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ONE MAN IN THE FACE OF APOSTASY

Editorial:

LET US NOT BE ROBBED

The Russian word *okradenost* refers to the stealing of material possessions, but in patristic literature it also denotes the common reality of *spiritual* robbery. This type of robbery occurs when a person is given a revelation of Christ's kingdom in his heart and thus acquires a "feel" for what constitutes that incorruptible realm, but then does not *guard* his inner world.

To guard one's inner treasure—one's awareness and longing for heaven—means to *hunger*, to *weep* (Luke 6:21) in this world because one knows that total fulfillment can never be found here. It means to be *cast out* (Luke 6:22) by those who seek satisfaction in this world, to have every apparent reason to be sad and yet to be inwardly happy.

For one's treasure to slip away, one has only to put primary value on external things: what other people think of one, what is officially acceptable, what one's passions and whims dictate, etc.. One may then have every apparent reason to be content, but be miserable inside.

Spiritual robbery can be followed by something yet worse: a clinging to the actual state of being robbed, to the raw, numb feeling of the soul's deprivation. As people cherish past hurts and resentments, so can they cherish the pain of their emptiness. The spiritually robbed may still "shop around" for inspiration, but such an unserious search will not fill the void; at most, it will only excite the blood.

The Scriptural parable of the sower is precisely an illustration of spiritual robbery. At the end of it, our Lord provides the key for those who would guard His precious gift to them. His true disciples, He says, are those who have a *good and honest heart*, who use their inward treasure to *bring forth fruit*, and who endure all the attacks of the world, the evil one and their passions with *patience or constancy* (Luke 8:15).

In this issue, two recent Church teachers, Archbishop Averky and Father Seraphim, exhort us to watch over the treasure in our hearts, to *walk circumspectly* (Eph. 5:15) in this post- and pseudo-Christian age, lest we be stolen away from the true Christ. Let us allow our God-given consciences to be stirred and awakened by their words. Let us not be robbed.

St. Herman of Alaska Monastery
Platina, California, 1986



*From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive to love God
above all, and fulfill His holy will.*

THE ORTHODOX WORD

For the Mission of True Orthodox Christianity

*Established with the blessing of His Eminence
Archbishop John (Maximovitch)*

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Archbishop Averky at a St. Vladimir Youth Society meeting, 1955.



*Left to right: Archbishop Nikon, Archbishop John
and Archbishop Averky*

*Modern Links with
the Holy Fathers:*

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville

*In Honor of the Tenth
Anniversary of His
Repose: 1976-86*



The outward events of Archbishop Averky's life, which have been recounted in both Russian and English,* could be found in the lives of lesser men. They may even be considered rather standard, and thus by themselves they cannot convey the extraordinary phenomenon that Archbishop Averky actually was. For the most part, he was spiritually formed by the saintly Archbishop Theophan of Poltava (+1940), who in turn had been instructed by the modern luminary Bishop Theophan the Recluse (+1894). Through his timeless words of warning and exhortation, Archbishop Averky successfully carried to our own generation the spiritual "mantle" or legacy of these two great preceptors. No common man could have been worthy of this mantle, which he received directly as once did Elisha from Elias.

Those who knew Archbishop Averky when he was Abbot and Rector of Holy Trinity Monastery/Seminary in Jordanville, New York, remember his striking physical presence. He was tall, with a thick white beard and flowing hair. His eyebrows were remarkably bushy, and beneath them his large eyes seemed to look right into one's soul. Whenever he was concentrating, these eyes were seen to blink repeatedly. He was hard of hearing

and used a hearing aid: this deficiency helped him keep from polluting his mind with worldly talk.

His manner was the epitome of quiet spiritual dignity. He was never hurried and scattered. One could never find him in a "casual" position or mood. This nobility of bearing, however often it is feigned by those who *try* to act spiritual, was completely natural to him: it reflected the pure disposition of his soul.

Naturalness and integrity were in fact hallmarks of his character. For one to be a genuine carrier of Orthodox tradition like Archbishop Averky was, one must first be a genuine person. The opposite of such a person is one who *calculates*. For himself, Archbishop Averky never calculated his actions or words according to how they might "reflect" on his "image," because he honestly *did not care what people thought of him*. He did not cajole or hurt anyone in order to exercise personal power, nor did he try to impress others. Such is the nature of one who truly lives in the presence of God -- and becomes humble by this alone.

Although Archbishop Averky was very much aware of the principles of earthly life and had a sober and realistic attitude towards all that went on around him, he was obviously detached from earthly things. There was nothing worldly to be seen in him.

He is remembered as having been fatherly and compassionate, while at the same time almost childlike. Not really thinking much of himself, he was genuinely moved and even surprised when someone did him the slightest favor. At these times he reminded one of a little boy who, having grown accustomed to live in dire poverty, is unexpectedly given a wonderful present. Being an archbishop, he had the humble attitude of the poor.

The language of Archbishop Averky was so beautiful that after his repose he was referred to in an article as "a Chrysostom [golden-tongue] for the end times."** Even in everyday conversation his speech was flowing and effortlessly oratorical. This language, combined with a burning love of the Truth, made his sermons unforgettable. Very often he would be so overcome by contrition that he would begin to weep in the middle of a sermon. The more insensitive of his listeners scoffed and this "emotionalism," but all could plainly see that these tears were by no means "forced" -- they came out of the abundance of the heart (Luke 6:45).



*Three generations of spiritual teachers: (left to right)
Bishop Theophan the Recluse, Archbishop Theophan of Poltava
and Archbishop Averky*

Archbishop Averky was a true Christian pastor. He did not just say, "do this, don't do that," but gave the "whole picture" -- the whole Orthodox philosophy of life whereby people could understand *why* they should do one thing and not another. Placed in the context of the spiritual devastation of the 20th-century, he did what the nature of his times demanded of all pastors. As will be discussed below, he identified all forms of falsity and both preached and embodied the Truth.

—Fr. Damascene

NOTES

* See *Pravoslavnie Rus* (May, 1976), *Orthodox Life* (May-June, 1976), and *The Orthodox Word* (September-December, 1981).

** By Fr. Seraphim Rose, in *Pravoslavnie Rus* (May, 1976).

One Man in the Face of Apostasy



Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works?

It is the "accepted" ones who will speak these words—those who will have "paid their dues" and built up their reputations as servants of Christ, doing impressive things ostensibly for Him. And the Lord will reply:

I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.
(Matt. 7:23-24)

In what will they have failed, warranting this harsh rebuke from the Lord? In Christ's *name* they will have performed their works, but not in the spirit of Christ, and thus they will not have truly lived according to His commandments. Their deeds, in being done *for* this world, will perish in this world. They will have outwardly conformed to all the dictums of the Faith, but inwardly they will not have directed their lives to heaven. And they will find themselves before the Judge with their hands empty.

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This is an image of what will occur at the culmination of the world's apostasy, or "falling away" from Christ: the Last Judgment. And it reflects precisely the message of a Holy Father of these last times, Archbishop Averky Taushev of Jordanville. Through Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, he was directly linked to the unbroken line of Orthodox theologians who have handed down the living spirit of their tradition as from father to son. A sign of his being a genuine transmitter of patristic tradition is seen in the fact that he never thought of calling himself a "theologian" or "patristic scholar," much less being recognized as that which he actually was: *a prophet of the apostasy*. It was only because of his love for the life-giving Truth of Orthodoxy and for the flock entrusted him by Christ that he spoke out. He felt it his duty to warn people of the more subtle effects of the apostasy, which spread ever faster as our world approaches its dissolution. The apostasy, he knew, was more than just something that has externally manifested itself "out there"—in the self-blinded, godless secular world or in the apostate Christian bodies which have become almost entirely centered in this world. No, the roots of apostasy went far deeper. They could penetrate into the very heart of man...

Archbishop Averky understood that, like the deeds of the false servants whom Christ rebuked in the above passage, the outward form of the Church and even of "true," "traditional" Orthodoxy could be *imitated* so cleverly, so exactly, as to be capable of "deceiving the very elect" (Matt. 24:24). This thought was a tremendous weight on him. He had been given, *directly* from genuine Orthodox Fathers, the essence of Orthodoxy. In order to successfully transmit this essence to the next generation, he had to distinguish it from surrogates which were now growing ever more subtle. Spoken and written words seemed inadequate to the task. He often took refuge in Bishop Theophan the Recluse's poignant phrase: "Orthodox Christianity is losing its salt" (cf. Matt. 5:13). But could it be that the only ones who could detect this loss were those who had already tasted the authentic "savour" of Orthodoxy? Someone who has never tasted salt would not know the difference if he was presented with some other new flavor and was told it was salt.

Archbishop Averky also quoted often the words of Bishop Ignatius Brianchininov: "Do not dare to raise your weak hand to stop the elemental tide of apostasy. Avoid it, protect yourself from it, and that is enough for you. Get to know the spirit of the times, study it so you can avoid its influence whenever possible."¹

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Of course, Archbishop Averky's students and monks at Holy Trinity Seminary/Monastery appreciated the timeliness of his warnings. But still it was difficult for many to fathom the reason for his constant dwelling and harping on so negative a theme. Once, when the archbishop was as usual discussing the signs of the falling away from Christ, one student posed a question: "Of course the apostasy is terrible and we have to hear about it, but why so much? After all, we are sheltered from its influences by being Orthodox, by adhering to the traditions. We're in the Russian Church Abroad—we aren't ecumenists, we have nothing to do with the betrayal of Orthodoxy that is being carried on by other jurisdictions. We are in the true Church—the Orthodox Church. Aren't we safe? Christ said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church."

Looking piercingly at his questioner, Archbishop Averky asked in turn, "But what will determine whether or not *you* are in that Church?" He used the Russian singular form of the word "you" for he meant to address his listeners *as individuals*.

All of the students present were baptized Orthodox Christians; the man who had asked this unexpected question was their own hierarch, their own link to the apostles. They were not only in his same Church, but also in his same "jurisdiction." How, then, could he question *their* membership in the true Church without questioning his own?

Archbishop Averky's question had been loaded with meaning. He had often told his students that the Antichrist would "recognize," "legitimatize" and thus possess the outward semblance of the Orthodox Church—with its traditions, arts, dogmas, canonical validity, liturgical purity and apostolic succession. Therefore, external membership in the Church and adherence to the traditions—though necessary steps for those who know the Truth of Orthodoxy and wish to share in the fullness of its grace—offer, as he said, "no guarantees." By asking his students what determined whether they were members of the true Church, he was stressing the need for them to individually develop within themselves a feeling for *genuineness* that would enable them to identify the spirit of basic Orthodox Christianity and its cunning imitations.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Archbishop Averky observed that Orthodoxy's ecclesiology was, more than any of its other dimensions, in danger of being

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distorted in modern times. As Christendom was losing the last traces of the savour of its underlying Faith, Orthodox Christians too—unwittingly influenced by the spirit of the times—were losing the right conception of what the Church actually was. Their perspective was, like that of the society in which they lived, turned *outward*, and thus they were looking at the Church more and more as an *institution*. Feeling the pressing need to respond to this tendency, Archbishop Averky wrote:

Orthodoxy is not merely some type of purely earthly organization which is headed by patriarchs, bishops and priests who hold the ministry in the Church which officially is called "Orthodox." Orthodoxy is the mystical "Body of Christ," the Head of which is Christ Himself (see Eph. 1:22-23 and Col. 1:18, 24 et seq.), and its composition includes not only priests but all who truly believe in Christ, who have entered in a lawful way through Holy Baptism into the Church He founded, those living upon the earth and those who have died in the Faith and piety.²

Archbishop Averky feared that the spirit of Orthodox ecclesiology would be replaced by a papistic conception of the Church, and that Orthodox leaders would, in the consciousness of the faithful, be seen as "mini-popes" and eclipse Christ as the Head of the Church. When the Church will become identified first of all with a temporal administration, the archbishop realized, then the Antichrist will have an open door to the hearts of men and will with little effort make them his obedient servants. With their wrong understanding of the Church, they will do—"for the good of the Church"—things manifestly opposed to the commandments and will of Christ.

Again turning our attention from the earthly to the spiritual in his definition of the Church, he stated:

The Orthodox Church is not any kind of "monopoly" or "business" of the clergy, as think the ignorant and those alien to the spirit of the Church. It is not the patrimony of this or that hierarch or priest. It is the close-knit spiritual union of *all* who truly believe in Christ, who strive in a holy manner to keep the commandments of Christ, with the sole aim of inheriting that eternal blessedness which Christ the Saviour has prepared for us, and if they sin out of weakness, they sincerely repent and strive "to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8).³

Those whose foremost concern is the consolidation of the Church's temporal power may feel threatened by Archbishop Averky's definition of the Church (which, it should be noted, is identical to Blessed Archbishop John's definition, showing that these two hierarchs were of one mind and spoke from the same tradition). "Yes," it is sometimes heard, "the Church is mystical. But you must take into consideration the earthly aspect of the Church, no matter how prosaic it may be." While Archbishop Averky's answer to this did in fact make room for such considerations, it completely swept them away as justifications for worldliness in the Church:

The Church, it is true, may not be removed completely from the world, for people enter her who are still living on the earth, and therefore the "earthly" element in her composition and external organization is unavoidable; yet *the less of this "earthly" element there is, the better it will be for her eternal goals.* In any case, this "earthly" element should not obscure or suppress the purely spiritual element—the matter of salvation of the soul unto eternal life—for the sake of which the Church was both founded and exists.⁴

As Archbishop Averky perceived, the overshadowing of the spiritual by the earthly in church life led to the loss of something necessary for all Christians: an awareness of the distinction between what is *official* and what is *right*. In turning his attention to the outer world, man seeks the "accepted position"—what is right and good in the eyes of others—rather than to be inwardly right with God and his own conscience. To idealize and conform oneself to something because it is officially "right" or "recognized," is *to ask to be deceived*, for Satan can easily—especially in our times—make outward "officialness" coexist with inward falsity. For this reason Archbishop Averky emphasized:

One must realize and remember that Orthodoxy is not only and always that which is officially called "Orthodox," for in our false and evil times the appearance everywhere of pseudo-Orthodoxy which raises its head and is established in the world is an extremely grievous but, regrettably, an already unquestioned fact. This false Orthodoxy strives fiercely to substitute itself for true Orthodoxy, as in his time Antichrist will strive to supplant and replace Christ with himself.⁵

WHAT IS MEANT BY "ANTICHRIST"?

A word should be said here about what Archbishop Averky meant when he spoke of the "Antichrist," for he viewed the Antichrist in a spiritual way, without any "doomsday" sensationalism. In order to recognize the Antichrist and that which even now prepares his coming, one must look beyond what *appears* to be good and evil, just and unjust.⁶ One must understand the *principle* behind the Antichrist, which is the principle of *imitation* of all that is Christ's. Since his very name means the one who is "in place of Christ" or looks like Christ,⁷ the Antichrist will be the final, most deceptive embodiment of Satan's age-old attempt to "copy" Christianity, to make a new, this-worldly form of it. "The Antichrist will appear," writes I. M. Kontzevitch, "...not as an absolute atheist or as a follower of that which is connected with it, Bolshevism, since the latter has shown to the world every horror which results from atheism."⁸ Rather, as St. Ephraim the Syrian states, he "will come as a robber, in a manner such as to deceive all: he will be as one humble, meek, a hater (as he will say of himself) of unrighteousness, despising idols, giving preference to piety, good, lover of the poor, beautiful to an extreme degree, constant, gracious to all. He will especially esteem the Jewish race, since the Jews will await his coming. But together with all this he will work signs and miracles and dreadful spectacles with great authority; and he will use sly means to please all, so that people will quickly fall in love with him. He will not accept bribes, speak with anger, show a gloomy countenance, but with a decorous exterior he will take to deceiving the world, until he has become king."⁹

With his philosophical, patristic understanding of the reality of Antichrist, Archbishop Averky understood that one need not live during his actual reign to be—in a figurative yet very real sense—his follower. One may be drawn to that which the Antichrist represents—the counterfeit of Christianity—by that which one has in common with him: an inward absence of Christ.

The purpose of all that Christ gives is to prepare people for His Heavenly Kingdom, while the motive of Antichrist is to bind people in every way possible to this earth. This distinction, though simple and clear-cut, may not be so easily seen since Antichrist himself—like many of his predecessors—will in fact be very "spiritual," binding people to earth even with the external manifestation of things which are intended to lead them to

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heaven. The imitation of Christianity will only be discerned by those who have preserved a "feel" for what is intrinsically earthly and corruptible and what is heavenly and eternal. The "apostasy" of which Archbishop Averky spoke is precisely *the loss of this discernment and this desire*. Again, St. Ephraim the Syrian writes that, when the Antichrist actually comes, he will not be seen for what he actually is by "him who has his mind on the affairs of this life and loves the earthly...for he who is always tied to the matters of this life, although he even hear, he will not believe, and will despise him who says these things. But the saints will be strengthened, because they scorned every care for this life."¹⁰

A Christianity without "savour" is filled with *worldliness that masquerades itself as spirituality*. And to "worldlify" Christianity is to make it vulnerable to the temptations of Antichrist.



THREE LEVELS OF APOSTASY

In studying Archbishop Averky's writings on the apostasy, one can discern three levels of which he spoke, these levels progressing from the most obvious to the most difficult to detect.

The First Level

At the first level is the loss of Christianity's "savour" by Christendom *in general*. The roots of this are found in the schism of East and West and in the medieval West's gradual formation of a "new Christianity," in which man's fallen reason—rather than divinely revealed tradition—became the criterion of truth. In essence, it was this change in perspective from the spiritual to the natural that led, through the Renaissance and "Enlighten-

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ment," to the blatant materialism of our own times—a materialism that has spiritually blinded modern man.¹¹ "There can be discerned," wrote Archbishop Averky, "some kind of rationally acting black hand which is working to bind people as tightly as possible to this temporary, earthly life by forcing them to forget the future life, the eternal life assuredly awaiting us all."¹²

Materialism, Archbishop Averky understood, corrupts the faith of Christians without their even knowing it. Even their ostensible stand "against worldliness" or their talk of heaven may be filled with worldly conceptions if they have lost the right understanding of the "world" that is opposed by basic Christianity.¹³ Moreover, that which would, from an Orthodox viewpoint, be considered immoral, becomes permissible to a Christianity infected with worldliness. Wrote Archbishop Averky:

Of what sort of genuine union of all Christians in the spirit of Christian love can we speak now when the Truth is denied by almost everyone, when deceit is in control almost everywhere, when a genuinely spiritual life among people who call themselves Christians has dried up and been replaced by a carnal life, an animal life which has nonetheless been placed on a pedestal and concealed by the idea of pretended charity which hypocritically justifies any sort of spiritual excess, any sort of moral anarchy. Indeed, it is from this that are derived all these numberless "balls," various kinds of "games," "dances" and amusements, toward which, despite their immoral and anti-Christian nature, even many modern clergymen have a tolerant attitude, sometimes even organizing them themselves and participating in them.¹⁴

In losing touch with the essence of its faith—which is, in a word, *otherworldliness*—, Christendom deprives believers of living contact with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Christians must therefore find substitutes for this grace by inducing, through self-persuasion, "spiritual experiences." At the same time they seek a substitute, in this world, for the other world that is no longer tangible to them. Of these "neo-Christians," Archbishop Averky wrote:

They want blessedness here in this world, burdened with its multitude of sins and iniquities; and they await this blessedness with impatience. They consider one of the surest ways to attaining it to be the "ecumenical movement," the union and unification of all peoples in one new "church" which will com-

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prise not only Roman Catholics and Protestants, but also Jews, Moslems and pagans, each retaining its own convictions and errors. This imaginary "Christian" love, in the name of the future blessedness of men on earth, cannot but trample upon the Truth.¹⁵

Archbishop Averky termed the belief in future blessedness on earth "neo-chiliasm"—chiliasm being the ancient heretical belief in a thousand-year reign of Christ as an earthly king. He foresaw that the outward "ecumenical unity" sought by the "neo-chiliasts" would be nothing else than an official unity supported and approved of by Antichrist.¹⁶

For Archbishop Averky, the modern "ecumenical movement" was indicative of something else: the widespread disbelief in absolute Truth. Through this comes an unwillingness to take a stand for anything and a weak-willed acceptance or even justification of evil, all in the name of the most superficial ideas of "Christian love" and "peace." Archbishop Averky expressed it thus:

In our times, when there are such strong doubts about even the existence of Truth, when every "truth" is considered relative and it is considered legal for each person to hold to "his own truth," the struggle for the Truth acquires a particularly important meaning. And the person who does not sympathize with this struggle, who sees in it only a manifestation of "phariseeism" and suggests "humbling oneself" before falsehood by falling away from the Truth, should naturally be recognized as a betrayer of the the Truth, whoever he might be, whatever he might call or consider himself.¹⁷

Those who place all their hope in this world must of necessity either give into despair or blind themselves to the rising degeneracy in all forms of public life. Their relativistic and irresolute attitude only helps to unleash the forces of Satan in the last times. As Archbishop Averky pointed out:

The "ministers of Satan," or, which is the same thing, the servants of the coming Antichrist, make use of this spiritual blindness of the majority of modern people and stubbornly and insistently do their work with genuinely satanic energy. With special efforts and with all available means, with the aid of all the resources under their control, they bind forcibly to themselves adepts who are wittingly or unwittingly, willingly or unwillingly, cooperating with them in creating in the world

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circumstances and conditions appropriate for the very near appearance of the Antichrist as the ruler of the whole world and the master of all mankind.¹⁸

In another place, Archbishop Averky wrote more on this same theme:

The fundamental task of the servants of the coming Antichrist is to destroy the old world with all its former concepts and "prejudices," in order to build in its place a new world suitable for receiving its approaching "new owner" who will take the place of Christ for people and give them on earth that which Christ did not give them... One must be completely blind spiritually, completely alien to true Christianity, not to understand all this!¹⁹

The Second Level

At the second level of the apostasy described by Archbishop Averky, the Orthodox churches—in "keeping in step with the times"—leave behind some of the Church's traditional forms and ecclesiological positions which they consider "outdated," and thus they too cut themselves off from the tradition that retains the "savour" of basic Christianity. This is one of the ways in which Orthodoxy becomes a worldly "pseudo-Orthodoxy." The essence of Orthodoxy cannot be transmitted when the very context of receiving it is all but gone.

Archbishop Averky explained why the Orthodox Church, as St. Athanasius the Great once said, "must not serve the times":²⁰

The Church never conforms to the world. Indeed not, for the Lord said to His disciples at the Last Supper, "You are not of this world." We must hold to these words if we are to remain faithful to true Christianity—the true Church of Christ has always been, is and will always be a stranger to this world. Separated from it, she is able to transmit the divine teachings of the Lord unchanged, because that separation has kept her unchanged, that is, *like the immutable God Himself*.²¹

Once in the early 1960's, a seminarian heard Archbishop Averky pacing for a long time in the monastery corridor. Finally he went up to the bishop and asked him what was wrong. "Brother," replied the righteous hierarch, contemplating, "the term 'Orthodoxy' has become meaningless because *unorthodoxy* is dis-

guising itself behind the external mask of Orthodoxy. Thus there is a need to coin a new phrase for that which we call Orthodoxy, just as there once had been a need to coin the term 'Orthodox.'—And that is not so easy."

Archbishop Averky perceived that, for whatever reason, Orthodox churches and church leaders have not treasured the otherwordly basis of Orthodox tradition as passed on from father to son uninterruptedly through the centuries. About this he wrote:

Wherever the inherited spiritual link of grace going back to the Holy Apostles and their successors the Apostolic Men and Holy Fathers has been broken, wherever various innovations have been introduced in faith and morals with the aim of "keeping step with the times," of "progressing," of not getting out-of-date and of adapting to the demands and fashions of this world lying in evil—there can be no talk of the true Church.²²

These "innovations"²³ are sometimes introduced in order to make Orthodox life less of a struggle or to make it appear less "odd" in the eyes of the world. Archbishop Averky wrote that the very concept of doing this is heterodox, since "the Orthodox Faith teaches *how to construct life according to the demands of Christian perfection*, whereas heterodoxy takes from Christianity only those things which are, and to the degree to which they are, *compatible with the conditions of contemporary cultural life*." To lower Orthodoxy's standard of ascetic struggle is to deny Christians a means of self-purification, to deny them even the chance of soul-saving repentance when they fall short of this standard—in spirit if not in letter. It is to weaken the very foundation of Orthodoxy, which, as Archbishop Averky stated, "is an *ascetic faith that calls to ascetic labor in the name of the uprooting of sinful passions and the implanting of Christian virtues*."²⁴

In other cases, traditions are dissected and changed in order to feed the pride of contemporary "theologians" who, cut off from the direct, living transmission of tradition, strive to find "new ways of Orthodox theology," to intellectually "master history" and "restore" Orthodox practice to some kind of artificial purism. They clamor, Archbishop Averky wrote, "about how essential it is to 'renew the Orthodox Church,' about some sort of 'reforms in Orthodoxy,' which allegedly has become 'set in its ways' and 'moribund'²⁵...This new breed of 'Orthodox' are really

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no more than modern 'scholastics.'"²⁶ They "theologize" without the proper "feel" for the traditional church atmosphere in which saints have been raised. *By their fruits ye shall know them* (Matt. 7:20): Traditional Orthodoxy, with all its alleged "cultural accretions" and "impurities," has nurtured saints even in our own times; "restored" or "rediscovered" Orthodoxy, with all its claims of being more pure and better informed, has produced, at best, clever men. The spiritual impotence of the latter is the result of its "theologians" "knowing better" than the modern, living repositories of Orthodox sanctity.

Churches, in "keeping step with the times," can also lose the savour of Orthodoxy by being caught up in the spirit of the fashionable "ecumenical movement" which, as we have seen, is a manifestation of the process of world apostasy. Thus, Archbishop Averky stated in different places:

The destructive spirit of Apostasy has already penetrated even our Orthodox Church, extremely prominent hierarchs of which openly are proclaiming the approach of some sort of "new era" and cynically are proposing being done with all the past as they assemble to create some kind of completely "new Church" in close "ecumenical" contact and unanimity with all apostates from the true faith and Church²⁷...For a long time we have heard that they [Orthodox clergy] belong to this movement in order "to witness to the peoples of other confessions the truth of holy Orthodoxy," but it is difficult for us to believe that this statement is anything more than "throwing powder in our eyes." Their frequent theological declarations in the international press can lead us to no other conclusion than that they are traitors to the holy Truth.²⁸

The Third Level

Finally, the third level of the apostasy that Archbishop Averky warned about is reached when Orthodox churches, even while preserving all the traditions of what they call "true Orthodoxy," also lose the precious savour of their faith and become infected with a worldly spirit disguised as spirituality. This occurs through (1) the loss of basic Christian love, without which all the traditions become *condemning* rather than *grace-bearing*, and (2) the use of outward forms and supports of faith (which are intended to evoke remembrance of the other world) for worldly ends. Through these factors arises another form of "pseudo-Orthodoxy," this time more subtle because it may be

cloaked in all the right externals. Some of its symptoms, which may also be found in the "pseudo-Orthodoxy" of the apostasy's second level, will be described below.

PARTY POLITICS

Archbishop Averky saw that, once the the savour of Orthodoxy is lost and the Church comes to be regarded first of all as an earthly organization, membership in the *Mystical Body of Christ* becomes confused with membership in one or another administrative church party. People's lives may then be ruined under the pretext of "cleaning up the Church" if these people do not seem advantageous to the organization. Clergy, laypeople and monastics are pitted against and made to distrust each other in order to protect the worldly interests of their respective parties. One church group may split off from another and seek to legitimize its position with any number of legal and canonical formulas. Various church parties may join to form "super-parties" in order to make themselves feel more legitimate; they may speak of their outward unity as if this represents the true spiritual unity of the Church, but they betray how merely political this unity actually is when they dismiss or use polemics against those Orthodox groups which have not joined their organizations. Those with a "party mentality" may lose the very idea of sanctity, glorifying church figures primarily because they are "recognized" by their particular party or are its most prominent spokesmen. "Canonicity," a major weapon in party polemics, comes to be manipulated quite arbitrarily and becomes wrongly confused with one party's "recognition" by other parties. Accordingly, one appears to become "canonical" when one uses the most effective propaganda.

Archbishop Averky was repulsed by this realm of what he called "party politics," seeing that it had nothing to do with basic Christianity.

Although party politics have indeed reached an extreme in these last times when *the love of many grows cold* (Matt. 24:12), the "party mentality" is not, of course, new to the modern age: it is a common tendency of the fallen, carnal side of humanity. Even St. Paul had to deal with it when writing to the church at Corinth: *Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? While one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?* (I Cor. 1:12-13; 3:4).

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To make the Church a tool of political intrigues, Archbishop Averky said, is "to subject the eternal to the temporal, the heavenly to the earthly, the holy to the sinful."²⁹ In his article *Holy Zeal*, he stated further:

And there is likewise a false, lying zeal, behind the mask of which is concealed the foaming of ordinary human passions—most frequently pride, love of power and honor, and the interests of a party politics like that which plays the leading role in political struggles, and for which there can be no place in spiritual life, in public church life, but which unfortunately is often to be encountered in our time and is a chief instigator of every imaginable quarrel and disturbance in the Church, the managers and instigators of which often hide themselves behind some kind of supposed idealism but in reality pursue only their own personal aims, striving to please not God but their own self-concern, and being zealous not for God's glory but for *their own glory and the glory of the colleagues and partisans of their party*. All of this, it goes without saying, is profoundly foreign to true holy zeal, hostile to it, is sinful and criminal, for it only compromises our Holy Faith and Church!³⁰

"The Church," emphasized Archbishop Averky in another place, "was given to us for the salvation of our souls and for nothing else! We cannot make it a tool or an arena for the play of our passions and for the settling of our personal accounts."³¹

As far as Archbishop Averky was concerned, party politics were boring no matter what party was involved. They were hardly worth giving one's life for—giving up the chance for a wife and family as he had done when becoming a monk. Ironically, it was precisely his lack of unanimity with those of a "party mentality" that made him the victim of their politics. He was dismissed as a permanent member of his council of bishops because he refused to be guided by a "party-line" rather than by his own conscience. Seeing that party politics had infiltrated not only other groups but his own as well, he once told one of his former seminarians, "Does it not follow from this that the grace of the Holy Spirit is leaving our synod?"

Still, it may be wondered why Archbishop Averky spoke so openly about the "uninspiring" phenomenon of party politics. Would it not have been better just to pretend that all the other Orthodox groups did not exist and to confine one's attention to one's own circle? No, for Archbishop Averky, this would have

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been a shirking of his responsibility as an Apostle of Christ. Party politics were poisoning the mission of Orthodoxy in the Free World, turning converts away and making believers listen to the whispers of the devil rather than to the words of Life. To keep silent would have been a crime, since if this issue was not addressed openly, how else would spiritual seekers find the true essence of Orthodoxy, which is inherently above party politics? How would they experience the living reality of the *true Church*, which, as Archbishop Averky said, is "the close-knit spiritual union of all who truly believe in Christ"?

"*ONLY HOLY ZEAL FOR GOD, FOR CHRIST,*" wrote the archbishop, "*without any admixture of any kind of slyness or ambiguous cunning POLITICS, must guide us in all deeds and actions.*"³²

ROLE-PLAYING

Archbishop Averky detected another sign that Orthodox churches, even when they adhered to all the outward forms, were losing Orthodoxy's *savour*. This was the fact that Orthodox leaders and spokesmen were having to play "roles." Role-playing occurs when small men, out of worldly ambition, want to take on positions which have been instituted in the Church for men of higher spiritual calibre. In most cases, those playing roles, having no real spiritual authority themselves, have to acquire this authority outwardly by resorting to what Archbishop Averky called "man-pleasing." This was spoken of by St. Paul, who in the first years of Christianity had to point out the distinction between the true representatives of Christ and the "man-pleasers": *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10). But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, Who trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness. Nor of men sought we glory... (I Thes. 2:4-6).*

In "man-pleasing," one must flatter the right people and, conversely, destroy potential opponents at the right junctures; one must "take into consideration" influential people, regardless of whether this accords with one's conscience. Finally, one must give out awards and ranks and publicize this, thereby binding oneself to allies by mutual "recognition" rather than by heartfelt love. "How many," wrote Archbishop Averky, "give their hearts to the distraction of exalted callings, ranks, orders and awards, being ready to acquire them by any means at all, even by tramp-

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ling down their consciences."³³

Archbishop Averky indicated that role-playing may also bring about hostility and divisions in the Church:

To start the cruel hostility and dissension which cut off at the root the peaceful course of parish life and break up and destroy the parish it is sufficient for just one such person to appear in a parish—a person who imagines that he is the "hub of the universe," that everyone should take account only of him and obey him in everything, that all his judgements and evaluations are infallible and without error...For people of this sort it is as if the voice of conscience does not exist and they do not recognize the Law of God: they are capable of every sort of tendentious distortion of the truth, of any sort of lie and malicious slander against those people who do not agree with their conceited inclinations, who do not approve of their attitude of self-satisfaction and their unrestrained desire to play the leading role everywhere, even if those people be lawfully appointed and truly good pastors and men of prayer, of whom there are fewer and fewer nowadays, and who ought to be valued, not persecuted with lies and slander for purely personal, conceited reasons, which is a foul and repulsive sin in the eyes of God.

It is just such people, possessed by the mad passion of self-love, who are being used by the powers of darkness, the servants of the coming Antichrist, to disrupt and destroy the Church, starting with its individual parishes...They are genuinely living without a conscience!³⁴

In role-playing, a person acts in the way the world *expects* one in his "respected" position to act. This is the opposite of that which characterizes the authentic modern "links" with Orthodox tradition: a complete naturalness, lack of pretense, and freedom of spirit, with no attempt to fit into some prescribed category.

Of one role-playing church leader, Archbishop Averky said that he wore a "mask." "There are such hypocrites," he wrote, "who like to appear saintly and pious, when, in fact, they are not at all that way, but they will have to answer to God for they attempt to deceive the trusting, and they do so for personal gain."³⁵

Role-playing may take many forms. One may take on the role of an authority on spiritual life or even of a "Holy Elder," misapplying lofty standards to the low spiritual calibre of modern

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times.³⁶ Using St. Paul's phrase, Archbishop Averky identified this as "zeal without understanding—zeal which loses its value because of the absence in it of a most important Christian virtue: *discernment*, and therefore, in place of profit can bring harm."³⁷

Another kind of role-playing is to be found in false spokesmen of Orthodoxy. We have already discussed the "theologians" of a "restored," innovative Orthodoxy. Such false teachers are to be found, however, not only in the more "liberal" circles, but also among the "patristic experts" and "scholars" of the "conservatives" and "traditionalists." False Orthodox spokesmen may make one feel that one has finally "figured out" Orthodoxy, but most often they leave one's soul unmoved and unchanged. Of them, Archbishop Averky remarked:

Alas! How few people there are in our times, even among the educated, and at times even among contemporary "theologians" and those in the ranks of clergy, who understand correctly what Orthodoxy is and wherein its essence lies. They approach this question in an utterly external, formal manner and resolve it too primitively, even naively, overlooking its depths completely and not at all seeing the fullness of its spiritual contents.³⁸

Once, when some clergymen were attacking the memory of a 14th-century saint because he did not fit in with their concept of "traditionalism," Archbishop Averky called them "puppy theologians." They were followers (to borrow a term coined by Fr. Seraphim Rose) of "external wisdom." The so-called "liberal" and false "traditionalist" Orthodox teachers were, in Archbishop Averky's view, but two sides of the same coin. They both had a touch of modern criticism, a love of glitter and an attitude of "knowing better," having received Orthodoxy by doing research and forming "reasonable" conclusions rather than by learning from its living vessels. Outward contact with a genuine bearer of tradition is not enough; there must be a loving kinship and "oneness of soul" with that bearer.³⁹ The presence or lack of this kinship, it is true, may be hard to discern from the outside, especially when one is not aware of the world of piety in which a true carrier of tradition has been born. For example, one might at first think that Archbishop Averky, from the bold, unequivocal tone of his writings, had the attitude of "knowing better." However, when one comes to understand the spirit of his first and second generation spiritual fathers, Theophan of Poltava and Theophan the Recluse, then one will see that he was entirely in

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their tradition, that he received everything from them. Like all true Fathers of the Church, Archbishop Averky taught others not because he had an inflated view of his own knowledge or significance, but because he felt personally responsible for the priceless treasure that had been passed on to him from holy teachers.

INIQUITY FROM ABOVE

The last form of role-playing that Archbishop Averky talks about is done by those in clerical authority. This form is perhaps the most influential in creating a pseudo-Orthodoxy, since it is the church leaders who are supposed to set the "tone" for church life.

Authorities who lack true apostolic zeal may still work zealously for personal ends or for the benefit of their parties. Archbishop Averky wrote that, for them, "the Church is nothing more than one of the ordinary human organizations where they wish to play some sort of leading role..."⁴⁰ In another place he stated:

They have not unsuccessfully been taking control of the Church into their own hands, trying to become the complete and unchecked directors of people's religious and church lives and even applying ecclesiastical discipline for those who refuse to obey them so they can keep everyone in their power without opposition or rebellion.⁴¹

Having a worldly concept of authority, they think that their first responsibility is the smooth running of their church's external apparatus rather than the salvation of souls. Since the practice of loving, fatherly pastorship is beyond them, they view obedience to them as a soulless fulfilling of a standard code of behavior necessary for the functioning of the *organization*. Because they are objectively endowed with clerical rank, *having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof* (2 Tim. 3:5), they can quote many canons to affirm their absolute control. These canons are, of course, meaningful only if they are applied in the right spirit, with pastoral discernment and according to the conscience of the Church.⁴² Many innocent believers, having outward standards imposed on them from above in an artificial context, feel they have to conform themselves to it at all costs. In the words of Archbishop Averky, they "fall under the influence" of unspiritual leaders, "and in their naive thoughtlessness support them in their conceited undertakings as some sort of 'maintainers of

law and order!"⁴³ Thus, to the extent that the church leader tries to play a role, his flock is expected to go along with his worldly idea of authority and play the role of unthinking cattle. The authorities set the false example and the people, who may never have been given the "real thing," have nothing to contrast it with. They cannot distinguish between *official* and *genuine*, soul-saving Orthodox pastorship; and therefore they seek out pastors not for spiritual reasons, but to be first of all "legitimate" members of the right church party. (It should also be said that if for some reason this search ends in naught, there is seen another negative result of placing too much value on officialness: bitterness at *not* being considered "legitimate.")

Under unspiritual guides, a kind of paralysis can set in among the faithful. A symptom of this is seen when people become afraid to take any initiative according to the dictates of individual conscience, having been led to believe that anyone who disturbs the *status quo* has no right to exist. They become *ashamed* to show through their actions that they love God with all their hearts or that they love those saints of God who might not yet be "official."

The use of authority for worldly ends is especially wrong for hierarchs since, as *monastic* pastors of laymen, they are supposed to provide the *leaven of otherworldliness* for those living in the world. Their function is to *inspire, guide and encourage* all the pious attempts of believers at bringing some goodness to this fallen earth, rather than to seize control of these attempts, to *standardize* and take all the "risk" out of them until there is no fresh inspiration left.

One of Archbishop Averky's phrases was "iniquity from above," iniquity that comes from the "lawful authorities" and is therefore not questioned. In calling attention to this manner of wrongdoing, he was not advocating people to wage war on authorities or to be immediately suspicious of someone just because he is in a respected position. Rather, he was exhorting people not to unreflectively conform themselves to the "letter of the law" without knowing whether the law is being used for a godly purpose or being manipulated for personal gain. In one place he wrote:

True Orthodoxy is alien to every dead formalism. In it there is no blind adherence to the "letter of the law," for it is *spirit and life* (John 6:63). Where, from an external and purely formal point of view, everything seems quite correct and strictly

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legal, this does not mean that it is so in reality... Orthodoxy is the one and only Truth, the pure Truth, without any admixture or the least shadow of falsehood, lie, evil or fraud.⁴⁴

Anything that stands in the way of Christ's Truth is an idol. Therefore, if one follows the decrees of a church leader when they are opposed to the commands of Christ, then one is making an idol of "officialness." This idolizing leads to the idea that "if the leaders are wrong, there is no hope!" As Archbishop Averky made clear, however, one will never be without hope as an Orthodox Christian as long as one preserves a spiritual understanding of the Church. "The 'gates of hell,'" he wrote, "will not prevail against the Church, but they have and certainly can prevail against many who consider themselves pillars of the Church, as is shown by Church history."⁴⁵

There can be no question of Archbishop Averky's stance. If something is done on false principles, we should not accept or keep silent about it because it is performed in an official capacity, because it is "iniquity from above":

*Meekness and humility do not mean spinelessness, and should not yield before manifest evil. A true Christian...should always be uncompromising towards evil, fighting with it by all measures and means available to him, in order decisively to cut off the spread and strengthening of evil among men.*⁴⁶

Again, Archbishop Averky stressed the dangers of self-effacingly seeking acceptance or recognition from any kind of authorities simply because of their "legal" status:

Any effort on our part to befriend those "holding authority" at the present time when the "many antichrists" who are openly or secretly fighting against Christ and His Church are so obviously in control, any effort slavishly to please them, flatter them, and do what they want, even to try for some degree of "legalization" from them is a betrayal of Christ our Saviour and enmity towards Him, even if those who act in this way are wearing the dress of clergymen.⁴⁷

In this statement, Archbishop Averky gives a good explanation of the principle of Sergianism. This principle, by which Metropolitan Sergius capitulated to the godless Soviet authority in order to remain "legal" and preserve the functioning of the church institution,⁴⁸ is not merely something that is *somewhere else*, in Soviet Russia. It is a universal category of the human

soul which only happened to take a dramatic form in the person of Metropolitan Sergius: it is *the doing of something wrong or the acceptance of a lie in order to obtain the temporal advantage of being "official,"* albeit "for the good of the Church."

"Thus," wrote Fr. Seraphim Rose in the spirit of Archbishop Averky. "some people can find themselves in a position that may be 'legally correct' but is at the same time profoundly un-Christian—as if the Christian conscience is compelled to obey *any* command of the church authorities, as long as these authorities are properly 'canonical.' This blind concept of obedience for its own sake is one of the chief causes for the success of Sergianism in our century—both within and outside the Moscow Patriarchate."⁴⁹

The final manifestation of the Sergianist principle will be the submission of even the most "traditional" Christians to the Antichrist himself. They will not be forced to agree with the Antichrist's ideas and methods. All that will be required of them is their recognition of his authority, which they will give in order to preserve the hierarchy, the church organization, the church services, and the possibility of openly receiving the Sacraments. Their betrayal will not consist of their clinging to canonical forms, but rather in their placing these forms *above* faithfulness to Christ, which is the first responsibility of the Church.

The Holy Fathers have a very definite teaching on this, based on the *Apocalypse* of St. John the Theologian. They comment on the fact that the seal of the Antichrist will not be placed on the forehead and the hand simultaneously, but on the forehead *or* the hand (Apoc. 13:16). According to St. Andrew of Caesarea, those who receive it on their foreheads will share the Antichrist's *way of thinking*, while those who receive it on their right hands will only recognize his *authority*, saying that it is permissible to do this "if only one remains a Christian in one's soul... The banishing of the grace of the Holy Spirit through the mark of the beast fills the heart of all such ones with the first sign—*fearfulness*—which will bring them to an easy destruction."⁵⁰

In view of this patristic teaching, Archbishop Averky could readily foresee how *all* ecclesiastical organizations—ecumenical and anti-ecumenical, innovative and traditional—would one day bow down before Antichrist. Those whose fear of temporal authority overrides their fear of God will rely on their fallen minds to justify this submission, for their hearts and consciences can never justify it. They will try to sustain their church institutions by relinquishing the *spiritual freedom and heroic confession*

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which, as Archbishop Averky reiterated, will alone sustain the invincible Body of Christ. Thus will come to pass the prediction of Bishop Ignatius Brianchininov quoted by Archbishop Averky:

One can suppose, too, that the *institution* of the Church which has been tottering for so long will fall *terribly and suddenly*. Indeed, no one is able to stop or prevent it. The present means to sustain the institutional Church are borrowed from the elements of this world, things *inimical* to the Church, and the consequence will be only to accelerate its fall... May the merciful Lord defend the remnant who believe in Him. But this remnant is meager, and it becomes more and more so.⁵¹



"More than anything on earth we value our Church's freedom."
—Archbishop Averky

THE END

So that we may remain true to Christ, Archbishop Averky warned us not to trust that which may seem "reasonable" or which accords with the "opinions" of our fallen minds. Instead, we are to follow our consciences and our Lord's commandments, and thereby expect to be hated by those—whether in the secular or ecclesiastical spheres—who are guided by the spirit of this world. He wrote:

In our time, truth is formally and solemnly declared falsehood and falsehood truth. And every person, whether he wishes to or not, must believe this, against all reason and rationale. Or else—alas! The one who follows the voice of his own conscience and of the teachings of the Lord, may end up paying dearly. And this is true in all aspects of modern life—at times even in the areas of religion and church...

Brothers! Let us not, even in the smallest degree, fall into the spirit of this world; we know so well, from the Word of God, that this world is governed by the king of darkness, who abides in cruelty—our fierce enemy, evil doer, liar and murderer from the beginning (St. John 8:44)—the devil. Let us not fear mockery and division, oppression and persecution by his faithful servants...⁵²

With spiritual eyes, Archbishop Averky could see around him the undermining by Satan of the smallest pious intentions on the part of Orthodox Christians. Those whose hearts yearn for love are not given it by Christians who should be known for their love (cf. John 13:35) —and thus their hearts dry up and they become as bitter as those around them. As this Christian love "evaporates,"⁵³ it becomes replaced by substitutes which strive to unify the Church only outwardly—officialness, prescribed modes of behavior, role-playing, man-pleasing, political concordats—substitutes which merely unify a false Church, a vacuum waiting to be filled by Antichrist. In this process, there occurs what Archbishop Averky called a "winnowing": a separation of the wise and prudent of this world (Luke 10:21) from those who pay no attention to the world's "opinions" and simply want to be with Christ in His Kingdom. This winnowing of the false and the genuine, stated Archbishop Averky, creates a burden for God-loving pastors, since fundamental distinctions are being blurred through the deceptions of Satan:

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The Christian life now becomes more difficult than ever before, for the snares to man's salvation have been greatly multiplied and highly refined. The labor of being a pastor becomes many times harder and more responsible... Before our very eyes the prophetic words of Bishop Theophan the Recluse about the last times are beginning to be fulfilled: "At that time, though the name of the Christian will be heard everywhere and churches and church services will be seen everywhere, all of this will be only an appearance, while inside there will be true apostasy." Besides the always primary and essential example of a personally high spiritual and moral life, for the modern pastor there flows from this the extremely responsible and important task of teaching the faithful to recognize the true Church amidst the multitude of false churches and by his words, filled with spiritual power and wisdom, keeping them in its bosom, while attracting those in error.⁵⁴

Archbishop Averky felt the burden of this responsibility perhaps more than any other of the great Orthodox pastors of our times. Like his beloved St. John of Kronstadt in the generation before his, he found that the most difficult thing to reconcile with his pastoral goals was the unmistakable *triumph of evil* in the world.

"Suffering Orthodoxy"—a phrase of St. Gregory the Theologian—was often on the lips of Archbishop Averky. This refers to two things: the sufferings that Orthodox Christians endure in this "vale of tears" on their way to their heavenly homeland, and also the persecution that the eternal Truth endures in this fallen world, whose prince is the devil.

Archbishop Averky knew what "suffering Orthodoxy" was from experience. Not long before his repose, ailing in body and suffering along with the Church Militant, he was asked about his condition by one of his friends. "How can I feel," he replied, "when the glory of Orthodoxy is diminishing, evil is triumphing, Christians are becoming so hateful and spiteful, and Orthodox Christians are no better—perhaps worse because they have been given more. *And who will stand up in these terrible last times for poor SUFFERING ORTHODOXY?*"

In his last book, Archbishop Averky mentioned how his pastoral concern for the "spiritual devastation" of his times contributed to his prolonged and final illness:

As a result of all the emotional stress I endured over all that is taking place nowadays, I was beset (at least, that is what

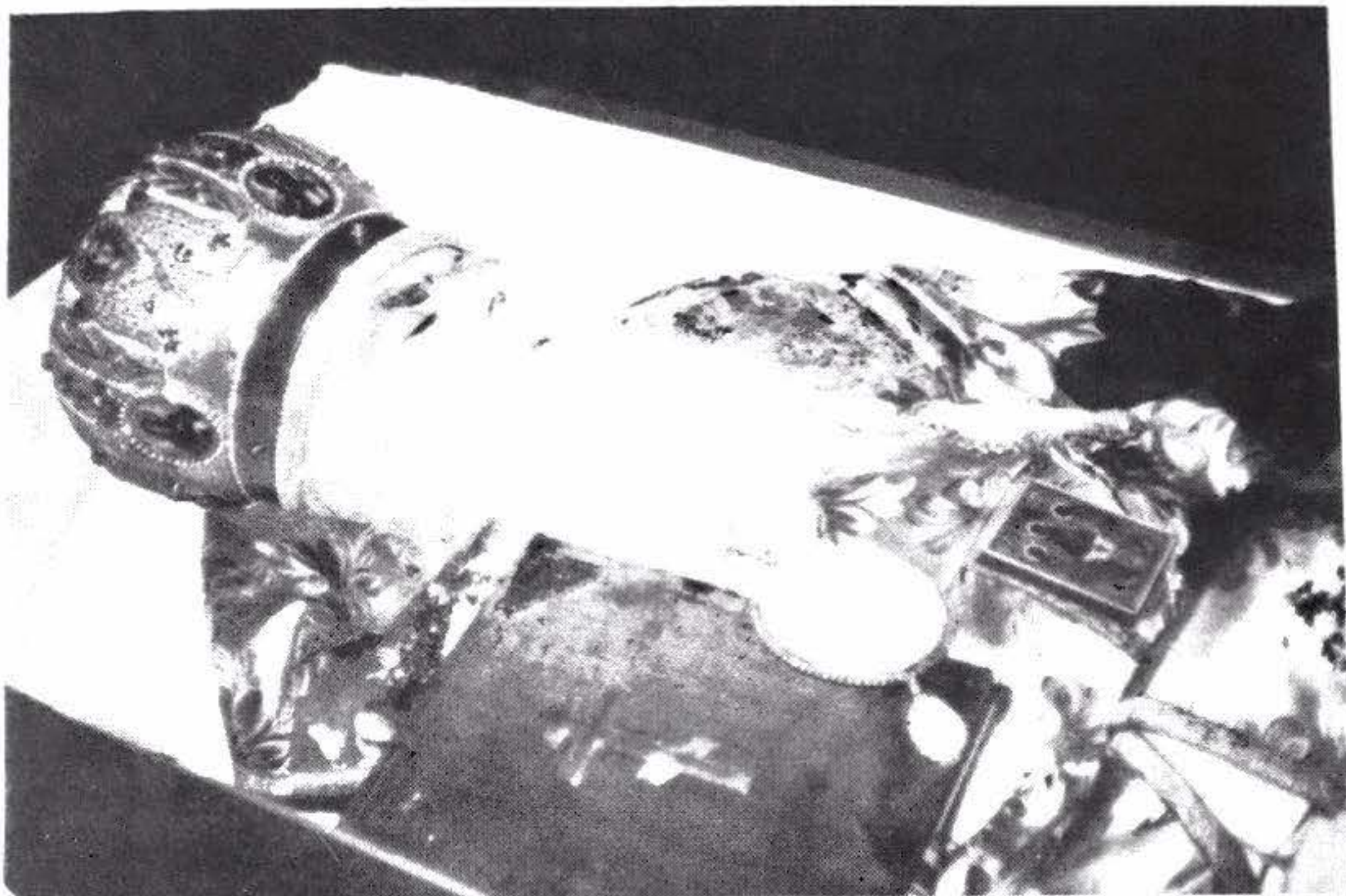
the doctors say) by several serious illnesses which almost took me away from this temporary earthly life, because I could not come to terms with everything happening around me and approach it indifferently.⁵⁵

Freed of his terrible pastoral burden at last, Archbishop Averky reposed in 1976. From an earthly point of view he died in defeat. The war of Satan with all forms of righteousness goes on, and will end in a reign of evil. But in heaven, Archbishop Averky was a victor. He had lived a godly life, preparing himself to be among the saints. His words, written only a year before his death, inspire us to follow him:

Let devoutness and piety be the only torches which we hold in our arms, as did the elder Simeon—then in a more mysterious way, in the depth of our hearts and souls. Then we will from our hearts be able to proclaim, upon departing this life, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!..."⁵⁶

Despair—the belief in the absence of Truth and love—was not in Archbishop Averky's heart when he reposed. He had lived in the presence of this Truth and love, and he knew that it would someday defeat the Antichrist after he had reigned for a short time (Apoc. 12:12 and 17:10).

In the end times, the true apostles of Christ will die or be killed off, as happened in the early years of Christianity: the sunset resembles the sunrise. And yet the flaming words of Archbishop Averky, one of the last true apostles, can still protect us from the subtle deceptions which are already upon us. He stood directly in the face of the onrush of world apostasy, and did not move. He uncovered the most cleverly hidden snares of the evil one, showing them to all who have eyes to see. His message was not to lose eternal hope, but rather not to pin this hope to external things which can be counterfeited. With courage and fortitude, he fulfilled his duty *not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God* (Col. 3:22). Thus, before departing to the Lord, he wrote these undoubting words: "I will be judged, as we all will be, by the impartial God. But I can say one thing: I did everything honestly, according to my conscience, and without regard for personalities."⁵⁷



Archbishop Averky in blessed repose.

On the last day of his final illness, he would doze off and be heard to say, "Lazarus is sick." Evidently this was a kind of mystical identification with Christ's friend in the Gospels, since Archbishop Averky reposed on the very day when the Church commemorates the death of Lazarus. He was buried three days later, on the eve of Lazarus Saturday—the day of Lazarus' resurrection from the the grave.

HEAVENLY TRIUMPH

On April 1/14, 1976, Fr. Seraphim Rose wrote in his *Chronicle*, "Today we were informed of the death of our spiritual and theological guide, Archbishop Averky, leaving us now truly orphans..."

It was not many many months after this, on October 22/November 4, that Fr. Seraphim came to church for the morning services and told one of his brothers of a wonderful dream he had had the night before. He had seen his beloved Archbishop Averky standing on some green grassy steps which led upwards. There were huge crowds of people as if at an outdoor gathering, and Fr. Seraphim was with them. Archbishop Averky looked radiant. He was vested all in dazzling white as was everyone, including a nearby deacon and Fr. Seraphim himself, who stood a little lower but right in front of Archbishop Averky. Some kind of sol-

emn celebration was taking place. The deacon was supposed to announce the *prokeimenon*, but suddenly the words would not come out of his mouth and he hesitated in trying to remember them. Fr. Seraphim knew them, however, and looked up at Archbishop Averky—meaning to say that he had the right words. Then the archbishop hinted to him that he should say the *prokeimenon* aloud for the deacon.

"Let God arise," Fr. Seraphim loudly intoned, "and let His enemies be scattered! Let Russia arise! Alleluia!"⁵⁸ As soon as he said this, it was caught up by the huge chorus all over; it thundered, rolling like billows far and wide. At this moment Archbishop Averky smiled in deep gratification. He began slowly to ascend while swinging a smoking censer. And as the magnificent thousand-voiced choruses continued, Fr. Seraphim knew that this grand, solemn, unheard-of occasion was the celebration of the Resurrection of Russia. Then he woke up.

Fr. Seraphim's understated tone in relating the dream convinced his brother that it had been a genuine visitation from Archbishop Averky. In concluding his account, he asked, "I wonder what it meant?"

"Don't you know what day it is today?" his brother said. "It's the commemoration day of St. Averky, Equal-to-the-Apostles: the first nameday of Archbishop Averky in heaven! Also, the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus (whose lives prefigure the General Resurrection) and the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God—which saved Russia in the past—are celebrated on this day. Your dream is not a simple one; it must have significance."

Thus was Fr. Seraphim vouchsafed to share in the heavenly triumph that Archbishop Averky was already experiencing.

CONCLUSION

The story of Archbishop Averky's hard-fought battle against falseness of all kinds and his final triumph tell us an important thing: we must look for the apostasy not only somewhere outside our own sphere of activity—in the secular world, the proliferation of pagan religions, the *other* Christian confessions, the *other* Orthodox "jurisdictions," the "converts," the "ethnics," etc.. The spirit of apostasy—the spirit of *imitation* of what is Christ's—is everywhere, attacking all churches and thus all who would remain true to Christ.

We are convicted and called to repentance and struggle by Archbishop Averky's unforgettable question, asked of one who

had done everything outwardly possible to be in the true Church of Christ, the Orthodox Church:

But what will determine whether or not you are in that Church?"

What but a feeling for *genuineness* and a stand against the most refined falsehoods, will enable us to be in that "close-knit spiritual union of *all* who truly believe in Christ," that Church against which *the gates of hell shall not prevail* (Matt. 16:18) and in which Archbishop Averky even now serves the Divine Liturgy upon God's altar?

Dedicated to the Evangelical Orthodox
Christian Movement, which is
about to officially enter the Orthodox Church

NOTES

1. Archbishop Averky, *Stand Fast in the Truth*, compiled by Fr. Demetrios Serfes (Pillars of Orthodoxy Parish House, Mt. Holly Springs, PA), p. 5.
2. "What is Orthodoxy," by Archbishop Averky, *Orthodox Life* (Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N.Y.) May-June, 1976, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.* p. 3.
5. *Ibid.* p. 2.
6. *Judge not according to appearances, but judge righteous judgement* (John 7:24).
7. See "Raising the Mind, Warming the Heart," by Fr. Seraphim Rose, in *The Orthodox Word*, No. 126, p. 30.
8. "Antichrist and the Present Times," by I. M. Kontzevitch, *Orthodox Life*, Jan.-Feb., 1976, pp. 8-9.
9. "Concerning the Coming of the Lord..." by St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Orthodox Life*, May-June, 1970, pp. 23-4.
10. *Ibid.* pp. 26-7.
11. See *True Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World*, by Archbishop Averky, in Russian (Holy Trinity Monastery, 1971), pp. 18-21.
12. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 8.
13. Bishop Ignatius Brianchiniov explains that the "world" of which Christ speaks is made up of the majority of people "who live for time and not for eternity." See his book *The Arena* (Holy Trinity Monastery, 1982), pp. 166-77.

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14. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, pp. 8-9.
15. "A Reminder to Us That True Christianity Is a Struggle," by Archbishop Averky, *Orthodox Life*, March-April, 1981, p. 24.
16. *The Life and Works of Archbishop Averky* (Pillars of Orthodoxy Parish House, Mt. Holly Springs, PA), p. 32.
17. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 11.
18. Archbishop Averky, *The Just Shine Like the Stars* (West Coast Orthodox Supply, Etna, CA, 1983), p. 16.
19. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 10.
20. His full quote is: "Know that we must serve, not the times, but God." (From the letter of St. Athanasius to Dracontius.)
21. "True Orthodoxy," by Archbishop Averky, *Orthodox Christian Witness* (Seattle, WA), Jan. 10/23, 1983, pp. 2-3.
22. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 2.
23. Eg., liturgical and calendar reforms, changes in fasting guidelines, infrequent Confession, pews and organs in church, beardless clergy, the tonsuring and ruling of monastics by married priests, etc.. Regarding such innovations, Fr. Seraphim Rose once stated: "The followers of unenlightened custom are themselves innocent; they merely accept what has been 'handed down' to them. But not seeing the meaning and not knowing the sources of what has been handed down, they are easily led into error, accepting customs which the Church has allowed only out of her condescension or economy as if they were the best of Orthodoxy, and also improper customs of recent heterodox origin and inspiration, together with the pure and meaningful Orthodox customs handed down from the Holy Fathers." See *Paisius Velichkovsky* (St. Herman Brotherhood, 1976), p. 14.
24. "Should the Church Be 'In Step With the Times?'" by Archbishop Averky, *The Orthodox Word*, Nos. 16-17, pp. 184 and 186.
25. *The Life and Works of Archbishop Averky*, p. 25.
26. "True Orthodoxy," p. 5.
27. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 7.
28. "True Orthodoxy," p. 3.
29. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 7.
30. "Holy Zeal," by Archbishop Averky, *The Orthodox Word*, No. 62, pp. 130-1.
31. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, pp. 51-2.
32. "Holy Zeal," p. 131.
33. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, p. 35.
34. *Ibid.* pp. 50-1.
35. *Ibid.* p. 54.
36. For a discussion of contemporary false spiritual guides who demand total submission to their wills without first having conquered their passions, see *The Arena*, pp. 43-47.
37. "Holy Zeal," p. 130.

ONE MAN IN THE FACE OF APOSTASY

38. "What is Orthodoxy?" p. 1.
39. See Paisius Velichkovsky, p. 288.
40. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, pp. 50-1.
41. *Ibid.* pp. 16-7.
42. The New Russian Martyr Metropolitan Cyril of Kazan wrote in 1929: "Church discipline is capable of preserving its efficacy only as long as it is an actual reflection of the hierarchical conscience of the Catholic Church; and discipline itself can never replace this conscience... The Catholic-hierarchical principle of the Church's existence is not at all the same thing as outward unity at any cost." In *Russia's Catacomb Saints* (St. Herman Brotherhood, 1982), pp. 246-7.
43. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, p. 51.
44. "What is Orthodoxy?" pp. 3-4.
45. *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 2.
46. "Holy Zeal," p. 98.
47. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, p. 18.
48. In his infamous declaration of 1927, where he stated that the Soviet Union's "joy's and successes are our joys and successes." See *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, p. 45.
49. *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, p. 257.
50. *Ibid.* p. 222.
51. "True Orthodoxy," p. 4; and *Stand Fast in the Truth*, p. 5.
52. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, pp. 54-5.
53. This was the word used by the great 20th-century ascetic and confessor, Archimandrite Gerasim of Spruce Island, who said: "Christian love is evaporating from the face of the earth."
54. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, p. 25.
55. *The Life of Archbishop Averky*, by Priestmonk Ignatius, *Orthodox Life*, May-June, 1976, p. 30.
56. *The Just Shine Like the Stars*, p. 55.
57. *The Life of Archbishop Averky*, p. 25.
58. From the service of Holy Pascha, the Resurrection of the Lord. The words "let Russia arise!" were added for the heavenly celebration of Russia's Resurrection.

Anything outward can
become a counterfeit.

—Fr. Seraphim Rose

***EACH ONE OF US
IS POTENTIALLY
A JUDAS***

A sermon given by Fr. Seraphim Rose
during Great Lent, 1982

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as he sat at meat. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, 'To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.' When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, 'Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall be also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.' Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, 'What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you.' And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

St. Matthew 26:6-16

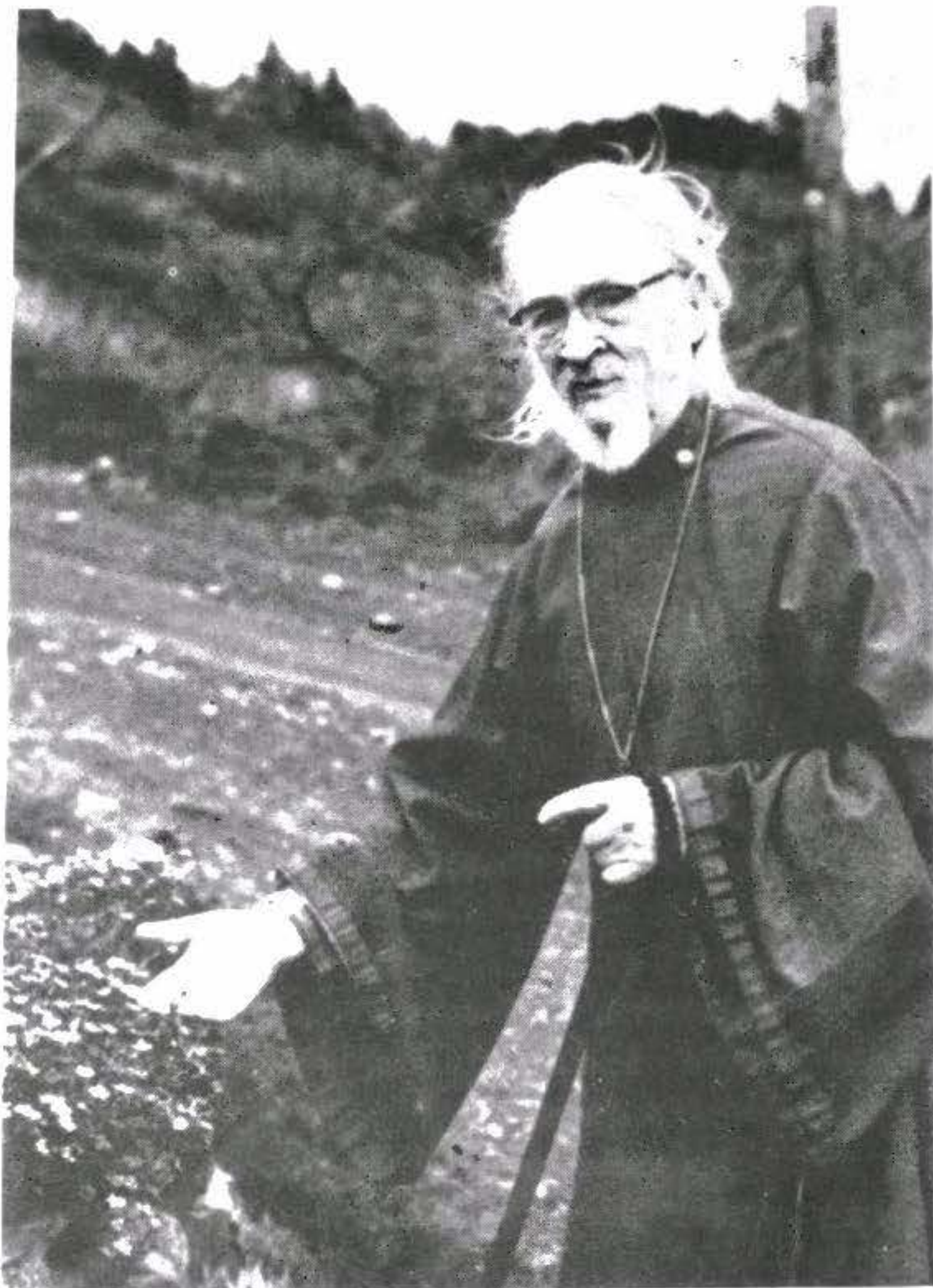
In this passage of Scripture, we read how, as our Lord prepared for His Passion, a woman came and annointed Him with very precious ointment; and it is very touching how our Lord accepted such love from simple people. But at the same time Judas - one of the twelve who were with Him - looked at this act, and something in his heart changed. This was apparently the

EACH ONE OF US IS POTENTIALLY A JUDAS

"last straw," because Judas was the one in charge of the money and he thought that this was a waste of money. We can even see the logical processes going on in his mind. We can hear him think about Christ: "I thought this man was somebody important. He wastes money, he doesn't do things right, he thinks he's so important..." and all kinds of similar little ideas which the devil puts in his mind. And with his passion (his main passion was love of money), he was caught by the devil and made to betray Christ. He did not want to betray Him; he simply wanted money. He did not watch over himself and crucify his passions.

Anyone of us can be exactly in that position. We have to look at our hearts and see which passion of ours will the devil hook us on in order to cause us to betray Christ. If we think that we are something superior to Judas - that he was some kind of a "kook" and we are not - we are quite mistaken. Like Judas, everyone of us has passions in his heart. Let us therefore look at them. We can be caught with love for neatness, with love for correctness, with love for a sense of beauty: any of our little faults which we *cling* to can be a thing that the devil can catch us with. Being caught, we can begin to justify this condition "logically" -- on the basis of our passion. And from that "logical" process of thinking we can betray Christ, unless we watch over ourselves and begin to realize that we are filled with passions, that *each one of us is potentially a Judas*. Therefore, when the opportunity comes - when the passion begins to operate in us and logically begins to develop from a passion into betrayal -- we should stop right there and say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!"

We must not look at life through the glasses of our passions, nor see how we can "fit" life into being what we would like it to be -- whether this is a life where there is peace and quiet or where there is a lot of noise and excitement. If we try to make life "fit" like this, a total disaster will result. In looking at life, we should accept all the things which come to us as God's providence, knowing that they are intended to wake us up from our passions. We should pray to God to show us some God-pleasing thing that we can do. When we accept what comes to us, we begin to be like the simple woman in the Gospel who heard the call from God and was thus able to be His minister. She was proclaimed to the ends of the world, as our Lord says, because of the simple thing she did -- pouring out the ointment upon Him. Let us be like her: sensitive to watching God's signs around us. These signs come from everywhere: from nature, from our fellow



*Archimandrite Gerasim of New Valaam (1888-1969),
successor of St. Herman on Spruce Island*

men, from a seeming chance of events... There is always, everyday, something that indicates to us God's will. We must be open to this.

Once we become more aware of the passions within ourselves and begin to fight against them, we will not let them begin the process which was seen in Judas. Judas started from a very small thing: *being concerned for the right use of money*. And from such small things we betray God the Saviour. We must be sober, seeing *not* the fulfillment of our passions around us, but rather the indication of God's will: how we might this very moment wake up and begin to follow Christ to His Passion and save our souls.

The Soul After Death:

Is There Life Beyond the Grave?

by Archimandrite Gerasim

Editor's Note: The following article is of value for many reasons. It expresses in every line the simple, straightforward and guileless Orthodox piety that is so needed today, instilling in the God-fearing reader a desire to prepare himself for the future life. Further, it provides insights into the life of a 20th-century ascetic and confessor, Archimandrite Gerasim (who was featured in *The Orthodox Word* #120.) Because Fr. Gerasim was such a dedicated man of prayer, he had mystical contact with several of his close ones who lived far away. They made themselves known to him after they had departed this life, and in many cases this could only have been because they were made to realize the efficacy of his holy supplications before God.



*I*s there life beyond the grave? This question has interested and still interests all nations in all times.

Many, very many contemporary "wise" men deny the immortality of the soul, eternal life beyond the grave.

But I would like to share with the reader of spiritual journals how my friends used to inform me about their passing into the other world. I will write the full truth, with no trace of imagination or any form of lies.

1) I don't remember now the exact year, but it was in 1907-1908, when I was a novice at the St. Tikhon of Kaluga Monastery [in Russia]. One beautiful summer we novices worked together to gather hay about seven miles from the monastery, and

we all slept on the fragrant hay in a huge barn that had been specially built to store the hay. One morning at about 3 o'clock I saw in my dream an old acquaintance of mine, an old lady, who cheerfully greeted me at the porch of our house and said to me, "I don't live here anymore; I live now by myself." But I must say that she lived in Moscow all her life, except that every year she would come to spend the summer with my aunt for about two months. She also came that particular summer, became sick and died in the house of my aunt, with whom she had been a friend for more than forty years.

I woke up feeling a certain sadness, and this sadness would not leave me that whole day. By late evening a monk from the monastery, Fr. Jerome, came and brought mail for all of us monks. I also received a letter and, opening it, I read: "At 3 a.m. Alexandra Alexandrovna died. Pray for her. She used to love you and in dying she remembered you." My dream had turned out to be prophetic, precisely because at that very hour slave of God Alexandra had passed away.

2) In 1911 I went to Mount Athos and decided to remain there forever, entering the novitiate in the Brotherhood of St. Andrew's Russian Skete. Once I saw in my dream Monk Christopher from my St. Tikhon's Monastery, who had died on the 11th of January, 1911. I saw him walking on a green meadow. The sun was brightly shining all over. Having caught up with me, Fr. Christopher said to me, "Greetings, Father!" And then he added, "You should leave this place, and as soon as possible." I asked him, "Where do you live now, Fr. Christopher?" "Same place -- there in St. Tikhon's Monastery," he answered. Then we turned east, and I saw as if the whole of St. Tikhon's Monastery was placed on a green meadow bathed in sunlight. It was such a beauty: all was blindingly white; the crosses, as if pure gold, were brightly burning on the majestic cathedral and belfry. Then Fr. Christopher led me to the Transfiguration Catholicon, where the relics of St. Tikhon were treasured under the reliquary eaves. I was amazed at its beauty and the luxury of its decoration. Fr. Christopher was a great ascetic. His main virtues were that he never judged anyone and never visited anyone, knowing only the temple of God and his humble cell. I woke up and began to think of what I had seen in my dream.

I had known Fr. Christopher very well; he used to love me. Involuntarily I began to wonder about the dream I had seen and decided to leave not only Mount Athos but even the Athonite

Metochion in Odessa, to which I had been appointed to do my obedience. My monk-friends called me to go to Tula, to the Protection of the Mother of God city monastery, where there was a dire need for working monks. In 1912, right on the Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God, I arrived in Tula and began to live a quiet life working in the temple. And what transpired meanwhile on Mount Athos? A frightful storm broke out there, evoked by some fanatic monks who, not having a thorough understanding of Holy Scripture, became the "Name-worshippers." And of course, if I had been living on Mount Athos, God knows what would have happened to me at that time. But my wonderful elder, Fr. Christopher, had sternly ordered me to leave that place, and had even hastened me to do it. How amazing! -- he was dead at that time, his body lay in damp earth. Who at that time could have warned me to avoid such misfortune? Unquestionably, of course the immortal soul of Fr. Christopher.

3) Once while in Alaska (I don't remember the year) at the end of September, I saw in a dream how I drove up to my home and, approaching the garden gate, saw my Uncle Valentin (my father's brother). I was very happy to see him; but then I saw that he passed by, pointing with his hand in the direction of the city cemetery and saying to me, "I do not live here anymore. I am going there." I woke up and at once thought: Uncle Valentin probably died. Then I wrote a letter to Russia to his sister Olga and my aunt, describing my dream in detail, the day and the month. And what do you think? My aunt wrote to me in this way: "Your dream did not lie to you: Uncle Valentin died precisely on September 30th in the morning." And again the immortal soul of my uncle informed me, who lived in far away Alaska, about its passing into the other world.

4) In my childhood and the years of my youth I had a friendly acquaintance with a family that consisted of seven daughters and a son. The family, although poor, was honest and work-loving. The head of the family, Gregory A. Novikov, and his devoted wife worked hard in order to provide an education for their children. One member of this family, Liza Novikova, was my childhood friend. But when we grew up our paths parted: I went to a monastery and she, having finished theological school in the town of Kashir in the Tula Province, became a school teacher in a village. Once in a while we would correspond; she was a kind, cheerful girl. Then the terrible time of trouble

came to Russia: the red beast came. I lost all my friends because I lived a long distance from my homeland. But once I received a letter from Russia and, opening it up, I saw that it was from Liza Novikova, who was informing me of the death of her mother. Of course, I at once understood that Liza was no longer that believing girl I had known, that she had already infected her soul with unbelief in God. She wrote to me that, although the funeral had been conducted in church, she had not visited a temple in a long, long time and that "science is conquering all." Then she wrote to me a long letter, not hiding anything from me.

But still the last words of a communist girl touched me to the depth of my soul. She wrote to me: "Dear Misha (that was my worldly name), I've known you for a long time. I know that you are a religious man, that you believe in God and the immortality of the soul. And I ask you, Misha: pray for my mother -- after all, she loved you and used to scold us that we seldom write to you..." The letter was stained with tears. Then suddenly last year, 1936, during Great Lent, Liza Novikova came to my mind and for three days or so would not leave it. I wrote thus in a letter to Russia: "For such a long time now I haven't received a letter from Liza Novikova. Where does she live? Please inform me." And what would you think? I received a letter, and they wrote to me: "Apparently your soul felt something: Liza Novikova, having been sick for a week, died during Great Lent."

Here again she let me know with her soul that something had happened to her.

5) Once I wrote a letter to Russia to one of my friends, an old lady who was very pious and God-loving. Here is what she wrote to me in her reply to my letter:

Dear Fr. Gerasim! I am very glad that you remembered me by writing to me a letter. But I must tell you that I was expecting your letter, because Dounia came to me (that was her niece, the daughter of her sister) and said, "Auntie Luba! I saw my mother (who was dead) in my dream and she told me: 'Tell Luba that Fr. Gerasim has sent her a letter from America.'"

What actually is this? Does not this diary of events speak for the fact that our souls are immortal, that they are alive, that they abide in another world, in the Abodes of our Heavenly Father?

IS THERE LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE?

Here are two more cases of when I was informed by the dead of their unfortunate demise:

In 1908 I was working in the monastery infirmary. One July morning, about 2 a.m., I saw in my dream one of my acquaintances, who misused alcoholic beverages. I saw some dark place, where a crowd of black people were dragging my friend. His face was also black -- only his white teeth were chattering as from a frightful cold. That black crowd, it seemed, was rejoicing and dancing. It quickly dragged the unfortunate one somewhere. I awoke out of fear: it was exactly 2 a.m., the bell was tolling for nocturnes. I crossed myself and wondered if the poor man had died from drunkenness. But in August of the same year, the wife of his brother visited me and, giving all the news, asked me, "Did you hear that Andrey Ivanovich died?" "Yes," I answered, "they wrote to me about it." Then she looked at me with a piercing eye and, seeing my calm face, asked me again, "But did you hear how he died?" "No," I replied, "they did not write to me how." "The poor man committed suicide: he hung himself," she said. And then I told her my dream. When I told her when I had seen him, that it had been 2 o'clock in the morning, then she almost screamed: "Hold it, hold it, Misha! That's exactly when it occurred that night -- early in the morning."

That autumn I visited his wife in the town of Alexin, and she told me everything in detail about his unfortunate death. It was absolutely true that he killed himself early in the morning in the month of July.

And here is a second case:

In St. Tikhon's Monastery I had a good friend, Monk Innocent. He was a humble man, kind, but he drank a lot. And although he was well educated, he was not ordained to a priestly rank because of his weakness for alcohol. In 1912, while living on Mount Athos, I saw in a dream that a crowd of black monsters were dragging Fr. Innocent all bound in chains and were beating him hard with sticks. From his face I could see that he suffered a lot. He tried to tell me something, but that black crowd did not give him a chance and quickly dragged him away.

When I returned to Russia in the fall of 1912, Monk Trifon visited me in Tula and we began to recollect our old friends. And when I told him about the dream I had seen on Mount Athos about Fr. Innocent, he told me, crying out: "Dear Misha, you must pray for him. That poor man died without repentance -- he had a stroke."

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And again, does this not speak for the fact that there is eternal life and that, according to the Word of God, for some it is joyful in our Heavenly Father's Mansions, and for others - for all unrepentant sinners - it is eternal suffering, since even the ancient prophet has said that *frightful is the death of the sinner*.

Having worked three years in the monastery infirmary and having spent twenty years in a parish in Alaska, I saw how both believing and unbelieving people die. And I tell you the truth: blessed indeed, thrice blessed, is the death of a believer!

I remember how in St. Tikhon's Monastery Fr. Jerome was dying. On his very last day all he said was that at 4 o'clock he would pass away. At 4 p.m. they struck the monastery bell for vespers, and the soul of Fr. Jerome quietly, accompanied by the pealing of the bell, flew away into eternity.

I also remember the death of Hieroshemamonk Joseph who, sitting in an armchair, listened to the reading of the canon for the departure of the soul from the body. After the canon was completed, he quietly fell asleep in the sleep of the righteous forever. I remember the death of a young monk, Fr. Seraphim, who was dying even cheerfully while singing the Paschal canon.

And here is an exemplary death of an old lady in the village of Afognak in Alaska, Juliana Derenova. She lived until ripe old age and very much loved to go to the temple of God. When she felt her death approaching, she called me, had Confession, partook of Holy Communion and then with a trembling hand handed me a dollar. "Send this to the Lord's Sepulchre," she said, and then quietly, peacefully breathed her last. There were many such examples in this land, which is severe in its nature.

This truthful writing I will end with the words of a prayer to the Protectress of this cold world of ours:

Most Holy Mother of God, save us! Be the Preserver of our lives, O Most Holy One! Deliver us from the demons at the hour of our death, and after death be Thou our peace. Amen.

Archimandrite Gerasim Schmaltz
New Valaam, Spruce Island, Alaska
January, 1938

Translated from the Russian periodical "Kleb Nebesnii"
("Heavenly Bread"); Harbin, China; no. 11, pp. 14-17.

Heavenly Visitations of Archbishop Averky

1. Prevention of a Car Accident

I'm sending you a description of how Holy Hierarch Averky saved our lives.

My daughter Alla and I set out to go on a visit to our friends. On our way to Long Island, New York, my daughter speeded up to 100 miles per hour since there was no traffic. I did not notice it, and we quietly talked. About halfway there we noticed the smell of burning rubber, but paid no attention and kept going. The smell increased but my daughter did not slow down. Suddenly she stopped the car and got out. I remained sitting in the front seat, crossed myself and suddenly lifted my eyes. In front of the hood of the car I clearly saw Archbishop Averky standing in a gray cassock. He looked so unearthly, as if transparent, with a pleasant smile, as I had never seen him during his life: such heavenly beauty is impossible to describe, it is only possible to depict in an icon. I never encountered anything like it in my whole life. In this unexpected joy I even forgot that Vladika had left us already (had died). I raised my hands to get his blessing, when my daughter opened the door on my side and yelled, "Quickly, quickly, get out!" Seeing my exalted happiness, she cried, "What's the matter with you?" I exclaimed, "Vladika Averky is standing here — go to get his blessing." "Where, where?" she asked, looking at the spot to which I pointed; but Holy Averky had disappeared and was no longer there.



When we came to the place where a lot of smelly smoke was coming from, we were shocked to see that the whole wheel had come out of its place and was standing separately next to the car! We were petrified. Only when we took hold of ourselves and began to pray, did we understand that we had been saved from unavoidable death by Archbishop Averky, whom I had just seen.

Then a mechanic arrived and, when he saw what condition our car was in, he loudly exclaimed that it was impossible to drive at such speed: "Unquestionably there occurred a miracle, for otherwise nothing would have remained of you." These were his precise words.

In our hearts there is no doubt that Holy Averky saved our lives... During his lifetime I considered him a saint, and now we pray to him, crying with gratitude: *Holy Averky, pray to God for us!*

Zinaida Nepomniatschy
October 12, 1977

2. Help in Employment

Archbishop Averky knew me from infancy and was always concerned with everything that went on with me. Only a year before his death I was employed in a very good position in a very good firm, but I had the misfortune of having a very disappointing supervisor: he was terribly nervous, irritable, was constantly yelling and simply impossible. Before I came, many people had my position but would not last, so I ended up in this terrible situation. Soon I began to think of changing my job, but Archbishop Averky kept insisting, imploring me not to quit this job, saying that the supervisor was simply nervous, and so on. But I would come from work every evening worn out and such a nervous wreck that I would simply collapse. And every morning

HEAVENLY VISITATIONS OF ARCHBISHOP AVERKY

again I would drag myself with repulsion to my tormentor. The bishop nevertheless telephoned me two or three times a week, encouraged me and *implored me not to quit my job*.

The last time such a talk took place was on Sunday, and on Tuesday he died. Finally I came to a dead end. There was absolutely nothing with which I could please my boss — nothing worked any longer. About two weeks after Archbishop Averky's repose, one day after morning prayers I went up to his portrait that hangs near my icon-corner, and said to him, "Today is the last day of my torture. Let him make only one 'peep' — I'll hand over to him the keys and simply walk out! After thinking a little, I yet added, "Now you can't telephone me anymore, you can't implore me any longer either — you can't do anything any longer, anyway." Feeling good about it, I slammed the door and left. At work I sat and waited for the boss to make a move, keys in hand — all ready. At about 10 o'clock my boss came in, came up to me and asked me to come to his office. He closed the door behind me and bid me to sit down. With glee I thought to myself: "Oh, boy — I'm getting fired — hooray!" He lowered his eyes and began to apologize to me for everything, for his irritability, begging forgiveness, claiming that he was under severe pressure. Then he thanked me for my patience and for my excellent "performance" at work. He informed me that he had written an outstanding recommendation to our supervisors, and said, "Tanya, I gave you an outstanding rating." As a bonus he presented to me a \$108 monthly raise. I was dumbfounded and lost the gift of speech. Somehow I managed to wobble to my desk. Then my supervisor left for somewhere. In an hour he came back and brought me a large bouquet of roses. I at once remembered Archbishop Averky. You know how he loved rose oil, with which he loved to anoint icons, the Holy Shroud before Pascha, especially the Cross and even at times his beard. I consider that a miracle, although of a personal nature.

Three months later my boss was transferred to another state and I received a high promotion. In our place, people wait for years for such a promotion. I am now the main assistant to the head manager of our firm, and every day I thank God and my Vladika. Today my present boss is calm, believing, thankful for every trifle — in general, one can't imagine anything better. Besides, this last promotion I received relatively recently, but before that there were of course gradual promotions in the course of a year. And again I must add that, at the time I was appointed to the present post, I also received roses from my

co-workers.

After the death of Archbishop Averky, I often used to have panikhidas served. After one such service, as I was leaving the church to go home, the priest - Fr. Peter Mocharsky - stopped me and said, "Please wait a little. I want to give you a bouquet of flowers from my little garden." And with these words he cut for me a bouquet of beautiful roses.

Vladika would always especially rejoice when I would receive Holy Communion. And again during Great Lent of this year, after receiving Communion I went home and, as I was approaching my house, I suddenly saw at my feet an absolutely fresh rose bud.

Perhaps these incidents appear insignificant. This is not for me to judge. All I can say is that I feel through them the presence of my dear spiritual father, Archbishop Averky, who thus lets himself be known.

Tatiana Vikliancev
November 14, 1977

3. A Visitation to His Spiritual Daughter

I recently saw a very vivid dream. I saw Archbishop Averky on the eve of the Dormition. I saw myself standing near to where the candles are sold (that is, at the entrance) in the Old Calendarist church of Bishop Petros (in Astoria). Bishop Petros together with his clergy came out of the altar in bright, dazzling vestments. They moved towards the exit: this was a procession with the cross. When they all passed me, then at the end of the procession I saw Archbishop Averky, who was not in full vestments but only in a mantle, as it appeared to me. I was full of joy and with tears rushed to Vladika. Meanwhile, all the clergy went outside and began to sing a litia in front of the church. Archbishop Averky stopped and kindly looked at me. At first I didn't know what to say to him because I had an endless number of things which I wanted to talk to him about.

Not knowing with what to begin, I said, "Dear Vladika, what are you doing here? After all, we all know you to be dead!"

He smiled and said, "Look at me carefully, and conclude yourself: am I dead or alive?"

"Vladika! How wonderful! You are as alive as I am! That means you didn't die!"

HEAVENLY VISITATIONS OF ARCHBISHOP AVERKY

"Well, you see I'm not dead at all—I am alive! You ask me why I'm here? I'm always here! I live here!"

"Here? With them (the Greeks)?"

To this he responded affirmatively, and I asked again, "What are you doing here?"

"There is a lot to do here," he answered, "but mostly I teach the little children."

"Do they treat you well? Do they take good care of you?"

"Oh yes, very well. It is good for me to be here."

At this moment, the litia being finished, all the clergy passed by us and went to the altar, and Archbishop Averky remained standing with me. Then he pointed with his hand outside and said, "Tanya, look how the cross is brilliantly shining there where they were just praying."

His face at this moment was bright and glowing and joyful. I was trying to see this cross but could not see it. Nearby, next to Archbishop Averky on the candle table, I saw some small cross and I thought that he had spoken about that one. But Vladika said again, "Not that one—the one over there, outside. Look how brightly and beautifully shines this cross."

Then I said that I did not see it. He came to himself and said, "My child, there where they pray there always remains great grace. But now you go home. I don't want you to go home late. And here, as a blessing for your safety, I bless you with this little cross." Here he took from the shelf a little copper cross, just like the ones I think the Greeks give to the newly-baptized.

"Vladika," I said, "this is not your cross, it is theirs. How can you give it to me?"

Archbishop Averky smiled and said, "Not theirs, but ours."

Then I woke up and for a long time could not come to myself because of the vividness of the dream.

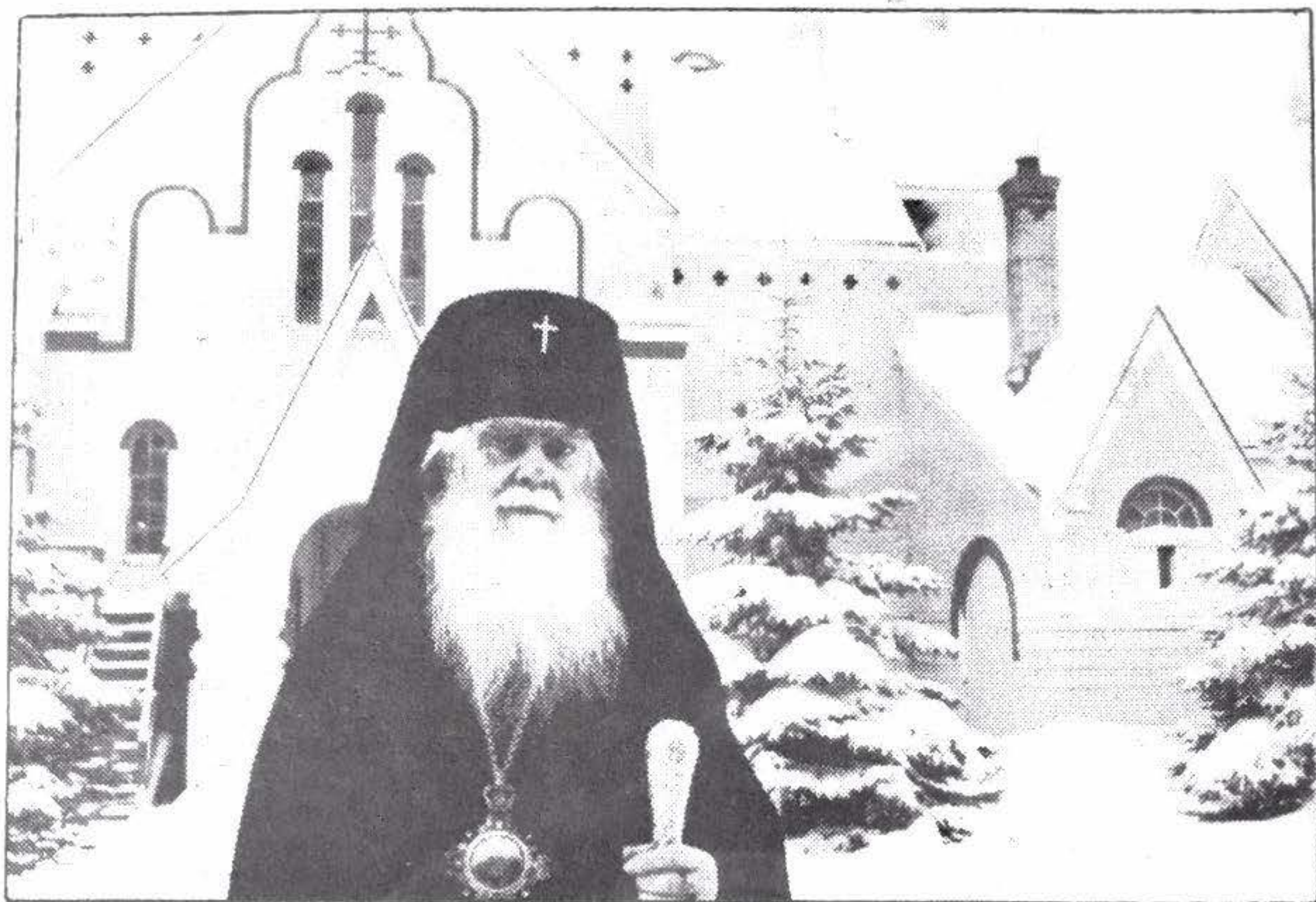
Several people saw him in their dreams and there are several cases of miraculous intercessions. But you should contact them personally.

With love in Christ,

Tatiana Vikliancev

November 14, 1977

(same source as above)



Archbishop Averky before the Holy Trinity Monastery Church.

4. Healing of a Rash

A woman in Birmingham, New York, had a rash on her hand and went to different doctors, but they could not help her. She came here and was praying at the grave of Archbishop Averky, resting her hand on the sarcophagus. When she arose to leave, the rash had disappeared. Several people talked to her and saw it.

Br. Macarius Shaeffer
 Sept. 28/Oct. 11, 1977
 St. Chariton the Confessor
 Holy Trinity Monastery
 Jordanville, New York

Chronicle of Blessed John:

From THE COLLECTED MIRACLES OF BLESSED JOHN

67

Healing of a Thumb, Eye and Back

I first heard of Blessed John at least a year and a half ago through somebody in my community (I don't remember who). At that time, it was a case of little more than curiosity. Living in San Francisco not far from his place of rest, I went there to pray and experienced a great warmth of soul. I don't know how else to describe it, but there was the tangible presence of a great Saint there, that was unmistakeable. But at that time I knew so little of Blessed John—his life, his writings, his place in the Church—and I had no references, no books, nobody to ask about him, so I prayed to him to help me to know him better. A couple of days later (this was probably October, 1985), I went to the bookstore of the Holy Virgin Cathedral to see again if I could find something about Blessed John, and I was milling around when I found myself drawn to a large photograph of Metropolitan Philaret in a bookrack. I picked it up to more closely examine it, and right behind it, completely hidden by it, was a xeroxed copy of *Blessed John* by Bishop Savva, held together by a paper clip! I was told that the book itself had been out of print for some time, so I don't know how I would have found anything like it otherwise. Incidentally, I was overjoyed when I heard that this book is going to be reissued soon. The English-speaking Orthodox world really needs to read about such a miracle-worker and lover of God and humanity.

The first healing which I received through Blessed John happened in December, 1985. Every year, our community puts on a Yule Mart to raise money for our children's school. Individuals with various skills come together to make handcrafted items

to sell. I was working on stringed musical instruments, using a drill press. This was the Saturday before the Yule Mart, and things were not nearly finished, so I was feeling rushed and my concentration was off. At one point the wood I was working on got jammed and twisted suddenly, pulling my left thumb into the bit of the drill press. It got caught in the blades, and the skin over the knuckle got shredded. After bandaging the finger, I found that the tip of it was numb and, of course, I was unable to bend it at all. People with medical experience told me it would take weeks to heal—yet there was still much to do in the next week. Then I remembered that one of my roommates had visited Blessed John and had gotten a bottle of oil from the lamp in the Sepulchre the day before my accident. So when I changed the dressing, I put a couple of drops of oil on my thumb and prayed that I would be healed at least enough to be able to continue my work. I did this for three days, and on the third day the feeling had returned and I could bend the thumb enough to go back to work. A few days later, it was almost completely healed, and those who saw it said that it had healed much faster than they ever would have expected.

The second healing took place a month or so later. One of my eyes was beginning to hurt one day, and upon looking in the mirror I discovered a sore on the bottom of the upper eyelid. I didn't know how it got there, but it was getting worse rapidly. By the middle of the day it was very painful to blink, and at that time I remembered Blessed John and I put a drop of his oil on the sore. Soon I became very sleepy and so I took a nap for an hour or two. When I awoke, the pain was completely gone; and when I looked in the mirror, I could see no trace of the sore, either. This pain has never recurred, and I never found out what it was.

The third healing took place just prior to Pascha, 1986. For the last five years I have been employed as a carpenter; and several times during those five years I have had severe muscle strains in my lower back. I tried chiropractors and acupuncturists and they sometimes helped, but the symptoms would always, eventually, return. Last Holy Week was one of those times. One of the things that aggravates the pain is standing for long periods of time. During Holy Week, of course, there is much prayer, most of it done while standing. By Holy Saturday, the pain was so bad that I was forced, first to kneel, and finally to sit on the floor of the the chapel with my knees pulled up to my chest. So here it was, the eve of the holiest day of the



*Blessed John at St. Tikhon's House,
San Francisco, in the 1950's*

Christian calendar, and I was sure I would be unable to stand for services and not even sure I would be able to attend at all. Therefore, before going to sleep that night, I prayed to Blessed John for help, took a drop of oil and made the sign of the cross on my forehead. The next morning, it was halfway through the services that I realized, with great amazement, that I had been standing all morning and had felt no pain! And I have had no trouble with my lower back since then, either.

And so it is with great thanksgiving to God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Theotokos, and the tireless servant of God and man Blessed John Maximovitch that I add my testimony to those of countless others who have experienced the miraculous intervention of a true Saint of these times. May his Glorification by the Church come quickly!

Zachariah Liebmann
November 6, 1986
San Francisco, California



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