughout its former, almost a thousand years of history! Otherwise we would not glorify the memory of "All Saints Who Shone Forth in the Land of Russia" and our Motherland would not be called Holy Russia.

And if a Russian person has sometimes violated these precepts, then he repented of this and how he repented! We know many examples of such sincere repentance, both individual and nationwide. All is forgiven for sincere repentance. He who has fallen by weakness, through repentance rises again and goes forward again, continuing his irreconcilable struggle with the "enemy".

How is it with us now? Do we know all these sacred precepts of our Enlightener? Do we always remember them? Do we fulfill them?

Do we all, modern Russian people, remember God and His holy law? Do we believe in God, do we hope in God, do we love God and our neighbors in God's name? The favorite reading of our pious ancestors, before the poison of Western free-thinking and godlessness came into our lives, were books that gave us knowledge about God and about life in God: the Word of God and, in particular, the Psalter and the Gospel, Lives of God's Saints, deeply edifying writings of the Holy Fathers and the great mentors of ascetic life.

What do we read now? What kind of books do they read?

Our ancestors spared no expense to build magnificent temples, decorating them with silver, gold, and precious stones; they loved long, statutory Divine services, taking an active part in them, reading and singing; They kept holy icons at home, lit lamps before them, and recited incense; they observed morning and evening prayers, and often the whole Divine service, turning their homes into real "house churches"; they strictly observed all the fasts, all the church regulations, pious customs and traditions; - the way of life in family households resembled a monastic life in many respects.

Is this still the attitude of modern Russian people to temples and to services performed in them? Is God's temple such a great shrine to all of us, for the sake of which we will not stop at any sacrifice? Do we all love the strictly statutory services and try never to miss a single one of them without a good reason, even on Sundays and major holidays? Do we pray with all our zeal every morning and every evening before the holy icons at home? Are we afraid to break fasts and other church regulations?

In former times even small children were taught to read and write from the liturgical books, the Book of Hours and the Psalter.

How do our children learn to read and write now?

Are modern Russian children familiar with our sacred Church Slavonic language, can they even read in Church Slavonic? Are they brought up in a spirit of ecclesiasticalism, love for the Church, obedience to it and its statutes? Do not modern parents often sin by excessive concern for the body of their children, for their earthly well-being, without any concern for their soul, teaching them from an early age not to take into account the Church and its statutes at all? Do our children see in their own parents a good example of religious and moral life?

Our pious forefathers learned perfectly well the saving thought about the temporality and frailty of all earthly things and the need to prepare themselves for a death worthy of a Christian - for the transition to eternal life and a good answer at the Last Judgment of Christ.

Are modern Russian people also set up in the same way? Are they not, on the contrary, guilty of an excessive attachment to earthly goods, pleasures and enjoyment and of total oblivion of eternity? What else, if not this ruinous forgetfulness of the soul is witnessed by all these countless "evenings," with their shameless, immoral dances, amusements, and entertainments, which are also held during church services and on the eve of holidays? For this is a direct and impudent challenge to God Himself, an abuse of His holy feasts, of which many - alas! - many are no longer aware of. And the imputing of the sanctity of the family union to almost nothing, the constant divorces, the frivolous extramarital affairs and cohabitations! All this has truly become the disease of the century, which is very difficult to fight: so deeply has the contagion penetrated, poisoning the spiritual organism of many.

Let us see, what is the case with the second covenant, that of unwavering loyalty and devotion to our Holy Orthodoxy?

In our past, for the Russian person the most precious thing in the world was the purity of his Orthodox confession, for which he was ready to give his life. The concept of "Orthodox" and "Russian" in his view were as if synonymous, identical concepts, inseparable from one another. Orthodoxy has always been the soul of the Russian people. It is to St. Orthodoxy that the Russian people owe everything that is truly great, beautiful, sublime and holy. None of the persistent attempts of the popes to subjugate the Russian people could therefore be successful. No sects have arisen on Russian soil until the Russian people succumbed to the pernicious influences of the West. Only these pernicious influences poisoned and corrupted the soul of the Russian man first with the disintegrating ideas of liberalism and rationalism, and then with the murderous poison of materialism, socialism and communism.

What do we see now? Do we value our Orthodoxy above all else, are we aware of its immeasurable superiority over all other faiths and confessions? Do we educate our children in full devotion to St. Orthodoxy? Do we send them to our parochial schools where the Orthodox Law of God is taught?

Alas! Many of us have become entangled in the net of so-called ecumenism and fashionable ideas of equal rights and even equality of all faiths. Others have fallen into the trap of all sorts of sectarians, from Baptists and Adventists to those who have nothing but the name of Christianity. And some have wallowed in the delusions of theosophy, occultism, spiritualism, etc. surrogates of religion and various secret organizations.

That is why it is very difficult for the modern Russian people to fulfill the third testament of St. Vladimir - about an implacable struggle against the evil of the devil. Where is it possible to fight with evil, when it is not clear where is good and where is evil? When really the devil himself, through his servants, was able to put upon many Russian people such a fog, which confused all their concepts, and so darkened in their hearts the truth of Holy Orthodoxy, that they are often ready to consider any crazy and disfiguring sect, any fantastic, sometimes even malignant fiction equal to the faith of their ancestors?

We are not talking about all of them, of course, but, unfortunately, still about many. If there were not so many of them, there would not be so much turmoil, strife, turmoil, and even schisms in our church life. Where would there have come from, then, the Church of Christ, Renewalism, and various "jurisdictions"?

Some people are inspired by the idea of fighting evil by joining various political parties. But do these parties teach us how to struggle against the evil in our own souls, which is the only way to begin this struggle, so that it may be fruitful? Do they teach how to invoke the help of God, without which the struggle cannot be crowned with victory? All these parties are trying to "save Russia" from the evil of the devil that enslaved it, but offer all means but the most important and only true - the national repentance and return to the faith of our ancestors - the pure and uncompromising Orthodoxy. And all are naively sure that they will succeed in defeating Bolshevism on Russian soil without defeating and eradicating it in their own souls, for what is Bolshevism, in its essence, but the denial of the spiritual world, of spiritual life - a life only of the flesh, the gratification of the womb and its passions, from which, naturally, is born the opposition to God and His Holy Church?

Unfortunately for us, it is still not clear to many that Bolshevism is an evil of the devil, and that it can only be defeated by the power of God. The devil does not fear loud slogans, political programs, or the atomic bomb. He fears only the Honorable and Life-giving Cross of the Lord: "He trembles and trembles, not suffering to look at his power."

Can Bolshevism be defeated by those who in words fight against the Bolsheviks, but in reality are themselves in the same mood, allowing themselves a frivolous attitude toward our Holy Faith, a mockery of the Holy Church, its sacred canons and regulations?

After so many bitter and fruitless experiences in the struggle against Bolshevism, it is high time we realized that the evil of Bolshevism will be defeated only by those people who will get over Bolshevism in their own souls and contrast the materialistic ideology of this satanic doctrine with the Orthodox Christian ideology, with all that it entails, that is, by giving everybody a living example of Christian exploits in their own lives.

Without this - we must finally admit it! - all the loud slogans, all the political programs, and all the external struggle aimed at overthrowing the godless Soviet power in Russia are pointless, meaningless, and vain.

"Without God - not to the doorstep!" - So expressively stated an old Russian proverb, now largely forgotten by many.

So: do we keep the sacred precepts of our Enlightener, our Spiritual Leader and Father, Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles?

Let the conscience of each of us answer this!

Chapter 6: Christ is Risen!

With these joyful words, which always awaken in us a special liveliness of spirit and a bright hope for a better future, I cordially greet you, beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord!

In these grievous times that we are experiencing, when there is no certainty of tomorrow, when the whole world is in anticipation of the terrible catastrophe that is looming over it, our only comfort is our holy faith with its bright and joyful hopes. And at the foundation of our faith, as its cornerstone, lies the greatest marvelous event in the history of mankind, the three-day Resurrection of Christ.

Christ rose again, having overcome human unrighteousness and the very death to which that unrighteousness condemned Him. On this great day, truth has triumphed over falsehood, good has triumphed over evil, life has triumphed over death.

How not to rejoice, how not to exult on such a great day of the triumph of God's Truth!

This is why our Easter service is so joyful and solemn, when we, still living on earth, are allowed to taste a small semblance of that heavenly joy, that unspeakable bliss, which Christ, the Victor of hell and death, gave to all who truly believe in Him by His Resurrection.

"Let the heavens rejoice with dignity; let the earth rejoice with dignity; let the world, visible and invisible, celebrate: for Christ is risen, eternal joy" (Troparion to the first song of the Canon).

Death itself ceases to be frightening for us, for for all who believe in Christ it is nothing more than a temporary sleep, as "Christ was raised from the dead, the Firstborn from the dead," according to the Apostle, and "as in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall live" (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). And then, on the day of His glorious Second Coming and universal resurrection of the dead, Christ, who will come in His glory to "judge the living and the dead," will "put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

And then will come that eternal kingdom of glory in which there will be no more sickness, nor sorrow, nor lamentation, but only endless joy.

All of us will attain to this joy, by the grace of the Risen Christ, if only we sincerely, with all our heart, strive for it during our brief earthly life.

"Let us cleanse our senses from all corruptible, earthly things, and see the unapproachable light of the resurrection, Christ shining, and let us rejoice, let us hear clearly, singing victoriously."

"Rejoice divinely ... Christ is risen, an everlasting gladness."

Chapter 7: Holy Orthodoxy, the fate of Russia and the sacred duty of contemporary Russian youth

Our Russian youth is our future. The future of the Russian people depends on what mood they will be imbued with, what worldview they will adopt, what path they will take, the fate of our homeland Russia and even more depends on the fate of the world, of all humanity, because, as it is now becoming clear to everyone, the fate of the world is closely tied to the fate of Russia and the Russian people. The frivolous neglect of the basic questions of life by Russian youth, the refusal to develop a correct worldview, the assimilation to the environment, is now more than ever a crime, bringing an undoubted and irrevocable doom not only to Russia, but also to all mankind. If previously it was possible to live carelessly, without asking any questions (as it seemed, at least), now the time is not like that. Everyone with the slightest sensitivity to all that is happening in the world today understands that we are now experiencing a time that is quite exceptional, a time never before seen in the history of mankind. The world is truly on the edge of a terrible abyss that is about to swallow it up.

Is it possible to live under such conditions without asking the basic questions of life, without thinking about the reasons that have led humanity to such a catastrophic state?

All the events taking place before our eyes at this time are extremely instructive. They are a revelation to those who, in the current frantic pace of life and passions, have not yet definitively lost their spiritual vision. The momentous events of recent years imperatively demand that conscious contemporary Russian youth give an answer to the questions we have posed above. To do this it is necessary first of all to refuse the views that have become fashionable in recent decades, inspired by Western godless socialist theories, and to understand that everything that is happening in the world is not driven by social, economic, or political causes, as usually thought by spiritually unenlightened people, saturated with all kinds of imaginary scientific ideas, but by causes of a purely spiritual nature and order. Reasons of social, economic, political nature can be considered only as derivative, as secondary factors of what is happening. The root, underlying cause, the main engine of all that is happening in the world, is never, not for one moment, the fierce struggle of the prince of this world the devil with God - the desire of the devil, as an opponent of God, to destroy the works of God in the world and to destroy man as the crown of God's creation. Only from this point of view should we explain to ourselves everything that happens in people's lives, both private and family, public, political; then everything that sometimes seems unclear, even inexplicable, will become quite understandable. Afraid of revealing its destructive activity, the devil tries in every way to disguise, and even completely hide their involvement in people's lives. Of course, only these attempts and can explain such a strange phenomenon as the denial of the existence of the devil people who say they believe in God. "In God I believe," one often hears now from many, "well, the devil is, of course, only a

concoction to frighten ignorant people. "The devil is a collective concept," one hears from others, "by the devil we must mean evil in general.

Disguising himself, the enemy of the human race has reached the point that modern people, instead of talking about him seriously, as the real origin of all evil, all the disasters and misfortunes that befall man, talk about him jokingly and idly, with a frivolous smile. Is it possible to fight one's worst enemy without seeing it, without noticing it? Is it possible to avoid mortal danger by joking about it, not taking into account its reality? So modern people have joked to the fact that the enemy of God has become the de facto lord of the situation in the world, the absolute master of the lives of modern people. Another of his tricks, which can not be ignored, so it is characteristic of our time. Numerous people can be found nowadays, declaring themselves believers, and even "theologians", who are seriously trying to argue and prove that the evil activity of the devil extends only to a personal, private life of people, but does not apply to the life of the public, political. Such people, undoubtedly, who have given themselves into the power of the enemy of human salvation, cunningly recommend to focus all their attention only on their personal spiritual life, on their personal spiritual perfection, as they like to put it, and not to seek the action of dark forces in the surrounding public and political life, that is, in fact, to give the devil complete freedom of action in human society.

The dark forces in the person of the leaders of social and political life of people, who gave themselves to the devil and became his obedient tools, the executors of his destructive for people hell's will, masking, like his master and master the devil, and acting as the "benefactors" of humanity, have achieved very much. In one part of mankind they have caused a bloody persecution of faith in God, scorching all that is holy in the human soul as if by heat of iron; in another, they have skillfully and systematically, by creating a suitable environment for life, a suitable living environment for this purpose, instilled indifferentism and godlessness. As a result of all this is a terrible decline in morality, a profound spiritual crisis. We find clear predictions of this spiritual crisis in Scripture, which refers it to the end times.

In fact, is it not about our times that St. Paul says in his 2nd letter to Timothy: "But know this, that in the last days there will be hard times. For men will be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, boastful, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unfriendly, intransigent, slanderers, incontinent, cruel, not loving kindness, traitors, insolent, pompous, more covetous than lovers of God... (2 Timothy 3:1-4)?"

What a vivid and vivid picture of today's extreme depravity, to which past centuries do not seem to have reached to such an extent! Otherwise the God-inspired writer would not have referred this picture to the end times. And here is another surprisingly typical feature of the modern spiritual crisis: "...the time will come when they will not receive sound doctrine, but will choose teachers according to their own whims, who will flatter their ears, and will turn their ears away

from the truth, and be turned to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). How many of all kinds of false teachers we see these days who are only followed because they flatter the ear! In rejecting the truth of Christ's teaching, they spread fables, sowing lies in the minds and hearts of those who, led by their passions, trust in them. The sound doctrine of Orthodoxy seems to be a heavy yoke for people who are used to working with their passions, and they are easily carried away by the seductive wind of various sectarian fabrications that indulge these passions. In America alone, as its statistics for the last 15 years show, there are more than 500 religious sects, whose followers persistently propagate in all parts of the world, in order to lure as many adherents as possible into their net. Some sects who still call themselves "Christian" have strayed so far from true Christianity that they reject the most important tenets of the Christian faith. The main thing that they all preach is the ease of salvation without any exploits, this is what attracts to them the hearts of all cowardly people, afraid of that feat, to which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself called those who want to be His followers, when He said: "Whoever desires to follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

In addition to false doctrines in the field of purely religious, we see in recent times an unprecedented spread of all kinds of false doctrines, flattering the ears and corrupted heart of man, in the field of socio-political. Here we see false doctrines, trying to replace Christianity, allegedly obsolete and incapable of improving the earthly life of people, making it free and happy. The followers of these false doctrines with a fierce hatred attack Christianity, accusing it of all the misfortunes that befall man in his earthly life, and leading with it some openly and openly, others covertly and secretly, a fierce struggle "not for life but for death. The whole modern social and political life of people, who sometimes still officially call themselves Christians, is full of this struggle for the complete eradication of the faith of Christ from human hearts. Not since the days of the Roman pagan emperors and Julian the Apostate have we seen such a persistent and systematic struggle as is currently waged against Christianity, under the most plausible pretexts, which also flatter the depraved heart of man, and with an amazing systematicness. The whole social and political life of people at the present time is such that there is no place in it for Christian principles: everyone who wishes to confess Christ, by his very life is now placed in the most unfavorable conditions of life, under which only a very few persons of exceptional spiritual heroism are able to be true Christians. All who are weak in spirit are forced at every step of their lives to renounce Christ, either theoretically or practically. And from this point of view, it can truly be said that the time has already arrived of which the ancient fathers-prophets prophesied about "Christians of the last generation." "temptations will come upon them, and those who at that time will prove to be good (that is, will remain faithful to Christ despite all these temptations) will be greater than we and our fathers" ("The Ancient Paterik," p. 5). After all this, is it surprising that with such a general direction of modern human life there are already people in all parts of the world who openly profess the cult of the devil and even build temples to the devil!

All this is the result of the action of those dark forces, the forces of evil, of which beloved disciple of Christ, the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian speaks in his first council message, calling them anti-Christians many (1 John 2:18). Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself warned His disciples and through them, of course, all His followers about appearance of false Christs and false prophets in the world (Matt.24:24). It is precisely these false Christs and false prophets, who are also the Antichrists, represented by various self-appointed religious teachers, as well as false teachers of all kinds, who set out to replace Christianity with other teachings, supposedly capable of enriching mankind, in view of the fact that Christianity was either already outdated or was incapable of organizing and regulating the life of people, they created that terrible state, threatening a terrible disaster in which mankind currently finds itself. And despite this, they still hold the masses of people in blindness, skillfully suggesting to their adherents that the cause of all modern evils and disasters is not that they want to displace Christianity with their false teachings, but in something else. St. Peter beautifully exposes them in the 2nd chapter of his 2nd Council Epistle, calling them "false prophets," "false teachers," "lawless," "shames" and "defilements," "waterless springs," "clouds" and "clouds driven by the storm. He says of them that they will introduce pernicious heresies, that many will follow their debauchery, and that through them the way of truth will be reviled; That they will catch orthodox Christians out of covetousness with flattering words, that they follow the filthy lusts of the flesh, they despise the rulers, they are bold, willful and not afraid to speak evil of the higher, that they are like senseless animals, they say evil things they do not understand, That their eyes are filled with covetousness and incessant sin, that they seduce unconfirmed souls, that their heart is accustomed to covetousness, that they, uttering inflated idle talk, entrap in carnal lusts and debauchery, promise freedom, being themselves slaves of corruption. We see how all these characteristics fit remarkably well with all those who have departed from the pure and unadulterated truth of Christ's doctrine, with all those modern-day innumerable sectarians and all the propagators of new social and political doctrines that ignore Christianity. All of them, as corrupters and destroyers of mankind, St. Peter, with all justice, calls them sons of the curse (2 Peter 2:14).

In similar terms, the apostle Judas, the Lord's brother, characterizes these false teachers, devoting almost his entire letter to warning believers against them. He calls them ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into an occasion for profligacy, and who deny the only Master of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, dreamers who defile the flesh, deny rulers, and revile high authorities. He says of them that they speak evil of that which they do not know, that they walk in the way of Cain, they give themselves up to the deceitfulness of the reward, they are without fear to mortify themselves. St. Paul's characterization of their moral condition is apt. Judas characterizes their moral state, calling them waterless clouds carried by the wind, autumn trees, barren, twice dead and exhausted, fierce waves of the sea, foaming with their scum, wandering stars, to whom the darkness of darkness is guarded for ever, murmurers, dissatisfied with nothing, acting on their lusts impiously and lawlessly, whose lips speak inflated words and who exercise self-reliance for

self-interest. In summarizing all of the above, St. John the Baptist says. Judas says that these ungodly false teachers appear in fulfillment of what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted, who warned that in the end time there would appear scoffers, acting according to their ungodly lusts, and concludes by giving them a final description that clearly explains all their moods and behavior: they are men who separate themselves from the unity of faith, who are soulless, who have no spirit, that is, who are led in their life and activity only by the lower powers of the soul, which animals have in part, who are not guided in their lives by higher spiritual powers, illuminated by the gracious gifts of the Holy Spirit. (Jude 1 :4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16-19).

Of course, throughout the whole history of mankind there have appeared people and false teachers, whose spiritual disposition, life and behavior corresponded in one way or another to these characteristics, but there is no doubt that on Christian soil, or rather, among the society that calls itself "Christian" there has never appeared such an abundance of false teachings that fully meet the apostolic characteristic, as there are at present. More importantly, never have these false teachers been as successful as they are now, nor have they acquired as many followers as they do in our own time. For in all fairness it can be said about our time that the majority of people do not accept the sound doctrine of Divine truth, but according to their whims choose all kinds of false teachers, people of spirit, who would flatter the ear and pander to the basest passions of modern man, although he continues sometimes still by tradition to carry the name of Christian, but in fact he has long since renounced Christ.

Such are the results of a persistent, persistent and systematic struggle between the prince of this world - the devil and God for the soul of man! Thoughtful person, attentive to events happening in the world, not only from the standpoint of sociology, economics, and politics, can not fail to notice that an especially stifling moral atmosphere in the world has come after the terrible bloody disaster which befell our mother Russia, called the revolution and the loss of Russia from the system of world life. The First World War ended, was signed by the peoples of "eternal peace", without the participation of her sons shed with blood Russia, but the peace in the world was not felt: there came a period of very grave and gloomy state of mankind, which is dubbed the name of "crisis".

This crisis was felt in all areas of life. In the field of religion, an extreme coldness to faith was evident everywhere, a derisive contemptuous attitude toward believers as "prudes," and along with this, all kinds of unhealthy fancies for all kinds of surrogates of religion, like theosophy, occultism, and spiritualism. In a number of countries, many declared themselves as not practicing any religion, and this was noted in passports and other documents and identity cards officially issued by the state authorities. Entire societies of "free-thinkers" were founded, emphasizing their contempt for all religion and promoting all kinds of free-thinking and freedom from "prejudice. Orthodoxy, even in Orthodox countries (not to mention our unhappy homeland,

where the Orthodox Church was subjected to savage bloody persecution) began to experience great constraints and restrictions: a new style was forcibly introduced in some places and modernization was imposed in the Western Protestant spirit, deeply opposed to the very spirit of Orthodoxy. The clergy, zealous for authentic Orthodoxy, began to be recognized as "backward," "uncultured," and "hostile to progress."

In the moral field, the crisis manifested itself in an incredibly precipitous decline in morality. In society, honesty and decency were ridiculed as aberrant, too, as a sign of backwardness. Orders which ran directly counter to the requirements of morality were established. The most vulgar and morally dirty literature was printed and disseminated, and often even the former unprintable words and expressions were shamelessly printed. The most open and cynical debauchery was established everywhere. Divorce and unlawful cohabitation became commonplace, and no one was shocked as he had been before. What until recently was considered reprehensible and indecent became normal and fashionable. The proper moral education of the younger generation in educational institutions is almost entirely disregarded. In many cases the educators not only failed to educate young people, but rather corrupted them, and by their own bad example, and sometimes even by the theories they developed in conversations about the freedom of personal life of every person and about his right to live without any restrictions and constraints, in his own pleasure. We know of even cases of suicide, under the influence of such a morally oppressive atmosphere, in which persons who had not yet been fully convinced were simply suffocating, falling into despair at the environment in which they lived.

It can be said that the tensely suffocating atmosphere, established all over the world, after the departure of Russia, was reminiscent of that suffocation, which is always felt before the storm, and especially before the storm: from this point of view, the Second World War, with all its hitherto unheard of horrors, was only a natural, inevitable consequence of the created situation. And in the moral world, as in the physical world, there are immutable laws, one of which constantly gives itself to people, it is the law of retribution, wonderfully expressed St. Paul in the saying "God is not mocked" (Gal.6:7). This terrible vengeance of God has befallen mankind, who in their insane blindness have turned away from God and decided to build their lives without God, contrary to the saving laws of their Creator God.

The close connection between this so-called global crisis, which was finally resolved in the terrible World War, and the misfortune that befell Russia, is obvious: the fate of the world is most closely linked to the fate of Russia as the stronghold of one true, single saving faith - the Orthodox faith.

Without Orthodox Russia, there is no peace in the world, and all of humanity, deprived of its only true stronghold and fence, is now on the brink of death. Without the source of light on earth

- without a firm bulwark of true faith, St. Orthodoxy, there is no life for people, everything is covered by a dark and ominous darkness.

But what is Orthodoxy? Is it not only one of many Christian confessions, having equal dignity and importance, as many very clever and very intelligent people of our time think? Nowadays one often hears not only from persons close to the church, but even from some representatives of the Orthodox clergy, that different Christian confessions are one and the same Christianity, only from different points of view, and that this diversity of Christian confessions is a positive rather than negative phenomenon, because everyone can choose the confession which will suit him more to his taste. There is an idea that everyone is equally guilty for the division of Christianity into different confessions and that there is no complete truth in any Christian confession, but all Christians should forget their mutual sins, mutual guilt against each other and unite - to organize the so-called union of the churches, and, of course, it goes without saying that in this union of the churches each confession must sacrifice something in favor of the others. This point of view is held, by the way, by the now very fashionable so-called ecumenical movement, which is not always so outspoken, however, for fear of scaring the zealots of Orthodoxy away from itself. Needless to say that such ecumenical preaching leads only to a very dangerous indifferentism in matters of faith - indifference to the truth, while for a Christian the truth is above all and most dear, the walk in the truth, as St. John the Evangelist stresses especially in his second (2 John 1:1-4) and third (3 John 1:3-4) Council epistles. Characteristically, it is precisely such an apostle as St. John the Theologian, not without reason nicknamed "the apostle of love" for the most complete and elevated-spiritual exposition of the doctrine of Christian love, is inexorably severe on all perverters of the truth of Christ's teaching. Whoever comes to your house and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, and do not welcome him, for he who welcomes him participates in his evil deeds (2 John 1:10-11). Isn't it surprising, then, that ecumenists want to be more loving than the apostle of love himself, the beloved disciple of Christ, St. John the Evangelist?

For the Christian the truth is the most precious thing, and therefore unity for the Christian is the only one that is in the truth. "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, that I might testify to the truth," says the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, "everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice" (John 18:37), and exhorts those who wish to believe in Him to know the truth (John 8:32), for outside this truth there is no freedom from sin and consequently no salvation. Therefore, it is not only wrong, but even criminal, to seek any kind of unity with anyone by compromising the truth. That is why the holy Fathers of the Church, who fought so much and uncompromisingly against the heretics, who distorted the truth of Christ's teaching, say that there is a beautiful discord, as there is a most pernicious unanimity. St. Gregory the Theologian, who cared so much about peace in the Church, nevertheless says: "And some are better in dissension, than in unanimity" (Works, Part 2, p. 189). It is not unity as such that we should seek, but unity in truth. Orthodoxy is nothing else than the fullness of Christian truth, in contrast to more or less

deviations from the truth, distortions of the truth, what are the other confessions, calling themselves Christian, which, according to the great saint of our time, Fr. John of Kronstadt, which contains the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), joined superstition and falsehood to the truth (Thought of the Church, p. 13). Therefore the union of the Churches, preached by the ecumenical movement is unacceptable for us, because it is not the only valuable and for all true Christians desired unity in the truth, in the image of the unity of the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, about which Christ the Savior prayed in His High Priestly prayer (John 17:21), but unity achieved by denying the truth, by giving in to lies.

Orthodoxy did not come into being, as many ignorant people who have not studied church history in good faith, but judge everything by hearsay, think, in the 11th century, after the so-called division of the churches, but existed and will always exist, as the unchanging teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy apostles, intactly preserved by the Church in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. We find the term "Orthodoxy" in Greek "orthodoxy" already in the writings of Christian writers of the 2nd century (St. Clement of Alexandria, among others), and it refers to the faith of the entire Church, in contrast to the diversity of heretics ("heterodoxy"). The term "Orthodoxy" was especially widespread and used in the 4th century during the difficult period of the Church's struggle against the heretics Arian. Those who professed the true doctrine of the Church, undamaged by human fabrications, in contrast to the followers of false doctrine, heretics, became known as Orthodox. And it is remarkable that no matter how many heresies appeared later, Orthodoxy always, in the end, triumphed over them, in memory of which is established the significant and so consoling and joyful for all the zealots and champions of the Holy Orthodox Faith. To commemorate this, a memorable feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy was established, so consoling and joyful to all followers of the Orthodox faith, which our Church still commits every year on the first Sunday of Great Lent. Orthodoxy is, therefore, pure and undamaged by any perversion of the wicked human mind, the true doctrine of Christ concerning faith and godliness, which has been preserved to this day in this form only in our Eastern Church, which, in all justice, up to now bears the name of Orthodoxy. In order to be convinced of the truth and purity of Christ's teaching, which is contained in our Holy Orthodox Church, one must seriously delve into a careful, and above all, unbiased study of the history of the Church, and not judge everything superficially and on the basis of hearsay, as our liberal intellectuals usually do, boasting of their religious tolerance.

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, our homeland Russia became the only stronghold of this one true, one saving, holy Orthodox faith in the world. "God has entrusted to us Russians the great saving talent of the Orthodox faith, in which many people are saved," said the great righteous man and miracle worker of our day, Fr. John of Kronstadt (The Living Spike, p. 42). For centuries, all Orthodox Christians of all nations, from the Eastern Patriarchs themselves to ordinary believers, have looked with hope upon our homeland, Russia, as the Protector and Patroness of Orthodoxy, brutally oppressed and persecuted by those outside of Russia, and have

never shamed in their hope; for Russian people of those times, from the Tsar to the common people, there was nothing more precious to them than the Holy Orthodox Faith, which they held dear to them. Orthodox faith, for which he was ready to give his life. And all the wars waged by the Russian people were a holy struggle "for the Orthodox Faith, for the House of the Most Holy Mother of God," as our Motherland Holy Russia called itself - somewhat later: "for Faith, Tsar and Fatherland," and faith continued to be in first place, as the highest value, for which one must first of all fight and which one must first of all defend against the enemy. Alas! Other slogans we hear now from modern Russian "patriots," who imagine themselves to be great national figures, and fervently, apparently, are trying to save Russia, to free it from the terrible bloody Bolshevik captivity. They prefer to be silent about the Holy Orthodox faith, at best they talk about it very modestly, as if ashamed of something and among other things, and their main slogan is "For Russia. They call for the restoration of "National Russia" and only! They widely use seemingly convincing to naive and superficial people democratic slogans about "freedom of conscience," "freedom of religion," "separation of church and state," and "religious tolerance. An Orthodox Christian is not a fanatic, ready to exterminate with "fire and sword" the followers of all other faiths, but, knowing the truth, he certainly cannot take the ecumenical and democratic view of the equality, the equivalence of all faiths. This, however, by no means precludes his complete religious tolerance, in the true sense of the word, which in the past has always distinguished the Russian man. Here is how beautifully our great Russian theologian and teacher of piety, Bishop Theophan, Vyshensky the Hermit, characterizes this religious tolerance: "True religious tolerance sincerely love and reverently honor the one holy faith. It is zealous for the purity and glory of its faith, rejoices in its elevation; but at the same time it allows room for other faiths, not because it regards them as equal and saving, but because it condescends to the infirmities of those who are going astray. It does not close, does not persecute, does not persecute; but never fails to lovingly point out the error and offer free conviction and conscience the choice of the best" (Words on the Feast of the Lord and the Theotokos, p. 82). Any other interpretation of religious tolerance is, of course, betrayal and even, to some extent, resisting the divine truth, which was brought to earth by the incarnate Son of God Himself, that is, in essence, the same God-fighting, only not so clearly and sharply expressed as the God-fighting of the Bolsheviks.

It is precisely the fact that the Russian people were the largest Orthodox people in the world, that they loved their Orthodox faith more than anything else in the world and cherished it as their greatest treasure, and thus was the only strong and reliable pillar of Orthodoxy and its torch for other peoples, And that was the reason for the terrible anger and hatred, which was kindled against him by all the servants of the dark forces, the Antichrist many, because it is clear that such a Russian people stood in the way of the implementation of their hellish plan to enslave all humanity to Satan and the reign of the Antichrist.

And Russia, the guardian and protector of Orthodoxy, was condemned to destruction. Her very name, hated by the dark forces, was to be wiped off the face of the earth.

Persistently and tenaciously, with extraordinary energy and intensity this subversive work of the "dark forces" was conducted to destroy Russia, with the main attention in this work naturally turned to the education of the younger generation in a spirit alien to the Holy Orthodoxy. Everything that was associated with Holy Orthodoxy, that emanated from the Church, the ancient educator of the Russian people, was skillfully and subtly criticized and ridiculed. All the high Christian principles of life were subjected to ridicule, Christian morality was declared obsolete and unnecessary, preventing us from living "at our own pleasure. Freedom from all conventions was inculcated, "scientifically" proved the permissibility and legality of the service of all sinful passions. Everything native, indigenous Russian Orthodox was blasphemed, and foreign, foreign exalted as the most advanced, highly cultural, worthy of borrowing and imitation. This is to painlessly transplant to Russian soil corrupting the soul of man, full of deadly poison fruits of the era of the so-called "Renaissance", which proclaimed the cult of man who rebelled against God and decided to put himself in place of God. After such prior preparation, it was easy to instill the God- and man-hating theories of socialism, anarchism, and communism in the distraught Russian people, who had forgotten their rank. As a result - almost total insanity of the Russian people, who have fallen away from God, which led to the terrible, unprecedented in history bloody revolution of 1917, and the horrors of Bolshevism, which has lasted for 33 years. God is not mocked (Gal.6:7), and the Russian people, who betrayed God, not standing on the height of his calling, who allowed themselves to be seduced by the ministers of Satan, had, according to the inexorable law of retribution, to suffer this heavy penalty!

What was the result of all this?

The collapse which befell Russia has disturbed the balance and peace of the world. But Orthodoxy itself, not only in Russia, which was enslaved by the Bolsheviks, but also in other countries, among other peoples was under serious threat. Not only in Russia a movement arose that threatened to undermine the very foundations of Orthodoxy and resulted in forms of the so-called "living church. These pernicious ideas of "Zhivism" have spread widely in all other local Orthodox Churches, still claiming domination. These ideas and their akin to modernist aspirations and tendencies, aimed at depriving Orthodoxy of what constitutes its most fundamental beginning - the spirit of asceticism, detachment from the world, lying in evil - began to be vigorously pursued in all the local Churches in the Orthodox East as soon as Russia, the bulwark of Orthodoxy, collapsed. The "All-Orthodox Congresses" and "Pre-Conferences" began to be convened, at which their initiators tried to carry out reforms intended to modernize the Orthodox Church by abolishing supposedly obsolete canonical rules. Characteristically, it is precisely those canonical rules that most fully and clearly express the true spirit of Orthodoxy, such as the rules on celibacy for bishops, on the prohibition of second marriages for clergy, on monasticism, on fasting, on the obligation for clergy to wear special clothes, on the indecency of secular amusements and entertainment, that were recognized as "obsolete. A new style was

introduced in a number of local Orthodox churches. This caused turmoil and unrest among the faithful, shaking their confidence in the clergy, which, of course, did not serve the Church at all well. The secularization of not only the outward appearance, but also, inevitably, of the inner attitudes of the Orthodox clergy, is spreading more and more, finally depriving the Orthodox clergy of all respect and authority in the eyes of the faithful. More and more frequently nowadays we see how not only priests, but even bishops of the Orthodox Church, not only by their outward appearance, but also by their whole demeanor and attitude, tend to resemble the laity, thus merging completely with this world, lying in evil, instead of rising above it, giving their flock an example of the struggle with passions and lusts, which is the essence of true Christianity (see Galatians 5:24). Before our eyes the salt is wearing away, and the light that should be shining in the world is turning to darkness. What can we expect from ordinary lay believers, who, seeing no good example of the Christian life in their shepherds, are themselves more and more morally degraded, remaining Christians in name only? And it must be emphasized that this religious and moral decay comes from above, since the appointment of the bearers of the highest church authority almost everywhere depends on the modern secular rulers, in one way or another connected with the servants of the dark forces, those anti-Christ of many, who in fact already lead modern public and political life and have long since, not without success, tried to establish their control over the Church.

In this, by the way, is the main internal cause of all the sad divisions and schisms in our Russian Church Abroad.

Many anti-Christians, skillfully playing on human passions, have caused divisions in the initially united Russian Church Abroad, and lately they have even waged an entire campaign against it, challenging its very right to exist. Just as the devil once used the texts of Scripture to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ, and then his followers, the Christian ascetics, so now he is using the canonical rules of the Orthodox Church to crush the Russian Church Abroad, which is unwilling to submit to him! And we will not be at all surprised if he succeeds in this sooner or later, for his time and domain of darkness is coming. Now only in Soviet Russia have believers gone into the catacombs, fleeing from the official "Orthodox Church," which has essentially renounced Christ and is serving the Antichrist, and then everywhere else in the world believers will have to go into the catacombs, breaking off all communion with the official "Orthodox Church," which will have only the appearance of the Church of Christ. About these times, based on the prophecies of the ancient Fathers of the Church, our great theologian and spiritual mentor, Bishop Theophan of Vyshensky Zatvornik, has remarkably strongly predicted, saying that then "although the Christian name will be heard everywhere, and everywhere will be seen temples and church ranks, but all this only in appearance, inside is true retreat" (Tol. 2 Epist. to Solon., p. 492). The signs of this retreat are already there!

There is no need to be embarrassed by it. It is God's permission. We were warned about it by the gospel and the apostles' letters. But in these coming fearful times, we must take care to remain faithful to Christ the Savior and His true Church. It is the duty of Christian love that each of us must also open the eyes of all those around us to the true state of affairs in order to help them to remain faithful to Christ in these dreadful days of universal apostasy. "Do not expect to be satisfied with the general structure of the Church," says the elder Isaiah to another great mentor of spiritual life, Bishop Ignatius (Bryanchaninov), who also wrote much about the shaking of the building of the Church by dark forces, "but be satisfied with what is presented in particular to people who wish to be saved.

All this was not written in order, under the influence of gloomy thoughts, to indulge in cowardice and give up. Not at all! Not for one moment should we forget the solemnly invigorating words of our Savior and Lord, addressed to His disciples, and through them to all of us, at the Last Supper: "...be bold, for I have overcome the world! (John 16:33). So, despite the temporary triumph of the dark forces, the ultimate victory is ours. But this goes without saying - only if we remain faithful to our Savior and Lord to the end. And to this fidelity we call our modern Russian youth.

To realize the importance and responsibility of the formidable events we are experiencing, to find a place in the world worthy of the great past of our people, without assimilating with the surrounding godless environment, to study with love the history of our homeland as the guardian of Orthodoxy, to guard against enslavement to the dark forces that have ruined our homeland, and to open the eyes of all foreigners to the true situation, that is, to be apostles of Orthodoxy in the environment of those of other faith where we must live - such is the holy duty of contemporary Russian youth! And to remember at the same time that the main task of working on ourselves should be to develop a correct Orthodox worldview, which should become the guiding principle of all life. This Orthodox worldview of a Russian person will certainly be a Russian national, because Russia was always built and lived by the Orthodox ideals. No borrowing from the West, which still suits us unhappy, confused Russian people: the slavish imitation of the West has led our homeland to a terrible disaster. It has, as the poet rightly says, a very special identity. This special become - in the special calling of Russia, given to it by God - to be in the New Testament "New Israel", the new chosen people of God, the bearer and guardian of the one true, one saving faith - the faith of the Orthodox Church. Exposing the vicious slander of the servants of the dark forces against the former Russia, we must constantly testify loudly to this vocation of Russia, and point out that without Orthodox Russia, without Holy Russia, the guardian and protector of Orthodoxy, the whole world will inevitably perish, and that only the restoration of Orthodox Russia (not just "national") can still postpone the coming of the last terrible times of the Antichrist and the end of the world.

Chapter 8: The World and Us

"...In the world was he, and the world was that, and the world did not know him..." (John 1:10). (John 1:10). "Let me not boast only of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world..." (Gal. 6:14). (Gal.6:14).

As we approach the two great feasts to come - the Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady, who lived in the world, but was not "of the world," which is why she was worthy to become the Mother of the Lord Himself, and the Exaltation of the Cross, which reminds us that we too must "crucify the world," it is good to ask ourselves: What is our relationship to the world - to that modern world, which now more clearly than ever, shows its anti-Christian qualities and characteristics?

Some kind of concession to the world, or rather, adaptation to it, what is called, for example, in the science of pastoral theology, "pastoral application" is of course inevitable, and sometimes useful, but what we see now goes beyond all limits, becomes already a denial of true Christianity, which is "not of this world".

Christ the Savior did not oppose Himself and His followers to the world in vain, saying: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; as you are not of the world, but I chose you from the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19). And He comforted His disciples: "If the world hate you, believe, as I was hated before you (John 15:18); you will be afflicted in the world: but dare, as I overcame the world" (John 16:33).

Similarly, the Apostles, in describing the world, said of the world: "Do not love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, there is no love of the Father in it" (1 John 2:15) - and that is because "the whole world lies in evil" (1 John 5:19). Note that this is said by none other than "the apostle of love" - the beloved disciple of Christ, St. John the Theologian.

And St. James, the Brother of the Lord, says, perhaps, even more strongly and forcefully: "Fornicators and adulterers, don't you believe that anyone of this world is an enemy of God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world is an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

All true Christians - ascetics of Christian piety looked at the world in the same way, feeling that in the world they cannot be true followers of Christ, cannot be saved, they fled from the world, to please God. They fled from the world even when the world was no longer pagan, as in the beginning, but Christian.

Obviously, this opposition of true Christianity to the world, of which Christ the Savior and the Holy Apostles spoke, is valid for all time and has its force and meaning in all circumstances.

After all, these words we have quoted above cannot be thrown out of Scripture, no matter how much modern "neo-Christians" or the representatives of the new post-Christian era - ecumenists and modernists of all kinds - would like to do it.

In direct contrast to these words of Christ and the Holy Apostles, these modern "champions of Christianity" - if they do not dare to reject Christianity altogether - either openly preach fusion with the world, which lies in evil, or practically, in fact, realize such fusion, hypocritically covering themselves with various beautiful sounding, loud phrases, sometimes borrowed even from St. Scripture, of course, interpreted wrongly. They have at their disposal, in this case, all the Jesuit casuistry developed over the centuries, with the help of which anything can be justified. But it is precisely this nowadays strongly propagandized fusion with the world that is the clearest sign of retreat at the time we are experiencing!

Blessed is the one who understands this - who has recognized the terrible symptoms of the time leading us to the antichrist!

For it is the Antichrist, the spiritual offspring of Satan, who will be the "prince of this world" lying in evil (John 12:31): he will reign over this world in order to try to return it completely to Satan's power.

We know very well how this sad attempt will end (2Sol.2:8: "The Lord Jesus will kill him with the spirit of his mouth and abolish him by the appearance of his coming"), but what will it be like for those who, consciously or unconsciously, are seduced by him and follow him?

In terms of their understanding or lack of understanding of what is happening in the world today, all people can now be divided into two classes, there is a clear and obvious "sifting out". Some understand what is happening in the world now, shudder and are horrified, taking every precaution not to be drawn into this stream of retreat that has become very rapid in recent years. Others... are blind. But this blindness is of two kinds: one is innocent, for unconscious, coming from a lack of understanding and underestimation of the events taking place, the other is conscious: they feel and understand something, but consciously close their eyes to everything, obsessed with certain passions that, like any passion, cloud the spiritual vision.

And how many things now contribute to this spiritual blindness! For Satan, as well as his ministers, according to the words of St. Scripture, so rarely appear to men and deceive them in their natural, natural form: "Satan is transformed into a bright angel" and "his servants are transformed as ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15), And what is happening in the world now so many find very attractive, even the generation of true Christianity. People forget that Satan is a liar and slanderer and murderer of men from the beginning (John 8:44), and so are all his ministers, only pretending to be ministers of truth.

It is extremely symptomatic of our time that there is a call for universal unity: everyone now seems ready to unite, forgetting their former divisions - what used to divide them. And many are very tempted by this.

Indeed. Isn't it beautiful to forget all divisions, to give up all disagreement and mutual enmity, and to live in peace and love with one another?

Didn't Christ Himself also call people to such unity when He prayed to God the Father: "Let all be one" (John 17:21)?

Did He not call everyone to mutual peace and brotherly love? All this is true, but this is not the kind of unity, this is not the kind of peace and brotherly love that Christ called people to, as modern unificationists - ecumenists, modernists, neo-Christians, or whatever they may call themselves!

Christ the Savior called all men to unity in that Divine Truth which He brought to earth for the salvation of men. "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world," He Himself said to Pilate, "that I may bear witness to the truth, and everyone who is of the truth may listen to my voice" (John 18:37).

The truth, the pure and undefiled Truth of the Divine doctrine of Christ, is the only measure and the only motivation for the true, salvific, God-pleasing unity of men. Any other unity will be unnatural, artificial, insincere - it will contain lies and falsehoods. In fact, the Apostle, in calling Christians to unity, clearly says how he thinks this unity should be:

"I pray you, brethren, ... I beseech you, brethren, ... that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; that ye be established in the same mind and in the same judgement" (that ye be united in the same mind and in the same judgement) (1 Corinthians 1:10). (1 Corinthians 1:10), or else, "that ye should have the same sense, the same love, be of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2).

Complete unanimity and single-mindedness is what the word of God teaches is required for an expedient, fruitful, and salvific unity of the people. Without unity in the Truth, there can be no true, genuine unity of people in peace and love among themselves, uniting them to one another and uniting them to God.

And what kind of love without unity in the Truth can we speak about, when the Apostle clearly says that love "does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the Truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6)? What

kind of unanimity, what kind of unity in truth can the Orthodox have with Roman Catholics and Protestants? What true unity can Christians have with Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans?

But the modern unificationists are ready to unite even with the godless! Isn't that absurd?

They want to unite people of entirely different spirits, with different thoughts - contrary to the clear exhortation of the Apostle, of which we spoke above - and so that each remains in his error, in his departure from the one Truth of Christ. All proselytizing is even considered by them undesirable, reprehensible, and illegal, and as such is forbidden.

What is important to them is not truth, which alone is dear and salvific, but unification at all costs and by all means, as an end in itself. But association cannot be an end in itself: there are all sorts of unions, including obviously reprehensible ones with criminal aims, such as, for example, a gang of robbers which is sometimes bound by a very strong mutual responsibility and even seemingly very good feelings of companionship. What then? Are we to rejoice at such an association and welcome it, seeing in it the realization of the ideals of Christian love?

And can it be a positive phenomenon for people to unite with a total disregard or even a disregard for the Truth that the only begotten Son of God, who brought to earth for our salvation, was incarnate? That is how we should put the question, hearing constantly deceitful, at times even hysterical, appeals for universal unity made by modern unificationists!

Are they calling us to unite with Christ, or ... With this evil world, to which Christ opposed Himself and His true followers?

And when we see clearly how eager all these unificationists are to keep up with the times, to please the spirit of the times, to be not backward but modern, with a kind of arrogant contempt for all that was formerly in the world in the heyday of true Christian piety, we cannot help being convinced that these unificationists call us not to Christ, but away from Christ. They call us to forsake Christ and merge with this world that lies in evil, whose prince, according to their own declarations (they are often very transparent now!), must soon come and reign over the world. This is the same one, about which Christ had foretold to Jews, who did not believe in Him: "I have come in My Father's name, and you will not receive me; but if another comes in his own name, you will receive him" (John 5:43).

And they are already waiting for him and hurrying to unite everyone under his authority! This artificial, unnatural union of everyone and everything is necessary to facilitate his speedy enthronement and to ensure him a firm grip on the world. **T h i s** is the true, real background of all this modern "modernism" and all this unification histrionics!

It is necessary to liquidate Christianity painlessly, making it "salt of the beleaguered" and leaving for those people who do not yet want to part with it completely, one appearance of it, which does not oblige people to anything, is not dangerous to enemies and does not save people. Truth is skillfully replaced by a lie - because this is what the enemy of human salvation - the devil has long specialized in, and in what he willingly helps people who have sold their souls to him for earthly goods - the true children of this world, lying in the evil. This world is clearly headed for disaster, and his death is not slumbering.

Where shall we be? On whose side shall we be? Shall we forget that we Christians are "not of the world", just as Christ Himself is "not of the world", according to His word (John 17:16)?

And will this world have the power to entangle us to such an extent that we, with its deceptive temporal benefits, are willing to forsake the True Christ and accept in His place the "Christ" of the false, that is, the anti-Christ?

We will not!

But then, if we want to preserve ourselves and remain faithful to the true Christ, a great and urgent duty is imposed on us, namely, to resolutely distance ourselves from everything that bears the stamp of Retreat, to separate ourselves from all those who are already on the path of Retreat, bearing in mind the wonderful warning given to us a century ago by the great Russian saint Ignatius (Bryanchaninov), who had an insight into our times: "Retreat is allowed by God: do not try to stop it with your weak hand. Remove yourself from it, guard yourself from it, and that is enough for you. Get acquainted with the spirit of the time, study it, so as to avoid its influence as far as possible" ("The Father's Guide" - conclusion). "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17).

Let us be with God, with Christ, not with the world! And let us be afraid of all deceit and temptation by beautiful and ingratiating words (Col.2:4)! Having acquainted ourselves with the spirit of the age, let us find a firm resolve, whatever it may cost us, to withdraw from it, severing all that ties us to it.

This and only this is the true way - the way of separation from the modern world for each of us individually and for our Church as a whole, if it wishes to remain a true Church!

Chapter 9: Russia - "The House of the Most Holy Mother of God".

Our once great and glorious Motherland Russia - Holy Russia - has from time immemorial acquired a great and glorious name: "The House of the Most Holy Mother of God," or otherwise, "The undefeatable estate of the Mother of God (patrimony).

"The Lord, who helped the meek David to defeat Goliath, also helped our blessed prince to stand up for the Orthodox faith, for the House of the Most Holy Mother of God" - with such a joyful exclamation people met Sainted prince Alexander Nevsky, returning home after the brilliant victory he had gained over the Livonian knights.

"Orthodox people! We want to help the Moscow state, let us not spare our bellies. Let us all, as one, stand up for the Russian land, for the House of the Blessed Virgin Mary" - these were the words Kozma Minin-Sukhoruk called out to the Russian people, urging them to rise to defend and save their fatherland.

And as all Russian history throughout the centuries testifies, this lofty title was not devoid of the deepest meaning. All the most important events of the historical life of the Russian people are so closely connected with the veneration of the Most Holy Mother of God, Who in difficult moments immediately came to his aid, saving him from the strongest enemies, that indeed our Motherland was as if Her House, in which She constantly dwelt. And this Her invisible, but nevertheless always really tangible presence on Russian soil She showed through numerous Wonderworking icons, which are reverently venerated by the Russian people, not as idols, according to the insolent assertion of sectarians, but as visible signs, symbols of Her invisible presence and protection of the Russian people. According to the faith of the Russian people, from these icons flowed innumerable miracles, and at critical moments, threatening the very historical existence of the Russian people, by fervent prayer before these icons, the Blessed Virgin Mary truly miraculously saved the Russian land from terrible ruin, and the Russian people - from destruction.

It is impossible to count all such isolated instances of the Mother of God's miraculous help to the Russian people of faith. We shall mention here only the most important examples of the miraculous intercession of the MostHoly Mother of God for the whole Russian land, of which it would be shameful for any Russian person not to know.

The main holy relic of the Russian people, by the prayers before which the Most Pure Mother of God repeatedly saved the Russian land, is the wonderworking icon of Our Lady of Vladimir. In the holiest of holies of the Russian people, in the heart of the Russian state in the Moscow

Dormition Cathedral, first in the iconostasis, to the left of the royal door, stands this great, cherished shrine of the Russian land. Before it the kings of Russia were crowned, and before it the chief priests of the Church of Russia were chosen. Throughout the eight centuries Russian people have prayed before this holy icon to the Protectress of the Christian race, and She immediately showed Her blessed aid, until, under the influence of the dark forces, there appeared in Russian people blasphemers, detractors of the Most Pure Virgin, who doomed the Russian land, as writes about this in one of his letters to our great hierarch Theophanes, the Wyshensky Cloisterer: "We must be punished: blasphemers against God and His public works have gone. Someone wrote to me that in some newspaper "Light" No. 88 were printed blasphemies against the Mother of God. The Mother of God and turned away from us; for her sake also the Son of God, and for his sake God the Father and the Spirit of God. Who is for us when God is against us? Alas." (Collected Writings, Vol. VII, p. 206).

This is the cause of the terrible calamity that befell our Motherland: we did not want our Motherland to continue to be "the House of the Most Holy Mother of God," and therefore we lost Her protection and intercession, which was always so tangible throughout our centuries-long history in the past.

Let us recall what was due to the Russian people to the Most Pure Mother of God in this past and, above all, why was this greatest of all Russian shrines - the wonderworking icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir particularly dear to us?

According to tradition, this icon was painted by Luke the Evangelist himself on the board of the table on which the Lord Himself, His Most Pure Mother and St. Joseph the Betrothed had eaten during Christ the Savior's youth. When the Holy Evangelist, having painted this image of the Mother of God, showed it to Her, She uttered the words She had once spoken when visiting St. Elizabeth: "Henceforth shall all the parents of me be blessed," and then she added: "The grace of Him who was born of Me and of Me be with this icon". Until 450 this icon remained in Jerusalem. During the reign of Theodosius the Younger, it was transferred to Constantinople. At the beginning of the 12th century, Patriarch of Constantinople Luka Chrysoverg sent the icon to Kiev as a gift to Great Prince Yuri Vladimirovich Dolgoruky. The icon was placed in the grand-ducal village of Vyshgorod not far from Kiev which once belonged to St. Olga, in the women's monastery there. Since 1155 Vyshgorod became the inheritance of the son of Prince Yuri Andrii, surnamed Bogolyubsky. One day the clergy entered the church of the Vyshgorod monastery and saw the icon standing in the middle of the temple in the air. They put it back in its former place, but it rose again and stood in the air. An ardent admirer of the Mother of God, Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky came to the conclusion from this that the Mother of God was obviously pleased that Her shrine should remain in another place. Intending to pass over to the North to the Suzdal Land, he secretly took out at night with himself the holy icon, constantly serving prayers before it along the way, and he arrived at the city of Vladimir, where the inhabitants there met the

prince and the holy icon with great joy. The prince, however, supposed to go on to Rostov, but the horses, carrying the icon, after leaving Vladimir ten versts, stopped and, despite all the horsewhips, did not want to go any further. Then they harnessed others, but even they did not want to budge. After the prince's long and fervent prayer before the icon, the MostHoly Mother of God revealed to him Her will, that Her holy relic might remain in Vladimir. The prince who held the relic in awe at the sight of it built in Vladimir a magnificent Assumption cathedral (1160), in which was placed the icon in a rich chasuble, which from that time received the name Vladimirsk.

Many miracles were seen in Vladimir, and then in all the Russian land from this great shrine. In the year 1164 this shrine accompanied prince Andrew in his campaign against the Volga Bulgars who were making regular devastating raids upon the Russian land. Before the decisive battle with them, Prince Andrew, having received the holy sacrament, prayed fervently before the shrine, exclaiming: "Whoever trusts in Thee, O Mother of God, shall not perish." All the soldiers also reclined in tears to the holy icon, and the Bulgarians were utterly defeated. Immediately on the battlefield a thanksgiving service was performed before the holy icon, during which a marvelous sign was seen: in full view of the army from the holy icon and from the Life-giving Cross of the Lord shone a powerful light, which lit up the whole area. On the same day the Byzantine emperor gained a brilliant triumph over the Saracens and also with the whole army saw a miraculous light from the Life-giving Cross of the Lord and the Icon of the Mother of God with his army. By mutual agreement, the two sovereigns established on this day of August 1 "a feast to the All-Merciful Savior, Christ Our God, and to the Most Holy Mother of God, His Mother".

During the invasion of the Tatar khan Batyi's hordes, when on 7 February 1237 Vladimir was exposed to terrible devastation, the holy icon remained completely intact and unharmed, as a sure guarantee of the future salvation of the Russian people.

And indeed, when in the year 1380 the fate of the Russian land suffering under the Tatar yoke was decided, and Mamai khan led untold hordes into the Russian land, Prince Dimitrii Donskoi together with all the people fervently prayed before this holy icon for salvation of our Motherland and, doubtless at the prompting of the Mother of God, he went to the great saint of God, St. Sergii Radonezhsky, to ask for blessing for the battle with the Tatars. The Reverend gave him as a blessing a prosphora of the Mother of God, and he said: "Go prince: God and the Blessed Virgin will help you." And it is remarkable that the Russian met with the Tatar hordes on the very day of the feast of the Nativity of the MostHoly Mother of God, September 8, and exactly at noon a terrible battle broke out, which ended in the victory of the Russian, which was the beginning of the deliverance of the Russian people from the hard Tatar captivity. ("The Battle of Kulikovo").

Especially remarkable was the intercession of the Mother of God for the Russian land in the year 1395 during the invasion of the terrible Asian conqueror Tamerlane. This most ferocious of invaders, which not without reason was called "the scourge of the nations," having slaughtered millions of people and shed streams of blood, after the devastation of a number of countries, headed toward the borders of the Russian state, everywhere spreading fear and terror. He has already reached the river Don, taking the town of Elets and beating many people, along with its prince. Having hastily gathered his army, Grand Duke Vasily Dimitrievich left to meet him and stopped at Kolomna on the bank of the river Oka. But, of course, one could not expect salvation from human strength, and all over the Russian land fervent prayers began to be offered up to God, to His Immaculate Mother, to the Moscow saints Peter and Alexius and to the sorrowful Venerable Sergius of the Russian land. An example of this fervent national prayer was given by the great prince himself, who asked the people to impose upon themselves the strictest fast and commanded that the wonderworking icon of Our Lady of Vladimir be transferred from the city of Vladimir to Moscow. For the relic a special honorable embassy of the clergy was sent to Vladimir. On the very day of the Dormition of the Mother of God, on 15 August, after the liturgy and a prayer service, the holy icon was taken up from its customary place and accepted in the hands of the Moscow embassy. The journey of the icon to Moscow lasted ten days. It was a soul-shaking spectacle. On both sides of the road there were people on their knees, stretching out their hands to the icon, shouting: "Mother of God, save the Land of Russia!" At this time, Metropolitan Cyprian, with all the clergy and people, imposing a strict fast, did not leave the church, performing services day and night and praying with tears for the great prince, for his army and for all Orthodox Christians.

When the holy icon approached Moscow, a solemn welcome awaited it there. "The whole city came out against the icon for the celebration of her". At the head of the innumerable people, who came out in procession, was Metropolitan Cyprian himself, "with bishops and archpastors, with abbots and deacons, with the entire clergy and church parish, with nuns and nuns, with noble princes, noble princesses, with boyars and boyars". The people surrounded the high priest and his attendants in dense crowds: "men and wives, young men, virgins and elders, children and infants, orphans and widows, beggars and the poor, every age male and female, from young to great, all the innumerable multitude of people, with crosses and with icons, With gospels and candles and censers, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and moreover, all with tears, little ones and great ones, who would not find a man who was not weeping, but all with prayer and weeping, sighing and weeping. When they saw the holy icon, they all fell on the ground and worshipped it as to the Most Pure Mother of God Who had come to them, and accepting it with great joy, they took it to the Assumption Cathedral, praying to the Mother of God for deliverance from the invasion of the terrible enemy.

And what was it? This total nation-wide, tearful prayer did not remain fruitless. On the very day (August 26) and at the very hour when the holy icon was so solemnly greeted in Moscow,

Tamerlane dozed in his tent. And suddenly, in his dream he sees a high mountain, from the top of which the saints with golden rods are descending towards him, threatening him with them; above them in the air, in untold majesty, in the bright glow of rays, stood the mysterious Woman, covered with scarlet royal clothing, shining "like the sun with lightning rays. Around her were countless lightning warriors armed with fiery swords. She fiercely looked at Tamerlane and commanded him to leave the Russian land, and at the same time the lightning warriors, raising their swords of fire, rushed at him... Tamerlane, trembling, awoke from the horror that seized him. Having called his princes and commanders, as well as sages and fortune-tellers, he trembled and groaned as if in a frenzy, told them his dream. Listeners have come in tremor and horror, and the wisest of those called have explained to them, that the majestic Woman in imperial attire seen to them in a dream is the Protectress of Russian, Mother of the God Christian and that Her force is irresistible. Then Tamerlan said: "If the Russians have such a Helper, then we are going against them in vain" - and immediately ordered his hordes to turn back. On the way they began to think that the Russians were pursuing them, and the Asians turned to a veritable flight, crushing one another, throwing down their weapons and booty, and leaving prisoners behind.

Thus, through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, victory was granted to the Russian host over the terrible conqueror without battle or bloodshed. And the chronicler, describing this event, adds: "And Tamerlane fled, persecuted by the power of the Blessed Virgin."

At the place where the icon met in Moscow was established the Sretensk Monastery, and on 26 August was established the Feast of the Meeting of the Wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir, while the holy icon itself has since been abiding in Moscow, as a great and wondrous stronghold of the Russian capital.

Many more miracles the Russian people have seen, through prayers before this wondrous icon.

In the year 1408, the Horde king Edigei suddenly approached Moscow, when there was no prince or metropolitan there. It was impossible to expect any human help, and the Muscovites put all their hope in the Most Pure Mother of God, fervently praying to Her before the holy icon of Saint Vladimir to save the capital. And suddenly Yedigey, suddenly receiving news of the rebellion in the Horde, lifted the siege of Moscow and hurried home.

In 1451 the Nogai prince Mazovsha laid siege to Moscow. The Tatars had already set fire to Moscow's suburbs. Courageous Metropolitan Jonah through the flames and smoke, under a hail of arrows, made a procession through the walls of the city. On the way he met a monk of the Chudov monastery named Anthony, known for his righteous life. St. Jonah asked him to pray for the deliverance of the city from the Tatars. Antony replied, "The Mother of God will not despise your prayer. She has already begged her Son to save Moscow." And what? At night the Tatars,

hearing some unusual noise, as if from the multitude of the approaching army, fled in terror, having thrown all their burdens and the booty they had seized.

It was only through the intercession of the Mother of God, through prayers before Her wondrous image, that the Russian people attributed the final fall of the Tatar yoke that had been hanging over the Russian land for two and a half centuries. This was in 1480. Grand Duke John III Vasilievich broke the Khan's basmah, refusing to pay tribute to the Tatars. The Horde khan Akhmat, having gathered vast hordes, moved on Moscow. The Grand Duke, armed with prayer and the blessing of Metropolitan Gerontius and his confessor, Archbishop Vassian of Rostov, came out against the Tatars to the river Ugra, which the Russians called the "Belt of Our Lady". The Tatars were on the opposite side of the river, and none of their adversaries dared to cross the river first. Both the Metropolitan and the Grand Duke's confessor exhorted him not to be afraid of the Tatars, trusting in the intercession of the Mother of God who had saved the Russian land so many times. For a long time both armies stood against each other without taking any decisive action. And suddenly some inexplicable fear attacked the Tatars: they turned to a panic flight, persecuted by no one. Thus, through the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Russian land, without the slightest bloodshed, was freed from the so long burdensome yoke hanging over it. To commemorate this event a feastday was established in honour of the wonderworking Vladimir Icon on 23 June.

In 1521, the Crimean khan Makhmet-Girei attacked Moscow with huge joint hordes of Tatars from Crimea, Nogai and Kazan. Over a vast space from Voronezh to Nizhny Novgorod the Tatars rampaged, plundering and killing every living thing, and finally came close to Moscow itself. All hope could be again only on the intercession of the Mother of God. Basil, a fool for Christ's sake, prayed especially fervently for the salvation of Moscow. At midnight he saw the doors of the cathedral open, the Vladimir Icon rising from its place and coming out of the door, and a voice was heard from it: "I will go out of the city with the saints. For a moment the whole church was illuminated by a flame, which was immediately extinguished afterwards. The same night there was a remarkable vision to the righteous blind nun of the Ascension monastery. She imagined that from the Kremlin to the Spassky Gate is a whole holy cathedral. The saints and righteous men, all in radiant glory, were coming and carrying the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir. When they came out of the Spassky Gate, the Venerable Sergius of Radonezh and Varlaam of Khoutyn came out to meet them. Falling at the feet of the saints, they asked them, on whom were they leaving the city in such distress? "We have prayed much to the most Gracious God and the Most Pure Theotokos, - answered the saintly saints, - but the Lord has commanded us to leave the city and take with us the wonderworking icon of His Most Pure Mother, because men have despised the fear of God, and do not care about His commandments, therefore God has allowed the barbarian people to come, that they be punished now and through repentance will return to God". Falling at the feet of the Moscow saints and wonderworkers, the Monk Sergii and Barlaam begged them to appease the wrath of God. The saints heard their

implacable pleas, held a moleben before the wonderworking Vladimir Icon, and sanctified the city with a cross and returned to the Kremlin, carrying back the wonderworking icon as well. Suddenly it seemed to the Tatars that a huge army was encircling Moscow. Khan sent to ascertain this. The sent men saw an even more powerful army. Then Khan sent another of his entourage. He returned in awe. "Run at once," he cried out, "an incalculable army is coming toward us from Moscow. And the Tartars fled in panic. To commemorate this, the feast of the miraculous Vladimir Icon was established on May 21.

Are all Russian people today aware of these marvelous cases of Our Lady's miraculous intercession for the Russian land? Alas, our official textbooks, on which we studied Russian history at school, were silent about these miraculous incidents. And how else could it be? How could we talk about miracles in our very highly cultured age of science and progress? One could be branded a retrograde or obscurantist - sadly remembered expressions which were stuck like labels to all those who did not want to go along with the ministers of the dark forces, energetically and tirelessly working on the destruction of Holy Russia.

We have cited here the most remarkable instances of the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God for the Russian land through prayers before Her miraculous image of Vladimir, of which the most important are noted in our Divine Service. The troparion composed in honour of this holy icon is touching: "Today shines forth the most glorious city of Moscow, receiving, O Mother of God, your miraculous icon as the dawn of the sun. And now we come to it, and we pray to you, and we cry out in this way: O most wondrous Mother of God, pray for Thee to the incarnate Christ our God, that He may save this city and all the cities and countries of Christendom from all the sins of the enemy, and save our souls, as he is merciful.

In addition to the above cases, there is another remarkable one. During the reign of the pious Tsar Theodore Ioannovich the Tatars already occupied the Vorob'ev hills in front of Moscow. The Tsar, distinguished by particular piety, zealously prayed to the Most-holy Mother of God for salvation from the enemy invasion, and he ordered that the Saint Vladimir Icon should accompany the army sent by him. He himself from the height of the Kremlin tower watched the movement of the troops. Beside him stood a boyar, weeping from consciousness of the terrible danger threatening the city. Noticing this, the Tsar turned to him with a clear smile on his face and said: "Tomorrow, by the prayers of Our Lady, there will be no wicked." After the battle, which lasted the whole day, from the Vladimir icon, which was in the ranks of the Russian army, an irresistible power came out which put on the Tatars some kind of tetanus. Their hands became as though shackled and they were unable to lift their swords. An unbelievable fear attacked them, and they turned to a tremendous flight.

Soon came the so-called "Time of Troubles," God's punishment for the sins of the Russian people. Dimitri Samozvanets entered Moscow. His acolytes burst into the Cathedral of the

Assumption, when His Holiness Patriarch Job was performing the Divine Liturgy, and began to tear off his holy robes. It was a moment of deep sorrow and high majesty at the same time. As if seeing before him in the flesh the Mother of God, the pillar of Orthodoxy and defender of the Russian people in our country, the Patriarch, taking off his own panagia, laid it before the icon of Vladimir, and as if entrusting to Her the fate of faith and the Fatherland, prayerfully exclaimed: "O Mother of God, here before Thy icon this panagia was placed upon me and the patriarchal staff was given to me. With them I have kept the integrity of the faith for nineteen years: now, because of our sins, the kingdom is in distress; deceit and heresy are triumphant. O Mother of God, save Orthodoxy through your prayers to your Son. And this prayer did not go unheeded. After a few years of unrest our Motherland again experienced the miraculous intercession of the Mother of God and was saved from the enemies, through the fervent prayers of the Russian people, through another of Her wondrous relics - the wonderworking Kazan Icon, about which we shall speak next.

Bearing in mind all of the above, it is not surprising that the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God enjoyed special veneration with us, before which the Moscow grand princes and Russian tsars always prayed during their campaigns against their enemies. During the election of metropolitans of All Russia, and later on of patriarchs, the lots of those elected were placed in the casket of the Vladimir wonderworking icon, in the hope that the Mother of God would herself show the worthy elector. Before this icon the noblest men of the Moscow state swore an oath of allegiance to the tsars.

In 1547 there was a great fire in the Kremlin. They wanted to take out the Vladimir icon from the Assumption cathedral fearing for its integrity, but they couldn't move it from its place. Then many saw the shining Woman in the sky above the Assumption cathedral crossing the temple. Soon the fire subsided, not even touching the Assumption Cathedral.

During the invasion of the French in 1812. The Mother of God, however, allowed Her relic to be removed from Moscow during the French occupation of the capital: from September 2 to October 20, she remained in Vladimir, and then returned to Moscow.

During the time of the horrors, which befell the Russian land in the beginning of the 17th century for the sins of the Russian people, when the so-called "Time of Troubles" came upon the Russian land, it pleased the Mother of God to glorify another of Her sacred objects, the wonderworking Kazan Icon, which had not long before been revealed. Through the fervent prayer of the Russian people repenting before this holy Icon, miraculous deliverance from the horrors of the Time of Troubles came to all the Russian people, and again was restored the Russian Empire.

This other great shrine, also especially revered by the Russian people, appeared miraculously in the city of Kazan, soon after the conquest of the Kazan kingdom by Tsar Ivan Vasilyevich the

Terrible, on July 8, 1579. That year a terrible fire broke out in Kazan, turning half the Kremlin and the adjacent part of the city into ruins. The Tatars began to mock the Russians, saying that the Russian God had no mercy on them, having sent them such a fire soon after their conquest of the city. "The faith of Christ," the chronicler notes, "became a parable and a shame. And then, as if to save the Orthodox faith from desecration, the Lord showed the Orthodox people in Kazan His mercy through the appearance of the miraculous icon of His Immaculate Mother. At the site of the fire, one of the streltsys was going to build himself a house. The Mother of God appeared to his nine year old daughter Matrona in a dream three times, commanding her to tell the archbishop and the town leaders to dig up Her icon from the ground, and in the dream the Mother of God showed the girl the exact spot on the ashes, where the icon was hidden. The girl told her mother about the dream, but the mother, both the first and second time, paid no attention to it. Finally, the third time, the girl saw the very icon in her dream, from which a menacing voice was heard: "If you do not tell My verbs, I will appear in another place, but you will perish. The girl was terrified and awoke, screaming to her mother to do the Queen of Heaven's bidding. Then the mother took her daughter to the governor and to Archbishop Jeremiah, but neither of them paid any serious attention to the girl's words. Then the mother took the spade and began to dig in the place indicated. Others of the gathered crowd helped her dig, but the icon did not appear. But as soon as Matrona began to dig, the icon was found. It was wrapped in a shabby cloth and shone with wonderful light. The face of the icon was perfectly fresh, as if the icon had just been painted.

Upon learning of the miraculous find, the citizens of Kazan, with the archbishop and the city authorities at their head, gathered at that site and carried the icon in procession to a nearby church. The abbot of this church was the priest Hermogen, who later became metropolitan of Kazan and patriarch of Moscow and all Rus and who described both the appearance of the icon and the numerous miracles of healing that followed. A detailed report about the discovery of the icon and a copy of it had been sent to the Tsar in Moscow. The tsar ordered the construction of a monastery at the site of the appearance of the icon. The first nuns to take monastic vows in this monastery were the adolescent Matrona who found the icon and her mother.

From this great shrine came salvation to the Russian people during the terrible time of the Time of Troubles. Moscow was in the hands of the Poles, in the northern regions the Swedes ruled, throughout the country went about, robbing and killing, gangs of robbers. The death of the Russian state seemed irrevocable and final. The only hope could be only on God's help and the miraculous intercession of the Mother of God, often saved the Russian land - her home. And to this very intercession ultimately resorted repentant Russian people. In response to the letters of appeal to stand up for the defense and salvation of the Fatherland, sent out by Patriarch Hermogenes and the Trinity Sergius Lavra, the national militia began to be formed. One of these letters went to Nizhny Novgorod, where it was read in the church from the pulpit and caused Kozma Minin-Sukhoruk to be particularly enthusiastic. "Let us all stand as one for Holy Russia,

for the House of the Blessed Virgin Mary," he appealed to the Russian people with such a fervent appeal, "let us lay down our wives and children, but let us free our fatherland. Those who were inspired by this call formed a militia under the command of Prince Pozharsky. Eagerly praying before the miraculous icon of Our Lady of Kazan for the salvation of the homeland, Prince Pozharsky took with him a copy of it, so that it would accompany his militia. Many obstacles had to meet the Nizhny Novgorod troops arriving near Moscow. It was necessary to take a well fortified city, stubbornly defended by Poles, to repel from Moscow just arrived a fresh numerous Polish army and to tame the rioting and disorder of some Russian troops. In addition, the devastated areas were not able to deliver enough food for the Russian army. All this has aroused in feeble hearts the timidity and decline of courage. The salvation of the fatherland seemed hopeless.

In such a miserable situation, all hope was only for help from above. And so all the people and the army began, with heartfelt emotion and tears, to offer up their prayers to the Most Pure Mother of God before Her miraculous image of Kazan. After a solemn prayer service in front of the image, everyone decided to take a strict three-day fast. And these prayers were not in vain. In the Moscow Kremlin, St. Arseny (Archbishop of Ellasson, who came to Russia with Greek Metropolitan Jeremiah) languished in captivity with the Poles. From the strain of his captivity and suffering, he fell into an illness and lay on his bed in confinement. And suddenly, amidst the midnight silence, his cell in prison was filled with an extraordinary light, and among this light he sees before him St. Sergius of Radonezh, who says to him, "Arsenii, your and our prayers have been heard, by the intercession of the Mother of God the judgment for our fatherland is laid upon mercy, tomorrow Moscow will be in the hands of the besiegers, and Russia will be saved". As if in confirmation of the truth of this prophecy, the ailing old man suddenly regains the strength of mind and receives healing from the terrible ailment that had been troubling him. This glad tidings, passing from mouth to mouth, spread with lightning speed, went beyond the walls of the city and inflamed the hearts of Pozharsky's soldiers with undaunted courage. They made a decisive attack on the Kremlin, and the Poles, despite their desperate resistance, had to surrender the Kremlin. It was on October 22, 1612. On the very first Sunday, the Russian army and all the inhabitants of the capital made a solemn procession to the Place of the Cross with the miraculous Kazan icon of the Mother of God. Toward the procession came St. Arseny, bearing the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir, which he had kept in captivity. Falling to the ground and shedding tears of gratitude, each strove to sanctify himself by the touch of this wondrous shrine, which had so many times saved the Russian land.

To commemorate the deliverance of Russia from the calamities of the Time of Troubles, the newly elected Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich Romanoff, with the blessing of his father, Metropolitan Philaret, decreed that the Kazan icon of the Mother of God be commemorated annually, on the day of its discovery on July 8, in addition to the day of deliverance of Moscow from the Poles,

on October 22. Under Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich the 22nd of October was declared an All-Russian feastday.

Soon afterwards, many copies of the Kazan icon became famous for their wonderworking. Of these, the most remarkable copies were: one in the Kazan Cathedral in Moscow, the other - in the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg. General Kutuzov, who had just been appointed commander-in-chief of the Russian army in 1812, visited the Kazan Cathedral to pray before leaving for the army. After a prayer service for him, the miraculous Kazan icon was laid on him, and, as we can see, the Mother of God did not reject the old commander's hopes and granted him the victory over the French. In memory of this, Kutuzov was buried in the Kazan Cathedral. There is also a magnificent iconostasis cast in silver. This silver was taken away from the French from the loot of the Moscow churches and brought by the Cossacks as a gift to the Kazan Cathedral.

The troparion to this great shrine of the Russian people is touching:

"Assumption, Mother of the Lord of the Highest, for all you pray to your Son, Christ our God, and you grant salvation to all who come under your sovereign protection. Protect all of us, O Lady, Queen and Mistress, who are in tribulation and sorrow, and in sickness, burdened by many sins, coming to You and praying to You with contrite soul and broken heart, before Your Immaculate Icon with tears, and irrevocably hoping for Your deliverance of all evil, grant us all useful gifts, and save all, O Virgin Mary, You are the divine protection for Your servants.

The Kazan shrine of St. Petersburg was the most cherished and beloved shrine of St. Petersburg. Many business dwellers of Petersburg considered it their duty to run into the Kazan Cathedral every day, if only for a few minutes, to pray before the shrine, asking the Mother of God for Her blessing and help in their business.

Such are the two most important shrines of the Russian land, justifying its designation as "the House of the Most Holy Mother of God." But, besides this, in Russian soil there were so many wonderworking icons of the Mother of God, from which there were many wondrous signs and wonders, that it is impossible to recount all of these in a short space of time. Let us mention here only a few more icons, the most celebrated and revered by the Russian people.

This first of all is one of the most ancient icons, which is particularly near and dear to us, the Russian exiles, the wonderworking icon of the Sign of the Mother of God of Kursk, which is here with us, and which we rightly call the Hodegetria, that is, the Guide, of the Russian Diaspora, For it pleased the Most Pure Mother of God, that this holy shrine participated in the great exodus of the Russian people abroad, after the First World War and the revolution in 1920, and that, during the course of more than thirty years, it has been a comfort and consolation to us, in our life in exile. This wondrous shrine also appeared in its time, in the year 1295, as a

consolation to the Russian people, soon after the great sorrow that befell them-the Tatar invasion of the Russian land and the beginning of the long two and a half centuries of the hard Tatar yoke. The history of our shrine, it seems, is known to all Russian people abroad, at least in general terms. It appeared to hunters at the root of an oak tree not far from the city of Kursk, why it was called the Kursk Root. The hunter who had scarcely unearthed it picked it up, as it produced the first miracle: at that place there ran a pure and running spring of water. Later on the icon was cut by Tatars into two parts which miraculously grew together. At the place where the icon had been found a monastery was built which was called the Root Hermitage. The Russian people's devotion to the icon was so great that even Samozvanets considered it necessary to take it from Kursk to his camp at Putivl, and then to Moscow where it remained until 1615, after which it was returned to Kursk. Even during the absence of the icon, the gracious help of the Mother of God did not leave Kursk. In 1612, the Polish general Zholkevski with a great army besieged Kursk. At the very beginning of the siege, some citizens saw the Mother of God with two luminous monks shadowing the city. Captive Poles said that they also saw a Woman with two men of light on the walls of the city, who was threatening the besiegers. During the siege, the inhabitants repeatedly made processions of the cross around the city and vowed, in the event of liberation from enemy invasion, to build a monastery in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the city and to place in it a miracle-working icon. Soon Zholkiewski's army withdrew from the siege and with great losses retreated from the city.

In 1676 the wonderworking Kursk Korenaya icon visited the Don for a blessing of the Don Cossack armies. In 1684, Tsar and Grand Dukes Ioann and Peter Alexeyevich ordered a copy of our icon to be carried during the campaigns of Russian soldiers against the Enemy. In 1812, such a copy was sent to the army of Kutuzov to encourage the Russian troops. A remarkable miracle took place in 1898, when several malefactors tried to blow up the shrine, having placed a bursting projectile with a clockwork mechanism at the foot of it. The explosion caused terrible damage, but the holy icon remained unharmed, and even the glass on its casket remained intact. In 1920 Bishop Theophan of Kursk took the icon abroad, where it remained until 1944 in the Russian Church in Belgrade, frequently visiting the Russian dispersion sites. The Russian people in Belgrade have seen many miracles of healing from her, and especially many miraculous rescues during the terrible bombing of the city. A whole series of miracles were also witnessed in Munich, where our shrine was based from 1945 to 1951, also frequently touring various cities and camps. Many she healed from lingering illnesses, many she reunited with relatives who had disappeared during the war. And now, since February 5, 1951, this holy relic has been here in America, where it too has already performed many miracles.

After the Second World War, in 1944, another great shrine found itself abroad (if only the genuine icon is really exported, not a copy of it) - the wonderworking icon of the Mother of God of Tikhvin. This wondrous icon appeared in 1383, during the reign of Grand Duke Dimitrii Donskoy in the air on Lake Ladoga and was constantly at the monastery near the town of

Tikhvin in Novgorod Gubernia. Earlier it was in Constantinople, where it was transferred in the fifth century by Empress Eudocia from Jerusalem. For her they built a church, which was called the Blachernae Temple. For 70 years prior to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, the holy icon itself had passed into the Novgorod region. This is believed to be because the icon mysteriously disappeared from its church in Constantinople and soon afterwards appeared on Russian soil as was clear in a conversation between the Novgorod merchants who had visited Constantinople and the Patriarch. The icon was glorified by many miracles, especially the sightings of the blind and the healing of demoniacs. In 1613 during the Time of Troubles the Swedes laid siege to the Tikhvin Monastery, threatening to level it to the ground. The monks prayed fervently before the wonderworking icon, praying to the Mother of God to save the monastery. Then, one devout woman who was there, and who had just before received insight from the icon, the Mother of God appeared and commanded to announce to all those in the monastery to make a procession along its walls, with the icon in front. Suddenly some inexplicable fear attacked the Swedes and they fled. Again they besieged the monastery, bringing a huge army, and again they fled, for it seemed to them that a multitude of new troops had entered the monastery.

A year later, a fresh Swedish detachment came and was given the order to ravage the monastery, scatter the temple of the Mother of God in stone and cut the icons. There were so many Swedes that salvation was beginning to seem impossible. They decided to take the icon and flee with it to Moscow, where at that time Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov was already reigning. But they couldn't take the icon out of the monastery, and then they realized that the Mother of God herself would protect her shrine. When the Swedes were already quite close to the monastery, they were struck by a new miracle: they saw the vision of a heavily armed, numerous army rushing to surround them on all sides. In fear, the Swedes rushed to flee so hastily that they crushed each other. In the monastery they waited in vain for the enemy. When at last the nearby inhabitants brought the news of their flight, no one wanted to believe them, but they went to ascertain what had happened - it turned out that the whole neighborhood was strewn with abandoned weapons, while the crumpled bushes, broken young forest and the bodies of the enemy scattered at a large distance, eloquently testified to the horror that seized the Swedes and the swiftness of their flight. It was the last attempt of the Swedes to fight against the power of the Mistress of Peace. This is how the Most Pure Mother of God defended the Russian land - Her House - from all sides, when the Russian people did not lose faith in Her almighty help and turned to Her in tearful prayer, asking Her protection and salvation from their enemies. The feast day of the Tikhvin icon is June 26.

Of the other miraculous icons of the Mother of God, it is also necessary to note the miraculous Smolensk icon, called Hodigitria, which means "Guide". This icon was brought to Russia from Greece, but when and by whom is not precisely known. Among the numerous miracles which came out of this saint icon, it is remarkable that Smolensk was spared from the ravages of the

Tatars in 1239 during their terrible invasion of the Russian land of the wild hordes of Batyi. Having learned that the Tatars halted not far from the city and were going to launch a surprise attack on it, the citizens fervently prayed to the Mother of God before Her wonderworking icon. The Mother of God chose as their instrument of salvation the pious soldier Mercury, who was a member of the Smolensk prince's squadron. On the night of 24 November, the watchman of the cathedral, in which the wonderworking icon stood, received a command from the Mother of God to announce to Mercury: "Mercury, come forth soon in your military armor, for the Mother of God is calling you. The watchman immediately went to Mercury and announced this to him. Mercury, having put on his military armor, hurried into the temple to the miraculous icon, and there he heard from it a voice saying: "Mercury, I send you to guard my House. The ruler of the Horde secretly wants to attack my city this night, but I begged my Son and God for my House, that he would not deliver it into the hands of the enemy. Come to the meeting of the enemy secretly from the people, the saint, and the prince, who do not know of the attack of the army. I myself will be with you, helping your servant. But there with the victory awaits you a crown of martyrdom, which you shall accept from Christ. With tears Mercurius fell down before the holy icon and in holy obedience to the will of the Mother of God, without fear went on his enemies alone. At night he invisibly penetrated into the enemy camp and killed the Tatar giant, on whom the Tatars hoped more than on the rest of his forces. Surrounded by his enemies, Mercury bravely repelled all their attacks. The Tartars were terrified to see near him the majestic shining Woman and some men of lightning, and they turned to flight. But at the last moment Mercury, as the Mother of God foretold him, was himself struck in the head and fell dead. The Tatars fled and the body of the holy martyr was buried with honor in the cathedral church. Until very recently the 24th of November was solemnly celebrated in Smolensk with an all-night vigil and thanksgiving service before the wonderworking icon of the Hodegetria. The feast of the icon itself is July 28. There are more than 30 miraculous copies of the icon in Russia.

The miraculous Iberian Icon of the Mother of God is a cherished relic of the ancient Russian capital of Moscow. It was painted on Athos and sent to Moscow under Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon in the 17th century. In spite of its recent appearance, compared to other icons, it became widely venerated and became firmly entrenched in the Moscow population: it entered into the everyday life of Moscow and merged with the life of its inhabitants. It was located in the Iverskaya chapel (in 1929, demolished by the Bolsheviks), in the very center of Moscow life, not far from the Kremlin walls and the historic Red Square. From early morning until late at night one could see many people entering this chapel to worship the shrine and pray before it in their sorrows and needs. Many representatives of large Moscow firms did not start their working day without having visited the Iverskoy, a rare student did not go to her before examinations; even many who bragged about their unbelief in difficult moments of life resorted to Iverskoy: so great was her veneration among the inhabitants of Moscow. However, only a very small part of the faithful saw the true icon, for it was carried almost round the clock to the homes of those who wished to receive it at their homes. The Moscow Iversk Icon was

remarkable in that it was perhaps the only shrine in the world that was never locked up, never left without the presence of a significant number of people. They took it from house to house, even at night, for there were always too many people who wished to receive it in their homes. How significant it is that the sacred countenance of Our Lady constantly circumnavigates the city dedicated to Our Lady! Her feast is celebrated three times a year: on February 12, October 13 and on the third day of Easter.

The description of the miracle-working icons of the Mother of God, manifested in our homeland, could go on and on, for almost no city and village in Holy Russia existed, which would not honor its own miracle-working icons, and many of them were only copies of the most venerated icons, as, for example, the Kazan, Vladimir, the Sign, the Smolensk Odigitria, which, like their originals, are famous for their wonderworking.

Of the other miracle-working icons made famous in our homeland, these are: Akhtyrskaya, Bayvuzskaya, Balykinskaya, Barlovskaya, or "Blessed Crevoe," Barskaya, Annunciation, "Blessed Heaven," "Blessed Flower," Bogolyubskaya, Borschagovskaya, Brailovskaya, Bratskaya, Belovezhskaya, Vzygranie, "In Search of the Lost," Vilenskaya, Volokolamskaya, Vorgolskaya, "Joy of All Who Sorrow, Consolation in Sorrow, Vydropskaya, Galatskaya, Galichskaya, Herbovetskaya, Glinskaya, Grebnevskaya, Gruzinskaya, Dalmatskaya, Dvinskaya, Devpeteruvskaya, Dechterovskaya, Donskaya, Duvovichskaya, Dubomiet'skaya, Dumnitskaya, Elet'skaya-Chernigovskaya, Yelet'skaya, Ephesianskaya, "Zhivonosniy Istochnik", Zhirovitskaya, Zaonikievskaya, Zlatovorotskaya, Igritskaya-Smolenskaya, "Deliverance from the distress of the afflicted", Ilinskaya Chernigovskaya, Issakovskaya, Jerusalem'skaya, Kaluzh'skaya, Kasperovskaya, Kiperskaya, Kievo-Pecherskaya, Kozelshchanskaya, Koloch'skaya, Konevskaya, Korsun'skaya, Kostrom'skaya, Kupyatitskaya, Lenkovskaya, Lesnyanskaya, Lyubech'skaya, Maksimovskaya, Mglinskaya, Melninskaya, Minskaya, Mirozh'skaya, Modenskaya, Moldav'skaya, Molchenskaya, Mokhnatinskaya, Murom'skaya, Narv'skaya, "Neopalimaya Kupina", "Unbreakable Wall," "Unwithering Color," "Unchained Joy," Novgorodseverskaya, Novodvorskaya, Novonikitskaya, Ovinovskaya, Ozeryanskaya, Okovitskaya or Rzhev'skaya, Okonskaya, Oranskaya, Orlovskaya, Ostrobramskaya, Permskaya, Petrovskaya, Pimenovskaya, Pisiya, Pochaevskaya, "Prizri na humbleniye", Pskovo-Pecherskaya, Pskovo-Pokrovskaya, Putivl'skaya, Ratkovskaya, Rzhav'skaya, Rudenskaya, Repitskaya, Svenskaya-Pecherskaya, Svyatogorskaya, Sebez'skaya, Sedmigorodnaya, Sedmiizerna, Seligerskaya, Serafimo-Ponetaevskaya, Slovenskaya, Sokolskaya, Sosnovskaya, "Surety of Sinners", Starorusskaya, Passion, Surdeg'skaya, Syrkovskaya, Syamskaya, Tambovskaya, Terebinskaya, Tobolskaya, Tolg'skaya, "The Three Joys", Trocheruchitsa, Totem'skaya, Tupichevskaya, "Umilenie", Uspenie, Ustnedum'skaya, Ustyuzhinskaya, Ustyug'skaya, "Assuage My Sorrows", Filermskaya, Khlebennaia, Kholm'skaya, Khutyn'skaya, Tsarevokokshaia, Tsaregrad'skaya, Healer, Czestokhovskaya, Chernigovskaya, Chir'skaya, "Wonderfully-Image", Shuyskaya, Yug'skaya, Yaroslav'skaya, Yaskin'skaya, Yakhrom'skaya, Feodorovskaya-Odigitriya, Feodotievskaya.

Here is a rough list of the miracle-working icons in our homeland. Is it surprising, after all the above, that our Motherland was called "the House of the Most Holy Mother of God" and is it possible to dare to challenge this lofty title, which, in all justice, our Motherland Holy Russia could boast of?

It is shameful for a Russian person not to know all this: it is shameful not to know the marvelous cover of the Mother of God over Russia. Not to know this means - not to know the true Russian history in general. It is not without reason that the feast of the "Intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God" is a purely Russian national holiday, because no other Christian country has experienced so often and so tangibly the miraculous intercession of the Mother of God in the most critical moments of its historical existence.

Why is this? How can this be explained?

Obviously, because to the heart of Russian people, which deeply perceived the Gospel teaching, especially close and dear were the exalted virtues of the Blessed Virgin: Her virginal purity and chastity, Her humility and obedience, devotion to the will of God. For these virtues the Russian people especially revered Her tenderly and devoutly, worshipping Her as the most worthy vessel in the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, and She in response to this reverent veneration of Her bears witness to Her special favors of protection for the Russian people, having become for them truly "the Unconquerable Wall", "the Source of miracles" and "the Assisting Diligent", as they call Her in their devotional hymns.

Here it should also be noted that of all the feasts, after the Feast of the Bright Resurrection of Christ, the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos was most honored by Russian people, calling it "the Pascha of the Mother of God". The Russian people felt with their hearts the great truth of the words of the troparion of this feast: "In the Dormition of the world thou hast not forsaken the world, O Mother of God. He felt vividly that through Her Assumption the Most Pure Mother of God became even closer, even dearer to all the faithful Christians, for She became the all-powerful Intercessor for them before the throne of Her beloved Son, "staying awake in prayer," and "interceding with an immutable hope. That is why a great many churches on Russian soil were dedicated to this feast, the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, which gave not without reason to many to call this holiday a Russian national holiday. Not without reason in the very heart of Holy Russia - in the capital city of Moscow a majestic cathedral in honor of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the most ancient and cherished shrine of the Russian people, where the Vladimir miracle-working icon of the Mother of God was located, where Russian kings were crowned and where the first priests of the Russian Church were elected. The building of this majestic temple is closely connected with the beginning of the rise of Moscow and its greatness as a center, around which the whole Russian land was united. Having moved to

what was then still a very small and insignificant city of Moscow, Metropolitan Peter, the first prince of the Russian Church, bequeathed to Prince John Kalita of Moscow, then not yet "Grand Duke", to build a church in honor of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to bury himself in it, and he made the following remarkable prophecy: "If you obey me, my son, then you yourself will be more glorious than other princes with your clan, and your city will be glorious among all the cities of Russia, and the saintly will live in it. ..". We see how soon this prophecy was fulfilled: already two years after the death of Sainted Peter, John Kalita was made grand duke, and Moscow, rising rapidly, was soon made the capital of the Russian State. It is remarkable, that the Kievo-Pechersk Lavra, the spiritual stronghold of South-Western Rus, is also dedicated to the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God; the famous Pochaev Lavra is also dedicated to this feast, which was of such great importance in the struggle for the Orthodox faith of the Russian people who were under alien domination. It is astounding that the most marginal western branch of the Russian people, which was never within the borders of the Russian state and for more than 900 years was under the Magyar yoke, the so-called "Ugorrossians" or "Karpatorossians," also still revere above all the feasts the holiday of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God: at the celebration of this feast there always gathered the greatest number of prayers. The main holy place of Carpathian Rus and the bastion of Orthodoxy in it, until the triumph of the forcibly imposed union, was the Dormition Monastery on the mountain Chernechya, near Mukachevo.

And as long as the Russian people honored its Protectress and Patroness of the Most Pure Mother of God, it was easy and free to live on Russian soil, which God blessed with all kinds of abundance, so that all the nations of the world were fed with its bread. It grew and expanded, prospered and flourished, rising from strength to strength. But the enemy omniscient envied the prosperity of the Russian people and hated the Russian land - the House of the Blessed Virgin Mary - as a dangerous to him a stronghold of true faith - the Orthodox faith, and he set out to destroy it. Slyly and flattering, he approached the Russian people, seducing them with deceptive tinsel benefits of Western false culture. Gradually, but systematically and persistently, imperceptibly to the child-simple gaze, poured the deadly snake venom in the soul of Russian people. Farther and farther away his enemy led him from the faith of his fathers, more and more poisoned his soul with materialism, disbelief and godlessness, slyly suggesting that this is the true good. Gave in to enemy deception trusting and child-simple Russian man, and ... Has departed from his historical calling of being the guardian of the one true, one saving the holy Orthodox faith. Turned away from the divine face of the Immaculate intercessor and protector, forgot all Her countless blessings. It is terrible to say what have reached in their insanity crazed Russian people: in their demonization they came to blasphemous blasphemy against the Most Pure Mother of God. Is it any wonder that after that the Russian land was befallen by such terrible bloody disasters? Too great was the fall of the Russian people, who succumbed to the seduction of Satan. And this sin, the grave sin of apostasy and God-fighting could only be purified by a truly fiery trial, by tears and blood. That is why the so-called White Movement was

not successful. It was not enough one external liberation from Bolshevik power. It would not give anything to the Russian people, in the souls of which the poison of the Bolsheviks continued to live. Only through severe suffering could the Russian people be purified from their terrible sin. And these sufferings were given to the Russian people, given to him for good.

We believe that these sufferings are providentially permitted by God, we believe that Mother of God did not depart from the Russian people finally, that She will not give them into the abyss of fall, but will send them deliverance, as in ancient times, when they turned to Her in tears of repentance: "O mistress, help on us merciful, not turn away your servants we have, you and one hope we have. That this was so, and that the Mother of God did not cease to protect the Russian land, is testified by a remarkable apparition of our last wonderworking icon on the very day of the repudiation of Tsar Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich, on 2 March 1917: the Mother of God of the Sovereign. This icon represents the Mother of God in an imperial crown, with a scepter and an orb in her hands, clothed in red, as though drenched in blood, and with eyes which express sorrow. What was it not but that the Mother of God herself took the supreme royal power over the Russian land, after the distraught Russian people had rejected their Sovereign, God's Anointed? And She looks with sorrow on the grievous suffering of the Russian people, inevitably caused by their demonization, and waits patiently, as a true Mother, for their repentance and conversion to God.

Chapter 10: The Harbinger of God's Punishment of the Russian People

This year, 1964, the Feast of the Epiphany, marked exactly 70 years since the blessed repose of the ever-memorable Bishop Theophan, known to the Russian faithful under the name of the "Vyshensky Zatvornik.

The life of this great luminary of the Russian Church, before so terrible times for her and for all Russia, is remarkable, as is the immense spiritual wealth, which he has left us in the form of his, truly precious, written works, which may constitute an entire library. These writings are a most precious compendium of the true spiritual life - that life in Christ, which has been lived for almost twenty centuries by all the true ascetics and zealots of Orthodox Christian piety. They, these works of St. Theophanes, reveal to us the whole depth and incomparable sublime beauty of the spiritual life, and therefore anyone striving to live an authentic spiritual life cannot but know and appreciate them, and who is not yet familiar with them, must become acquainted. This is like a touchstone of a correct approach to the spiritual life, truly orthodox evaluation and understanding in our evil time, when so many are "possessed" by all kinds of false teachings (Ef.4: 14) and are carried away "with philosophy and vain seduction, after the traditions of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ" (Col.2: 8).

The very life of Saint Theophanes speaks for itself and serves as the best recommendation of all the above, instilling in him and his writings complete trust and high respect.

In the world George Vasilyevich Govorov, Saint Theophanes was the son of a priest of the Church of St. Vladimir in the village of Chernavsk in the Elets district of Orel Province. He was born on 10 January 1815. Having received his initial training at his parental home, he later followed a course at the Livensk Theological School and Orlovsk Theological Seminary (1831 - 1837). Here undoubtedly he received that integrity of direction and serious temperament of thought which our old theological school gave to its best pupils. As the best pupil, he was sent at public expense to the Kiev Theological Academy. With great diligence he studied theology, and there, in the quietness of the prayerful solitude among the Kiev caves, these silent, but eloquent monuments of our native antiquity, an idea to take the path of monastic life mirotochnogo life matured in him. Having petitioned for this, he was tonsured into monasticism with the name of Theophanes a few months before he graduated from the course. The tonsure was performed by the Rector of the Academy, Most Reverend Jeremy on 25 February 1841, and on 7 April in the same year monk Theophan was ordained hierodeacon, and on 7 July - hieromonk. The young monk was later imprinted with an instruction that was given to him after he was tonsured by the Lavra confessor, the renowned elder, Hieroschmonk Parphenios, for the rest of his life. "Behold, you learned monks," the elder said to him, "when you have gathered for yourselves rules,

remember that one thing is most necessary: to pray - and to pray unceasingly with the mind in the heart to God, that is what you achieve!"

After graduating from the Academy in 1841 and defending his Master's thesis, Hieromonk Theophanes during five years asceticized in his spiritual and academic pursuits, constantly imploring his students that their main concern should be to please God, and that "scientific knowledge," as he called it, was only an appendage. He especially stressed that any science taught to a Christian must be imbued with Christian principles, and moreover, with the Orthodox faith. "We have the most dangerous delusion," he said, "that they teach science without any attention to the true faith, allowing themselves the liberty or the lie of assuming that faith and science are two areas resolutely disconnected. We have one spirit. He accepts the sciences, and is imbued with their beginnings, as he accepts faith and is imbued with it. How is it possible that they do not come into favorable or unfavorable contact here?"

In 1842 Hieromonk Theophanes was appointed inspector and teacher of logic and psychology at the Novgorod Theological Seminary, and in 1844 he was transferred to the St. Petersburg Theological Academy as teacher of moral theology. In 1845 he became an assistant inspector in the academy, and in 1845 he was appointed to a committee, which had to consider bills for school subjects in seminaries. Administrative duties, however, were quite burdensome for the monk, who was drawn to his solitary, ascetic life. God's Providence soon spared him from this, showing him a different path. In 1846 he was appointed a member of the Russian Spiritual Mission to Jerusalem. The seven-year stay of Fr. Theophanes' seven-year sojourn in the Holy Land was of enormous significance to him. His soul was nourished here by the sacred biblical memories, he visited the famous Lavra of St. Sava and other ancient monasteries, learning the stories of the deeds of the former ascetics and observing the life of the modern ascetics. His knowledge of ancient languages enabled him to study in situ the valuable manuscripts of the Fathers' works, which received for him a special vitality under constant contemplation of the holy monuments of antiquity. Thanks to this he became more and more deeply imbued with the spirit of the great Christian ascetics, practically studying the ascetic life at the very primary sources and ancient nurseries of monasticism.

On his return to Russia, Hieromonk Theophan in 1855 was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite with the appointment as rector of the Olonets Theological Seminary. But he did not even have to stay on this post for a year. In the same year he was sent to Constantinople as rector of the Russian ambassadorial church there, where he remained for about two years. And he used this time extensively to deepen his acquaintance with Eastern monasticism and, in particular, to study the ascetic life on Athos.

In 1857 Archimandrite Theophanes, who had already won popularity in spiritual circles for his educative and ascetic disposition, was summoned to St Petersburg and appointed Rector of the St

Petersburg Theological Academy. At the same time he was entrusted with overseeing the teaching of God's law in all the secular educational institutions of the capital and its suburbs.

But even in this position he did not serve long. In 1859 he was consecrated at the Alexander Nevsky Lavra by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Grigory of St. Petersburg, together with other hierarchs, as Bishop of Tambov. His Grace Feofan zealously performed his episcopal ministry and did much for the diocese of Tambov, but the administrative duties of a diocesan bishop did not suit him, since they distracted him from the life of contemplation of God and prayer, to which he had yearned since his youth. He began to dream of complete solitude, and while he was still on the Tambov cathedra, he chose "the beloved and humble Vyshenskaya Hermitage, where there is nothing on earth more beautiful". At that time, however, he was not yet able to fulfill his intention. In 1863 he was transferred to a bishop's chair in the city of Vladimir on the Klyazma River. The three years of his ministry here were also marked by a tireless and zealous archpastoral activity: he often conducted services, preached tirelessly, made regular visits to the diocese, developed missionary activity to bring the lost back into the fold of the Church, opened parochial schools, founded, as in Tambov, a female diocesan school, and started the publication of the "Eparchial Gazette". Gracious and compassionate to all, he shared with his flock both joy and sorrow, responding with his loving heart to everything.

Since his youth, Saint Theophanes had burned with a special love and reverence for the memory of the great spiritual mentor and pillar of the Russian Church, Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, and in 1861 was granted the great joy of participating in the celebration of the opening of his holy relics. One may suppose that this celebration finally strengthened in him the intention which he had long cherished in the depths of his soul, to follow the example of Saint Tikhon, to withdraw completely from the sinful world by going into seclusion.

"The year 1866 came at last, when much previously conceived was accomplished" - so writes one of his closest relatives about the realization of this intention of the saint. Saint Theophanes submitted to the Holy Synod a petition to be retired. This request was quite unusual, for the saint's years did not provide any basis for it. Metropolitan Isidor, the leading member of the Synod, thought it necessary to inquire of Saint Theophanes what prompted him to submit such a petition. The saint replied, that he aspired to a contemplative spiritual life, but, at the same time, he did not give up his work for the benefit of the Church, supposing himself to devote his time in solitude to his writing. The Synod granted his request, appointing him to stay in the Vyshenskaya hermitage, which he had chosen and fixing him an annual pension of 1000 rubles. Bishop Theophanes bidding a touching farewell to his Vladimir flock on 24 July 1866. Having celebrated that day the Divine Liturgy for the last time in his cathedral, the saint addressed a heartfelt farewell to his flock. There was a profound silence in the church, interrupted only by the soft weeping of the Vladimirites, who were grieving for their parting with their beloved archpastor.

Remarkable was that word, breathing with unusual cordiality and intimate and at the same time imbued with a burning zeal for the salvation of the souls of his flock. "Do not reproach me; for God's sake," said the saint, "that I am leaving you. I am not going away so as to be forced to leave you. Your kindness would not have allowed me to change you for another flock. But as a guided one, I am led to a life free from cares, seeking the best, as it is inherent in our nature... In addition to the external necessity, there is an internal necessity, which the conscience obeys and to which the heart is not strongly opposed... For one thing I ask your love, leaving aside the judgments and condemnations of the step I have taken, deepen your prayer, so that the Lord may not brushing aside my aspirations, and may grant me to find what I am seeking. And I will pray for you; I will pray that the Lord will always send you every good thing, to improve your prosperity and to ward off every misfortune, but moreover, to arrange for your salvation. Save yourselves, and be saved in the Lord. I cannot wish you better. Everything will happen when you are saved." In these words the whole soul of Saint Theophanes was poured out. This is what he would later write about constantly in his letters, about which he insistently kept repeating, and in various ways, in his God-wise inspired creations. The second half of his farewell is no less significant. In it he points to the only true path of salvation and warns against those flattering and deceitful teachings that led, in the end, our homeland to ruin. The saint reminds his former flock of the words of St. Paul: "O Timothy, preserve the tradition. "Preserve," he goes on, "what the Lord and his holy Apostles committed to the Church and what one generation of Christians passes on to another. I am compelled to remind you of this, for the reason that many false teachings are now in circulation among us: teachings that are corrupting, that undermine the foundations of faith, that destroy family happiness, and that destroy the welfare of the state. Beware, for God's sake, of such teachings! There is a stone by which gold is tested. Let the holy doctrine, which has been preached in the Church from time immemorial, be your test stone. All that disagrees with this doctrine must be rejected as evil, no matter how plausible a title it may be disguised with... This reminder I ask you to accept as your last testament. This, as we shall see, was a warning and a testament of the great spiritual leader, not only to the congregation of Vladimir, but to all Russian people, who paid the price cruelly for not heeding the warnings made to them.

Having blessed his weeping spiritual children, Saint Theophan left the cathedral, and four days later, after a parting prayer in his home church, he set out for Vysha. Since then began his ascetic life in hermitage, which lasted nearly 28 years. During the first six years the saint was gradually preparing himself for total seclusion: he along with all the monks attended all the monastic services, and on Sundays and holy feasts he himself performed the Divine Liturgy in unison with the monastic brethren. He instilled the fear of God in all those who served with him. No one ever heard a strange word from him in the altar. According to an eyewitness, he stood in the temple reverently, quietly, without looking around, alertly, as a warrior before Christ, the King of Heaven. And more and more inwardly he withdrew from the world, immersed in contemplation

and prayer. It happened that the monk who offered the antidor to the saint would stand unnoticed in front of him for several minutes, until the saint, immersed in prayer, would open his eyes.

In 1872, the Most Reverend Theophanes himself built for himself a house church in his cells and consecrated it in the name of the Epiphany. This feast, named "Theophany" in Greek and consonant with his name, was especially venerated by him. From this time onwards the saint was completely shut up in his cell: he himself did not go out at all, nor would he let anyone in, save his confessor and the prior of the hermitage, and even his penman Eulampii, who supplied him with prosphorae and wine for the Divine Liturgy and everything else necessary. During the course of 21 years, the Reverend Theophanes himself performed the Divine Liturgy in his private church, first only on Sundays and feast days, but during the last 11 years, on a daily basis. When asked how he served the Liturgy, the saint would answer: "I serve the Liturgy in silence, sometimes by singing. His fasting and mortification of the flesh was perfect: he was, according to those who had access to him, as if all was imbued with spirituality, and he nurtured his body only in order that it might help his spirit to live freely and easily. The saint sent his entire pension to the poor, leaving himself only a small sum to write out books. In full accord with the precepts of the ancient Fathers and with his own, Saint Theophanes alternated his spiritual exploits and mental occupations with manual labour.

He, as witnessed by the objects and instruments found after his death in his cell, was an iconographer, an excellent carver and locksmith, very good at lathe work and carpentry, and he made his own clothes. But the great saint spent most of his time in meditation, and as a fruit of his inspired contemplations his many written works were of immeasurably important value. Thus he translated into Russian a whole series of the works of the ancient ascetics and spiritual mentors. This work of his, embracing five volumes and known under the name of "Dobrotolubiya", contains in itself a teaching about the eradication of passions and about the methods of gracious regeneration of the human soul damaged by sin. The most valuable theological works of St. Theophanes are also his Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, Commentary on the 118th and some other Psalms, "Gospel Story of God the Son, incarnated for our salvation", "An Outline of Christian Morals", "The Way to Salvation", "Invisible Fight" and many others. As early as 1882 the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, "as an expression of deep respect for the tireless and fruitful literary activity of the Most Reverend Theophanes in the field of Orthodox moral theology and the interpretation of Holy Scripture," elected him its honorary member, and in 1890 "for his numerous and remarkable theological works" it awarded him a doctorate in Theology.

But no less remarkable and valuable was his vast correspondence. Having left the vanity of the world and having ceased all external communication with the world, Saint Theophanes did not abandon the human world, beset by many passions, for his archpastoral love and concern for its salvation. Not communicating with people personally, he communicated with all those who

sought his spiritual guidance and advice in writing. He willingly answered letters to anyone who approached him in need of spiritual guidance. When it became known in Russia that there appeared in the Vyshenskaya hermitage a marvelous hermit, filled with fatherly love for people, letters with the expression of spiritual and bodily sorrows, with bitter lamentations about the injustices of his own and of others, about worldly vanity and spiritual torment flew there from all parts of our immense homeland. Each day the Saint received between 20 and 40 letters and responded to each one with his tender, truly fatherly love. The letters of His Eminence Theophanes are a true treasure: they are distinguished by their unusual vividness of speech, the warmth of feeling, the clarity of thought, the imagery of comparison and, despite the simplicity of exposition, their unusual depth, their fine understanding of the human soul. They are published in several collections under different titles, such as: "Letters on the Christian Life," "What is the Spiritual Life and How Can I Tune in to it?", "Letters to Various Persons" and simply "Collected Letters" in 8 editions.

Both the personal great feat of the life of Saint Theophanes and his profound penetration into the very essence of true Christian life give him infinite superiority, as a teacher of Christian morality, over all the modern systems of Christian moral teaching appearing in our country and in the West - among Roman Catholics and Protestants. His merit in this respect is unparalleled, and he has no equal either in the past or in the present. Such is the significance of our great saint for all of Orthodoxy.

As wonderful was the whole life of Saint Theophanes, so was his truly blessed end.

On the very day of the great feast of the Epiphany, which was the subject of his particular veneration, on January 6, 1894, the devoted servant of the saint, Eulampios, without hearing the customary signal for tea, looked into his cell and saw the saint lying on his bed. As he approached him, he saw him already deceased. His left hand was on his chest and his right hand was folded as if to bless him. On a table nearby lay an open January book of Soul-useful Reading.

At the vesting of the deceased in the vestments of a bishop, a blessed smile visibly shone on his face.

For three days the deceased holy Hierarch Theophanes stood in his little home church, devoted to the feast of the Epiphany, and for three days - in the cathedral monastery church, and no sign of decay was noticed: the deceased appeared as a peaceful and quiet sleeping person. Only on 12 January a solemn funeral service for Saint Theophanes was held at the warm monastery cathedral, conducted by the Most Reverend Jerome, bishop of Tambov, with a suite of clergy and a choir of singers. At the funeral a great multitude of people gathered together, who could not be seated in the church. Many came with bags on their shoulders for 200 and 300 miles - just to

worship the deceased great saint and ask for his prayers for themselves. Weeping and sobbing could be heard.

But the aim of this essay is not to give an exhaustive description of the remarkable personality, life and writings of this marvelous pillar of our Russian Church in recent times; instead, it is to paint him, as a prophet of God, sent to the Russian people before the approach of dire times, as a harbinger of God's judgment upon the Russian people for their treason against their calling, for their apostasy, for their transgression of holy Orthodoxy. For the departure from the holy behests of its Enlightener, St. Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir.

In order to understand and evaluate in all its power the importance of His Eminence Theophanes for the Russian people, of whom he was a faithful son, it is necessary to cast at least a cursory glance at what represented contemporary Russian society. It was an extremely sad spectacle. Separated, under the corrosive influence of Western false culture, from its native Orthodox root, it had come to nothing, had not created, and could not create any positive ideals. Most pernicious of all was the deep rift, the gulf that formed between the common people, who still retained allegiance to their native antiquity, and the ruling educated class, the so-called "intelligentsia", which had cut almost all ties with the past and became a kind of a special people in Russian society, not remembering their kinship.

So as not to be unsubstantiated, we will leave it to a modern observer, so characterizing Russian life at that time. "Modern Russian society," he says, "has become a mental desert. Serious regard for thought, sincere respect for science has almost disappeared, any living source of inspiration has dried up. With the fall of philosophy, logic has become an unnecessary burden, the ability to link their thoughts was relegated to the realm of prejudice, never has Russian literature did not stand so low, never thoughtlessness and ignorance so unashamedly flaunted. The most extreme conclusions of the most one-sided Western thinkers, usually misunderstood and undigested, are boldly passed off as the last word of European education ... The modern educated man has lost his balance. Nowhere does he find a firm foothold. In the midst of an infinite multitude of particularities, he has lost all common ground. Never has there been such general vacillation, such mental gloom. Strong thought, strong convictions, high characters are becoming rare" ("Science and Religion" by B. N. Chicherin).

In the religious and moral field the picture of contemporary Russian life of St. Theophanes is even bleaker, even more depressing. Faithlessness, nihilism, lack of principle, the denial of any kind of religious and moral foundations, and then sometimes - unhealthy hysterical infatuation with extreme sectarian false teachings, spiritualism, occultism, theosophy, black masses, etc. - all this clearly showed that Russian society is gravely ill, that it is infected with a severe, hard-to-heal disease, that it is experiencing a painful moral crisis. The essence of this crisis was aptly defined by one of our poets of the time:

Not the flesh, but the spirit is corrupted in these days,

And man desperately yearns,

He is longing for the light from the shadow of the night,

And in the light, he murmurs and revolts.

He's faithless and desiccated,

He endures the unbearable...!

And he knows his doom,

And longs for faith... But does not ask for it.

(Tyutchev).

Faithlessness - that is the root of all evils, that is what led the educated Russian man to this confusion of minds and hearts, to this oppressive spiritual crisis. Where did this "faithlessness" come from in the Russian people, who since the time of Saint Prince Vladimir so embodied in their life the lofty ideals of the Gospel, that they deserved the name of the people-the God-bearer, and became truly "Holy Russia," as unbiased historical monuments testify?

This faithlessness and the resulting confusion of minds and hearts was brought to us from the West. It was sown among us as a result of a too rapid and careless approximation to a spiritually alien, semi-pagan Western European culture. The destinies of every nation, as well as the destinies of every individual, are undoubtedly in God's hands. And every nation has its specific, God-given mission and vocation. Evasion from this mission inevitably leads to disaster, because no one can go against the will of God with impunity. The Russian people had its own high mission, undoubtedly defined by God - to be the guardian of the true faith in the world, to be a lamp of St. Orthodoxy to the rest of humanity. And as long as the Russian people were aware of the greatness of this mission, as long as they cherished their holy Orthodoxy, they have escaped all the historical turmoil that has befallen them. But, unfortunately for the Russian people, and, as we see now, unfortunately for humanity as a whole, the Russian advanced society at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century, began to diverge sharply from the historical path God intended for it. We are far from indiscriminately condemning all the reforms of Emperor Peter I, who "opened a window to Europe" and borrowed from the West many useful things for the improvement of Russian technology, military and naval affairs, and in general, everything

that concerns the improvement of mundane human life. Not by themselves, these external borrowings were ruinous - fatal for the Russian people at that time was his inner, spiritual convergence with the West, which was celebrating just then the era of the so-called "Renaissance", ie, renounce the last vestiges of Christianity, which still remained in the Latin, and return to the ideals of paganism. The case of our great saint, St. Mitrophan of Voronezh, whom the Emperor Peter himself loved and honored, should serve as a good example of the correct attitude toward the reforms of Peter the Great. St. Mitrofan was fully sympathetic to many of Peter's measures, but only so long as they were not at variance with the Orthodox piety of the Russian people, and did not undermine the foundations of the Holy Orthodox Faith or destroy that truly Christian ascetic morality in which, for centuries before, all Russian people, from the princes and tsars to the last commoner, had been brought up. It is known, that for the building of the Russian fleet St. Mitrophan donated to the Emperor Peter all his savings from the diocesan revenues in the enormous amount for that time of 6000 roubles and then he continuously sent him new savings with the inscription: "for military service. But when Peter once invited him to his palace, he refused to go in when he saw statues of pagan gods before the gates and in the yard. The king became very angry with him for this, but the saint remained adamant. And so? Peter finally relented - ordered to remove the statues, and at the death of the saint wept for him and himself carried his coffin to the tomb. In this simple but vital example the Russian person was clearly shown the right way in relations with the West: one can borrow from the West all that is really good and useful, but at the same time one should not forget the incomparable superiority of the treasures of his native Orthodoxy, one should remember one's high calling and not become part of the alien to us Western spirit of the unnatural mixture of perverted Christianity with regenerated paganism.

But, alas! Too tempting seemed to the Russian people the lure of a deeply earthly Western culture, indulging all the base passions and lusts of fallen man. To fall down, to roll on an inclined plane is always easier than to hold on to the height of his position, his calling. So here we are, rolling! Although the external, purely earthly culture continued to develop and improve - but the internal culture, the culture of the Orthodox Christian spirit began to fade away quickly. Since Peter's time we began to borrow from the West and transplant everything we could get, indiscriminately, on the grateful, Black Earth Russian soil. "All that is good which is not ours" has become the slogan of the Russian society of the 18th century, while our indigenous native, right down to the sacred things of our faith, have been derided and mocked, - at the most, recognized as the legal property of the "muzhik", who became some inferior creature, a representative of some special, backward race of the Russian people. In this wild enthusiasm for all things Western they finally reached such a madness that they despised even their own native Russian language. The French language has appeared for some reason better, more beautiful, nobler, more expressive than our native Russian language, and the best tutors and the most desirable teachers of Russian young generation were French footmen, janitors, chambermaids, barbers, in most part, deeply corrupted to the bone, and our youth also deeply corrupted, taught it

faithlessness, nihilism and depravity. Instead of the works of the holy fathers, which were the favourite reading of our pious ancestors, the Russian moral monsters of the 18th century were reading vile and disgusting French novels which were saturated with the same spirit of faithlessness, vulgarity, shameless cynicism, and every kind of moral impurity. Every new trend, every new current in the depraved pseudo-cultural life of the West was immediately picked up by us in a servile and subservient manner, disseminated, implanted and propagated as the top of the "cultural achievements" of mankind. Especially devastating for us were the fruits of the ideas sown in us in the era of Empress Catherine II, the French so-called "enlightenment" philosophy of the XVIII century. The godless and revolutionary ideas which, under the impression of the French Revolution, had just broken out, so seized Russian society at that time that they caused serious anxiety even in our very liberal government circles. The contagion, sown since it was not firmly counteracted from the outset, could not help spreading more and more widely. Not surprisingly, therefore, all sorts of secret revolutionary circles and the Decembrist movement emerged at the beginning of the next nineteenth century. The entire 19th century passes under the banner of the further importation from the West of all the godless materialist and revolutionary doctrines and currents that emerged there, up to the notorious Marxism-Communism, which finally ruined our unhappy homeland.

Of course, all this did not happen by accident, it did not happen by itself. Special dark forces, which hated our Motherland as a stronghold of the true faith on earth, the faith of the Orthodox faith, systematically worked to corrupt our younger generations and make Holy Russia the lot of Satan. But it is disappointing and painful to the core for those naive and unreasonable Russian people, who did not understand then, and now do not understand who, how and why pushed the Russian people into the abyss of faithlessness and depravity. Well, here we are, finally, before the terrible bloody abyss, before the terrible communist hell, which is now preparing to devour the whole world. Isn't it time, isn't it time, even now, for everyone and everyone to see the light of day?

And in this respect, the works of our great luminary and mentor, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, are extremely precious and instructive for us. His true significance as a prophet of God, who was sent to the Russian people in order to call them to repentance and conversion to God, has not yet been fully appreciated. For he, being in the depths of his hermitage, as late as during the 60-70s of the last century, saw in his spirit the terrible disaster that was coming over the Russian people, who had not yet become true to their holy Orthodoxy, and foretold the terrible bloody abyss into which they were sliding. He saw in the spirit, grieved, horrified, fatherly admonished, implored, warned. All of his sermons and letters in one way or another reflect this sorrow of the great saint about the irrational follies of contemporary Russian people, and some vividly and quite openly portray the features of the approaching disaster. It is remarkable that he spoke and wrote so forcefully about this back in the 60s and 70s of the last century. What became clear to many in the years immediately preceding our unhappy revolution was far from being and could not have

been clear to all in those, still so distant years of the last century. But the great saint of God foresaw all this with his God-inspired, penetrating eyes and warned the Russian people in a terrible way about God's inevitable punishment awaiting them. To the conviction of its inevitability led him first of all by his own observations of contemporary Russian people. Here is how he wrote, for example, in one of his letters: "Do you know what I have deplorable thoughts? And not without reason. I meet people who are said to be Orthodox, but are, in spirit, Volterrians, naturalists, Lutherans and freethinkers of all kinds. They have passed through all the sciences in our institutions of higher learning. They are neither foolish nor wicked, but as regards the faith and the Church, they are nowhere near it. Their fathers and mothers were pious; corruption entered into the period of education outside the parental home. The memory of their parents' childhood and spirit still keeps them within some limits. What will their own children be like? And what will keep those within proper limits? I conclude from this that in a generation, much less two, our orthodoxy will dry up.

These gloomy thoughts do not, however, plunge St. Theophanes into despondency and despair. He still finds it possible to fight against the religious and moral decay of Russian society of his time. And as a true servant of God, he fervently calls upon all who are able to do so not to sit idly by, but to begin a decisive struggle against the approaching mortal danger to the Russian people.

"So what? Should we sit with our hands folded? - he further writes, - no! We must do something! Evil beginnings came into the sciences and life; we do not have books, reading which we can be reasoned with those who are still capable of reasoning... We need hot books, protective against all evils. Writers must be dressed up and obliged to write" (Letters on the Christian Life, p. 78).

First and foremost to the holy struggle for the salvation of the Russian people, St. Theophanes urged pastors. He accorded great importance to the tireless preaching of the pastor and fervently called upon the clergy not to keep silent in the preaching of the Word of God, explaining to the faithful the truths of Christ's faith and the immeasurable superiority of Orthodoxy over all other confessions, drawing all by word and example into the path of true pious Christian life.

"Silent shepherding, what is shepherding?" - he says, and advises the priest to regularly gather his children to church and home on Sunday evenings or "whenever and however convenient" to "prepare the young born generation, from the first conscious years, by interpreting and explaining to them the truths of our faith, what they need and can know." "The first work of his conscience," says Saint Theophanes further, "the priest must consider the preaching of the Word of God, the instruction and improvement, both of adults and children, in the conduct of the Christian faith" ("Thoughts for Every Day of the Year," p. 247).

The position of the pastor-priest has become especially responsible due to the fact that all kinds of false teachings, contrary to the Word of God and the teaching of the Church, are spreading

more and more in the Russian land, and therefore great knowledge is required of the pastor in order to keep his flock from being carried away by them.

"What doctrines we do not have in schools, in society, and in literature! - The priest must be able to explain all of this and give solutions to all of it, because the discourse of the scholars is like a rumor and fashion: today it is one thing, tomorrow another, but pay attention to the one word of God, which remains for all eternity.

Observing the increasing apostasy of God among the Russian people and their gradual departure from the faith and the Church, St. Theophanes reaches a sad conclusion about the inevitability of God's punishment of the Russian people, moreover, in the form of a bloody revolution, which he quite clearly alludes to in a number of his "Thoughts on Every Day of the Year" and in many sermons.

"A latent persecution of Christianity has risen, which has also begun to break out manifestly, as recently in Paris. What was done there in a small way must be expected in time in a larger way...Save us, O Lord!" (pp. 225-226). Here is a remarkable foresight that the revolution in Russia will be even worse than the French.

"The Lord showed many signs at Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin; yet the number of those who believed was not commensurate to the power of the signs. Therefore He severely rebuked these cities, and judged that on the day of judgment it would be more pleasant to Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom and Gomorrah, than to those cities. We must judge ourselves by this example. How many signs the Lord has shown over Russia, delivering her from her strongest enemies and conquering her peoples! How many permanent treasuries He has given her, which are a constant source of signs, in the relics and miracle icons scattered throughout Russia! And, nevertheless, in our days Russians begin to depart from the faith: one part falls completely and comprehensively into unbelief, another part falls into Protestantism, the third secretly weaves their beliefs, in which they think to combine spiritualism and theological delirium with the Divine Revelation. Evil grows: mistrust and unbelief raise their heads; faith and Orthodoxy weaken. Will we not come to our senses? Finally, we will have the same thing that, for example, the French and others ... And, if this happens, what do you think will be for us on the day of judgment, after such God's mercies to us? O Lord, save and have mercy on Rus' Orthodox Russia from Your righteous and impending punishment!" (pp. 187 - 188).

As can be clearly seen, in the words above, St. Theophanes, in language sufficiently understandable to all, foretells that as an inevitable consequence of the departure of Russian people from the faith and the increase in their midst of wickedness and unbelief, will be such as was seen by "the French and others", the terrible massacre of self-murder, called a revolution.

In what does the holy saint see the cause of this growing evil and unbelief, threatening us with such a terrible catastrophe? In many places of his works, he clearly and definitely indicates the reason for this in our unreasonable fascination with the alien to us in spirit semipagan, Christless culture of the West.

"The Lord has and will punish us with the West," the saint so threateningly foreshadows, "but it does not make sense to us. We are stuck in the mud of the West up to our ears, and all is well. We have eyes, but we cannot see; we have ears, but we cannot hear; and our heart cannot understand. Lord, have mercy on us. Send Your light and Your truth!" (Letters on the Christian Life, p. 70).

But where were we to understand it as he understood it? After all, everything that came from the West, seemed to us then the ideal of true enlightenment, and the light of evangelical truth many distraught Russian people did not dare to call sacrilegiously "obscurantism".

St. Theophanes also points to the malevolent influence of modern Russian literature, which by that time had lost in most of its works its ideal character and the national Russian spirit, and had become a vehicle for the same destructive Western ideas in society. He writes in the same letter: "We have another evil thing - our literature, filled with the spirit of the West - and the Lord also cleanses it with blows from the West. But he still cannot stop it" (p. 70).

Having in mind the absurd and ridiculous, but at the same time deeply malignant, Frenchomania, with which our intellectual society was sick during the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries, up to the so-called Patriotic War with Napoleon and his hordes, St. Theophanes devotes a few words to it in his teaching on the feast of the Nativity, when we celebrated the deliverance of Russia from the invasion of Gauls and with them twenty languages.

"We are carried away by enlightened Europe," he says, "yes, there the pagan abominations that were driven out of the world have been restored for the first time; from there they have already passed over and are passing over to us as well. Having breathed in this infernal blight, we spin around like madmen, not remembering ourselves. But let us remember the twelfth year: why did the French come to us? - God sent them to destroy the evil that we took from them. Russia repented then, and God had mercy on her ...".

And then prophetically threatens and foretells: "... And now, it seems, that lesson has already begun to be forgotten. If we come to our senses, of course nothing will happen, but if we do not come to our senses, who knows, maybe the Lord will send to us the same teachers to bring us to our senses and put us on the path of correction. This is the law of God's righteousness: to heal from sin the more one is drawn to it. These are not empty words, but a matter affirmed by the voice of the Church. Bear in mind, O Orthodox, that God is not mocked" (Thoughts, p. 461).

There is no doubt that by these "abominations of the pagan", reconstructed in Western Europe, St. Theophanes meant the era of the so-called "Renaissance", or "humanism", which was characterized by the rejection of Christianity and a return to the ideals of paganism in the cultural life of the West. In the above words, as we see, the saint sharply condemns our unreasonable infatuation with this semi-pagan Western culture, and especially our Frenchomania, which went so far as to despise our own native language and replace it with French. And this terrible, one might say, spontaneous invasion of the French and other European peoples ("the twenty languages") against us in 1812 was, in St. Theophanes' opinion, nothing other than a healing agent that the Lord used so that we could wake up and see with our own eyes what this supposed Western culture is worth. When, during the Patriotic War, the French, who were so charming and gallant in secular salons, revealed all their inner shamelessness, their riotousness, and their bestiality, and were not ashamed to turn the temples of God into stables and to desecrate our sacred things, then we only learned the true price of that false culture, which we had so recklessly been fond of before. As a result of the Patriotic War we seemed to be radically cured of "French life: "Russia repented then," says St. Theophanes, "and God had mercy on her.

But it soon became clear that this lesson was not enough. We were too deeply immersed in the filth of Western culture, too attractive to humanistic Western culture, which had put man himself in the place of God, satisfying and flattering all the base passions and lusts of man, "a man of the soul, having no spirit" (Jude 1:19). And now, according to St. Theophanes, "the lesson" that had been given to us in the providential invasion of the French began to be forgotten. Again began to be infatuated with all kinds of freethinking, godless, materialistic theories born in the West, which rejected God; again, self-appointed Western teachers and mentors of faithlessness, nihilism, and debauchery became welcome guests in our society and even idols, before whom our intellectual society, and especially - the unhappy, confused young pupils, worshipped reverently.

"It is bitter, bitter," St. Theophanes wrote on this subject in one of his letters, "what is going on among our thinking people. All have lost their minds. Philosophical views are not in vogue and are guided by wind-inspired beginnings. Holy faith has been relegated to the background. And even the theologians have lost the real fundamentals of Orthodox theology, and everyone is laughing. And the Lord seems to have turned His eyes away from us and does not send out laborers. How many times I have tried to cry out, but nothing comes out of my head. Maybe others feel the same way. Isn't this God's abandonment? God be merciful!" (Collected Letters, Vol. VII, p. 206).

"We should be punished," the saint writes in another letter, "by sending blasphemies against God and the works of His vowels. A certain person wrote to me that blasphemies against the Mother of God were printed in some newspaper, Light No. 88. The Mother of God has turned away from

us, for Her sake also the Son of God, and for His sake God the Father and the Spirit of God. Who is for us when God is against us?! Alas!" (ibid.).

Remarkably, St. Theophanes himself, the gentlest, kindest and most loving, was mercilessly harsh and mercilessly strict towards all the sowers of disbelief and impiety, who dragged Russia into the abyss of destruction. They say that one of the reasons for his leaving the bishop's chair into seclusion was precisely his unusual, pigeon-like gentleness, which prevented him from making the necessary reprimands and remarks to his malfunctioning subordinates. And now such a meek saint with all the merciless severity attacks in his letters the propagators of materialistic views in Russia and demands to ban their corrupting work... under the threat of the death penalty!

"You have there," he writes, "and everywhere they ooze and ooze. Trouble! Trouble! And trouble is visible. But it does not occur to anyone to block and bury the source of the trouble. How did the French Revolution proceed? First, materialistic views spread. They also shook Christian and general religious beliefs. There was widespread disbelief: there is no God; man is a lump of dirt; there is nothing to look forward to beyond the grave. "Despite the fact that the clod of dirt could be trampled on by everyone," the saint rightly sneers, "they came out with: don't get it! Don't touch! Give freedom! And they did! Demands began - some reasonable, some half-brained, some crazy. And everything went upside down."

"What do we have? We have materialistic views more and more gain weight and generalize. The powers have not yet taken, but are taking. Disbelief and immorality are also expanding. The demand for freedom and self-rule is freely expressed." And so it turns out, - already directly and openly predicts the saint, - that we, too, are on the way to the revolution. What to do?"

And the God-ordained saint, seeing in his spirit all the countless bloody horrors that, as a result of the consolidation of these materialistic views, have befallen our unhappy homeland, suggests the most decisive, radical measures to which we were not willing to resort in our time. "It is necessary," he says, "to suppress freedom of conception - to clamp the mouths of journalists and newspapermen. Unbelief should be declared a state crime. Material views must be forbidden under the death penalty. Material beliefs shall be disseminated through schools. Laplace's theory about the self-education of the world with the addition of Darwinian nonsense goes into the classroom. After school and in writing it enters... and everywhere brings the fruit of disbelief. Who is to blame for this? The government. It allowed it. Consequently, who should put a stop to all this? The government." (Collected Letters, vol. VII, pp. 142 - 143). Interestingly, in this accusation of our government of weakness and lack of determination in the fight against the ever-increasing evil, St. Theophanes, quite in agreement with his other great contemporary, the ever-memorable Father Ioann Kronstadtsky, who also repeatedly rebuked our imperial government for not taking sufficiently decisive and harsh measures to curb the evil that was

driving the Russian people to ruin. Both of these great men of spirit, who had a truly prophetic ministry for the salvation of the dying Russian people, fervently called the Russian people to repentance, seeking to raise the Russian people from the terrible abyss of fall, into which it was sinking, but in vain.

Drawing in one of his remarkable sermons, the grim picture of the wide spread in our homeland of pernicious materialistic ideas that were brought to us from the West, which long ago abandoned Christ under the influence of "humanism," St. Theophanes draws a logical conclusion: "If everything goes our way, what is wonderful, if the end of the 18th century with all its horrors is repeated among us? For of such causes come such consequences!" (Words on Solemn Days, p. 187). "The waters of the flood of wickedness are rushing upon us, ready to swallow us all up," and all this because "a spirit of peace is now beginning to prevail among us, a spirit which was overcome by the Lord Jesus Christ and must be overcome by his power also through us" (ibid., p. 262).

"Who would not think," says Saint Theophanes further, "that in saying so, we are frightening you with ghosts, setting up unprecedented dangers, indicating an enemy, strong, perhaps, somewhere else, but not at our place. May God grant that it is so! And may the pernicious spirit be removed from us to the end of the world, and may his name not be remembered among us! But look at what is being done around us, and see that the enemy is face to face with us, already breaking into the ranks of our host and causing great confusion and desolation in it."

And then the saint, point by point, gives a vivid description of this evil spirit of the world that has begun to prevail in our Russian life.

"For what is the 'spirit of the world'?"

1. The spirit of peace is the spirit of enmity toward God... Those who have partaken of the spirit of the world do not think, speak, or write about God and things divine, but live as if there were no God: they even consider it improper to mention it in their circle. There is a class of people among them with purified, as they say, concepts, who do not think shameful on occasion let off a sharp word about our holy beliefs and works of piety, who every month publish huge volumes, read by tens of thousands, where about everything they argue, except God, They make up their minds about everything without the participation of the Higher Wise and Good Power, and decide on everything without feeling the need for divine assistance and prayer to God, where, if out of fear, they do not openly spew blasphemous disbelief and godlessness, they are not afraid to infuse the poison of doubt and hesitation in the faith in inexperienced souls through various tricks of speech. Is it marvelous that coldness to the faith and the holy Church, neglect of its holy statutes, alienation from them, desire to cancel and destroy them, is spreading among them only because they proclaim so strongly about God and the life to come.

2. 2. The spirit of peace is the spirit of mutual cooling, division, and enmity among men, as opposed to the sincere and deep unity which should reign among true Christians. When one, carried away by the spirit of the world, falls away from God with his mind and heart, he naturally stops at himself and, making himself the goal, turns everything around him, both things and persons, into a means to his ends. Self-love (egoism) is the origin of life according to the spirit of the world.

And so you see that we, too, among those who are carried away by the spirit of the world, mutual coldness spreads, brotherly love dries up, husband and wife begin to separate, children and parents, houses dig under houses, births under births, and estates are armed against estates: the laity cold to the clergy, lower classes to higher classes, secular scientists to spiritual scientists and back... everywhere there is a division... Lord! Are these your disciples, to whom you said, "Behold, you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves!"

3. The spirit of the world is the spirit of all-round lust... For "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of men" (1 John 2:16), says the Apostle. And so we have open guild parties, theaters, musical evenings, home shows, live pictures, concerts, balls, fireworks, pleasure gardens, where everyone is invited, without distinction of sex or age, without distinction of Sundays, holidays, and fasts. Hundreds of hands are busy describing and pictorializing it all, in hundreds of sheets, newspapers and magazines, where they try to present it all in the most attractive and seductive colors. All this is before our eyes. You see how the spirit of the world overcomes us, and, removing from us the chaste garment of Christian life, clothe us in the shameful trenchcoats of lustful affairs and customs...

4. 4. Finally, the spirit of the world is the spirit of persecution and persecution of all that is holy, heavenly and divine. The world, hostile to God, can tolerate nothing that bears the stamp of divine origin and reminds of God: therefore it presses and persecutes from its domain the works of faith and godliness... Persecution for the works of faith - in the Orthodox kingdom! Surprisingly, however, it is so... There are persons who are ashamed to go to God's temple... to behave like a Christian. The persecutor is invisible, but the persecution is visible; and is tested by all... And so all, by the magic word: "what they will say," not knowing who and what they will say, are afraid to openly reveal their holy faith in deeds. But the words and deeds in the spirit of the world are openly displayed in the steps of the city. They are not ashamed or afraid to do them; they are at home.

Behold, brethren, what a pernicious atmosphere is forming around us!" ("Words," pp. 262 - 268).

In his sermon on the birthday of the Heir, Tsarevich Nicholas Alexandrovich, delivered on 8 September 1863, Hierarch Theophanes noted with sorrow: "... After the end of the Crimean War,

(as if a dam had burst), Western teachings about family, religious and political life, unheard of until then, contrary to the spirit of Christ, started to flow down to us in a wide river, which began to be publicly heard in speeches and read in the press ... Remember the story of the judges of Israel. For four hundred years they repeated the following course of events. As soon as they deviated from the rules of life commanded them by God through Moses, and adopted new ones from their neighbors, they were immediately delivered into captivity to these very teachers. When they repented and returned to their former manners, God sent them a deliverer and delivered them from under His yoke. If they again were turned aside, they again fell under the yoke of slavery; and when they were reformed, they were again delivered. So there were twelve times, as if for the purpose of making them, and through them all, well aware that the rules of life, committed by God, could not be avoided with impunity; that whoever did so would incur the wrath of God and undermine the welfare and the independence of the state. Whatever kind of deviation this may be, it is all, as a God-fighting affair, unsafe. For example, in our country there are cases when people do not observe the holy fasts, do not consider marriage holy and do not observe its laws; they avoid monasticism and would like to abolish it, do not keep the Lord's day and holy feasts, turning them into public gatherings, shames and other similar things. All these are not our rules and customs, but were adopted from our neighbors. And, of course, they will not be in vain if we keep up with them and let them generalize among ourselves. Let us beware, lest the Lord be angry with us and deliver us into the hands of our teachers, the wicked and the wicked, as he once threatened to do. We cannot help but see that prayer and the church have begun to be squeezed out of the circle of our life. Many live and act as if the Lord and His holy Church were not there for them... They go to the theater when they should go to church; they hold parties with noise and music during church services, and even near the church, distracting the simple-minded from it and entertaining those who want to be pious; they hold market days on Sundays and holidays, and stroll through the markets when they should be praying and doing God-pleasing things. They pass by the church and do not pray, because they do not remember it: their heads are not occupied with other things. They do not turn to icons and do not make the sign of the cross when they enter a house, and they do not greet their housekeepers in the Christian way. They even take icons out of their homes, like the Molokans. There are even some who do not consider it their duty to baptize their children. We have many other bad things from our neighbors. It is impossible to list them all. These cases are enough to assure us that customs have begun to creep in that denounce God's love in those who accept them. And this will not pass in vain for us.

And in his sermon on the birthday of the Heir Caesarevich, delivered on September 8, 1864, Hierarch Theophanes uttered a genuine prophecy, which was fulfilled literally: "The basic elements of Russian life have long been characterized in us and are so strongly and completely expressed by the usual words: Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality. This is what must be preserved! - When these principles weaken or change, the Russian people will cease to be Russian. He will then lose his sacred tricolor banner" (ibid., p. 289).

All of the foretold by Bishop Theophanes, as we see now, has been fulfilled. Indeed, little by little "our Orthodoxy has dried up. How few people are left among us who understand, value, love, and try to live their lives in accordance with Orthodoxy! The vast majority do not know and do not want to know Orthodoxy, living their own lives independent of the Church and its statutes and guided by half-pagan, half-animal ideals of humanism. And those who, for some special reason, have not completely broken with Orthodoxy, are inventing their own non-Orthodoxy. Indeed, first a latent and then overt persecution of Christianity began, which reached such great proportions that the Church of Russia became like the martyred Church of the early centuries of Christianity.

The prediction of St. Theophanes was also fulfilled, that "once again the Lord will send such of our teachers to bring us to our senses and set us on the path of correction," for "this is the law of God's righteousness: to heal from sin the more one is drawn to it. We were carried away with the materialistic theories of the West, nihilism, Marxism-communism - the Lord sent us in sealed wagons the leaders of Marxist-communism, Lenin and Trotsky and "comrades", who were beloved by our intellectual society, to "bring us to our senses and set us on the path of correction. And now, for more than 45 years, they, in the person of their worthy successors, have been "bringing us to our senses," in order to correct us and turn to God in repentance. Suffering in the terrible chains of the most humiliating slavery, our Motherland, drenched in blood and tears, subjected to mockery and all kinds of mockery and defamation of the holy-sacred soul of Russian man. "You yourselves wanted it," as if the Lord were telling us so, "get what you want and enjoy it!"

"Such is the law of God's righteousness: by that healeth from sin, the more one is drawn to it."

Our government was not willing to take decisive measures: to suppress the freedom of conspiracy, to clamp the mouths of journalists and newspapermen, to declare unbelief a state crime, to ban material views under the death penalty - and so we have lived until the revolution, even more terrible than the French revolution, and between us the end of the eighteenth century with all its horrors was repeated. We have not kept the basic elements of Russian life - Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality, and as a result: Orthodoxy has been replaced in our homeland by the godless religion of Marxism. Autocracy - unheard of in the history of mankind cruel tyranny, and the People - a soulless international. And now there is no more Russia, no more Russian people, and our sacred tricolor flag!

From all of this we can see what a truly prophetic service was performed by our great God-wise mentor, the Reverend Theophanes, the Hermit of Vyshensky, trying to instruct our unfortunate Russian people with his fiery word at the saddest time of their historical existence, when they, as

if in a kind of mad intoxication, rushed headlong into the terrible bloody abyss that opened up before them.

Explaining to us the causes of the grievous calamities that befell us and revealing to us in his inspired creations, filled with deep spiritual experience, the wondrous sublime beauty of spiritual life - the hidden life in God - Saint Theophanes calls us all, Russian people, to the path of repentance and conversion to God from the pleasures of the world and sin. The literal fulfillment of the disasters prophetically foretold by him, which have befallen the Russian people, must with all evidence convince us that only in God and in the guidance of the teaching of our holy Orthodox Church is our salvation. The attitude toward St. Theophanes of those or other persons who imagine themselves to be spiritual leaders and leaders of the minds and hearts of the Russian people can at present be considered an infallible criterion of their Orthodoxy and spiritual trustworthiness. There is no other way to the salvation and rebirth of our homeland except the only true, strictly Orthodox path, outlined in the writings of St. Theophanes and his kindred spiritual men and mentors of pure, unadulterated, holy Fatherly Orthodoxy. Only through the firm centuries-old foundations of such authentic Orthodoxy will the Orthodox Russian people live.

Chapter 11: "Salt is beguiling" - a sign of the approaching end

To the centenary of the blessed repose of Bishop Ignatius (Bryanchaninov).

"Our time is like the last. The salt is overwhelming. In the highest pastors of the Church there remains a weak, dark, confused, misunderstanding by the letter, killing the spiritual life in Christian society, destroying Christianity, which is a work, not a letter. It is hard to see to whom the sheep of Christ have been entrusted, or fallen into the hands of, to whom their leadership and salvation has been given! The wolves, clothed in sheep's skin, are and are known by their works and fruits. But this is an assent of God. Let those who exist in Judea flee to the mountains!" - In these words our great Russian luminary, ascetic and spiritual writer, St. Ignatius (Bryanchaninov), whose centennial since his righteous death we commemorate prayerfully in this year of 1967 († April 30, 1867), characterized contemporary church life more than a hundred years ago.

Is it not with far greater right that we can repeat these formidable, cautionary words of his in our day? For just in this respect - in regard to the complete spiritual and moral decay, which seems to have already reached its extreme limits, life in these last hundred years, especially since the catastrophic collapse of our Motherland-Russia, has indeed gone far ahead.

Sad "progress," clearly indicating, in the Godly words of St. Ignatius, that the end is approaching!..How much further can we go, if those entrusted to guide human souls to salvation lead them not to salvation, but to eternal destruction?!

It is important for us that St. Ignatius, who from his early youth sincerely strove with all his soul for an authentic spiritual and moral life and who himself was a high example of such a life, writes this not without reason, but having experienced all this himself, as we know from his wonderful biography. And the conclusions of the disappointments and distresses he personally experienced, on this ground, he set forth in writing in many places of his "Ascetic Experiences," "Ascetic Sermon," "Letters to the laity," "An Offering to Modern Monasticism," "Father" and his other extant writings are an invaluable library for anyone interested in questions of spiritual and moral life and, in particular, for those who wish not only to philosophize (which is often quite fruitless and unhelpful!), but to live the spiritual life as St. Ignatius himself truly lived it. The writings of St. Ignatius are especially valuable to us because they are all written from his own spiritual experience.

Having painted a positive picture of spiritual and moral Christian life in a number of his deeply edifying creations, as it was reflected in the lives of God's saints, throughout Christian history, and especially in the teachings of the saintly ascetics of faith and piety of the first centuries of Christianity, St. Ignatius moves on to the end times, with signs of these latter times already

indicated in his contemporary era (a hundred years and more ago). What is valuable for us is that St. Ignatius, as he himself emphasizes, seeks answers and guidance for everything from the ancient ascetics and says little "from himself" and in his own words, setting forth in his reasoning their thoughts and sometimes quoting word for word their sayings.

This is how, for example, he speaks of the modern era in the "conclusion" of his "Fatherland": "From the spectacle presented by antiquity, let us turn to the spectacle presented by modernity. What must we say of ourselves? How should we live, how should we act? We find the answer to these questions in the ancient monks: they foreshadowed our situation; they also foreshadowed the way of action in this situation. "In the last time," said one of them: "those who will truly work for God will prudently conceal themselves from men, and will not perform signs and wonders in their midst, as at the present time. They will walk in the way of doing, dissolved in humility, and in the kingdom of heaven they will be greater than the fathers who were glorified by signs" (St. Niphont's 4th response). What thorough instruction, what consolation for us in these prophetic words of the signified and spiritual father!"

This indication is extremely important! From this the conclusion is clear: where there is much noise, self-promotion, the search for popularity, that is, where there is clearly no humility, but an apparent desire for glory, for the exaltation of oneself in the eyes of others by real or only by puffed up, imaginary, imaginary works and merits, there is no true pleasing to God.

What is there?

There is "hypocrisy alone," St. Ignatius quotes St. Tikhon of Zadonsk.

"Be afraid of this hypocrisy," St. Ignatius further instructs, "be afraid of hypocrisy, first, in yourself, then - in others: be afraid precisely because it is in the character of the time and is capable of infecting anyone at the slightest deviation into frivolous behavior... Pursue hypocrisy in yourself, driving it out of yourself, away from the masses infected by it, acting both intentionally and unconsciously in the direction of it, covering up serving the world by serving God, seeking temporal goods by seeking eternal goods, covering up a vicious life and a soul totally committed to passions in the guise of holiness. Here is one extremely characteristic trait, especially peculiar to our time, which as an experienced expert in spiritual life, St. Ignatius reveals, warning us against it.

The second feature, to which St. Ignatius repeatedly points in his writings, is the drying up of the gracious leaders of true spiritual and moral life, and in connection with this, which is especially important for everyone sincerely seeking salvation in our time to know and remember, is the multiplication of false teachers, deceived by demonic delusion and drawing the whole world into this deception. We need extreme caution, as St. Ignatius warns us many times in his writings,

"not to mistake a wolf for a shepherd" and not to trust lightly to someone who can ruin your soul by leading it on a false path. According to St. Ignatius, our time is a time of extreme depletion of spiritual mentors, and therefore it is no longer possible to find a true "elder" as were the elders-mentors of the first centuries of Christianity, and it is much safer to be guided by Holy Scripture and the writings of the Father. Saint Ignatius himself recalls, however, how much he suffered from an almost constant meeting with spiritual "leaders, who were sick with blindness and self-belief, and how many bitter and grave shocks" he experienced as a result.

The third characteristic feature of our time is the extraordinary multiplication of temptations of every kind, of all kinds, which will all distract man from serving God sincerely and without hypocrisy.

"Woe to the world because of the temptations: for there is need to come temptations" (Matthew 18:7), the Lord proclaimed. And the coming of temptations is God's presupposition, and the moral distress of temptations is God's presupposition. By the end of the world the temptations must multiply and multiply so much, that because "lawlessness will abound" (Matt. 24:12) and "when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth? (Lk.18:8) - "the Land of Israel" - the Church will be "brought down by the sword" - by the murderous violence of temptation - "and quite empty" (Ezek.38:18).

It will be very difficult to live according to God. It is made so because it is impossible for one who lives in the midst and in the face of temptation not to be affected by temptation. As ice loses its hardness when exposed to heat and turns into the softest water, so the heart, which is full of good will, when it is exposed to the influence of temptations, especially constant ones, relaxes and changes.

"Oh, wretched time! Oh, a calamitous state! - St. Ignatius exclaims, contemplating this pernicious spectacle of temptations, - oh, a moral calamity, unnoticeable to sensual people, incomparably greater than all material, loud calamities! Oh, a calamity that begins in time and does not end in time, but passes into eternity! Oh, the calamity of calamities, understood only by true Christians and true monks, unknown to those whom it encompasses and destroys!"

The golden words of St. Ignatius! We are already facing all these countless and varied temptations, which make it so difficult for modern people to live according to God, and how many in our time are clearly aware of the extreme perniciousness of these temptations? Shocking events are taking place in the world before our eyes, such as the bloody catastrophe that befell our motherland Russia, the creation of godless godless states, the open struggle with God and the Church, the obvious service of Satan, but many people, like blind men, seem not to see any of this and are even angry when it is pointed out to them: "What are you saying? There's nothing special here! It's always been like that!" - and so forth.

Just like this spiritual blindness of almost the majority of modern people, even those who call themselves Christians (it's scary to say: there are quite a few Christian clergymen among them! According to St. Ignatius, this is a clear sign of the departure that has already begun and is rapidly progressing in our days, about which St. Paul foretold in his Second Epistle to the Solonians (2Sol.2:3). :3).

"The living according to God," says St. Ignatius, "is made very difficult by the vastness, the universality of the Apostasy. The apostates, who multiply, being called and presenting themselves outwardly as "Christians" (!!!), will prosecute true Christians; the multiplied apostates will surround true Christians with countless intrigues, will put up countless obstacles to their good intent to save and serve God, as St. Tikhon Zadonsky notes. They will act against God's servants with the violence of power, and slander, and devious intrigues, and various deceptions, and severe persecutions... In these latter days a true monk (of course, this applies not only to monks, but to all true Christians!) will scarcely find any remote and unknown shelter, in order to serve God with some freedom, and not to be drawn by the violence of apostasy and apostates into the service of Satan.

Who, seeing all that is now going on in the world - even to the point of openly serving Satan - can say that this time has not yet come? And it certainly has come, if St. Ignatius more than 100 years ago already wrote about its coming in his time, indicating clear signs of it.

Here, for example, is how strongly and vividly he writes about it: "The times, the further on, the harder. Christianity, as a spirit, unnoticeable to the fussy and world-serving crowd, very noticeable to those who pay attention to themselves, is removed from the midst of humanity, leaving it (the world) to its fall.

Here in these words it is very important to notice that it is as if the Departure is not seen, not noticed by those people, who belong to the "world-serving crowd, who are so vain, having given themselves to serve this world, which lies under evil, according to the word of the Apostle (1 John 5:19), that they have lost the spiritual vision, and therefore everything that happens in the world now seems to them absolutely normal, something to be reconciled with. And they are terribly angry with those who try to open their eyes, for it prevents them from living quietly, in their pleasure.

And here is what St. Ignatius says next: "The prophecy of Scripture is fulfilled about the apostasy of the peoples who have passed from paganism to Christianity. The apostasy is foretold with all the clarity of St. Scripture and serves as evidence of how true and true everything said in Scripture.

This is why a true, true believing Christian cannot have any "panic" when contemplating this gloomy picture of apostasy, which some people fear quite naively and unreasonably, preferring therefore to "ignore" apostasy and keep silent about it. A true Christian knows from the words of Christ the Savior Himself that all this "must be" (Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9), and he should not close his eyes to it, but be absolutely conscious of what is going on, correctly estimate and weigh all the events in which a digression takes place, in order to know how to act, in order not to be drawn into the current of retreat, which can happen unnoticed by him if he neglects and does not pay enough attention.

For our guidance, St. Ignatius says: "Retreat is permitted by God: do not try to stop it with your weak hand...".

What then? Does this mean that we have to be reconciled to the Apostasy and "join in" with it?

Far from it, of course not! This is what it means: "Retreat, guard against it yourself: and that is enough for you. Get acquainted with the spirit of the time, study it, so as to avoid its influence as far as possible.

How important it is in our time to remember, to carry in our minds and hearts this most precious instruction of our great Russian luminary!

This is why it is a crime to remain silent about the Retreat, to lull ourselves and others into thinking that everything is quite safe, that there is nothing to worry about. Although we are powerless to "stop the Retreat with our weak hand," the duty of Christian love commands us not only to "remove ourselves" and "guard against it," but also to protect and warn our neighbors against it, if they themselves do not see it or do not notice it. Here we must always remember the wonderful saying of one of the greatest pillars of our Church, St. Gregory the Theologian, that "God is betrayed by silence. One cannot remain silent about what is a matter of paramount importance, as the work of saving the souls of men!

Let us turn to the further thoughts of St. Ignatius, which open our eyes to what is now happening in the world: "Retreat has begun to take place quickly, freely and openly from a certain time. The consequences must be most grievous. God's will be done!"

Do we not see this? For as recently as comparatively recently it seemed utterly impossible to see the utter shamelessness in the religious and moral life of men which is now being done before our eyes, even to the point of completely denying Christ and rejecting all religious and moral foundations and openly serving Satan. And not only the secret, hidden, but also the overt, open persecution, up to and including the shedding of blood, against those who profess the true faith of Christ has become a formidable fact in our day. And it is vain to draw any parallel between

this modern persecution of the faith of Christ in all its forms and that which existed at the dawn of Christianity. Then the Christians were persecuted by pagans who did not know the true God, who did not know Christ, and now those who know Christ and the high doctrine He preached, who are often conscious apostates from the faith of Christ, who have sold their souls to Satan for worldly goods, are persecuted furiously and fiercely, maliciously.

It is horrifying to read further prophecies of St. Ignatius, which are being realized before our eyes in our time: "May the merciful Lord cover a remnant of those who believe in Him. But this remnant is meager: it is becoming scarcer and scarcer... The cause of orthodox faith can be recognized as approaching a decisive denouement... One special grace of God can stop the moral epidemic, stop it for a while, because it is necessary to fulfill the prophecy of Scripture. Judging by the spirit of the times and the fermentation of minds, we must assume that the building of the Church, which has been shaking for a long time, will shake terribly and quickly. There is no one to stop and oppose it. The measures of support taken are borrowed from the elements of a world hostile to the Church, and will hasten her fall rather than halt it.

It is as if these words were written from nature in our day! For we are just now witnessing this fearful and rapid vacillation of the Church. And indeed, the measures taken are borrowed not at all from whence they should be taken - not from the spiritual realm, but from the same elements of a world hostile to the Church - from the realm of human passions, thinking not of what is divine, but of what is human. And of course such measures will not only not stop the fall of the Church, but rather will hasten it.

"Listen to what you say," some will say, "what fall of the Church can we speak of when we have such a decisive promise of Christ as: "...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18)?"

Quite right, and Christ's words are certainly immutable. But what is somehow forgotten is that these words of Christ do not specify the limits of the church, the gates of hell will not prevail against it. It does not say, which Church it will be: the Constantinople Church, the Russian Church, the Serbian Church, the Bulgarian Church, our Russian Church Abroad, or any other: it says simply - "the Church," that is, that until the end of the age and the Second Coming of Christ the true Church will not disappear from the face of the earth, but will exist.

But the Church will remain a Church with all the high promises and gracious powers and rights that belong to it, even if at least one bishop and the smallest number of believers remain in it. All the rest will be shaken and fallen, overcome by the gates of hell, even if they continue to call themselves the church. This is what St. Ignatius is talking about here, and this is what must be kept in mind for a correct assessment of the events taking place in our time!

"There is no one to expect the restoration of Christianity," Saint Ignatius goes on to say, "the vessels of the Holy Spirit have finally dried up everywhere, even in monasteries, these treasures of piety and grace, and the Body of the Spirit of God can only be sustained and restored by His instruments. God's merciful forbearance prolongs and delays the decisive denouement for the small remnant of the saved, while those who rot or decay reach the fullness of decay. Those who are saved must understand this and make use of the time given for salvation, "as time is shortened," and the transition to eternity is not far off for any of us.

To the position of the Church we must be at peace, though together we must understand it. It is an assumption from on high.

The elder Isaiah told me, "Understand the time. Do not expect to be well-fixed in the general composition of the Church, but be content with the fact that it is given in particular to people who wish to be saved.

The admonition is direct, as if directed directly to us, so that we do not become discouraged, do not lose heart definitively, seeing what is being done. The hardest thing, of course, as St. Ignatius notes more than once, is to endure spiritual loneliness at such a time.

"Save yourself! Blessed if you find at least one faithful collaborator in the cause of salvation: this is a great and rare gift of God in our time. Beware of wishing to save your neighbor, lest he draw you into a perishing abyss. The latter happens hourly.

Now, what a difficult time for salvation this will be, and it is already here!

"He who saves, let him save his own soul," says the remnant of Christians, says the Spirit of God," St. Ignatius emphasizes this difficulty, wishing to instill in us a special vigilance, a special attention to himself.

The retreat, in the intensified, more and more developing age of which we have already entered, according to many signs, as St. Ignatius testifies to it, must precede the appearance in the world of the Antichrist, the enemy of Christ: it must prepare the coming and enthronement of the Antichrist and "crown" him, after which will come the terrible period of the last decisive struggle of the devil with God and with His Christ.

About this, based on the predictions of many of the Fathers of the Church, says St. Ignatius in his wonderful book "On miracles and signs" (also in volume 4).

Antichrist will be a natural consequence of "the impoverishment of people of spiritual knowledge and reasoning" and "lack of true knowledge of God," which "takes the works of the devil for the works of God.

The whole situation in the world, before the arrival of the Antichrist, will be such that the Antichrist will appear as a necessary consequence of all this truly anti-Christian environment, anti-Christian mindset of the world. That's why already St. John the Apostle spoke about many Antichrists (1 John 2:18), that's why we can talk about the manifestation of the spirit of Antichrist in the world long before the reign of the Antichrist himself. And to talk about it is not to take the liberty of predicting the time of the appearance of the Antichrist, which, according to the teachings of God's Word, no one knows with certainty, although many signs of it are pointed out.

And it is necessary to talk about it, so as not to allow ourselves to be carried away by the Antichrist, who will be extremely skillful deceiver-traitor, even capable of performing false signs and wonders.

Here is how St. Ignatius speaks about this dangerous and soul-destroying deception, based on the teachings of the Word of God and the Holy Fathers: "Before the Second Coming of Christ, when Christianity, spiritual knowledge and discernment will be scarcely touched among men, "false christs and false prophets will rise, and will give great signs and wonders, as they may deceive the elect" (Matt. 24:24).

In particular, the Antichrist himself will lavish wonders, impress and satisfy carnal wisdom and ignorance with them: he will give them "a sign from heaven," which they seek and long for. "His coming," says St. Paul, "will be accomplished "according to the work of Satan in all power and signs and wonders false, and in all flattery of unrighteousness in those who perish: for they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2Sol.2:6-10). Ignorance and carnal wisdom, seeing these wonders, will not stop to reflect, will immediately accept them by the affinity of their spirit with their spirit, by their blindness, will recognize and confess the work of Satan as the greatest manifestation of the power of God, and Antichrist will be very quickly, without thinking (St. Ephrem the Syrian, Part 2). People will not understand that his miracles have no good, reasonable goal, no clear meaning, that they are alien to the truth, full of lies, that they are monstrous, spiteful, meaningless acting, trying to surprise, to lead to bewilderment and self-occupation, to deceive, deceive, fascinate by the charm of a magnificent, empty, stupid effect.

It is not strange that the wonders of the Antichrist will be accepted unconditionally and enthusiastically by apostates from Christianity, enemies of truth, enemies of God: they have prepared themselves to openly and actively accept the messenger and instrument of Satan, his

teachings, all his actions, having entered in good time into communion with Satan in spirit. Worthy of deep consideration and lamentation is the fact that the wonders and deeds of the Antichrist will lead the very elect of God into embarrassment.

These last cautionary words of St. Ignatius are especially important for those who look at the modern preparation of the world for the acceptance of the Antichrist lightly, who remain blind in spite of everything, and do not want to see clear signs of this frantic preparation for the reign of the Antichrist by his servants, who have already sold their souls to Satan for earthly goods: for the free, unhindered gratification of "the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the flesh," and "the pride of life," that is: lust, covetousness, and voluptuousness (1 John. 2 :16)!

It is necessary to know and remember how great will be the cunning of the Antichrist and how cunningly he will act, if even the chosen of God, the true Christians will be in difficulty, not being able to immediately detect and expose the Antichrist - not being able to first recognize him.

The reason for this predicament and strong influence of the Antichrist on people, according to St. Ignatius, "will lie in his hellish guile and hypocrisy, which cleverly will cover the most terrible evil, in his unbridled and shameless insolence, in the abundant cooperation of the fallen spirits, finally, in the ability to work wonders, though false, but striking.

Insidiousness and hypocrisy are particularly characteristic of our time. By fostering them in people, humanity is prepared for the easiest and most painless acceptance of the Antichrist.

"Human imagination," says St. Ignatius, "is powerless to imagine the evil one as the Antichrist will be; it is incompatible with the human heart, even a corrupt one, to believe that evil can reach the degree that it will reach in the Antichrist. He will sound the trumpet about himself, as his forerunners and icons trumpeted about themselves, he will call himself a preacher and restorer of the true knowledge of God: those who do not understand Christianity will see in him a representative and advocate of true religion, will join him.

"He will sound a trumpet and call himself the promised Messiah: the disciples of fleshly wisdom will cry out to meet him; seeing his glory, his power, his genius, his vast development in the elements of the world, they will proclaim him a god, they will be his accomplices (St. Ephraim the Syrian, word 106).

"The Antichrist will show himself to be meek, merciful, full of love, full of all virtue: they will recognize him as such, and obey him because of his most exalted virtue, those who recognize fallen human truth as truth, and have not renounced it for the truth of the Gospel (St. Macarius the Great, conversation 31).

The Antichrist will offer mankind the highest worldly welfare and prosperity, he will offer honors, riches, splendor, carnal pleasures and comfort: seekers of the earthly will accept the Antichrist, calling him their lord (Herald explains at John 5:43).

Here is a vivid picture of what we are seeing now, even though the antichrist himself as a certain specific person does not yet exist. However, his "forerunners" are already acting in the world in the same way that he himself will act. From this point of view, we understand all these modern trends in church-religious life, like "ecumenism," all these fiery calls for mutual unity "in the name of Christian love," all this blossoming of purely earthly, entertaining human passions and lusts of external culture and civilization, all this passion for charity. And how much caution and wise prudence is needed to distinguish here the real from the fake, sincere from the deceitful, hypocritical, real benefactor from the servant of the coming Antichrist, who spreads his net! How dangerous it is nowadays for a true Christian to deal with "benefactors" and use the "good deeds"!

But that is not all! "The antichrist will open before mankind a shameful spectacle of amazing wonders, inexplicable by modern science; he will inspire fear with the thunder and wonder of his wonders, satisfy by them reckless curiosity and gross ignorance, satisfy the vanity and pride of men, satisfy the carnal wisdom, satisfy superstition, perplex human scholarship: All men, who are guided by the light of their fallen nature, who are alienated from the guidance of the light of God, will be drawn into obedience to the deceiver (Rev. 13 :8)"

The beginning of all this we see even now, and we can clearly imagine what will happen when the antichrist himself appears.

"The signs of the Antichrist will predominantly appear in the air layer (Pr. Ephraim the Syrian, word 106): in this layer Satan predominantly reigns (Eph.2:2). The signs will work most on the sense of sight, enchanting and deceiving it (Simeon, Nov. God. - On the third mode of attention). St. John the Theologian, contemplating in the revelation the events of the world, which must precede the end of the world, says that Antichrist will do great things, "and he will create fire from heaven on earth before men" (Rev.13:13). This sign is pointed out by Scripture as the highest of the signs of the Antichrist, and the place of this sign is the air: it will be a great and terrible spectacle.

And this we see now in the foreknowledge - in the form of all kinds of extraordinary, previously unheard of inventions, developing their effect just in the air.

"The sign of the Antichrist complements the effect of his cunning behavior: the majority of men will be caught up in following him. Those who oppose the antichrist will be regarded as

troublemakers, as enemies of the public good, and of order, will be subject both to covert and overt persecution, will be subjected to torture and execution."

And this we already know! Not only Antichrist himself, but his forerunners and servants in our time have already erected a "covert and open" persecution of all true Christians, and in some places, such as in our homeland, have even gone as far as bloody persecutions, torture and executions. And all this is done under the most plausible pretexts: true Christians are proclaimed "enemies of the people," "enemies of public good and order," recognized as "troublemakers," and in the church as "dissenters."

"Evil spirits, sent out over the universe, will excite in men the most sublime opinion of the Antichrist, a general enthusiasm, an irresistible attraction to him (St. Ephraim the Syrian, word 106)."

Something similar we have already seen in relation to the true forerunners of the Antichrist, such as Lenin and Stalin. They were like rehearsals for what would happen on an even larger scale under the Antichrist.

"In many ways Scripture has depicted the severity of the final persecution of Christianity and the cruelty of the persecutor. A strong and certain is the name, which the Scripture gives to this terrible man: he is called the Beast (Rev. 13:1), while the fallen Archangel is called the serpent (Gen.3:1). Both names portray with fidelity the character of both the enemies of God. One acts more secretly, the other - more clearly; but the beast, which has a resemblance to all animals, combining their diverse nature, "gave the serpent his power, and his throne, and great power" (Rev.13:2). The test for the saints of God will be dreadful: The deceit, the hypocrisy, the wonders of the persecutor will seek to deceive and seduce them; the subtle, contrived and covered by cunning ingenuity of persecution and constraint, the unlimited power of the torturer, will put them in a most difficult position; their small number will seem insignificant before all mankind, and their opinion will be given special weakness; general contempt, hatred, slander, oppression, violent death will become their lot. Only with the special assistance of divine grace, under its guidance, will God's elect be able to confront the enemy of God, to confess before him and before men the Lord Jesus.

How familiar all this is to us too: as if it had been copied from modern life! Only the spiritually blind or those who are already in the service of the anti-Christian servants would not recognize that we are on the threshold of the kingdom of the anti-Christ and are beginning to experience all of the above!

But, how and why will people reject Christ and accept the antichrist?

And to this question our Saint Ignatius gives the perfect explanation. Just as they rejected Christ nineteen-odd centuries ago and crucified Him on the cross.

"Christianity is taught with such certainty that there is no excuse for those who do not know it. The cause of ignorance is one of arbitrariness. As the sun shines from heaven, so Christianity shines. He who closes his eyes arbitrarily, let him attribute his unseeing and ignorance to his own arbitrariness, not to the absence of light. The reason for the rejection of the God-man by men is in men, just as the reason for the acceptance of the Antichrist is in men.

"I have come in my Father's name," the Lord testified to the Jews, "and you will not accept me; but if anyone comes in his own name, you will accept him" (John 5:43). They are called together both rejecting Christ and receiving the Antichrist, though the Antichrist is mentioned as having come. By rejecting Christ in spirit they are numbered among those who have accepted the Antichrist, though they completed their earthly walk many centuries before he came. They accomplished his greatest deed: God-killing. For the time of his appearance, for him no such evil was left. As their spirit was at enmity with Christ: so it was in a state of communion with the Antichrist, separated from him by a vast expanse of time, now reaching the end of the second millennium.

"Every spirit" says the theologian, "who does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the Antichrist, whom you have heard say is coming, and is now in the world. (1 John 4:3) by the Spirit.

Those who are led by the spirit of the antichrist reject Christ, have received the antichrist in their spirit, have entered into communion with him, have submitted to him, and have worshipped him in the spirit, recognizing him as their god.

"For this reason he will send" - that is, he will allow "them the work of deceit, that they may believe a lie: that judgment may come upon all those who do not believe the truth, but are well pleased in unrighteousness" (2Sol.2:11-12).

In His allowing, God is just. It will be a satisfaction, together with rebuke and judgment for the human spirit.

The Antichrist will come in his own time, predestined to him.

His coming will be preceded by a general Departure from the Christian faith in most people. By apostasy from Christ, mankind will prepare to receive the Antichrist, will receive him in his spirit. In the very mood of the human spirit there will arise a demand, an invitation to the Antichrist, a sympathy for him, as in a state of severe illness arises a thirst for a murderous drink.

The invitation is pronounced! A call is heard in human society, expressing the urgent need for a genius of genius, who would raise the material development and prosperity to the highest degree, to bring welfare on earth, in which heaven and heaven are made superfluous for man. Antichrist will be a logical, just, natural consequence of the general moral and spiritual direction of men.

Truly God-wise, prophetic words of our great Russian luminary and visionary! After all, he wrote all this over a hundred years ago, when life in Russia was relatively peaceful, normal, when there was nothing that God sentenced us to experience later, during the century since then, and in particular - during the last terrible, truly apocalyptic fifty years, when many people naturally began to feel that the end of the world is very close, almost at the door. And everything that we now observe in the world - in the ecclesiastical and socio-political life of the people - is quite in keeping with the foretelling of our saint above. After all, if you seriously consider everything that is happening now, it becomes clear that never before, in its entire past history, has the world been as close to the Antichrist as it is at this time. The only question is the timing, which is not revealed to us.

We, the sons and daughters of the Russian Orthodox Church, should be eternally grateful to St. Ignatius for the fact that a hundred years ago he so vividly drew before our mental eyes the picture of all that is now happening before our eyes and what is yet to happen, perhaps in the near future. We have been warned of everything, and a terrible answer will be incurred if we ignore it all, assuring ourselves and others that nothing special is happening, that everything is absolutely normal, and that we must be reconciled to everything, fearing nothing and doing nothing, but "going with the flow, like everyone else," or "keeping up with the times," which are drawing us headlong toward the Antichrist.

The salt is wearing off - the Church ceases to be the Church, but becomes a "false church" that has the Antichrist as its "Messiah," except for the small remnant of true believers, which, in the words of St. Ignatius, is becoming "scarcer and scarcer. All modern culture and all human life, aimed only at ensuring the external, purely mundane well-being of people, strenuously and hastily prepare the world for the reign of the Antichrist.

So, the last time for each of us is to determine where we are and with whom: in this "little remnant" of true believers, in this "little flock" of Christ, as Christ the Savior Himself said (Luke 12:32) - with Christ or with his enemy - the Antichrist?

This is what the God-wise writings of St. Ignatius teach us!

Chapter 12: Father John of Kronstadt - the Bright Image of Orthodoxy

"O wonderful, life-giving, divine Orthodoxy! I see your bright image!" - so many times loved to exclaim our great righteous man, prayer leader and miracle worker, the ever-memorable Father John of Kronstadt.

And this is understandable! After all, he himself constantly felt in himself all the incomparable gracious power and spiritual might of wonderful, life-giving, divine Orthodoxy - that pure, undamaged, not distorted or contaminated by any human errors and fabrications of the true faith of Christ, the one true, one saving.

Whence is all the greatness and glory of our marvelous All-Russian righteous man, who gained worldwide fame, before whom even many foreigners and foreigners, who experienced all the miraculous power of his prayers and intercession for them before God and who only heard about him from others, bowed down and worshiped him as the true pastor of Christ's Church?

From Holy Orthodoxy.

After all, Father John is the son of a poor pious parishioner and his equally pious wife, the offspring of a primordial spiritual family, - flesh from the flesh and blood from the blood of Holy Russia, which lived and breathed holy Orthodoxy; together with the milk of his pious mother he absorbed from his early years the spirit of true Orthodox piety, he was nurtured and fed with the life-giving juices of Holy Orthodox Faith; From his childhood he received strong spiritual support in the prayerful atmosphere of his native rural Orthodox church, and then received the most thorough spiritual and theological upbringing and education in our Russian Orthodox spiritual schools - the Archangel Theological College, the Archangel Theological Seminary, and the St. Nicholas Theological Seminary. - Petersburg Theological Academy.

Father John is our Orthodox shepherd, and hence all his greatness and all his glory!

And he himself was always deeply conscious of this and experienced it. For he never spoke on his own behalf or attributed anything to himself personally, but only to the grace of the priesthood which the Holy Orthodox Church had bestowed upon him.

"Oh, brethren! - he said in his conversation with his co-pastors, the priests of the diocese of Nizhni Novgorod (in 1901), "We have been given much grace from the Lord God, and if we keep this gift of God, we are invincible. Behold, venerable co-pastors, this is how I serve for the glory of God, for the glorification of the Church of Christ and the spread of the Orthodox faith."

"The Faith of Christ is Orthodox," so exclaims Fr. John in his inspired diary, "How many unexpressed blessings are revealed in you! How you renew, purify, and transform our soul and very body through faith, through hope, through repentance, through prayer, and especially through the life-giving Mystery of Communion! How many unspeakable gifts of God in you! What a divine life! What wondrous actions of the Life-giving Spirit! How many blessings in you, holy, orthodox faith! What a rich treasury of the Divine! What an inexhaustible granary! What a source of the living water of the Holy Spirit! What a sun of light to all who walk in the darkness of the night of life! What a source of fragrance, holiness, and incorruption from you! What wondrous salt of the earth art thou, - for us earthly men, rotten with sin to the bone and brain! We thank the Lord for such a heavenly, holy, life-giving treasure! Teach us all, O Lord, to live worthy of such faith, such trust!" (Thoughts on the Church, p. 271).

Do we in the West, among the so-called "non-Orthodox," see anything of the kind manifested by our ever-memorable Batiushka Father John, such a vivid exponent of the spirit of true Orthodoxy, a zealous and unwavering champion of the true Orthodox Faith and the Church?

Not at all! Our Father John is an exceptional phenomenon, completely out of the ordinary.

But he was revealed to us by our Holy Orthodox Church, and this we must always know and remember firmly: outside of Orthodoxy such a phenomenon would simply be impossible, as the same Father John himself testifies to us. John himself testifies to us.

Father John treated everyone with love. He accepted everyone, benefited all - Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, pagans, and over all, without distinction of creed, performed, at their request, miracles of healing, but he constantly taught that the saving Truth is only in Orthodoxy, because all other confessions "contain the Truth in unrighteousness."

"No confession of the Christian faith," so Father John taught, "except the Orthodox, can lead the Christian to the perfection of the Christian life or holiness and to the perfect purification of sins and to incorruption, because other confessions not Orthodox "contain the Truth in unrighteousness" (Rom.1 It is because other confessions, which are not Orthodox, "contain truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18), and attribute error and lies to the Truth, and do not possess those God-given means for purification, sanctification, regeneration and renewal, which the Orthodox Church possesses" (ibid., pp. 13-14).

Hear this, all the modern modernists, the ecumenists, all the liberals, who arrogantly and self-assuredly declare that "God is One" and that therefore all faiths are equal and of equal value, and that it makes no difference what church or denomination one belongs to, as long as one "is a good man"!

Says this the greatest righteous man of our time, whose unquestionable holiness and closeness to God are attested by striking miracles, and whose entire amazing life makes us involuntarily bow before his words, before his teachings, as before an unquestionable, undeniable authority!

"Outside the Church," he says, "there is no salvation, no spirit of grace" (p. 8).

And where is the true Church, impartial history shows us: the true Church is that which confesses the True Faith, not perverted by any human wisdom, which comes from the Apostles themselves, the true faith of Christ.

"That faith (or that Christian creed)," says Fr. John says, "It is the true faith, which daily and unceasingly eradicates the all-destroying sin in the believer, purifies him, sanctifies him, enlightens him, renews him, revives him, strengthens him, and not that which produces enmity, persecution, torture, execution (Catholic) or which leads to false wisdom, to the domination of corrupt reason over Divine Revelation, to the rejection of the hierarchy, the sacraments, fasting and almost everything that the Holy Spirit, who was at work in the Holy Apostles and the Fathers, was able to do. The Church is not the true Church, which has boldly and impudently cut off its connection with "the Church of the firstborn, which was written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). (Hebrews 12:23)", who have pleased God, who enjoy bliss in God, who praise God and continually pray for us, the earthly living, and who help us in salvation through their prayers; not that true church, which has boldly, impudently, and proudly severed its links with the dead (or with the underworld church) and considers prayers for them invalid (Protestantism)" (P 30-31).

And here are Fr. John himself, which should be so convincing to all modern inter-confessionalists, who are trying to level all faiths and to our grief-politicians, who in advance are declaring their intention in the future free Russia to impose inter-confessionalism - criminal indifference to faith under the loud and fashionable slogan of religious tolerance, separation of church and state: "There are many separate denominations of Christianity, with different arrangements externally and internally, with different opinions and doctrines, often contrary to the divine truth of the Gospel and the teachings of the Holy Apostles and Ecumenicals. The Apostles, the Ecumenical and Local Councils, and the Holy Fathers. They cannot all be regarded as true and saving: indifference in faith, or recognition of all faith as equally saving, leads to faithlessness or coldness to faith, to neglecting the observance of the rules and statutes of faith, to the coldness of Christians toward one another. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan asks you to sow as wheat" (Lk.22:31). This is what he, Satan, has done and is doing, that is, breeding schisms and heresies. Strictly adhere to the one true faith and the Church" - so firmly our great shepherd bequeathed to us. "One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph.4:5).

According to Fr. John, our worship itself, which neither Catholics nor Protestants have in its beauty, prayerfulness, or penetration, is the best of all. John, is the best and for all a clear testimony to the superiority, truth, and life-giving nature of our Holy Orthodox Faith.

"Where is there such prayer, praise, thanksgiving and supplication, such wondrous worship, as in the Orthodox Church? - asks Fr. John, and he resolutely answers, "Nowhere" (p. 38).

And do we not now see abroad how many non-Christians are captivated and moved by our Orthodox worship? What fascination do many foreigners have with our ancient church singing, our ancient iconography, as the most fully reflecting the spirit of Orthodoxy? The Roman Catholics themselves, who, with a sly purpose, have introduced the so-called "Eastern rite" in order to trap the Orthodox in their nets, are often genuinely captivated by its sublime beauty and depth, which may even be fraught with very unexpected consequences for themselves.

How clearly, well, understandably, and convincingly does Fr. John, in his remarkable "Thoughts on the Church," exposes the lies of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism!

"The most harmful thing in Christianity," he says, "is the supremacy of man in the church, such as the pope, and his supposed infallibility. It is in his dogma of infallibility that the greatest error lies, for the pope is a sinful man, and trouble if he thinks of himself that he is infallible. How many of the greatest errors, destructive to human souls, have been invented by the Catholic papal Church - in dogmas, in rites, in canonical rules, in Divine Service, in the deadly evil relations of Catholics to Orthodox Christians, in slander and slander against the Orthodox Church, in curses addressed to the Orthodox Church and to Orthodox Christians. And in all this to blame the infallible, supposedly infallible pope, his and the Jesuits' doctrine, their spirit of falsehood, duplicity and all kinds of wrong means "ad maiorem Dei gloriam" - to the greater, supposedly, glory of God" (p. 44).

Even more sharply and forcefully he denounces the lies of Protestantism. John denounces the lie of Protestantism even more forcefully: "Lutheranism, hiding behind the name of Christian faith, is in reality the rejection of faith, indulgence of the senses, rejection of fasting, of monasticism or the virgin life devoted exclusively to the service of God, indulgence of the false human mind with its philosophical delusions and its worship, rejection of the divine authority of the Ecumenical Councils and of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Baptist Fathers, insolent breach of the divine authority of the Church, and rejection of the true Catholicism. The impudent rupture with the Universal Church and its Head Christ, an arbitrary gathering hiding behind the name of a 'church' purified and reformed" (p. 38).

"He who is not in the Church," explains Fr. John, "he is not with Christ, and will have no communion with God either here on earth or there in heaven. Therefore it is necessary to belong

to the Church of Christ, whose head is the Almighty King, the Victor of hell, Jesus Christ" (p. 52).

"The Orthodox Church," says Fr. John, "It surpasses all non-Orthodox churches, first, by its truth, its orthodoxy, observed and won by the blood of the Apostles, hierarchs, martyrs, saints, and all saints; second, by the fact that it guides to salvation in the truest way, the straightest, most faithful way; That which truly purifies, sanctifies, renews through hierarchy, Divine Service, Sacraments, fasts; thirdly, that which best teaches to please God and to save one's soul, best guides to repentance, correction, prayer, thanksgiving, praise" (p. 38). 38).

What madness, therefore, not to cherish one's belonging to the Holy Orthodox Faith and the Church! In a series of inspirational words, addressed to the entire Russian people, our great pastor warned Russian people, therefore, against the indifferentism to faith, faithlessness and nihilism, which was spreading more and more, threatening the inevitable punishment of God.

Alas! The Russian people did not heed their great shepherd, prayer leader, righteous man and miracle worker, and this terrible punishment of God broke out.

"How cunning and cunning Satan is," exclaims Fr. To destroy Russia, he stirred up faithlessness and corruption through misguided writers and teachers, through Russian middle and high schools, and through the so-called intelligentsia. On the basis of faithlessness, cowardice, cowardice, and immorality, the state disintegrates. Without the planting of faith and the fear of God in the population of Russia, it can not stand" (Word of February 19, 1906).

"We had the happiness of being born and baptized in the kingdom of Christ - in the Orthodox Church, and are called to be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, but many of the Russian intelligentsia have renounced Christ and His Church and want to govern themselves, to live according to their own reckless will... - and they themselves are striving and dragging Russia to ruin." (Word of October 5, 1906).

And have not these warnings come true? What should we do now?

"As long as it is not too late," Fr. John, "Turn all unbelievers to faith, to repentance, in tears and brokenness of heart. Wouldn't anyone be too late! Perhaps tomorrow, man, the judgment of the Creator will follow you" (Word April 15, 1907).

"Brethren, friends! Love the church: in the church is your life or your living water, flowing unceasingly from the ever-flowing Source of the Holy Spirit... Oh, what a good thing the church is! Oh, believe, believe not only in words, but in deeds - in the holy, catholic, apostolic Church,

or community of the saved in Christ, adorned with every virtue!" (Thoughts on the Church, p. 20).

Chapter 13: "Keeping up with the times" we will not go!

"Know that we must not serve time, but God" (From the letter of St. Athanasius the Great to Dracontius).

"In step with the times!" - is the slogan of all those who in our time are trying so strenuously to draw the Church of Christ further and further away from Christ, Orthodoxy from the true confession of the Orthodox-Christian faith. Even if this slogan does not always resound so loudly, explicitly, and openly with everyone - it may discourage some, after all! - What is important is the practical application of this slogan in life, the striving to put it into practice in one way or another, to a greater or lesser degree and to a greater or lesser degree.

With this fashionable, "modern," soul-destroying slogan, however it is proclaimed and however it is applied in life, openly or covertly, we, the faithful children and representatives of the Russian Church Abroad, cannot but struggle with it, whose entire ideology, in the name of which it exists, is not to "keep up with the times," but to remain steadfastly faithful to Christ the Savior, the True Christian Orthodox Faith and the Church.

Let us remember how as early as His Beatitude, Metropolitan Anthony, the founder and first leader of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, in his remarkable article "How does the Orthodox Faith differ from the Western Confessions?" wrote about the profound difference between our faith and non-Orthodoxy. This deep difference he points out is that the Orthodox faith teaches how to build a life according to the requirement of Christian perfection, while "non-Orthodoxy" takes from Christianity what and how much is compatible with the conditions of modern cultural life. "Orthodoxy looks at Christianity as the eternal standpoint of true life and demands that everyone break himself and his life until it enters into this norm, while non-Orthodoxy looks at the foundations of modern cultural life as a fact unshakeable, and only in the field of existing private varieties of it indicates those of them which are most approving from the Christian point of view. Orthodoxy requires moral heroism - heroism, non-Orthodoxy is looking out, what of Christianity would be good for us in our present life order? For the Orthodox man, called to the afterlife, in which the true life begins, the historically established mechanism of modern life is a negligible specter, but for the non-Orthodox teaching about the future life is a sublime ennobling idea, an idea that helps us to better and better arrange our real life here.

Golden words, pointing us clearly and vividly to that truly bottomless chasm that separates true Christian faith - Orthodoxy - from its distortion - non-Orthodoxy!

There it is a feat, a striving for eternity, here it is a strong attachment to the earth, a belief in the progress of humanity on earth.

Further, as vividly and justly, Vladyka Antonii establishes that "the Orthodox Faith is an ascetic faith," that "that well-being which the worshippers of 'superstition of progress' (in the apt expression of S.A. Rachinsky) are waiting for on earth. Rachinsky), is promised by the Savior in the future life, but neither Latins nor Protestants want to put up with it for the simple reason, saying frankly, that they do not believe in the resurrection and strongly believe in the welfare of present life, which, on the contrary, the Apostles call "vanishing vapor" (James 4 :14). That is why the pseudo-Christian West does not want and cannot understand the denial of this life by Christianity, which tells us to struggle, "having put off the old man and his works and having put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge in the image of his Creator" (Col.3:9-10).

"If we trace all the errors of the West," writes Vladyka Anthony further, "both those that have entered into its doctrine and those inherent in its morals, we see that they are all rooted in a misunderstanding of Christianity as a feat of gradual human self-improvement.

"Christianity is an ascetic religion," so ends this beautifully strongly and intelligibly written article, "Christianity is the doctrine of the gradual expulsion of the passions, of the means and conditions of the gradual assimilation of the virtues: these conditions are internal, consisting in deeds, and - given from outside, consisting in our dogmatic beliefs and gracious sacred actions, which have the same purpose: to heal human sinfulness and to raise us to perfection.

So what do we see now in modern "Orthodoxy" - "Orthodoxy" that has entered into the so-called ecumenical movement?

A complete denial of the above-mentioned holy truths - in other words: a rejection of True Orthodoxy on the grounds of spiritual fusion with the non-Orthodox West.

"Orthodoxy," which has taken the path of ecumenism, thinks not of raising modern life, more and more declining in religious and moral terms, to the level of the Gospel commandments and requirements of the Church, but of adapting the Church itself to the level of a declining life.

This path of actual rejection of the very essence of St. Orthodoxy - the feat for the sake of eradicating passions and enjoying the virtues - was taken in our time by the so-called "Believers" and Renewalists. This movement immediately spread from Russia, cast into the dust by the fierce rebels, to other Orthodox countries. We still remember the "Pan-Orthodox Congress," convened in 1923 by the sad memory of Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios IV, where such "reforms" as a married episcopate, the second marriage of priests, the abolition of monasticism and fasting, the reduction of services, the abolition of special clothing for the clergy, etc. were conceived.

In spite of the then failure of these impious designs, the dark forces, of course, did not rest, and have continued since then to act persistently and persistently, finding obedient instruments in the

ranks of the church hierarchy of the various local Orthodox Churches. And at the present time, by God's permission, they have achieved great success: Almost all of the Orthodox local churches have already entered into an ecumenical movement that sets itself the task of abolishing all presently existing churches, including, of course, the Orthodox Church, and creating some entirely new "church" that will already be quite in step with the times, discarding as unnecessary rags, as something outdated and out of date, all the true foundations of true Christianity, and in the first place, of course, the deed, as a necessary condition of the main task of the Christian - the eradication of sinful passions and the planting of Christian virtues.

Here, for example, is before us an official document of this kind, belonging to the Serbian local Church: the magazine "Theology," published by the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade - year VIII, issues 1 and 2 for 1964. In this magazine we find an editorial entitled literally: "The Need for Codification and Publication of the New Canonical Collection of the Orthodox Church." The author of this article, slyly asserting that "the ideal principles of the Church remain everywhere and always unchanged," nevertheless tries to prove that the canonical collection of our Orthodox Church is only a product of a time long gone into eternity, and therefore it does not meet the requirements of modern life and must be abolished and replaced by another. This new canonical compendium, you see, "must be brought into harmony with the basic principles of life," with which the Church has supposedly "always reckoned." "Our time," says this wily author, "is in many ways different from the time when the ecumenical councils in which these canons were drawn up took place, and therefore these canons cannot now be applied.

Let us now see which canons this modernist author considers obsolete and to be abolished?

Here they are!

The 9th Rule of the Apostles, which requires the faithful entering the church to remain in the service until the end, and not to make a disorderly mess by walking in the church

The 80th Rule of the Trull Council, which punishes clerics with excommunication and laymen with excommunication for not attending church on three consecutive Sundays without any valid excuse.

The 24th Rule of the Council of Trull, which forbids the clergy and monks to attend equestrian stables and other amusement spectacles; to this rule the author makes an absolutely naive, strange remark, as if only in former times such attractions were places of debauchery and vice, while now they are supposedly "the centers of culture and education" (?!).

The 54th Rule of St. Apostles, which forbids a clergyman, except for necessary necessities, to enter a tavern: and here for some reason it appears as if the tavern had been some other institution before than it is now.

The 77th Rule of the Council of Trulles and the 30th Rule of the Council of Laodicea, which forbid Christians men to bathe together with women: why these rules too should be considered "obsolete" is impossible to understand!

The 96th Rule of the Council of Trulia, which condemns the artificial curling of hair on the head and any adornment of oneself with different garments "for the enticement of unconfirmed souls", suggests instead "to adorn oneself with virtues and good and pure morals": this rule seems not only to be "obsolete" nowadays, but it is especially relevant, if we take into account the modern obscene, totally unfit for Christians, shameless female fashion!

Even this is enough to see what task the "reform" planned in our Orthodox Church sets for itself - for what purpose the Eighth Ecumenical Council is to be convened, about which all modernists so dream, already anticipating that "merry life" which then will be openly permitted and legalized for all!

Let us only think deeper, what is the awful nature of all these demands for the abolition of supposedly "obsolete" canonical rules?

That these modern church reformers, who now so brazenly raise their heads in the very depths of our Church (it is terrible to say that among them are not only clerics, but high hierarchs as well!), take modern life with all its ugly, immoral manifestations as an unshakable fact (which is, as we saw above, not an Orthodox, but a "foreign Orthodox", Western concept!) And they want to abolish all those canonical rules which, precisely, characterize Orthodoxy as an ascetic faith, calling to the deed, in the name of eradicating sinful passions and planting Christian virtues.

It is a terrible, pernicious movement for our faith and the Church, which wants to achieve, in the expression of Christ the Savior, "the salt of it," a movement aimed at the subversion and destruction of the True Church of Christ, by cunningly substituting a false church for it.

The above-mentioned article of the Serbian Theological Journal is still modest, refraining from full candor, speaking only of the fundamental permissibility of marriage for bishops, while in reality we hear more and more frequently and insistently about much more, namely the inapplicability in our time of supposedly all those canonical rules which demand of priestly candidates and of the clergy themselves a pure and chaste moral life, or, simply put, that they are permitted to live the horrible debauchery into which mankind is sinking more and more.

It is one thing to sin and repent, knowing and knowing that you have sinned and need to repent and mend your life. It is quite another to legitimize lawlessness, to sanction sin, thereby lulling one's conscience and abolishing the most basic foundations of the Church, which we have no right to do and which is the gravest crime before God, the Holy Church and the souls of believers seeking eternal salvation.

And until when, to what limits can we allow ourselves to go down such a slippery slope of abolishing the rules of the Church that affirm Christian morality?

Now in America, and, as we hear, in some other countries which have embraced the modern "culture," there is a strong advocacy of the official abolition of marriage and the legalization of "free love" in its place, the use of birth control pills not only by the married but also by the celibate, The legalization of the vile and unnatural passion of homosexuality, even to the point of establishing a special ceremony of marriage for homosexuals (proposed by an Anglican bishop), etc. II., etc., etc.

What? Should our Church also follow this fashionable way of keeping up with the times in order to keep up with life?

But what kind of a "Church" would be that would allow itself all this, or at least look at it with forgiving condescension!

It will no longer be a church, but a true Sodom and Gomorrah, which will not escape, sooner or later, God's terrible punishment.

We must not allow ourselves to be deceived and deceived, for we do not need such a church, or rather a false church! Even though we ourselves are weak, weak, and often sinful, we will not allow the rules of the church to be abolished, for then the very gospel of Christ, which modern people do not want to live by, would also have to be recognized as outdated, not corresponding to the spirit of the times, and be abolished!

Both the Gospel of Christ and all the rules and regulations of the Church outline for us the ideal of the Christian to which we must aspire if we desire eternal salvation. We cannot allow this ideal to be diminished to please the passions and lusts of sin, to sacrilegiously desecrate the sacred.

Whatever "reforms" all these modern criminal "reformers" may have in mind, the truly faithful Orthodox Christian consciousness cannot recognize or accept them. And no matter what the apostates do from True Orthodoxy, the ascetic faith, the ascetic faith, we will not allow the modernization of our Church and we will not "keep up with the times"!

Chapter 14: The Ominous Bloody Jubilee and St. John of Kronstadt

"May the Lord deliver us from the present evil age" (Gal.1:4).

With these words began His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, his truly historic letter of January 19, 1918, in which he anathematized the god-fighting Communist regime and all who commune with it. These momentous words have since become, as it were, lawful for our faithful and infallible evaluation of all that is going on in the world today.

Two dates that deeply touch the heart of a true Orthodox Russian man-patriot, although for completely different, to the contrary, occasions, occur in the month of October according to our Orthodox calendar.

They are the day of the ecclesiastical glorification of our Saint Righteous Father John, wonderworker of Kronstadt - October 19 B.P., and the day, since when, according to our sins, the horrible bloody nightmare engulfed the whole Russian land - October 25 B.P.

The first date was especially joyful for us just three years ago, when, at last, the long-awaited consecration of our great All-Russian righteous man, wonderworker and prayer leader, to the list of All Saints Who have journeyed through the lands of Russia, took place in our Russian Church Abroad (October 19, 1964).

The second date this year marks the ominous bloody anniversary of the fiftieth anniversary of the seizure of power in our homeland by the fierce god-fighters, who desecrated our holy places and enslaved our unhappy homeland, flooding it with streams of blood and tears (October 25, 1917).

It is no coincidence that these two dates are so close in time!

Every true Russian should know and remember that in his lifetime Saint John the Wonderworker of Kronstadt, who became famous not only throughout Russia, but also throughout the world, was for us, Russian Orthodox people, a true prophet of God, sent to Russia for his instruction. Russia did not listen to him as it should have, did not listen to his fiery inspired speeches and warnings - and not immediately came upon her terrible punishment of God, which he threatened, and about which he so fervently, fatherly warned and warned.

How many all sorts of memories in the form of journal articles and whole books were written during those fifty years that had elapsed, the authors of which, more or less in good faith, trying to find and explain the causes of the terrible catastrophe that befell the Russian land, but ... All of them walk, for the most part, only "around the bush", not looking into the root of things, and therefore, not seeing the main cause of the terrible bloody disaster that has befallen us, they can not explain anything.

Meanwhile, the basic and main reason for this so clearly, simply, understandably and for the unbiased mind quite convincingly, is revealed to us in his truly prophetic foresight of the Holy

Righteous Saint John, in a number of his speeches and teachings, delivered long before this so-called "revolution" - mainly in the words of 1906 and 1907.

Here, for example, what he said in his speech on the Sunday of Orthodoxy on February 19, 1906: "Where does this anarchy, this revolution, this socialism, this ridiculous commune, these strikes, robberies, murder, thefts; this public immorality, this reigning debauchery, this indiscriminate drunkenness? - From unbelief, from godlessness. Therefore, if the government or the assembled Duma want to bring order in the state and respect for the laws, obedience to the government, peace and serenity, reasonable and useful work, they must curb the immoral seal, which inflames all passions, and pay the most careful attention to the education of young people and instill in them, their proud mentors and intellectuals by their own example the proper respect for faith and the Church and the commandments of the Gospel ...".

Clear, simple and straightforward!

This was not done, and Russia was plunged in 1917 into the terrible bloody abyss - a terrible disaster, in its grandiose proportions yet unheard of in history.

"How cunning and deceitful Satan is," he says further in the same, "to ruin Russia, he fanned faithlessness and depravity in it through malicious writers and teachers, through Russian secondary and higher schools and through the so-called intelligentsia. On the basis of faithlessness, cowardice, cowardice, and immorality, the state disintegrates. Without the planting of faith and the fear of God in the population of Russia, it cannot stand. - Rather with repentance to God! Hurry to the firm and unshakeable refuge of faith and the Church! Amen."

In his homily at the Annunciation on March 25, 1906, St. John depicts strongly and colorfully to what terrible moral decay our Russian society has reached and directly points to the inevitability of the destruction of our homeland under such circumstances: "Faith in the word of truth - God's word - has disappeared and been replaced by faith in human reason; the press, which calls itself proudly the sixth great power in the world under the moon, is mostly ruined - there is nothing holy or honorable for it except its wicked pen, often saturated with poison of slander and ridicule; no obedience of children to parents, students to students and students themselves to those who are subject to the authorities; marriages are ruined; family life is degraded; there is no firm politics, everyone is politicking, - pupils and teachers have mostly given up their real jobs and are judging politics; everyone wants autonomy - almost every child thinks of being autonomous; even the secondary and higher spiritual-educational institutions have forgotten their purpose: to be servants of the Church and the salvation of men. The intelligentsia has lost its love for the homeland, and is ready to sell it to foreigners, as Judas betrayed Christ to the wicked scribes and Pharisees; not to mention that it has lost its faith in the Church, which regenerated us to God and the heavenly Fatherland; there are no Christian morals, there is immorality

everywhere; There came, in direct contradiction to the Gospel, the cult of nature, the cult of the passions of the flesh, a total irrepressible debauchery with drunkenness; plunder and theft of public and private banks and postal institutions and parcels; and the enemies of Russia are preparing the state decay. The truth is nowhere to be found, and the fatherland is on the brink of ruin. What can be expected in the future if such faithlessness, such depravity of morals, such lawlessness will be continued? Will Christ come to earth again? Will He be crucified and die for us again? - No; - enough to mock God; enough to trample on His holy laws. He will come soon, but He will come to judge the world, and to reward everyone according to his deeds... Man who calls himself a Christian, come to your senses, return to the faith, to common sense, to the Word of God ...!"

And here is another picture of Russian life before the revolution, which led Russia and the poor deluded Russian people to the horrors of the revolution!

"Russian society suffers precisely because," said St. John in his homily on the feast day of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, December 6, 1906, "there is no faith in Christ, no firmness of faith, no Christian convictions, that society is obsessed with all manner of 'freedoms,' misunderstood, and creates all manner of absurdities, nonsense, and is chasing after the latest fad of government, which it is totally incapable of achieving, due to its heterogeneity, diversity, and mutual antagonism. "All pernicious is the rule of many: one shall be King," says the ancient sage!"

"Now is a terrible time of faithlessness and apostasy from God, a time of soul-shaking iniquities of every kind: many people have turned morally into wild beasts or evil geniuses and spirits. There is nothing holy to them, there is no immortal soul, according to their dreams; there is no God, no resurrection, and no retribution according to works, no judgment impartial, exact, severe for every deed and word, and therefore, they say: smash, kill, burn, steal, rape your neighbor in every way, lie, be a hypocrite, don't submit to any authority, be your own boss - you won't be responsible for anything - so many of the notorious intellectuals and ignoramuses think and say, and so thinking, act according to their views. O Lord! Put an end to the wickedness!" (Word on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - August 15, 1906).

It seems enough of these quotations to clearly see, in what our great all-Russian righteous man saw the main evil of Russian life before the revolution and, at the same time, the main reason, which caused a terrible bloody disaster, which cost the lives of many and many millions of Russian people and plunged our whole country into a terrible disaster, continuing for half a century already!

Faithlessness and godlessness - here is the root source of all evil, here is the root cause of the horrors of the Revolution that befell our Motherland!

It is surprising that for many, even after all they have experienced, this still remains incomprehensible, and they do not see and do not hear, continuing to live in a state of some terrible blindness and spiritual insensitivity, even here in freedom, abroad, with the same sentiments that in their time led Russia to ruin! And even those who consider themselves patriots and think about saving Russia, naively imagine that they can save it by some ordinary human means and ways, without God, without faith, without the true Church, self-confidently, presumptuously, without understanding anything, and all haughtily and arrogantly criticizing what the Holy Church teaches.

A particularly sad picture in this respect is that of the hooray patriots, who, under the guise of love for Russia, do in reality only their own affairs and, under the guise of shrill ostentatious patriotism, often serve the bitter enemies of our motherland.

How many different organizations and parties we have which seem to be working for the salvation of Russia, but does everyone who is a part of them and who leads them have a clear conscience of why our Russia perished and what is the first thing necessary to save it?

Alas! Deeply embedded in the souls of many Russian people was that spiritual decay, that spiritual contagion which led us to the revolution - a spiritual fall is far from being eradicated, and that is the reason why our homeland still has no salvation, why neither the White movement nor the movement of the so-called "Russian Liberation Army" (General A. A. Vlasov) has had any success.

How can we not know and remember that the entire nearly thousand-year history of our homeland is closely connected with the Orthodox Faith and the Church, and that it was the retreat, the departure of the Russian people from their Faith and Church, which caused that terrible bloody catastrophe of 1917!

How can we not understand and feel, knowing at least somewhat the history of Russia, that we care not just about "Russia" but about "Holy Russia", that we need not just about "Russia" but about "Orthodox Russia"!

After all, it is not at all accidental and not without the deepest meaning and significance that our national anthem sings: "The Tsar is Orthodox"... Unfortunately, some people, even those who consider themselves "monarchists" are somehow unable to understand that a mere "Tsar", who is not a true son of the Holy Orthodox Church, and simultaneously the protector and patron of the Holy Faith and the Orthodox Church, will give Russia absolutely nothing, and such Russia, even if Soviet power falls in it, will differ little from the present-day USSR.

Saint Righteous Father John of Kronstadt, who indicated to us the cause of the destruction of Russia, also indicates the only true path to its salvation. And if we see that his bleak prophecies about the destruction of Russia have come true, which he clearly predicted, saying more than once: "The kingdom of Russia staggers and wobbles, close to the fall" - then we must believe him in what he indicates to us this way of salvation.

"Turn to God, Russia," as St. John ardently cried out in his homily on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 8, 1906, and he continues to call out to us in his thoughts until today, desiring to awaken us, Russian people, from the pernicious state of fossilized insensibility. "Turn to God, Russia, who has sinned more before Him, more grievously than all the nations of the earth - turn in weeping and tears, in faith and virtue. Thou hast sinned more than all, for thou hast hadst and hast the unappreciated treasure of life, the Faith of the Orthodox Church, and thou hast trampled and spit upon it in the person of thy proud and wicked sons and daughters, who think themselves educated, but true education, that is according to the Image of God, cannot be without the Church."

"Return, Russia, to your holy, pure, saving, victorious faith and to the Holy Church, your Mother, and you will be victorious and glorious, as in the old faithful time. Have no more hope in your own cantankerous, clouded mind. Fight all evil with the weapon of the Holy Faith, divine wisdom and truth given to you by God, with prayer, piety, the cross, courage, loyalty and faithfulness of your sons" (Word for August 30, 1906).

"We need a universal moral cleansing, a nation-wide deep repentance, a change of pagan mores into Christian ones: let us be purified, washed with tears of repentance, reconciled to God, and he will be reconciled to us!"

This is the covenant left to us by our great righteous man, this is the only way of salvation for us and for the whole world, because the fate of our homeland Russia is now so closely connected with the fate of the rest of the world, which is now experiencing much of what Russia experienced before the revolution of 1917!

A terrible abyss has opened up before us, ready to engulf us all. But our fate is in our hands. Russia did not obey in due time the prophet of God, the Holy Prophet of God, Saint John, and collapsed into the pit of destruction. If we do not listen to him now, after everything that has happened in these past fifty years, no doubt, we will all finally perish, and with us the whole world, so rapidly rolling downhill to the abyss.

May the fiery call of our great righteous man resound unceasingly in our ears and hearts: "Hurry with repentance to God! Hurry to the firm and unshakeable refuge of Faith and Church!" Let us not delay and procrastinate!

Chapter 15: Terrible Night.

July 3/16 - July 4/17, 1918 (Word before the Memorial Service for the murdered Royal Family on the night of July 4/17, 1967 at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville)

On this coming night it will be exactly 49 years since that dreadful night, when in Ekaterinburg an unprecedented evil occurred, unprecedented in its cruelty, the unusual power of the evil shown in it, and especially its devastating consequences not only for our homeland, Russia, but for the whole world. It is quite wrong to see this terrible atrocity only as a purely political act, just as it is inappropriate for us to hold memorial services for the murdered Imperial Family, an exercise in politics, of which some like to accuse us.

It is an act of religious and mystical, which has a deep and terrible mystical meaning. And this religious and mystical meaning of it we must always keep in mind and remember it well, in order to properly assess everything that has happened in Russia and that is happening today in the world.

It is beautifully explained to us by our great All-Russian righteous St. John of Kronstadt, recently renowned by us, who in his spirit for many years had seen through this terrible atrocity. When pious pilgrims came to him one day from Perm province, he suddenly said: "A black cross hangs over Perm" (Yekaterinburg was then part of Perm Province). Only after the terrible events of 1918 did they understand the meaning of these prophetic words. One day during the Divine Liturgy at the Leushinsky Monastery in St. Petersburg, St. John the Righteous called out in his sermon: "Repent, repent! A terrible time is coming, so terrible that you cannot even imagine it!" And when the 80-year-old old lady, Abbess Taisia, asked him, "Father, when will it be?" He replied, "You and I, Mother, will not live to see it, but they," and he pointed to the younger nuns, "will."

In his remarkable word on the birthday of the Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich in 1902, St. John the Righteous. John literally said thus: "... yes, through the intermediary of sovereign persons the Lord guard the good of the earthly kingdoms and, in particular, the good of His Church, not allowing godless doctrines, heresies and schisms to afflict it, - and the greatest villain of the world, who will appear in the end times - the Antichrist may not appear among us, because of the autocratic royal authority, which holds back the godless sway and absurd teachings of the godless. The apostle says that as long as the autocratic royal power exists, no antichrist will appear on earth.

"The mystery of godlessness is already being dealt with," he says, "but as long as the Sovereign is not taken from us: 'Till now the Sovereign shall be from the midst,' and 'then shall the lawless one appear,' whom 'the Lord Jesus shall kill with the Spirit of his mouth.'" (2Sol.2:7-8).

In one of his other sermons, St. John explicitly said "when the Lord Jesus kills with the Spirit of his mouth" (2Solves 7:7-8). John explicitly said that "when the Holder now (the Orthodox Russian Tsar-Summoner, according to his repeated interpretation) is taken from the earth, then the Antichrist will come" (see word 1906).

In his 1907 sermon, St. John the Righteous said in his sermon. John menacingly prophesied, "The Russian kingdom is wavering, wobbling, close to falling. If things go on like this in Russia, and the godless and crazy anarchists will not be subjected to the righteous penalty of the law, and if Russia is not cleansed of many tares, she will be devastated, like ancient kingdoms and cities, wiped out by the justice of God for their godlessness and their lawlessness ... Poor fatherland, will you ever prosper? Only when you will cling with all your heart to God, the Church, love for the Tsar and the Fatherland, and purity of morals ... And what would we Russians be without the Tsar? Our enemies would soon try to destroy the very name of Russia, because the carrier and guardian of Russia, after God, is the Tsar of Russia - the Tsar Autocrat: without him Russia is not Russia.

Isn't it amazing how literally these prophetic words of our great righteous and visionary were fulfillment? - No more Tsar - no more Russia!

And now, since there was no "Sustainer" - the Orthodox Autocratic Tsar of Russia, and with him also no longer the former Russia as Holy Russia, - we clearly see what a frantic and intense work has begun around the world to create the conditions and environment, which would be favorable to the earliest appearance of the Antichrist.

Truly only the spiritually blind can fail to see it!

How quickly everything in the world began to change radically for the worse: what a persecution (whether open or hidden!) arose everywhere against the true faith and the Church, how cunningly and skillfully, under every conceivable pretext, all the good religious and moral foundations of life were undermined, what cynical freethinking, what shameless moral licentiousness in their place was taking root everywhere! Especially in recent times, after the Second World War, this widespread retreat, which, according to the words of the Apostle (2Sol.2:2-3), shall precede the appearance of the Antichrist, has taken really giant steps. Literally, almost every day brings us more and more soul-crushing news in this regard.

After all this, can we please and lull ourselves, trying to assure ourselves and others that all is well, that everything in the world is going quite normally, toward positive progress? Wouldn't that mean deceiving yourself and others?

All right-thinking, honest and sensible people should now be able to recognize the terrible religious and mystical meaning hidden in this terrible crime in Ekaterinburg, that it is not a mere political murder, of which there have been many in history.

The Russian Orthodox Tsar, and with him the Orthodox Russia must be eliminated, destroyed, so that nothing would prevent the rapid enthronement on earth of the enemy of Christ - the Antichrist. And now you and I are just unwitting witnesses of this intense preparation for his enthronement!

The times and dates, however, are not clearly revealed to us, but there are more than enough signs of its proximity. We are daily given more and more signs, which are striking and comprehensible to those who are still willing and able to understand.

So our memorial service for the royal martyrs is by no means a political act, but a religious and mystical one. And so this memorial service has a special, different character from ordinary memorial services. Of course, as at all memorial services, we pray for the forgiveness and remission of the sins of the murdered, just as we pray for all the saints not yet officially glorified by the Church, but we also pray a penitential prayer for the forgiveness of our own sins, since we all, Russian Orthodox people, are guilty, to a greater or lesser degree, of allowing such terrible atrocities to happen on our Russian soil. In view of this, it has been established by our Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority that, at the end of this memorial service, a special prayer of penitence, the words and thoughts of which have been taken from the prayer of the three pious youths in the furnace of fire, from the book of Daniel, the Prophet. At the same time, we ask our royal martyrs to offer a prayer for us before the throne of God, for our unhappy, suffering homeland Russia and for the entire modern world, whose fate is so obviously linked to that of our Russia. Amen.

Chapter 16: The Spirit of Orthodoxy in our Worship

Your Eminence, Your Eminences, Most Venerable Fathers, Dearly beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord! In considering what to dedicate my word on this High Holy Day, I have settled on

the topic of "The Spirit of Orthodoxy in our Divine Service. I consider this topic to be especially important and vital in our time. Without daring to answer this matter of paramount importance in my own words, I want to try to illuminate it with the words of Scripture and high spiritual authorities.

"We possess a treasure that has no price," says our great Christian writer N. V. Gogol, the centennial of whose death we commemorate this year ("Selected Places from the Correspondence with Friends"). This treasure is Orthodoxy. Do we realize all this as Gogol did? Do we value this great treasure as we should, do we cherish it?

"O wonderful, life-giving, divine Orthodoxy, I see your bright image!" - In his inspired diary, the great righteous man of our time, Father John of Kronstadt, exclaims. John of Kronstadt.

Are we so moved by Orthodoxy? Do we also see its bright image? In what can we see this image of Orthodoxy?

It is most clearly and vividly portrayed in our marvelous, incomparable divine service. "If you want to see in all heavenly light the image of the Orthodoxy of our Church," says the same righteous man of memory, "read the whole circle of our liturgical books, and you will see what a wondrous institution it is on earth - not human, but Divine" (III, p. 180).

It would be a great mistake to think that Orthodoxy consists only in outward appearance, in liturgical rites performed formally, as many unfortunately think. But Orthodoxy is not about dogmas alone, either, as cold, abstract truths disconnected from life. Orthodoxy is not an abstract philosophical system: it cannot be reduced to mere speculation, even if it is very scholarly and very lofty.

Orthodoxy is all in spirit and life.

"The words, which I have spoken to you, are spirit and life" - Christ the Truth Himself testified (John 6:63). This Orthodoxy is the true doctrine of Christ, not perverted by any human fabrication, which, according to Christ Himself, is the spirit and life.

What is the spirit of Orthodoxy? What is it?

The spirit of Orthodoxy, as the Word of God clearly teaches about it, is in its ascetic detachment from this world, which lies in evil (1Jn.5:19).

My Kingdom is not of this world"-Christ answered Pilate's question, "Are You the King? (John 18:36,37), and to His apostles in His farewell interview He inspired that they are "not of this world" (John 15:19), as He was "not of this world" (John 17:16).

"The world" is the totality of sinful passions and lusts at war in the world. These sinful passions have so enslaved people who are alien to Christ's teaching, who do not want to give themselves wholeheartedly to Christ, that the "prince of this world" is called the devil. As such is called by none other than Christ Himself, who came to save the world (John 12:31). This is because, according to the beloved disciple of Christ, "all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of men" (1 John 2:16). Therefore, "Do not love the world," he cries, "nor that which is in the world. Whoever loves the world does not have the love of the Father in him" (1 John 2:15). The apostle James, the Lord's brother, also teaches in perfect agreement with him. "Adulterers and adulterers," he says, "do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity against God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Not just monks, but all Christians are inspired by the great apostle of tongues Paul this ascetic detachment from the world, saying, "Those who take advantage of this world must be like those who do not" (1 Corinthians 7:31).

Orthodoxy is - a holistic worldview of life, the ultimate goal of which is not beautification of this earthly life, as some mistakenly think, but the education of whole-hearted citizens for a future heavenly kingdom. Therefore, it absolutely excludes any concession, any agreement with this world, which lies in the evil. For a truly Orthodox Christian, there can be no question of any compromise with evil: the very thought of it disgusts him, because his spiritual nature is completely alien to any kind of duplicity. He remembers very well the words of Christ: "No man can work with two masters: he will love the one, and hate the other: or he will hold fast to the one, but will despise the other: you cannot work for God, nor for mammon" (Matt. 6:24). (Matt 6:24), "mammon" here means, of course, not in the narrow sense of the word, the wealth, as such only, but the whole world, lying in the evil, most vividly personified by the service to the idol of wealth, as the means to satisfy the passions and lusts. Whoever wishes to be a true follower of Christ, that is, a true Orthodox Christian, must therefore, through the ascetic feat of self-denial, renounce serving his passions. This is clearly and categorically, without allowing any misinterpretation, says the Subordinationist Christ Himself, who likens this feat of self-denial to crucifixion on the cross: "...if he will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me he shall come" (Mark 8:34). The same asserts St. Apostle Paul, saying, "they who are Christ's, the flesh is crucified with passions and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). From this it is clear that the way of salvation in the Word of God is called "the narrow way and narrow gate", which is contrasted with the "wide way" and "wide gate", leading to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

From all of the foregoing it is evidently clear that Orthodoxy as authentic Christianity, preserved in all its purity and intactness, is a world of special people, set apart from the "world that lies in evil," alien to it by its inner disposition.

"No one can approach God," says the great ascetic of the sixth century, St. Isaac the Syrian, "unless he removes himself from the world. I do not call removal from the body, but removal from worldly affairs. That is the virtue, that man should not occupy his mind with the world" (Word I).

"Contact with the world stains our soul firmly," says the great mentor of spiritual life and our native ascetic Bishop Theophanes, Vyshensky the Hermit (Letters on the Christian Life, p. 65), "to be alienated from the world is a commandment" (Ibid., p. 23).

It is this aloofness, this ascetic detachment from the world, that is the most characteristic, typical feature of Orthodoxy.

Everything in our worship reminds us, vividly and vividly, of this ascetic detachment from the world, which is necessary for a true Christian. "Entering the temple during the service," says Fr. John of Kronstadt, "You enter as if into another world" (II, p. 18).

What other world is this? This is the world to which the thoughts and feelings of a truly orthodox Christian always aspire, perceiving himself in this present, earthly world as only a temporary guest - "stranger" and "stranger" (Hebr.11:13). This is the heavenly world, our heavenly fatherland, the sorrow for separation from which we confess in the weeks leading up to Lent, singing in our churches the touchingly majestic hymn of the Jews, condemned for their sins to a distant and dark captivity of Babylon: "On the rivers of Babylon there we sit and weep, when we shall remember Zion... If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten..." (Psalm 136:1,5). We cannot forget this heavenly homeland of ours, and that is why our Orthodox Church is so dear to us, that with all its internal structure and the divine service performed in it, it forces us, still living on earth, to break away from all earthly things and be transported to this heavenly world. This is beautifully expressed in the words of our Lenten liturgical text: "In the temple of Thy glory we stand in heaven, O Mother of God". This is what attracts us to our Orthodox Church, as it gives us a happy opportunity to feel, at least for a while, like celestials, while still in this "earthly hell of sorrow and tears. "Truly the temple is heaven on earth," says Fr. John of Kronstadt, "for where the throne of God is, where the sacraments are administered, where angels serve with men, where the incessant praise of the Almighty is, there truly is heaven and heaven is heaven.

Indeed, everything in the temple reminds the Orthodox Christian that he must be alien to this world with all its passions and lusts, - that while still living in the body on earth, he must have a

mind and heart to go there, where he will live forever - in our heavenly fatherland. This ascetic detachment from the world is also signified by the special clothes the clergy put on both inside and outside the church, by their very appearance, by the stern faces of our icons, which have nothing in common with secular painting, by the impassioned church singing, which evokes no earthly feelings or emotions, by the special sacred language of our worship, which differs from the ordinary spoken language, and, of course, by the content of our worship service itself. Its richness and depth of instruction for the faithful is truly inexhaustible! Our worship is a true school of godliness, taking the soul completely away from this sinful world and transporting it into the realm of the Spirit. Here is revealed to us, in vivid images, the entire history of the Divine Housekeeping - God's good planning for human salvation in the Old and New Testament; the destinies of God's Spirit-led Church, both throughout the world and within our earthly homeland Russia, are revealed, with inspiring to imitate the lofty examples of the lives of God's saints, especially the holy martyrs and saints, who truly denied themselves, took up their cross and followed Christ; Here the dogmatic teaching of the Church is presented, which overwhelms the soul with reverence for the greatness of the Creator, and moral lessons of a truly Christian life are taught, which purify the heart. Whoever listens attentively to the divine service, who always participates in it with his mind and heart, cannot fail to feel the power of the powerful call of the Church, which through its divine service seeks to tear us all away from all earthly attachments and passions and make us those "earthly angels" and "heavenly men," whom it chants in its troparions, acknowledgments, verses, and canons.

The ideal of life, which the Holy Church wants to instill in us through its divine service, is exactly that, which, as we mentioned above, is spoken about by Christ the Savior Himself in His Divine Gospel, and which the Apostles teach us in their letters - the renunciation of the sinful world with its passions and lusts and the total dedication of oneself to God, in communion with Whom alone the troubled human soul can find rest and complete inner satisfaction. It is necessary to vigorously break with all sinful passions and lusts, which torment and torment a poor man in this world, making him a captive of the devil, in order to unite with God, in Whom alone man finds that bliss, for which he unconsciously strives during his entire earthly life, but does not find it in most cases, because he seeks it where it cannot be found. People go in darkness on their way of life, not knowing the guidance of the Orthodox Church, or presumptuously rejecting it, and therefore they suffer and suffer in poverty. For this reason human life is full of evil and suffering, especially in the present age, when the devil is especially furious against the faith of Christ. Having failed in his intention to destroy the Orthodox Church, he now seeks, through unfaithful clergy, ready to betray Christ for earthly well-being, earthly goods, to subdue it, to make it an instrument of his hellish plans.

Some are embarrassed by the fact that the Orthodox are now in the minority on earth. But didn't Christ say to His true followers: "Do not fear the little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk.12:32)? Orthodoxy is the fate of the select few who, by God's help,

have been able to turn away from the spirit of this world. That is why very few people understand it, even among those who are called Orthodox Christians. For in our time, as never before, the spirit of this world and the prince of this world, the devil, has risen up among people, to whom very good people, to put it in secular terms, zealously serve, often without even realizing it, without being clearly aware of it. But to be saved we must become Orthodox in spirit. One name without content, one external affiliation to the Church will not save.

Even worse, even more terrible is the phenomenon widespread in our time: people who consider themselves Orthodox are introducing into Orthodoxy innovations alien to its spirit, such innovations that undermine the spirit of Orthodoxy. Instead of true Orthodoxy in the name of Orthodoxy they preach thoughts and ideas that are contrary to the fundamental requirements of its spirit - they want to serve both God and mammon. They want to remain Christians, and not to break with this world, which lies in the evil! Such represent in themselves and in their followers the salt, which, according to the word of Christ, is good for nothing, but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot (Matthew 5:13). They also try to reform, pervert, and distort our wondrous worship to suit their corrupted taste, and they want to make it into salt, so that it loses its saving power for people. Let us remember, however, that about such preachers of false orthodoxy, as well as about all heresy teachers, the Apostle said firmly and categorically: "If even we, or an angel from heaven began to preach to you something other than what we preached to you, let there be anathema" (Gal.1:8)!

Now by His providence God has called us, the Orthodox Russian people, through our dispersion, to be confessors of Orthodoxy throughout the world. our worship is the preaching of Orthodoxy to all the peoples of the earth who did not know it or who have deviated from it. It is for this reason that at this time we must be especially aware of the grave responsibility that rests upon us. Through our marvelous, God-inspired worship, we must reveal to the world the true spirit of Orthodoxy, and not any falsifications or surrogates of it-the salt of it. And we will be able to achieve this only if we ourselves are truly Orthodox in spirit, not if we bear only the outward image of Orthodoxy, or even its name alone, rejecting its power and spirit. Our inner self-education in a strictly Orthodox spirit is at present the only sure guarantee of both our personal salvation and the salvation of all mankind, which has strayed far from the true teaching of Christ and is about to descend into the abyss of destruction. Orthodoxy-but authentic Orthodoxy in its spirit of detachment from "the world that lies in evil"-is the only force capable of renewing the world and saving it from its inevitable catastrophe.

Chapter 17: Church Life.

Practical Directions.

Practical guidelines for the churching of life naturally follow from the very concept of "churching of life.

But what do we mean by "churching of life"?

This becomes clear from the concept of "Church."

What is the Church?

According to the teaching of the Word of God, especially figuratively and vividly expressed in the letters of St. Paul, the Church is the Body of Christ, in which Christ Himself is the Head, and we are all members of that Body (see Eph.1:22-23; 2:18-22; 4 all, and especially Eph.4:11-24; 5:23-25; Col.1:18-24).

Another imaginative comparison that the Word of God uses to make clear to us the concept of the Church presents the Church as a majestic building, a "spiritual house" made of "living stones" in which "the cornerstone" and the only "foundation" in the proper sense is Christ Himself (Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:4-7; 1 Corinthians 3:11-16; 10, 4). Christ is the foundation of this magnificent building of the Church, and we are all the "living stones" of which this building is made.

From this it should be abundantly clear what is to be understood by "the churching of life. To "churchify" one's life means to live with the clear and profound conviction that you are a member of the body of Christ, one of the "living stones" of which the church is built. And to live according to that consciousness, in order not to become an unfit member, which is cut off from the body, a stone, which has fallen out of the building, or by the figurative comparison of Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, a dried up branch, which is cut off from the vine as not bearing fruit, and is thrown into the fire, where it burns up (John 15 :1-6).

In order not to suffer such a bitter fate and not to perish forever, you need to "church" your life: you must not only be registered in the Church, but also live in the Church, be a living member of the Church, who participates in the life of the Church as Christ's body, as a single unified organism.

Do all modern Christians live in the Church?

Alas! Far from it. This is why we now have to raise the question of the necessity of churching life, something that would have been strange to talk about in the first centuries of Christianity, when everyone who belonged to the Church actually lived in the Church. As we know from the

book of the Acts of the Apostles, the first Christians lived in the Church to such an extent that their personal life merged with the life of the whole Church: "they were constantly in the apostles' teaching, in the communion and breaking of bread and in prayers.... And they were together and had all things in common: and they sold their possessions and goods of every kind, and divided them all according to the needs of every man. And they were in the temple with one accord every day, and, breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and being in love with all the people" (Acts 2:42-47). The very fact that the first Christians were not only enrolled in the Church, but lived in the Church, was of tremendous missionary significance: "the Lord daily applied those who were saved to the Church" (Acts 2:47). (Acts 2:47) - so inspired and attracted to imitation the high example of such a truly Christian life, that those around the Christians, seeing their life, were eager to become Christians.

The Deuteronomist goes on to characterize the life of the first Christians in the same way: "The multitude who believed had one heart and one soul, and no one called anything of their possessions his own, but they had everything in common... There was no one among them who had need; for all who owned lands or houses, when they sold them, they brought the price of what they sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and whatever they needed was given to them. And the apostles testified with great power to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:32-35).

What is this if not a vivid fulfillment on believers of the wonderful, so-called "high priestly prayer" of the Lord Jesus Christ: "that they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21)?

This most sincere, most intimate unity of all believers, in the image of the unity of the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, is the Church. And he who sincerely, with all his heart, with all his inner being, participates in such a unity of gracious Truth and Love, - he is "living in the Church.

Unfortunately, that almost ideal life of the first Christians did not last long; it diverged from its ideal and became more and more unchristian as time passed. There were many reasons for that, and it is not our task now to look into all of them in detail. The chief of them was the gradual dominance of the Christians of "the spirit of this world which lays in evil" (1 John 5:19), the weakening of faith and love, the increase of lawlessness and, as a consequence, the conversion of Christian society into "salt which chafes" - having lost its power, against which the Lord Jesus Christ warned His followers (Matthew 5:13). And nowadays, the life of Christian society has become so unchurched that most Christians of our time are "Christians" in name only: they only formally belong to the Church, but they do not live in the Church.

Therefore, for Christian pastors of our time, the question of the churching of their flock, and to some extent, perhaps, the question of the churching of themselves, has arisen as the main question of their pastoral activity, because this process of "retreat," of which St. Paul foretold (2Sol.2:3) is gradually seizing more and more not only the ordinary flock, but the pastors themselves, seeking to make them "salt of the beguiling".

Everyone has to struggle against this gripping Christian society, for the sake of saving his soul and the souls of his neighbors, but first of all, this duty lies, of course, on the shepherds of the Church. The main task of the contemporary Christian pastor is the churching of himself and his family, so that this work may be carried out successfully, and so that no one could say to a pastor who is zealous for the churching of his flock: "Physician, heal thyself!" (Luke 4:23).

What practical guidelines can we offer for such a churching of life?

To this end, let us consider, first of all, in order, all those features which characterized the life of the first Christians, in accordance with the above-mentioned passages of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

"They were constantly abiding in the apostles' teaching, in the communion and breaking of bread, and in prayers... Every day with one accord in the temple... praising God" - this is the first and necessary condition for "living in the Church". We must constantly study the Word of God and all that the Church teaches us: all its rules, regulations, pious customs and traditions. We must pray incessantly, praising and glorifying our Creator and Savior God. We should pray our own private prayer at home and, at the same time, we should try, if not every day, which in the present conditions of life is impossible for most people, then as often as possible to be in the church, taking part in the common prayer of the church. It is necessary to participate in the "breaking of bread," that is, in the greatest Sacrament of Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, and also, of course, to receive the other gracious sacraments instituted by the Church, sanctifying all our lives by the grace of the Holy Spirit, which has been ever present in the Church since the great day of Christian Pentecost, and not to do anything without the blessing of the Church.

"The multitude who believed had one heart and one soul, and no one called anything of his possessions his own, but they had everything in common... "Since all Christians must recognize the Word of God and the teaching of the Church as their supreme authority, it is natural, thanks to this, that complete agreement and unanimity should reign among them, and their mutual unity in the graceful Truth and Love should by itself exclude all dissension and disagreement, all dissension, quarrels and divisions, not to mention animosity and hatred. Their mutual love united them as if in one family, so that there was no place left for any self-love, for egoism; therefore, in Christian society, there must not be such an emphasis on "property rights," which is associated

with resentment and deprivation of everything necessary for life. A true Christian must always sacrifice himself and his material possessions for the sake of the welfare of his neighbors, which he himself uses, and, if necessary, give his life for his neighbors, as the Lord Jesus Christ taught about it at the Last Supper: "Greater love hath no man than this, that no man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

"And all who owned lands or houses, when they sold them, brought the price of what they sold, and laid it at the apostles' feet, and whatever anyone had need of, was given to them..." - This is the basis of true Christian charity, the only motive of which should be love, but not vanity or any other sinful feeling, which often lies in the basis of the so-called "public charity" of modern, secularized society.

From all the aforesaid it should be clear to us that in the basis of life of the first Christian society, which was very close to the ideal, was the fulfillment of that commandment, which the Lord Himself called the main commandment in the law. This is a commandment to love God and love your neighbor. Consequently, all the work of the modern Christian pastor, aimed at the churching of life, should go in this direction - it should be directed first of all to the cultivation, both in himself and in the souls of his flock, of love for God and for others. Without this, all his pastoral labors, all his complaints about the decline of faith and morality in his flock, and all his talk about the churching of life, are pointless, meaningless, and aimless.

Another question is what ways to go about it, how to achieve it.

But we have established the most important point, and on the basis of this, it is easier to determine the ways we should go in order to make our life holy.

The pastor must begin, first of all, with himself. It is inadmissible to practice our daily morning and evening home prayer rituals with all diligence. As often as circumstances permit, attend the Divine Services in the church, and consider the highest joy for oneself, in particular the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, preparing for it with all diligence and thoroughness, as prescribed by the regulations of the Church. All Divine services, not excluding the Liturgy, should be performed devoutly, reverently, and worshipfully, so that the flock may feel the sincerity of their pastor's prayers and be certain that their pastor is really praying and holding the office, and not only "serving" his official duty, as a "hired hand" indifferent to his work, or, God forbid (which is really bad!), as one who is burdensome to it and would rather "get rid" of it.

The pastor must be well acquainted with all the canonical rules concerning his way of life and determining his conduct, and must try with all possible rigor (as circumstances permit, of course) to abide by them. It is absolutely inadmissible for a pastor to adhere to all kinds of sinful passions or "passions," such as smoking tobacco, playing cards, etc. It is especially important to

observe all the fasts established by the Church and, without good reason, to avoid breaking them in one's home, in one's family. Temptations of this kind are often very destructive to the flock.

In general, for the good of his flock, for the salvation of their souls, and also to relieve the tribulations of their temporary earthly life, a pastor must accustom himself to sacrifice himself, his own personal interests and tastes, as Christ the Savior said, "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). And he must always remember the formidable, warning words of the Lord: "Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt.18:6) and "woe to the man through whom sin comes" (Matt.18:7) - all the more "woe" to the pastor who causes his flock to be led astray.

The shepherd must also train his family to the same self-sacrifice, raising his children in the fear of God, so that they may in no way diminish in the eyes of believers the dignity of their father, and so that his family may truly be a "house church."

Here is the first and basic practical instruction for the pastor who is zealous about the churching of life: take care with all diligence to "church" first of all your own personal life and the life of your family!

This is the first and most important step toward the churching of your flock, toward the churching of modern society. Only having churches himself and his family, a pastor can hope to have some success in churches of those around him, being a living example of the church to all - "a lamp burning and shining", in fulfillment of the words of Christ: "you are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14).

How should we then conduct the work of churching our flock?

The main attention must be focused on the education of children, from their infancy, in the spirit of true Orthodox ecclesialism, influencing their parents in every way possible, and seeking to have as much interaction with their children as possible. A high example for this is our pastor Christ, who so loved children, embraced them, blessed them and once said: "Do not let children come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt.19:14; Mk.10:14). All that is perceived by all five senses in early childhood, all the earliest infant impressions - all that is most firmly imprinted in the soul and usually remains for life. Beautifully talks about this in his remarkable book, St. Theophan, Vyschensky Hermit: "As the first food has a significant influence on the temperament of the body, and the first objects, which are engaged in the soul, have a strong influence on the nature of the soul or the tone of its life. The developing senses provide material for the imagination; the imagined object is stored in memory and constitutes, so to speak, the content of the soul. Let the senses receive their first impressions from sacred objects: an icon and

the light of a lamp for the eyes, sacred songs for the ears, etc. The child does not yet understand anything of what is before his eyes, but his eye and ear are accustomed to these objects, and they preoccupy the heart and thereby put other objects at a distance. Behind the senses and the first exercises will be sacred: it will be easier for him to imagine these objects than others: such are his first bends. Then, for a future time, the graceful things, which one side is essentially connected with the forms of the senses and imagination, will attract him no other way than under the sacred forms. - Therefore, let the child be shielded by sacred objects of all kinds; everything that can corrupt in examples, images, things, be removed" ("The Way to Salvation," p. 35).

The pastor should try his best to persuade parents to bring their children to church as often as possible, even as infants, for communion with the Holy Mysteries of Christ, in which is the main guarantee of true churching of life.

In general, there is no better school of godliness for children and adults alike, no better school for the churching of life, than a church with a well-arranged Divine Service and the gracious sacraments administered in it. It is only important that everything in the temple should be beautiful, that everything should attract and dispose to prayers: its inner structure and decorations, its devout service, intelligible, strictly prayerful reading and singing, and everything else. The main concern of a pastor, who is zealous for the churching of his flock, should be to take care of such an all-round ecclesiastical splendor, so that everyone who visits his church can say, like our ancestors who visited the Constantinople church of St. Sophia in the time of St. Vladimir: "We did not know whether we were on earth or in heaven: we cannot forget this beauty...". It goes without saying that when speaking of the beauty and opulence of Church Worship, we mean the inner, spiritual beauty and opulence, which are due primarily to the sincere prayerful attitude of the participants of the service, and not any outer theatrical effects or techniques, which generally should have no place in Orthodox Worship.

The first condition of true ecclesiality, of life in the Church, is that love for God is fostered through the Divine Service. Whereas the private prayer of each individual believer is called by the Fathers "the breath of the spirit," the Divine Service performed by the body of believers is, as it were, the breath of the entire church organism, the entire Body of the Church. Just as breathing is necessary for all the members of the ordinary bodily organism, because it animates them through the blood, which is constantly purified by the oxygen it receives from the air, so constant participation in Divine Service is absolutely necessary for all the members of the Body of Christ, the Church, because it also animates them spiritually through the grace of the Holy Spirit received through church prayer and sacramental acts. Whoever does not participate in the Divine service spiritually dies and falls away from the Church, as a member dies and is cut off, in which the blood circulation stops, as a withered branch is cut off from a vine, according to the Lord's figurative comparison (John 15:6).

This is why, in ancient times, those who missed three consecutive Sunday liturgies were excommunicated from the Church.

From this it is obvious that the main task of a pastor who wishes to rechristen his flock must be the striving to connect believers more firmly with the Divine service taking place in the church, so that they would not only be indifferent spectators and listeners, who come to the church as to some concert or theatrical performance, and become bored because they do not understand what is happening in the church, as it is very often the case in our days. The pastor must acquaint his flock with the Divine Service and, moreover, he must give them the opportunity to participate legitimately in the Divine Service, a participation to which Christian antiquity and the very text of our liturgical books give them the right. The officiating priest at the Divine Liturgy calls on those praying to praise and sing to God not only "with one heart," but also "with one mouth. The active participation of the laity in the Divine Liturgy is also indicated by the many notes in the Typicon and liturgical books, where the word "countenance" is very often replaced by the pronoun "we", as for example: "But we sing in the voice "Lord I have cried", or: "And we sing: 'O Gladsome Light'" (Tip. 2). (Tip. ch. 2). Very frequently, instead of "countenance", we use the phrase "the people", "and the people sing" (e.g., the sequence of Holy Subchurch at Vespers). In the Sluzhebnik it is explicitly stated that at the cry of the priest before the Gospel "Peace to all" the "people" respond: "And to thy spirit". Not only in deep Christian antiquity, but in some places, as, for example, in Carpathian Rus', even today all praying people take a very active part in the Divine Liturgy with a common national chant. And this is quite right, because it corresponds to the very idea of our worship, because worship is a public prayer in which everyone should take part: the shepherds pray together with their pastor, as if supporting his prayer with their own, rather than standing as idle spectators and listeners who understand nothing of what is happening in the church.

Thus, a very important, perhaps even paramount task, after the churching of oneself and one's family, is for a pastor who is zealous for the churching of his flock, to care for the church education of children and then to involve all, both children and adults, in active participation in Divine service, by restoring public singing in churches. Of course, given the modern spiritual savagery of the flock, especially of the intelligentsia, this is not an easy task, but it is always possible to approach its realization gradually, as is already being done in some places: first, the whole church sings the most familiar prayers and chants, such as: "Heavenly King," "Our Father," "I believe," and then add new chants little by little as the old ones are learned: "Hail Mary the Virgin," "The Resurrection of Christ," at the all-night vigil, etc.

Here again, it is clear that it is best to teach this kind of common participation in the divine service to our flock from a very early age. How important, therefore, it is for every pastor to have a parochial school in his church! It is not easy to "church" an adult or, even more so, an elderly person, who has lived his whole life away from the Church, but what a rewarding and truly

grateful labor to educate in the spirit of the Church such receptive and responsive to everything good and holy souls of children! And we can say with all firmness that the pastor who neglects this most important and sacred duty, does not fulfill his basic pastoral duty, and deprives himself of the greatest consolation and high spiritual satisfaction. One should never be embarrassed by the small number of children in a parish, and thus justify his neglect: we must remember that, according to the words of Christ, one human soul is more precious than the whole material world (Mark 8:36-37).

At that, the pastor must remember that the most dangerous age for children is the so-called "transitional age" - approximately from 12 to 16 years old - when he must watch that children, having fallen under different kinds of evil influences, do not go away from the Church "to the country far away.

In order to keep adolescents turning into young men and women in the Church, St. Vladimir's Youth Clubs or their corresponding church organizations are appointed. And here we should not be embarrassed by the small number of such youth representatives in the parish, but should hold regular classes with them, no matter how many there are, at least two or three.

Finally, a very important way of educating the whole flock in the spirit of the church, after all of the above, is to regularly preach sermons and hold extra-luncheon talks on Sundays or on other days, where convenient, depending on local circumstances. Both in sermons and in out-of-service talks, the pastor must necessarily hold and emphasize the basic idea that all believers are living members of the one Body of Christ, and that all must take an active part in the common life of that Body, fostering love for the Head of that Body - Christ our Savior - and for their fellow-members - our neighbors. It is very important to bring our hearers' thoughts and feelings back to the life of the first Christians, seeking to inspire them with a zeal to imitate them. We must not be overly involved in various lofty and abstract religious-philosophical themes, wishing to please educated parishioners, but more and more often talk about what life in the Church obliges us to do: how we must live so as not to be strangers in the Church, but, on the contrary: everything that the Church teaches and commands us would be for us native, dear, dear, so intimately our possessions, for which we would be willing to give our lives. And first of all, it is necessary to begin by teaching believers their outward behavior, because, as the Fathers say, "the inner without the outer is not good," how to properly cross oneself, how to pray morning and evening, before and after meals, before and after any work, how to place holy icons in the rooms of one's apartment and light lamps before them, how to honor them in order to be able to rebuke those who blaspheme the holy icon. The church is a place where the sectarians, who are guilty of the crime of worship, must be properly venerated, so as to be able to give a proper rebuke to the sectarians who worship the icons. To enter the church, and to conduct oneself during the Divine Liturgy: how to put on the icons and other holy things, how to light candles before them, how to make homage at the waist and on the ground, when it is not proper to make homage and why;

how to prepare for confession, how to give Holy Communion, how to come to the Holy Communion, how to conduct oneself after the Communion, etc.

Believers, in order to be churchmen, should necessarily know about the existence of the book "Trebnik" and that this book contains very important prayers and the succession of the sacraments, which sanctify the entire life, beginning from the birth of man to the consecration of the body to earth after death and prayers for the repose of the souls of the deceased. It is of the utmost importance to urge the faithful to refer to the prayers in this book on every occasion in their lives, and to seek thereby the blessing of the Church for everything they undertake.

How important it is for the pastor to make his flock so familiar with the Divine Service that he will never feel constrained to perform it on any day of the week: that there will always be believers in his parish who can read, sing and serve, even in the absence of an official pastor and acolyte.

It is necessary constantly to instill in the flock the importance of keeping the fasts established by the Church, and at the same time to point out that he who breaks the fast "without the blessing of his confessor" and "besides the infirmities of the body" shall thereby fall away from the Church, since the Apostolic Rule 69 commanded that those who do not fast during the Holy Week, Wednesday and Friday shall be excommunicated from the Church. It is important to acquaint believers with other canonical rules governing their life and conduct as members of the Christian Church, especially the rules concerning marriage, entertainment, and amusement, which are incompatible with Christian rank.

It is also of no small importance to remind the faithful of all those pious customs and traditions, which, though not a direct Church regulation, are quite in accord with the spirit of true ecclesiastical and Orthodox piety, and at the same time to warn against all kinds of customs and traditions foreign to our faith and often directly opposed to the spirit of the Church, which have invaded us from the West, corrupting the true Church and destroying our original Orthodox life. In general, strengthening in the life of the flock the Orthodox church life inherited from our pious ancestors is extremely important and should therefore also be part of the pastor's task.

But not only in sermons and in out-of-service talks should the pastor seek to inculcate in his flock the spirit of the Church; he should make use of every favorable opportunity to do so: At every encounter with his parishioners, whether at home, at their house, or as a guest, or elsewhere, even at a chance meeting in the street, the true pastor dares not forget his basic duty to foster in his flock the spirit of true churchness, and to do so not only in words, but also by personal example, which is sometimes stronger and more effectual than words. And we must firmly remember that there is nothing worse than when a pastor's word and deed do not coincide. Many, especially in our time, often do not forgive this at all, condemning and blaspheming the

pastor and thus fundamentally undermining all his, even the most sincere pastoral work aimed at the reformation of the flock.

Afterwards, a high task lies before the pastor - to christen, to spiritualize the whole inner world of his flock, encouraging them to read spiritual and moral literature and instilling in them an aversion to reading those repulsive, corrupting to the soul and heart books, which are now being thrown into the book market by the hundreds of thousands. He must inspire a love for reading the Book of books - the Word of God, the lives of God's saints and the marvelous inspired writings of the Holy Fathers, which reveal to us the beauty of true spiritual life - the intimate life in God; so subtly, figuratively and vividly, as no secular psychologist can, drawing all the sublime appeal of Christian virtue and all the base, repulsive nature of sin and sinful passions, which so darken man's earthly life and plunge him truly into the abyss of evil, and in death prepare him for the hell of fire.

Here in general terms, the whole circle of churching the life of modern Christian society, in a large part of its, if not in the majority, far-removed from the spirit of the true orthodox church. A tremendous task! Such a great and arduous task for a shepherd, and it would have been quite impossible for him, had not the all-powerful grace of God, "always healing the weak and replenishing the weak", accompanied him in all his affairs by the sacrament of priesthood. Trusting in this grace and firmly believing that "the impossible to man is possible for God" (Matthew 19:26), a shepherd can achieve much in this gracious field, if he begins this work of churching his life with himself.

Chapter 18: What have we not yet lost and what must we guard like the apple of our eye?

One of the main topics of discussion at this year's Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia will be "standing firm in Orthodoxy under present conditions. And this is indeed the most important topic, the most vital.

Indeed. We Orthodox Russian people, with the bloody catastrophe that befell our homeland-Russia, through our sins, have irrevocably lost everything we had. The only thing we have left is our holy Church, the guardian of the pure and undamaged truth of Christ's divine teachings.

But this is our greatest value, on which our life in eternity depends.

And it is this greatest value that they want to deprive us of at the present time, while we, unfortunately, in the great majority, do not even notice it, and do not show enough vigilance, prudence, and effort to protect ourselves from this evil intent, which is much worse and more terrible than the loss of our earthly homeland and threatens us with final, eternal destruction.

Many of us are so caught up in the vanity of modern life, which is quite alien to the spirit of true Christianity, that we show unforgivable levity and carelessness, not wanting to see or hear anything, and being content with our purely external well-being.

This is in spite of the fact that in the last 40 years or so we have already had to witness many formidable symptoms, which would seem to sober us up and open our eyes to the true state of affairs and the danger that threatens us.

We have in mind here the church destruction in our homeland in connection with the appearance of the so-called "living" and "renovationist church," and then the "Soviet church," which entered the service of the Bolsheviks and became an obedient instrument of the God-fighting Soviet authorities. We mean also the trends in the other local Orthodox Churches, analogous to that of the Church of Jesus Christ, which made themselves so clearly evident at the 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress and in their activity connected with the convening of the 8th Ecumenical Council, which was supposed to reform the Orthodoxy that had retreated from its modern life. Finally, we have in mind the sad schisms that took place in 1926 (and again in the USA in 1946) in our Russian Church Abroad, whose inner spiritual connection (or perhaps even organizational?) with the above mentioned phenomena destroying the Holy Orthodox Church is quite obvious to us.

All of this has gone very rapidly forward in recent years at a most rapid pace.

With the worldwide recognition of the invading, God-fighting Soviet power as the legitimate authority of the Russian people, the "Soviet Church" began to be recognized by all as the legitimate Russian Church, regardless of all the self-evident lies and blatant violations of the church canons that lay at its foundation.

And the entry, it seems, of all the local Orthodox Churches into the so-called ecumenical movement, united by the so-called World Council of Churches, puts us face to face with the terrible fact of the self-administration of Holy Orthodoxy.

There remains only our Russian Church Abroad, which, in the person of its most steadfast and prudent sons and ministers, in spite of this pernicious "spirit of the times" already prevailing in the world, nevertheless wishes to remain unchanged, the true Church of Christ. This is where all the malice whose poisonous arrows are constantly directed at our Russian Church Abroad comes from! We are hated, reviled, condemned and reviled by all those whose conscience is not clear.

Characteristically, they themselves, filled with prideful self-exaltation and malice, as the most common and fashionable accusation against us, put forth the alleged presence of our pride and lack of Christian love.

In what do they see our pride?

Obviously, that we do not want to humble ourselves before the evil that is plotting to take from us our most precious treasure, on which our life in eternity depends, the Holy Orthodox Faith (the real one, not the perverted and modernized one that they want to impose on us instead).

In what do they see our lack of Christian love?

That we cannot sympathetically contemplate the betrayal of Holy Orthodoxy that is taking place nowadays, and, strictly adhering to the commandment of the great apostle of Love - the beloved disciple of Christ (1 John 2 (1 John 2:15-16), we are trying not to love the world, or that which is in the world, and do not wish to have any fellowship with apostates of the true faith of Christ (as stated in 2 John 1:7,11), which another great apostle also clearly commands all Christians, when he says: "after the first and second correction, shun the heretic" (Tit.3:10).

How can love for Christ and for the Divine Truth He brought to earth be compatible with love for heresy and the propagators of heresy? And in the so-called ecumenical movement we have before us the most terrible modern heresy - the rejection of the dogma of the Church.

After so many statements in the press by the most prominent ecumenists, can it not still be clear that at the heart of the ecumenical movement lies the false doctrine that the true Church of Christ does not exist on earth at present, that therefore the words of Christ about the impassability of His Church to the gates of hell are false (what terrible blasphemy this idea alone sounds!) and that now the Church must be rebuilt?

No less terrible is this false doctrine, which in its destructiveness is not inferior to the ancient heresies, such as Arianism, Macedonianism, Monophysitism, etc., and what they want to put into the basis of the moral teaching of this newly-created false church.

This is that friendship with the world, which, according to the teaching of the Word of God, is "enmity against God" (see James 4:4), this is "love of the world and that which is in the world", in complete contrast to the above teaching of the beloved disciple of Christ, and rejection of the moral and Christian exploit of prayer and fasting, the teaching about the need for salvation is throughout the Holy Scriptures (see, e.g., the words of Christ, which are the basis of the moral teachings of the Church), The idea of the necessity of which for salvation is a red thread running through all Sacred Scripture (see, for example, the words of Christ in Matt. 17:21) and about which so brightly and vividly taught not only in words, but also by high examples of their personal life the great ascetics, glorified by the Holy Church as God's saints, to whom we pray and whose prayerful intercession for ourselves before God we ask.

Now according to the new ecumenical false doctrine, nothing of this, which the whole Church has been living for the past 19 centuries, is needed any more: only "believe, and you are saved", as the whole Protestant world teaches, in the depths of which this movement was born, so attractive to the modern man "decaying in lusts of charm", which does not forbid anyone "to live and enjoy life", because it seems quite natural, and as if God created man for this purpose. A chiliastical belief in the progress of mankind here on earth with oblivion of the future life awaiting man in eternity is what is characteristic of ecumenical false teaching (to see this, it is enough to read a collection of articles entitled "Orthodoxy in Life" published several years ago by the Chekhov Publishing House in New York). All the countless passages of Holy Scripture that speak so clearly of asceticism are completely ignored, and asceticism itself is shamelessly and falsely proclaimed to be a product of the dark Middle Ages, from whose oppression "the brilliant age of humanism, or Renaissance, has freed man.

And now, such a false Orthodoxy, or, as some openly call it, "neo-Orthodoxy," is offered to us, assuring us that we are now living in an entirely new age, some third cosmogony, when all "the past must be discarded" (the words of Const. Athenagoras, quoted by the foreign press) and replaced by the new.

But since we do not want this and cherish our old and ancestral Apostolic and Fatherly Orthodoxy, we are accused of pride and lack of love.

May all honest and sensible Orthodox Russian people know that this purely ideological divergence in our views and convictions, including our different attitude toward the Soviet government, which we cannot recognize as "God's government," and toward the "Soviet

Church," which we cannot recognize as canonical, has been the cause of the schisms that have occurred in our Russian Church Abroad, both in Europe and here in America.

Unfortunately, there are very few people today who can honestly and unselfishly serve an idea and follow in their lives only ideological convictions: this alone explains why our sad and so disastrous church schisms have so many of their followers and, despite all our persuasive calls for unity, have not yet been eradicated.

Everything in our time is so shaken, all moral principles are so shaken, that unfortunately, even in our own milieu, sometimes we do not have that full agreement and single-mindedness, which are commanded by the apostle (see Phil. 2:2-3). This is the reason for all the disagreements, disputes and confusion in the depths of our Church, which at times arise and do us much harm. That is why the main and basic task of our Russian Church Abroad is not so much an external mission as an internal one.

Many in our midst are overly enthusiastic about the idea of the conversion of non-Orthodox believers to Orthodoxy. Against this, of course, one cannot object. There is no doubt that our Russian scattering has a providential meaning: the Lord scattered us, as in the old days of old Israel, into all the nations of the earth, so that these nations through us might become more familiar with the true Christian faith and convert to Orthodoxy.

But this high mission is not at all easy for us. It is not so simple or easy for a foreigner of a foreign faith to convert to Orthodoxy, to become truly Orthodox in spirit. We have had many disappointments in this respect, and even very great ones!

In order to better understand this, let us ask ourselves the question: why are the majority of the peoples of the earth still in the darkness of paganism?

Doubtless because the later Christians are far removed from the spirit of the first Christians and have ceased to be an inspiring example of life for the Gentiles, an example which would have encouraged the Gentiles to embrace Christianity.

That is why our Orthodox missionary work can be successful only if we ourselves are true Orthodox Christians in everything, and not only in our words, but also in our lives, if we show the true image of Orthodoxy to the non-Orthodox. And one purely formal translation of the non-Orthodox into Orthodoxy will do nothing for them or for us, and in some cases, as has happened more than once, can only threaten us with all kinds of complications and troubles.

This is where the enormous importance of the inner mission comes to the fore. Where are we to convert others to Orthodoxy if we ourselves are bad Orthodox: if we do not really know our Orthodoxy and do not live as Orthodox Christians should live?

And the ignorance in our Orthodox environment in this respect is often staggering!

And this is the reason why we are facing the terrible fact that we are losing our own Orthodox flock, especially young people, who are so rapidly becoming denationalized and so alien to the true Church.

We must use our best efforts primarily to keep our own flock, especially the young people, within the walls of our Russian Church Abroad, as the Church at present the only Church that is willing to keep the pure and undamaged Truth of Christ's Doctrine within its walls.

But we must remember that we will never achieve this by a deceitful adaptation to modern apostate life, by compromising the age-old principles of Gospel teaching, the rules and regulations of the Church, and our ancient pious customs and traditions.

It is more than naïve to think that we will keep the older generation from leaving our Church if we hold a card game in the church house or other similar "club activities," while we can educate and establish young people in Orthodoxy if we organize "dances" and other immodest entertainment for them.

After all, our task is not to keep members of our Church purely outwardly in the Church for the time being, but to lead them to eternal salvation.

To do otherwise is, in the words of the Word of God, to "covet" the divine doctrine of salvation, mixing, like wicked innkeepers, wine with water, and thereby bringing upon ourselves the curse of God, pronounced through the holy prophet Jeremiah against the false prophets (see Jer. 23).

And it is quite criminal, either out of pettiness or in search of cheap popularity, to belittle the high requirements of God's law, teaching his flock only what is pleasing to them and what does not run counter to their moral promiscuity, indulging them in everything.

How fashionable and seductive this is to many in the present age! We must teach our flock what true uncompromising Orthodoxy is and inculcate the necessity of doing all that our holy Faith requires.

But at the same time we must not approach today's flock with purely formal demands, expecting from it that which was not given to it in its time; we must not "press" it with our external

authority, "commanding" by ordering and ordering and demanding the unconditional recognition of its authority and unconditional submission to its demands.

A shepherd is, first of all, a shepherd - the father of his flock, not an "official," not a formal official in the church, who needs only to be obeyed unconditionally.

Only when we are imbued with this consciousness will we be able to draw everyone to us - to gather rather than disperse our flock, we will not lose it as we are losing it now.

There are two driving forces that a shepherd must have if he is to succeed in his interior mission. This power is love: love for the divine doctrine of salvation that he preaches and love for the flock he is feeding, which creates in him a burning zeal for their salvation.

And since the present age threatens us with the great danger of the deceitful replacement of the true doctrine of salvation by a false doctrine, of true Orthodoxy by false Orthodoxy, every pastor of our Russian Church Abroad has the sacred and responsible duty of imbuing himself deeply with the spirit of true Orthodoxy and of being able to inspire it in his flock.

To do this it is necessary first of all to remember that St. Orthodoxy is not only beautiful and sugary words, not only beautifully furnished divine service in a church, decorated with well painted icons of ancient writing and with ancient church tunes, and not even the bare recognition of a known set of dogmas, coldly and formally professed: Orthodoxy is life - life in God, life in Christ, life in the True Church of Christ.

If a pastor does not have this understanding, and more importantly, an inner feeling, a sense of Orthodoxy, and if he is not able to instill it in his flock, serving as a high example to it, then even the most brilliant church administration, the most exemplary organization, in which some are for some reason inclined to see the whole essence of pastoral work, will be of no use.

What will all this be, what will the pastor "administer" and what will he "organize," if his flock is scattered among other denominations and sects, or even goes completely godless, as we are now forced to observe with great sorrow in the mass of Russian people living in America, especially those who came here before the First World War and the revolution?

How can we dream of bringing "other sheep" into our Church, when we can't even bring down our own sheep and are losing them?

But the Lord will severely call them from our hand (see Ezekiel 34:10), so our main concern must be our inner mission.

We must be clear about the times in which we live. For only those who are spiritually blind or who have already sold their souls to the enemies of our holy faith and the Church can fail to sense in all that is now happening in the world the breath of the approaching Antichrist. What true unity of all Christians in the spirit of Christian love can be spoken of now, when the Truth is almost universally rejected, when lies reign almost everywhere, when the true spiritual life among people who call themselves Christians has dried up and been replaced by the life of the flesh, by animal life, which is also raised to a pedestal and is hidden under the idea of imaginary charity, which hypocritically justifies all spiritual disorder and all moral licentiousness. This is precisely the origin of all these innumerable "balls," all sorts of "games," "dances," and amusements, to which, despite their anti-Christian immoral nature, even many contemporary clergy, sometimes even those who organize them and take part in them, have a rather lenient attitude today.

And who needs the idea of universal unity in our time - we know it well from numerous predictions of the Holy Fathers of the early centuries of Christianity: a common religion for all and a single world state with one leader - the Antichrist.

Is it any wonder, then, that so many people are angry at us, accusing us of pride and lack of Christian love?

We are so angry because we expose them and warn everyone against them.

Paying no serious attention to all these unscrupulous attacks of the enemies of our holy faith and the Church and not being embarrassed by their malice, so natural as we see it, let us guard as the apple of our eyes our Russian Church Abroad, our only treasure, and strive to worthily nourish all her faithful children.

And even if it is destined, perhaps in the near future (if the time is indeed near), to go into the catacombs: we know that it will remain the irresistible servants of Antichrist, and will remain until the end of the age, because it is to it, not to the false church, which has departed from the Truth of Christ, belongs the great promise of Christ: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

Chapter 19: On the Need for an Intensified Internal Mission in our Russian Church Abroad

We Orthodox Russian people, dispersed nowadays, like Israel of old, into all the nations of the earth, often express a fair idea about the special providence of our dispersion: the Lord has dispersed us in such a way that all the nations of the earth, through us, might be introduced to the true Christian faith - holy Orthodoxy, and that they might become orthodox. And many expect and even demand of us missionary work among foreigners and non-believers.

All this is true. God's providence is that the Lord tries to turn even obvious evil to good consequences for the benefit of people - to the salvation of souls. And so the duty of such external missionary work undoubtedly rests upon us. But in doing so, we often forget the key to the success of such missionary work, and most importantly, we forget the terrible danger that threatens us in the dispersion - the very real and growing danger of losing our own Orthodox faith under the influence of constant close contact with non-believers. We cannot but see how easily our younger generation is already being denationalized before our eyes, forgetting everything that is Russian and native, forgetting their language, their Russian manners and customs, and at the same time, quite naturally, their faith, gradually withdrawing more and more from the Church. Especially great is the danger in this respect for our children, who are already born in foreign countries and deprived of the opportunity to receive an upbringing and education in Russian schools in the Orthodox and national Russian spirit.

Let us not close our eyes to the absolutely undeniable sad fact that we are gradually losing our flock, which seems to be dissolving in an environment foreign to us in language, culture, and faith. Maybe in a few more years there will be almost nothing left of our Russian Orthodox flock. Is it wise, knowing this danger, to get carried away too much with the idea of an external mission, forgetting the far more important thing - the sacred duty of an internal mission that lies upon us?

Our main and basic task is an inner mission, for the Lord will avenge on us for every soul lost recklessly, for every lost sheep of the word flock entrusted to us. As far back as the Old Testament, the Lord Himself, through the prophets, pointed us to this very primary and basic task of the inner mission of the shepherd who wishes to be a truly good shepherd.

"Son of man," thus said the Lord to St. Ezekiel, "utter a prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, utter a prophecy and tell them to the shepherds: thus says the Lord God: woe to the shepherds of Israel, who shepherd themselves! Should not the flock be shepherded by shepherds? You have eaten fat and clothed yourselves with a wave, you have slaughtered your fattened sheep, but you have not shepherded the flock. You have not strengthened the weak, nor healed the sick sheep, nor bound up the wounded, nor brought back the stolen, nor sought out the lost; but you have ruled them with violence and cruelty. And they were scattered abroad without a shepherd, and when they were scattered abroad, they became the food of every beast of the field. My sheep are wandering in all the mountains and on every high hill, and my sheep are scattered abroad; and no

one searches for them, and no one seeks them out. Therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. I live, says the Lord God, because my sheep were left to be strayed upon, and without a shepherd my sheep became the food of every beast of the field, and my shepherds sought not my sheep, and the shepherds tended themselves, but my sheep were not tended ... Behold, I am upon the shepherds, and I will call my sheep from their hand and will not let them graze the sheep any more..." (Ezekiel 34:2-10).

How frightening this stern warning from God, spoken as early as the Old Testament!

But how much stricter and undoubtedly stricter will be demanded of us shepherds now - in the New Testament! To clearly imagine it, let us recall two deeply touching parables of the Lord Jesus Christ: the first about the good shepherd (John 10:1-15,27), and the second about the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6).

In our day, when, as a consequence of the extreme decadence of spiritual life, many are excessively drawn to purely external work to the detriment, and sometimes to the detriment, of internal work, it is often heard that for successful pastoring, and consequently for the success of the internal mission, one must first of all be a good administrator. But the shepherd Christ Himself says exactly nothing about this. He says that a true shepherd, i.e. the one, who can be successful in his mission, is the one, who "calls his sheep by name", and whom the sheep follow "because they know his voice", that "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep", that he knows his sheep and the sheep know him (In.10 1-15); that he, having lost one of his sheep, leaves the 99 sheep in the wilderness, and goes in search for the lost one, until he finds it, and, having found it, will lay it on his shoulders and come home with it, rejoicing over it more than over the 99 not-beguiled (Luke 15:4-6). And St. Apostle Paul considers the main activity of a good shepherd to be not "administration", but a purely spiritual activity: pastoral care, according to him, is "the work of ministry to the saints, to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the connection of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fulfillment of Christ" (Eph 4:11-13). Setting himself as an example to the pastors in Ephesus, St. Paul said: "Watch and remember that for three years I tearfully taught every one of you day and night" (Acts 20:31). And to the Solonians he wrote: "Remember, brethren, our toil and weariness: working night and day so as not to burden any of you, we preached the gospel of God among you. Ye are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved before you believers, for you know how we exhorted and persuaded and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who called you into His own kingdom and glory" (1Sol.2:9-12).

From these few passages in New Testament Scripture it is already clear that the central work of the pastor, which alone can ensure the success of his interior mission, is precisely that inner, spiritual work with a strictly individual approach to each individual soul.

Not administration, but what in the science of Pastoral Theology is called soulcare, which is the most important thing.

If this is not there, then, in essence, there is no pastoral care at all.

It is not enough for a pastor, for the success of the inner mission led by him, if he were only a good administrator, an official with a well-organized office; not even enough if he preaches well, intelligently and beautifully, and worship magnificently, although this is very important.

The main and most essential thing in a genuine pastoral ministry, the only thing that can ensure the full success of an inner mission, is pastoral care, the driving force of which is the love of the pastor for his sheep, which generates a fervent zeal for the salvation of their souls, that very compassionate love which every good pastor likens to Christ the pastor-chief and which, according to the teaching of His Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), which he borrowed from a talk of St. John Chrysostom. John Chrysostom's Letter to the Colossians (Vol. XI, p. 360), is presented as a rudimentary gift, which must be constantly fostered, developing it in oneself, by each ordained person in the great Sacrament of the Priesthood.

If a pastor does not have this compassionate love for his flock, if he has extinguished this great gift in himself, instead of developing and rekindling it, if he is not burning with zeal for the salvation of the souls of his flock, if he is only a formalist official, If he is only a formalistic bureaucrat who outwardly performs his duties with care and punctuality, and has all his affairs in order and administration in a brilliant manner, he will never be successful in his inner mission, and he may easily lose all his sheep, which will gradually scatter from him in different directions.

What, therefore, is needed for the success of the inner mission?

First of all - a living soul of a shepherd-father, filled with compassionate paternal love for his flock.

It is with such a living soul, paternally attuned, and not only in a clerical and formal-mechanical way, that the pastor should carry out his three pastoral activities in the parish: teaching, priestly work, and pastoral care.

The shepherd, who wishes to be successful in his interior mission, must never forget that he, according to the commandment of Christ the pastor himself, is first of all the teacher of God's law for all his sheep (Matthew 28:19), regardless of their age, sex, condition and position in society. And he must justify this title by constantly teaching his flock - not just formally, by

preaching sermons at the service, but everywhere, on every opportunity. And here he must remember that both his preaching and all his teaching and instruction must be not simply a mechanical task to be performed, but a living word filled with sincere, and not at all contrived and affected (which is always felt and often produces only a repulsive impression) pathos. Everything that a pastor intends to say or teach his flock must first be put through the crucible of his mind and processed in the laboratory of his heart, that is, thoroughly thought out and felt by himself, as one of our prominent homilies (Prof. V. F. Pevnitsky aptly put it). A sluggishly delivered word, like a pupil reciting a lesson he has memorized, will not have the effect it deserves in the heart of his hearers. Insincere and contrived pathos sometimes even has a negative effect, not only it does not draw attention to the pastor's words and himself as a loving father, but often it repulses, because pretence and insincerity, if they are felt, can never inspire trust and warmth.

At the same time, when teaching his flock, a shepherd must carefully watch that his word and deed do not differ - that he himself does what he teaches his flock. Trouble if the flock begin to notice that the pastor does not himself follow in his life what he teaches! In other words, a shepherd who wishes to be successful in his interior mission must teach his flock not only in words, but also by the example of his own life.

Catechesis, that is, constant and systematic instruction in the basic truths of our Orthodox Christian Faith, by children and adults alike, is absolutely necessary in our present circumstances, more than ever before, since we are surrounded on all sides by non-Christians. Both children and adults should be so familiar with the basic tenets of our Orthodox-Christian faith and morals that they should be able to answer every questioner about St. Orthodoxy and, if necessary, to shame the non-Christians and sectarians who approach them, as they often do, with their deceitful interrogation. There is nothing to show how important this is for the preservation of our flock in the fence of our Holy Church!

Likewise, both teaching and priestly acts must not be performed by a pastor only mechanically, as a mere formal fulfillment of an assumed duty. Here, spiritual burning, sincere prayer, a personal commitment to prayer, both at home and in the community, is especially required of the pastor, who enters into sacramental communion with God and with the entire upper world. A shepherd is an advocate before God for people - for his sheep, and such he should always feel and be conscious of when he prays, and especially when he performs public worship. Here it is necessary that the flock feel the sincere prayer of its pastor, that his own prayerful mood be transmitted to it, and that it be inspired by his prayer and pray in the same way.

Here too, as in teaching, the mechanical "obedience" of the liturgical ritual and the artificial, feigned pathos of "theatricality" in gestures, movements, cries, and prayers are just as harmful.

It is essential for the success of the inner mission to involve all the people praying in the Worship Service, so that they may not feel like spectators or listeners only, coming to the church as to the theater, "just to listen to the beautiful singing of the choir" and singing, as it often happens now, completely unchurched, bravura, theatrical compositions. It is absolutely necessary to restore the ancient custom of public singing during the Divine Liturgy, which is demanded by our charter itself. After all, it is well known that it is this common singing, which is so characteristic of sectarian gatherings, that draws our believers most into sectarianism. It is shameful for Orthodox believers not to know their wonderful, incomparable Orthodox Divine Service, and therefore it is the sacred duty of the pastor to acquaint his flock with the Divine Service, which is easiest and can be achieved by engaging them in practical participation in it.

This practical knowledge of worship in our circumstances is extremely important for another reason. There are fewer and fewer of us in our Russian Church Abroad, both priests and experienced, formerly well-educated psalmists. Many, if not all, of our parishes face the very real danger of eventually being left without any pastors, or even, perhaps, without priests, at least, who are regularly and regularly conducting Divine Services.

What, then, is to be done? Should we close parishes or allow them to go to some other jurisdiction?

We will not!

After all, according to our charter, all the liturgical rites of the daily cycle, except, of course, the Divine Liturgy and other sacraments of the Church, can be performed by persons not ordained as priests. This was widely used in their prayer practice by all the monastic monasteries, hermitages and hermitages, among whom there were no monks invested with the rank of priests. Until quite recently this was observed, for example, in Carpathian Rus, which was noted for its high piety of the people, where, if the priest was ill or absent, the faithful themselves, without a priest, would read and sing the Midnight Mass, Matins, Hours, Vespers, and Supper, and, instead of the Divine Liturgy, the Liturgy.

There is nothing wrong with this, because our liturgical books themselves provide for such a possibility, in a statement of this kind, which is often found, for example: "If a priest says, 'Blessed is our God'... And if not, say in a humble way: "By the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, Amen." And then follows the entire liturgical order, except, of course, for the Litanies and the priestly cries. The Great Litany, the Litany of Supplication and the Litany of Supplication are replaced by the recitation of "O Lord, have mercy!" twelve times, and the Little Litany is replaced by the threefold recitation of "O Lord, have mercy!"

Public prayer, like nothing else, unites the faithful firmly. And so in all those parishes where there is no permanent priest, it is absolutely necessary not only to allow, but also to encourage the faithful to come together on Sundays and holidays in the church or even at home, where there is no temple, in order to perform such public prayer together according to the established liturgical order. In this way we will keep our parishes, which are left without a priest, from being dispersed and from leaving for other jurisdictions. From time to time, a priest specially sent there by the Diocesan Authority may come to perform the Divine Liturgy and the necessary sacraments and services.

But most important and most important in the interior mission is the pastor's heartfelt concern for every individual soul, or so-called pastoral care, which is the very essence of pastoral care in its proper sense.

As can be seen from the words of St. Paul to the Solonians (1Sol 2:11), pastoral care is the constant burning of a loving pastoral spirit, the constant grief of the pastor as father and mother for his spiritual children - a constant watchfulness and a constant response to the needs of his flock. The shepherd must be aware of all that his flock live and breathe. The essence of such pastoral care is beautifully expressed in the words of the Lord, spoken to St. Jeremiah the prophet: "See, I have appointed you ... to destroy and to destroy, to destroy and to destroy, to build and to plant" (Jer.1:10). This means that the shepherd must wisely and with fatherly love eradicate and destroy all that is evil in the souls of his flock, and plant and strengthen all that is good.

To do this, it goes without saying, a shepherd must know his flock well ("I know mine" - John 10:14), which can be achieved only through constant close communion with them. From this follows the necessity for the shepherd not only to receive all his flock in his home when they desire and request it, but also to visit them as often as possible, becoming acquainted with their life, their thoughts, feelings, desires and experiences. A true shepherd must not neglect any of his flock, but must visit all of them in their homes, not just to "drink tea" and "chat about this and that," but to know them better and benefit them spiritually. Here is what the great pastor of our time, the ever-memorable Father John of Kronstadt, says so wonderfully well about such visits to homes: "My sweet Savior! You, when You came to serve the human race, You did not preach the word of heavenly truth only in the temple, but You went around the towns and villages, You did not keep away from anyone, You went to everyone's home, especially to those whose warm repentance You foresaw with Your divine gaze. Thus you did not sit at home, but had the fellowship of love with all. Grant that we too may have this fellowship with Thy people, that we, shepherds, may not be confined from Thy sheep in our houses as in castles or dungeons, going out only to serve in church or to do the work in houses, according to one duty, with learned prayers alone. May our mouths be opened to speak freely in the spirit of faith and love to our parishioners. May our Christian love for our spiritual children be opened and strengthened

through lively, free, paternal conversations with them. Oh, what sweetness you, O Lord, our infinite Love, have hidden in the spiritual conversation between a spiritual father and his spiritual children, warmed by love, what a blessedness! How can I not strive on earth with all my strength for such bliss? And it is still only a feeble beginning, only a faint semblance of the heavenly beatitude of love! Love especially the fellowship of beneficence, both material and spiritual. "But do not forget charity and fellowship" (Hebrews 13:16). ("My Life in Christ," Vol. II, p. 146).

And in our circumstances, when our shepherds live so scattered, separated, for the most part, from one another, surrounded on all sides by non-believers, this communion of love and beneficence of the pastor with them is especially important, especially necessary. Only with such a lively contact between the pastor and his flock will the great Sacrament of Confession, this most important act of pastoral care, not be a mere formality, to which - alas! - which it is often reduced to in our time, but will be a truly life-giving Sacrament, reviving human souls to a new life.

Such is the way of truly good pastoral care!

And only in this way can we ensure the success of our inner mission, a mission without which we are in danger of losing the entire Russian flock abroad. No external measures, no the most exemplary and brilliant administration and organization, which some are inclined for some reason to attach an exaggerated importance to such a purely spiritual work as pastoral ministry, will save us if this most important thing is missing, because one form without content, one shell without soul is nothing.

For the task of the pastor is to strive to make his flock, with the grace of God, true Christians. And the essence of Christianity is spiritual renewal, to which a properly guided spiritual life leads.

Quite legitimately, therefore, believers want to see in their pastor a spiritual leader-mentor of the spiritual life, and not an administrative official, even if very diligent, but only formally "serving" his pastoral duties. This type of pastoral official can only frustrate and discourage.

"Be a faithful image in word, in life, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity," St. Paul instructs pastors (1 Timothy 4:12). If a pastor will really diligently try to follow this instruction, he will automatically gain the trust, respect, authority, and obedience of the flock. But it is impossible to create pastoral authority for oneself, to achieve obedience to oneself in an artificial way - through moral pressure or any kind of external coercion. It can only achieve the opposite result - to cause displeasure and grumbling and even to alienate everyone. In these times of extreme aggravation

of self-love, hypersensitivity, and resentment, this way of acting as a pastor is inherently dangerous and destructive to the pastoral work.

The shepherd must call for obedience to the Church, not for obedience to himself. Only the Church is infallible, and all of us human beings can err and be mistaken. And we must be able to honestly admit and correct our mistakes, which can only serve to elevate our credibility, rather than ascribing to ourselves the infallibility of the Church alone. The temptation of papism is very dangerous for the pastor: "Sin as much and as much as you like, but obey me! There is nothing more destructive to the cause of inner mission when a pastor is immensely lenient toward all, even the gravest sins of his flock, and infinitely strict and exacting toward only one - the sin of disobedience to himself.

It is also extremely important in the work of our inner mission that the face of our Russian Church Abroad be completely clear and distinct in the perception of all our flock. All of our faithful flock must understand perfectly well and be clearly aware of why they belong to the Russian Church Abroad and not to any other "church" or "jurisdiction," and they must value and cherish their belonging. There can and should be no ambiguities in this matter, no compromises or indulgences, no "sitting between two chairs.

In general, the pastor must be absolutely strict and adamant in all that concerns the eternal foundations of the Church. The Church, its faith and morals, its sacred rules, regulations, and customs, but this rigor must stem exclusively from a genuine zeal for the glory of God and a paternal love for his flock and a zeal for their salvation, and not at all from any other collateral motives, and still less from personal interests or self-love and wounded pride. It is unacceptable to disregard the canons of the Church in purely principled cases and to resort to them only where our personal authority begins to suffer and where it is personally advantageous to us.

Purely spiritual work, great service for the salvation of the souls of our flock - that is our destiny, that is our sacred duty, that is our holy calling, in the successful fulfillment of which we will have to give an answer to God! And most of all we, modern pastors, must fear that we may not give occasion to the ominous words of the gloomy prophecy of Saint Niphont of Tsaregrad about pastoralism in the end times: "Those who occupy the priesthood thrones throughout the world will be completely unsophisticated and will not know the art of virtue. Such will be the rulers of monastics, for all will be put down by gluttony and vanity, and will serve as more of an offence to men than an example... ..but the love of money will reign then... Many will fall into the abyss, being led astray in the breadth of the wide and spacious path" (From the Life of St. Niphontus, p. 496).

That this not happen to us and that our inner mission may be successful, we must always keep before our mentality the lofty examples of the pastoral service of the Orthodox Christian Church

throughout the centuries, and in particular, the sublime image of the greatest pastor of our time, the ever-memorable Father John of Kronstadt, which is so dear and dear to us, Russians.

His two remarkable talks with fellow-pastors in Sarapul, at the invitation of His Grace Nazary, Bishop of Nizhny Novgorod, reveal to us the secret of his marvelous gracious influence on human souls, the very influence that every pastor who wishes to have success in his inner mission must try to acquire. When Father John was asked how he achieves this beneficial effect on people's hearts, he replied: "I try to be a sincere shepherd, not only in words, but also in deeds in life. This is why I am strictly watching over myself, over my inner peace, over my inner work. I even keep a diary, where I record my deviations from God's law, check myself and try to get better...".

And when asked what Fr. John fills all his time away from pastoral work, especially during his constant travels, he replied, "I pray, I pray all the time; I don't even understand how one can spend time without praying. Truly, prayer is the breath of the soul.

Here is a simple and concise answer to the question of what is most important for the success of our much-needed domestic mission in our Russian Church Abroad.

Chapter 20: I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church

"...He gave Him the head above all the church, which is His body" (Eph.1:22-23).

"But you are the body of Christ, and you are surprised in part" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

On the 3rd week after Easter, May 4/17, 1964, if it please God, a Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia will open in New York City, one of the most important acts of which will be, as stated, "to secure the leadership" of our Church.

The significance of the Council of Bishops is great, for the Council of Bishops is the highest authority in the Church, exercising, at the same time, in very deed, one of the most important basic characteristics of the true Church - its synodality.

What is the "synodality of the Church"?

In the ninth Article of our Creed, adopted at the Second Ecumenical Council, and therefore binding for our entire Church as a confession of her Faith, clearly and precisely stated, the Church is called conciliar, which is a translation of the Greek word "katholikos".

It is very characteristic and extremely important that our Slavonic early teachers, translating the Creed from Greek into Slavonic, translated the word "katholikos" not by any other word, but by the word "sobornaya".

Totally inaccurate and, in any case, far from being exhaustive, with us, under the obvious influence of the West (Roman Catholics), this word "katholikos," and with it the word "conciliar," as applied to the Church, has come to be interpreted and understood only in the sense of "ecumenical. This is clear if we take into account that the Greek word used for "ecumenicality" is a very different word, "ikumenikós".

In addition to the concept of "ecumenicality", the word "katholikos" - "conciliar" - is in reality much more profound: it expresses the understanding of the being of the true Church of Christ which St Paul sets out in several of his letters, teaching about the Church as the Body of Christ, headed by Christ himself and of which we all believers are members (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Eph. (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-28; Eph.1:22-23; Eph.4:4-16; Col.1:18-29; Col.2:10-20).

The idea underlying the term "katholikos" - "conciliar" - is perfectly grasped by our gifted theologian, A. S. Khomyakov: it is the idea of "unity in the multitude": "The Catholic Church is the Church according to all, or according to the unity of all, the Church of free unanimity, unanimity complete" (Essays, vol. II, p. 312).

Thus, "catholic" means all-embracing, gathering all into one, forming a unity of all in Christ - a unity, of course, not only external, but internal, organic, as in a living organism all members are

united together in one body. The most important feature of this unity is that each individual member is in indissoluble unity with the whole. This is why, as we find in the monuments of ancient Christian writings and in the acts of the Ecumenical Councils, not only the Church as a whole (universal) was called catholic, but also every single part of the Church, every single metropolis or diocese, which was in unity with the whole Church. In this very sense also the pure, undefiled teaching of the Church, as opposed to heresies, has often been called the catholic faith.

Such is the real meaning of the profound term "catholic," which can in no way be fully replaced by the term "ecumenical. And if the Roman Catholics have made such a substitution, it is precisely because they, having broken away from the true Catholic Church, have also lost the subordinate idea of catholicity.

The idea of catholicity receives a particularly clear and comprehensible expression for all in the conciliar government of the Church.

In the true Church, the Catholic Church, there can be no dictatorship, no oligarchy (government, or domination by a few), no democracy, no secular form of government, and no purely secular approach to power at all. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, shortly before His suffering on the cross, clearly indicated to His disciples this decisive and radical difference between the spiritual, pastoral-hierarchical authority He established in the Church and ordinary temporal authority in the words: "Behold, the princes of the tongue shall rule over them, and the great ones shall possess them: not so shall it be in you, but whosoever will be greatest in you, let him be your servant: and whosoever will be first in you, be your slave: as the Son of man came not to serve him, but to serve and to give his life as a deliverance for many" (Matt. 20 :25-27).

From this it should be abundantly clear that pastoral-hierarchical authority is not dominion, but service. How often do many of the great Fathers of the Church emphasize this in their writings, and it is beautifully explained in his lectures on pastoral theology by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky)!

Therefore, the true, Catholic Church knows no other head than the one Head of the whole Church, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. All bishops, as successors of the apostolic ministry in the Church, are equal among themselves - they are "brethren" (see Matt. 23:8), and none of them has any right to claim to call himself "the head of the Church" and try to dominate others, like a worldly superior, because it is against the teaching of God's Word, it is heresy against the dogma of the Church.

That is why the supreme authority, both legislative, executive and judicial, in each given region or Local Church belongs, according to the canons, or church rules, only to the whole Council of

Bishops of the given region or Local Church, while the supreme authority in the whole Universal Church belongs to the Ecumenical Council, that is, to the Council of Bishops from the whole universe.

The idea of the infallibility of any one bishop or even of the whole local Council of bishops is utterly foreign to the Catholic Church. Only the voice of the Ecumenical Council, recognized as such by the whole Church, can be regarded as infallible and, for all believers, indisputable and unconditionally binding. Our Church has long since taken as her guide in this matter the remarkable teaching of St. Vincent of Lirin, that only that which is believed everywhere, always and by all, is true.

But if a Council of bishops, even one that pretends to call itself "Ecumenical" (not to mention regional and local), decides anything contrary to this principle, then such a decision can no longer be considered infallible and will not be binding for the faithful.

Thus, all bishops in the Church of Christ are equal, just as the disciples of Christ, the Apostles, were equal among themselves, whom the Lord Jesus Christ warned more than once during His earthly life against exalting one another. Only for the sake of greater order in the entire earthly organization of the Church and in order to avoid disorder and anarchy in it, in each ecclesiastical region or individual local church some bishops, while remaining equal to others in grace, are elected by the remaining bishops as "first among equals," to direct the entire system of church government, but not at all dictatorially, but still on the same basis of catholicity, or sobornost.

Essential for such council-catholic governance of the Church is the 34th Rule of the Apostles, which literally runs as follows: "It behoves bishops of all nations to know the first among them and to recognize him as their head, and to do nothing that exceeds their authority without his knowledge: but each should do only that which concerns his diocese and the regions belonging to it. But let the first also do nothing without the discussion of all. For so it shall be unanimity, and God will be glorified in the Lord in the Holy Spirit, Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is clear from this rule that "the first of the bishops" is not the head in the proper sense of the word, but only "as the head," that is, like the head. It is also very important in this rule to emphasize so strongly the unanimity of all the bishops, for this is the main sign of the catholicity or synodality of the Church, as well as to point out quite clearly that each bishop in his diocese and in "the places belonging to it" has all the full hierarchical authority, and therefore no other bishop, not even the "first among equals" himself, has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of his diocese. And the Council of Bishops itself, as is clear from the canons, is not convened to decide any diocesan affairs, but solely for matters of a church-wide character, affecting the interests of the entire Church.

Thus, our "Book of the Rules of the Apostles, the Holy Councils of the Ecumenical and Local, and the Holy Fathers" clearly and precisely indicates the range of subjects to be administered by the Council of Bishops. This council 1) conducts the business of its province, 2) deliberates on the dogmas of piety, 3) adjudicates ecclesiastical quarrels and cases of doubt, 4) hears complaints against bishops, 5) resolves bishops' disputes about their parishes, 6) corrects the decisions of a smaller council, 7) elects and installs bishops and 8) condemns bishops. There is no question of the Council of Bishops dealing with purely local diocesan matters, let alone parochial matters, and making any decisions on them, for such matters are entirely the responsibility of their local diocesan bishop.

In their mutual relations with one another, all bishops, as brothers, are guided only by brotherly love and by that same understanding which naturally follows from their belonging to the One Catholic Church and is conditioned by the commonality of their aspirations and interests. In this brotherly love and single-mindedness, the bishops are united by one common desire, the zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

To this, and to this alone, should be directed all their interests, all their activities, and all the service they pass through!

For this their high service, with which nothing else in the world can be compared, in its greatness and meaning, is "the work of ministry - to the perfecting of the saints, to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the connection of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fulfillment of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13).

There can be no uglier and more intolerable phenomenon in the true Church - the Church of the Catholic Church - than a bishop who has any other interests, and therefore is engaged in something else, in some other, extraneous, purely worldly affairs, which have no direct relation to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, such as political activity (which always divides and embitters people, but does not reconcile and unite them), So fashionable now so called cultural-educational or social activity with the arrangement of secular entertainments and amusements (almost inevitable in our sick time, persistently and insistently demanding "bread and circuses," more than spiritual food and salvation of souls), not to mention all kinds of commercial operations, financial machinations and money turnover, which especially lowers his authority and humiliates his high rank and title, etc. II.

According to the clear meaning of the canons, the bishop in his diocese, as we have already seen, has all the fullness of hierarchical authority, and all the affairs of his diocese, without exception, are subject to his authority, not only purely spiritual, ecclesiastical, but also material and economic. However, as we also have seen, such authority of a bishop, according to the teaching of the Word of God (Matthew 20:25-27) and the exposition of the holy Fathers of the Church, by

its very nature and character is very different from ordinary secular authority - worldly government, or rulership, based only on external authority and external compulsion. The canons condemn with all their vigor the "smoky haughtiness of the world" in the bishop (see the Epistle of the African Council to Pope Celestine), condemning any desire to resemble in him anything to the worldly authorities or rulers.

Above all, in all their activities, in all their conduct and actions, and in the affairs of ecclesiastical government, the bishops of the true Catholic Church are guided not by their own personal or extraneous considerations, but by the interests of the Church. The teaching of the Word of God and the sacred canons of the Church are the supreme and unquestionable authority for them, which they themselves must know perfectly well and hold fast to in all matters, bearing in mind always their solemn pledge to keep them sacred, made at their ordination as bishops, and to enlighten the clergy and lay faithful in this respect in every possible way, instilling in them an attitude of reverence and respect for both the Word of God and the sacred canons, which flow from one source: the gracious illumination of the Holy Spirit. Just as it is unacceptable to say that the Gospel is out of date, out of date, so it is unacceptable to say that the canons are out of date, out of date, and therefore no longer obligatory for us (here we are not speaking, of course, of those canons which were only of temporary significance and were issued only under certain circumstances, in connection with certain purely local conditions).

Those who dare to speak thus break their unity with the Catholic Church, fall away from the true Church!

As far as the affairs and the administration of the Church and of the diocese are concerned, as has been historically and historically already exemplified by the First Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, in which not only the Apostles participated, but also the "elders with the whole Church" or "brethren" (see Acts 15:4, 6, 22-23). (Acts 15:4, 6, 22-23), the bishops exercise their hierarchical authority in these matters not in a dictatorial, solitary fashion, but "in council," deciding all these matters with the unchanging participation and assistance of clergy and lay faithful, chosen for this purpose on the sole ground of their Christian piety and not on the ground of their noble birth, wealth or membership in any political party or social grouping.

Even such an ardent zealot for episcopal authority as St. Cyprian of Carthage, to whom belongs the famous dictum: "The bishop in the Church and the Church in the bishop, and he who is not with the bishop is not in the Church," stresses that "the Church consists in the bishop, the clergy and all who stand in faith," and in his letters we very often find evidence of the bishop deciding matters together with the clergy and the people. As he himself writes to presbyters and deacons: "From the very beginning of my bishopric I have made it a rule to do nothing at my sole discretion, without your advice and without the consent of the people" (see "Essays from the History of the Dogma of the Church" by Vlad Troitsky, pp. 372 - 373).

The very authority of the bishop, which should stand high in the eyes of his flock, as well as the exercise of his hierarchical archpastoral authority, should be based not on external coercion - not on "edicts" and "orders" - but on a moral basis - on his elevated spiritual and moral character that inspires in him sincere affection and respect among all the members of his flock who truly believe. Believers should see in him a model of true Christian life, as the Word of God teaches: "Be a model of faithfulness in word, in life, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). (1 Timothy 4:12) or: "feed the flock of God that is in you, attending not in want, but willingly and according to God, not unrighteous gain (not for filthy lucre), but diligently, not as one who has the parish (not ruling over God's heritage), but to be an example for the flock (but setting an example for the flock)" (1 Peter 5:2-3).

The episcopal service is the greatest service in this world for the salvation of souls to eternal life, and this high goal cannot be reached by any external coercive measures, by no "administration", not even by the most brilliant "organization": any soulless formalism and any official approach in such a holy matter can only harm, and sometimes cause irreparable harm, driving away living human souls from the Church and from the work of salvation.

Hence we do not conclude that administration is unnecessary at all - not at all! But we must remember that the administration is only auxiliary: it is a means, not an end, and therefore it must not be placed "above all," giving it an attitude of self-sufficient importance. It is always useful to remember the wonderful dictum of our most distinguished pastorologist, the same Blessed Metropolitan Anthony: "The worst praise for a pastor is if one says about him that he is a good administrator. It is not administration that is the main condition for good pastoral care, but something else entirely.

The main and most important thing in the success of pastoral ministry is love, in which the catholicity of the Church is fully realized, and the fullest expression of this love, as St. Cyprian of Carthage beautifully teaches about it, is prayer, both private and especially public, collective prayer performed in the temple.

The temple of God, with its public Divine Service and, especially, the sacraments, is the center of the entire church life of the true Catholic Church, the main unifying center for all believers, both pastors and flockers (but not the lower rooms under temples, which, in desecration of the sanctity of the church - this "House of God", "house of prayer" - more and more often now are built, with the explicit purpose of organizing in them "cultural" entertainment!)

Prayer, worship, is the breath of the whole organism of the true Catholic Church, the Body of Christ, without which its very life and unity with its Head, Christ, is impossible.

Therefore, if a shepherd, especially an archpastoral bishop, wants to be truly authoritative and to have the authority necessary for the success of his ministry over his flock, he must first of all be a true, sincere, good prayer leader. "Our whole life," says the same Metropolitan Anthony, "must be a continuation of those devotional prayers that we all love so much... My heart has always been pained," he told one of the bishops he ordained, "when it was said of any bishop that he did not like to serve and was a bad prayer leader, but a good administrator. A bishop does not need such administration. If he sees his first duty in prayer, then the administration will arrange itself, and everything around him will get better and better."

Prayer, and only prayer, gives the pastor that gracious power which is absolutely necessary for him in order to follow the way of salvation, leading the constant struggle with his passions and lusts, and help his flock to follow the same way, saving their souls. St. Gregory the Theologian, the great universal teacher, wonderfully says: "First one must purify oneself, and then purify others; first one must be wise, and then teach wisdom to others; first one must become luminous, and then illuminate others; first one must draw oneself closer to God, and then draw others closer; first one must sanctify oneself, and then sanctify others."

That is why the blessed Metropolitan Anthony said that "only a great monk can be a great hierarch. For a great monk, first of all, by the grace of God, overcomes the passions in himself, and as a consequence of this, God wisely manages his soul. This gives him strength and power, and ability, and love, and the right to possess human souls evangelically."

This is what the most important and essential thing in the Church has led us to in our thoughts about the "catholicity" or, at the same time, the "synodality" of our One, Holy, Soborna and Apostolic Church!

For some reason, since some time, at whose behest, our Russian Church Abroad has been called "Synodal. This is totally wrong, illegal and altogether undesirable! After the sad schism that occurred in 1926, our Russian Church Abroad always called itself "Sobornaya," as opposed to the Church that broke away from it, as guarding the canonical principle of "sobornost. Even the believers who belonged to it and were zealous for it called themselves "Soborans."

It is precisely this principle of synodality that we must cherish, for it is our only strength!

Our Church is Catholic, not "Synodal," as it was during the sad period of its infringement by the State. That which we now call "Synod" (in Greek, "Synodos" is "cathedral") is nothing more than the executive organ of a Council, and can in no way fully replace the entire Council of Bishops in grace and authority.

Real "synodality" is not only a matter for the entire episcopate, which must decide all questions of the Church according to the canons, "conciliarly," without allowing for any dictatorship that is against the very spirit of our Holy Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church is not to be subjected to a dictatorship (which in the West has developed into a form of "papism") or to oligarchy (the rule of only a few), but to the other parts of the Body of Christ - the clergy and the lay faithful, to the extent of their canonical capacity, certainly not to the principle of democracy that is inappropriate and unacceptable in the Church.

It is significant and deeply instructive for us in this respect to read a passage from the Eastern Patriarchs' 1848 "District Epistle to all Orthodox Christians," which literally reads as follows: "Neither patriarchs nor councils could ever introduce anything new, because the guardian of piety in us is the very body of the Church, that is, the people, who always wish to keep their faith unchanged and according to the faith of their fathers. So as not to go too far back in history, let us recall, in confirmation of this important truth of 'sobornost', how in Russia, in the first years after the Bolshevik Revolution, the people themselves defended their Orthodox faith from the Church of Christ and the Renewalists.

Significant in this respect is the activity of the "brotherhoods" in Southwestern Russia, composed of believing laymen, who saved Orthodoxy from Latinism, while the bishops betrayed Orthodoxy by accepting Unia.

If we take into account that since ancient times, since the time of the Apostles, the term "catholic" or "conciliar" has been used in the sense of "true," expressing the pure and undefiled teaching of the faith, then the catholic or conciliar Church will mean the true Church, which teaches the true and undefiled teaching of Christ and, at the same time, through its hierarchs, gives an example of truly Christian life, the spiritual life, life in Christ.

This is why it is so important for us to keep this authentic "synodality": it unites us, the members of the Body of Christ, with our Head, Christ, and brings down on us from Him all the gracious powers "which are so necessary for our salvation, to life and godliness.

If, God forbid, we should lose this power, the Russian Church Abroad will be faced with the danger of transforming into one of the many secular organizations of a political or public nature that have only an outward church exterior, but "de-spiritualized," without a corresponding inner substance; in other words, it will become "the consuming salt," whose sad fate we know well from the Gospel (Matthew 5:13).

Let it not be so!

Chapter 21: On synodality in the Church

Your Eminences, all-honorable Fathers and Brethren!

I am very sorry that the excellent report of our father, Archimandrite Constantine, has remained essentially without discussion, without an exchange of thoughts.

Meanwhile, the reports of Fr. Konstantin's reports on the spiritual state of the world, which he makes annually at our Diocesan Assemblies, are of enormous value. After all, they are based on the world press (which Fr. Konstantin receives from all over the world, in all languages), which reflects the entire spiritual life of the modern world. And this picture cannot help but horrify us, for it is a vivid and strongly-speaking picture of "apostasy" rapidly spreading in the world.

What is apostasy?

It is a word we find in verse 3 of chapter 2 of St. Paul's II Epistle to the Thessalonians, by which he denoted the spontaneous phenomenon of the "Departure of Christians from Christ" - a process that is constantly increasing in the world, which will reach its climax in the last years of this temporal world and culminate in the appearance of the Antichrist, the enemy of Christ, into the world.

Everything clearly indicates that we are living in an age of unusually rapid apostasy. Almost every day brings us more and more data in this respect. But some people see and understand this, while others somehow and for some reason do not see and understand it. Not only that: they even become angry for some reason, why does "Orthodox Russia" constantly write about it. But how is it possible not to write about it? Pravoslavskaya Rus is a periodical, and it is typical for any periodical to respond vividly to everything that is happening in the world. This is not some kind of prediction of the end of the world, what some accuse Prav. Rus and what is forbidden by Scripture. No! It is nothing more than a sober, conscious attitude toward what is happening in the world, about which we, as pastors, have no right to remain silent, but must warn and warn our flock. For the Lord Himself, who said "no one knows the day or hour of the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:36), at the same time described so thoroughly the signs of the nearness of His Coming and concluded: "And so, when you see all these things coming true, watch therefore, as it is near, at the door" (Matthew 24:3-33).

And some say to us, "Why are you writing about this? There are plenty of other good topics to write about." Such reasoning is similar to this. Someone comes to visit his acquaintance and suddenly notices that a fire is starting in his house. He anxiously tells his host about it, and the latter replies: "Let's not pay attention to that. There are plenty of other good things to talk about. Let us better sit down and talk to you about something else.

Wouldn't someone like that be considered insane?

And here we have something just like that happening.

Apostasy spreads like a real fire, engulfing the whole world, consuming more and more souls. And we... are we going to sit around and talk merrily about all sorts of nice, pleasant things?

Here, for example, is the most recent news, which you may have read about recently in Prav. Rus. The Serbian academic journal Theology, published by the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Belgrade, proposes that all church canonical rules be revised because the old ones are "outdated" and do not correspond to the "spirit of the times. It is true that there are ecclesiastical canonical rules that were issued under certain definite time conditions, in relation to certain circumstances, and have now, to one degree or another, lost their former significance. But it is not of such rules that we are speaking here, but of those which express in themselves the immutable teaching of the Christian Church, in which are vividly reflected the immutable moral foundations of the Orthodox Christian moral teaching of the Church, the very essence of that teaching.

What rules, for example, does this academic journal recognize as "obsolete" and therefore subject to abolition?

The rule forbidding those who come to the church for the Divine Liturgy to leave before the end of the Divine Liturgy and thereby cause disorder in the church. Why this rule should be considered obsolete is unclear!

Or the rule that punishes those who miss three Sundays of worship without a valid reason. Why is this rule obsolete?

Or here is the rule forbidding men to bathe with women. Is it "obsolete" only because there are now "common beaches" and even some priests do not think it shameful for them to bathe on such beaches?

Or the rule forbidding women to make excessive use of their physical appearance by adorning themselves "to entice the unconfirmed and innocent souls. Should this rule be abolished only because modern women in this adornment of themselves seem to have reached the point of utter shamelessness and often appear even in the temple of God in completely indecent attire?

The Orthodox Christian faith is an ascetic faith that requires a feat of struggle against one's own sinful passions and lusts. Therefore, the rules of the church, which affirm this ascetic spirit of the church, can never become "obsolete" and be subject to abolition. Whoever wants to abolish them undermines the very foundations of the Church: he is undoubtedly and obviously possessed by the spirit of apostasy.

Such attempts to abolish the entire ascetic order of our Church were manifested earlier by our so called "Believers" and Renewalists, and then in 1923 at the "All-Orthodox Congress" in

Constantinople, when Patriarch Meletius IV wanted to introduce a married episcopate, the second marriage of clergy, abolish monasticism and fasting, introduce secular clothing for clergymen, etc.

All this is nothing less than the winds of the spirit of apostasy!

It is precisely this process of apostasy, which is now furiously developing, that explains all the ugly, criminal, immoral things that are nowadays happening in the world and which so darken the lives of people who are thought to be Christians. It is precisely this process of apostasy that explains everything that is going on in the Church, and in particular, all of the turmoil and turmoil that is going on in our Russian Church Abroad. Our disputes, quarrels, and disagreements in the ideological sphere and in Church life have as their source, to a large extent, the same apostasy, of which, unfortunately, not everyone is clearly aware.

In the first place in these ecclesiastical troubles is, of course, our complete loss of the spirit of genuine "synodality," which should be the basis of our ecclesial life. Our church is conciliar, as is so clearly emphasized in the Creed. And this word "conciliar" is not equivalent to the word "ecumenical", as it is often interpreted by us under the influence of the Latin West: "conciliar" is a translation of the Greek word "kafolikos", while "ecumenical" has another Greek word, "icumenikos".

The doctrine that our Church is catholic is beautifully expounded by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 where he says that the Church is the body of Christ and we believers are members of that body (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27) and also in the letter to the Ephesians (Eph.1:22-23, 4:4-16) and Colossians (Col.1:18-19).

The Church is "conciliar" because it is "gathered together," made up of various constituent parts, which together constitute one coherent unity - one whole organism, one body, of which Christ Himself is the head. This is why the Church cannot be regarded as an ordinary secular organization, and none of the secular forms of government are applicable to her at all--no dictatorship of any kind, no oligarchy (rule by a few), no democracy are appropriate or acceptable. It consists of different constituent parts: the bishopric, the clergy, and the laity, and all these constituent parts must be in perfect harmony with one another, as members of the human organism in the human body.

The understanding of "synodality" does not lend itself to any formal definition: it is therefore very difficult for someone who does not live an authentic life of the Church. In general, the "spirit of unity," like all elevated truths of our holy faith, is comprehended not by the mind, but by the believing heart. True synodality has nothing in common with "democracy," with the now so fashionable aspiration of the laity, often very unchurched and even of little faith and simple

unbelievers, to rule in the Church. But authentic synodality also resolutely excludes any kind of "dictatorship" in the Church. It must be well known and remembered that the very notion of authority in the Church is quite different from the secular understanding of authority. The Word of God clearly teaches this. When two of His closest disciples, James and John, came to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked that He let them sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom, that is, share with Him His authority over the world, He said to them, "You do not know what you are asking," and called the other disciples to Him and admonished them: "Princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and lords rule over them. But let it not be so among you: whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant... For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45).

Spiritual authority, pastoral authority, is not domination, not dominion, but service - service to the great cause of human salvation.

In full agreement with this instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ, St. Peter teaches: "Feed the flock of God among you, visiting not by need, but by the will and the good pleasure of the Lord, not by unrighteous gain (not for filthy lucre), but diligently, not as one who has the parish (not dominating the heritage of God), but as one who makes example for the flock (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Spiritual authority is not based on any external, violent coercion, but only on the high spiritual authority of the pastor, why St. Paul exhorts the pastor: "Be faithful in word, in life, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity, an image (i.e. example)" (1 Timothy 4:12: 12). (1 Timothy 4:12).

The Church has always strongly condemned pastors who have tried to imitate in their lives, in their behavior, worldly leaders, calling it "the smoky arrogance of the world" and emphasizing the difference between worldly leadership and pastoral ministry.

There is no teaching in our Church about anyone's infallibility either. Only the Church as a whole is infallible, since the whole Church, kept by the Holy Spirit, cannot depart from the truth. Individual members of the Church can err, even if they are bishops, or patriarchs, or whole councils of bishops, except that Council which is accepted by the whole universal consciousness of the Church, as the Ecumenical Council, which expresses this universal consciousness, or the Truth kept by the Church.

This Truth is the pure and undefiled Truth: it is the most precious thing in the world to us!

We know in the history of the Church the Council of Bishops in 449, which claimed to be "ecumenical," but the ecumenical conscience of the Church rejected it, giving it the name of "robbery," because it deviated from the Truth.

This is why there cannot and should not be any and no one's dictatorship in the Church. This is why even such a fervent zealot for the bishop's authority as the highest authority in the Church, the holy martyr Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, to whom belongs the famous dictum: "The bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop, and whoever is not with the bishop is also not in the Church," simultaneously says: "The Church consists in the bishop, the clergy and all who stand in the faith," and to his elders he writes: "From the beginning of my bishopric I have made it a rule to do nothing at my sole discretion, without your advice and without the consent of the people.

Significantly and deeply instructive for us is the passage from the Eastern Patriarchs' 1848 "District Epistle to all Orthodox Christians" which literally reads as follows: "With us neither patriarchs nor councils could ever introduce anything new, for the guardian of piety is the very body of the Church, that is, the people themselves, who always wish to keep their faith unchanged and in accordance with the faith of their fathers.

We are all concerned about the question of a more correct and, if possible, perfect government of our Russian Church Abroad, and it is on this basis that we have certain disputes, divisions, and differences of opinion. The Vladyka Metropolitan has asked everyone to speak frankly about this.

Some of us have already stated that there is no need for us to draw up and adopt new statutes and regulations for the government of our Church when we already have the "Resolutions of the Holy Synod of the All-Russian Orthodox Church" of 1917. These definitions were drawn up and adopted by the last freely and lawfully convened Council of our Russian Church, when it was still free from the enslavement of the godless, and therefore these "Definitions" cannot fail to be binding upon us, at least insofar as they can be applied abroad. Only a new, freely convened All-Russian Church Council in a free Russian land has the power to completely revoke or change these "Definitions," while we abroad have only the right to make some exceptions to them which are unacceptable under the conditions of our life abroad.

There is an opinion that this All-Russian Council was guided in its definitions by revolutionary sentiments. There were all kinds of sentiments, but we cannot forget and should know and remember that it was this Council that accomplished the great work of restoring Patriarchy by electing His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, and that at this Council the principal leaders of its acts were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Anthony, who received the majority of votes in the election of the Patriarch, and Metropolitan Anastassy, who was also one of the strongest candidates for Patriarch, both subsequently the heads of the First Hierarchs of our Russian Church Abroad.

The "Resolutions" of this Council were nothing more than an attempt (more or less successful, as is everything that comes from an imperfect person) to fulfill the "spirit of conciliarity" in the life of the Russian Church at the difficult time of the triumph of atheism, by placing on the shoulders of the lay faithful a part of their responsibility for the Church and their concern for its preservation in the dire year of persecution. As clearly stated in the beautifully composed Introduction to the Parish Statutes elaborated by this Council, these Statutes are only "dry bones" into which each pastor must put the "spirit of life" of his personal pastoral enthusiasm. The aim of the new Charter was that the most devout and diligent of the parishioners should become "the shepherd's closest assistants," and that the shepherd should be "a real leader and father of his flock. This is a long way from "democracy," which has and can have no place in church life.

And this involvement of the laity in active participation in the life of the Church in the spirit of conciliarity, as we know, was quite justified in the exceptionally difficult years of persecution of the Russian Church. Who, if not the faithful laity, saved our holy faith and the Church from the godless and from the so-called "Church of God" and the Renewalists?

At a time when it was not uncommon for priests and even bishops - we speak of this with great sorrow and horror! - and the Church, and bishops became the Church-believers and the Renewalists, and priests, in front of the faithful, threw off their pectoral cross and trampled on it with their feet, simple lay believers, even women, were steadfastly fighting for their faith and the Church, fearing nothing. There have been cases when a bishop - an Episcopalian or Renewalist - came to the church to perform a service and the faithful would not let him in, saying that he would enter the church only on their corpses. And there was nothing that could be done about it: the harsh Soviet government itself was powerless to fight with these believers, who had discovered such strength and steadfastness of faith, and, thanks to this, the Church of Evangelical Faith and Renewal fell by the wayside.

What would have happened if the faithful had blindly, without thinking, followed their pastors, presbyters and bishops, who had betrayed and renounced their faith, or had become "living-churchists" and "renewed believers"?

The difficult times experienced by our Church are far from over - perhaps even more difficult times lie ahead! - It is therefore of the utmost importance to preserve in our Church the "spirit of conciliarity" - the harmonious combination and unanimous action of the bishops, clergy, and laity, based on mutual Christian love and trust, in full harmony with the canons.

Chapter 22: The remission of sins and imaginary Christian love and forgiveness

Take the Holy Spirit: unto them that remit sins, they shall be remitted; and unto them that hold fast, they shall be held fast (John 20:22-23).

"Let no one weep for trespasses, for forgiveness from the grave shall be exalted..." (John 20:22-23). we hear on the sacred and all-holy night of the Resurrection of Christ so joyful for us words of the great universal teacher and saint, renowned church visionary St. John Chrysostom.

And indeed! One of the most important and most important consequences of the great work of redemption of mankind, accomplished by Christ the Life-Giver who rose three days from the grave, was precisely forgiveness, or remission of sins.

That is why, appearing on the first day after His Resurrection to His disciples gathered together, the Risen Lord, after teaching them peace, blew and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit: unto them that put away sins, they shall be absolved; and unto them that hold fast, they shall be held fast" (Jn.20:22-23).

And further, from the book of Acts we see that the holy apostles, after preaching about Christ crucified and risen from the dead, immediately called upon their hearers to repent and receive holy baptism "for the remission of sins".

"Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" - thus St. Peter cried out to the crowd of many thousands, listening to him on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38).

"Repent therefore, and be converted, that ye may be cleansed from your sins," he also cried to the people who had gathered around him and Saint John the Apostle after their miraculous healing of the lame man from birth (Acts 3:19).

"God commands all men everywhere to repent, - Saint Apostle Paul said to the Athenians in his famous sermon before the Areopagus, - because he fixed a day (for he fixed a day), in which he wants to judge the universe with truth (in which he will judge the universe with justice)" (Acts 17:30-31).

From this it is clear that this "forgiveness", about which St. Chrysostom speaks, or "remission of sins" is given to us not unconditionally, but conditionally, just under the condition of repentance (of course, sincere). This is also why the Lord, having given His disciples the power to "absolve sins" by the Holy Spirit, at the same time, as we see, gave them the power not to forgive sins - obviously to those who do not truly repent: "...and by them ye shall hold fast," i.e., "on whom ye shall leave sins, on him they shall remain" - hence, they shall not be forgiven.

How understandable this is, how logical it is, and how completely at odds with this clear and definite, pure Gospel teaching is the now so fashionable propaganda of some imaginary Christian love and unconditional forgiveness, too all-encompassing, which supposedly extends even to the enemies of Christ's faith, up to and including the doubtless servants of the coming Antichrist, actively fighting against the Holy Church and the very faith in God!

Such false preachers of fashionable imaginary "Christianity" in order to support their shaky positions like to abuse the well-known saying of the Lord: "Judge not, lest ye be judged" (Matt. 7:1). 1) - a particularly favorite saying of theirs, which, however, does not prevent them from judging and condemning most cruelly all those who do not agree with their false teaching, which is only a very cunning distortion of the Gospel teaching - a forgery, with which they confuse and confuse many.

In order to understand correctly this saying of the Lord, we must remember that the same Our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: "Judge not, lest ye be judged", immediately afterwards taught: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your beads before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and ye be wrung after them" (Matt.7:6).

Who are these "dogs" and these "swine?"

By these dogs and pigs the Lord meant morally corrupt people, incapable of accepting the Truth of the Gospel, to whom everything sacred and spiritual is alien and even repugnant, because they cannot understand its price. These are morally fallen, impious and wicked people, who often only sneer at the Truth of the Gospel, trample on it, and can turn violently on its preachers themselves, causing them various troubles and even death (see the interpretations of St. John Chrysostom, Ephesius Michael, etc.).

Is it not clear from this that by the words "Judge not, lest ye be judged" the Lord does not forbid at all to give moral estimation to people - to differentiate between good and evil people? Not only does He not forbid it, but, as we shall see below, He even commands it.

For example, the Lord explicitly commands us to rebuke our brother who has sinned: "If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him between you and that one man: if he listens to you, you have gained your brother..." (Matthew 18:15).

Moreover, to such reasonable and Christian judgment on the sinned brother, it is not only permitted, but even commanded to attract also other brethren: "If he will not listen to you, take with you one or two more, that with the mouth of two or three witnesses every verb may become" (Matt. 18:16).

But that is not all! If the brother continues to persist in the evil he is doing, then we must "tell" the Church, that is, the church authority, which received from the Lord Himself the gracious right to "bind and decide: "And if he will not obey them, let the Church be warned: but if the Church also disobeys, let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector" (Matt. 18:17).

These last words are the most frightening and completely unacceptable to the twisted imaginary-Christian ideology of modern propagandists of liberal fashionable neo-Christianity, for they run completely counter to their basic tenets.

But whether one likes or dislikes them, they cannot be thrown out of the Gospel: they are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

How can they not be taken into account?

But today's neo-Christians, which now include scholars of theology and many high hierarchs, do not want to reckon with the real, authentic gospel of Christ, but arbitrarily fabricate their own "gospel," just as their ideological predecessor of grim memory Leo Tolstoy did in his time.

Alas! For many of today's very unstable, unshakable in the true Christian faith, this is a great temptation, a temptation that completely throws them off the right path.

"Judge not, lest ye be judged!"

How attractive this seems to be in the neo-Christian crookedness: "I will not hinder you from sinning, and you will not hinder me from sinning for it!"

This is the horrifying, perverted, criminal interpretation of this sacred text in our day! In fact, we should know and remember that condemnation is not the same as condemnation: there are different kinds of condemnation.

One condemnation is sinful, and the other, as we have seen, is not only not sinful, but is prescribed by the Gospel itself.

And this is quite understandable: for if we never, on any occasion, condemn anyone, we will soon lose all ability to distinguish between good and evil, and we can easily be led down the path of evil ourselves.

The greatest of those born of women, whose holiness and blameless moral highness is witnessed by Christ the Savior Himself, the holy Forerunner of the Lord John, seeing the Pharisees and

Sadducees coming to him, said to them, "Ye of Eden, who told you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7).

What is this? Sinful condemnation?

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who invited His followers to take His example and said, "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29), but not once did He use the same expression about those sinners hardened by evil, who would not listen to His divine teaching: "vipers' spawn," and often addressed the people around Him, especially the scribes and Pharisees, with very sharp words of condemnation: "wicked and adulterous generation!" (Matt. 12:34,39), "O unfaithful and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" (Matthew 17:17). He constantly called the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites", "foolish and blind", "serpents" (Matthew 15:7; 16:3; 16:6-12, all 23rd chapter), He once called King Herod "fox" (Luke 13:32); "reviled", as the Gospel itself expresses it, the whole cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, because they "did not repent" (Matthew 11:20-24).

Not only that! We know from the Gospel, that the meek and humble Lord, who later prayed for His crucifiers: "Father, absolve them: for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34), not only used harsh words of condemnation, but sometimes He resorted to very strong and drastic measures of physical influence: thus, twice - at the very beginning of His public ministry - and again at its very end, shortly before His suffering on the cross, He expelled the traders from the temple. These events are vividly and figuratively recounted to us by the evangelists. Not being able to tolerate the ugly peddling, which was started, under the protection of the priests themselves and even with the participation of the high priests, who had a large profit from selling pigeons, by the Jews in the Temple of Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus Christ, "making a whip of cords, drove all out of the temple, both sheep and oxen, and scattered the money of the changers, and overturned their tables", saying to the sellers: "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (Jn. 2:14-16). And after His solemn entry into Jerusalem before His suffering, He again entered the temple and "drove out all those who sold and bought, overturned the tables of the changers and the pews of the peddlers, and said to them, 'It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves'" (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46).

What is this?

And how far is it from the supposedly Christian "love" and all-encompassing "forgiveness" preached by today's liberal "neo-Christians"! And won't they, more "loving" than the Lord Himself, find such words and actions of the sinless Lord sinful and unacceptable, contrary to His teaching: won't they brand them with their favorite expressions of "obscurantism," "Black-hundreds," "dark Middle Ages," "retrogression," "inquisition," etc.?

But can we think that our Lord, the Incarnate Only-Begotten Son of God, who came to earth to save us humans, to teach us the Divine Truth and to live in harmony with it, would contradict Himself in any way - act contrary to His own teaching?

Of course it is out of the question: to think so would be the greatest blasphemy!

But there He was!

Following the example of the Lord Himself, His holy disciples and apostles were not afraid, when necessary, to "condemn" those who stubbornly opposed the Gospel Truth which they preached, and sometimes to resort to the most drastic measures to restrain and suppress evil.

Thus, St. Peter severely condemned Ananias and Sapphira for the deception they had committed, who were punished with instant death only because they had "withheld a certain part from the price of the land" they had sold, instead of offering the whole price as an offering to the Church (Acts 5:1-11).

The holy archimandrite Stephen openly condemned his fellow Jews in front of all, in the council, calling them "cruel" and "men with uncircumcised hearts and ears", and accusing them of "always opposing the Holy Spirit", that they "killed the prophets" and finally "became traitors and murderers" of the very Lord Jesus Christ, whose coming had been announced by those prophets (Acts 7:51-52).

St. Peter condemned Simon the Volhov for his attempt to buy the grace of the Holy Spirit with money, saying to him, "Your silver shall be with you in destruction... I see you filled with bitter gall and in bonds of unrighteousness" (Acts 8:18-23).

The Apostle St. Paul, during his first missionary journey, severely condemned the false prophet Bar-Jesus, or Elymas, who tried to reject from the faith in Christ proconsul Sergius Paul, saying to him: "Oh, one filled with all guile and all wickedness, son of the devil, enemy of all righteousness" and punished him with blindness (Acts.13:6-12).

What is this? A sinful condemnation? The apostles' lack of Christian love?

The same St. Apostle Paul, when the Corinthians, newly converted by him to the faith in Christ, informed him that a disgusting and vile sin of incest had come into their midst - that "some men, instead of a wife, have a wife of their father", did not tell them about it: "Judge not, lest ye be judged! - Or," What do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but don't feel the plank in your own eye?" No! Nothing of the sort! The apostle immediately condemned this sinner, and

commanded the Corinthians to condemn him with the strictest sentence and punishment, "deliver him to Satan for the weariness of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

Not only that! St. Paul then instructed the Corinthians not to "associate with fornicators", and not only with fornicators, but also with "covetous persons", or "extortioners", or "idolaters", and with all those "who, being called "brother" (i.e. "Christian") "fornicators, or covetous persons, or idolaters, or swine, or extortioners; with such even not to eat together... You shall cast him out of your midst, who is corrupt" (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).

(1 Corinthians 5:9-13) The above Scripture seems to be more than enough to see how we should properly understand God's words, "Judge not, lest ye be judged. "That is, to make sure that these words do not exclude any kind of condemnation of one's neighbor, which is not only permissible but even necessary, prescribed by the very law of God and conscience, since a true Christian cannot treat obvious evil and sin indifferently, ignore it and put up with it under the evil pretext of "non-judgment," "Christian love" and "all-forgiveness.

We must know well and remember that Tolstoy's malignant doctrine of "non-resistance to evil" (which, incidentally, ruined our wretched homeland of Russia and plunged it into the terrible bloody horrors of Bolshevism!) is completely alien to true Christianity: every true Christian is implacable to evil, no matter where or in whom he encounters it.

The example of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and of His holy apostles was then followed throughout the history of the Church by all true Christians, who always condemned evil and fought against it, even if it cost them all kinds of severe hardships and even their very lives.

Thus struggled against the evil of dark paganism and idolatry the holy martyrs, not only passively dying for the Name of Christ, but also very strongly condemning, sometimes in very harsh words and expressions and even actions, the delusion and impiety of the idolaters.

Decisively and uncompromisingly the holy Fathers of the Church struggled with the false teachers of heretics, not at all considering heretics as "dissenters" (as it has become fashionable in our days!), to whom one must show "tolerance", to whom one must "approach with understanding", but considering them as "fierce wolves, not sparing the flock", as the Word of God expresses it (Acts 20:29). (Acts 20:29), severely condemning them at Ecumenical and Local Councils, warning the orthodox against communion with them in every possible way and making them anathema.

What is this? Sinful condemnation or lack of love?

No! It is nothing more than the legitimate application to life of the words of St. Apostle: "What fellowship of light with darkness? What harmony between Christ and Belial? Or what fellowship of the faithful with the unfaithful?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

And our Reverend Fathers and Mothers, Christian ascetics and ascetics, "condemned" this world, lying in evil, by the very fact of their departure from it. They followed the call of the Word of God: "Depart from their midst and depart, says the Lord, and touch no uncleanness, and I will receive you: and I will be to you in the Father, and you shall be to me sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

And now, in the terrible time of cynical and blatantly wicked godlessness that we are experiencing, we, as Christians faithful to Christ the Savior and His True Church, cannot but condemn with all our determination the godless and blasphemers, the wicked God-fighters who seek to eradicate the faith of Christ throughout the world and to destroy the Holy Church, who desecrate our Motherland and desecrate our Holy Places.

Nor can we fail to condemn all those who collaborate with them, who support them and contribute to their power, thereby assisting them in their infernal designs.

We condemn the servants of the coming antichrist and the antichrist himself ...

Is all this a sinful condemnation, forbidden by the Gospel, as modern clever neo-Christians, filled with some extraordinary "super love" and all-encompassing "forgiveness", are trying to convince us?

Let them not lie about the Lord and His Holy Gospel!

Let them not ascribe to themselves, in their Pharisaic pride and self-belief, a greater love than that which our Lord and Savior Incarnate Love Himself had!

And as we should correctly understand the saying of the Lord: "Judge not, lest ye be judged," this is beautifully explained by the great Father of the Church, St. John Chrysostom: "Here the Savior commands not to judge all sins and forbids not all without exception, but only those, who, being themselves filled with innumerable sins, reproach others for some insignificant faults. Christ also points here to the Jews, who, being wicked accusers of their neighbors of some insignificant and insignificant deeds, themselves unconscionably committed great sins" (see vol. VII, p. 260).

Hence it is not judgment of the deeds of a neighbor that is forbidden, nor condemnation of his evil deeds in themselves, but an evil feeling in the soul toward a neighbor, by a person who himself sins as much, or even more, without thinking of his own rectification.

What is forbidden is not an objective "judgment" of one's neighbor, not an impartial condemnation of his bad behavior, but evil gossip and backbiting that comes, as it often does, from any selfish and impure motives, from pride and vanity, from envy or resentment.

In other words, it is forbidden to be angry and gloating over one's own sinful neighbor, on personal grounds, but not at all a fair, purely ideological, principled, impassioned evaluation of his deeds and behavior, which is not only not against the Gospel and not reprehensible, but on the contrary - even necessary, so that we do not eventually become indifferent to good and evil, and evil would not prevail in the world as a result.

The great crime, therefore, is committed by those modern pastors, whom it would be better to call false pastors, who, under the plausible pretext of supposed Christian "love" and "forgiveness," consciously or unconsciously, teach their flock the Tolstian "non-resistance to evil.

What terrible, hopeless slyness this is! What genuine Pharisaic hypocrisy this is!

"Do not condemn anyone for anything at all" - this is the attitude that the servants of the coming antichrist want to achieve in contemporary Christian society, so that they can easily and spaciouly act, preparing in the world an environment favorable to the speedy enthronement of their ruler.

Could it not be clear to every honest and conscientious Christian in our time that unconditional "forgiveness" is needed only for the enemy of Christ - the Antichrist, so that people completely lose the sense of distinguishing between good and evil, would make peace with evil, willingly accept it, and then - the Antichrist himself, without thinking about combating him?

This is nothing more than a hypocritical Pharisaic deceit of the enemy, who longs for our destruction!

If the Christian forgiveness, granted to us by the risen Christ the Savior, extended, so to speak, automatically to those who are not willing to repent and reform their lives, then the Lord would not have given His apostles, and in their person all their successors, the pastors of the Church, along with the power to "forgive sins" the power to "bind" them and not say, having appeared to them after the Resurrection: "unto them that remit sins, they shall be remitted; and unto them that hold, they shall be held" (i.e.: they shall not be remitted Jn. 20 :22-23).

What an utter and reckless impudence, indeed, to think ourselves more loving than God Himself, and to "correct" the gospel of Christ by making up our own "gospel"!

Let us take every precaution, brethren, against this wicked leaven of modern Pharisaism!

Resolutely fighting against every slightest manifestation of evil and sin in our own souls, let us not be afraid to uncover and expose evil wherever it reveals itself in modern life - not because of pride and self-love, but only out of love for the truth. Our main task in this wicked time of deceitful shamelessness is to remain completely faithful and committed to the true Gospel Truth and to the Author of our salvation, Christ the Life-Giver, who rose on three days from the tomb, the Victor of hell and death.

Chapter 23: "My temple, the temple of prayer shall be called" (Matthew 21:13)

"Today is the temple of the animate, and of the great King, into the temple enters, That One is welcome in the divine dwelling place" (Verse 21:21).

Thus joyfully sings the Holy Church on the great feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, which we solemnly celebrate on November 21st according to our Orthodox calendar.

Who is this "temple animated"?

It is the Blessed Virgin Mary, who at the tender age of three was brought by her pious parents, Joachim and Anna, according to the vow they made, into the temple in Jerusalem.

Why and for what purpose?

"To that one be prepared for the divine dwelling," that is, so that "having been brought up in the Holy of Holies" she might become worthy of divine habitation, to become the Mother of our Lord and Savior.

Constantly being in the quiet of the temple, in ceaseless, unentertained prayer and contemplation of God, She soon matured to become the "receptacle of the incomprehensible" - to become the Wonderful Creator of our salvation by the supernatural incarnation of the Son of God from Her - our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, therefore, this is the great educational value of the temple of God! It makes men holy, worthy of the indwelling of God Himself. But if such was the meaning of the temple of the Old Testament, which was only "the shadow of good things to come", in the words of St. Paul (Heb.10:1), how much higher and more important is the temple of the New Testament - the "grace and truth" itself (John 1:17)!

It was not without reason that our godly fathers called the temple a "school of godliness. Nowhere can prayer be so fervent and effective as in the temple, for there is the constant offering of the Passionless Blood Sacrifice "for all and for all," there is incessant prayer on behalf of all believers, there is "the most holy air," as one of our saints put it.

"Truly the temple is earthly heaven," says our great righteous Saint John of Kronstadt, "for where the throne of God, where the fearful sacraments are administered, where angels minister with men, where the incessant praise of the Almighty is, there truly is heaven and heaven is heaven. Let us therefore enter the temple of God, especially the Holy of Holies, with the fear of

God, with a pure heart, having put off the passions and all worldly cares, and let us stand in it with faith, reverence, intelligence, attention, love, and peace in our hearts, so that we go out renewed, as if from heaven, that we live in the holiness proper to heaven, unbound by worldly lusts and vanities" (My Life in Christ, Volume II, page 65. 65).

Is this the attitude of contemporary Christians toward the temple of God, do they enter it with such feelings and attitudes, do they conduct themselves in it and come out of it truly renewed, "as if they were in heaven"?

For example, we are abroad, are we like that, do we behave that way?

We build temples. And we must admit that many of us, thank God, still have a zeal for it. Wherever Russian people have settled, in more or less significant numbers, there is almost always the idea of building a temple. So until now, at least, it was. And in this and only in this is the key to our spiritual revival, without which we will not see Russia - the real Russia, as if it were our own ears!

The temple is heaven on earth: in the temple "the powers of heaven serve with us invisibly. The temple is the house of God, it is a house of prayer.

That is why it is necessary to begin and conduct the building of the temple, and then to visit the temple, which is already built, with prayer and reverence. Nothing earthly, lowly, passionate should have no place here, because the Temple is the great Holy of God.

The great and solemn, deeply moving and joyful consecration of the church (full order) must therefore be performed only over a church that is properly erected, so that it may forever remain an Orthodox church, without any thought of transferring or selling it into non-Orthodox hands, for any other, earthly use, which only the modern persecutors of faith and the Church - the godless communists do in our time and which is blasphemy and sacrilege.

Alas! We have to admit that many Russian people have already lost a clear consciousness of the sanctity of God's temple, and for many it is almost an ordinary building where people come to pray to God, but not in this they see the only and most important purpose of its construction. The main thing is now seen in mutual fellowship - meeting one another, as in some kind of "club. That is why one can often see more people in front of and around the temple than inside the temple itself, especially in fine summer weather. It is where acquaintances meet each other, tell each other the latest news, where politicians discuss political issues, where traders make their deals, etc., etc. At the same time, many people smoke unashamedly right there, in the immediate vicinity of the temple, so that tobacco smoke is sometimes carried by the air movement into the temple itself, mixing with the fragrance of incense. And they sometimes talk very loudly,

completely forgetting that nearby in the temple the sacred words of the prayers are said and the sacred hymns are sung, which they can drown out with their noisy talk.

This is why some parishioners now advocate the construction of a lower room beneath the temple for such "clubbing" meetings and for the entertainment of young people, a semi-basement room that Orthodox countries have never known in this form in all the centuries of Christianity. The temple building is all holy, for its very walls at consecration are anointed with the greatest holy thing after the Holy Gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ, the holy oil. Within the walls of the temple building, therefore, only holy words of prayer, holy hymns, and church preaching are allowed—all that is aimed at sanctifying and edifying the faithful, and nothing else that would violate the sanctity of the place and the proper reverence.

But even inside the temple itself, and even during the service, many people nowadays seem to forget where they are and what they came there for. They sometimes arrive much later than the beginning of the service and leave before it is over, walking around the temple reverently and making noise, saying hello and talking quite loudly with acquaintances. Not everyone now understands that one should come to the temple in appropriate, quite decent clothing that does not embarrass or offend the eyes of those who are praying. This is especially true of women and maidens, who sometimes come to the church very indecently dressed, not to say half-dressed, and completely ugly makeup, not being embarrassed sometimes in such an indecent way to come even to the holy cup for communion.

The ancient Church custom according to which men and women should not stand together in the temple has been almost completely forgotten now. Men should take their places in the right side of the temple opposite the icon of Christ the Savior and women - in the left side - opposite the icon of the Mother of God, and women should be in the temple with their heads covered.

It is embarrassing to say, but in non-Orthodox churches there is often much more piety and reverence in this regard than in many of our Russian Orthodox churches! Perhaps this is partly due to the fact that our pastors are afraid of losing their already sparse flock, making appropriate comments and suggestions. But it is still their indispensable holy duty, for failure to do so they will answer to God. A mild way might be found for this sort of indoctrination, but it cannot be allowed to stand. God will punish severely both the perpetrators and those who permit such blasphemous disrespect for the sanctity of the temple.

"God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7). In temples everything should not be arbitrary and not as if it were, but "as it were according to the order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

On our sinful earth, especially in the present time, which is so full of all kinds of sins and iniquities and the most terrible and ugly crimes, the Holy Temple of God is the only place where

we can find refuge from the storms and troubles of life, from all the moral filth of life, and find solace and peace of mind in prayerful communion with God Himself, who is invisibly in it; therefore all our behavior in the Temple must correspond to its holiness and grandeur.

It is necessary to enter the temple decently dressed, with spiritual joy, humility and meekness, coming to the very beginning of the service. Entering the temple one should at once stand in his usual place and make three mock bows at the altar (on the weekdays three mock bows are given) and without saying hello to anybody in particular, moreover by the hand, make a general silent bow to everybody. One should go through the temple quietly and calmly, without looking around and when passing the Holy Gates stop for a moment in front of them and bow reverently with the sign of the Cross. It is necessary to be baptized for real, as it should be, and not as casually and carelessly, which, unfortunately, has now become fashionable, especially among our secular-minded intelligentsia. We should make the sign of the cross and make bows at the same time as the servants and all those who are praying, paying attention to the service and listening to the words of the prayers and hymns.

The church is a public worship service, and therefore everyone should pray with everyone else and exactly what the whole church is praying for. What others do in the temple is not to be seen or observed: one should look only to oneself and pray to God for forgiveness of one's own sins. It is permissible to sit in the temple only in cases of illness or extreme exhaustion, loss of strength.

It is necessary to approach the Holy Communion with the feeling of greatest reverence and humility, crossing your arms on your chest and not crossing your arms before the bowl in order not to accidentally hurt or hit it (which can happen). After receiving communion, kiss the cup and, after leaving, drink the warmth, tasting a particle of antidor. Do not leave the church without having heard or read the prayers of thanksgiving after communion. It is absolutely inadmissible for women and maidens to receive Communion with their lips painted: this is a sacrilegious insult to the greatest sacredness of the Body and Blood of Christ.

On the day of Holy Communion one should not spit, eat too much, or get drunk on alcoholic beverages, and one should behave reverently and decently in every way so that "you may honestly keep Christ who has been received in you.

Oh, if all this were observed by our Russian people as it should be! Then our entire life would be transformed and become different, better, and we would be graced with God's forgiveness and favor, earning the salvation of our poor suffering Motherland, about whose deliverance from the yoke of the wicked godless we only talk a lot at our public and political meetings and private conversations, but - alas! - We do nothing realistically to attract to us the mercy and goodwill of God, without which we cannot and should not expect anything good.

"A Christian without the Church is like a fish without water, he cannot live a true life," says our great righteous Saint John of Kronstadt, "the Church is his element" (Thoughts on the Church, p. 114).

Let us learn better and stronger this concept of church and, as we zealously build our temples of God, let us remember what they are built for.

"In church we are sobered from worldly glamour," thus explains our same great righteous man, "from the intoxication of passions and lusts of life, we are enlightened, sanctified, our souls are cleansed, we are brought closer to God, we are united with God. How venerable and worthy of love the temple of God must be, as God's holy men loved it!"

We need the temples of God in order to become the spiritual temples of God, which is our purpose, the goal of our life, as the Word of God clearly teaches us: "Do you not believe that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).

This is what we must build it for, and not for anything else, much less for the vain, purely earthly...

Let us remember that the greatest event of the birth of the Son of God in the world, who came to earth to save man, was possible only because the Pure Maiden chosen as a glorious instrument for this wonderful event was brought by her parents into the temple of God and was educated in the temple.

How can we not love God's temple after this, reverently and with the fear of God, reverence its sanctity!

"Brethren, friends! - call to us our wondrous righteous Saint John, - love the church: in the church is your life or your living water, flowing unceasingly from the ever-flowing spring of the Holy Spirit, - your peace, your purification, sanctification, healing, comfort, enlightenment, your strength, help, your glory - in it are all the highest eternal interests of man. Oh, what a good thing the church is! ("Thoughts on the Church," p. 20).

Chapter 24: "Do not be deceived, brethren; God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7)

Why is it unacceptable for Christians to have a party on the eve of Sundays and holidays?

It is amazing how far people today, even those who still consider themselves "Christians", have strayed from their holy faith and the church!

They do not want to understand why it is so reprehensible to have fun and entertainment on Sunday eve (i.e., Sabbath) and holiday eve.

It would seem that even the well-known fact that the godless Bolsheviks, soon after they came to power, deliberately began to organize all sorts of entertainments during the hours of church service for the express purpose of distracting people from going to God's temple and praying in church, should have set everyone to reason and made them understand why it is inappropriate to hold amusements on Saturdays and the eve of feasts.

But no! So calloused and hardened are the hearts of modern Christians that nothing can penetrate them now. Many have become blind and deaf. They even become bitter when they are told the truth. But it is our duty, the duty of the shepherds of the True Church of Christ, to constantly talk about this and try to admonish those who do not understand: maybe someone will understand. So here we turn our word to those who have not yet completely lost the ability to reason.

"And there was evening and there was morning: the day is one" (Genesis 1:5) - we read on the first page of the Bible, which tells about the creation of the world. This is how ancient the religious custom of counting the coming of the next day from the evening before has its origins. Our feasts, which the Lord God Himself, the Creator of the world and man, commanded us to "sanctify," that is, to honor sacredly: "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Gen. 2:3), are of the same ancient origin. This "seventh day", sanctified by God Himself at the dawn of human history, 1600 years before the Nativity of Christ, we were commanded again to keep it holy on the solemn day of the Sinai legislation. This commandment was the particular fourth commandment of the law of God, which reads thus, "Remember the Sabbath day (which means literally, the day of rest), that you may keep it holy. Six days you shall work, and in them you shall do all your works: but on the seventh day, Saturday (rest) to the Lord your God" (Ex. 20:8-10).

The sanctity of this seventh day - in the Old Testament the Sabbath, the celebration of which always began on the evening before, was protected under penalty of death: "keep the Sabbath, for this is holy unto the Lord, and unto you: whosoever profanes it shall die by death" (Exodus 31:14).

Instead of the old Old Testament Sabbath, the New Testament began to celebrate the "Lord's Day" or "Sunday Day" with dignity and righteousness, because on that day the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, conquered hell, and saved us from eternal death and the power of the devil. The beginning of the celebration of Sunday Day, as evidenced by the New Testament Scriptures and the earliest monuments of Christian writing, goes back to the first days of Christianity. This day is, for us Christians, a day of bright joy, the Paschal joy - the Lord's Passover, which we remember and celebrate weekly. For on this day the Lord, having risen from the dead, appeared to his disciples, gathered together, and "the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). "On the day of the eighty days", that is, again on the same day of the week, the apostles gather together again, and once again the Lord appears to them, renewing their joy (Jn.20:26). After seven weeks, on the day of Pentecost, which was again the same day of the week, the holy apostles, according to a custom already established among them, assembled in the Upper Room to pray, and that day became for them a new day of joyous celebration: the Lord sent down to them the Most Holy Spirit, who from that time forward continued without interruption in the true Church (Acts 2:1-4). From this time on, as the book of Acts makes clear, "the day of the Lord" becomes a day of special reverence for all Christians.

Following the example of the Old Testament Sabbath, and since, according to the Church, the Lord was resurrected at midnight, the celebration of this day began on Saturday evening, continued through the night and ended in the morning with the "breaking of bread", that is, the greatest Christian sacrament of the Eucharist - the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ (Acts 20:7-11).

This is the origin of our public worship, which is called the "All-Night Vigil," which, according to its idea, should go on all night from Saturday to Sunday, but only because of our laziness and negligence has become more and more shortened. We find information about this kind of nocturnal public prayer of Christians already in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. For example, the apostles Paul and Silas, imprisoned in prison, sang to God at midnight (Acts 16:25). The entire first Christian community in Troas, "on the first day of the week", i.e. on Sunday, gathered for prayer since evening, and spent the entire night "until dawn" in prayer and listening to the teachings of St. Paul, finishing this prayer meeting with "the breaking of bread", i.e. the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ (Acts 20:7-11).

This celebration of Sunday by the first Christians is also mentioned in such ancient Christian writings as the Epistle of St. Barnabas, the Epistle of St. Ignatius the Theophilos, the works of St. Justine the Philosopher, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyon, Meliton of Sardis and many others. The great Father of the Church St. John Chrysostom and the most famous teacher Origen unanimously witness that the All-Night Vigils on Sundays date back to the Apostolic times and are established by the very apostles.

The famous letter of the proconsul of Vifinia, Pliny the Younger, to the Emperor Trajan, is also remarkable extra-Christian evidence. In it Pliny writes that Christians gather on a fixed day, even before sunrise, and sing a hymn to Christ as God. According to many of the Fathers and Christian writers of the early centuries of Christianity, all-night vigils were celebrated not only on the eve of Sundays, but also on the eve of the feasts of the Lord and the Theotokos and the feasts commemorating the Holy Martyrs. Of the composition of these All-Night Vigils we find clear indications in the book of the Apostolic Instructions (see ch. 19, V). "From the evening until the cock crowing," it says, "abide in vigil, prayers and supplications to God, reading before the cock crowing the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and after reading the Gospel, offer the people a talk. Prelate Cassian and St. Basil the Great testify that the all-night vigil included both the night and the morning services, and ended "after the cock crows had been sung.

This is how the first Christians met Sunday and festival days!

For them, the night before Sunday or the night before the feast was a holy night, which they spent in prayer the entire night, getting ready in the morning for the greatest Sacrament of Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. In this night's prayerful preparation and in the morning's celebration of the Divine Liturgy was, in fact, the celebration of this memorable day, consecrated by the Church.

Can one, after this, be considered a Christian who spends that holy night before the feast in any other way?

Certainly not!

For such a person, in breaking off his prayerful communion with the Church on this holy night of the feast, is thereby voluntarily separating himself from the body of Christ's Church. This is why, in ancient times, Christians who missed three consecutive Sunday services without a sufficiently valid reason were excommunicated from the Church as unfit, dead members.

It was all the more inadmissible on this holy night to engage in entertainment and amusement that was inappropriate and indecent at a time when all thoughts and hearts of true Christians should be entirely turned to God.

To say nothing of the fact that such amusements can distract Christians from attending the festive services, their very arrangement in these days and hours that are sacred to the true Christian is offensive to the believing mind and is a sacrilegious insult to the sacred. This is why, by the voice of the Universal Church, in its canonical regulations, binding for all Christians, all public entertainment and public merrymaking on the days when it disturbs the attendance of

festive services is strictly forbidden (see the Rule 66 of the VI Ecumenical Council and the Rule 72 of the Council of Carthage).

Unfortunately, few people know that in earlier times in our pre-revolutionary Russia the sanctity of Sundays and feast days was protected not only by ecclesiastical, but also by civil laws. Thus, in 1627 Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov issued a decree which forbade, under pain of a whip, any assembling for "beslepitsa," that is, for frolics. Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich was even more energetic in his fight against these festive revelries which were invading our country more and more from the West. In 1648 he issued a special decree which forbade on Sundays "all drunkenness and all rebellious demonic activities, mockery and skomoroshcha with any demonic games": instead this decree ordered to come to the church for Vespers, Matins and Liturgy and "to stand there with all obedience, with all piety". Those who disobeyed the order were "beaten with whips mercilessly" and even exiled. In 1652 the tsar issued a new decree which forbade selling wine on Sundays all year round. Article 26 of the famous "Collective Code" of 1649 is remarkable: the laws which protect the sanctity of Sundays refer in it to the period from Saturday three hours before the nightfall.

The Emperor Peter I who was known for his admiration of the West introduced in Russia the first secular western-style entertainment called "Assemblies", nevertheless by a special decree allowed to have them not earlier than the end of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday. On February 17, 1718 he also issued a decree which obliged all people to attend Vespers, Matins and Liturgy on Sundays. The Empress Elizaveta Petrovna signed a decree of 1743 which forbade the opening of cabarets on Sundays before the end of the liturgy. The Emperor Paul I in his decree of 22 October 1796 banned theater performances "on all Saturdays," and in his decree of 1799 it was forbidden to sell alcoholic drinks during church service hours at all. In 1833, during the reign of emperor Nikolai I the Code of Laws of the Russian Empire was compiled by the famous Speransky; in the XIV volume of this Code there is a special article "On the protection of the sanctity of the Sunday". Sunday legislation is represented here in the following way: Sundays should be devoted to "rest from toil and pious piety". The law advises, abstaining on these days from "dissolute life, to go to church for the service of God". At the same time, the civil authority has taken upon itself the obligation to ensure order, silence, and tranquility during the service, both in and around the church. Drinking houses may be opened only after the liturgy. This law prohibits any games, music, theatrical performances, and any other public amusements before the end of the Divine Liturgy. A special decree of September 21, 1881 reiterated Emperor Paul I's prohibition to hold plays and theatrical performances "on all Saturdays", except for drama performances in foreign languages for foreigners.

From all the above it is clear, that not only the rules and regulations of the Church, sacred to every true Christian, but even the civil laws of old Czarist Russia, demanded that the true believers should meet the feast days in prayer and reverence. And if this was violated in the last

years of the existence of tsarist Russia, it was only because of that decadence of faith, that wanton prancing of minds and hearts and moral decay, which led, in the end, to all the bloody horrors of godless Bolshevism in our wretched homeland-Russia. And the godless Bolsheviks already purposely arranged all sorts of spectacles and amusements during the hours of festive services and even on Easter night, in order to distract people from going to church.

Are we not ashamed here abroad to imitate the godless Bolsheviks in their desire to desecrate our holy feasts and to distract people from church!

Still, people rarely sin and commit crimes without any self-justification. Conscience speaks in man after all. And so for every sin, for every crime there is almost always some ideological justification, in order to justify oneself before God, before people, and before one's own conscience. The people who organize entertainment on the eve of the feast have also invented a deceitful "ideological" justification for their sin. The purpose of the entertainment, they say, is to "help our neighbors" - to do charity.

Let us see, however, what the truly greatest benefactor of our time, Saint Righteous Father John of Kronstadt, says about this kind of "charity," during whose time these "charity balls" had already begun to be organized in Russia.

"What charities are imaginary? With a charitable purpose they make revelries, that is, first of all they want to deliberately serve their sinful flesh, the devil, and then - their neighbor and God. But this, gentlemen, is not charity at all! The name of beneficence alone is. "Let us not do evil, that good may come" (in Russian: "Shall we not do evil, that good may come out?") (Rom. 3:8). "Woe to you who are now sated, as you are hungry! Woe to you who laugh now, for you will weep and wail." (Lk.6:25).

That is how severe is the judgment of our great All-Russian righteous man, who did the same charitable deeds as no one else! (See *My Life in Christ*, Vol. II, p. 113).

True Christian charity is done "for Christ's sake", "in the name of God", and not in rude violation of God's commandments and the statutes of the Holy Church. Church. Worthless is such "charity," which is bought at the cost of sacrilegious desecration of the sanctity of the feast days and the distraction of the faithful from the Church.

And in vain they attempt to justify themselves by arguing that the festivities take place in the late evening hours, when the All-Night Vigil is already over. After all, he who goes to a ball on Saturday will not come to the church for the all-night vigil, and after a sleepless night of "dancing till morning" (for so the advertisements usually say) will hardly be able to come to the Divine Liturgy in the morning. And even if he does come, what kind of prayer would he have,

with a child in his head from a noisy and stormy night at the ball? Let us not repeat that, as we have seen above, the very arrangement of these revelries on this holy night is in itself reprehensible!

When all these "balls" and "evenings" are hosted by outright godless people and enemies of Christ's faith and the Church, it is not at all surprising. But when the same thing is done by people who consider themselves "Orthodox Christians" and, moreover, people of faith, it is impossible to understand and justify.

This is some kind of real confusion of minds and hearts!

By now, it would seem, it should be clear to all that Russia perished because Russian people were too blindly following all kinds of self-appointed "leaders" and "teachers," who instilled in us a spirit of supposed "freedom" and disobedience to the Mother of our Holy Church and her wise and salvific decrees. It is time, in the face of the terrible doom that now hangs over the whole world, to realize that whoever wants to "free" himself from obedience to the Church is digging a ditch of destruction for himself, with his own hands.

We can expect nothing good for ourselves until we honor and fulfill the commandments of God and the statutes of the Holy Church, and by violating them and swearing at the great sanctity of the feast days, we prepare ourselves an even worse fate than that which has already befallen our wretched homeland-Russia, for "God is not despised" (Gal. 6:7).

Chapter 25: The Situation of the Russian Church Abroad in the Contemporary World

The coming year of 1970 is an anniversary year for us. This year we commemorate a double anniversary: it is the 50th anniversary of our exile life outside of our homeland, Russia. It was exactly 50 years ago, in 1920, that so-called "White Army" units left our homeland and fought the Bolsheviks under the leadership of General Bar. P. N. Wrangel, and with them went abroad many hundreds of thousands of ordinary Russian people who did not want to live under the yoke of the godless government; at the same time, this year we are also celebrating the second anniversary - the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, or, as we now more commonly call it - and this name has even entered into liturgical usage - the Russian Church Abroad.

In this connection, the Council of Bishops of our Church decided to commemorate this anniversary by convening an All-Diaspora Council of the Church Abroad with the participation of clergy and laity, something that has been convened abroad only twice over these 50 years: in 1921, in Sremski Karlovci (then Kingdom of the Holy See), where our High Church Administration Abroad was then located, and the Second All-Diaspora Council in 1938, also in Yugoslavia. Both of these Councils dealt with important questions of the ideology and government of our Russian Church Abroad, and not only bishops were invited to take part in these Councils, but also clergy and laity, that is, representatives of our clergy, priests and deacons, as well as representatives of the lay faithful. It is now proposed that such a 3rd All-Diaspora Council be convened. At first it was scheduled for this very year, 1970, but later, owing to certain circumstances and considerations, it was decided to call it in September, 1971, at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville.

"Behold, I send you out as sheep among wolves..." (Matthew 10:16).

This is what the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples and apostles when He sent them out to preach His divine teachings. The same imaginative comparison can be used to describe the position of our Russian Church Abroad in today's world. I am referring, of course, only to those ministers and faithful members of our Church who not only formally, outwardly, belong to it, but who fully share and fearlessly profess its ideology-those who remain faithful to our Church always and under all circumstances, allowing no compromises or deals with conscience, much less retreats or treason against it, "for fear of Judaism" or for any personal self-interest and earthly gain. For such steadfast and faithful servants and children of our Church, their situation in today's world is not much different from that of the Lord's disciples and apostles in the Jewish and Gentile world of that time, in the midst of which they were called to live and act. We might even say that the position of the disciples and apostles of Christ in the ancient world was in many respects more favorable: they lived and acted among people who did not know Christ and His

divine teaching, while we now live among apostates who have denied Christ, or among people who know more or less His divine teaching, but who consciously reject it and struggle against it.

What particularly complicates and aggravates the gravity of our situation is the fact that not only the clearly godless and godless world of our time, which has already seized power over a third of the world, but also the rest of the supposedly "Christian" and even "Orthodox" world, in its main mass, and especially in the person of its spiritual leaders and chiefs, with a few glimmers of light, is deeply alien and hostile to us.

And this is only because we want to preserve a wholehearted and uncompromising loyalty to Christ the Savior and His True Church, we want to confess a pure and intact Christianity - "the apostolic faith, the faith of the Father, the faith of the Orthodox", which "establish the universe," without any concessions, agreements and compromises with the fashionable ideas of "this world, which lies in evil".

After all, what is the modern world like spiritually?

A terrible picture of a rapidly spreading "Apostasy," of which the great apostle of tongues, St. Paul, speaks in the second chapter of his Second Epistle to the Solonians. Paul (2Sol.2:3). Not long ago many doubted this, but recent events have begun to open the eyes of those doubters as well. Almost every day brings a new sensation in this respect!

In a third part of the modern world godlessness is openly proclaimed and insistently promoted, and there is a more or less explicit and open persecution of faith and of the Church.

In the so-called "free world" godless and immoral ideas are no less intensively propagated to undermine faith in God and in the spiritual world in general, and the same persecution of faith and the Church goes on, only not so explicitly, but mostly in disguise - yet even more dangerous and destructive for souls.

Such an indestructible stronghold the Roman Catholic world seemed, not long ago, since its fall from Orthodoxy, mired in many errors, but strong in its monolithic and iron discipline. And now, by the grace of its last two popes, John XXIII and Paul VI, and of the Second Vatican Council, it is not only shaken to its foundations in its former, seemingly unshakeable foundations, but is now losing the last vestiges of true Christianity. In fact, he has already completely renounced Christ, and is on the road to falsifying the history of the Gospel and fabricating a new text of the Gospel and even of the whole Bible. Is it still imaginable that many Roman Catholic believers sincerely resent the actions of their pope and do not want to accept the decrees of the Vatican Council, while Roman Catholic pastors in their churches openly call on their faithful to pray that God will "instruct" the "infallible" pope?! What a disappointment to some of the Orthodox, who

once thought that the Vatican Council was leading Roman Catholicism to return to the Orthodoxy from which it fell away 900 years ago!

And now, instead of a return to Orthodoxy, there is a complete falling away from Christianity!

And if before Roman Catholicism, for all its extreme hostility to Orthodoxy, there was still something of the true Church, now, despite its affectionate flirtation with the Orthodox Church, it bears the very clear and unambiguous stamp of apostasy.

What do we see in the Protestant world?

Protestantism, especially in the last two centuries, has broken up into innumerable sects, some of which have strayed so far from true Christianity, rejecting its most basic tenets, that, in fact, they have lost the right to call themselves Christian at all. It is quite possible, as some believe, that the so-called ecumenical movement was born in the depths of Protestantism as a result of longing for the lost One Church. But... very soon it became clear that it would not give Protestants what they needed, and for which, one would think, the best of them yearned. The ecumenical movement took a completely false path. Instead of seeking and finding this One True Church in the Orthodox Church, which has never deviated from true Christianity, the ecumenists set out to create an entirely new false church, through mutual concessions and compromises between all the Christian denominations now in existence. And having taken this false path, they, like the Roman Catholics, began gradually to lose what little they still had of true Christianity, the spirit of faith and sincere piety, and they fell into the most extreme liberalism, sometimes reaching the point of boundless skepticism and even complete nihilism, which is not acceptable in Christianity, where there is no place for Christianity any more. Apostasy is in full swing here as well!

What is being done in our Eastern Orthodox Church?

At the end of the 19th and especially at the beginning of the 20th century, as a result of the impoverishment of the truly Orthodox ascetic spirit and under the influence of the free-thinking Protestant spirit that came to us through the schools, apostasy vectors began to successfully infiltrate us, too, conducting their destructive work by exploding from within, gradually leading to inner decay. Hence, precisely, the movement of the so-called Church of Christ and the Renewalists. Not surprisingly, therefore, gradually all the local Orthodox Churches, one by one, under various plausible pretexts, joined the ecumenical movement spawned by Protestantism. In the beginning this was done very cautiously and with various reservations, such as that it was "necessary in order to testify to the non-Orthodox about Orthodoxy," but this was soon forgotten, and at present the situation has become such, that the representatives of Orthodoxy in the ecumenical movement not only do not witness anything about Orthodoxy, but, on the contrary,

they themselves penetrate the Protestant spirit more and more and, under the plausible pretext of Christian unity, implant purely Protestant ideas at home in their local Orthodox Churches. No one in the ecumenical movement wants to reckon with true, authentic, holy fatherly Orthodoxy, and only those clergymen and secular theologians, who to a greater or lesser degree have already been imbued with the Protestant spirit, are recognized as representatives of Orthodoxy and only pass off as genuine "Orthodoxy" its surrogate, bearing the now so fashionable stamp of apostasy.

It is frightening to say, but "salt has overtaken", and genuine Orthodoxy survives only in a few individuals, who "are not given a move", to whom the modern spiritual leaders of Orthodoxy treat with contempt and disdain, as people backward, for some reason persistently do not want any progress, in which as if only the coming happiness of humanity - "the Kingdom of God on earth", which allegedly came to earth to establish Christ the Savior.

All contemporary local Orthodox Churches, to a greater or lesser degree, have already been poisoned by this apostasy poison of ecumenism, and only a relatively very few individual hierarchs, clergymen and believing laity (the latter, perhaps, the most!) still resist this poison, remaining faithful to true sacred patristic Orthodoxy - the historical faith of the fathers - although this is becoming more and more difficult.

A striking sign of the times is that even Roman Catholicism, so intolerant of all dissenters and other believers, although not giving up its position completely (the primacy and infallibility of the Pope remain in force!), has actually joined the ecumenical movement, trying only to take the leading role in it, for which, in fact, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council. And Pope Paul VI is a faithful continuator of his work, for which he undertook his triumphal visits to the Holy Land and New York, and tries to play the fashionable role of "angel of peace," flirting not only with non-Christians but also with non-Christians (non-Christians) and even with representatives of the atheist world.

After all, we remember well his meeting in the Holy Land with the true traitor of the Holy Orthodoxy, Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, their mutual embrace and kiss, about which the whole world press was so rumbling, and his speech at the Society of Nations in New York, to which there were devoted not only separate articles with beautifully executed numerous photographs, but also entire books. And his repeated speeches in favor of ending the war with the Communists in Vietnam: How perfectly characteristic of him!

This is extremely typical of the ecumenical movement as a whole, which has repeatedly advocated the necessity of uniting all Christians against godless communism, but now not only does not even mention it anymore, but on the contrary, it openly advocates "living together" with godless communism and tries to establish the kindest and most peaceful relations with it, turning

a blind eye to what communism is doing to the Christian faith and the Church in the USSR and the other countries it enslaved.

Nowadays, from what the press tells us, we can safely say that ecumenism is not with the persecuted for the faith, but with their persecutors!

And what happens to the Church in communist countries is beyond comprehension! One can only seriously ask the question: Does a church that, through its hierarchs and clergy, faithfully serves the God-fighting Communist authorities, making itself an obedient instrument of them, deserve the name "Church of Christ"? And here there can be no parallel with the former relative dependence of the Church on the tsarist Christian authority, as some have tried to do to justify the unnatural position of the Church in communist states and the subservient behavior of its hierarchs toward the godless communist rulers. Is it possible to equate a Christian sovereign, who has received from the Church the sacred anointing and the crowning of a kingdom, with a godless atheist usurper, who wages a violent struggle against faith and the Church? What more incredible blasphemy is there than the decree of Patriarch Alexy of Moscow to conduct funeral services for the terrible God-fearing Stalin, or the laying of a wreath by the Serbian Patriarch on the tomb of the evil atheist Lenin, or the laying of a similar wreath by the Bulgarian hierarchs, representatives of the Synod, on the tomb of Communist Vasily Kolarov, who took part in the 1925 in the bombing, by means of an infernal machine, of the Cathedral of St. Weeks in Sofia? And the constant proclamation by these hierarchs to the whole world of a terrible lie about the innocence and harmlessness and almost benevolence of the God-fighting Communist authorities toward the Church? Can the ministers of the Church, and even the highest ministers of the Church, operate with lies, even if only for self-preservation? Does not such a Church, whose existence is based on lies, destroy itself? Should not the blood of the first Christian martyrs, on which the Church of Christ was founded in the world, then be considered unnecessary, and then all those who have denied Christ and sacrificed to idols be justified? And is not the very union of the Church of Christ with the followers of militant atheism something extremely unnatural and fundamentally flawed? "What fellowship of light unto darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and the Veliar? Or what part of the return with the unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

For, according to Christ's clear word, "No one can work with two masters: either he will love the one and hate the other, or he will cling to the one and despise the other. You cannot work for God and for mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

It is impossible to serve Christ the Savior and the persecutor of Christ, the god-fighting communist regime, at the same time! One precludes the other. This, it seems, should be perfectly clear to everyone. But - alas! - it is not clear to modern man, who has been brought up in slyness and is used to slyness.

We have drawn here, of course, only in the most general terms, a sad picture of the spiritual condition of the modern world, which so clearly and unambiguously bears the stamp of apostasy.

In the midst of this spiritually devastated world of apostasy, our Russian Church Abroad stands alone, as an anachronism, as a relic of a distant past that has passed into eternity. Its ideology is completely at odds with the prevailing sentiments of the modern world. Its very existence, as a Church temporarily independent of anyone, the Moscow Patriarchate not subject to any authority, is to heaven a blatant protest against the apostasy sentiments of the modern world.

Some dispute the legitimacy of the existence of our Russian Church Abroad. But one must know how it arose. It has also been pointed out that there have been divisions within it itself.

In order to be able to judge correctly the divisions in our Russian Church Abroad, we must know well the history of its rise, and then the reasons for these divisions will become clear by themselves.

After the seizure of power in Russia by the fierce persecutors of the faith and the Church, the so-called Bolsheviks, in 1917, a selfless part of the Russian people began a heroic struggle with them for "Holy Russia," which culminated in the so-called White Movement. In the territory of Russia, a military front was formed, as a result of which a number of dioceses were cut off from the Supreme Church Administration in Moscow. This Administration, headed by His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, was soon enslaved by the godless government.

What was the diocese that found itself without ecclesiastical leadership to do?

It was natural to do as the sacred canons demanded. At the basis of canonical church government lies the principle of synodality: the Church is ruled by the Council of Bishops - no diocese can exist and be ruled by itself (see Rule 34 of the Apostles). For this reason a special church government was formed in southern Russia. On May 6, 1919, in the city of Stavropol in the Caucasus, there was held a South-Russian Ecclesiastical Council, at which the Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration in Southeastern Russia was created. It was also recognized by His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon.

After Patriarch Tikhon had understood the vital necessity for the existence of such a free government in the free part of the Russian Church, he issued a very important resolution to this effect, which stated literally: "In the event that a diocese should happen to be out of all communication with the High Church Administration, or if the High Church Administration itself, headed by His Holiness the Patriarch, should for any reason cease its activities, the diocesan bishop immediately enters into communication with the bishops of other dioceses with a view to setting up a higher court. As the same decree continues, the organization of such a

supreme body for an entire group of dioceses "is the indispensable duty of the highest ranking bishop in the designated group" (N 362 of 7/20 November 1920).

It was on the basis of this decree that our conciliar Russian Church Abroad was founded and still exists today abroad.

We are sometimes objected to the fact that such an ecclesiastical government abroad cannot be justified by the canons.

This is not true! We are justified by the 39th Rule of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which speaks of Archbishop John of Cyprus, who "because of the barbarian invasions, together with his people" moved to the area of the Hellespont, which was under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. According to this rule, Archbishop John of Cyprus retained all of his former rights to govern his flock, which left the island of Cyprus with him.

Why then are our Russian archpastors and pastors, who left in far greater numbers a Russia enslaved by theomachists, not able to retain their canonical rights to govern and provide spiritual guidance to their many thousands of flock, now dispersed throughout the world and exposed to so many kinds of trials and dangers?

We are well aware that His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon and his successors were fully sympathetic to our church government abroad, since they sometimes had the opportunity to speak out about it.

Guided by the wise decree of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, dated November 7/20, 1920, the High Church Administration, which arose in the South of Russia, continued its activities, moving, after the White Army had lost the Northern Caucasus, first to Simferopol, and then, after the evacuation of General Wrangel's Russian Army from the Crimea, to Constantinople. To stay there he had the official consent of the Patriarchate of Constantinople by a special act of December 29, 1920.

Soon after, at the invitation of Patriarch Dimitrios of Serbia, the High Church Administration moved to the Kingdom of S.H.S. (Yugoslavia) and settled in Sremski Karlovci, the patriarchal seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church. No one at the time challenged its legitimacy, and all 34 Russian bishops outside enslaved Russia by the Bolsheviks united around it.

All of them took part in the Russian All-Border Church Council convened in Sremskije Karlovci on November 8/21, 1921, with the presidency of the most senior of the Russian hierarchs abroad, His Eminence Anthony, Metropolitan of Kiev and Galicia, who had been the first candidate for

Patriarch at the All-Russian Council of 1917 in Moscow. Metropolitan Evlogii, who later left the Russian Church Abroad, also took a very active part in this Council.

When from Moscow was received the decree of the Patriarchal Chancery of April 22 / May 5, 1922, incidentally, signed not even by the Patriarch himself, but by Archbishop Thaddeus, by which the Higher Church Administration Abroad, for its "political statements," as it said, was declared abolished, it was clear to all that this decree was issued not freely, but at the request of the Bolsheviki and under their pressure. Even Metropolitan Evlogii thought so at the time and suggested that this decree should not be obeyed. In his letter of July 3/16, 1922, to Metropolitan Anthony, he stated bluntly that "this document is of a political and not ecclesiastical character, and therefore he recognizes no binding force behind it."

And yet, in response to this decree, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, convened on August 31, 1922, after discussing the events, decided: "The Supreme Church Administration is to be abolished. In accordance with the resolution No. 362 of November 7/20th 1920 of the Patriarch and the organs of ecclesiastical administration attached to him, an interim Holy Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was formed. This decree was signed "for the presiding Synod" by Metropolitan Evlogii.

The essence of this change was that in addition to bishops, the Higher Church Administration also included clerics and laymen, and that only bishops were included in the newly formed Synod of Bishops. The chairman of the Synod was naturally the oldest of the foreign hierarchs, Metropolitan Anthony; by the precise meaning of the resolution of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon cited above, Metropolitan Anthony, as the oldest of the bishops who had gone abroad, not only had the right, but the duty to create for the dioceses abroad this very organ of supreme church authority. After Metropolitan Anthony passed away in 1936, the Synod of Bishops was headed by Metropolitan Anastassy.

At that time, no one objected to the establishment of the Synod of Bishops, and the Russian Church Abroad retained its unity until 1926, when Metropolitan Platon, who was head of the North American Diocese, and Metropolitan Evlogii, who was head of the Western European Diocese, departed from it.

What is the essence of these ecclesiastical divisions that are so painful for us?

The root cause of them is quite clear.

Who could be displeased by the existence of a united Russian Church Abroad, and who would wish to bring about its disintegration and destruction?

It goes without saying that the existence of such a Russian Church Abroad is unpleasant to all the explicit and implicit enemies of our holy faith and Church, to all the haters of that high idea of Holy Russia, of which our homeland has been the bearer for centuries.

From the very beginning of her existence, our Russian Church Abroad, represented by her hierarchical leadership, took the only correct view that until Russia has a supreme ecclesiastical authority that can freely express her will, she must govern herself abroad on the principles of canonical conciliarity.

The hierarchs who left the Russian Church Abroad in 1926 found it possible for themselves to submit to the church authority in Moscow, which had been enslaved by the Bolsheviks, who dictated their will. They continued their hierarchical submission to Metropolitan Sergius, the Deputy Patriarchal Locum Tenens in Moscow, even after he made public his message of 16/29 June 1927, in which he urged the flock to "express our gratitude to the whole people" for the Soviet authorities' "concern for the spiritual needs of the Orthodox population," to recognize it as lawful and to obey it "not only out of fear, but also from conscience" (cf. Rom. 13, 4), "to recognize the Soviet Union as a civic homeland, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes and whose failures are our failures," and "every blow directed at the Union ... as a blow directed at the representatives of the Church." This message expressed its condemnation of the foreign clergy and flock for their disloyalty to the Soviet power and for speaking out against it, and demanded that the clergy issue written pledges of loyalty to this godless power.

Our Russian Church Abroad was alone in giving a worthy response to this message, which was clearly written to please the godless authorities. The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia declared publicly on August 27 / September 9, 1927, that "the Message of Metropolitan Sergius is neither archpastoral nor ecclesiastical, but political and, therefore, can have no ecclesio-canonical meaning and is not necessary for us, free from the oppression and captivity of the godless and Christ-hating powers. At that time it was also decided "to discontinue all administrative communication with the Moscow church authority, in view of the impossibility of normal communication with it and in view of its enslavement by the godless Soviet government, which deprives it of freedom in its will and of the canonical government of the church. It was decided that "the foreign part of our Church should govern itself, in accordance with the sacred canons, the resolutions of the Holy Synod of the All-Russian Local Church of 1917/1918 and the resolutions of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon, the Holy Synod and the Higher Church Council of November 7/20th 1920, with the assistance of the Synod of Bishops and the Council of Bishops under the presidency of the Metropolitan Anthony of Kiev.

Metropolitans Platon and Eulogius, who broke away from our Church, took other paths.

Metropolitan Platon, sent by our Synod of Bishops to North America and supported there by unchurched elements alien to true Orthodoxy, began to strive for full independence - autocephaly. This idea of the autocephaly of a special "American Orthodox Church" is still being promoted here in North America. But of what kind of autocephaly can we speak here, when there is no Orthodox American Church at all, but only separate national churches - Russian, Greek, Syrian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian and others, each dependent on its spiritual center, cherishing its national separateness and showing no inclination to merge into one American Church?

At the same time, after his departure from the Russian Church Abroad, Metropolitan Platon maintained contact with Metropolitan Sergius in Moscow, seeking some sort of support for himself, until he was denounced by Metropolitan Sergius as a "schismatic society" and his church organization was condemned to the priesthood, which occurred on August 25, 1933 (Decree No. 837 of Metropolitan Sergius).

At the same time as Metropolitan Platon broke away from the Russian Church Abroad in the name of "fidelity to the Mother of the Russian Church," as he frequently expressed it, Metropolitan Evlogii, who entered into submission to Metropolitan Sergius in Moscow. At the request of the latter, on behalf of his clergy, he gave him a pledge of "loyalty" to the god-fighting Soviet authorities. But this did not help him either. Not having pleased the Bolsheviks because he had to conduct memorial services for the victims of the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik terror, and because he participated in prayers for the end of the persecution of the Church in Russia, Metropolitan Evlogii was removed from office by a decree of Metropolitan Sergius of 30 June 1930, and on 24 December 1930 was even forbidden to serve as a priest. However, despite all of his earlier assurances of loyalty to his "Mother Church," he did not wish to submit to these decrees, but instead, without any basis whatsoever, entered the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who, contrary to the Church's canons, accepted him, violating the legal rights of the autocephalous Russian Church. Metropolitan Evlogii did this in spite of the fact that in 1923 and 1924 he himself repeatedly rejected the claims of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to rule the Russian churches in Western Europe and resented the illegal interference of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the affairs of the Russian Church.

It cannot but be deeply instructive and instructive for us that both of these hierarchs, who left our Church, found themselves banned from that ecclesiastical authority which they opposed to our Synod of Bishops and which, as they themselves repeatedly declared, they considered the only lawful authority.

In 1935, His Holiness Patriarch Barnabas of Serbia, a great friend of national Russia, made an attempt to restore the former unity of the Russian Church Abroad. To this end, he invited Metropolitan Evlogy and Metropolitan Theophilus, who had replaced Metropolitan Platon, who

had died in North America in 1934, to Yugoslavia for a joint session with the hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad. Metropolitan Anastassy and Bishop Demetrius of Hailar, who had arrived from the Far East, took part in this meeting on behalf of our Church. As a result of a series of negotiations, unity was restored, of which a corresponding written act was drawn up, under which all the hierarchs who participated in the meeting, including Metropolitan Evlogii, signed. The latter's entourage, however, when he returned to Paris, even though his diocesan assembly expressed the desire "to restore the unity of the Church Abroad," still caused him to break with the Russian Church Abroad once again.

The North American Diocese, elevated to the rank of a metropolitanate, was reunited with our Church and remained in full canonical communion with it for eleven whole years, until 1946. Metropolitan Theophilus openly expressed his joy on this occasion, telling newspaper correspondents upon his return to America: "Our ecclesiastical life has been established: it now has a solid canonical foundation" ("Novaya Zarya"). In his address to the Holy Virgin Cathedral in San Francisco on January 27 / February 9, 1936, Metropolitan Theophilus expressed "gratitude to God for the gracious peace and unity of the Church.

At the end of World War II in 1945, Metropolitan Evlogii, succumbing to the Soviet patriotism that gripped many, took a Soviet passport and became subordinate to Patriarch Alexis of Moscow. Since not everyone in his flock accepted this with sympathy, Metropolitan Vladimir, who replaced Metropolitan Evlogii after his death, re-submitted himself to the Patriarch of Constantinople as the latter's exarch for Russian parishes in Western Europe.

In North America, a similar outburst of Soviet patriotism resulted in the 1946 resolution of the Council of Cleveland, which separated the North American archdiocese from the Russian Church Abroad and subordinated it to Patriarch Alexis of Moscow. This happened despite the fact that Metropolitan Theophilus himself apparently wished to remain faithful to the Synod of Bishops and believed, according to a statement he himself made, that "it would not be ethical to abandon the bishops headed by Metropolitan Anastassy when it is most in need of their moral and financial support from here," while his successor, Archbishop Leontius, said on November 27 of that same year: "My conscience does not allow me to submit to the Patriarch. In the future, the Synod of Karlovac will move to America, and therefore we do not need to sever ties with the Synod of Karlovac." A certain group, however, campaigned for a break with the Russian Church Abroad and achieved this at the Council of Cleveland, which decided to "ask His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow to reunite us in his fold and to remain as our spiritual father, subject to the preservation of our full autonomy which now exists" (R. A. P. V. No. 12, Dec. 1946).

There is a great deal of press coverage of what happened at this Council. Here, for example, as one of the participants writes: "Oh, how grievous was the impression this council made on me, what a painful oppression lies on my soul after all I have seen, heard, and experienced! Instead

of the expected strict, rank and true synodality, instead of the spirit of mutual love, pliability, and respect for free speech, I found myself at once in the atmosphere of rallies, successfully inculcated by some members. The majority at once behaved not "cathedral-like", trying in every way to remove the episcopate and the oldest clergy from the leadership of the council" ("Russian Life" Dec. 18, 1946). The resolution of this council was not approved by a meeting of bishops, of whom two - Archbishop Leontius and Bishop Benjamin hurried to leave, while Archbishops Vitaly, Tikhon, Joasaph and Jerome filed their protest, as a result of which this resolution could not have any canonical force. The latter, as well as Bishop Seraphim, then newly arrived from Europe, were illegally excluded from the North American Metropolis.

As a result of the subsequent cooling of political relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, the subjection of the Archdiocese of North America to the Moscow Patriarch was not formalized to the end, relations with the Moscow Patriarchate were severed, and the American Archdiocese took a strange, anti-canonical position, without recognition of any supreme ecclesiastical authority. At the same time, some of its representatives to this day continue to speak of "spiritual recognition" of the Moscow Patriarch, and in some churches, comparatively recently, his name was proclaimed during services and Soviet red flags were carried in the chancel. Out of concern not to draw suspicion of disloyalty to the American civil authorities, Metropolitan Leontius advised that the name of the Patriarch of Moscow not be raised during services but that instead prayers be made "For the Most Holy Orthodox Patriarchs," among whom, he explained, the Patriarch of Moscow was naturally meant. "By doing so," he declared, "we are not severing our ties with the Mother Church" (see Herald of the American Metropolis and Pravda of Dec. 13, 1950).

After the death of Metropolitan Theophilus in 1950, the American Metropolis was headed by Archbishop Leontius, who was proclaimed Metropolitan at the Council of the same year. It was at this time that our Synod arrived in the United States from Europe, and simultaneously with the Council of the American Metropolis, our Council of Bishops was in session. Our Council of Bishops then made every attempt to call for the reunification with the Russian Church Abroad of the separated American Metropolitan Church, but, unfortunately, without success. Under the new Metropolitan Leontius, the separation of the American Metropolis from the Russian Church Abroad deepened still further, as a result of the reception of clergy banned for various transgressions, which made liturgical communion between our bishops and clergy and the bishops and clergy of the American Metropolis impossible. In addition, the American Archdiocese has made a strange and unjustifiable claim to interfere in the church life of the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of North America, causing all kinds of disturbances, disorders, and schisms, such as in Argentina, Venezuela, and elsewhere. It seems as if its leadership intends to establish something like a second Russian Church Abroad, which would be parallel to ours. Its inner life, in many cases full of all kinds of innovations not corresponding to the canons, of liturgical deviations, and of its increasing departure from the

original customs and traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church, will inevitably bring it ever nearer to a gradual merger with the Protestant world.

Such, in general terms, is the history of the unfortunate ecclesiastical divisions in our Diaspora. It shows that our Russian Church Abroad, which from the very beginning of its existence took the firm and straightforward path of non-recognition of the God-fighting authorities in Moscow, cannot be held responsible for these unfortunate divisions. She did not create them, and it is not up to her now to restore the peace and unity to which she has invariably called. She can only pray that the Lord may give us this longed-for peace by reuniting us all into one pan-European church body.

Recent events, however, have shown that those who broke away from the Russian Church Abroad were not only unwilling to respond to our calls for church unity, but, on the contrary, made every effort to deepen these sad divisions.

The Western European Diocese, which arbitrarily became the "Exarchate of the Ecumenical Patriarch," was headed after the death of Metropolitan Vladimir by Archbishop George, who was soon ordered by the Ecumenical Patriarch to enter the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Archbishop George, however, did not submit to this and declared his Church a "self-governing archdiocese.

It is quite characteristic that all these dissenters, who have constantly denied our Russian Church Abroad the recognition of its canonicity, have recognized and recognize all ways for themselves as canonical: for them, what is canonical is what benefits them, what they like best, according to some secret reasons of their own.

For a long time there have been persistent rumors that representatives of the American archdiocese are engaged in some secret negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate, but Metropolitan Iriney himself, who replaced Metropolitan Leontius, who died in 1965, vehemently denied this. More recently, at the end of 1969, there was an official press announcement that such negotiations had in fact been underway since 1963, and that the American Metropolia, having recognized the Moscow Patriarchate as its "Mother Church," was receiving autocephaly from it as the local American Orthodox Church. This announcement made the impression of an exploding bomb even in the ranks of not only ordinary believers, but also many of the clergy of the metropolis itself. What this will lead to, the near future will show.

So "the wind returns to its own course" (Ecclesiastes 1:6).

The only good of this is that the eyes of many of the supporters of the American Archdiocese have now been opened, but will they find the courage and real ideology (not only in words, but in deeds!) to return to the fold of the Russian Church Abroad that they left behind?

Let not everything in our country be perfect, for where people are, mistakes, errors, and sins are always possible, but the ideology of our Russian Church Abroad, by the grace of God, has remained unshaken in its entirety to this day.

Above all, our Russian Church Abroad cherishes its spiritual freedom, which Christ granted to His faithful, and wishes to remain entirely faithful to Him, serving Him alone and no one else.

Our Russian Church Abroad sets itself the goal of being abroad, as the lawful successor to the former Russian Orthodox Church-a perpetual guardian of the apostolic doctrine of faith and piety, a zealot for the traditions of the Fatherland and the Holy Canons, and for all the pious traditions and covenants of Holy Russia.

Her slogan is the words of St. Athanasius the Great: "We must serve not time, but God.

Such is, in short, and basically, the ideology of the Russian Church Abroad. Outside of this ideology, the independent existence of our Russian Church Abroad is meaningless, aimless, and unnecessary. It is not a political organization, but precisely the Church, and wants to be and remain only the Church under all conditions. And anyone who belongs to it, who thinks and feels differently, stays in its fold in vain: he, therefore, belongs to it only formally, not ideologically, and has no place in it.

This is why our Church is so lonely in today's world. The modern world, with its strongly pronounced, in recent times, ideology of "Retreat," is deeply alien and hostile to our Russian Church Abroad, and we must always know this and remember it, without constructing for ourselves any rosy hopes and illusions. It is true that among the other local Orthodox Churches and even among the non-Orthodox, there are still quite a few persons sympathetic to us, but officially and formally, after World War II, almost no one recognizes our Church, and our bishops and clerics, with a few exceptions, are denied even liturgical communion. We are considered "schismatic" only because we do not want to break away from the historic One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church - to break away from the Lord Christ and enslave ourselves to the forces of World Evil, that is, in essence, "the servants of the coming Antichrist," in the form of the Moscow Patriarchate serving the God-fighters and the ecumenical movement that bears the bright stamp of apostasy. It is as if we are "thrown overboard" and lead a completely different life, separate from the rest of the world.

But can we naively think that the rest of the apostasy world is quite indifferent to us, that it has no interest in us at all?

That would be naive! To think so unreasonable and criminal!

Our Russian Church Abroad is like a thorn in the side of the leaders of the modern world, and not only of the godless communists, and therefore they cannot allow our Church to exist freely, independent of them.

They, though it is not entirely clear and not always visible to us, are trying and will try to enslave it as well, seeking to keep it at least under their watchful eye and control, until the opportune moment when, through our indiscretion, they will succeed in bringing it completely under their control.

That is why the main thing that is required of us is the strictest vigilance and care lest we get caught in the nets cleverly laid, according to the instruction of the Lord Jesus Christ, given by Him to His disciples: "Watch and pray, lest you enter into mischief ..." (Matt. 26:41). (Matthew 26:41).

Is everyone here clearly aware of this?

Is everyone clearly aware and understand the danger threatening us?

The position of our Russian Church Abroad in the modern world binds us to many things. Above all, it obligates us to always be what we should be.

We are an uncompromising rejection, a resolute rejection of that anti-Christian Evil, which has already seized almost the whole world in its hands both church and secular power, conducts everything and rules everything.

This is why we must behave with full consciousness of our dignity - it is not a display of pride at all! - Without ingratiating ourselves to anyone, without being servile, and without seeking any recognition or legalization. Legalization is, for the Church today, surrender, as we saw in the case of Metropolitan Sergius of Nizhny Novgorod, who issued a "declaration" in 1927 recognizing the god-fighting Soviet government as "a power from God.

And especially from no one should we accept money or gifts of any kind, for this binds us - deprives us of spiritual freedom, which should be dearer to us than anything else in the world.

Any legalization of the Church in the present world situation borders on betrayal of the Church, if not entirely so, especially if it involves any infringement of the rights of the Church.

In nothing and in no way dare we or should we capitulate, no matter what demands are made of us! It is better to go for a catacomb position, like the Church in the USSR, than to "sell our birthright for lentil stew"!

For our Church does not derive its high dignity, its rights and authority from human government, but from the Divine Founder of the Church Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone for the Church is the Supreme Authority and the Unquestionable Authority, and no one else! To Him alone must our Church keep its entire allegiance.

And to humiliate their high dignity for the sake of money is absolutely the last thing. It is, in the fullest sense of the word, Judas' betrayal.

Our exceptional position, as the only one now in the world still quite free and true Church of Christ, then obliges us to have everything spotless and impeccable - without the slightest reproach. At least we must strive for this with all our might, strive for it. Our late Metropolitan Anastassy often liked to recall the words once spoken by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, to the effect that on the white Metropolitan's coat of arms, every slightest spot is already visible, and this obliges the bearer of it to be especially vigilant about himself. We can say the same about our Russian Church Abroad. We dare not leave even the slightest speck unnoticed, to which others might point with their fingers and laugh at us and say, "Look: is this the true Church? And what is going on in it!" Nothing shameful, nothing compromising to our Church we dare, we must not allow.

Especially our pastors must be at the height of their calling, so that they are not affected by what our great Russian hierarchs wrote a hundred years ago, such as Metropolitan Philaret and Episcopal Ignatius Bryanchaninov: "Salt overwhelms. - In the highest pastors of the Church there remains a weak, dark, confused, wrong understanding of the letter, which is killing the spiritual life in Christian society, destroying Christianity, which is a work, not a letter. It is hard to see to whom the sheep of Christ are entrusted, to whom their leadership and salvation is given. But this is God's permission. "They that are in Judaea shall flee into the mountains!" Could we not more rightly repeat these words at this time?! But let them apply to those who are already on the path of apostasy, and not to our Russian Church Abroad, which wishes, in spite of everything, to remain the true Church of Christ.

There should be no false shepherds in the True Church!

And to do this, we must not "keep up with the times" in anything, we must not allow any "modernism" in our Church, no sly alignment with apostate modernity, no "elasticity," as one of our pilgrims aptly put it, who, using this expression, naively wanted to praise his pastor without noticing that he had thereby condemned him.

We must keep sacred that which, in the words of Vincent of Lyre, "was believed everywhere, was always believed, was believed by all," and not follow any fashionable false doctrine.

We must observe with the utmost strictness the sacred canons of the Church now so freely trampled upon by others-not those, of course, which had a temporary and conventional significance, but those on which the Christian faith and morality rests, and by shaking which we destroy the foundations of the Church.

We must be zealous for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, which alone is the purpose of the Church, and not self-serving and self-loathing.

We must not look with indulgence and indifference on the negative phenomena in our Church that degrade her honor and dignity, but we must eradicate them with all determination. Otherwise the existence of our Church is utterly meaningless and cannot be justified in any way, and those who do not wish to recognize it as a canonical Church will be right.

This is the position of our Russian Church Abroad in the world today, and this is what it binds us to!

Chapter 26: The essence and methods of true pastoral ministry in our time

There is nothing in the world above the pastoral ministry, for the pastoral ministry is a ministry to the greatest and holiest cause - the cause of salvation of human souls.

Salvation from what?

Salvation from sin - from that sinful state of the soul, with which, after the fall of our forefathers, every human being is born into the world, - and from that eternal destruction, to which sin leads man.

The highest goal, therefore, is the pastoral ministry, a goal with which no other earthly work can be compared. This is how the great apostle of tongues St. Paul defines true pastoral service in his letter to the Ephesians. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians: it is "...the work of ministry to the perfecting of the saints, building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the connection of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of fulfillment of Christ" (Eph.4:12-13).

The main key to the success of true pastoral care the same apostle Paul points out in the personality of the shepherd himself, who must be an example for his flock in this struggle with sin, in this striving for Christian perfection. "Be a faithful image," he says to the shepherd, "in word, in life, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12). All the efforts of the shepherd to guide his flock along the path of Christian perfection will be fruitless, if they will not see in him any aspiration toward this high Christian ideal, if, God forbid, he will give them a negative, opposite example - the example of total enslavement to sin, instead of struggling against it.

The struggle against sin to achieve Christian perfection is the goal of the Christian life, and the essence of pastoral ministry is to promote and help people in this struggle, to spiritually lead this struggle, pointing out the right ways and warning them against the wrong ones. Clearly, in order to be fruitful in such leadership, the pastor himself must be well acquainted with the methods of this saving struggle, and above all, from his own personal experience.

What more is required of the pastor to make his ministry successful and fruitful?

We will get the answer to this by parsing philologically the very term "shepherd" as it is used in the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures. In the Old Testament, our word "shepherd" is rendered by the Hebrew word "roé," a participle of "raá," which means "to bend," "to bend," and in the general voice "to bend somewhere," "to incline to something. In a further sense "raá"

means: "to strive to go somewhere," "to seek," "to watch carefully, to tend, especially to the flock," whence "roé" is a shepherd. In relation to people, the verb "raá" can mean: "to govern" (Ps.77:71), "to instruct" (Ecc.12:9).

If we combine all these meanings, it appears that a "shepherd" is a person close to, intensely occupied with his flock, carefully watching over it, caring for, directing and managing it, and in such a way that his devotion and affection for the flock is reflected in it.

It is not by chance that the name "shepherd" was borrowed from shepherding: it points to that feature of a shepherd's leading activity, when the shepherd's attention is directed to each sheep of the flock individually.

Here is how strongly the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel speaks about the essence of pastoral service, emphasizing precisely this feature of the shepherd's individual care for each individual soul: "Son of man," says the Lord himself to St. Ezekiel, "utter a prophecy to the shepherds of Israel and say to them, shepherds: thus says the Lord God: woe to the shepherds of Israel, who rear themselves! Should not the flock be shepherded by shepherds? You have eaten fat and clothed yourselves with a wave, you have slaughtered the fattened sheep, but you have not shepherded the flock. You did not comfort the weak, you did not heal the sick sheep, you did not bandage the wounded, you did not bring back the stolen sheep, and you did not seek the lost one; you ruled them with violence and cruelty. And they were scattered abroad without a shepherd, and when they were scattered abroad, they became food for every beast of the field. My sheep wander over every mountain and over every high hill, and over the face of the whole earth my sheep are scattered abroad; and no one searches for them, and no one seeks them out. Therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. I am living, says the Lord God, because my sheep were left to be strayed upon, and without a shepherd my sheep became the food of every beast of the field, and my shepherds sought not my sheep, and the shepherds tended themselves, but my sheep were not tended... Behold, I am upon the shepherds, and I will call my sheep from their hand and will not let them graze the sheep any more..." (Ezekiel 34:2-10).

How frightening this warning from God, spoken against unworthy shepherds, sounds even in the Old Testament!

And then the Lord Himself points to this essence of shepherding, which is the shepherd's care for each individual soul: "I will shepherd My sheep, and I will comfort them, says the Lord God. I will seek out the lost and bring back the stolen, I will bandage up the wounded and strengthen the sick, and I will slay the fat and the boisterous; I will shepherd them in righteousness" (Ezekiel 34:15-16).

In the New Testament, the Hebrew word "roé" corresponds to the Greek word "pimin," usually derived from the root "pó" - "to nourish," akin to "pou" - flock, from the root "po" - to protect. It is noteworthy that the word "pou" refers specifically to a herd of small livestock, which, because of its weakness and defenselessness, especially needs care, careful care, feeding, and protection. A classic place in the New Testament where this word "pimin" is used is in John 10, which recounts the parable of the Lord Jesus Christ about the "good shepherd. "The 'good shepherd' calls his sheep by name," the sheep "follow him because they know his voice," "the 'good shepherd' knows his sheep and the sheep know him" (John 10:1-15) and loves and cares for them so selflessly that he is willing to lay down his life for them. Another remarkable place of the New Testament, describing true shepherding is the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6), which emphasizes the individual care of the shepherd for each individual sheep: when one of his sheep is lost, the good shepherd leaves the 99 sheep in the desert and goes to seek the lost one, until he finds it, and when he finds it, he shoulders it and when he comes home, he is more pleased with it, than with 99 others, who are not lost.

It is clear from all of the above, on the basis of Holy Scripture, that pastoral ministry is not just the purely formal fulfillment of a set of known rights and duties entrusted by the Church to one human shepherd, the purely external fulfillment of a series of duties, purely administrative labor, but something incomparably greater, inaccessible to the ordinary natural powers of ordinary sinful man, not sanctified, not enlightened, not fortified for this truly supernatural, superhuman work by the power of God's grace.

In his remarkable lectures on Pastoral Theology, His Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony, who gave a new direction to the science of Pastoral Theology in our country, emphasizes precisely this gracious aspect of pastoral ministry. He says that pastoral ministry is not a collection of only a certain kind of rights and duties, as we used to think before, not a bare administration, in which, strange as it may seem, many still see the ideal of pastoral ministry, but "a single, integral, inner disposition of God's chosen one, a certain all-embracing aspiration of the ennobled human spirit.

Not "administration" but "pastoral care"-selfless zealous concern for the salvation of the souls of the flock-is the essential point of pastoral ministry.

"My heart has always been painfully wrung," said His Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony in a speech at the consecration of the now deceased Archbishop John (Maximovich) in 1934, "when it was said of any bishop that he did not like to serve and was a bad prayer leader, but a good administrator. A bishop does not need such an administration. If he sees his primary duty in prayer, then the administration will arrange itself and everything around him will get better and better."

Thus, true pastoral care is not an administration, but a special "wholesome, inner mood of the human spirit," which depends not on his personal purely external abilities, but on a special gift of grace - received by him in the sacrament of the Priesthood. This gift of grace, as a decisive factor in pastoral ministry, is what His Beatitude, Metropolitan Anthony, teaches in his Pastoral Theology on the basis of the word of God and the holy fathers of the Church.

What is this gift?

It is the gift of "a gracious and compassionate love for the flock," which stipulates the ability to experience within oneself the sorrow of struggle and the joy of the moral perfection of one's flock, the ability to "wee" for them, as did apostle Paul or John. Paul or John. This quality of the pastoral spirit, according to Metropolitan Anthony, expresses the very essence of pastoral ministry.

From this, if we take into account all that has been said above about the concept of "pastor" as it appears to us in the Old and New Testament, the definition of "pastor" follows by itself: A shepherd is a man who, with his whole being, has devoted himself to the care of the souls of the people entrusted to his care, and who has devoted himself with all his being to the spiritual regeneration and to leading them faithfully and steadily along the path of their attainment of spiritual perfection.

If a shepherd does not have this compassionate love for his flock, if he has extinguished this great gift, instead of developing and "warming up" it, according to the apostle's commandment (1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6). If he is not burning with a holy zeal for the salvation of the souls of his flock, he is just a formalistic clerk, and neither a well-organized bureaucracy, nor a brilliantly directed administration will help him: he will lose his sheep, who, not feeling in him a loving father, will scatter from him in different directions.

Difficult times we are now experiencing, which, apparently, have never been in the history of Christianity, for this is clearly a period of "apostasy," with all its characteristic signs. And this requires the modern shepherd to be especially vigilant, above all over himself, so as not to destroy his sheep instead of saving them.

This is a time of a reassessment of values, a subtle and pointed criticism of "everyone and everything. There is little acknowledgement of authority. The external authority of position, of ministry, in the eyes of many, almost the majority, is no longer of any importance. Therefore, it does no good to the pastor who likes to refer all the time only to the authority of his rank, thinking that by doing so he will force his flock to listen to him and obey him. Nowadays, more than ever before, it is not the rank, not the ministry, but the person himself, what he is, what he is, and how he corresponds to the rank or ministry he holds, whether he can be trusted or not.

Oh, how the flock of our day keeps close tabs on its pastor, sometimes seeking out his sins, which are not his own, or gloomily and exaggeratedly revealing the smallest of his real weaknesses and mental afflictions!

All this should be very much taken into account, and with this the modern pastor should always be concerned about himself, about his own conduct, in order to avoid tempting his flock in any way.

These are times when the devil's affliction of pride - the mother of all sinful passions - and all the vices arising from it flourish: self-love, conceit, resentment, vindictiveness, vindictiveness, conceit, vainglory, self-exaltation.

A shepherd can only successfully fight against the manifestations of these passions in his shepherds if the shepherds do not notice these same passions in their pastor: otherwise, as the proverb says, "a rash will be found," and if the pastor will contrast his own pride with that of his shepherds, then all his pastoral work will be "nullified."

The true shepherd must be "the image of meekness and humility" to his flock. In his ears and heart must constantly sound the admonition of the Lord: "Learn from me, that I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). For this he must not equate himself with the Church. A shepherd is not the Church, but only a servant of the Church, more or less worthy, but in his own eyes always unworthy. Many examples of Christ's marvelous humility have been shown us by famous pastors in the history of the Church. Especially striking is the example of the great Russian Saint Tikhon of Zadonskiy, who fell at the feet of a Voltaire nobleman who struck him on the cheek, asking his forgiveness for making him angry. Another example belongs to our time. The late Archbishop John of San Francisco visited, before he died, and even administered the Mysteries of God to his bitter enemy, who had vilified him most viciously in his newspaper for a long time.

In order to attain such a saving humility, both for himself and for the flock, the pastor must remember that, according to the teaching of God's Word, pastoral ministry is not a superintendence in the secular sense, but precisely a ministry. The shepherd must never dare, must never forget the words of Christ, spoken to His closest disciples James and John of Zebedee on this subject, when they asked Him for the first places for themselves in His kingdom: "Behold, as princes rule over them, and great men possess them: Not so shall it be in you: but whosoever will be greatest in you, let him be your servant: and whosoever will be first in you, be your servant: as the Son of man cometh not to serve him, but to serve and to give his life a deliverance for many" (Matt. 20 :25-28).

And the canons of the Church strongly condemn in shepherds "the smoky haughtiness of worldly authority." (III Ecumenical Council Pr. 8, etc.).

The shepherd must call for obedience to the Church, not for obedience to himself. Only the Church is infallible, and all of us human beings can err and go astray. Therefore, we must be able to honestly admit and correct our mistakes, which can only serve to elevate our credibility, rather than ascribing to ourselves the infallibility that belongs only to the Church as a whole. The temptation of papism is very dangerous for the pastor and harmful for his ministry: "Sin as you want and as much as you want, but acknowledge and obey me!"

There is nothing more destructive to pastoral work than when a pastor is immensely lenient toward all, even the gravest sins of his flock, and infinitely strict and exacting toward only one - the sin of disobedience to himself.

A shepherd must be unconditionally strict and unbending in everything that concerns the centuries-old foundations of the Church, its faith and morals, its sacred canons, institutions, and customs, but this severity must stem exclusively from a genuine zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of his flock, and not from any other motives, and still less from personal interests, or self-love and wounded pride. It is utterly unacceptable to disregard the canons of the Church in purely principled cases and to resort to them only where our personal authority begins to suffer and where it is personally advantageous to us.

The personal exaltation of the pastor is the main obstacle to success in his pastoral ministry. Even if in former times the flock forgave their pastor everything, except for pride, nowadays the proud flock is especially sensitive to displays of pride in its pastor and does not forgive him if he wants to be a boss, a commander, instead of being a father to his flock. It is on this basis that the vast majority of all parish troubles arise.

The second very necessary quality required of a pastor for the fruitfulness of his pastoral ministry, a quality that is less and less common in today's world, and therefore of particular importance, more than ever before, is sincerity.

In 1901, the Right Reverend Nazarius, Bishop of Nizhny Novgorod, taking advantage of the brief visit of the Right Reverend Father John of Kronstadt, gathered the city's priests in his chambers and asked Father John to speak with them. When St. Right. John was asked what he was accomplishing that was so beneficial to the hearts of the people, he answered, "Honorable Fathers and brethren, co-religionists! You yourselves, as I see, are men adorned with grey hair, so you yourselves are rich in the experience of life. I have nothing to teach you. But since you ask me how I achieve a wholesome effect on the hearts of people, I will tell you. I try to be a sincere shepherd, not only in word but also in deed, in life. This is why I strictly watch myself,

my peace of mind, my inner work. I even keep a diary where I record my deviations from God's law; I check myself and try to get better.

There is nothing worse than when the shepherds - and now they are especially observing the life of their shepherd and drawing their own conclusions and conclusions - notice a discrepancy in their shepherd between word and deed, when he teaches one thing and himself does another. It is even worse when they notice insincerity, falsehood, pretense: when he says something, not because he believes what he says, but because he finds it advantageous at a given moment to speak this way and not that way, for some purely personal, egoistic reasons, to suit his hearers, or when he says one thing and another thing, even the opposite.

Especially a shepherd diminishes his authority in the eyes of his flock, and often irrevocably and hopelessly, when he seeks to please the powerful and glorious and rich of this world, flattering them in the hope of getting something from them, or of benefiting from them in one way or another. The flock will never forgive this, even if it has even the slightest shadow of such a suspicion, perhaps not even sufficiently well founded. That is why the pastor must be especially careful in this regard and not give rise to such suspicions.

Our time, when, for the most part, no one is trusted, demands a special sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness from the pastor, without a shadow of any guile, falsehood or sycophancy or self-servingness.

The words of Scripture should be constantly in the ears of a shepherd: "If I had not yet pleased man, I would not have been a servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10). God scatters the bones of the wicked, and also, - Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and lays his flesh upon him (Jeremiah 17:5), - and also, - Do not trust in princes, in the sons of men, in whom is no salvation" (Psalm 144:3).

The pastoral application, of which St. Paul says: "All things be all, that every man may be saved" (1 Corinthians 9:22) should not go so far as to lower the very principles of our faith. The shepherd must not adjust himself to the lowered moral level of modern life, but, on the contrary, must strive to raise it to that height which the Gospel preaches and which the Church requires. It is unacceptable to condescend to the sins and iniquities of one's flock out of selfishness, or out of fear of losing popularity, or for any other reason: the true pastor does not benefit from the "elasticity" so praised by modern people. A pastor is not a diplomat, but a servant of Truth. Jesuit casuistry is absolutely unacceptable to a healthy Christian consciousness, and in Orthodoxy it is not tolerated at all.

In particular, it is extremely destructive to the lenient attitude often shown in our time toward obvious sins against morality: illicit cohabitation, indulgences for divorce, which now,

unfortunately, are granted very easily, which all leads to the breakdown of family life, which is now observed in more and more horrific proportions. No less destructive is the indifference of pastors to the obscene fashion of women's clothing, to the arrangement of indecent, unworthy of the Christian name, and often on Sundays, holidays and fasting days.

But if it is unacceptable for a shepherd to show any kind of pandering and to violate the rules of the Church for the sake of pleasing people, then we should also be afraid of the opposite extreme - disdain for "these little ones," those whom the Lord calls "his little brothers" (Matthew 25:40), people from whom we expect nothing for ourselves and do not expect to receive anything. It is unacceptable to despise and condescend to one's flock, whatever they may be. All such disdain, contempt, and condescension are characteristic of Roman Catholicism, in which the clergy are, as it were, a higher, privileged class in comparison with the "lower" class, the flock. This is well explained by our eminent professor at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, A. P. Lopukhin, in his article "The Clergy of the Church. P. Lopukhin in his remarkable lectures on the subject: "The Modern West in Religious and Moral Relation. He holds a very original, but undoubtedly true idea that Roman Catholicism is like a continuation of ancient pagan Rome, whose spirit it has assimilated, only outwardly dressed up in Christian clothes. There were two classes in ancient Rome: the privileged upper class, the patricians, and the lower class, the plebs. This division was carried over to Christianized Rome: the clergy were the same "patricians," the highest privileged class, and the ordinary believing laity were the "plebs," the lower, powerless class, obliged only to obey, unconditionally obeying everything, daring not to express themselves in any way.

Is it necessary to say how much such a Latin concept is against the spirit of true Orthodoxy?

Suffice it to recall a remarkable passage from the District Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs of 1848, which states: "With us neither patriarchs nor councils could ever introduce anything new, because the guardian of piety in us is the very body of the Church, that is, the very people, who always wish to keep their faith unchanged and in accordance with the faith of their fathers.

Never in the history of our Orthodox Christian Church have ordinary believers been a powerless and voiceless "plebs," but they have often raised their voices against heretics, as in our memory, in our homeland, have ordinary believers, often simple women, defended the Orthodox faith against modern heretics, such as the Believers of Kiev and Renewal, who have already taken control of the church and most churches under the protection of the godless communist government.

These are exceptionally difficult times: the "apostasy" of which St. Paul speaks in his 2nd Epistle to the Solonians is developing apace: literally almost every day brings us something new, sometimes simply sensational, which until quite recently seemed unthinkable, impossible. Not

surprisingly, our flock is now also very difficult, very difficult to instruct and admonish, willful, presumptuous, and often hopelessly ignorant in everything that concerns our holy faith and the Church. But this does not relieve us of our responsibility for her, since we have taken upon ourselves the burden of pastoral ministry. We are not called to destroy, but to build up, as St. Paul clearly teaches in his letter to the Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 10:8 The Lord will exact from us for every lost sheep, if we were directly or indirectly responsible for its death. Our negligence, our negligence, our personal weaknesses and vices, our tempting the flock - all this can be the cause, can be the cause of the destruction of the sheep entrusted to us by our shepherd, the Word sheep entrusted to us by Christ.

But the greatest danger in our time, both for the modern pastor and for his flock, threatens from the side of Satanism, which is almost triumphant in the world today, and which rather slyly dresses up in the garments of light under the sly guise of "humanism", or in our case - "Tolstvoism", serving the good of mankind, universal unity, "peace" and even "Christian love".

Alas! Quite a few Orthodox pastors are already, to a greater or lesser degree, entangled in the net of this artfully camouflaged Satanism, which, like the two-faced Janus, now appears in two forms: in the form of Marxist-communism in the countries enslaved to its God-fearing power, and in the form of ecumenism in the countries of the so-called "free world", which is not really free at all. They have a father in common - it is Satan himself, who is now preparing to enthrone his faithful servant - the Antichrist.

We must know and remember: a true pastor of the true Church of Christ can have no contact, no relationship, direct or indirect, with both of these types of world evil.

And it seduces many pastors and shepherds with all kinds of handouts and promises of earthly goods, on which people are so hungry, especially in these days.

A true pastor must by all means protect himself and his flock from this very dangerous temptation, which is usually disguised as "charity. A good Russian proverb must always be remembered here. "The claw is stuck - the whole bird is lost." Many are very much already entangled in these or other networks, and would like to get out sometimes, but can no longer. Satan has a tight grip on his prey.

We, Russian people in exile, are more or less well aware of what communism is, and are largely somehow insured against it. But not everyone has clearly realized that the "world evil" is not in communism alone, that it is only a derivative evil, only a "child," and that its parent, which gave birth to an equally, if not even more dangerous and pernicious evil - so-called ecumenism, headed by the "World Council of Churches" - is the most terrible. It is no accident that the "World Council of Churches," which had previously lured the Orthodox to join it under the

pretext of the need for common unity in the struggle against the coming godlessness, is now so conciliatory toward God-fighting communism and does not even mention at its conferences any struggle against it, willingly including in its ranks representatives of the Orthodox Churches, who are the obedient instruments of communism.

At the present time, we, the pastors of the Russian Church Abroad, whose existence is understood and justified only by a resolute rejection of global evil, are at a crossroads. For the most part we have hitherto been modestly silent, without fully declaring our ideology, in the name of which we exist. Our Pravoslavnyaya Rus' alone has always written very strongly and unambiguously, which some did not even like. But now it has gone too far, and ecumenism has so exposed itself that we now have a number of official documents that bind us to many things. These are, first of all: 1) Three messages from our First Hierarch, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Philaret, addressed to Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, to James, Greek Archbishop of North and South America, and a "Lamentation Message" addressed to all the Heads of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and all the bishops of the Orthodox Church; 2) An Epistle from the 9th Diocesan Congress of the Western European Diocese, signed by His Eminence Archbishop Antonov and His Grace Anthony. Archbishop Anthony and Bishop James; and 3) The report of the last conference of the World Council of Churches, entitled "Uppsala and Orthodoxy," by the head of external relations of the Synod of Bishops, Protopresbyter Fr. George Grabbe. To this we must add another 4) Report of His Eminence Archbishop Vitaly at the Council of Bishops in 1967 under the title "Ecumenism", published in the Canadian Diocesan magazine "Orthodox Review", no. 40, June 1969.

These extremely important documents show that we are already sufficiently aware of the entire unholiness and malignancy of ecumenism as a movement leading mankind to the Antichrist.

So now we must show that we are not satisfied with mere words, only bare assertions, but that behind these words we have corresponding deeds that confirm their truth.

We must break with ecumenism with determination, and we must have nothing to do with its fellow travelers.

We are not on our way with them. This we must say and show with determination. A time of true confession is coming for us, when we may be left alone and in the position of the persecuted. Since all the Orthodox local churches have now joined the "World Council of Churches," and have thereby betrayed Orthodoxy and worshipped Satan, the time has come for our complete isolation. We cannot and must not have any fellowship with apostates from true Orthodoxy, and must be prepared, if necessary, to withdraw to the "catacombs" as "true Orthodox Christians" in our homeland.

Our position as champions and confessors of the pure and unadulterated truth of Christ binds us more than ever in the past.

We must always remember that a true pastor of the true Church of Christ cannot and must not have any other interests except the pure zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of the souls of his flock - to this and only to this all his thoughts, all his feelings, all his activity must always be directed.

There can be no uglier, more ugly phenomenon in the true Church of Christ than a pastor who has any other interests as a pastor who is involved in extraneous, purely worldly affairs, which have no direct relation to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, such as political activity, which always only divides and embitters people, Such fashionable now so called "cultural-educational activity", which is usually reduced to organization of secular entertainments and amusements, dances and the like pastime, indecent and obscene for a Christian, not to mention different kinds of commercial operations and various financial machinations and financial turnovers, which especially undermine the authority of a pastor, degrading his high rank, etc. д., etc.

We conclude our report with the words of St. John of Kronstadt. We will conclude our report with the words of saint John of Kronstadt, from a remarkable talk he gave to fellow-pastors at Sarapul in 1904.

St. John of Kronstadt said as long ago as 65 years ago. At that time, 65 years ago, St. John said that the task of pastoral care in our time is becoming more and more difficult: the struggle of the shepherd is gradually becoming more and more sophisticated, and the more the pastors must be at the height of their vocation. "A shepherd in his disposition," says St. John, "must completely renounce all self-love, must resemble the biblical shepherds in their 'standing in the spirit'. This requires shepherds to be completely cautious and focused, always crucifying themselves for the sake of their flock.

If this is what St. Right Reverend John said sixty-five years ago. If St. John said so 65 years ago in our Orthodox Tsarist Russia, what would he say now in our time?

The conversation moved on to the plagues of modern life. St. John the Righteous. John drew attention to the mood of contemporary society, which is so close to our present, contemporary mood.

"An astonishing disease has appeared today - this passion for amusement," he said, "there has never been such a need for amusement as there is today. This is a direct sign that people have nothing to live for, that they have forgotten how to live a serious life - work for the benefit of the

needy and the inner spiritual life - and have become bored! And they exchange the depth and content of spiritual life for entertainment. What madness! They are like children without reason! And yet, entertainment is already a social vice, already a social passion. That is where shepherds should direct their energies: they must bring back to life the content it has lost, restore meaning to life. But, of course, shepherds must prepare themselves for this. Shepherds must be at the height of their vocation.

And what is most needed to do this?

What is the best way for a shepherd to prepare himself to be at the height of his calling?

And to this question St. John the Righteous. John gives a clear and comprehensive answer: "I pray, I pray all the time. I don't even understand how one can spend time without prayer. Truly - prayer is the breath of the soul."

What else can I add to that?

That says it all - at least - the most important thing, without which everything else is nothing.

Chapter 27: What is Orthodoxy?

"I was born for this and for this I came into the world, that I might testify to the truth, and everyone who is of the truth will listen to my voice" (John 18:37).

It is extremely significant and profoundly instructive for us that the first week of Great Lent consists of a feast in honor of Holy Orthodoxy. It is a great pity that in the days of our untimely time this glorious feast is often not celebrated with the dignified solemnity that it truly deserves. The reason for this, one may think, is that many in our time, even among the clergy, not excluding those of the highest ranks, do not understand clearly what Orthodoxy is, why it is so infinitely dear to us, why we should so highly value and cherish it as our greatest treasure, with which no earthly treasures of this perishable world can be compared.

A widespread, "walking" opinion of our days is that Orthodoxy is but one of the many varieties of Christianity, along with others that have every right to exist and are even, in one way or another, of equal value.

But to think so is either extreme naivety, based on ignorance, or definitely a malicious distortion of the truth.

If we turn to the history of the Christian Church and allow ourselves the labor of a calm and unbiased, without any prejudice, thorough examination of it, we can easily see that only Orthodoxy is true Christianity-that Truth, which, according to His own words, the only begotten Son of God came to earth to witness (John 18:37).

The original enemy of human salvation, the devil, while still in the manger, as we know, intended to destroy our Savior, in order to prevent Him from completing the work of our salvation. When he failed to do that, he turned all his malice against Him and used the pride, vanity, power and ambition of the Jewish chief priests, elders, scribes and Pharisees as an instrument for himself.

When even these evil schemes of his collapsed, and his very power was trampled by the Resurrection of Christ, first through the Jews and then through the Gentiles he raised the cruelest bloody persecutions against the followers of Christ, in the hope of wiping Christianity off the face of the earth.

But even these machinations of the enemy were not successful. On the contrary, Christianity became the predominant religion in the cultural world of Greece and Rome.

The wicked enemy, however, did not faint from his defeat.

He then erected a new battle against the hated faith of Christ - against the Divine Truth that the incarnate Son of God had brought to earth for the salvation of men - a battle that was infinitely more difficult and dangerous.

At his instigation and inspiration, people, deceived by his pride and ambition, began to stir up disputes about faith, different disagreements and divisions among the Christians, within the very Church of Christ, as it was foreseen yet by Saint Apostle Paul (Acts 20:30), putting their own purely human speculations and considerations instead of the God-revealed Truth.

Thus arose heresies and schisms, which threatened from within to undermine the life-giving and salvific power of Christ's doctrine, replacing the Truth with a lie.

To expose and condemn these heresies, false teachings, and schisms, the "guardians" of Divine Truth, the successors of the Holy Apostles, the Fathers of the Church. Apostles, the Fathers of the Church - bishops began to gather at the Councils - Local and Ecumenical, in order to clarify and determine once and for all Christians the obligatory and unchangeable teaching of the Church, establishing, as they believed everywhere, what they always believed, what everyone believed (St. Vincent of Lirin).

That is when the true Christian faith, the right faith, in contrast to heresies and sects, which also called themselves Christian, began to be called "Orthodox.

So this is what Orthodoxy is!

Orthodoxy is the pure and undistorted Truth brought to earth for the salvation of men by Christ the Savior: it is the true teaching of Christ on faith and godliness (life by faith), preserved in all its purity and intactness, set forth by the holy apostles. The Apostles in Holy Scripture, carefully expounded and interpreted by their legitimate successors - the apostolic men, the holy Fathers and teachers of the Church in the Sacred Tradition of our Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Church, which alone, as having changed nothing in this teaching, is still, in all justice, called the "Orthodox Church.

Unfortunately, in our time so much interest has been lost in the sublime truths of the faith and the proper understanding of them, and especially in their application to life, which is commonly called "piety," that many sincerely think that all the difference between Orthodoxy and other confessions lies only in the rites, and since "rites," they say, are "a secondary matter, but God is One," it does not matter what confession one belongs to: "as long as one believes in God and is a good person."

That is the fashionable, popular opinion.

But is it so?

God is One, Christ is One, but somehow there is not one faith: there are many different faiths.

If God is One, can all these different faiths be equally true and therefore equally saving? For if "God is One and Christ is One, does it not oblige all those who sincerely believe in Christ that everything concerning their faith and godliness should also be one: the same, and not different?

This truth is what the Word of God asserts, saying, "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father of all..." (Eph. 4:5-6). (Eph.4:5-6).

Didn't the Lord create many different churches?

Did He not say clearly and distinctly: "I will build my church (one church, not many different churches!), and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18)?

Can we consider these words of our Savior to be false, unjustified, blasphemously admitting that the "gates of hell" have nevertheless "overpowered the church," dividing it into many different churches?

It will not! Let us not allow ourselves such terrible blasphemy against the Son of God!

There is only one, one and only Church, founded by the Incarnate Son of God for the salvation of men: it is one, founded by Himself and not by ordinary sinful men, has always existed, exists now, and will continue to exist unchanged until the end of the age.

What can be unclear here?

We only have to believe firmly in this and not be deceived.

And it is from this wicked wisdom that so many false churches and "denominations" have sprung up, which arrogantly and confidently claim to possess the Truth, without having it, and often preaching outright lies and all kinds of fabrications that flatter the depraved human heart.

The true Church is all Truth, and there is not and cannot be a shadow of any falsehood or delusion in her. The individual members of the Church, up to and including the highest ranking hierarchs, may at times, relying on their own reason alone, err and go astray, but the Church as a whole never does.

She, and She alone, the True Church, is Infallible.

This is because her head dwells to the end of the age - the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 28:20), the Holy Spirit inspires and leads her (John 14:16-17).

Our statement is not unsubstantiated, for it is based on a clear teaching of the Word of God: "...the church of God is alive, a pillar and a witness of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) - so says the great apostle of tongues, St. Paul. Paul.

Whoever lies or falls into error is immediately cut off from the Body of the Church by the invisible judgment of God, falls away from it, thereby losing hope of salvation, and can only reunite with Her again by sincere repentance.

No lie, therefore, is peculiar to the Church, nor can it be tolerated in the Church. Therefore, there can be no dissent, no disagreement, no division.

This is clearly stated by St. The apostle Paul, when instructing the first Christians: "And I beseech you, brethren, beware of them that do quarrels and discord, beside teaching (contrary to doctrine), that ye learn it and depart from them: such as these do not work unto our Lord Jesus Christ, but by their womb: and they do good words and blessing to deceive the hearts of the wicked" (that is: by caresses and eloquence they deceive the hearts of the naive - Rom.16 :17-18).

"Let ye be alike in wisdom, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind (that is: having the same thoughts, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind): nothing through zeal or vanity (do nothing through zeal or vanity), but do honorably toward one another in humility" (Phil.2:2-3).

What does the now so fashionable movement of ecumenism look like in terms of such a clear and categorical teaching of the Word of God?

Isn't it a complete lie, uncharacteristic of the true Church and intolerable in it?

While demanding complete unanimity and unanimity among Christians, the Word of God is equally clear and categorical about how true Christians should relate to false teachers who distort the true teaching of the Church:

"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching (i.e., the teaching preached by the Apostles), do not welcome him into your house, and do not rejoice in him" (i.e., do not welcome him - 2 John 1:10).

"The heretic man, after the first and second punishment (after the first and second admonition) be denied" (be turned away - Tit. 3:10).

Is this what modern Christians do-or are they ashamed of the requirements of God's Word as "outdated," "backward from the age," not "progressive" enough?

This is why all these ecumenists and all kinds of modern "unificationists" lie about the Truth, trying to combine the unconnected: truth with lawlessness, light with darkness, Christ with Belial, the faithful with the unfaithful (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

After this, what can we say about the hierarchs, leaders and spiritual leaders of the contemporary Local Orthodox Churches who have joined the ecumenical movement and have become full members and active workers in the "World Council of Churches"? Do they still have the right to consider themselves Orthodox?

We are not even talking about a whole series of canonical rules of the Orthodox Church, which forbid prayerful communion with heretics, for which bishops and clerics are to be excommunicated from the Church and deposed (see Apostolic Rules 45, 46 and 65 and Laod. 32, 33, and 37), for many now believe that the canons are "behind" the way of life, and that they must all be repealed or reworked so that no one is constrained and everyone can do whatever he pleases - at his own pleasure.

And when one considers that many of the leaders of these churches, the hierarchy and the clergy, not to mention the lay people, are now even joining anti-Christian organizations, or are openly proclaiming the atheistic God-fighting government as "an authority from God," which must be obeyed "not out of fear but in conscience," placing themselves at the service of the enemies of Christ and making themselves their obedient instruments, one becomes quite afraid!

What have we come to?!

And is it possible to turn a blind eye to all this and to lull ourselves and others carelessly, assuring them that there is nothing special about it, that it has always been like this?

Some of it may have been, but not like this, not on such a vast, one might say, all-encompassing scale, when there is hardly any healthy room left, and an honest sincere Christian does not know where and with whom he can go, whom he can trust.

Unable, after a struggle of many centuries, to simply destroy the Church, the dark forces of Satan, in these days, with a particularly fierce energy, have set their sights on the Church, trying to seize it from within, in order to use it, represented by its compliant ministers, for their own purposes. The impoverishment of faith and true Christian love helps this, and the vain pursuit of advertising and vanity of fame and the search for material gain goes directly to these satanic plans.

And so, as a result, the sad picture we are now seeing is that of salt.

Many in our time forget that the Church is the Church: That it is not an earthly, human institution, but a divine institution, whose highest purpose is the salvation of souls to eternal life; that there is no place in it for any politics or diplomacy, and it is inadmissible to twist one's conscience in the name of any purely earthly aims, even if they were covered by false false slogans like "world peace", "the common good" and even supposed "Christian love" and "humility", which are so popular now.

All this modern falsehood and hype and fascination with some kind of higher politics and secret diplomacy, to which not only the rank and file, but also the highest servants of the Church are intensively attracted now, have as their goal nothing else but to prepare the future world power of the Antichrist, who must lead a single (united from all religions of the world) false church and a single world (united from all nationalities) state.

It is not surprising, therefore, that these days it has become insufficient, not entirely definitive, to call oneself simply "Orthodox," and that is why all true believers in our suffering homeland now call themselves "true Orthodox Christians," wanting to emphasize that they do not belong to the formal "Orthodox Church," which has sinned against true Christianity by its unnatural alliance with the enemies of Christ the Savior.

And if we consider what is now happening to "Orthodox Christians" in the so-called free world, where ecumenism reigns and where almost all have already united in the so-called "World Council of Churches," we cannot but agree that this more accurate designation: "true Orthodox" is appropriate here as well - in contrast to those who, calling themselves "Orthodox," have actually already renounced Orthodoxy, keeping only the outward appearance of it.

It must be remembered and known: the true Church of Christ cannot proclaim and affirm any lie and enter into fellowship or collaboration with the enemies of Christ!

Therefore, all those bishops, clerics, and laity who take part in this lie and who in one way or another become friends and collaborators with the enemies of our Lord and Savior are "Orthodox" in name only.

Again and again, we are involuntarily reminded of the truly prophetic words of our wondrous Russian saint, Theophanes the Hermit of Vyshensk, about how it will be in the end times:

"Although the name of Christianity will be heard everywhere, and temples and church ranks will be seen everywhere, yet all this is only appearance, but inside is true retreat" (Tolk. Sol., p. 492).

Do we not see something like that now?

Because Orthodoxy is not something abstract, Orthodoxy is not only faith, but also life by faith, a life consistent with faith, which is usually called piety.

And so, it is quite characteristic that all these modern ecumenical modernists, who still call themselves "Orthodox," with a kind of complacent levity dismiss all the ascetic guidelines of the Holy Church, in which the spirit of Orthodox piety is most fully and clearly expressed, such as, for example, the feat of temperance - the fast of the mind and body.

For us, who remain faithful to true Orthodoxy, it cannot not be especially significant and highly instructive that the holiday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy as if it were the crowning achievement of the first and most severe week of Great Lent.

Let us strive for a deed, in which precisely is expressed the essence of our Orthodox-Christian faith, which is a deed of imitation of Christ in the practice of the Cross and self-mortification (see 1Peter 2:21; 1Kor.9:25-27 and Gal.5:24), a featifying faith. And as we pursue it lawfully, as the Word of God teaches, let us endure all things for the Truth, not departing from it, as many do now, out of cowardice or self-interest of any kind.

And let us firmly remember: where there is no feat, where there is no standing for the Truth, there is no Orthodoxy, no true faith in God and in His Christ, Amen.

Chapter 28: "The Kingdom of God on earth," "progress," or - the Cross?

On the first of August, according to our Orthodox calendar, our Holy Church begins the celebration of the Honorable Life-Giving Cross of the Lord, which reaches its climax on September 14 on the great Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and ends on September 21 on the "Feast of the Deposition."

Why this? Is not the day of Good Friday, when the crucifixion of the Lord on the Cross is commemorated, not enough that every Friday the Holy Church also glorifies the Cross of the Lord?

There is a profound inner meaning hidden in this celebration of the Lord's Cross: our thoughtful Mother Church wants to draw our particular attention to this great and saving sign, against which there has always been, and in our days is, a deliberate and persistent struggle on the part of "the world that lies under evil," a world that is now so clearly turning away from Christ and preparing itself for the adoration of the Antichrist.

How dare he call himself a Christian if he closes his eyes to all the horrors of the world today, and lulls his conscience and those around him with the assurance that all this is an accidental, temporary phenomenon, but that the world is headed for "progress," the establishment of "God's Kingdom on earth"?

It is frightening to think that we hear such assurances more and more often nowadays, not only from unbelievers, not only from sectarians who profess "chiliasm" with its "millennial kingdom on earth," but even from some Orthodox clergymen, up to and including those who hold high hierarchical ranks!

What these people, who seem to be called to instruct people in the pure teaching of the Word of God and the Holy Fathers of the Church, think, and why they are so intent on keeping pace with sectarians and, sometimes, with "progressives" who do not believe in God and Christ, it is difficult to say. Either they are extremely naïve and are not at all familiar with the clear teaching of the Word of God and the Holy Fathers, or they themselves do not believe in anything, but say what their masters "bread winners" demand of them, to whom they faithfully serve for fear of losing the earthly benefits they receive: money, titles, ranks, high position in society, pleasures, etc.

The Word of God not only does not give us the slightest reason to believe in the establishment of "the Kingdom of God on earth" or in any earthly progress of mankind, but on the contrary, it foretells to true followers of Christ many tribulations and "bearing their Cross", in imitation of

and following the Lord-Crusader, and to this world, lying in evil, the inevitable end. "The Kingdom of Christ on earth" is not promised in the sensual, but in the mental, in the souls of all those who truly believe in Christ, for whom the Lord is King.

For it was not in vain, in determining what the whole course of the life of a true Christian on earth should be, that Christ the Savior said: "If he will follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34), and at the Last Supper, before His suffering on the cross, He warned his disciples: "you will be sorrowful in the world" (John 16:33).

Not in vain also the Apostles of Christ, in full accordance with these words of their Divine Teacher, instructed the Christians: "... by many tribulations it is fitting for us to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), or: "And Christ suffered for us, he left us his image, that we should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

And this temporary earthly world, in which "progressives" promise people some absolutely fantastic, contrary to the sad evidence, happy "paradise" life, with the full welfare and prosperity of all people, according to the clear teaching of God's Word, is doomed to destruction in the "day of the Lord", when "the heaven will pass away with a noise, the elements will be destroyed, the earth and all the works on it will be destroyed" (2Pet.3:10).

Today's brainiacs don't want to hear about it, saying that it may happen "someday," "after many millions of years," but not now. By such statements they resemble those insolent scoffers, about whom the same apostle says, warning Christians against these dangerous for Christian morality: "First of all, know that in the last days there will be insolent scoffers, who act according to their own lusts and who say, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers began to die, from the beginning of creation, all things remain the same'" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

It is typical to point out that those who say this are people who "act according to their own lusts"! It is these very lusts, to which they are given over, that obscure their spiritual eyes, and they see nothing, for they look at everything only from the standpoint of their lusts, which absorb all their attention and all their interests.

Meanwhile, the Lord Himself clearly taught not to put off in their thoughts the day of His Second Coming for some very distant, uncertain future - for "millions of years" - but commanded always to wait for Him, comparing His coming, by its unexpectedness for people, with the coming of the thief: "Watch therefore, as you do not know the hour when your Lord will come. Be on your guard, for if the lord had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not have allowed his temple to be dug up. For this reason ye also be ready, that in the next hour ye may not think that the Son of man is coming" (Matthew 24:42-44). "The faithful servant and the wise" will not say that the Second Coming will be "some time", "in many, many

years" and therefore one should not trouble oneself with this thought, for he knows that the Lord Himself forbade saying, "my master will not come soon" (Matt. 24:48).

What to say about those who not only do not think about the possible proximity of the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ, as many signs indicate to us, but believe in some doubtful progress of mankind in the coming of general welfare and prosperity, although all modern life with its complete decay of true faith and morality, with terrible destructive, murderous inventions for man, simply cries against it - such are alien to true Christianity, even though they wear high titles and titles of Christian clergy

We must know and remember that this earthly "progress", this imaginary welfare and prosperity of people on earth, promises to give people the enemy of Christ, Antichrist. These are his servants, preparing his enthronement in the world, are trying beforehand to confuse people accordingly, shouting and preaching everywhere about this supposedly awaiting people "paradise on earth.

And all those who strive for this earthly "progress" forgetting the words of Christ: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matt. 6:33), who run away from carrying their cross, according to the commandment of Christ, and think only about how to get along better and more comfortable, richer and more comfortable on earth, enjoying all the earthly blessings and pleasures, are in one camp with the servants of the coming Antichrist, working consciously or unconsciously for his soonest appearance and enthronement in the world.

Such are not Christ's, but anti-Christ's!

And we, if we are only true Christians, and not just falsely and hypocritically bearing the name of Christians, must constantly look to the Cross of Christ, this saving sign of God's love for us, the sign of our salvation, and draw from it inexhaustible graces, "for life and godliness", To bear our cross, as the Lord has commanded us, and to look upon this temporary life on earth only as a sojourn in the hospice, from which we must return home - to those "heavenly abodes" which the Lord has prepared for us by His suffering on the cross (Jn. 14 :2-3).

We must with the great apostle of tongues "count all things as rubbish, that we may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

And to do this we must forsake all our purely earthly interests, all disputes, squabbles, quarrels and quarrels, from which there is no benefit to anyone, but only spiritual harm.

"Our life is in heaven, from henceforth we also wait for a savior, our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20) - that is what we need to constantly remember!

Soon everything will be over - this temporal, perishable and perishable, earthly world will be over. Let us not, for its sake, give in to our petty passions and lusts and lose hope of eternal life!

"Seek ye things from above," therefore the apostle Paul exhorts us, "where Christ is at the right hand of God - seek the things of high, and not those of the earth!" (Col.3:1-2).

Chapter 29: The Church of Christ is "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

"...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

"We celebrate the feast of Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit" - the Church joyfully sings on the great and glorious day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, and on earth appeared "the Kingdom of God, coming in power", about which the Lord Jesus Christ predicted at the time of His earthly life (Mark 9:1), - the Kingdom of God's Spirit, the Church of Christ, to which the Lord gave the great promise, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

The Church of Christ is founded on earth, but it is not of earthly origin, but of heavenly origin.

The Church of Christ is composed of men, but it is not a human organization, but a divine one.

This is because its Head is the Divine Founder - the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, "who for our sakes and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnated of the Holy Spirit and of Mary the Virgin and became incarnate.

The goal, with which the Church of Christ was founded, is the salvation of souls to eternal life, and therefore the true Church of Christ cannot and should not set itself any purely earthly goals, earthly tasks.

This does not mean that she must be separated from the earth and from all earthly things - no! - But it does mean that it must be above all temporal, earthly things: it must look at all earthly things and evaluate all earthly things from the lofty height of its position - from the perspective of its high goal, its high purpose - the eternal salvation of people. Everything that on earth contributes to this high purpose is acceptable to the Church and is approved and blessed by the Church; everything that hinders, in one way or another, the attainment of this purpose is unacceptable to the Church and is rejected by the Church.

The "gates of hell", that is, all the most select forces of hell, wage a fierce battle "not for life, but for death" against the Church of Christ, to destroy it, or at least depersonalize it, in order to make it, as Christ the Savior Himself said, "salt that wets" (Matthew 5:13), so that it becomes unable to fulfill its high purpose - to save people's souls to eternal life.

In our time, it has become obvious to many, it is clear that simply to destroy the Church is impossible: the bloody persecutions of so many centuries, including the most recent persecutions of our time, have achieved nothing in this respect. This is why the "gates of hell" have changed

their tactics quite sharply in our time: they seek to depersonalize the Church - to lead her away from her eternal, unearthly goals and to tie her firmly to the earth, to the earthly interests and aspirations of people.

They do this through malleable, compliant, "elastic" hierarchs, who sell the Church for "Judaic Tribute.

Oh, how grievously sinful before God and the Church are those hierarchs appointed as "overseers" of the Church (for the word "bishop" itself means "overseer"), guardians and watchmen of it, who depart from the high purposes and tasks of the Church - salvation of souls to eternal life - and strive for other merely earthly purposes, to please the powerful of this age, keeping pace "with the times" in order to gain from this personally for themselves some earthly benefit!

Then only the appearance of the Church remains, but without the spirit of the Church.

But how, you may ask, is this possible, when Christ Himself promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church"?

Unfortunately, this saying is misunderstood and misinterpreted by many, and in our day it is often maliciously perverted.

The insurmountability of the Church by the "gates of hell," as well as the infallibility of the Church - concepts closely related to one another - belong to the Church of Christ as a whole, but not to any particular part of it, even if it is very numerous, much less to any particular person, even if it is a clergyman in the highest rank, bishops or patriarchs.

The history of the Church for many centuries testifies to frequent cases of individuals, up to the highest hierarchs, and entire Christian societies falling away from the true faith of Christ.

Christ's saying about the impassability of the Church by the gates of hell means only that the true Church of Christ will not disappear from the face of the earth until the end of this age and the second coming of Christ, but this in no way excludes the appearance in Christian society of false churches and "churches of the evil one" who have only one outward appearance of the Church, but without her spirit, - churches that worship the Antichrist and serve not Christ, but the Antichrist.

But the true Church of Christ will remain on earth even if at least one bishop remains in it (for "without a bishop there is no Church") with only a few clergy and believing laity.

The chief attribute of the True Church of Christ is the keeping of the Truth, for the Church, according to the great apostle of tongues, is "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Christ the Savior came to earth, in His own words, to "bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37), and all His faithful followers, especially the pastors of the Church, should take example from Him and also, first of all, bear witness to the Truth, without allowing any lie - neither in their words, nor in their actions.

No lie is appropriate for a true Christian, a minister of the Truth. That is why St. Apostle Paul exhorts all Christians: "Therefore put away lying, speak the truth each to his own self" (Eph.4:25).

Lie is all the more intolerable in the mouths of the ministers of the Church of Christ, and certainly especially intolerable in the mouths of the high hierarchs, who must always proclaim one Truth on behalf of the whole Church.

What would it have been if the martyrs of the first centuries of Christianity, "for the salvation of the Church" (a very fashionable excuse nowadays for this kind of lie!), had they only pretended to deny Christ and made sacrifices to idols at the demand of their tormentors?

What would it be if the great Fathers of the Church, also "for the salvation of the Church," instead of fighting the heretics, would find various compromises and enter into concord with them?

Where would then be the true Church of Christ? Would she not then have disappeared from the face of the earth?

And now, for some reason, they say, things have become different, and one can lie, lie, and lie without end "for the salvation of the Church." (???!!!). Everything is turned upside down now, and all concepts are turned inside out!

Fighting for the Faith is somehow reprehensible "politics."

Agreeing with the bitter enemies of the Faith, however, is not "politics," but something very laudable, which many now endorse as an act of "wisdom."

For many, the Church has now become a purely earthly organization, to serve earthly ends, and it is attempted to be made an obedient instrument by men of "this age," all the way down to the obvious ministers of Satan. But the most terrible thing is that this service to earthly ends is

veiled, often disguised by lofty evangelical slogans, sayings of Christ, apostolic and saintly, which misleads many, naive, who yield to this dishonest deception, this truly diabolical lie, artfully concealing its essence.

But let us remember, brethren, that wherever there is a lie, no matter how it appears, no matter how it is disguised, there is no true Church.

There is a false Church!

For the True Church of Christ is "the pillar and the ground of truth. "Watch how you walk dangerously, not as foolish, but as wise" (Eph.5:15)!

Chapter 30: Unforgivable levity - or...?

"Watch ye, for ye know not in what hour thy Lord cometh... Be ready, for in the next hour you do not think the Son of Man will come... And if that wicked servant declares in his heart, "My master will not come... The master of that servant shall come in a day that he does not desire, and in an hour that he does not know, and shall make him half dead, and shall put his portion with the unbelievers: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:42-51).

Long since is known of the book, published as early as 1912 on Athos, translated into Russian, entitled "The Posthumous Vehicles of the Monk Nilos of Mount Athos", which contains, apart from spiritual counsels and warnings to the monks, the prediction of this great ascetic about the end times, about the universal reign of the Antichrist and the tribulations, which would befall the world at the reign of the Antichrist. Now we have received a Russian translation of the predictions of this wondrous Athonite hermit, especially those of the 20th Century, which up to this time were not translated from the Greek, and therefore are unknown to us. These predictions are striking, which in fact, only supplement and clarify those previously known to us. Here is the verbatim text of them:

"About 1900, by the middle of the 20th century, the people of that time will begin to become unrecognizable. As the time draws nearer the coming of the Antichrist, the minds of men will be darkened by passions of the flesh, and wickedness and lawlessness will intensify more and more. The world will then become unrecognizable, the appearance of people will be changed and it will be impossible to clearly distinguish between men and women, because of the shamelessness of clothing and the shape of head hair. These people will become wild and brutal like beasts because of the temptations of the anti-Christ. There will be no respect for parents and elders and love will disappear. The shepherds of Christendom, bishops and priests will become conceited men who do not distinguish right from left. Then the mores and traditions of Christians and the Church will change. Modesty and chastity will disappear from people and fornication and promiscuity will reign. Lying and covetousness will reach their highest point, and woe to those who lay up treasure. Fornication, adultery, sodomy, undercover trades, theft and murder will dominate society.

At the same time, the power of the greatest criminality and debauchery will deprive people of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which they received in holy baptism, and they will also lose their conscience.

The churches of God will be deprived of God-fearing and godly pastors, and the trouble will then be for the Christians who remain in the world, who will completely lose their faith, because they will be deprived of the opportunity from anyone to see the light of knowledge. They will then depart from the world to holy places of refuge in search of relief for their souls, but everywhere

they will encounter obstacles and constraints. And all this will be a consequence of the fact that the Antichrist will wish to dominate everything and become the ruler of the whole universe and will produce miracles and fantastic signs. He will also give perverse wisdom to wretched man, so that he will make such discoveries that one man with another can have a conversation from one end of the earth to the other. Also then shall they fly through the air like birds, and dissect the bottom of the sea like fish. And all this having been achieved, wretched people will spend their lives in comfort, not knowing the poor, that this is the deception of the Antichrist. And, wicked man, he will so perfect the science with vanity that it will lead people astray and lead them to disbelief in the being of the Triune God.

Then Almighty God, seeing the ruin of the human race, will shorten the days, for the sake of those few who are saved, because he wanted to lead into temptation, if possible, also the elect... Then suddenly the chastening sword will appear and kill the seducer and his servants.

Is it not yet clear to anyone that we have before us, in this striking prophecy, a vivid and vivid picture of all that is going on in the world today?

It is in vain and without foundation that some try to assure us that "it has always been so," and that "there is nothing new now. Of course there has always been sin and iniquity, but never before in the history of Christian mankind has it taken on such truly monstrous proportions as it has taken on in the present age-people have always sinned, but never before have they so brazenly, so openly, so defiantly, without a shadow of repentance, as they do now.

It is also significant that everything referred to in this prophecy, has become so extraordinarily grandiose throughout the world only during the last half century, - just from the time of the collapse of our Orthodox Russia with that "Holder" at its head, which, according to our spiritual luminaries Bishop Theophan of Vyshensk and St. Right. John of Kronstadt, "restrained the lawless staggering and ridiculous teachings of the godless", and did not allow the appearance of the Antichrist.

Now there is no one else to oppose the appearance of the Antichrist, and so it is natural to expect his advent and reign in a world steeped in all kinds of sins and lawlessness. And not only does no one now oppose the coming of the Antichrist, but on the contrary - quite a lot of people are already involved in the most strenuous work to prepare for his soonest enthronement, not excluding - I'm afraid to say! - and some Christian clergy, up to the highest hierarchs of the Church, cooperating with atheists and the explicit and secret enemies of our Lord and Savior, negotiating with them, entering into all kinds of compromises and all kinds of agreements, often bordering on betrayal of our holy faith and the Church.

"The "apostasy," or "apostasy," about which the Word of God, as foretold by St. Paul (see 2 Chronicles 2 Ch.), is now in full swing, and woe to him who does not see it, or rather, does not want to see, by an unforgivable levity closing his eyes to all that is happening in the world, and comforting himself and others that "nothing special" and that "all this is normal and natural. But is this unforgivable levity alone? Isn't there something else behind it, something that speaks naturally to you when you hear such naïve assurances? The Antichrist and his servants are not at all interested in his coming and his enthronement being talked about and announced openly: he will come as the greatest benefactor of mankind, as a benefactor and even as a protector of faith and church, and he will expect universal recognition and public adoration. And from the OT prophecies we know that not only unbelievers will accept and worship the Antichrist but also deceived by him people as though he is a believer and even Christian clergy, even those having the highest degree of ministry.

So has the time of the apparition of anti-Christ really already come?

We do not say so.

We only say that the blowing of the spirit of Antichrist in the world is now so clearly felt, as if its appearance is already "near, at the door," in the words of Christ the Savior, who gave us many signs of the nearness of the end.

Moreover, and most importantly, we want to warn everyone against being led astray by this spirit of anti-Christ.

Because he is already now, in the person of his servants, preparing his coming, very cunningly and skillfully recruits supporters and followers, attracting them to himself with various tempting slogans, tempting promises and simply handouts. And many, many people have already fallen for his bait and into his cleverly laid net ...

It is in his interests to chase away the idea of the arrival of the Antichrist - and it is very dangerous. Such a man is already half in his hands, and, of course, will worship him when he comes, being among his faithful servants.

But what of the predictions about the coming still resurrection of Russia and the triumph of Orthodoxy in it and as if even in the whole world?

All of us, of course, would very much like to see our unhappy homeland-Russia-raised to a new life and participate in the worldwide triumph of our holy faith-what can I say! But such unspeakable mercy of God has to be earned. So, out of the blue it will not happen, and to hope for it, without any sufficient reason, is idle daydreaming!

In addition it is necessary to know that all predictions are always relative and not unconditional. After all, even the prophet Jonah, at the command of God Himself, had foretold the destruction and ruin of the great city of Nineveh, but this prophecy was not fulfilled: Nineveh was not destroyed - God spared it for the national repentance of its inhabitants, beginning with the king himself.

Thus should we look at the present state of the world: the punishing sword of God has already been drawn over the world, but it may be withdrawn by the kindly hand of God, if there is that "universal moral purification, nationwide deep repentance and the change of pagan mores into Christian ones" in the world, to which - alas! - in vain called upon the Russian people in his time by our wondrous pastor and miracle worker, Saint Righteous John of Kronstadt.

"Without repentance there is no salvation" - this is a well-known holy truth for every genuine Christian, and therefore to hope for some "reprieve", for salvation and rebirth to a new and better life for Russia and the whole world without repentance is more than naive, absolutely fantastic and unreasonable, because it cannot be justified by anything.

St. Righteous John of Kronstadt, in his words in 1906/1907, spoke literally as follows: "Apparently, the day of the Second Coming of Christ will soon come, - for the departure from the faith predicted in Scripture has come... What can we expect if such faithlessness, such depravity of morals, such lawlessness continues? Shall Christ come to earth again? Will He again be crucified and die for us? No! Enough to mock God, enough to trample on His holy laws. He will come soon, but He will come to judge the world and to give to each according to his work... We may soon hear the terrible message, "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming at midnight, and blessed is the servant that finds him that keeps watch..." "If there is no repentance from the Russian people, the end of the world is near."

That is why now we all should think first of all about repentance, putting aside everything else - all our vain concerns, plans and considerations.

But is there such a repentance in the modern world, such a universal conversion to God, which alone can draw God's chastening hand away from the moral fall of mankind sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss?

This is not yet visible, and therefore there is no need to talk about it.

In the present circumstances of our contemporary life, the above prophecy of St. Nilus of Mirotchiv remains in all its force, with all the consequences it entails, but especially, of

course, for all of us the equally binding warnings and warnings of Christ concerning His return and the absolute necessity of constantly preparing ourselves for it.

If a slave, being angry, will say in his heart, "My master will not come quickly, and will begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with drunkards, then the master of that slave will come in a day in which he does not expect, and in an hour in which he does not think, and will cut him down, and will subject him to the same fate as the hypocrites: there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:48-51).

This is what we must most fear!

"Watch out! - Christ the Savior commanded us, - for at an hour when you do not think the Son of Man will come" (Matthew 24:44). It is this attitude that is the law for us, unless we are truly Christians and have already sold out to the servants of the coming Antichrist.

"Yea, come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.