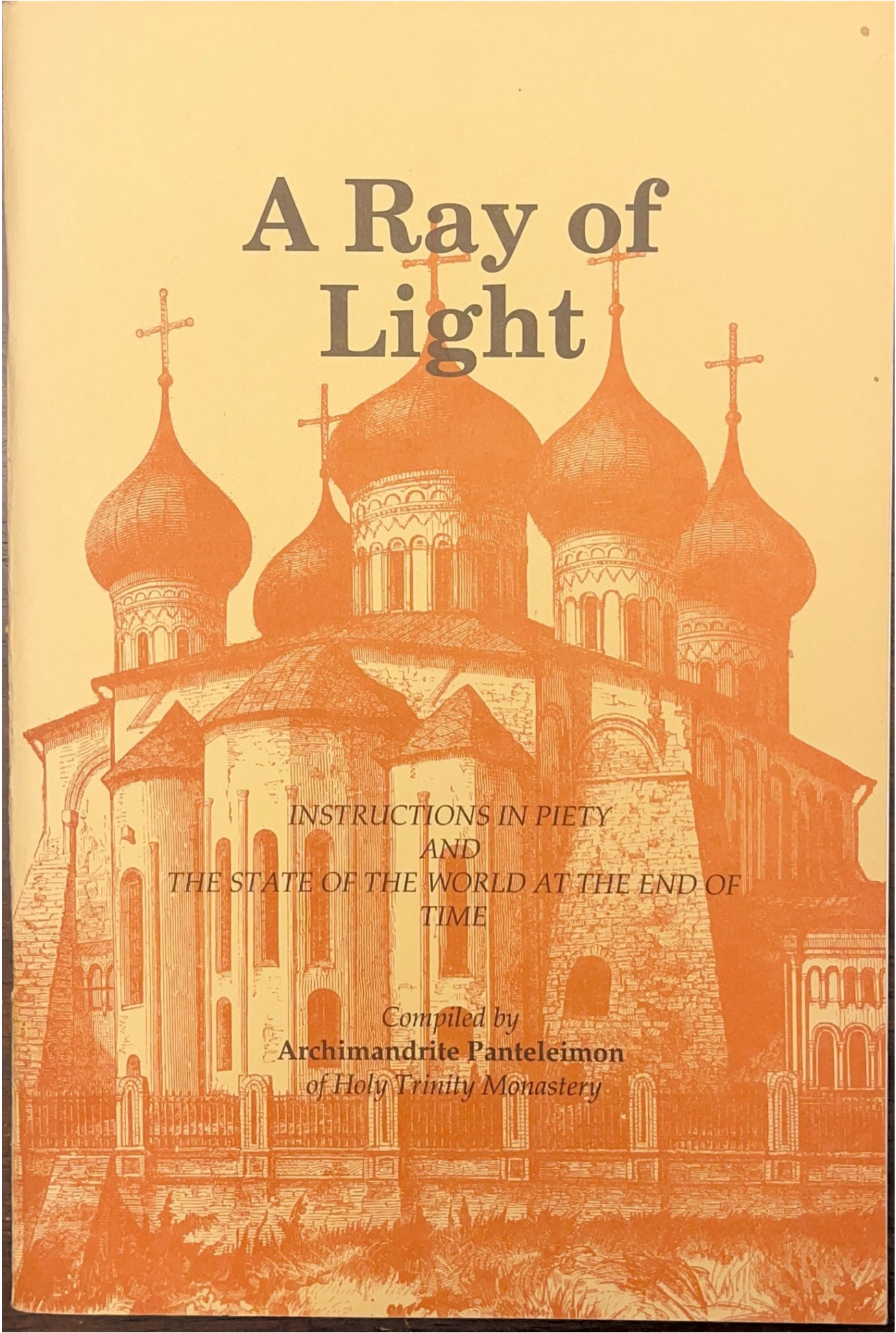


A Ray of Light



INSTRUCTIONS IN PIETY
AND
THE STATE OF THE WORLD AT THE END OF
TIME

Compiled by
Archimandrite Panteleimon
of Holy Trinity Monastery

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Translated by Michael Hilko



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Foreword

In the matter of salvation the understanding of the truth is indispensable; without it no one can achieve eternal life. It is said that they who are strangers to the illumination of truth *walk in the worldly vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God* (Eph. 4:18); *they have their portion in this life* (Ps. 16:14); *who mind earthly things, and whose end is destruction* (Phil. 3:19). The truth of God calls such people *the faithless and perverse generation* (Matt. 17:17), and for that reason says to us: *Save yourselves from this untoward generation* (Acts 2:40). And so, man, life and death are up to you. Select whichever you want; search for what is better for you — to remain now in spiritual darkness and the shadow of death (Matt. 4:16), and then to go to eternal suffering, or to turn from evil and to enter the ever-present life and light, — *the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (Matt. 25:34). And so? — *Light is come into the world, says the Lord, and men loved darkness rather than light* (John 3:19). The prophets, too, appealed: *Who believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed* (Is. 53:1)? *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God* (Matt. 22:29). These are the main barriers to our enlightenment and achievement of eternal life, i.e., not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

A sharp sword is handy and even necessary while travelling, or where danger abounds, since with its help one can defend oneself from enemies; but it often leads also to destruction, serving as the instrument for robberies, threats, and murders. Like this sword, reflection and investigation concerning the time for the ending of the world is beneficial for people to the same degree that it is harmful. Judicious and worthy of praise is he, who, while dwelling mentally on the immensity of the almightiness and justice of God, does not forget his own personal demise, remembers that in the future he will receive the recompense for his

deeds, becomes fearful of eternal sufferings, and directs his efforts towards good works.

In presenting this book to the reader we, with God's help, have decided to reveal the true signs of the coming of Antichrist which will occur before the world's end. This is especially important for ordinary people, who, like leaves, waver in their understanding about the Antichrist, credulously blown about, accepting various false explanations.

Devout reader! Accept without fear the spiritual food offered by this book; forsake all doubts, for you can be assured that everything we speak of will be founded on the Word of God and the interpretations of the Holy and God-fearing Fathers and Teachers of the Church: John Chrysostom, Andrew of Caesarea, John of Damascus, Ephraim the Syrian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Nilus of the Holy Mountain, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, our Father John of Kronstadt, the Miracle-Worker, and others.

We have not dared to resolve the higher and unattainable mysteries of God, leaving this right to the One Divine Church, which has eagle's wings. *And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle* (Rev. 12:14), says the seer of mysteries." The Holy Church was given the godly wisdom of two testaments," the Holy Fathers relate — guided aloft by these two wings we have written this book to first quiet the lips of false teachers, and secondly, to furnish pious people with useful and soul-saving reading material.

Let all of this be in honor and praise of our Lord God, Who punishes us with His righteous judgment. He, the All-Just, permits confusion and discord in the Church, in order to cleanse His selected ones in the refinery of temptations like gold. He produces storms and subdues the winds and storms of the seas. He never leaves His Church unguarded, but directs it amid powerful, beastly, worldly misfortunes, and steers it to a peaceful harbor.

*The Abbot of the Holy Trinity Monastery
January 16, 1946 Abbot Panteleimon*

CHAPTER ONE

A Ray of Light How to Leave the Darkness of Death The Perception of Truth

Infinitely great, incomprehensible, and ineffable is God's love for sinful mankind! For the salvation of mankind He sent to earth His Only-Begotten Son, Who, taking on a servant's appearance, became a man similar to us and during a span of thirty-three and a half years lived among sinful people and served them, instructing them in true God-pleasing life.

Though without stain of sin, He, took upon Himself the sins of mankind, through His unutterable love toward the race of man, undergoing for them grievous suffering and agonizing death on a cross of wood. He then descended into Hell with His soul, and there defeated the sovereignty of the devil, thereby reconciling us with God and opening to us access to eternal blessedness in the heavenly Kingdom. But this is not all! Knowing that people, because of their sinful nature cannot by their own efforts obtain the saving fruits of redemption, He also provided the means for salvation — He founded here the Holy Church, or His Kingdom. On the tenth day after His Ascension into heaven, He sent the apostles His Holy Spirit, Who perpetually resides in the Church and covers all its members, helping them to save themselves in Christ. In this way, the Lord accomplishes for us everything which one can desire; He gave us all the tools necessary for salvation. It depends only on us — to use or not to use these means.

Having granted us the means of achieving salvation, the Lord also designated a fixed term, during which we can make use of these means. For each of us, this term ends along with our earthly life, and for all mankind it ends with the end of the world. But you, brethren, must know that with the death of the body, life does not end; our bodies die, but our immortal souls continue

to exist. In the same way the life of the whole race of man will not end with the end of the world. After the general resurrection a new life will begin, "the life of the future age." At our own death, therefore, the matter of our salvation will not be ended. The Lord will judge us, weighing correctly whether we made use of the means given us for salvation and are worthy of eternal blessedness.

Having passed judgment, He shall reward us justly. To each, according to his merits, He shall determine our destiny in eternal life. Judgment and recompense will complete the matter of salvation effected by the Lord. The Orthodox Church differentiates between the two judgments of God. There is a private trial for every person separately, and a general trial for the whole race of mankind.

The private trial and judgment of one's soul begins immediately after a person's death. *It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*, says the holy Apostle Paul (Heb. 9:27). This private trial is held for every person, since all people, as descendants of Adam, who sinned and was judged, are sinful and must face God's judgment. Besides, since death entered through sin, death is the unavoidable consequence and result of sin. Death consists of the separation of the soul and body: *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God Who gave it* (Eccl. 12:7) This spirit will remain alive and immortal, going on to face the private judgment of God immediately after the death of the body.

Holy Scripture does not discuss the private judgment of God. We know of this judgment from Church Tradition, preserved in the writings of its holy teachers. According to the teaching of the Church, this judgment will take place in the following manner. Picture a dying person; just as at the birth of a person into the world, relatives meet and receive into their arms the new little member of this earth, so, the soul, upon separation from the body, as if being born into another world, is met and received by bodiless spirits, the inhabitants of the spiritual world beyond the grave. At the moment of death, good spirits, the holy angels, with our Guardian Angel at the head, will appear on one side, and on the other side will be wicked spirits, devils, "the rulers of the

darkness of this age." Seeing the wicked spirits, the soul of the person is troubled, alarmed, and struck with dismay, and looks to the angels of God for help. This is the reason for those striking scenes which are often observed at the bedsides of the dying. The latter seems to be turning away from one side in terror, then turns to the other side in indescribable happiness. We think that these are the nightmares of a sick imagination. No. The dying person sees the devils on one side and the angels on the other. St. Ephraim the Syrian says, "When the ruling powers approach the dying person, and when the godly messengers order the soul to leave the body, then, seeing them, the poor person trembles like a leaf shaken by the wind, struggles like a swallow in the hands of the hunter, is numbed and surprised, seeing the terrible powers, seeing majestic images new to him, seeing an order of things which he never saw before." And the poor soul sees who of the bodiless spirits attending it has more power over it, the angels or the devils. If, while living on earth, it followed the advice of the devil, it is even more dismayed and worried; if the suggestions of the angels were its rules of life, it is soothed. And here the word of God is justified — *the death of sinners is severe, while the death of the upright is honorable; and when death overtakes the righteous, he will be at rest.*

Having parted from the body, the soul appears for God's judgment, which is accomplished by angels at the so-called toll-house trials. In order to rise up to God, the soul must pass through these trials, which as St. Cyril of Jerusalem describes, "are like unto toll-gates or examination rooms, where it (the soul) is questioned and tried for the deeds of its earthly life." It will meet the inquisitors and torturers (devils), who during our lives participate in our evil deeds, arouse in us sinful thoughts and desires, and hinder our performance of good deeds. They, as witnesses of the sinful side of our life, will be the accusers of the soul in its trials. These horrible beings meet the soul, examine the record, and note and describe in detail all the sins of the soul, sins of youth and age, voluntary and involuntary, committed in deed or by word or only in thought; and great is the terror and fear of the poor soul, indescribable the grief which the soul suffers then

from the enemies surrounding it, slandering it in order not to allow it to rise to heaven to take up its abode in the land of life.

On the other side the bright angels together with our guardian angels will appear as the defenders of our souls. As our witnesses and helpers in our pure and holy deeds, thoughts, and desires, they will seek out our good deeds to justify us before the court of God's truth. There will be a special trial for every sin and passion of our soul, so that for every sin there will be a special ordeal. There will be twenty such ordeals, as it was disclosed to St. Gregory, the pupil of the holy monk Basil the New. At the first ordeal the sins of the mouth and tongue will be the subjects of the inquisition; for instance, idle talk, profanity, rowdiness, lying, calumny, etc.; at the second — sins of vision; at the third — sins of hearing, etc. Further ordeals will be for the sins of anger, rage, malice, loathing, jealousy, pride, greed, lust, heresies, schisms, and others. At all of these ordeals the tormenting spirits of malice will remind the poor soul of every occurrence in its life, of where and when it was implicated in one or another sin, and will point out in detail the time and scene of our evil doings. The poor soul will flutter in fright and prayerfully look toward the angels of God. They, our guardians (about whom in the course of our lives we often forget), will defend the soul, pointing out when and where it performed good deeds. And this will be the time for remembering before God "the cup of cool water," given in the name of Christ, and the "tear drop," and even "part of a tear" shed for our iniquities; also remembered will be every prayerful sigh sent to God from the depths of a humble and contrite heart.

Such will be the personal judgment of the soul of every man! Of course it will be accomplished by the Lord God, Himself, but it will be carried out by His angels, in the presence of demons. Take note, brethren, this will be a real trial. Here will be found the accusers of a man, demons; and his defenders, the holy angels. Nothing will be concealed here; the judgment will be just and impartial.

Just as at earthly trials people are exonerated or condemned, so will it be at the personal judgment of God. After the trial the Lord will determine the fate of each person. If one acted righteously and piously while living on earth, his soul is carried up

by holy angels to a place of joy and blessedness. If, however, the ordeals prove that the person passed his life in negligence and incontinence, in vices and dishonesty, then, according to the condemnation of the Judge, his soul is given into the power of the demons and they drag the poor thing into a "dreary, dark" region, settling it in a place of sorrow and sighing.

However, it must be noted, that the recompense which is received by both sinners and the just after the personal judgment is not complete. The Holy Fathers teach that souls, having parted from their bodies, though they soon pass either to happiness or to sorrow and grief, do not yet feel either total blessedness or complete suffering. For every one will receive full blessedness, or full suffering, only after the general resurrection, when the soul will be reunited with the body. This will occur after the Second Coming into the world of the Lord Jesus Christ, and after the Last Judgment.

In the future life man will receive recompense for his earthly actions. Man lives on earth, either saving himself or sinning, not only by means of his soul, but the body too. This means that complete recompense must be received by the complete man, composed of soul and body. The body of man must share either in blessedness, or in suffering, just as on earth, it, together with the soul, deserved one and the same fate. All of this will be achieved only after the general resurrection of the dead and after Christ's Last Judgment.



What Will be the Status of the Incomplete Blessedness of Righteous Souls and the Incomplete Torture of Sinful Souls?

The souls of the righteous are carried by angels to the place of blessedness, which in God's Holy Scripture is called paradise, Abraham's bosom, the heavenly kingdom, God's kingdom, the house of the heavenly Father, heavenly Jerusalem, etc. While situated here, righteous souls reside at rest from all toil, in a place where there is no sickness, sorrow, or sighing; they are in close communion with other righteous souls and with angels, in the sight of God, anticipating that eternal blessedness, which we cannot now even begin to imagine for ourselves.

But, just as not all holy people are equally righteous and virtuous, so the blessed state of souls in heaven will have various degrees. *In my Father's house there are many mansions*, Jesus Christ said (John 14:2). The Apostle Paul adds that every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor (I Cor. 3:8). The degree of blessedness will correspond to the degree of the deeds — what we shall sow here on earth, that we shall reap in heaven.

The glorification of the righteous is not limited only to the heavenly mansions. Our Lord, the just Judge and Giver of gifts, also glorifies His saints in the earthly Church. This glorification, according to the instructions of the Church, consists of our revering the departed righteous ones as saints and friends of God, as "quick helpers and supplicants," venerating their incorrupt relics and their icons.

We call the righteous departed, saints of God, in the sense that they pleased God in their life, and for that reason were worthy to receive eternal blessedness. But, revering saints of God, we do not place them on the same level with the Lord God, nor regard them as gods, but accept them as true servants of God, friends of God. These words, oft-heard in Church: *Wondrous is God in His saints* (Ps. 67:35), mean that God is glorified through

His saints. Living on earth of righteousness, glorified now, residing in heaven in memory among people, we honor in them on earth, and Whose glory regarding as His friends, said to His disciples *he that receiveth Me receiveth Me* — the Lord is clearly showing His servants and friends in

How can we not glorified by the Lord? His services and feats are so many that should we venerate them? The King. We honor earthly kings, but we meet them triumphantly, glorify them with expensive gifts. In their lives, we glorify them in hymns, imitate their exploits, first centuries of Christianity glorified the saints as faithful, calling them to them in our prayers, righteous of God, for help us and pray for us, it can be seen that we do not think that in our needs. No, — before God, who can answer

There is no doubt that the prayers of all in heaven, with the power of command, said the one who is our Saviour, *but if any man will glorify him He heareth him* (John 14:12). Their exploits, earned for this reason the

His saints. Living on earth, they praised God's name by their life of righteousness, glorifying the name of the heavenly Father, and now, residing in heaven, God's name is praised through their memory among people. Therefore, revering God's righteous people, we honor in them God Himself, Whom they pleased while on earth, and Whose grace resided in them. The Saviour, while regarding as His friends all those who fulfilled His commandments, said to His disciples: *He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me* (Matt. 10:40). Our Lord is clearly showing that the honor rendered to His faithful servants and friends is imputed to Himself.

How can we not venerate the saintly righteous, who were glorified by the Lord God Himself?! We respect people whose services and feats are rewarded by an earthly king; all the more should we venerate the saints who were exalted by the heavenly King. We honor earthly kings' servants in a worldly manner: we meet them triumphantly, honor them with banquets, remember them with expensive statues; but the saintly righteous we revere spiritually. In their honor we arrange annual church holidays, glorify them in hymns, build temples and chapels in their honor, imitate their exploits, etc. All of these celebrations began from the first centuries of Christianity, as church history witnesses. Revering the saints as faithful servants and friends of God, we also appeal to them in our prayers. We cry out, "Pray to God for us, you righteous of God, for we diligently have recourse to you, who help us and pray for our souls." From this prayerful supplication, it can be seen that we do not regard the saintly righteous as gods, and do not think that they by their own personal power assist us in our needs. No, — they are only intercessors, our pleaders before God, who can assist us only by their prayers.

There is no doubt that the Lord Himself immediately hears the prayers of all individuals, but our innumerable sins interfere with the power of our prayers. *I know that God will not hear sinners*, said the one who though blind from birth, was cured by the Saviour, *but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth* (John 9:31). However, the holy saints of God, by their exploits, earned for themselves God's eternal good will, and for this reason the Lord listens to their prayers for us sinners.

The Fate in the Future Life of Sinful People, Unrepentant of Their Sins.

A completely different fate awaits sinners in the future life. After its trials at the toll houses mentioned earlier, the sinful soul is at the mercy of the demons' authority, and they drag it off into a place of "darkness and gloom," into hell, a fiery furnace. St. John Chrysostom, when asked where was hell, this place of torture, said appropriately: "One asks exactly where is hell: but why should this be any person's business? One must know that it exists, and not where it is hidden...; therefore, we should continue our search not into where it is, but— how to avoid it."

What will be the life of sinners in hell? This will be a life amid torments. The torment of sinners will be caused by a clear recognition of their sins committed during their lives, and from pangs of conscience, which will awaken with full force and wrack the sinful soul, *like the worm that does not die* (Mark 9:44). The soul will be alarmed by longing for earthly pleasures, now lost forever; aware too, that it is removed from communion with God and His saints, and must now dwell together with the other sinful souls, and the company of angry demons. It will be especially troubled by the thought that after the last judgment of Christ even greater sufferings await it.

However, it must be noted that the sufferings in hell will not be the same for all sinners, the degree of tortures will depend on the degree of their sinfulness. Just as there are many mansions in the heavenly Kingdom, so in hell there will be specific sections for various forms of punishment.

The tortures of hell inescapably await all unrepentant sinners. But glory and thanks to the mercy of the Lord! Glory and thanks to the power of the redemption of Christ our Saviour on the Cross! It reaches out to people even on the other side of the grave, until the general last judgment. Glory, too, for the infinite

justice of God! Punishing out reward, even if this v

The Orthodox Church which before parting with not able to bring forth prayer, contrition for sins Christian charity, — the some consolation, and the completely lost from the mains the possibility of a chance to pass from a ve and even to pass complete teaches us that forgiveness of a sinner (Matt. 12:32), sible. Of course, sinners its, can no longer ease the activity or repentance, — of the Church, and its c helped too by charitable their remembrance, and a sacrifice which is offered the Catholic and Aposto (Orth. Conf., Part I, answer

The holy Apostle J brethren, both living and long as they are not in me any sin the person did a pleasing to God because a being dear to Him, cre and redeemed by the m Lord *does not take pleasure turn from his way and live*

Alms, distributed by by increasing the number ing received alms) for the ceived by the Lord as if Many examples from the

justice of God! Punishing sin and evil, it cannot leave virtue without reward, even if this virtue was only just begun.

The Orthodox Church confesses that the punishment of souls which before parting with the present life did repent, but were not able to bring forth worthy fruits of repentance, such as prayer, contrition for sins, fasting, alms, and, in general, deeds of Christian charity, — the suffering of such souls is mixed with some consolation, and their state is not hopeless, for they are not completely lost from the Kingdom of God. For them there still remains the possibility of receiving an easing of their sufferings: the chance to pass from a very grievous section of hell to one less so, and even to pass completely to blessedness. Jesus Christ Himself teaches us that forgiveness of sins is possible even after the death of a sinner (Matt. 12:32), — which means that leaving hell is possible. Of course, sinners themselves, by their own efforts or merits, can no longer ease their state, for after death there is no more activity or repentance, — but their fate is altered by the prayers of the Church, and its children who remain on earth. They are helped too by charitable deeds, faithfully performed on earth in their remembrance, and especially by the power of the bloodless sacrifice which is offered by the priest for each Christian and by the Catholic and Apostolic Church for all Christians in general (Orth. Conf., Part 1, answer to questions 64, 65).

The holy Apostle John testifies that our prayers for the brethren, both living and departed, can grant them eternal life as long as they are not in mortal sin (I John 5:16) — mortal sin being any sin the person did not repent of. Prayers for the dead are pleasing to God because we are asking for the salvation of a soul, a being dear to Him, created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the most-pure blood of His Son; and too, the Lord *does not take pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ezek. 33:11).

Alms, distributed by the living in memory of the departed, by increasing the number of those praying (by virtue of their having received alms) for the salvation of the departed souls, are received by the Lord as if performed by the departed themselves. Many examples from the lives of the saints confirm this point.

Most helpful to the departed is the liturgy served in their memory. Is it possible that this great sacrament of the Only-Begotten Son of God will not propitiate the righteous judgment of the most merciful God? Oh! With unwavering faith let us continue to believe that there shall be a mitigation of the fate beyond the grave for all our fathers, brothers, and sisters departed in the faith, through the power of the bloodless sacrifice! For this reason all types of liturgies, beginning with the apostolic ones, include prayers for the departed. The power of these prayers is confirmed by the holy fathers. For example, St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: "Souls, on behalf of which prayers are brought, will have the greatest benefit at the time of the offering of the holy and awesome Sacrifice," i.e., the body and blood of the Saviour. St. John Chrysostom avers: "Not lightly did the apostles establish the remembrance of the departed at the service of the awesome Gifts. They knew that this brought much help and benefit. For when the awesome Sacrifice is offered, how can we not pray to the merciful God for them?"

However, it is necessary to note, brethren, that our prayers and those of the Church are beneficial only for those who departed to the life beyond the grave with at least the beginnings of good: with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, with hope in His mercy, and with repentance of sins. The most grievous sinners can receive mitigation of their fate, and even be completely relieved of hell's torture, but only if they died in repentance and faith. But woe to unconfessed sinners, freethinkers, blasphemers, and those stubborn in their unbelief! Their destiny is the eternal tortures of hell! They shall not be aided by the prayers of the Church, for in denying faith in Christ, denying their sins, and spurning the prayers of the Church, they blaspheme the Holy Spirit which is active in the Church. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, according to the words of Christ, *shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come* (Matt. 12:32). Prayers for such sinners do not help them, but benefit only supplicants themselves according to the Prophet David: *And my prayer returned into my own bosom* (Ps. 34:13).

In the teachings of the Orthodox Church presented, one can see that the departed are either in paradise, or in hell, in tor-

ments. There is no middle stage is recognized in their teaching, though their teaching, though it lacks its fruits, are there for a time, for their sins. But the Saviour in His passion without any middle stage which means that the prayers are necessary in the life of Jesus Christ risen on earth, repudiating death to God by his tomb.

This, Orthodox teaching concerning the life of the departed. This teaching does not mean which is idly curious for us. From it we see between our present and the beginning, and the first is — sowing here, that you will see us to try to have a sowing not for the Apostle Paul: *For the sowing of the seed* (1 Cor. 9:6), and *sower* (1 Cor. 9:7).

Secondly, in this world, passes in time, therefore, it is necessary, to nurture the heavenly and give our soul immediate by the reward necessary for us to move our sins, cleansing our neighbor; so that we should not fall worthy to be called.

ments. There is no middle stage between paradise and hell; such a stage is recognized only by Roman Catholics. According to their teaching, the souls of people who depart in penitence, but lack its fruits, are to be found in the fires of purgatory, and suffer there for a time, until by their own sufferings they atone for all of their sins. But this teaching is not Orthodox. The Lord and Saviour in His parable on the rich man and Lazarus did not point out any middle state between "Abraham's bosom" and "hell," which means there is no such state. What other new sufferings are necessary in the propitiation of God's justice when the blood of Jesus Christ redeems us from all sins? If a person, while living on earth, repudiated faith in Christ, can he possibly be reconciled to God by his tortures in the fire of purgatory?

This, Orthodox Christians, is the teaching of the Church concerning the life of the departed until the general great judgment! This teaching does not give the answers to questions of a mind which is idly curious, but it does present many edifying lessons for us. From it we learn that there is a most intimate bond between our present life and life hereafter. Our present life is a beginning, and the hereafter is the continuation and result of it; the first is — sowing, and the second — the harvest. What you sow here, that you will harvest there! For this reason it is necessary for us to try to have a good beginning, an abundantly good sowing, a sowing not for the "body," but for the "soul," as is said by the Apostle Paul: *For, sowers for the body will harvest death (i.e., punishment), and sowers for the spirit, will harvest eternal life.*

Secondly, we find that the soul after separating from this world, passes into another world — the spiritual realm. Therefore, it is necessary to become acquainted with that world in advance, to nurture in oneself beforehand a love for everything heavenly and godly. Thirdly, we discover that after our death, our soul immediately awaits a just and impartial trial, followed by the reward for the deeds of our life. For this reason it is necessary for us to make a reckoning of our debts here, by confessing our sins, cleansing our soul, and doing deeds of love for God and our neighbor; so that, having accomplished the course of life, we should not fall into the hands of angry demons, but be found worthy to be carried up by angelic hands into Abraham's bosom.

Most important is to pray to our Lord and Saviour that He would help us, through the prayers of the Most Pure Mother of God, all the righteous of God, and the intercession of our Guardian Angel, to attain the blessedness of paradise and to be in communion with the saints who have pleased God. It behooves us brethren to remember these thoughts more often for much good will come of it. *Remember the end* (your death), teaches the Word of God, *and you will never sin.*

Blessed are those of us, who in the troubles and sorrows of the present life search for consolation in God and with diligence pray to the saints, for that prayer will not be in vain. Each of us has had occasion to be convinced of this thought. That is why all saints revered by us are called intercessors, for they defend us in trouble, assist us in bodily suffering, comfort the sorrowing and the angry, and plead for sinners who have sincerely repented.

We should add that the saintly righteous are always prepared to pray for us since they themselves once lived on earth, suffered afflictions, and know by personal experience, how difficult it is for man to struggle with worldly calamities and grief, and how necessary is heavenly assistance in the battle.

The saints love us spiritually, for they, descending from the same ancestors as we, are related to us, and are our brothers in the faith. Though they reside in heaven now, they always remember their earthly homeland and are ever ready to intercede before God on behalf of His people. If we, who are sinful, can assist our neighbors, all the more the saints cannot remain disinterested observers of our troubles. With a love more complete and pure than ours, they cannot help but pray and intercede before God for us. How consoling all of this is to us sinners! This love of the saints should urge us to call upon them more frequently and more zealously for they "speedily assist and pray for us." For these reasons every church service ends with this appeal to Jesus Christ, that He save and have mercy on us, through the "prayers of His Most Pure Mother and all the saints."

CHAPTER FOUR

The Incorruptibility and Miraculous Powers of Holy Relics

The Incorrupt Hand of St. John Chrysostom

We stated earlier that the Lord glorifies saints through the incorruptibility of their relics. While the bodies of the deceased are generally subject to corruption, the bodies of some saints, by the will of God, remain incorruptible on earth for many years. This incorruption is visible witness of the holiness of the saints, a visible sign of God's blessing residing in their very bodies. In them the words of David have come true, not only in relation to the Saviour but his faithful servants as well: *For Thou (Lord) wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption* (Ps.15:10). The incorruptibility of relics is beyond all doubt. Whom the Lord has vouchsafed to see the incorrupt relics of God's saints and to venerate them

with faith, he will witness to their incorruptibility before the whole world. In Kiev, Novgorod, Moscow, Voronezh, and Zadonsk the incorrupt relics of saints were openly at rest and by their miracles witnessed to the power of God residing in them. How many relics of saints are still hidden? The relics of Sts. Zosima and Sabbatius of Solovetsky Monastery, Sergius and Herman of Valaam, Arsenius of Komel, Alexander Nevsky, and the newly-canonized righteous ones, St. John of Kronstadt, the elders of Optina, Ambrose and Nectarius, and others still hidden, pour forth numerous blessings on us!

Many holy fathers write of the incorruption and miraculous powers of relics. St. Ephraim the Syrian says: "Even after death, saints act as they did when living, healing the sick, expelling demons, and by the power of the Lord repelling every evil action of their torturous realm. For the miracle-working blessing of the Holy Spirit is always inherent in holy relics." With these words St. John Chrysostom invited all to approach the relics of St. Ignatius the God-bearer: "If you are sorrowful, ill, wronged, in some other trouble, or in the depths of sin, — run to him with faith: you will receive aid and depart with great happiness, sensing an easing of your conscience... This treasure is needful for all: for the unfortunate, since it frees them from calamities, and for the fortunate, for it confirms their fortune, and for the ailing, for it returns well-being to them, and for the healthy, for it turns away disease" (Christian Readings 1885, p. 225).

We revere not only the incorruptible bodies of saints, but also the instruments of the suffering and death of the martyrs, and the belongings which were used by the saints during their lives. Such relics through which we receive blessings include the robe and belt of the Mother of God, the chains of the Apostle Peter, and the handkerchiefs and towels of the Apostle Paul that performed miracles (Acts 19:12).

CHAPTER FIVE

The Veneration of Holy Icons

Finally, we also honor icons of the saints. Looking at the image of the saint, we carry our thoughts from the icon to the saint himself; from the image we are transferred to the person. Revering icons, we revere not the wood or paints, not the gold or silver decorating the icon, but those persons which are represented on the icon. But one might ask, why bow to icons, when we can mentally raise our thoughts to the saints themselves? This is easy to explain from the bond which exists between our soul and body. Our soul, closely united to the body, cannot have a pure and clear understanding of things unseen; for this it needs visible images. For this reason God Himself appeared to Old Testament righteous people in the form of a man, and instructed Moses to place golden representations of cherubim in the altar; such representations were also in the temple of Solomon.

The necessity of icons is also confirmed in the New Testament. We know that the Lord sent His own image Not-Made-by-Hands to Abgar, ruler of Edessa, and that St. Luke painted images of the Mother of God. During times of persecution Christians carried icons to the caves and there offered heartfelt prayer before them. In accordance with this early Christian example we place icons in prominent places of our churches and homes, light lamps before them, and burning incense, we bow before them and kiss them. The veneration of icons is logical; those whom we love and respect, we desire to see as often as possible, in this way showing them respect. We collect their portraits and decorate our homes with pictures of father, mother, brother, husband, wife, and others in order to transfer to those pictures the love and respect which we feel for the prototypes. How is it possible then for us not to venerate the icons of the Lord, the Mother of God, and the righteous?! St. Basil the Great writes: "I accept the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs, and invoke their intercession before God... I also revere the drawings of their icons and bow before them, especially for the reason that they come down from the

time of the holy apostles..., and are pictured in all our churches." The Seventh Ecumenical Council called the veneration of holy icons "a tradition of the Catholic Church which accepted the Gospel from all ends of the earth."

The most powerful witness to the holiness of icons is the innumerable signs and miracles which the Lord condescends to accomplish through icons, especially those termed "miraculous". Orthodox Russia abounded with such icons, and several have been brought overseas. Brethren, have recourse to these fountains of healing and be cured of your illnesses: some — from despondency, some — from passions, some — from life's sorrows, some — from bodily illnesses, but all — from wounds of the soul, our sins!

Let us remind ourselves now brethren of everything we have said about glorifying the righteous. In heaven they are unutterably blissful, awaiting yet greater bliss in the future. We on earth call on them in prayer and venerate their icons and incorruptible relics through which the Lord grants us sinners abundant miraculous assistance. How consoling it is to think that even among us there are imitators of the saintly righteous, and that from among us some will be found who will be vouchsafed the same glory of the saints in heaven and the same honor on earth.



CHAPTER SIX

Christ's Holy Church

So that people might attain eternal salvation for themselves, the Lord founded the Church, His grace-filled kingdom on earth, imparting grace to all members of the Church, — power which sanctifies them. He established sacraments for the Church as the means by which we receive this grace-filled power.

The name of the Church of Christ is used in two ways, either in a general sense or in a more inclusive manner. In a general sense the Church is a society of all free, intelligent beings, of both angels and people, believing in Christ the Saviour and united in Him as its one head. The holy Apostle Paul understands the Church in this way when He says that God ordained the union of all things in heaven and earth under Christ the Head and to place Him as the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:10,23; Coloss. 1:18), to which therefore people and angels belong. For angels, too, believe in Christ as the true God-man and serve as His ministers in establishing the Church on earth; they are sent by Him to assist every man in inheriting salvation (Heb. 1:14). In a narrower sense the Church of Christ is composed strictly of people professing the faith of Christ, whether they live on earth, or have already passed into the future life. Those living on earth compose the kingdom of grace, the earthly or militant Church, while the departed compose the kingdom of glory, the heavenly, triumphant Church.

But why must believers in Christ be saved not as individuals, but together? Why must they belong not only to an internal, spiritual union, but also to an external, visible union? Firstly, this relationship provides a healthy understanding of the Church, and secondly it is the way established by God Himself.

A similar pattern of organization is found in daily life. People of one descent aspire to the same aim, and form not only an internal, spiritual union, but also an external and visible union. They arrange general conferences, the strong cooperate with the weak, and the experienced with the less expert. In this way the family circle is formed, as are the circle of relatives and citizens'

societies. Through such union, societies become stronger, develop, and consolidate their existence for longer periods of time. Does it not follow from this that people who believe in the One True God, confessing the One Christ, Son of God, incarnate as man, redeemed by His Most Pure Blood, sanctified by the grace of the One Holy Spirit, must belong to an intimate union; not only internal, but also an external, visible one?

If we shall not only preserve unity in faith with all the children of Christ's Church, but will also be members of the Church visibly — participate in church gatherings and fulfill all Her rules, then the Church will be as close to us as our own mother. In Her we shall find for ourselves a sinless teacher of faith and piety, a supplicator for us in the present and future life, a comforter amid life's sorrows, a trustworthy guide to the heavenly fatherland. But, if while preserving in our soul the true faith, and regarding ourselves children of Christ's Church, we shall begin to alienate ourselves from the Church, shall discontinue our attendance at prayerful gatherings, shall not be fervent fulfillers of pious rituals, then we shall gradually begin to lose the habit of Church attendance, our ties to the Church will begin to weaken and eventually be cut. We shall find ourselves alone amid life's waves and then the destruction of our souls will be assured.

Orthodox Christians, this is how necessary it is that people who espouse faith in Christ be truly children of the Church of Christ. In the instructions of the Word of God we find even more solid reasons for not withdrawing from the Church. The Word of God teaches us that God Himself founded the Church, gathered His children together, and returned to the enclosure of salvation those who were torn from it by enemy forces.

We know that the first Church of our sinless ancestors was in paradise, and who founded it? It was formed by God Himself Who created Adam and Eve in His own image, having given them the commandment to consecrate the seventh day to God. When the first people sinned, and the Church of the sinless was destroyed, the Lord, having given people the promise of the Saviour, reestablished the Church, not of the sinless, but of those to be saved. During the long period of the Old Testament this Church of salvation was exposed many times to the danger of de-

struction from the devil's snares and from the enemies of the Church, both seen and unseen. The Hebrew people, chosen by God, often fell into sin and idol worship. During these dark years of decline in the Church the laws of Moses were broken, the temple fell into neglect, idols replaced the sacrificial altar, and sacrifices to Baal, Moloch, and other idols were brought openly to Jerusalem. But the Lord restored the failing Church, raised up prophets and pious kings, and by the miraculous action of His providence returned apostates to the way of truth. The temple was cleansed of pagan abominations and people again gathered to hear and learn the law of the Lord. Thus the Lord brought the Old Testament Church up to the coming into the world of the Saviour, Who was to restore David's fallen tabernacle and gather the believers into one flock, *as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings* (Matt. 23:37). He *gathered into one entity the children of God that were scattered abroad* (John 11:52) and built the New Testament Church, which could not be defeated by the gates of hell, and which would continue until the end of the age.

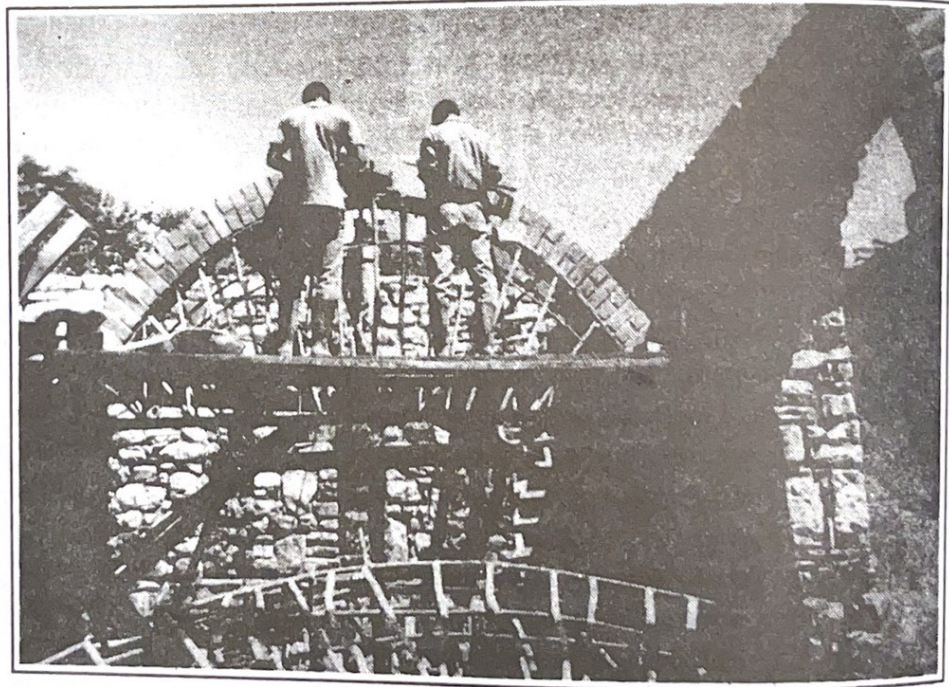
How did the Lord form this Christian Church? From the many people who accepted His teaching, He selected twelve at first, and then seventy disciples, and appointed them as teachers for all believers. At first He sent them to preach only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and then to the whole world, to preach the Gospel to all people. In order to strengthen the Church, the Lord established seven sacraments and prompted His followers to obey the people chosen by Him, as they would obey God Himself; finally, having brought Himself as a sacrifice for all mankind, the Lord called all to partake of the blessings of the heavenly Kingdom, and sent down on them the Holy Spirit. The apostles, cloaked in power from above, *went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following* (Mark 16:20). Finding believers in the teaching of Christ they formed societies in cities, calling them Churches; they inspired members of the Church to preserve the unity of faith in an alliance of peace, teaching them to be members of one body, to keep one faith and one spirit, to accept communion from one bread, and not to withdraw from general gatherings, for to do so risked the danger of separation from the

knowledge as members of the Universal Church as long as they do not apostatize, but adhere to the universal Orthodox faith."

It is affirmed that only in the Church of Christ is it possible to acquire salvation and eternal life, that outside the Church there is no salvation, and from this we receive the lesson to always remain members of the Church. Only under this condition is it possible to preserve the faith in all its purity; only in the Church can one receive sanctifying powers leading to life and piety; only in Her is a truly pious life possible. This lesson was continually reiterated by the Holy Fathers of the Church when exhorting apostates and dissenters. St. Irenaeus, an apostolic father, writes: "Where the Church is, there also is the Spirit of God; where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and the fullness of grace: for the Spirit is the truth. That is why those who are not partakers of Him, do not feed at the mother's breast to receive life, and do not find for themselves in the Body of Jesus Christ a copious fountain, but dig in the earth wells of destruction for themselves, and drink from pools of foul water, withdrawing from the faith of the Church, rejecting the Spirit, in order not to be enlightened by Him." The same truth is expressed by St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, a Church father of the third century: "He who has not the Church for a mother cannot have God for his father. If anyone who was outside of Noah's ark was saved, then those found outside the Church can also be saved." In order to instruct us the Lord says: *He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad* (Matt. 12:30). As the blessed Augustine teaches: "Everyone who has severed himself from communion with the Church, even though his life be worthy of praise, only for that one iniquity of leaving union with Christ, will not have life, but the anger of God will reside on him."

Orthodox Catechism teaches us that even though Jesus Christ truly gave Himself as a sacrifice for all, and brought grace and salvation to all, only those of us will profit by this who in turn voluntarily accept participation in His sufferings, in conformity with His death. In order for the Lord to be truly our Saviour, we must be cleansed of sins, change from sinners into saints, and be liberated from all destructive consequences of sin, temporary and everlasting. Without fulfilling these conditions,

we not only shall not attain that bliss which Christ prepared for us, but on the contrary, we shall find eternal destruction here. Eternal grief will befall us, the present children of the Church, if we, hearing the teaching of Christ, shall not adopt it with all the powers of our souls, shall reject the grace-filled powers granted to us, which are for our life and piety, and by our sins and unbelief smother within ourselves the voice of the Spirit, which instructs us in every truth. But the Lord, not desiring the death of a sinner, gives to each one of us ways of assimilating those blessings, which He has prepared for those to be saved. He sanctifies us and helps us to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24). When the end of life



The Orthodox Mission Church in Uganda

comes for every man, and the end of the earthly existence of the whole of mankind, then the Lord will bring all to trial and will reward every man according to his works (Matt. 16:27).

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Characteristics of People before the End of the World. A Prophecy

The particular judgment of the departed will occur immediately after their death, but the general (last) judgment will take place at the second coming of Christ; to determine exactly when this time will come is impossible, for this is hidden not only from people, but even from the angels. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only* (Matt. 24:36), said our Divine Teacher to His disciples, when they asked Him about this matter. It is hidden from us too, in order that we be ready at any moment, with a clear conscience to appear before the judgment seat of the impartial Judge, so that we do not give ourselves to carelessness about our salvation, but, like the wise virgins, will be ready to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom worthily and to enter the bridal chamber with Him. This is why Jesus Christ often encouraged His disciples to keep vigil, so that the coming of the Son of man would not catch them unawares: *Watch therefore: for ye know not in what hour your Lord doth come, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh* (Matt. 24:42,44); *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when (second coming) the time is... And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch* (Mark 13:33,37). If for our own good, through God's providence the day and hour of the second coming of Christ is hidden from us, then the same Lord, *Who desireth that all men be saved*, for the strengthening of the righteous and for the instruction of sinners, deigned to reveal signs to us, by which we can judge the time of His second coming.

The first of these signs is the universal awareness of Christ's gospel. The message about Christ will be spread to all nations of the world; not one nation, or tribe, even in the farthest and unknown corners of the earth, will be left without the enlightenment of Christ's teaching. The last commandment of Jesus Christ will be fulfilled — *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to*

every creature (Mark 16:15), and *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations* (Matt. 28:19). Another sign of the approach of the second coming of Christ will be the great impoverishment of faith and love among people. The primordial enemy (the devil), sowing the weeds of falsehood and delusion amid the good seed of God's Word, before the end of the world will direct all his powers and means in order if possible to unconditionally tear away from the Kingdom of God all those who are called to it or have already entered It, and to subjugate them to his destructive dominion. Jesus Christ taught His disciples, *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they will say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not* (Matt. 24:23-26, compare with Mark 13:21-23). The result of this will be that many will be seduced (Matt. 24:23-26, compare Mark 13:6), and many will be deceived (Matt. 24:10). *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold* (Matt. 24:12), and there shall follow the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (Matt. 24:15); *When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?* (Luke 18:8).

In the First Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul writes: *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils* (I Tim. 4:1). In his Second Epistle to Timothy, he offers a gloomy portrait of mankind's religious and moral condition: *In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof* (II Tim. 3:1-5).

The holy Apostle Jude witnesses to the agreement of all the apostles on this point: *Remember the words which were spoken of before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How they told you there should be mockers in the last days, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, not having*

the Spirit (Jude 17-19). The Lord Himself foretold that at the end of the world *Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold* (Matt. 24:11,12), so that *when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?* (Luke 18:8).

Such a decline in faith and love among people will result first in the appearance of many false prophets and horrible internecine wars, and secondly, great and serious calamities in the physical world. The gospel will be known to all, but some will not believe it; a greater number will hold heretical opinions, following not the God-given teaching, but building up their own religion, of their own fabrication, though based on the words of Scripture. These self-fabricated faiths will be numerous. Their roots are found in the papacy, and then continued by Luther and Calvin. The latter two, by setting as a principle their own personal understanding of faith from Scripture only, gave a strong impetus toward the invention of various confessions. Although there are many now, there will be more. For every kingdom their own faith, and later for every province, and then for every city, and finally, perhaps, for every person, his own faith. Wherever people devise their religions for themselves, it cannot be otherwise. And all such faiths will continue to appropriate to themselves the name of Christian.

There will be some who do maintain the true faith, as given by the holy Apostles and kept in the Orthodox Church; but even among these, many will be Orthodox in name only. They will not have in their hearts that order which is demanded by the faith, for they will be entranced by the present age. This is how broad the future field of apostasy will be! Even though the name Christian will be heard everywhere, and churches and rites will be widespread, all of this will only be outward; internally there will be complete apostasy.

The Antichrist will be born under such conditions, and will be reared in that spirit of pretense which is opposed to reality. Giving himself wholly to Satan, he will openly apostasize, and armed with his captivating intrigues, he will draw into apostasy from Christ the Lord all those not holding the Christian faith in truth, forcing them to worship him as god. The elect of God will

not be deceived, though he will attempt to entice them too. To save His elect the Lord will end those evil days. The Lord will appear and destroy Antichrist and all his works by His coming. (From the works of Bishop Theophan the Recluse.)



St Michael Leader of the Angels at the End of Time

Apostasy in the Last Days of the World

The apostasy of New Israel (Christians) from the Saviour at the end of time will be an extensive phenomenon, as the Apostle foretold: *There (shall be) a falling away first, and later, as a result and fruit of falling away, that man of sin (shall be) revealed, the son of perdition* (II Thess. 2: 2,3); he will dare to call himself the promised Messiah, will demand godly worship for himself, and will receive it from those who have prepared themselves to receive the Antichrist by either openly or secretly falling away from Christ. Apostasy will be so widespread that *because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold* (Matt. 24:12). This means that sinful temptations and behavior will increase so much that they will entice many people into sinful lives. Faith in Christ will barely exist, as the Lord Himself declared: *When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?* (Luke 18:8).

Temporary, material pursuits and pleasures will completely attract the attention of mankind. *As it was in the days of Noah, says the Gospel, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man: They did eat, they drank, married, were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded* (Luke 17:26-28).

Bountiful worldly progress and huge earthly enterprises, visible to all are described by the Word of God as a sign of the last days and the fruition of mankind's sinfulness. This state, for the most part will not be obvious to mankind at first glance. Mankind never will admit itself to be a disciple of evil, even though it be drowning in evil; it continually aspires to express itself as virtuous. Attachment to materialism and to material success can easily seize the whole person, seize his mind, his heart, and capture all of his time and strength: *As a result of my fall, my soul hath cleaved unto the earth from my youth, instead of abiding above.* This attachment distracts man from the Word of God and

thoughts of death and eternity, diverts him from faith and knowledge of God, and destroys him with eternal death.

The Holy Spirit of God announces to everyone without exception: *If any man love the world, (i.e., earthly life with its successes and pleasures), the love of the Father (God) is not in him* (I Jn. 2:15)



An Illustration from the Apocalypse on Mount Athos

The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is an enemy of God (James 4:4). Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). Serving mammon, (the god of money or earthly gain) especially when all the powers of the soul are sacrificed to this service, is a falling away from serving God, and a sure sign of falling into the deepest abyss of sinfulness with no way out.

As ancient Israel sacrificed the spiritual dignity offered it by the Redeemer for earthly advantages and futile hopes of superabundant earthly success, so the new Israel (Christians), as witnessed by Holy Scripture, will reject its spiritual dignity, already granted by the Redeemer, for the sake of fleeting material success.

Ancient Israel was deceived by dreams of earthly successes and the New Israel will be fooled by similar dreams and aspirations. For their rejection of the Redeemer ancient Israel was overtaken by temporary and eternal calamities. These disasters are only a feeble prefiguration of the horrible catastrophes which will be the punishment for New Israel for its transgressions. It will be subject to fierce punishment, both temporal and eternal, which it will not escape, if it *neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will (Heb. 2:3,4).*

At this point the question will be raised, what must we do in order not to fall away from the Redeemer and not to incur the anger of God? The Apostle Paul answers: *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (Heb. 2:1).* This means that we must devote special attention to the New Testament, in which God has deigned to join with us, uniting us with Himself by the holy sacraments, revealing to us His most holy and perfect will in the Gospel, crowning true children of the New Testament with a manifest and tangible gift of the Holy Spirit.

We need to remember death and God's judgment, to which we shall be subjected immediately after our separation from the body, and call to mind the blessed, or distressful, eternity which

will be our destiny according to the pronouncement of God's judgment. In constant remembrance of death, God's judgment, and blessed eternity, the attitude of the heart toward earthly life changes. A person begins to regard himself as a wanderer on earth, and a sense of coolness and indifference towards earthly objects appears in the heart. All attention is turned toward learning and fulfilling the gospel commandments.

As a traveller, having become lost in a thick forest on a dark night, tries to find his way home by the sound of a bell or a horn, so a true Christian, heeding the teaching of Christ, exerts himself to be free of the domain of his carnal mind, born and nourished by earthly life.

The majority of people, drunk on the false, seductive teachings of fallen spirits and violently agitated by the action of this teaching within themselves, have scorned the Word of God, and do not want to know It. But attention to this Word is most vital, so that we should never fall away! The events in today's world, which are so hostile to the words of the Gospel, justify the significance of struggling to follow its precepts. This attentiveness is necessary if we are not to be irrevocably deprived of salvation. In His patient long-suffering and mercy Our Lord has not yet deprived mankind of the means for salvation, offering an opportunity to the diminishing remnant of those still believing in Him. (from the works of Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov.)

When the Gospel reaches all peoples living on earth, and attracts all those capable of accepting its message and being reborn through the grace of the Holy Spirit, then there will be no more reason for the present order to continue. The end of the world will come and the Lord will appear to pass judgment over those living on earth, leading some into the Kingdom of His glory, and sending others to the bitter fate they have chosen for themselves.

In such a manner, either at the same time or after all of God's people come forth from out of humanity and there is nothing else left to expect, then those who are not of God, having thrown away their mask, will come forth and the harvest will be ready. The Lord will send harvesters and the end will come. In the same way that the period of ripening before the harvest has its limit, so also these final events have their limit, determined by God. The

good and the evil, already sown, will grow and develop, and they will ripen in their own time. This cannot take place before the allotted time. If one should ask the question, why the harvesters do not now come to the field, the answer is simply that the time has not yet come, the harvest is not ready. To the question as to why those awaited world events are not yet visible to us, the answer is that the time for their appearance, by God's will, has not yet arrived. It is in this same context that the appearance of Antichrist belongs.

God has deemed to reveal to us a few of His plans for the world. Applying them to our topic we may be able to discern that which withholds the Antichrist (II Thess. 2:6). The world continues so that the power of salvation deposited by God into mankind would produce its result. The power of salvation is the Word of God and grace, accepted in faith, and put into practice by self-denying zeal for pleasing God. The Word of God walks the earth, stimulating the slumbering, and leading them to the fountains of grace; re-born, they work out their own salvation, to the glory of God, who established salvation for all.

This activity takes place everywhere, among unbelievers, the lost, and true believers. Not all the called are the chosen, not all the fish in the net are fit for the table. Only those born from above, *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*, are given the power to become the sons of God (John 1:12-13). With these the Lord builds His heavenly Kingdom. They are the material on earth prepared for heaven by the Word of God and grace, received with their free will. When the Word of God and grace choose from the earth all the worthy material (for heaven), and the Kingdom of God is completely built up, then the salvation of the Lord will complete its task and nothing will remain of the present order of things.

The world continues because not all who are suitable for the Kingdom of Christ have entered it, or, not as many as are necessary have yet entered. The Lord has said: *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd* (John 10:16). When all seeking salvation in the true God have done so, then the end will draw near, and the Antichrist will appear. Therefore, the

reason for restraining his appearance will be that the power of salvation has not yet fully completed its work, and its continuing action restrains him. When this action has halted, then he will appear on the scene.

And what are the means for restraining Antichrist so that the elect may be brought to salvation? Our fathers considered the withholding power of the Antichrist to be the Roman Empire. In their time the Roman Empire still existed and it was possible to support this interpretation based on the prophecy of the Prophet Daniel. In our times the only significance we can give to such an idea is within the context of understanding the Roman Empire to mean imperial (monarchial) power in general. Concerning such power we should understand it to be a monarchy which has the ability to control social movement, and at the same time adhere to Christian principles. It does not allow the people to stray from these principles; it contains the people. Since the Antichrist will have as his main task the goal of attracting the people away from Christ, he therefore will not arrive if monarchy is still in control. This power will not allow him to appear; it impedes his negating spiritual activity. This is the withholding power. When the monarchy falls, and everywhere nations institute self-government (republics, democracies), then the Antichrist will be able to act freely. It will not be difficult for Satan to prepare voters to renounce Christ as experience taught us during the French Revolution. There will be no one to veto the movement. A humble declaration of faith will not be heard. Thus, when such a social order is instituted everywhere, making it easy for antichristian movements to appear, then the Antichrist will come forth. Up until that time he will wait; he is impeded. St. John Chrysostom's words lead us to this thought when in his time monarchy was understood to mean the Roman Empire, "When it is said that the Roman government has ceased to be, then the Antichrist will appear. Until that time the government (monarchy) will be feared. No one will easily follow the Antichrist. After this time, when such control will be liquidated, anarchy will triumph, and the Antichrist will try to capture all human and divine power."

It would be easy to assume that the people might be able to preserve their faith. But as was mentioned before, it is difficult to

imagine that in the course of time faith might grow in strength. The bright (hopeful) picture painted by some authors of Christian works of a good future would be pleasant to encounter, though there is no basis to justify such a hope. The grace-filled Kingdom of Christ indeed is increasing, growing, filling up, not visibly on the earth but rather in the heavens, invisibly. It is made up of people, here and there in the earthly kingdoms who have been prepared for that place by the salvific power of Christ. On the earth, the reign of disbelief and evil are predictable. It visibly expands and when it already is very much advanced, then the process will only have begun. It will take only one influential example or strong voice, and apostasy from faith will have begun. This jolt will be given by the Antichrist. (From the works of St. Theophan the Recluse)

St. Cyril of Jerusalem in his catechetical teaching on the Antichrist says: "We search for our own sign in regard to the coming of Christ; but belonging to the Church, we should look for a church sign. The Saviour says: *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another* (Matt. 24:10). If you hear that bishops even unto bloodletting attack bishops, clergy against clergy, and laymen against laymen, do not be bewildered: for this is foretold in the Scriptures; do not look at what happens today, but at what is written. Even though I, who teach you, perish, you shall not perish together with me; it is possible for a disciple to be better than the teacher, and be first among the latecomers; since the Master also receives those who come at the eleventh hour." If betrayal appeared even among the apostles, why should we wonder, if brotherly hatred will appear among bishops? But the signs refer not only to the rulers of the Church, but also to laymen. For Christ says that because of the spread of iniquity, the love of many shall wax cold. Shall any of those present be able to boast that he has an unhypocritical love for his neighbor? In most cases is it not rather that people kiss others, show a joyful appearance and happy glance, but in their hearts prepare snares, *speaking peace with their neighbor, but evils are in their hearts* (Ps. 27:3)?

Hate among brothers is already an invitation for Antichrist. For the devil first promotes discord among people, in order that

when the Antichrist comes, they would more easily accept him. God forbid that any one of those serving Christ anywhere, should unite with this enemy!

Formerly there were open heretics, but now the Church is filled with secret heretics. People have strayed from the truth, *having itching ears* (II Tim. 4:3). Say a blandishing word for their self-esteem, and all listen in satisfaction. Appeal to them to change, and all turn away. The majority have retreated from correct understanding, and more conveniently choose evil, rather than accept the good. And this is the apostasy, after which the enemy can be expected. He has already begun to send his forerunners, in order that the way be prepared for his hunt. For that reason, beware, brother, and strengthen your soul.

The Church witnesses today before the Living God, warns against Antichrist in advance of his coming. Whether this occurs during your life, we do not know; whether this happens after, we do not know. In the meantime, it would be well, if, knowing this, you would be forewarned.

The true Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, will not again come from this world. If anyone claiming false visions appears in the desert, do not go out. If they say, *Lo, here is Christ, or, lo, He is there* (Mark 13:21), do not you believe it. Do not look down to the earth any more; for the Master will descend from heaven, not alone, as before, but escorted by many myriads of angels; not secretly, as rain in the dark, but He will openly shine like lightning. For He Himself said: *For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be* (Matt. 24:27).

Just as before His Incarnation, when it was expected that God would be born of the Virgin, Satan, with evil intent, perverted this truth by means of a fabled teaching among idol worshippers that false gods give birth and are born of women, in order that when this lie was received, people would believe it, instead of the truth. In like manner before the second coming of the true Christ, the adversary, having turned to his own benefit the expectation of ordinary people, especially the circumcised (Jews), will produce a certain sorcerer, very experienced in the deceptive and evil art of magic and sorcery, who will usurp all power to

himself, falsely proclaiming himself as Christ, and under the name of Christ shall beguile the Jews in their expectation of the Messiah, and shall deceive pagans (and apostates from Christianity) by sorcery.

The foretold Antichrist will come only after the coming of worldwide anarchy and the struggle of various parties. When the end of the world draws near, ten rulers shall arise in various places, all ruling at the same time. The Antichrist will be the eleventh, and will usurp all rule by the skillful use of evil sorcery. He will overthrow three of those who became rulers before him, having in his own power the remaining seven. At first he will display the good sense and love of man befitting a person of wisdom and renown; having seduced the Jews, as if he were the expected Christ, by signs, miracles, and fraudulent, flattering sorcery, he will later become known for all kinds of evil, inhuman, and lawless deeds. He will surpass all iniquitous and dishonorable men who had lived before him, harboring destructive, brutal, and unkind thoughts against all, especially against Christians. He will act in these ways for three years and six months and will be stopped only by the second glorious coming from heaven of the Only-Begotten Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The Lord will destroy Antichrist by the *Spirit of His mouth* (II Thess. 2:8), and consign him to the flames of hell (From the 15th instruction of St. Cyril of Jerusalem).



Signs by which the Nearness of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ Can Be Judged

In order to prevent various arbitrary opinions harmful to the growth of spiritual life, our Saviour indicated some important signs through which we can sense the approach and beginning of the time for His second coming.

1) The first sign — an increase in catastrophes. Questioned by His disciples as to what kind of sign would precede His coming and the end of the world, He answered them with the following: *And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many,... For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened* (Matt. 24:6-22).

2) The second sign — the preaching of the gospel in all the world. *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations* (Matt. 24:14). The Antichrist shall come into the world only when the preaching of the Gospel shall have been spread over the whole universe, when all tribes and peoples shall be enlightened with the light of Christian teaching. St. John of Damascus warns: "Jesus Christ will come in order to accuse the antigodly Hebrews, after the Gospel shall have been preached to all nations" (Book 4; Ch. 7).

3) The third sign of the second coming of Jesus Christ — the lessening of faith and love among people. *And because iniquity*

shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold, then will follow ...the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet; When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on earth? (Matt. 24:12;24:15; [Luke 18:8]). The primordial enemy, (Satan) sowing the weeds of falsehood and deceit before the end of the world, shall direct all his means and powers in order to take by force and subjugate to his destructive rule all of those called to the kingdom of heaven.

4) A fourth sign — the conversion of Jews to Christ. Thus in his Epistle to the Romans the Apostle Paul, describing the special grace of God toward the pagans who through faith were grafted from the wild to the good olive tree, and inversely, the special severity of God's judgment toward the Jews in that they fell away from their native olive tree, at the same time pointed out that for Jews, in spite of this, by no means is it impossible or hopeless to again be grafted to their native olive tree (Rom. 11:22). Fixing his gaze into the distant future, he added these words: *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved as it is written: There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob* (Rom 11:25-26).

5) Finally, serving as the last and most precise sign of the approach of the second coming of Jesus Christ for judgment of the world, shall be the appearance of Antichrist. Under the special power of Satan, he will use all possible flattering and destructive means in order to shake or completely overthrow the Kingdom of Christ, so unbearable to him since it is a kingdom of truth and good. In its stead, he will seek to erect and make firm his own murky, sinful kingdom, which will continue until it is destroyed with the coming of Christ.

The Coming of Antichrist

Before the second coming of Christ, when Christianity, spiritual knowledge, and morality will be in an impoverished state, *false christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect* (Matt. 24:24). The Antichrist himself will produce numerous miracles, astonishing and satisfying the carnal wisdom and base desires of man. He will show them a sign from heaven for which they seek and crave. The holy Apostle Paul says that his coming will be accomplished through *the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness in them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved* (II Thess. 9:10).

Seeing these miracles, mankind in its ignorance and carnal wisdom, will not stop to think; they will immediately accept these signs because of the kinship of their spirits, and in their blindness, will recognize and confess the actions of Satan as the greatest manifestation of the power of God. Antichrist will be accepted very quickly and thoughtlessly. People will not realize that his miracles do not serve any good purpose, have no definite meaning, are alien to truth, and are simply a monstrous, malicious, senseless hoax. They are an intensive attempt to amaze, beguile, fool, perplex, obscure, and captivate through the fascination of elaborate, empty illusions.

It is not strange that the miracles of Antichrist will be accepted rapturously and without question by apostates from Christianity, the enemies of truth and of God. They have prepared themselves for open, active acceptance of the emissary and instrument of Satan, and his teachings and actions, by entering in advance into communion with Satan in spirit.

It is worthy of serious attention and sighing that the actions and miracles of Antichrist will cause difficulties for the very elect of God. The reason for the strong influence of Antichrist on

mankind consists of his hellish cunning and hypocrisy, by which he will artfully conceal the most horrible evil, his unbridled and shameless audacity, the full cooperation of fallen spirits, and finally, the ability to work miracles, false miracles, but impressive.

Man's imagination is powerless to conceive of such a villain as the Antichrist will be. It is unnatural for the heart of man, even as depraved as it is, to believe the degree of evil which will be reached in Antichrist. He will proclaim his worthiness just as his forerunners did, calling himself a preacher and restorer of true knowledge of God. Those who do not understand Christianity will see in him a representative and champion of true religion, and will join him. He will boast that he is the promised Messiah. Having seen his glory, power, and gifted abilities, and the vast progress in worldly things, his supporters will praise him, serve him, and proclaim him as god. Antichrist will appear meek, gracious, full of love and all virtues. He will be accepted as such and will be submitted to by those who accept as truth man's fallen truth, and have not renounced it for the truth of the Gospel.

Antichrist will offer mankind the possibility of greater earthly well-being and prosperity, esteem, riches, splendor, bodily conveniences and luxuries. Those who seek only the material will accept Antichrist and will proclaim him their master.

Antichrist will present a disgraceful spectacle to mankind by a contrived theatrical display of astonishing miracles, unexplainable by present-day science; he will terrify all by the awesome wonders of his miracles, and will satisfy the vanity and pride of man through these miracles. All men guided by the light of their fallen nature, estranged from the guidance of the light of God, shall be captivated into obedience by the deceiver (Rev. 13:8).

The signs of Antichrist will occur primarily in the skies for Satan is primarily in control of this realm. The signs will mainly influence the sense of sight, enchanting it and fooling it. St. John the Theologian, contemplating the events in the world which are to precede its end, says that the Antichrist will perform great deeds, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men (Rev. 13:13).

Ed. note. The possibility of creating "firestorms" with pinpoint accuracy in any place by using laser beams and satellites is a reality which could be utilized by the Antichrist.

The Scriptures emphasize that this magnificent and fearful sight, occurring in the air, will be one of the more important signs of Antichrist. These signs and spirits of Antichrist will enhance his deceitful behavior and seduce most of mankind into following him.

The adversaries of Antichrist will be regarded as troublemakers, enemies of social good and order, and will be subjected to hidden and open persecution, tortures, and execution. Evil spirits, sent over all the universe, will induce in men an exalted opinion of Antichrist, and a general rapture and invincible attraction to him. The gravity of the last persecution against Christians and the brutality of the persecutor is depicted in Holy Scripture. A definitive and decisive feature is the name given to this terrible man: he is called a *beast* (Rev. 13:1), just as the fallen angel was called *serpent* (Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:3). Both names truly describe the character of both enemies of God. One acts more secretly, the other more openly; but to the *beast*, which has a similarity to all beasts, uniting in himself their diverse ferocity, *the dragon gave his power, and his seat, and great authority* (Rev. 13:2).

For the saints of God a horrible ordeal will begin. Craftiness, hypocrisy, and miracles of the persecutor will intensify in order to seduce and deceive them; refined, fabricated, and fine-tuned by insidious inventiveness, the constraints, persecutions, and unlimited power of the torturer will place them in the most difficult situation. Their small numbers will seem insignificant before all mankind, and their opinion will be considered as nothing. General contempt, hatred, slander, oppression, and violent death will become their lot. The saints of God will be able to stand against the enemy of God and confess the Lord, Jesus Christ before him only with the special cooperation of God's grace and under its guidance.

St. John the Theologian writes: *Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world* (I John 4:3).

Those who live with the spirit of Antichrist cast off Christ, for they have accepted Antichrist by their own spirit, entered into communion with him, subjugated themselves and bowed down to him in spirit, acknowledging him as their god. *For this cause*

God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thess. 2:11-12).

In His long-suffering God is a just Judge. This patience shall be both a source of satisfaction (contentment) as well as an accusation and judgment of man's spirit. The Antichrist shall come in his own predetermined time. His coming shall be preceded by a general apostasy by the majority of Christians. By apostasy from Christ mankind shall be prepared for the acceptance of Antichrist, and shall receive him in its spirit. Within the very tone of the spirit of mankind there will arise a demand, an invitation to Antichrist, sympathy for him, just as in the condition of a virulent malady, a thirst arises for a deadly drink (to end the suffering).



St. John of Damascus

The invitation is announced! The call echoes throughout mankind, expressing an insistent need for a genius who would raise material development and success to its highest degree and usher in well-being on earth, after which Heaven becomes superfluous for man. Antichrist will be the logical, just, natural result of the general moral and spiritual direction of mankind. (From the works of Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, vol. 4.)



The Last Judgement

The Birth of Antichrist and His Acceptance by the Jews as the True Messiah

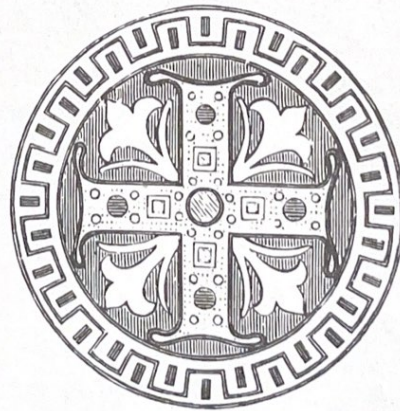
The Antichrist will be a real man, born of a supposed virgin, though in reality a fallen woman, as opposed to Jesus Christ, Who was born of the Most Pure Virgin Mary. Antichrist the man will be the son of evil, and as Hippolytus of Rome says, will be born of an unclean virgin, a jewess, from the tribe of Dan. St. John of Damascus says: "The devil himself shall not become a man, but a man will be born of fornication, and will adopt for himself all the activity of Satan; for God, foreseeing the future depravity of his will, shall permit Satan to enter into him. Born of a fornicator, he shall be raised secretly, shall be announced to all unexpectedly, and will ascend the throne" (Book 4, ch. 27).

St. Andrew of Caesarea writes, "The tribe of Dan is not listed with the others, for out of it will come the Antichrist; and instead of it the tribe of Levi is listed, which, as a priestly tribe is not entered in the list of tribes" (Explanation of Revelations, 7th Chapter).

After attaining a certain age Antichrist will appear in the world. As Jesus Christ appeared first of all to the the Jews with His preaching, so the Antichrist, by descent an uncircumcised Jew, will come first to the Jews, and will then attract other peoples. Those Jews who do not believe in Christ will accept Antichrist with great joy; they will believe him to be the Messiah, promised by the prophets. Concerning such a delusion of the unbelieving Jews the Lord said: *I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive* (John 5:43). The same thought is confirmed by St. Paul: *Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness* (II Thess. 2:10-12).

The holy fathers, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and St. John of Damascus, concur with these words of the Divine Scriptures. The last says: "The Jews did not receive our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; but they will receive an impostor, who will call himself God." According to the teaching of the Word of God and the Fathers and Teachers of the Church, Antichrist will be a man, who will appear in the world by the action of Satan and will act on earth under the direct influence of Satan.

In a sermon of Hippolytus of Rome, Antichrist is represented as a visible, definite man. He will be "meek, quiet, courteous, impoverished; the people will see only his virtues and will select him as their king... saying within themselves, it is hardly possible to have found such a good and righteous man among our people. The Hebrews will think that he will want to reestablish their kingdom. After these things he will become proud in heart and will then be cruel, merciless, and barbarous."



CHAPTER TWELVE

Antichrist Foretold

Saith the Lord Almighty.... I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5). And I will give power unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth (Rev. 11:4). ...These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy. And I will give power unto My two witnesses and they shall prophesy. — And if any man will hurt them, he must be killed. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And after three days and a half, the spirit of life ...shall enter into them (Rev. 11:3-8;11).



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Actions and Name of the Antichrist

Ten kings shall arise, and another shall rise after them, who shall exceed all the former ones in evil, and he shall subdue three kings, and he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints (Dan. 7:24); who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God... whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness in them that perish (II Thess. 2:4, 9-10).

The luminaries of the Church, the holy fathers, unanimously confirm that nobody can know the name of the Antichrist, for the ways of the Lord are past finding out, and His judgments are unsearchable. It is known from Revelation, that Antichrist will give an inscription of his name to all his followers.

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is his wisdom. Let him that has understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six (Rev. 13:16-18).

St. Hippolytus of Rome says, "Antichrist shall become a king, and will demand worship from all, and those who submit will be sealed with his sign, and those not wanting to obey him he will debilitate with suffering and countless severe tortures and executions, and will put Elijah and Enoch to death."

The Antichrist will continue to rule a year and another two years and yet a half year. *And they shall be given unto his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time (Dan. 7:25).*

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God,

that they should feed days. And the holy 12:14, 6;11:2).

Then shall the with the spirit of His coming (II The

And the king self, and magnify things against the accomplished: for t he regard the God any god: for he sha man deceive you by come a falling awi perdition; who op God, or that is we God, showing him.

He doeth gre heaven on the eart on the earth by me sight of the beast should make an in did live (Rev. 13:1

Persecution with the saints, a given unto him to power was given. 13:7).

Ed. note. Sa in general.

that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days. And the holy city shall be besieged for forty and two months (Rev. 12:14, 6; 11:2).

Then shall the wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (II Thess. 2:8).

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that which is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all (Dan. 11:36-37). Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (II Thess. 2:3, 4).

He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had a wound by a sword, and did live (Rev. 13:13, 14).

Persecution of the Saints: I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them (Dan. 7:21). And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:7).

Ed. note. Saints being understood to mean all true believers in general.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Seal of Antichrist

Antichrist shall stamp with his own seal all those who shall have made their obeisance to him. There is very little said concerning the seal of Antichrist in the Holy Scriptures and the fathers of the Church. St. John the Theologian writes in Revelation: *And he (Antichrist) causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads, And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name* (Rev. 13:16-18).

These words clearly show that the seal of Antichrist will be a special imprint, or a sign on the right hand, and that this seal will have a threefold appearance: a plain imprint or seal, the imprint of the name of Antichrist, and finally, the number of the name on the right hand or forehead. St. Andrew of Caesarea and St. Hippolytus indicate the signs of the seal of Antichrist. St. Andrew first explains the seal of Antichrist in an allegorical manner, saying that the seal on the right hand is the denial of good, and the one on the forehead is a denial of truth and a service of flattery (Explan. of Rev; Vol. 13, Ch. 37, p. 62). Secondly, the seal of Antichrist will also have an outer sign — it will contain the number of the name of Antichrist, 666, but the grace of God has not given us to know this name. The same clue is given by St. Hippolytus. Therefore the seal of Antichrist is a special mark on the forehead [and/or] on the right hand. It is also such a mark that it could be placed on every other part of the body, but as St. Ephraim the Syrian explains, it will be on the right hand in order to hinder the followers of Antichrist from using their right hands to make the sign of the cross of the Lord, which is especially fearful for Antichrist.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Miracles of Antichrist

There is clear evidence of the miracles of Antichrist in Scripture, the works of the Holy Fathers, and early catechetical books. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself says that the servants of Antichrist shall show great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24). St. John the Theologian says that one of these servants of Antichrist, his forerunner, shall do especially great wonders (Rev. 13:13-15). And the Apostle Paul says that the coming of Antichrist shall be with all power and signs and lying wonders (II Thess. 2:9).

According to the testimony of the Fathers of the Church the Antichrist will actually perform miracles. We read in the Great Catechism that Antichrist shall come and shall perform miracles by illusions, falsehoods and sorcery. St. Cyril of Jerusalem warns: "Antichrist shall seduce by means of many false signs and miracles."

The miracles performed by Antichrist will be innumerable and diverse as St. Paul describes them, full of all power and signs and lying wonders. The Fathers foresee that people will think that even Christ could not have been able to create as many miracles as will be performed by His adversary, and they depict his miraculous actions in the most clear and detailed terms. St. Hippolytus teaches that Antichrist will cleanse lepers, drive out devils, raise the enfeebled, will communicate with those far away as well as close by, raise the dead, produce mountains before the eyes of beholders, will walk on the sea with feet unwet, bring down fire from heaven, will make day dark, and night day, transfigure the sun as he desires, as well as the moon, and will show that all the elements, the earth and the seas, will seem to all those watching to be obedient (to him) through the power of his illusions (pp. 129-130).

In order to understand these unusual powers of Antichrist it is necessary to remember that his coming will be the doing of Satan (II Thess. 2:9), who at that time will be permitted by God to

act with the greatest freedom, for Satan shall be loosed near the end of the world, even though for only a short time (Rev. 20:3). Blessed Augustine says that the loosed Satan, who is to act through Antichrist, shall assume such power, which he never had before (The City of God, Bk. 20, Ch. 3, pp. 97-98). We do know from Scripture that Satan, when permitted by God, was able not only to smite Job with pus "from head to foot," but he also *brought down fire from heaven and burn up the sheep of Job and shepherds and consumed them, and sent a great wind from the wilderness which destroyed the whole house, in which were the children of Job* (Job 2:7; 1:16-19).

Therefore it is not surprising that near the end of the world the enemy of the race of man will produce through Antichrist even greater deeds, in order to captivate people into worshipping him; for the honor which people will lavish on Antichrist, will really belong to him whom Antichrist shall bear within him. The coming of Antichrist shall occur with all power and signs and false miracles.

According to commentaries of the holy fathers, Antichrist will be a great magician and sorcerer. Satan, who will reside in him from birth, will, through him, arrange false miracles; some imaginary, others naturally, as the Egyptian sages did at one time. St. Andrew of Caesarea says: "It is written that demons often spoke by means of statues and pictures, waters and trees, through the statue of Apollo, and others. Also, by means of dead bodies, as, for instance, Simon the Magician, in Apostle Peter's presence, showed to the Romans movement a dead body which moved. The Apostle exposed him, showing how the dead arise whom he himself resurrected" (13th word on Rev.). Antichrist shall also pretend to die, and will then arise — by such indicated miracles he will astonish the whole world!

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Disparagement of Divine Law by Antichrist; Persecutions and Tortures of those Confessing Christ

Antichrist will be an obstinate enemy of Christ. He will disparage all of Christ's actions and teachings, and will criticize miracles, and will attempt to ruin God's Law; he will renounce baptism, anointing with holy oil, Communion and the remaining sacraments. The holy martyr Hippolytus in his discourse about the end of the world says: "During the time of Antichrist the offering of the bloodless sacrifice to God shall be halted; God's churches will be demolished, shall be turned into dens of robbers and indecent stables; psalm chanting shall not be heard, for every rank and all church splendor shall become extinct." St. John Chrysostom says: "When he appears, he will order nothing that is right, only everything that is criminal and illegal" (4th Homily).

Antichrist will command all to be circumcised and to worship on Saturdays. Being accepted by the Jews as the Messiah, he himself will accept everything that is Jewish; as the Jews do not believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so their messiah, Antichrist, shall disparage and hate Him. *Who is a liar*, exclaims St. John the Theologian, *but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ: He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.*

Having called himself God, Antichrist will have over himself a kind of strong god, i.e., the devil. The holy Prophet Daniel witnesses: *He shall honor the god of forces; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things* (Dan. 11:38).

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Construction by Antichrist of his Altar in the Temple at Jerusalem

Enoch and the Prophet Elijah shall fight against Antichrist in Jerusalem; there *they shall be killed, and their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified* (Rev. 11:7, 8). These words tell us that Antichrist, having been received by the Jews as the Messiah, an earthly king, will establish his throne in spiritual Sodom, i.e., in Jerusalem, on the throne of David. According to the testimony of the Apostle, he will restore the Jerusalem Temple and will sit in it as God.

The holy fathers Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory, Hippolytus, and John Chrysostom designate the church of God and the holy place as the temple of Solomon. St. John of Damascus notes, "Antichrist shall erect his throne not in our temple, but in the Jewish one, for he came not to us, but to the Jews, and not for Christ, but against Him."

St. Andrew says that "He will found his kingdom in Jerusalem, according to the example of David, whose son, in flesh, was Jesus, our true God; and he will do this in order to assure all that he is Christ, fulfilling prophetic words: *I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins* (Amos 9:11)."

The Lord, too, spoke of the throne of Antichrist: *Ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place* (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27).



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Terrible State of the World and All Mankind during the Reign of Antichrist

As the Word of God teaches, so also the holy fathers and teachers of the Church clearly and definitely say that before Antichrist the state of mankind will be extremely fallen, that at that time there will be great affliction, such as has not been seen from the beginning of the world till now, and that finally, except those days should be shortened, then should no flesh be saved. Not only will people in those days suffer "great persecution and cruel torture," but even animals equally with people, and maybe because of people, will be subjected to innumerable sufferings. Finally, even visible nature will suffer various unnatural changes and upheaval and will suffer, not willingly, but because it was made subject to the vanity of man, its ruler and king.

Calamities will overtake the earth in the latter days. Some will be the work of Antichrist, while others will be punishment by the Almighty right hand of God for man's impiety and apostasy. Especially difficult and distressful will be the state of the elect of God, who will not submit to Antichrist. All the ferocities of the man of evil will be turned chiefly on them. "Then there will be great persecution and fierce torture for all Orthodox Christians living in the faith, who do not obey his (Antichrist's) will and accept the mark on their forehead and right hand." They will hide from Antichrist in secret and remote places, in the hills and deserts, but the servants of Antichrist will search them out even there and will return them to worship the enemy of Christ, and he will coerce them to deny Christ.

A special affliction of people during the reign of Antichrist will be hunger. At first, this will be visited on those who will not worship Antichrist and will not accept his seal. St. John the Theologian says that no one will be able to buy or to sell, save he that has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Rev. 13:17), for Antichrist will place merciless inspectors every-

where, and only he who has the mark of the torturer on his forehead and right hand, will buy a little food from the spare quantities that will be available. This circumstance shall cause many to accept the rule of the servants of Antichrist: "Come all and see his strength and power. He will grant you life and make gifts of wine, priceless riches, great honors, and because of the scarcity in food supplies, all will come to him and worship him, and will accept his seal, and the flatterer will give these a little food for the sake of the foul seal."

The visible advantages of those who had worshipped Antichrist, over those who had not, will not last long. Soon, by God's command, seven angels shall pour out seven vials upon the earth, sea, rivers, fountains of water, the sun, the throne of the beast, the great river Euphrates, and finally into the air (Rev. Ch. 16), defeating the rule of Antichrist and those who abandoned themselves to him. So, when by the will of the Lord all of nature will be armed against Antichrist and his worshippers, and when the believers in Antichrist will be exposed to the varied calamities from the punishing right arm of the Most High, and especially when they begin to feel hunger and thirst, then they shall come to Antichrist crying out with sickly voices: "Give us food and drink for we fade away from hunger and illness; command the sky to give us rain, and drive away from us the man-eating beasts." Then the adversary will answer, reproaching them in great perplexity, saying: "Where shall I get the food and drink for you? The sky does not give its rain, the earth does not want to give its grain, where shall I get the foods to give you?" Then, hearing the words of this flatterer, the wretched ones will discover that he is the evil adversary, and will begin to painfully cry and sob, hit themselves in the face, tear their hair, and scratch their faces with their nails. They will cry out: "O the plight, O the betrayal of the flatterer, O the fateful investments, O the fall of the great one, how were we seduced, how were we led to the flatterer, how were we caught alive by his nets! Why did we revile the preachers when we heard them? How did we hear the Holy Scriptures and not understand them?" (St. Ephraim the Syrian, 105th Homily).

The recognition of guilt, however, will not ease the condition of the distressed, for, though greatly desiring to hide, "they will not be able to run from the path of the adversary, but carrying around his mark, they will be better known and recognizable to him." Enduring the just anger of God, they will suffer even more from the thought that this mark will remain their eternal inheritance, in witness of their apostasy from God and Christ the Saviour, and that therefore, after their sufferings on earth, they can still expect eternal tortures in hell; for, according to the teaching of the holy fathers, which is in keeping with the Word of God, for those who have fallen away from Christ and accepted the mark of Antichrist 'there is no salvation'. "These will find themselves no mercy in the day of judgment, having worshipped Antichrist as the Holy God, shall have no part in Christ's coming, but will be put into gehenna together with the serpent" (St. Ephraim the Syrian, 105th Homily).

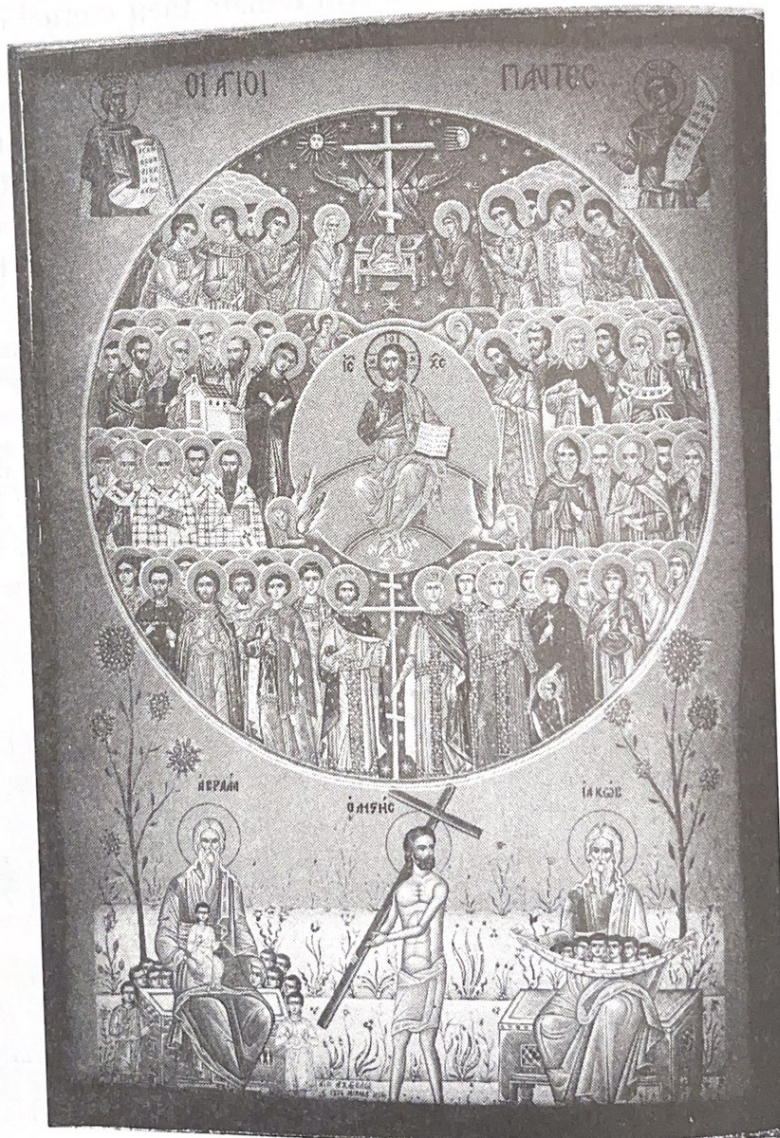
After this it will not be surprising that "there will be darkness over mankind, tears on tears, and sorrow on sorrow"; from such sufferings "pleasant faces and appearances shall wither away, they will look like the dead, and the graces of women will fade away; and gold and silver will be discarded everywhere, and nobody will take it or gather it, but all will become an abomination" (St. Ephraim the Syrian, 105th Word).

He shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps (Dan. 7:23; 11:42,43).

And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings for one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them (Rev. 17:12-14).

When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the

breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20: 7-10).



Icon of All Saints

CHAPTER NINETEEN

**Posthumous Prophecies of our Holy Father Nilus
the Myrrh-streamer of Athos****Foreword**

This book describes the miraculous events which occurred on the Holy Mountain between the years 1813 and 1819 when the Athonite hermit St. Nilus the Myrrhstreamer (+ 1651) made a number of posthumous revelations to a monk of Mount Athos concerning the Antichrist, the decline of monastic life, and an understanding of the true path of salvation. The saint communicated through Theophan that he was being sent by God, like Noah to the pre-flood people, and Jonah to Nineveh, to proclaim that God is ready to accept the repentance of even the most grievous sinners, just as while suspended on the Cross, He was ready to accept the repentance of Judas; He awaited his conversion and mourned his destruction.

Since grievous times are foreseen, of which the Lord says: *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*, the saint made known to those searching for salvation that they need not be troubled and fearful, but try to guard their faith in God inviolate and pure. The saint also foretold of the mark of Antichrist; the worldwide anarchy, which should precede the coming of Antichrist; the coercion of poor farmers; the degree of depravity of the later generations; the preaching of Enoch and Elijah against the seal of Antichrist, and their call to people to sign themselves with the sign of the cross, and much more in a similar vein. These "posthumous revelations" unceasingly tell us of the struggle against Satan.

Fearful are the signs of God's anger, but alas! our insensibility abandons everything to forgetfulness. We firmly confess and deeply believe in the truth of the heavenly appearances of St. Nilus and the godliness of his sayings, in spite of the fact that the form in which Theophan transmitted the content of his conversa-

tions with the saint is quite incomplete. Some parts are difficult to understand, there is much repetition, there are omissions; but with an attentive examination and with the help of God, we can discern the grace-filled thoughts which were uttered by the mouth of Theophan. For the humble, wise searcher of truth these revelations will serve as unquestionable proof of the godliness of their origin, and the humble-minded will not be led astray by the simple style used by Theophan in setting down what he was told by St. Nilus, for he will remember that the Apostles too were fishermen and by their simple teaching the Gentiles were converted.

God Sent Me To You, As The Tablets To Moses

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning (Prov. 9:8, 9).

Now I have presented your life before you, but have you been receptive to all of this? Or will my words vanish as nothing? But, since these words are not my own but those of Him Who sent me, is it possible that they will be in vain? If you will not have the judgment to think of yourself, my words to you will be wasted, and later you will have no answer. If you will not have the judgment to appraise my words, they will be wasted on you, and you will be without defense.

God, knowing the sinfulness of man and the inclination of people to evil, sent Moses to them with the tablets containing the ten commandments; since Moses was slow of speech, his brother Aaron recited to the people the commandments written on the tablets, conveying them through speech for man's understanding. In the same manner I have been sent to you by God, as a tablet (to the monk Theophan), tongue-tied as to grammatical speech, that you might transmit this to your advisor, Father Gerasim, as did Moses to Aaron, and that your advisor might set it down in writing for the understanding of the listeners as did Aaron.

Yes, let Father Gerasim transmit this, but concisely and attentively, for much wordiness causes contradictions and this causes great confusion among people.

Amen, amen, I say to you, contradictions cause harm, not benefits. After he has transmitted my words to people clearly, let him go where he pleases, for they will try to obliterate you from the face of the earth, to kill both of you, and will try to prove that my words are as diabolic prattle.

Moses, having accepted the tablets, related them to Aaron, and Aaron retold them to the people; but they heard only with their ears, and then placed the tablets in the dust under their feet regarding them as nothing. So they will consider my words, which I have told you.



Prophetic Characteristics of People Before the End of the World

For these reasons I tell you... When the seventh number of years shall pass, and five more rising half way toward the eighth, there, halfway to the fifth number, what confusion there will be from the fourth to the fifth (after the passing of 7,400 years from the creation of the world, then between the fourth and fifth centuries, or, during the course of the present 20th century) What plundering there will then be! What sensualism, adultery, incest, and debauchery will then take place!

To what decadence will people then descend, to what corruption through fornication? Then will there be confusion and a great struggle for power (the whole world will encounter revolutions and the struggle of parties); there will be interminable wrangling with no beginning and no end.

Later an eighth (ecumenical) council shall meet, in order to appraise the disorder and to impart well-being to the good, evil to the wicked... The farmer separates wheat from chaff. The wheat is for man, and the chaff for animals. We maintain that the good will be separated from the evil doers, — the right-believing from the heretics, and for a short time people will see peace restored (This is also spoken of in Byzantine prophecies).

Later they will again change their good outlook, will turn to evil with the same evil as those who are perishing. The father and mother, and mother and son, shall not recognize even the crown of marriage. They will have the same fate, one general fall into perdition, just like Sodom and Gomorrah (there will not be found even five righteous people). Then brother will take his sister as wife, a mother will take a son as a husband, sons will murder fathers to commit adultery with mothers; and a whole host of evils will become the custom. To the extent that people become engrossed in evil, so too will grief come upon them.

The more calamities afflict them, the more evil will they become; instead of repenting, they will be angered at God. The evil deeds of people will surpass those of people at the time of the flood. All will speak only of evil, plan only evil, consent to evil, meet others only for evil; every person's works will be only evil ones, with general plundering and oppression, aloofness, and disunion. At the same time they will think that the doer of evil is being saved. Then they will become greedy, (i.e., they will have financial resources, but will complain of the lack of them). They will lend money out at interest, and will receive interest on interest. They will beg in order to feed themselves, and will cry that they have no food. Their main aim will be the gathering of capital in order to have more possessions; as much as their greed will increase, so too will calamities mount in the world.

That is why I say to you: when four quarter centuries will pass, what will be the state of monastic life then? If three more quarter centuries will pass: meaning seven, and five rising halfway to eight, there in the center of the five, what confusion will occur from the fourth to the fifth?

Commentary: The saint said this to Theophan in the year 1817 from the birth of Christ; 7,325 years from the creation of the world according to Orthodox teaching. Therefore, the saint says: when four quarters of a century will pass, (100 years), and the year 7,425 will arrive, what will become of monastic life? (Everybody is familiar with what happened to Russian monasteries in 1917. Before the communist revolution there were in Russia: 529 men's monasteries and 456 convents with 10,998 monks, 15,000 nuns, 10,203 male novices, and 55,450 female novices. There were 53,546 Orthodox churches, 22,850 Orthodox chapels, 37,641 parish schools, 28 teachers' schools, 4 religious academies, 57 seminaries, and 266 church schools. Before the revolution there were 130 million faithful Russian Orthodox people, and today what of all of this has survived and escaped unscathed)? Now, if three more quarter centuries pass, (75 years), and we come to the 7500th year of creation: "the number 7 of years added to 5," (or seven thousand years and 500 years) "rising halfway to the eighth," (when we reach the middle of the eighth age), then here,

"in the middle of the fifth" (1942) "what confusion there will be" (from the 4th [1892] to the 5th [1992]!).

We understand St. Nilus to mean that from the 4th to the 5th means from the years 7,400 to 7,500. A.D. from creation. St. Nilus said the above to monk Theophan in 1817/ 7325. State of monastic life 100 years later 1917/ 7425. The middle of the eighth age 1942 7450. What confusion there will be from the 4th to the 5th century (from 1892 to 1992) 1992/ 7500.



The Prophecy on the Increase of Poverty; Persecution of Poor Peasants, their Resettlements; The Grain Monopoly Preceding the Birth of Antichrist

The poverty-ridden will be persecuted by reason of provincial expenses. (Evidently here we may understand the communist tendency to collective farms, in order to expropriate private property from all, even the poor. The calamities described are fulfilled exactly by the godless communists). The poor, however, not being able to pay their share of the demanded provincial expenses, shall be forced to leave their places and try to find others, in order to find rest and peace there, but again they will find the same troubles, only worse. Finally, not having enough strength to move to another region, they will go to the cemeteries and say: "Take us too; you have rested long enough, let us rest a short while, until the last judgment awakens us." They will say much more to the cemeteries, and the groans of the poor will rise like incense before God. Seeing such sufferings, God will provide for the whole world, (a harvest) and the poor, seeing such good, will happily praise God for the harvest; and when the fruits will be gathered into the barns, the covetous one will come there and carry off all the grain into his (collective) grain bins, and will issue an order, that he who demands grain would come to him, and receive as much as he wants. Then the beggars will begin to go to the greedy one for grain, (i.e., the peasants will buy their own grain from the monopoly).

The greedy one will then receive double the price for the grain than it cost a year earlier; the poor, seeing that the covetous one has turned even God's blessing into an expensive item, shall grumble at God; all, small and great, poor and rich, will grumble, and the latter more than the poor, for the poor are alien to greed. If they have two of some item, they keep one and give the other away out of a sense of duty; and if they have but one, even that is given away of necessity; and if they have none, even then they

praise God. The covetous will imagine that the poor one has possessions and will begin to oppress the poor, in order to take the very last item from him. He will search for the slightest reason to oppress him. Yes, he will oppress him, but how? — he will take

everything the poor man has by taking him to court; and if he has nothing, he will oppress him through jail, where he will weary him for not having anything to pay for his freedom. The usurer will visit the prison and torment the poor one in order to receive payments on the pretext that they are necessary for local expenses; his aim, however, is to receive his interest on the gold, which he has loaned on percentage for local expenses; and this is why he tries to get more than necessary for his interest. (Under "usurers" one should understand bankers, who with their financial nets have enmeshed almost all of Europe and the world).

Where shall the usurer get his bounty? The usurer wants to increase his income from the poor, but the poor do not even have enough to eat, and he, though rich, tries to confiscate something... The beggar is at a loss to find anything that he might give to the usurer, and the latter does not know what he can take from the beggar. If things remain so, he will suffer a loss, (i.e., the gold given out at interest, will not grow), for the poor have nothing that might be taken.

The usurer notices the rich man who walks around in torn clothing (i.e., the one who has loaned out his capital at interest for local expenses, and through the poverty of the peasants did not receive his profit), and he also sees the beggar, (i.e., the peasant), walking around in clean clothing; and the usurer shall pity the rich man, not the poor one, since he wears clean clothing. The usurer does not understand that the clean clothing of the beggar symbolizes his pure heart, for in it he has not the cunningness by which to pretend that he has nothing to wear.

The rich man has what he needs... and has become evil, keeping his heart in rags, just like his clothing. Such has been and will be the rich man's heart; but the heart of the poor shines. Which poor man's heart will shine? — only his who is forbearing and will endure the usurer, (not become angry at his unjust persecution).

Blessed
him, for at
will be acknowledged
say: *Inasmuch as ye are my brethren, ye shall love one another as I have loved the world.* He releases the least of My

O usurer
the poor?
pronounce
eternal life for
know the
know, the
pare it.

The poor
worry, and
which stifles
fire) for you
You prepare
treasures
treasures
sign, release

Yea,
Avarice, and
quired to
sodomy; and
lute drunk
your arrogance
quired no
despair or
gathered
Yea, you
which you
you pretend

So it
think much
one another
poor have

Blessed is he who will endure everything the usurer does to him, for at the time of the Judgment before the fearful tribunal he will be acknowledged "as a brother of the Fearful Judge." He will say: *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.* Do you see, do you hear? How does He regard the poor at the Last Judgment? He says: *these, the least of My brethren* (Matt. 25:40).

O usurer! Piratical is your soul! How long will you torture the poor? At some time in the future you will hear the terrible pronouncement, spoken to you: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* You are preparing it for yourself; but, tell me, if you know the means by which you are preparing it. You do not know, therefore listen and examine the deeds by which you prepare it.

The preparation (of everlasting fire for yourself) is care, worry, and gathering of riches. (Understood here are the cares which stifle the growth of spiritual strivings). You prepare (the fire) for yourself by worrying only about worldly material things. You prepare it by having your whole attention on gathering the treasures of the world into your treasure house; and what are the treasures you discover you have been piling up? — envy, evil design, resentment, and enmity.

Yea, you have grasped for riches, and ended with what? Avarice, usury, and extortion from the poor. Yea, you have acquired treasure, and ended with what? Fornication, adultery, sodomy; a dissipating gluttony, insatiable plundering, and dissolute drunkenness. Yea, you have attracted conceited pride by your arrogant self-esteem and haughtiness. Yea, you have acquired negligent sloth by your carelessness with the distracted despair of cowardice and ungodly forgetfulness. Yea, you have gathered cruelty, cowardice, censure, and anger against the poor. Yea, you have accumulated wordiness, evil gossip, blame, by which you judge that one is harmful, another is despicable, and you pretend to seem better than all.

So it is, that then, (during the time before Antichrist), all will think much about themselves, and aside from that will censure one another. The extortioner will blame the poor and say "the poor have money"; and because the latter will not pay his annual

payment, the usurer will begin to jail the poor and torment him, and strip him, taking all of his silver and gold, in order to gather the interest for his money.

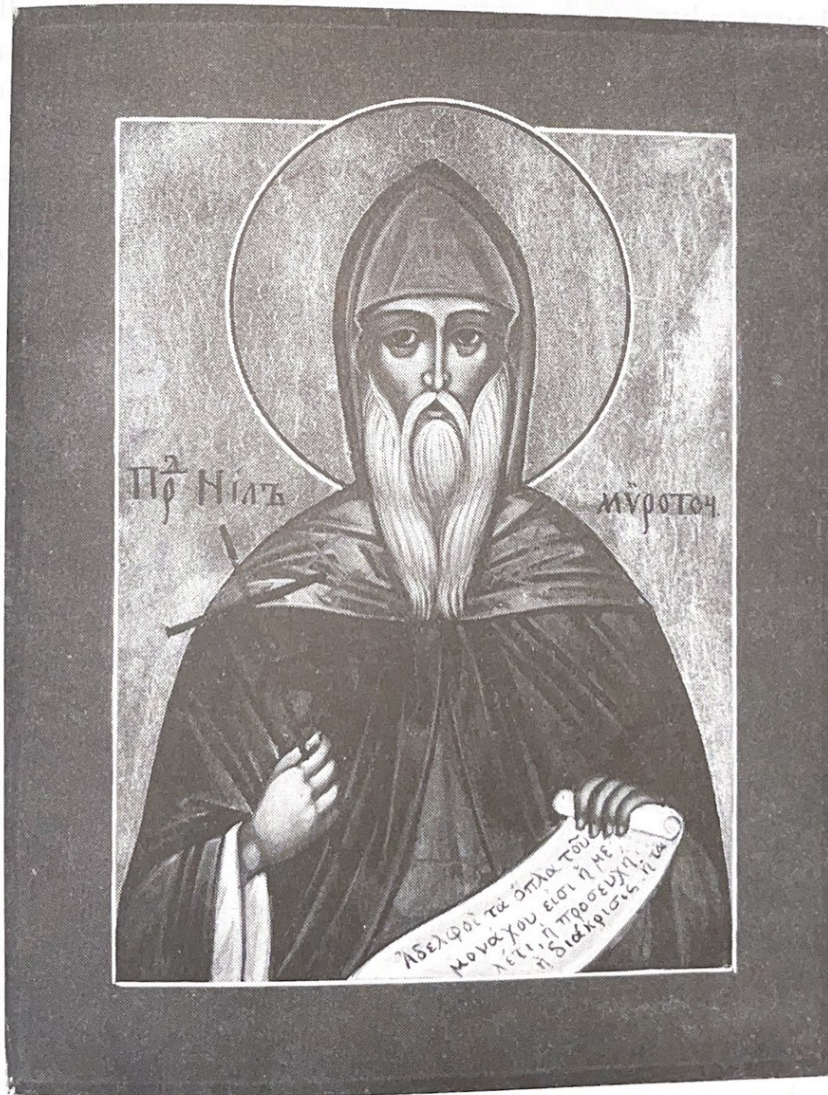
However, the poor, seeing that the extortioner tortures them, will also begin to save and accumulate silver and gold as a reserve for the extortioner. The poor will gather money for the extortioner, but in so doing he himself will be seduced (by greed), and will begin to accumulate for himself; having gathered a surplus, he will desire to double his surplus, and when he succeeds, will want to quadruple it. Suddenly, he dies, departs this life, and finds himself in hell, while his body is buried according to the custom of the land.

Little by little the poor forget Christ in their greed for gold. It is because of you, the usurer, that the beggar overemphasized gold in order not to be jailed, and while gathering it, dies, opening his eyes in hell; and you, seeing that the beggar did leave some savings, censure him and all the poor, that they have savings. Because you humiliate the poor before others though you are the cause of his censure, you too shall be humiliated by the Just Judge at His judgment, and He will say to you: *Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have not done it unto Me.*

You, poor, why are you on a course of soul-destruction (i.e., the avaricious grubbing for money)? You have passed your whole life without avariciousness and God did not allow your destruction; and, today, at the sight of coercion by the usurer, and fascinated by the greed of gain, you became one with the usurer, and have made your soul leprous as did Geza. All of your life you enlightened your soul without greed, and, now when the usurer attacked, you became frightened of his coercion and began to practice usury together with him. For this reason you became equal to him.

Greed is the path to destruction; lack of greed is the path to salvation. You become avaricious and salvation is lost. Due to avarice the salvation of mankind is imperiled by dangerous destruction. This, cursed avarice, will finally bring misfortune into the world, and will destroy the world's well-being. We repeat: the world will forget what well-being is, and misfortune will

reign everywhere. This cursed greed of gain will and has established discord in the world. But avarice will especially menace monastic life, where this curse has begun to flourish to such an extent, along with the dissension that it causes, that it threatens to ruin monastic life itself. For blissful monasticism is now almost destroyed! Not only is monastic life disorganized, but the whole world is in confusion from the curse of avarice.



St Nilus the Myrrh-streamer

The Root of Evil is Avarice, or Love of Money

Avarice is the forerunner of Antichrist. The Holy Spirit, through the prophets, prophesied the economy of the incarnation of Christ; they announced the Truth to the world. On the other hand avarice brought falsehood into the world. Untruth will lead to the incarnation of destruction, when great calamity will come upon the world. As the word of the prophets foretold the economy of the incarnation of salvation, so, too, the increase of cares involving acquisition of property and income are a portent of the nearness of the incarnation of the kingdom of destruction in the world, of the birth of Antichrist, who will be a diabolic vessel completely, and destruction incarnate.

Just as the Forerunner preached baptism by the Truth, and by this converted people to the way of salvation, so, conversely, man's many preoccupations shall darken his feelings and make him insensible to salvation. Because of a preoccupation with bodily cares people will not be concerned for their salvation; they will feel neither the desire for the future eternal life, nor the fear of eternal judgment.

In this manner people will lose feeling (the feeling of internal, spiritual sight, the method by which we achieve higher knowledge), and will not be able to perceive God. They will enter into drinking and eating of fine foods and surrounding themselves with the most beautiful buildings. In these pleasures they will abandon themselves to their bodily senses, to pleasing only the flesh, as if building it up for an eternal festive celebration. Since they will entertain only their carnal senses, it is only good food that they will perceive, and for such things will they strive. Through such proclivity toward carnal uncleanness people will become abominable to God. Yea, God will abhor them, as He abhorred the antediluvian people, but at least He showed mercy to them, through the ark of repentance. God desired that the people of old, observing the building of the ark, would repent; but they directed their feelings toward the carnal, became unfeeling

toward God and the ark, and could not sense the meaning of the ark. This **insensitivity** led them into the depths of the waters.



Noah and the Ark

**Antichrist Will Be Born When the World Will Be-
come
Spiritually Impoverished and When Worldwide
Anarchy Begins.
The Universal Reign of Antichrist.**

Antichrist will be born of an unclean, wanton maid. All debaucheries will be united within this maid, and she will be the treasure house of fornication. Every evil of the world, every uncleanness, every sin will be embodied in her. Through her conceiving from secret wantonness, all sins will be combined in a womb of uncleanness and will be brought to life together with the spiritual impoverishment of the world. When the world will be deprived of the grace of the Most Holy Spirit, then the Antichrist will come to life in the womb of the unclean, from the most filthy and impure woman to have lived, though she will appear as a virgin. Conceived from such secret and unnatural wantonness, the offspring will be the container of every evil, as opposed to the way in which Christ was the ideal of every good quality, and His Most Pure Mother was the ideal of womanhood.

This offspring will be born when the world will be destitute of virtues. What kind of poverty will overtake the world? There are many forms of poverty which will surround and gradually encompass the world. Firstly, love, harmony, and chastity will diminish in the world. Secondly, every settlement and city will be deprived of its leadership. Authorities will leave the cities, villages, and districts, so that not one leader will be found in a city, village, or district. So, too, the Church will lack spiritual leadership. After this impoverishment *the love of many shall wax cold* (Matt. 24:12). *He who now restraineth will be taken out of the way* (Thess. 2:2,7) and the unclean will be born from the womb of impurity. Later, this unclean birth will produce signs and wonders through demonic illusions.

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The world will imagine that this Antichrist is meek and humble at heart, but in reality he will be a fox at heart, and a wolf in soul; the confusion of people will be his food. When people become converted (i.e., perish), then Antichrist will be satisfied.

The confusion of people will lead to censure, envy, rancor, hate, hostility, greed, sodomy, forgetfulness of faith, adultery, and praise of fornication. These evils will be food for Antichrist. As bread for Christ was the fulfillment of the will of His heavenly Father, so food for the Antichrist shall be the fulfillment of the will of his father, Satan.

Antichrist will be made the head of cities, villages, and districts when there are no longer any leaders for these places. Then he will seize authority over the world, will become the director of the world, and will also begin to rule over man's senses. People will believe everything he says, since he will act as a lone ruler and autocrat for the elimination of salvation. People, having become vessels of the devil, will develop the utmost trust toward the Antichrist and will make him a universal monarch and autocrat. He will be the instrument of the devil in his last attempt to annihilate Christianity from the face of the earth. Spiritually doomed, people will think that he is Christ the Saviour and that he will arrange their salvation. Then the Gospel of the Church be held in disdain.

After this, when evil brings great calamity to the world, fearful signs will occur. Terrible hunger will come and the world will experience a great insatiability for food. In comparison to the amount of food a person eats today, he will then eat seven times more and not be satisfied. (Evidently, the perversion of spiritual capabilities will cause man's material needs to be perverted and induce an abnormal appetite for food).

Then a great disaster will occur worldwide. Then the greedy will open their greedy storehouses, i.e., capitalism will be abolished, property will be made equal, on the principle of socialism. Then gold will be worthless, like manure along the road...

The Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of Antichrist

Then the evil of the world will be born in the impure womb of the virgin of evil, who will give birth to Antichrist. As a result of the iniquitous deeds of the world, the grace of the Holy Spirit, which had been maintaining the world, will depart from it, according to the words and I will not join with their chosen (Ps. 140:5). Then the spirit of Antichrist will become incarnate. That spirit which already moves in the world will become a person who will be the most defiled of all men and the perfect vessel of the devil even from his mother's womb, i.e. he will be born of an evil whore although externally she will appear like a virgin (morally).

Yea, evil will be incarnate (the Antichrist will be born) without any masculine seed. Yea, he will be born of seed, but without man's sowing, but will be born through artificial insemination. — (Artificial insemination is already practiced with horses and cattle) **Ed. note.** This concept was entirely new at the time of this revelation which further proves its divine origin.

What then is immaterial seed? The immaterial seed (of the Antichrist) is anger, care, worry, and greed. However, there are various kinds of cares; not every care is destructive and not all lack of care is good. Most important for man is the care for his own salvation.

The salvation of man is found in love, meekness, chastity, absence of greed, virginal purity, righteousness, and merciful kindness, — the "oil" of man's salvation (exactly as the Gospel "oil" of the wise virgins). Righteousness is compassion toward man (the spiritual level of a Christian is always inseparable from kindness towards his neighbor). Kindness exists in two forms: one form is the charity which is expressed by generosity, the other is consolation by word, with which one consoles the oppressed. If there is no opportunity to help the unfortunate then the latter should be assisted by a consoling word. For one consoling word with which you console an unfortunate, you too shall be vouch-

safed consolation by the Just Judge with His decisive words at the Last Judgment when He says: *Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* If you do not comfort the despondent with consoling words, then you yourselves will later hear from the Just Judge these incomparable words: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. 25:25,42). For charitable love frees man from the anger of God.

Love helps to make a person meek and humble in heart; enmity makes a person violent. Love always is patient and never causes temptation; resentment, however, is always impatient, always causing temptation in a man's heart, so that it never has any peace. Resentment is the mark of Antichrist, for it imprints upon man's heart the seal of Antichrist.



What is the Seal of Antichrist Which Seals Evil People Today, and What is the Seal with Which Antichrist Will Seal People after his Accession?

Resentment is the mark of Antichrist and the heart of a spiteful person is sealed with this mark. When Antichrist (the spirit of Antichrist acting in the world) places this seal then by this mark of resentment the heart of man becomes faint (becomes as if dead, incapable of grief for sin, fear of God, or any other spiritual feelings). The saint disclosed the root of the main disturbances of mankind as revolutions, hatred of children for parents, and other discords. These discords are all caused by resentment, or the prideful censure of the shortcomings of our neighbor, disrespect for parents, insubordination to authority, etc. If we consider the spirit of the times and the manner of activities of the enemies of the Church and state, we shall see that they base their whole success chiefly on this, in order to poison people by censure and hatred, and having infected them, to make them their obedient instruments.

When Antichrist places his seal on people their hearts will become as if dead. At the time of the prophesied calamity, Antichrist will begin to seal people with his imprint, as though by this seal to save them from misfortune, for those having this seal, according to Revelation, will be able to buy bread. Many will be dying on the roads. People will become like predatory birds attacking carrion, and will devour dead bodies. But which people will devour the dead? Those who are marked with the seal of Antichrist. Since Christians will not have the seal they will not be able to receive or buy bread and will not devour the dead; but those who are sealed, though they can buy bread, will devour the dead. For, when a man is imprinted with the seal, his heart will become insensitive; not being able to bear hunger, people will carry off corpses, and sitting at the side of any road devour them.

Finally, the one sealed by the Antichrist will himself be put to death; and on the seal the following will be written: "I am yours." — "Yes, you are mine." — "I go of my own free will, not by coercion." — "And I receive you by your own will, not by coercion." These four sayings or inscriptions will be shown in the center of that cursed seal.



Calamities Which will Overtake the World after the Accession of Antichrist: The Ocean Will Dry Up, Animals Will Perish, Time Will Accelerate

O, how unfortunate is he who has been sealed with this cursed imprint! This cursed seal will bring a great catastrophe upon the world. For at that time the world will be so oppressed, that people will begin to move from place to place. Then the native population, seeing foreigners, will say: O you unfortunate people! How could you have decided to leave such a grace-filled region as yours, and come to us in our cursed regions, where no human feelings remain with us?! This is what will be said wherever people will move from one area to another.

Then God, seeing the confusion of the people by which they are evilly distressed, moving to and fro, will command the seas to again become heated as was their former state, so that people would not move from place to place. When Antichrist will occupy his cursed throne, then the sea will boil, just like water boils in a kettle (This is fully possible in the event of volcanic motion of the sea floor). When water boils for a time in a kettle does it not rise as steam? So will it be with the sea. Boiling, it will steam off and will disappear like smoke from the face of the earth.

All growing things on earth will dry up, the groves of trees and bushes will wither from the heat of the sea, the fountains of water will dry up, animals, birds, all creatures will die.

The day will spin like an hour, a week like a day, a month like a week, and a year like a month. For the evil of man will cause even the elements to become strained; they will become tense and hurried, in order that the years of the eighth age, foretold by God, would end more quickly. (This is the eighth millennium from the creation of the world).

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Sermon of Enoch and Elijah, so that People Receive Not the Seal of Antichrist, but Always Sign Themselves with the Cross; The Slaying of these Preachers.

And when the cursed glory of the Antichrist will see Enoch and Elijah preaching and saying to people not to accept the seal of Antichrist, it will give the order to seize them. They, however, will persuade people not to accept the seal of Antichrist, and will say that whoever will be patient and will not be sealed by Antichrist he will be saved and God will certainly receive him in Paradise, if only because he did not accept the seal. Let every one show the sign of the honorable Cross, making its sign at all times, for the sign of the Cross frees man from the suffering of hell; but the seal of Antichrist leads man to the suffering of hell.

If you crave and demand food, bear it a little while, and God, having seen your patience, will send you help from above; you will be revived by aid of the Most High God. If, however, you will not be patient, and will be sealed with the imprint of this foul king, you will later regret this.

People will say to Enoch and Elijah, "Why then are those who received the seal thankful to Antichrist?" Enoch and Elijah will say: "They are thankful, but who is really thankful? It is not the people who give thanks, only the seal itself." (Malice having triumphed over them, it expresses through their lips its delight and joy, for it has been successful in defeating these people, as so often happens with robbers, who celebrate and are joyful having finished their crime).

What is their thankfulness? It is that Satan has entered into them, is conceived in man's feeling, and man does not know what has happened to him. The one who is sealed with the imprint of Antichrist becomes a demon; even though he asserts that he feels neither hunger nor thirst, he craves food and drink even

more, and not only more, but seven times more than you. Be patient for only a little while. Do you not see rather that he who receives the seal of Antichrist will not live (he is dead in spirit, and eternal suffering awaits him)? Is it possible you too desire to perish with the seal in eternal suffering, there to be with those, who were sealed with it?— where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth? Enoch and Elijah will preach to people with many other such exhortations as well.

Antichrist will hear that two men are preaching, calling him a flatterer, sorcerer, deceiver, and a crafty devil. Hearing of this, he will become angry and order them to be seized and brought to him. With flattering words he will ask them: "What sort of lost sheep are you, that you are not sealed with the king's imprint?" Enoch and Elijah will reply: "Flatterer and deceiver! Demon! It is through your fault that so many souls were destroyed in hell! Most cursed is your seal together with your glory! It is your cursed seal and most defiled glory which have brought the world down to destruction; you have brought the world to a state in which it is expiring and its end has come." The Antichrist will hear such words from Enoch and Elijah and will say to them: "How dare you speak so before me, the autocrat and king?" And Elijah will answer: "We despise your kingdom and curse your glory, together with your seal." The Antichrist will become enraged upon hearing such a scornful answer, and like a mad dog will kill them with his own hands.

After the murder of Enoch and Elijah, Antichrist will release his most wicked followers (he will free the evil spirits, which he had restrained until now). These offspring or spirits of evil are adultery, fornication, homosexuality, murder, plundering, robbery, lies, tortures, buying and selling of people, and the buying of boys and girls for fornication with them, like unto dogs in the streets. Antichrist will command these evil spirits who obey him to drive people into doing ten times as much evil as formerly; his evil offspring will fulfill this destructive command, striving toward the destruction of man's nature by a diversity of evil doings. From the intensified efforts and great energy of his evil offspring, man's natural feeling and thought will be destroyed.

By their evil deeds these people will surpass demons, and will be of one spirit with them.

Antichrist will see that the nature of man has become more cunning and vain than that of his most evil offspring; he will greatly rejoice that the evil in man has increased, the natural attributes of man have been lost, and people have become more evil than demons.

Then Antichrist, rejoicing at the sight of man's evil, will discover the "double-edged sword" suddenly descending from above, by which he will be slain and his unclean spirit wrenched from his desecrated body. With the death of Antichrist murder among people will come to an end. Cain initiated murder and the Antichrist will end it, i.e., with him it will cease.



The Word of our Holy Father Ephraim the Syrian on the Coming of Antichrist

Is it possible that I, Ephraim, insignificant, sinful, and filled with shortcomings, can be in a position to speak of things that are above my abilities? Yet, inasmuch as the Saviour, in His great goodness taught me wisdom not from books, and in the same way enlightened the faithful everywhere, He will also make my tongue sufficiently clear for the benefit and edification of all who hear, as well as for myself. I begin my talk with pain, and with lamentations shall I speak of the end of the present world, and of that shameless and horrible serpent, who will bring to consternation everything terrestrial, will put fear into people's hearts, faintheartedness, and terrible impiety, and will perform miracles, omens, and terror, *in order to deceive, if possible, the very elect* (Matt. 24:24), and to deceive everybody with false signs and wonders. For it is by the allowance of Holy God that he will receive the power to seduce the world, since the iniquity of the world is fulfilled, and every sort of horror is perpetrated far and wide. Because of the dishonesty of the people the Most Pure Master will permit the world to be tempted by the spirit of flattery; for people desired to fall away from God and to love the evil one.

It will be a great struggle at that time, brethren, especially for the faithful, when the serpent himself with great authority will perform signs and miracles. When he will show himself like unto God in fearful apparitions, shall fly in the air, and all the demons, like angels, will ascend before the tormentor. For he will cry out with power, changing his appearance and extremely frightening people. Who then, brethren, will prove to be protected, unshakable in faith, having in his heart the true sign — the holy coming of the Only-Begotten Son, our God. One quickly will see unutterable grief descending on every soul for there will be no comfort or rest from any source at all, neither on earth nor at sea. Soon one will see that the whole world is in confusion, that everyone is

hurrying to hide in the hills, that some are dying from hunger, others melt like wax from thirst, and there will be no one to show mercy. Soon one will see that every person sheds tears and asks with longing: "Is the Word of God left anywhere on earth," and hear the answer: "nowhere." Who will endure these days, who will bear the unbearable grief, when he sees the gathering of nations coming from the ends of the earth to see the tormentor, and the many who worship him, calling out in trepidation: "Are you our saviour The sea is restless, the earth is drying up, the heavens give no rain, plants wither, and all who live in the east run in great fright towards the west, and those in the west fearfully run to the east. The shameless one, having then taken control, will send his demons to all corners of the earth to boldly proclaim: "The great king has appeared in glory, go and see him." Who then will have such a courageous soul that he might manfully bear all of these temptations? As I have said, where is there such a man, whom all of the angels would glorify?

But I, O Christ-loving and perfect brethren, am terrified at the thought of the serpent, thinking of that grief which will overtake people in those times, and how very cruel to the human race this unclean serpent will prove to be, having even more anger toward the saints who can overcome his illusory miracles. For then there will be found many people who had pleased God and who may be able to be saved in the hills and desert places by many prayers and ceaseless lamentation. For Holy God, seeing their indescribable weeping and true faith, will show them mercy, like a tender father, and will watch over them wherever they will hide; meanwhile the most evil serpent will continue the search for the saints on earth and at sea, reasoning that since he has already ascended to power all must be subservient to him. Not realizing his weakness and that pride which will cause his fall, the wretch will plot his opposition at that same fearful hour, when the Lord will descend from heaven. In the meantime, he will bring the earth into confusion, frightening all by his false, magical signs.

At the time of the serpent's coming, there will be no peace on earth, for it will see great affliction, confusion, bewilderment, death, and hunger everywhere. For our Lord Himself pronounced with His Divine lips that such grief has not been seen

from the beginning of creation (Mark 13:19). How shall we sinners then be able to imagine grief so great, as God described it? Every one should dwell attentively on the holy pronouncements of the Lord and Saviour, for He, because of extreme need and grief, desires to shorten the time of woe, admonishing us and saying: *But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day* (Matt. 24:20); and *Watch ye, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape these woes, and to stand before the Son of Man* (Luke 21:36); for the time is near. All of us are subject to this grief, but do not despair. Worshipping God day and night, let us sinners unceasingly ask in tears and prayer, that we be saved.

Whoever has contrition and tears should entreat the Lord in prayer that he escape from such great grief which will visit the earth, and that he should not see the beast himself, nor the terrors, quakes, hunger, and deaths which will occur all over the world. A steadfast soul is needed in order to be capable of directing one's life amid these temptations. If any person proves to be even slightly careless, he will be more easily captivated and overcome by the signs of the evil and crafty serpent. Such a one will find no pardon at the judgment, for he himself voluntarily believed the tormentor. We shall need many tears and prayers, O beloved, for some of us to firmly withstand these temptations. The beast will produce many visions; for he fights against God, and desires the destruction of everyone.

Listen, O my Christ-loving brethren, to what he did to Israel in the desert, after they had left Egypt; how the evil, vile one, contrived to implicate all in the most grievous sin. He suggested to Balaam the idea of giving to Balak, the Midianite king, the most evil advice of sending the city women out into the huts to capture the Israelites, inclining them to fornication and pagan sacrifices, so that all would act adulterously with these women like dumb animals. God would finally as a result consume all the ungodly. The king set the women up openly before the people, with food at the doors of the huts together with drink-offerings and sacrifices, drawing them unto their death, in order that if they desired to sin with these evil ones, they would first make a drink-offering before entering the hut; for the women accepted nothing from the

Israelites, but compelled all coming to them to offer a sacrifice. For the princes he brought out princes' daughters, for the rich, the daughters of the rich, and for the people he brought out many plain women, in order to catch suddenly all in the net of death. The rich man did not abhor the poor woman or the prince abhor the daughter of some peasant. Observe the work of lies, the evil design! How he dug a pit of destruction unto death for all! Have any one of you ever seen such a shameless affair— fornication armed with a double-edged sword? For the women destroyed those coming to them with a twofold fearful death, inciting them to offer sacrifices, as well as to take part in fornication.

The very same method will be used by the tormentor, in order that all would wear on themselves the imprint of the beast. With the fulfillment of time he will come to entice all with signs, so that only in this manner they might buy food and necessities for themselves; and for the fulfillment of this decree he will install leaders. Brethren, turn your attention to the inordinate treachery of the beast, to the artfulness of his evil; he begins with the stomach, so that man, led to extremes by the lack of food, is forced to accept his imprint. This unclean one will have his mark imprinted not on just any part of the body, but, so as not to cause difficulty, he will place it on the right hand. He will also place the ungodly imprint on the forehead, so that it would not be possible for a person to use the right hand for making the sign of Christ our Saviour on himself, and without doubt, so that one could not place on his forehead the awe-inspiring and holy name of the Lord and the glorious Cross of the Saviour. For the unfortunate one (Antichrist) knows, that having the imprint of the Lord's Cross on anyone, will destroy all of his power. Therefore, he will place his sign on the person's right hand, for it is the right hand that makes the sign of the Cross on all parts of the body; in the same manner the forehead carries the sign of the Saviour, as the candle stand carries light. So, my brethren, an awesome struggle is in store for all faithful and staunch Christ-loving people, not to yield even once until the hour of death, and not to succumb when the serpent will begin to imprint his seal in place of the Cross. For he will attempt to use any artifice that the name of the Lord and Saviour — this Most Holy and Most Pure Name, should never be

mentioned. He will do this because of his fear and trepidation at the holy power of the Saviour's name. For whosoever will not be sealed with his imprint, will not be a prisoner of his delusions; the Lord will not renounce such a one, but will enlighten his heart and will attract him to Himself.



The Angel of Death

Tearfully and sorrowfully I admonish you, the multitude of Christ-loving and faithful servants, that we should not be easily caught by the enemy; or better to say, that we should not allow ourselves not to be caught through the power of the Cross. The inescapable struggle is already at the doors. Let us all accept the shield of faith; let us lovingly draw upon the hope of salvation for our souls, from the fountain of God. My beloved brethren, I understand the uncreated Consubstantial Trinity to be the fountain and source of life. If our souls will be defended by such a weapon, the serpent will be destroyed. At the same time we should pray that we meet no catastrophes, and not attempt to save ourselves by fleeing in the winter. Therefore, be vigilant, as faithful servants who love their Master and are receptive to no other. For this ungodly, threatening thief will come in his time, with the intent of first abducting, slaughtering, and destroying the elect flock of the true Shepherd. He will assume the appearance of a true shepherd in order to beguile the sheep. Those who are well-acquainted with the holy voice of the True Shepherd will immediately recognize the deceiver; for the voice of the ungodly does not at all resemble the voice of the True Shepherd and is venomous. The voice of the thief is feigned, and is soon recognized for what it is. Let us then try to find out in what form the shameless serpent will come on the earth.

The Saviour, intending to save mankind, was born of a virgin, and in the form of a man vanquished the enemy by the holy power of His Godliness; on earth He was meek and humble, in order to raise us up from earth to heaven. This same God, Who truly and actually was conceived, incarnated, and born in the flesh of the Holy Virgin, in giving us the commandments saved all by His suffering on the Cross. He will also come again at the last day to judge the living and the dead, and, as a just Judge will reward both the just and the ungodly according to their deeds. The enemy, knowing that the Lord will come from heaven in the glory of His Divinity, therefore intends to imitate the form of His coming in order to seduce all. Our Lord will come to earth in clouds of light similar to fearful lightning. The enemy will not appear on earth in clouds of light, because he is an apostate. For in actuality his instrument will be born of an unclean woman; he

will not be incarnate by his own power, but in his image will the devil come, like a thief, in order to seduce all. He will pretend reverence, humility, meekness, and speak of hating falsehood turning away from idols, preferring piety, and helping the poor. He will be proper to the greatest degree, very constant, affectionate to all; respecting especially the Jews, for they will be expecting his arrival. Besides all this, he will perform signs, miracles, and instill fear with great power; he will use cunning to please all, so that ordinary people would quickly love him. He will not accept gifts, speak angrily, or show a gloomy expression, but will always be pleasant. In all of this he will begin to seduce the world by his sedate exterior until he ascends the throne. For when many nations and classes of people will see such good deeds, perfection, and power, all will suddenly conceive the same idea, and with the greatest joy will enthrone him, saying to one another: "How can another such man be found who is so good and truthful?" In the forefront of those glorifying him and rejoicing at his rule will be the Jews and for this reason he will show a preference for them. During the rule on earth of this serpent, the nations will willingly become his allies. Edom, Moab, and also the Ammonites will happily worship him as a legal king, and will be among his first supporters. His reign will be established quickly and he will defeat three great rulers. Then this serpent will become immeasurably exalted in heart and will spew forth his bitterness, discharging lethal poison from Zion. He will dismay the universe, shake it to its ends, oppress it, and defile many souls. He will act now not like a man who is reverent, solicitous, or tender, but at every opportunity grim, cruel, prone to anger, irritable, impetuous, disorderly, dreadful, hideous, hateful, vile, crafty, fierce, destructive, shameless; by his violence he will attempt to drive all mortals to the chasm of ungodliness. He will produce great signs and innumerable catastrophes; but it will all be an illusion, not real events. In a like manner this tormentor will rearrange mountains, but only as a deceitful illusion, and not in reality. In the presence of a huge crowd composed of many nations and classes praising him for his illusory miracles, he will produce a loud sound which will shake the place where the crowds gathered before him stand, and he will proclaim auda-

ciously: "All you nations can now perceive the great power of my rule. Now, before all of you, I command this great mountain standing opposite us that it should move over to us." And the evil one will say: "I command you, immediately to move over to us from across the sea." The mountain will move in the eyes of the onlookers, though not really moving at all from its foundations. For this evil one will not have power over what the Almighty God erected and created from the beginning. He will captivate the world with his magical illusions. Another hill rising from the depths of a great sea, in the form of a large island, will be commanded to leave its place and move to a dry spot on the pleasant shore, to please the onlookers. Although the island will not move from the sea at all, it will appear to be a mountain standing on the shore. Then this serpent will stretch out his hands and gather a multitude of crawling things and birds. In like manner he will step out into the deep and walk on it as if on land, presenting this as an illusion, and many will believe, and praise him, as a powerful god. Whosoever has God within him will have illumined eyes of the heart, and with true faith will see and know him rightly. Everyone who has within him the fear of God, and who has illumined eyes of the heart, will know truly that neither the mountain moved from its place, nor did the island move from the sea to the shore.

Then will every soul cry out and groan; then will all see that an unspeakable grief oppresses them day and night, and they will not be able to find food anywhere to appease their hunger. For cruel overseers will be placed everywhere, and only he who has on his forehead or right hand the imprint of the tormentor will be permitted to buy a little food, if any can be found. Then babies will die in their mother's laps, and mothers will die over their children, and a father, with his wife and children, will die in the marketplace, and there will be no one to bury them. Because of the many corpses strewn in the streets, everywhere there will be a foul stench, greatly astounding the living. Amid groaning and nausea, everyone will say in the morning: "When will evening come, so that we can have rest?" When evening comes they will say to themselves with the most bitter tears: "Will dawn be here soon, so that we may escape the grief which has over-

taken us?" There will be no place to run away or hide, for everything will be in confusion on sea and land. This is why the Lord has said to us: *Be vigilant, urgently praying that you may avoid grief.*

The stench will hang over both sea and land; hunger, earthquakes, confusion, and calamities will abound. The large amounts of gold and silver and silk clothing will not benefit anybody at this time, but all will regard as blessed those dead who were buried before such grief came to the earth. Gold and silver will be scattered over the streets, and no one will touch them for everything has become an abomination. Everyone hurries to run away, yet cannot hide from such grief; instead, together with all the hunger, grief, and fright, they will be gnawed by carnivorous animals and crawling things. Inner fear and outward trepidation; corpses on the streets both day and night. Stench in the haystacks and homes; hunger and thirst, sobbing with rioting everywhere. People greet one another with sobs. Friends and relatives die in the streets while embracing. The beauty of all flesh withers, and people have the look of corpses. The beauty of women becomes loathsome and all flesh and human desire will wither away. However, all who have desires, believed the fierce beast and received his seal, the evil imprint of the profane, will come to him suddenly and say: "Give us food and drink, for we all waste away suffering from hunger, and keep the poisonous beasts away from us." He, now in trouble and having no means to help, will answer cruelly, saying: "People, how can I give you food and drink? The sky does not want to give water to the earth, and the earth will also not give its harvest or fruits." The people, hearing this, will cry out and shed tears, having no comfort in their grief; instead, another unutterable grief will be added to them, namely, that they believed the tormentor so quickly (i.e., the recognition that they were deceived). For since he cannot help himself, how can he comfort them? In those days there will be great deprivation from the many woes caused by the beast, from earthquakes, tumult of the seas, hunger, thirst, and attacks by animals. And all, having accepted the imprint and worship of Antichrist as a good god, will have no part in the Kingdom of Christ, but together with the serpent will be thrown into hell. Blessed is he who at that time is completely holy and faithful, and whose heart

is unquestionably devoted to God; for he will fearlessly denounce all of the serpent's proposals, disregarding his tortures and illusions.

Before all this occurs, the Lord in His mercy will send Elijah and Enoch, that they might preach true piety to mankind and boldly preach the knowledge of good to all, teaching them not to believe in the tormentor out of fear. They will call out and say: "O people, this is flattery! Let no one believe it and obey the antagonist of God; let none of you be brought to fright, for he will soon be brought to naught. Soon, the Holy Lord will come from heaven to judge all who have believed His signs." Few will desire to hear and believe this admonition of the prophets.

However, the Saviour will send the prophets in order to show His unutterable love for man; for, even in such times He will not leave mankind without instruction, that all might be without defense at the judgment.

Many of the saints who may then be found at the coming of the foul one shall shed tears to God in rivers, and in order to be saved from the serpent, will hurriedly flee to the deserts, will hide in the hills and caves in fear, sprinkle earth and ashes on their heads, praying with great humility day and night. This will be granted them by the Holy God. His grace will lead them to specified places, and they will be saved, hidden in chasms and caves, not seeing the frights and signs of Antichrist; for, to those who have knowledge, the coming of Antichrist will be effortlessly made known. But, for whoever has his mind on worldly matters and loves the things of the earth this will not be clear; for whoever is always tied down to worldly things, even though he hears, will not believe, and will abhor those who speak. But the saints will be strengthened, for they have cast aside every care for this life.

Then will all the earth and sea cry out, the air, and together with them the wild beasts and the birds of heaven; the hills and crags, and trees on the plains will weep; the heavenly bodies will also weep for mankind. All have turned away from the Holy Lord and believed flattery, having accepted for themselves the mark of the evil, godless one instead of the Life-giving Cross of the Saviour. The earth and sea will weep, for suddenly the chant-

ing of psalms and prayers has ceased from the mouth of mankind; all the churches of Christ will weep greatly, for there will be no church services or divine offerings.

When three and a half years of the rule and deeds of the foul one will have been fulfilled, and all the temptations of the earth will have been completed, then, as foretold, the Lord will finally appear, like lightning flashing in the sky, the holy, most-pure, terrifying, and glorious God of all, with incomparable glory. Preceding His great glory will be hosts of angels and archangels, all of them like fiery flames; and the river full of terrible boiling fire; Cherubim with downcast eyes and Seraphim flying and covering their faces with fiery wings and with trepidation calling out: "Arise, you who have died, it is the Bridegroom Who cometh!" The graves will open, and in the twinkling of an eye all of the tribes will be awakened and will look upon the holy greatness of the Bridegroom. Great multitudes of Angels and Archangels, countless armies, will rejoice with great joy; the saints, the righteous, and all who had not accepted the seal of the ungodly serpent, will rejoice. The tormentor, with all of the demons bound by angels, all who received the seal, all the ungodly and sinners, will be bound and brought to judgment. The King will issue a sentence of eternal condemnation in unquenchable fire. However, all who had not accepted the seal of Antichrist, and all who had been hiding in caves, will rejoice together with the Bridegroom in the eternal and heavenly mansions with all the saints unto the ages of ages. Amen.

The Works of Our Holy Father Ephraim the Syrian. Part II, III.