



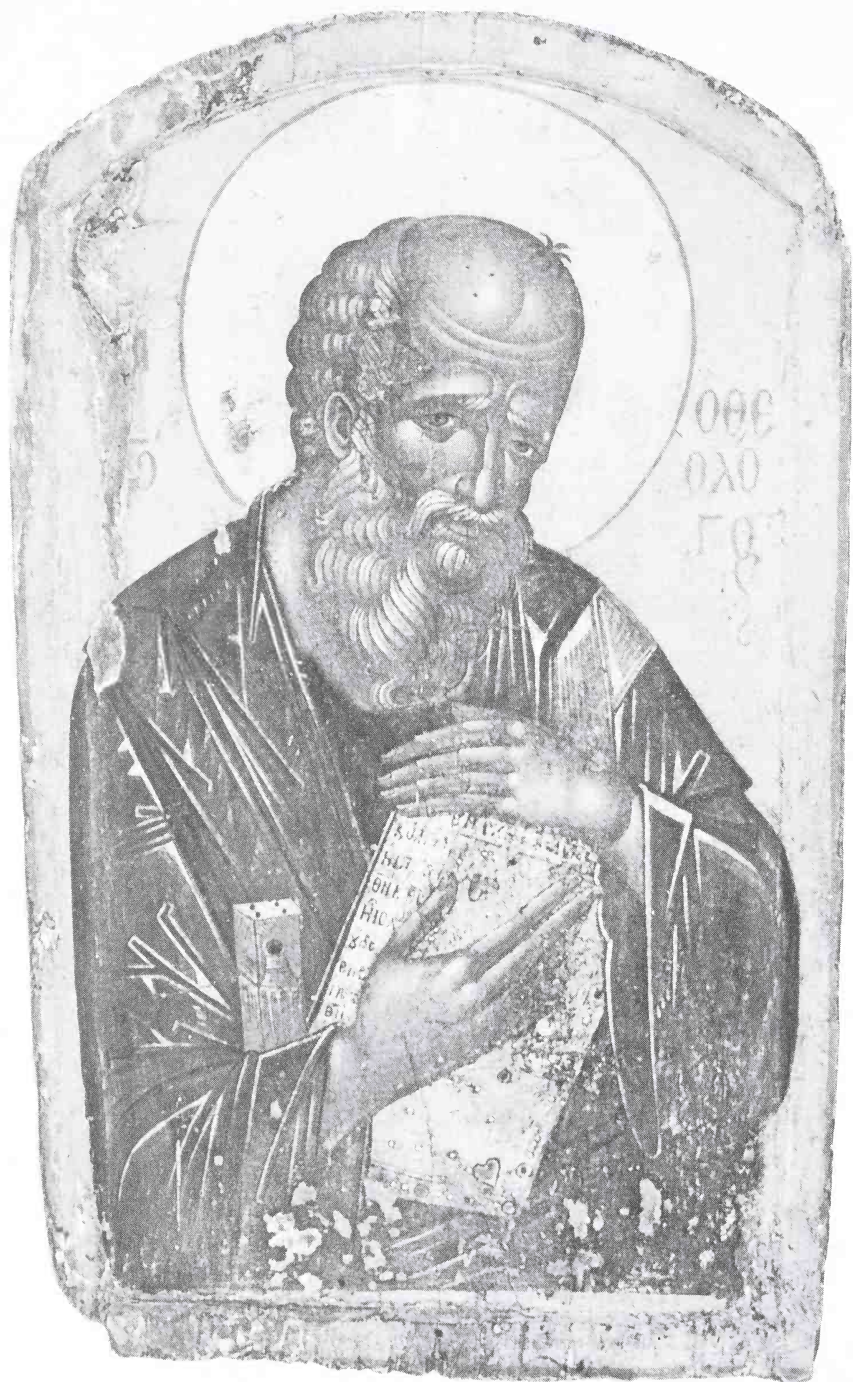
THE APOCALYPSE

in the Teachings of Ancient Christianity

BISHOP AVERKY TAUSHEV & FATHER SERAPHIM ROSE

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THE APOCALYPSE



The Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, author of the Book of the Apocalypse. 16th-century icon from the Monastery of St. John on the island of Patmos.

THE APOCALYPSE

In the Teachings of Ancient Christianity

An Orthodox Commentary by

ARCHBISHOP AVERKY TAUSHEV

*Translated and edited, with annotation,
an Introduction, and a Life of the Author by*

FR. SERAPHIM ROSE



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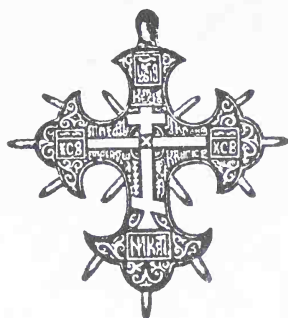
Illustrations of the Book of Apocalypse are from an 18th-century illuminated manuscript of the Old Believers, entitled *Interpretation of the Apocalypse by our Holy Father Andrew of Caesarea*. Courtesy of the Church of the Nativity, Erie, Pennsylvania.

Front cover: Icon of the First Vision of the Apocalypse, located in the Cave on the island of Patmos in which St. John the Theologian beheld the Revelation. Photograph courtesy of Dennis Engleman.

Back cover: 17th-century icon of the Evangelist St. John the Theologian, from Valaam Monastery, Russia.

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THERE IS nothing of which it is more dangerous to speak than the Apocalypse. Futile and over-literal speculation on apocalyptic events is an only too obvious cause of spiritual harm; and no less so, I think, is the facile way in which many of our contemporaries refer to the "apocalyptic" character of the times, and in so doing raise in others deep fears and hopes which their own vague pronouncements are far from satisfying. If a Christian is going to speak of the Apocalypse at all, it is quite clear that—in this as in everything else—his words must be sober, as precise as possible, and fully in accord with the universal teaching of the Church.

—Fr. Seraphim Rose



St. John the Theologian mourning at Christ's crucifixion.
Detail from a 14th-century icon of the crucifixion from
the Church of St. Clement, Ochrid, Serbia.

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Fr. Seraphim Rose of Platina
1934-1982

PREFACE

THE PRESENT BOOK is the first complete Orthodox commentary on the Apocalypse (Revelation) to be published in the English language. Originally written in Russian by Archbishop Averky (†1976), it is now accessible to English-speaking readers through the efforts of Fr. Seraphim Rose (†1982). Unlike Archbishop Averky, Fr. Seraphim was born into a culture and society devoid of the timeless Orthodox world view, outside of what he termed “the saving enclosure” of the Church. He converted to the Orthodox faith as a young man, but his conversion did not stop there. During the years that followed, he continued to deepen his experience of the mystery of Christ’s teaching. Penetrating into the wisdom of the Holy Fathers of the Church, trying to live, think and feel as they did, he grew to acquire their mind and became a genuine transmitter of Patristic spirituality to the modern world. He was successful in this not only because of his ability to distinguish the true from the false and the real from the artificial, but also because of his love and respect for those rare men and women of our times who have passed on the spirit and pathos of Orthodox sanctity. Realizing how the attitude of “knowing better” prevents people from fully entering into the spirit of Orthodoxy, he regarded his preceptors as a devoted son would regard his father, never exalting his own opinions over their living witness of Christian truth. As one such preceptor, Archbishop Averky, was being

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attacked and criticized by some younger clergy who, with a narrow and legalistic mentality, claimed that he was "not Orthodox enough," Fr. Seraphim championed him in print, defending what he knew to be a spiritual giant, one of the greatest Orthodox teachers of this century.

In Archbishop Averky, Fr. Seraphim saw an example of complete faithfulness to the Church of Christ; from his writings he learned that Orthodoxy is more than just the "correct" set of beliefs—it is a transforming power that can rejuvenate all those who truly seek Christ in these last days of apostasy. Both he and his preceptor devoted their lives to making this power known to a world that walks in darkness, to people who had never been exposed to the fullness of Christ's revelation. The present book is a fruit of their combined labors. It is appropriate that this work by a modern link with ancient Christian tradition, Archbishop Averky, should be presented to the English-speaking world through the hand of an American-born link with the Holy Fathers, Fr. Seraphim.

In a sense, this book can be seen as the culmination of Fr. Seraphim's life's work—the first installment of it being published in *The Orthodox Word* only a few months before his repose. The subject of the Apocalypse was so important to him that he would have probably begun writing a Patristic commentary on it himself, had not such an excellent one already been written in Russian by Archbishop Averky. In providing his readers with this commentary, he was giving them a last bit of spiritual food by which they could strengthen themselves against the trials ahead.

Those who are familiar with Fr. Seraphim's many writings are aware that his essential message, like his era, was apocalyptic. Avoiding the sensationalism that is so commonly seen today, he did not endeavor to make superficial speculations and predic-



Archbishop Averky

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tions about "doomsday." His understanding of the Apocalypse, of the apostasy and the coming of Antichrist which precede it, was much more philosophical and penetrating. In fact, it was his discovery of the principle of Antichrist in the world that led to his discovery of the presence of Christ and to his eventual conversion. Emerging from a culture that had lost its traditional values and otherworldly ideals, he found timeless Truth in the image of Jesus Christ, which had been kept pure and undistorted in the Orthodox Church. Once he was reborn in Christ, he was able to see more clearly the disastrous course that the world, having fallen away from God, was taking. Shortly before his death he wrote: "The times ahead, more perhaps than ever before in the Church's history, are a time of what St. Gregory the Theologian well called 'suffering Orthodoxy.' We truly live in apocalyptic times: atheism is conquering the public sphere of the whole world, false religion increases as never before and captures many of those who awaken from the sleep of unbelief, the ecumenical movement draws nearer its goal of a false world church (the harlot of the Apocalypse), and the spirit of the coming Antichrist begins to place its seal everywhere. Those who would be faithful to Christ in these terrible times must be prepared for sufferings and trials which will truly test the faithfulness of our hearts to Him. And yet, greater than these sufferings and the prince of this world who will inflict them upon us is He Who has promised to be with us even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20)."*

As the world apostatizes further and further from Christ, it is all the more imperative for truth-seekers to find answers in the divine, God-revealed teaching of the ancient Fathers, espe-

* *The Orthodox Word* (Platina, California: St. Herman Brotherhood), nos. 100-101, 1981, pp. 195-196.

PREFACE

cially with regard to the Apocalypse and the end times. It is indicative of the spiritual poverty of our age that many sincere Christians are not even aware that such teachings exist, but think that they have to interpret sacred texts for themselves, based on their fallible human reasoning. It is hoped that, with this book, more people will discover that the saints and visionaries of former ages have something to say about us and the events we witness around us.

Ignorance of Patristic writings and Church history has already caused many to follow ancient heretical teachings about the end times. Chiliasm, the second-century heresy that expects Christ's Kingdom to be this-worldly rather than otherworldly, is now accepted by an overwhelming number of religious groups. Both Archbishop Averky and Fr. Seraphim were concerned that this heresy be exposed, since it can induce many well-intentioned Christians to succumb to Antichrist when he establishes his counterfeit kingdom of God on earth. In the face of such false teachings which threaten to "deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24), this book is intended to awaken souls with a desire for the true kingdom "not of this world" (John 18:36), and to win more citizens for the new Jerusalem which will be revealed at the end of time.

Br. John Damascene
October, 1985



Archbishop Averky Taushev of Jordanville
1906-1976

About the Author:

Archbishop Averky

HIS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE ECUMENICAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH

by Fr. Seraphim Rose

*"Alas! His golden lips
have been silenced!"*

TOO OFTEN have we Orthodox Christians grown used to "taking for granted" the great men in our midst, of not valuing them as we ought until they have departed from us—and even then not evaluating them properly, and letting their significance and their teaching slip away from us into oblivion.

Archbishop Averky was one of the last of the giants of 20th-century Orthodoxy, not merely of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, or even of Russian Orthodoxy—but of the whole of the 20th-century Orthodox Church.

Born Alexander Pavlovich Taushev on October 19 (Nov. 1), 1906, in Kazan, Archbishop Averky was of a noble family. His father was a government official whose duties took him to many parts of Russia, allowing young Alexander to have a firsthand acquaintance with the heart of Holy Russia, its monasteries and holy places; the memory of these places remained with him all his life, even though he left his homeland while still

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a young teen-ager. Even at that tender age he was attracted to books of a spiritual nature, such as *Unseen Warfare*, and already from the age of seven or eight he began to feel an alienation from the ordinary life of the world and a subconscious attraction towards the monastic life.

In the midst of the civil war that followed on the Revolution of 1917, the Taushev family left Russia, in 1920, with great grief of soul. The family settled in the Bulgarian city of Varna, where Alexander attended school until 1926. The chief religious influence on him at this time was the local parish church and its priest, Father John Slunin.

Then, in 1925, a bishop came to Varna who was to give Alexander's life its direction: Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, a strict monk, a man of prayer, and theologian in the true Patristic tradition. After meeting him, the young student resolved to undertake the monastic way of life. With Archbishop Theophan's blessing, he attended the Theological Faculty of the University of Sophia, and on graduating from it with brilliant success in 1930 he went to Carpatho-Russia (in Czechoslovakia) with the intention of becoming a monk and serving the Russian Church. Tonsured a monk there in 1931, and ordained priestmonk the next year, he served several parishes and assisted the abbot of the monastery of St. Nicholas near the village of Iza. Soon he also undertook responsibilities as editor of the diocesan periodical and teacher of catechism in secondary schools.

When Carpatho-Russia was occupied by the Magyars in 1940, Father Averky went to Belgrade and served under Metropolitan Anastassy, Chief Hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, conducting courses in religious subjects both for seminarians and laymen.



Archbishop Theophan of Poltava
1874-1940

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When the Synod of Bishops moved to Munich in 1945, he followed it and continued his work of the religious education of youth. In 1950 he was appointed by the Synod as chairman of its Missionary Education Committee. When he came to America in 1951 he was invited to the newly organized Holy Trinity Seminary at Jordanville, New York, to teach New Testament, Liturgics, and Homiletics. In 1952 he became Rector of the Seminary, in 1953 Bishop of Syracuse, and in 1960, at the death of Archbishop Vitaly, Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery. In these positions he continued until his death his life's work of enlightening the Orthodox faithful, both the future pastors of the seminary (about 100 priests came from the seminary in these years) and all those who read the Monastery's publications, which were all solid works of Orthodox piety and theology. His sermons appeared frequently in the Monastery's bimonthly publication, *Orthodox Russia*, and his own books included textbooks on Homiletics and the interpretation of the New Testament (2 volumes), collections of his sermons and articles, and works on the life and letters of his beloved Abba, Archbishop Theophan.

All of the writings of Archbishop Averky bear one and the same character of love for God's truth, righteous zeal in expressing it, and urgent exhortation to others to follow it.

The abundance with which his golden lips gushed the sweet honey of the pure teaching of Orthodoxy, especially in his most fruitful last years, has perhaps helped to hide from us the rarity and even uniqueness of his teaching in our evil days. We have grown so used to his flaming and bold words that we have not noticed that he was virtually the only hierarch of any Orthodox church writing in any language with such boldness and uprightness in defense of Orthodoxy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In earlier centuries the Church had many Holy Fathers writing in defense of Orthodoxy against the numerous heresies which attacked her singly or together. But in our day, when Orthodox Christians are losing the savor of Orthodoxy and virtually all the Local Orthodox Churches are giving in to the apostasy of our times, his voice was almost the only one to continue speaking the truth with such vigor and boldness, even amid the many infirmities of his old age. Truly, he was a champion of Orthodoxy in our age when faith is growing cold.

His view of the contemporary world was sober, precise, and entirely inspired by the Sacred Scripture and Holy Fathers of the Church. He taught that we live in the age of the Apostasy, the falling away from true Christianity, when the "mystery of iniquity" has entered its final stage of preparation for the "man of sin," Antichrist (II Thes. 2:3-12). Archbishop Averky traced the development of this Apostasy in particular from the time of the schism of the Church of Rome (1054), through the era of Humanism, the Renaissance and Reformation, the French Revolution, 19th-century materialism and communism, culminating in the Russian Revolution of 1917, which removed the last great barrier to the working of the mystery of iniquity and the coming of Antichrist. (See his book, *True Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World* [in Russian], Jordanville, 1971, pp. 18-21; the quotes that follow are all from this book.)

In such an age, he writes, "to be a true Orthodox Christian, ready unto death to preserve one's faithfulness to Christ the Saviour, in our days is much more difficult than in the first centuries of Christianity" (p. 17). Although often open (in the lands under communist control), the persecution against Christianity today is more often hidden. "Under the covering of a deceptive outward appearance that looks good and leads many into error, in actuality there is occurring everywhere today a

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hidden persecution against Christianity.... This persecution is much more dangerous and frightful than the previous open persecution, for it threatens a complete devastation of souls—spiritual death” (18). He often quoted the words of Bishop Theophan the Recluse about the latter times: “Although the name of Christian will be heard everywhere, and everywhere there will be churches and church services, all this will be only an appearance, while within there will be a true apostasy” (21).

In fulfillment of these words in our own days, Archbishop Averky writes, “The Christian world, it is frightful to say, presents today a frightful, cheerless picture of the most profound religious and moral decadence” (22). The temptation of worldly comfort and prosperity drives God away from the soul. “The servants of Antichrist more than anything else strive to force God out of the life of men, so that men, satisfied with their material comfort, might not feel any need to turn to God in prayer, might not remember God, but might live as though He did not exist. Therefore, the whole order of today’s life in the so-called ‘free’ countries, where there is no open bloody persecution against faith, where everyone has the right to believe as he wishes, is an even greater danger for the soul of a Christian (than open persecution), for it chains him entirely to the earth, compelling him to forget about heaven. The whole of contemporary ‘culture,’ directed to purely earthly attainments and the frantic whirlpool of life bound up with it, keeps a man in a constant state of emptiness and distraction which gives no opportunity for one to go at least a little deeper into his soul, and so the spiritual life in him gradually dies out” (29). All of contemporary life, on the public level, is a preparation for the coming of Antichrist: “All that is happening today on the highest levels of religion, government, and public life...is nothing else than an intense work of preparation by the servants of

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

the coming Antichrist for his future kingdom" (24), and this work is being done as much by "Christians" as by non-Christians (18).

After painting such a grim picture of the present and future, Archbishop Averky calls on Orthodox Christians to struggle against the spirit of this world that lies in evil. "All who in the present day desire to preserve faithfulness to Christ the Saviour must guard themselves especially against every attraction towards earthly goods and against being deceived by them. It is extremely dangerous to give oneself over to every desire to make a career for oneself, to make a name for oneself, to obtain authority and influence in society, to acquire wealth, to surround oneself with luxury and comfort" (28).

To those willing to struggle to preserve their faith, Archbishop Averky offers a sober and inspiring path of confession: "Now is the *time of confession*—of a firm standing, if need be even to death, for one's Orthodox faith, which is being subjected everywhere to open and secret attacks, oppression, and persecution on the part of the servants of the coming Antichrist" (28). We must be true Christians, not giving in to the spirit of the times, making the Church the center of our lives (26)....

The path ahead of us, despite the deceptive promises of modern "progress," is a path of suffering: "The Lord has clearly said that it is not 'progress' that awaits us, but ever greater tribulations and misfortunes as a result of the increase of lawlessness and the growing cold of love; when He comes, He will scarcely find faith on earth (cf. Luke 18:8)."

The strength of the true Christian in the terrible times ahead is the apocalyptic expectation of the Second Coming of Christ: "The spirit of a constant expectation of the Second Coming of Christ is the original Christian spirit, which cries

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out in prayer to the Lord: *Even so, come, Lord Jesus* (Apoc. 22:20). And the spirit opposed to this is undoubtedly the spirit of Antichrist, which strives by every means to draw Christians away from the thought of the Second Coming of Christ and the recompense which follows on it. Those who give in to this spirit subject themselves to the danger of not recognizing Antichrist when he comes and of falling into his nets. Precisely this is the most frightful thing in the contemporary world, which is filled with every possible deception and temptation. The servants of Antichrist, as the Lord Himself has forewarned us, will try, *if it were possible, to deceive the very elect* (Matt. 24:24). The thought of this, however, should not oppress or crush us, but on the contrary, as the Lord Himself says, *Then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh* (Luke 21:28)."

It is such a man, a true Holy Father of these latter times, filled with the Christian apocalyptic expectation of Christ's Second Coming and with the sober Orthodox spirit of preparedness for it, who is the author of the following commentary on the culminating book of the New Testament Scriptures, the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian. Although his interpretation of the book is based solidly on the early Fathers of the Church, the very fact that he himself is so much in their spirit, and in the spirit of St. John, is a pledge for us of the accuracy of his commentary, as well as of the fact that it can speak not merely to our curious minds, but also and above all to our believing hearts. Archbishop Averky was an Orthodox scholar in the unbroken tradition of Patristic thought which has come down to us from the ancient Fathers to our own days, and which he imbibed most of all from his own teachers, the 19th-century Theophan (the Recluse, †1894) and the 20th-century Theophan (of Poltava, †1940). An unblemished

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teacher of the Orthodox moral and spiritual life, he is also an unrivalled theological and Patristic guide for us.

There are few saints left in our pitiful times. But even if we do not see about us now such upright and righteous ones as he, his teaching remains with us and can be our guiding beacon in the even darker days ahead which he foresaw, when the Church may have to go into the wilderness, like the Woman of the Apocalypse (ch. 12)—the Church of the last times.



St. John the Theologian, shown here as a young man during the life of Christ. 16th-century icon from Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

by Fr. Seraphim Rose

OUR TIMES, more than any before us, are "apocalyptic." It has become realistic politics to speak of the possibility of the annihilation of whole countries and even of the whole of humanity, whether by nuclear weapons or by the production of the modern "monsters" of pollution, chemical and biological experiments, and the like.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the book of the Apocalypse (Revelation) has attracted widespread interest today as never before. However, much of the interest in it is very superficial, as may be seen in a popular book of our times, Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Someone interested in world affairs and a believer in the truth of the Bible can read this book (which has sold over ten million copies in the United States) in a single sitting and be extremely impressed about how everything "fits together," how the prophecies of the Apocalypse seem to apply directly to our own times. Identifications are made of Scriptural personages and symbols: the "king of the south," the "king of the north," "Gog," "Magog," and many others; and the events associated with these names in Scripture are applied to contemporary history and future projections

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based on it with regard to Russia, China, Europe, Israel, the Arab countries, etc. In such books as this one is told to "watch what Russia does next," "look at Iran," "a tenth nation will join the Common Market" of Europe; etc. All this can make one very excited, almost dizzy, in an agony of suspense over what apocalyptic event will occur next.

But this is not the way we should be reading the book of the Apocalypse. Some of these identifications may turn out to be accurate; others will turn out to be the product of a fevered imagination. But it is all on a superficial level which does not help us to save our souls; we should approach Biblical prophecy, and in particular the book of the Apocalypse, in a quite different way.

AIDS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE APOCALYPSE

The difficult images and symbols of the Apocalypse are best examined separately in a reliable Orthodox commentary like that of Archbishop Averky, who has taken as his chief source the 5th-century commentary of St. Andrew of Caesarea, who in turn sums up the earlier Patristic commentaries on this book (some of which no longer exist). But it will also help us, in approaching this book to keep in mind the general aids to the interpretation of Scripture which have been utilized in such commentaries.

1. In some cases, the Scripture itself interprets its own difficult images. In the Apocalypse, for example, when our Lord Jesus Christ was seen in the first vision in the midst of seven golden candlesticks with seven stars in His right hand, He Himself explained the meaning of these two images to St. John (Apoc. 1:20). Similarly, the angels who appeared to the Prophet

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Daniel explained for him some of the symbols seen in his visions (Daniel 7:16-27; 8:16-26; etc.)—symbols which themselves are related to the content of the Apocalypse.

2. Parallel passages in other books of Scripture often shed light on or even directly explain some of the difficult images in the Apocalypse. The book of Daniel and other Old Testament prophets are especially helpful in this regard, as are the New Testament books that describe the coming of Antichrist. The fact that there are a number of Orthodox commentaries on these other books helps to make up for the fact that there are so few on the Apocalypse itself.

3. A knowledge of Orthodox doctrine in general—and in particular of Orthodox eschatology (the doctrine of the last things, including the end of this world)—is an indispensable part of any study of the Apocalypse. Without it, Protestant interpreters have gone astray into a multitude of fanciful opinions about the Apocalypse (for example, notions of the “millennium,” the “rapture,” etc.) which only lead readers astray and, in many cases, actually prepare them to accept Antichrist in place of Christ. The general account of the events preceding and accompanying the end of the world contained in the other New Testament Scriptures (Matthew chs. 24-25, Mark ch. 13, Luke ch. 21, II Peter ch. 3, II Timothy ch. 4, I Thessalonians chs. 4-5, II Thessalonians ch. 2, Romans ch. 1, I Corinthians ch. 15— all interpreted, of course, in accordance with the commentaries of the Holy Fathers) gives an outline of the Church's eschatological teaching which places the events described in the Apocalypse in their proper dogmatic and historical context.

4. Also, helpful is an historical examination of the book itself—the author, time and place of writing, and most of all, its purpose—all within the context of Orthodox tradition and

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piety, and not in the spirit of the rationalistic criticism of modern times, which often destroys the meaning of the book in its concern to be in harmony with academic fashion. Archbishop Averky's Introduction supplies this examination for Orthodox readers.

5. A knowledge of ancient languages, geography, history, archeology, etc., can sometimes throw light on various passages of Scripture.

6. More important than any specific scientific knowledge, however, is a general view and philosophy of history and culture. To understand some of the visions of the Apocalypse (and the Old Testament book of Daniel to which it is so closely related), one must have a grasp of the meaning of the succession of world monarchies and of the one unending monarchy of Christ which replaces them. Further, one can better understand Antichrist by studying ancient tyrants (such as Antiochus Epiphanes) and the modern rulers (truly forerunners of Antichrist) who attempted world conquest—Napoleon, Hitler, Communism.

With these aids the context of the Apocalypse, difficult as it sometimes is, may be fairly well understood. However, since the book is so much composed of symbols and figurative images, we should make a special note on the different levels of meaning in the Holy Scripture.

LITERAL VS. SYMBOLICAL OR MYSTICAL MEANINGS

Many would-be interpreters of Scripture go astray precisely on this point, whether by a too-literal understanding (as in the case of the Protestant Fundamentalists who come close to believing that *everything* in the Bible is “literally” true) or a

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too-free interpretation (as in the case of the liberals who dismiss everything difficult to believe as "symbolic" or "allegorical"). In the Orthodox interpretation of Scripture these two levels of meaning, the literal and the symbolical, are often intertwined.

There are many passages, to be sure, that are only meant to be understood literally; such are the strictly historical parts of Scripture (for example: "I John ... was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"—Apoc. 1:9-10). Theoretically, every point in such historical statements could be checked for accuracy by means of eye-witnesses, primary documents, early church historians, etc. Metaphorical statements, as when natural things are spoken of in poetic images ("The sun knoweth his going down"—Ps. 103) may also be classed under the literal sense of Scripture, as are those cases when actions or qualities of God are spoken of in earthly terms, or when bodily members or passions are ascribed to God (God grew angry, or repented, or walked in Paradise). These kinds of meaning can still be classed as "literal" (even though they are not strictly so) because they only attempt to describe reality as it is (whether earthly or Divine) and not to refer to something else entirely.

Symbolical meanings, on the other hand, can be of several kinds. There are, for example, *prefigurations*, when historical persons or events are used as *types* or foreshadowings of events in the life of Christ (for example, Jonah's three days in the whale, prefiguring Christ's three days in the grave—Matt. 12:40); *symbols*, when Divinely inspired actions indicate God's will or revelation (for example, the bonds and yokes which Jeremiah put on, signifying the Babylonian captivity—Jer. ch. 27; or the girdle of St. Paul which the prophet Agabus wound around himself, indicating the Apostle's imprisonment in Jeru-

salem—Acts 21:11). In both these kinds of symbolical meaning the literal, historical meaning of the text is also true.

In what one might call *mystical images*, when a deeper, spiritual meaning is given to some earthly person, thing or event, the literal sense is also retained—as, for example, with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Paradise, which St. Gregory the Theologian interpreted as “contemplation” without thereby denying that it was also a tree; or the tree of life, which besides being a prefiguration of the Cross of Christ is also an image of the future eternal life, without ceasing to be a literal tree in a literal garden, as Patristic tradition makes clear.

There is also *allegory*, in which a fictitious story is used as symbolizing a higher reality; this is rather rare in Scripture, and is chiefly limited to such forms as *parables* and *apologies*—instructive stories and fables in which the literal story itself need not be true (although in some parables it may be true). Even the *Song of Songs*, a kind of allegory of the love between Christ and the Church, has a historical reference to the love between Solomon and his Egyptian bride.

The *visions* of the Apocalypse, on the other hand, make use of symbols of a little different kind from all the above. Sometimes they present heavenly realities in forms adapted to the understanding of the seer (the vision of Christ in chapter 1; of heaven in chs. 4-7; of the future age in chs. 21-22); sometimes they present allegorical pictures of the Church and her life (the “woman clothed with the sun” in ch. 12, the “thousand years” of the Church’s existence in ch. 20), or of specific beings that war against the Church (the dragon in ch. 12, the two beasts of ch. 13), or of future events, whether general (the four horsemen of ch. 6) or specific (the seven last plagues of ch. 15).

The interpretation of all these images—to the degree that it is accessible to us now, before all the prophecies have been

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fulfilled—is set forth in the text of the commentary. Here we shall give only a few final words of warning and preparation for the reader.

1. We should not be over-definite or overly narrow in our interpretation of these images and visions. Many of the symbols of the Apocalypse are so sweeping in their application that no simple prose formula can encompass them; a man of richer experience and knowledge will see more in them than someone who lacks these. Too, as history proceeds to its end, the meaning of some of the images will become clearer. Archbishop Averky himself notes that some of the images simply cannot be understood yet, while of others (for example, the “locusts” and “horses” of ch. 9) he hazards interpretations based on the 20th-century experience of warfare.

2. We must be careful to distinguish between the passages that refer to realities of this fallen world of earth, and those that refer to the other world, heaven. Misinterpretations of the Apocalypse invariably confuse these two spheres by trying to apply prophetic visions about the other world (where sickness and sorrow have an end, there is no death, and “the leopard shall lie down with the kid”—Is. 11:6) to this earthly world; this is the fatal mistake of the chiliastic interpretation which prevails among Protestants today, which understands the “thousand years” of chapter 20 as a kind of “heavenly” historical epoch and applies to the earthly Jerusalem the Old Testament prophecies which can refer only to the heavenly Jerusalem in the age to come.

Sometimes even Orthodox commentators will have varying interpretations of these visions with their images. We should not, however, be quick to look for “contradictions” in this fact. With symbolic language it often happens that images have *multiple meanings* and levels of interpretation. Thus, the strange

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creatures of chapter 9 may indicate frightful modern weapons, but they may also symbolize demons and the actions of human passions; the "great star" of chapter 8 may be a meteor or missile or some other physical cause of destruction, but it may also symbolize the devil.

3. The chiliastic interpretation of the Apocalypse proceeds also from another basic mistake of most Protestant interpreters: to take the text of the book in strict *chronological* order instead of seeing it as it is: a series of visions quite distinct in nature from each other—some of heaven, some of earth; some very general and symbolic, some quite specific and literal; some of the past, some of the future, and some of the present. To identify each of these visions for what it is requires a precise Orthodox commentary and not simply a reading of the text as it appears to our modern understanding. The present book is an attempt to supply this much-needed Orthodox commentary.

4. Our reading of the Apocalypse should be one not of fevered excitement but of sober awareness. Our first concern should be to gain an understanding of the Orthodox doctrine and world view which are contained in the book; about specific applications of prophecies to contemporary events we should be slow to form a judgement and not be carried away by our own opinions and fantasies.

5. It is very important that the reading of this book should be done together with regular spiritual nourishment—the Church's services and sacraments, regular reading of Scripture and spiritual books. If this is done, and our Orthodox Christianity is a *conscious struggle* conducted daily and constantly—then we will be not overwhelmed by some new catastrophe or some new fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy.

6. With all this in mind, we must understand that the Apocalypse is a book of *mysteries*—the deep things bound up

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with the beginning and end of all things, the ultimate purpose of the world and man, the opening of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven; and so we must read it with *fear of God*, and with a *humble distrust* of our own wisdom.

THE APOCALYPSE—A BOOK FOR OUR TIMES

The subject of the Apocalypse is a mystical depiction of the future fate of the Church of Christ and of the whole world; it describes the battle of the Church against all its enemies and its final triumph over them. Thus, the reading of this book is a great consolation especially in times of persecutions and discouragements for Christians—such as our own times. Historical events which we see about us are placed in the context of the whole battle of the Church against the powers of evil, and the final victory of the Church and the opening of the unending Kingdom of Heaven.

Members of the Catacomb Church in Russia today invariably see themselves in terms of the persecuted woman in the wilderness (Apocalypse, ch. 12) and thereby gain strength from God for their most difficult struggle. When the powers of evil take such a strong form as that of a totalitarian atheist government, it is very easy to give up the battle if one does not have a picture of the *meaning* of this seeming triumph of evil, and a knowledge of the eventual triumph of good and Christ's Church.

Much interest was shown in this book in the Church of the first Christian centuries, when it seemed that the events depicted there might be close to fulfillment. However, the temptation of chiliasm, into which even some of the early teachers of the Church fell (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, St. Justin the

Philosopher), together with the peace and stability of the age of Constantine, when the empire itself became Christian—led to a waning of apocalyptic thinking in the Church and a general neglect of the book. Even its place in the New Testament canon was uncertain until the 4th century, and some of the great Fathers of the Church hardly mention it. As Archbishop Averky states, it is the one New Testament book which has no regular place in the Scripture readings during church services, even though the Typicon does give it a place in a part of the services which is seldom if ever performed in our days. (At the Saturday night Vigil, all the New Testament Epistles and the Apocalypse are appointed to be read in order between Vespers and Matins, beginning with the Sunday of All Saints.)

Some great Fathers, however, did make use of the Apocalypse: among the 3rd and 4th-century Fathers one can name St. Hippolytus of Rome, St. Cyprian of Carthage, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and Blessed Augustine. Some of their interpretations of the book will be given in the footnotes.

The one main Patristic commentary on the book is that of St. Andrew of Caesarea in the 5th century, which rejects the main misinterpretations of earlier centuries and gives the Orthodox understanding of such points as the “thousand years” of Christ’s reign with His saints (ch. 20). In the present work, in addition to St. Andrew’s commentary, Archbishop Averky has made use of 19th and 20th-century Russian Orthodox scholarship on the Apocalypse, as well as his own observations on the apocalyptic events of our times.

We do seem, indeed, to be living in the last times of this world’s existence, when the prophecies of the Apocalypse relating to the end of the world are beginning to be fulfilled. The time is surely ripe—especially in view of the numerous false

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interpretations of this book which fill the contemporary air—for a fully Orthodox commentary on it.

May Orthodox Christians gain from it a sober awareness of the signs of these times and learn to prepare themselves to endure to the end the trials and tribulations which are coming upon us!

The text of the Apocalypse used in this book is that of the King James Version of the New Testament. Since the understanding of the Apocalypse is so dependent upon the text of other books of Scripture, the parallel places in other books which are cited in Archbishop Averky's commentary are given more fully at the end of each chapter, in the order in which they appear in the text. These citations are taken: the New Testament, from the King James Version; the Old Testament, also from the KJV, unless indicated as being from the Septuagint (published by Bagster & Sons).

The text of Archbishop Averky did not include the whole text of the Apocalypse which he was interpreting. In this translation, this whole text has been furnished, so that the translation proceeds verse by verse. In some cases, explanatory material from St. Andrew's commentary which Archbishop Averky did not cite has been added in order to provide a commentary on every verse. The aim of Archbishop Averky, however, and of this translation, has been not to make an exhaustive interpretation of the text of the Apocalypse (which would require a book many times longer), but rather to provide a brief and practical understanding of the book for serious Orthodox Christians of these latter times.

The footnotes, which chiefly attempt to give explanatory material from other books of Scripture and from the Holy Fathers, are those of the translator and are so identified.



St. John the Theologian on Patmos dictating the text of the
Apocalypse to his disciple Prochorus.
16th-century Russian icon.

INTRODUCTION

by Archbishop Averky

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APOCALYPSE AND THE INTEREST IN IT

THE APOCALYPSE or, as it is translated from the Greek, the *Revelation* of St. John the Theologian, is the only prophetic book of the New Testament. It is the natural culmination of the whole cycle of the New Testament sacred books.

In the books of the Law, of history, and of instruction, the Christian draws knowledge concerning the foundation and historical growth of the life of the Church of Christ, as well as guidance for his own personal activity in life. In the Apocalypse, however, there are given to the believing mind and heart mystical prophetic indications of the future fate of the Church and of the whole world. The Apocalypse is a mystical book which gives itself to a correct understanding and interpretation only with great difficulty; as a consequence, the Church Typicon does not indicate readings from it during the time of the Divine services.

But at the same time, it is precisely this mystical character of the book that draws to it the gaze both of the believing Christians and of simply curious thinkers. Over the course of the whole New Testament history of humanity, men have striven to decipher the significance and meaning of the puzzling

visions described in it. There exists an immense literature about the Apocalypse, including many absurd works which touch on the origin and content of this mystical book. One might indicate, as one of such works in recent times, the book of N. A. Morozov, *The Revelation in Thunder and Storm*. Proceeding from the preconceived idea that the visions described in the Apocalypse depict, with the precision of an astronomical observer, the condition of the sky with its stars at some definite moment of time, Morozov makes astronomical calculations and comes to the conclusion that such precisely was the sky with its stars on Sept. 30, 395. Replacing the persons, actions and pictures of the Apocalypse with planets, stars, and constellations, Morozov makes broad use of indefinite, vague forms in the clouds, making them take the place of the missing names of stars, planets, and constellations in order to depict the full picture of the sky corresponding to the facts of the Apocalypse. If even the clouds do not help him, with all the softness and the receptivity of this material in capable hands, then Morozov redoes the text of the Apocalypse to fit the meaning which he needs. Such a free and easy attitude towards the text of Sacred Scripture Morozov justifies either by the mistakes and the ignorance of the copyists of the Apocalypse, "who did not understand the astronomical meaning of the picture," or even by the idea that the writer of the Apocalypse himself, "thanks to his preconceived idea," made forced interpretations in describing the picture of the sky with its stars. By such a "scientific" method, N. A. Morozov determines that the writer of the Apocalypse was St. John Chrysostom (347-407), Archbishop of Constantinople. To the total historical absurdity of his conclusions, Morozov pays no attention whatsoever.

In our times—the period of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, and then the yet more frightful Second

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World War, when mankind has experienced so many terrible shocks and misfortunes—the attempts to interpret the Apocalypse as applied to the events being experienced have increased yet more. Some of these attempts have been more, some less successful.

In making such attempts there is one important and essential thing to remember: In interpreting the Apocalypse, as in general in interpreting any book in Sacred Scripture, it is essential to make use of the facts given in the other sacred books which enter into the composition of our Bible, as well as of the works of interpretation of the Holy Fathers and the teachers of the Church. Among the special Patristic works in the interpretation of the Apocalypse, especially valuable is the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* of St. Andrew, Archbishop of Caesarea,* which gives a summary of the whole understanding of the Apocalypse in the pre-Nicene period (before the First Ecumenical Council in 325). Likewise very valuable is the *Apology on the Apocalypse* by St. Hippolytus of Rome (about 230).

In more recent times there have appeared so many works of commentary on the Apocalypse that there were already 90 of them by the end of the 19th century (in the Russian language). Among the Russian works the most valuable are: 1) A. Zhdanov, *The Revelation of the Lord Concerning the Seven Churches of Asia* (an attempt to explain the first three chapters of the Apocalypse); 2) Bishop Peter, *Explanation of the Apocalypse of the Holy Apostle John the Theologian*; 3) N. A. Nikolsky, *The Apocalypse and the False Prophecy Exposed by It*; 4) N. Vinogradov, *Concerning the Final Fate of the World and of*

* Almost nothing is known of St. Andrew apart from his authorship of this *Commentary*. He lived apparently in the 5th century or a little later and quotes also 4th-century Fathers such as St. Gregory the Theologian.

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Mankind; and 5) M. Barsov, *Collection of Essays for the Interpretation and Edifying Reading of the Apocalypse*.

CONCERNING THE WRITER OF THE APOCALYPSE

The writer of the Apocalypse calls himself "John" (Apoc. 1:1, 4:9). In the common belief of the Church, this was the holy Apostle John, the beloved disciple of Christ, who for the height of his teaching concerning God the Word received the distinctive title of "Theologian." To his inspired pen belongs also the fourth canonical Gospel and three catholic epistles. This belief of the Church is justified both by facts indicated in the Apocalypse itself, and by many inward and outward signs.

1) The writer of the Apocalypse calls himself "John" at the very beginning, saying that to him was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1). Further, greeting the seven churches of Asia Minor, he again calls himself "John" (1:4). Later he speaks of himself, again calling himself "John" saying that he was in the *isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ* (1:9). From the history of the Apostles it is known that it is precisely St. John the Theologian who was subjected to exile on the island of Patmos. And finally, at the end of the Apocalypse, the writer again calls himself "John" (22:8). In the second verse of the first chapter he calls himself an eyewitness of Jesus Christ (compare I John 1:3).

The opinion that the Apocalypse was written by a certain "Presbyter John" is totally without foundation. The very existence of this "Presbyter John" as a person separate from the Apostle John is rather dubious. The only testimony which gives reason to speak about "Presbyter John" is a passage from a work



The island of Patmos, where St. John received the Revelation.
Photograph taken in 1993. Courtesy of Anna Higgins.



The island of Patmos. View from near the Monastery of St. John
the Theologian. Photograph taken in February, 1995.



The island of Patmos. On the top of the hill in the distance is the Monastery of St. John the Theologian. In the center is the Monastery of the Apocalypse, with the Cave in which St. John received the Revelation; and above it, to the right, is the Seminary of St. John the Theologian (see Appendix III).

Photograph taken in February, 1995.



The Monastery of St. John the Theologian on Patmos.



Central courtyard of the Monastery of St. John the Theologian
on Patmos.

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of Papias which has been preserved by the historian Eusebius. It is extremely indefinite and gives opportunity only for guesses and suppositions which contradict each other. Likewise the opinion is totally without foundation that ascribes the writing of the Apocalypse to John Mark, that is, the Evangelist Mark. Even more absurd is the opinion of the Roman presbyter Caius (3rd century) that the Apocalypse was written by the heretic Cerinthus.

2) The second proof that the Apocalypse belongs to the Apostle John the Theologian is its similarity to the Gospel and the epistles of John, not only in spirit but also in style, and especially in several characteristic expressions. Thus, for example, the apostolic preaching is called here "testimony" or "witness" (Apoc. 1:2, 9; 20:4; compare John 1:7, 3:11, 21:24, and I John 5:9-10). The Lord Jesus Christ is called "the Word" (Apoc. 19:13; compare John 1:1-14, and I John 1:1) as well as "the Lamb" (Apoc. 5:6 and 17:14; compare John 1:36). The prophetic words of Zechariah, *And they shall look on Him Whom they pierced* (Zech. 12:10), both in the Gospel and the Apocalypse are cited according to the Hebrew text of the Scripture (KJV; Apoc. 1:7 and John 19:37).

Some have found that the language of the Apocalypse is supposedly to be distinguished from the language of the other writings of the Holy Apostle John. This difference is easily to be explained, both by the difference of content and by the conditions in which the writings of the holy Apostle had their origin. The Holy Apostle John, even though he knew well the Greek language, still, finding himself in exile far from the living conversational Greek language, naturally placed in the Apocalypse the seal of the powerful influence of the Hebrew language, being himself a native Jew. For the objective reader of the Apocalypse there is no doubt that on its whole contents there

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lies the seal of the great spirit of the Apostle of love and contemplation.

3) All the ancient as well as later Patristic testimonies acknowledge as the author of the Apocalypse St. John the Theologian. His disciple, Papias of Hierapolis, calls the writer of the Apocalypse "Elder John," a name which the holy Apostle gives to himself in his own epistles (II John 1, III John 1).

The testimony of St. Justin the Martyr is also important. Before his conversion to Christianity he lived for a long time in Ephesus, the city where the great Apostle himself lived for a long time and reposed.

Further, many Holy Fathers cite passages from the Apocalypse as from a Divinely inspired book belonging to St. John the Theologian. Such quotations are to be found in the works of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, the disciple of St. Polycarp of Smyrna, who himself was the disciple of St. John the Theologian; St. Hippolytus, Pope of Rome and disciple of Irenaeus, who even wrote an apology on the Apocalypse; Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen likewise acknowledge the holy Apostle John as the writer of the Apocalypse. In the same way Ephraim the Syrian, Epiphanius, Basil the Great, Hilary, Athanasius the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Didymus, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome were convinced of this. The thirty-third canon of the Council of Carthage, ascribing the Apocalypse to St. John the Theologian, places it in the rank of the other canonical books. The absence of the Apocalypse in the Syrian translation (Peshito) is explained solely by the fact that this translation was made for reading at Divine services, and the Apocalypse was not read during Divine services. In the 60th canon of the Council of Laodicea the Apocalypse is not mentioned, since the mystical content of the book did not allow it to be recommended to all, since it could give rise to false interpretations.

THE TIME AND PLACE OF THE WRITING OF THE APOCALYPSE

We do not have precise facts concerning the time of the writing of the Apocalypse. However, ancient tradition indicates for this the end of the first century. Thus St. Irenaeus writes, "The Apocalypse appeared not long before this and almost in our own time, at the end of the reign of Domitian" (*Against Heresies*, 5:30). The church historian Eusebius states that the pagan writers contemporary to him mention also the exile of the holy Apostle John on the island of Patmos for his testimony of the Divine Word, and they refer this even to the 15th year of the reign of Domitian, 95 or 96 A.D. Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Blessed Jerome affirm the same thing.

The Church writers of the first three centuries are in agreement also in indicating the place of the writing of the Apocalypse: the island of Patmos, which is referred to by the Apostle himself as the place where he received the revelations (Apoc. 1:9-10). But after the discovery of the 6th-century Syrian translation of the Apocalypse, (the "Pokoke"), where, in a superscription, Nero is named in place of Domitian, many began to refer the writing of the Apocalypse to the time of Nero, that is, in the 60's of the first century. St. Hippolytus of Rome likewise ascribes to Nero the exile of St. John to the island of Patmos. Such people likewise find that one cannot refer the time of the writing of the Apocalypse to the reign of Domitian because, judging from the first two verses of the eleventh chapter of the Apocalypse, the temple of Jerusalem was not yet destroyed at that time, since in these verses they see a prophecy of the future destruction of the temple—something which under Domitian, had already been accomplished. The indication of the Roman emperors which some people



St. John the Theologian.
Russian icon by Simon Ushakov, 1673.

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find in the 10th verse of the 17th chapter fit more than anyone else the successors of Nero. They likewise find that the number of the beast (Apoc. 13:18) can be found in the name of Nero: *Nero Caesar, 666*. The very language of the Apocalypse, which is full of Hebraisms, likewise, in the opinion of certain people, indicates an earlier origin compared to the fourth Gospel and the epistles of St. John. The full name of Nero was: *Claudius Nero Domitius*, as a result of which one could also confuse him with the emperor Domitian, who reigned later. According to this opinion the Apocalypse was written about two years before the destruction of Jerusalem, that is, in the year 68 A.D.

Against this, however, it is objected that the condition of Christian life as it is presented in the Apocalypse speaks for a later date. Each of the seven Asia Minor churches which St. John addresses already has its own history and a direction of religious life which in one way or another has already been defined. Christianity in them is already not in its first stage of purity and truth; false Christianity strives to occupy a place in them side by side with true Christianity. All this presupposes that the activity of the holy Apostle Paul, who preached for a long time in Ephesus, was something that had occurred in the distant past. This point of view, founded upon the testimony of St. Irenaeus and Eusebius, refers the time of writing of the Apocalypse to the years 95-96 A.D.

On the other hand, it is quite difficult to accept the opinion of St. Epiphanius, who says that St. John returned from Patmos under Emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.). Under Claudius there was no general persecution of Christians in the provinces, and there was only a banishment from Rome of the Jews, among whose number Christians might also be included. Likewise unbelievable is the supposition that the Apocalypse

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was written at a yet later time, under the Emperor Trajan (98-108 A.D.), when St. John had already ended his life.

Concerning the place of the writing of the Apocalypse there is another opinion: that it was written in Ephesus, after the return there of the Apostle from banishment. However, the first opinion is much more natural: that the epistle to the churches of Asia Minor which is contained in the Apocalypse was sent precisely from Patmos. It is also difficult to suppose that the holy Apostle did not immediately fulfill the command to write down what he had seen (Apoc. 1:10-11).

THE CHIEF SUBJECT AND AIM OF THE WRITING OF THE APOCALYPSE

In beginning of the Apocalypse, St. John himself indicates the chief subject and aim of its writing: *to show things which must shortly come to pass* (1:1). Thus, the chief subject of the Apocalypse is a mystical depiction of the future fate of the Church of Christ and of the whole world. From the very beginning of its existence, the Church of Christ had to enter into fierce battle with the errors of Judaism and paganism with the aim of effecting the triumph of the Divine Truth which had been brought to earth by the Incarnate Son of God, and through this to give to mankind blessedness and eternal life. The aim of the Apocalypse is to depict this battle of the Church and its triumph over all enemies, to show clearly the perdition of the enemies of the Church and the glorification of her faithful children. This was especially important and necessary for believers in those times, when frightful and bloody persecutions had begun against Christians, so as to give them consolation and encouragement in the sorrows and difficult trials which had overtaken them. This vivid picture of the battle of

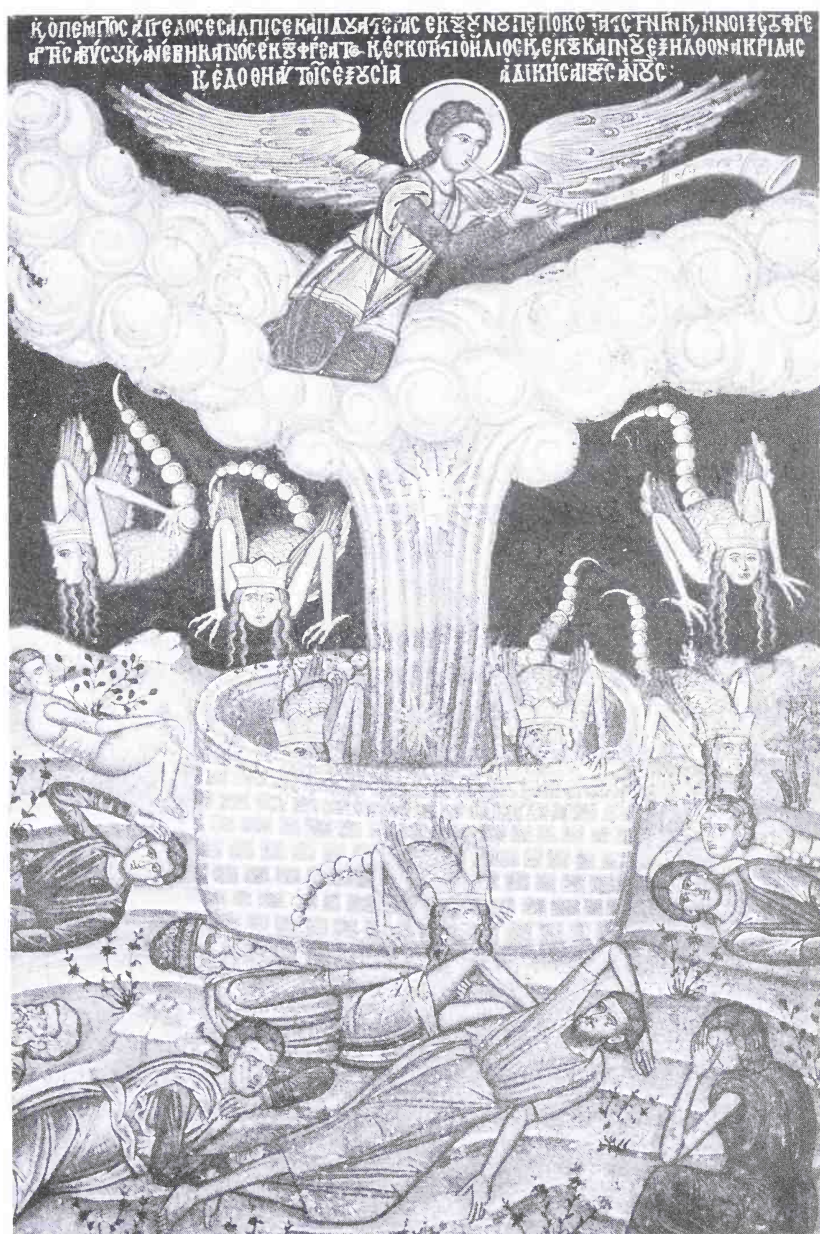
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the dark kingdom of satan with the Church and the final victory of the Church over the "old serpent" (Apoc. 12:9) is necessary for the believers of all times for precisely the same reason: to console and strengthen them in the battle for the truth of the faith of Christ, a battle which they must always wage against the servants of the dark forces of hell, who strive in their blind malice to annihilate the Church.

THE CHURCH'S VIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THE APOCALYPSE

All the ancient Fathers of the Church who wrote commentaries on the sacred books of the New Testament unanimously look on the Apocalypse as a prophetic picture of the last times of the world and the events which are to be accomplished before the Second Coming of Christ on earth and at the opening of the Kingdom of Glory which is prepared for all truly believing Christians. Despite the darkness under which the mystical meaning of this book is hidden, as a consequence of which many unbelievers have striven in every way to defame it, the deeply enlightened Fathers and Divinely wise teachers of the Church have always had great respect for it.

Thus, St. Dionysius of Alexandria writes: "The darkness of this book does not prevent one from being astonished at it. And even if I do not understand everything in it, it is only because of my incapability. I cannot be a judge of the truths which are contained in it or measure them with the poverty of my mind; being guided more by faith than by understanding, I find them only surpassing my understanding." Blessed Jerome expresses himself concerning the Apocalypse in a similar spirit: "In it there are as many mysteries as words. But what am I saying? Every praise of this book will be beneath its worth."



A fresco illustrating the Book of Apocalypse, from the refectory of Dionysiou Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece.
And there arose a smoke out of the pit ... and there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth (Apoc. 9:2-3).

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Many consider that even Caius, the presbyter of Rome, did not consider the Apocalypse to be the work of the heretic Cerinthus, as some infer from his words; for Caius speaks not of the book called: "The Revelation," but of "revelations." Eusebius himself, who quotes these words of Caius, does not say a word about the fact that Cerinthus was the author of the book of the Apocalypse. Blessed Jerome and other Fathers who knew this passage in the works of Caius and acknowledged the authenticity of the Apocalypse, would not have left this without reply if they considered the words of Caius as referring to the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian.

But at Divine services the Apocalypse was not read and is not read. One must suppose that this is because in antiquity the reading of Holy Scripture at Divine services was always accompanied by an interpretation of it, and the Apocalypse is too difficult for (an ordinary) interpretation. This also explains its absence in the Syrian translation, the "Peshito," which was intended especially for use in Divine services. As has been shown by researchers, the Apocalypse was originally in the list of the "Peshito" and was excluded from it only after the time of St. Ephraim the Syrian. We know this because St. Ephraim quoted the Apocalypse in his works as a canonical book of the New Testament and uses it widely in his own Divinely inspired writings.

RULES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE APOCALYPSE

As a book of God's decrees concerning the world and the Church, the Apocalypse has always attracted to itself the attention of Christians, and especially in those times when outward persecutions and inward temptations have begun to disturb the

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faithful especially powerfully, threatening from all sides with all kinds of dangers. In such periods believers have naturally turned to this book for consolation and encouragement and have tried to use it to decipher the meaning and significance of the events which are occurring. However, the figurativeness and the mystical quality of the book make it extremely difficult to understand. Therefore, for careless interpreters there is always the risk of being drawn beyond the boundaries of truth, and there is thus occasion for fantastic hopes and beliefs.

Thus, for example, a literalistic understanding of the images of this book has given occasion and even now continues to give occasion for the false teaching of "chiliasm"—the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The terrors of the persecutions which were endured by Christians in the first century and which were interpreted in the light of the Apocalypse gave occasion for some people to believe that the last times and the Second Coming of Christ were already at hand then, in the first century.

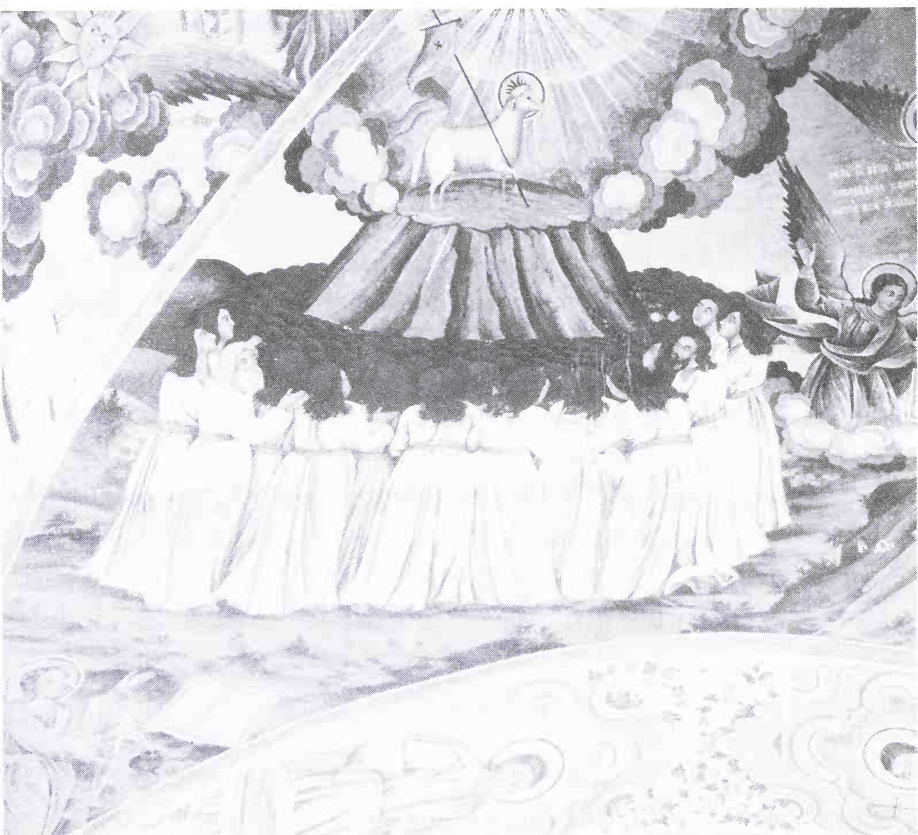
In the nineteen centuries which have since elapsed there have appeared a multitude of commentaries on the Apocalypse, and they have been of the most varied character. One may divide all these commentaries into four groups. Some of them refer all the visions and symbols of the Apocalypse to the "last times"—the end of the world, the appearance of Antichrist, and the Second Coming of Christ. Others give to the Apocalypse a purely historical significance, referring all the visions to the historical events of the first century—to the times of the persecutions raised against the Church by the pagan emperors. A third group strives to find the realization of apocalyptic prophecies in the historical events of recent times. In their opinion, for example, the Pope of Rome is Antichrist, and all the apocalyptic misfortunes are announced in particular for the Church

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of Rome, etc. A fourth group, finally, sees in the Apocalypse only an allegory, considering that the visions described in it have not so much prophetic as a moral meaning, and allegory is introduced only to increase the impression, with the aim of striking the imagination of readers.

The most correct commentary, however, is one that unites all these approaches, keeping in mind that, as the ancient commentators and Fathers of the Church clearly taught, the content of the Apocalypse in its sum is indeed directed to *the last part of the history of the world*. There can be no doubt, moreover, that in the course of the whole past history of Christianity many of the prophecies of the Apostle John concerning the future fate of the Church and the world have already been fulfilled. But great caution is required in applying the apocalyptic content to historical events, and one should not misuse this approach. One interpreter has rightly said that the content of the Apocalypse will only gradually become understandable to the degree that the events themselves approach and the prophecies uttered in the book are being fulfilled.

A correct understanding of the Apocalypse, to be sure, is hindered most of all by the departure of people from faith and true Christian life; this always makes people dull, and even leads to a complete loss of the spiritual vision which is essential for the correct understanding and spiritual evaluation of the events which occur in the world. The total devotion of contemporary man to sinful passions which deprive one of purity of heart, and consequently of spiritual vision (Matt. 5:8), serves as the cause of the fact that certain contemporary interpreters of the Apocalypse wish to see in it only an allegory and teach that even the Second Coming of Christ is to be understood allegorically. The historical events and persons of the times we are now experiencing—times which, in all justice, many already call “apocalyp-



A fresco illustrating the Book of Apocalypse, from the church
of the Monastery of St. John of Rila in Bulgaria.

*And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him
an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written
in their foreheads (Apoc. 14:1).*

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tic"—convince us of the fact that to see in the book of the Apocalypse only an allegory truly means to be spiritually blind. Everything now happening in the world does indeed remind one of the frightful images and visions of the Apocalypse.

THE CONTENT AND DIVISION OF THE APOCALYPSE

The Apocalypse contains in all twenty-two chapters. The book can be divided, according to its content, into the following sections:

1) An introductory picture of the Son of God Who appeared to John commanding him to write to the seven churches of Asia Minor (ch. 1).

2) Instructions to the seven churches of Asia Minor: The churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (chs. 2 and 3).

3) The vision of God sitting on the throne, and the Lamb (chs. 4 and 5).

4) The opening by the Lamb of the seven seals of the mystical book (chs. 6 and 7).

5) The voices of the seven trumpets of the angels declaring various misfortunes to those living on the earth at the taking away of the seventh seal (chs. 8, 9, 10 and 11).

6) The Church of Christ in the image of the woman clothed with the sun who is in the pangs of childbirth (ch. 12).

7) The beast (Antichrist) and his helper, the false prophet (ch. 13).

8) Preparatory events before the general resurrection and the Last Judgement (chs. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19).

INTRODUCTION

a) The hymn of praise of the 144,000 righteous ones; and the angels who declare the fate of the world (ch. 14).

b) The seven angels who have the seven last plagues (ch. 15).

c) The seven angels who pour out the seven cups of the wrath of God (ch. 16).

d) The judgment upon the great harlot who sits on the many waters and is seated upon the scarlet beast (ch. 17).

e) The fall of Babylon, the great harlot (ch. 18).

f) The battle of the Word of God with the beast and his army, and the destruction of the latter (ch. 19).

9) The general resurrection and the Last Judgment (ch. 20).

10) The revelation of the new heaven and the new earth; the New Jerusalem and the blessedness of its inhabitants (chs. 21 and 22 to the 5th verse).

11) Conclusion: confirmation of the truth of everything said and the testament to preserve the commandments of God; the giving of a blessing (ch. 22:6-21).



The Second Coming of Christ.
Fresco from Varlaam Monastery, Meteora, Greece.

*The Apocalypse
of St. John*

AN ORTHODOX COMMENTARY

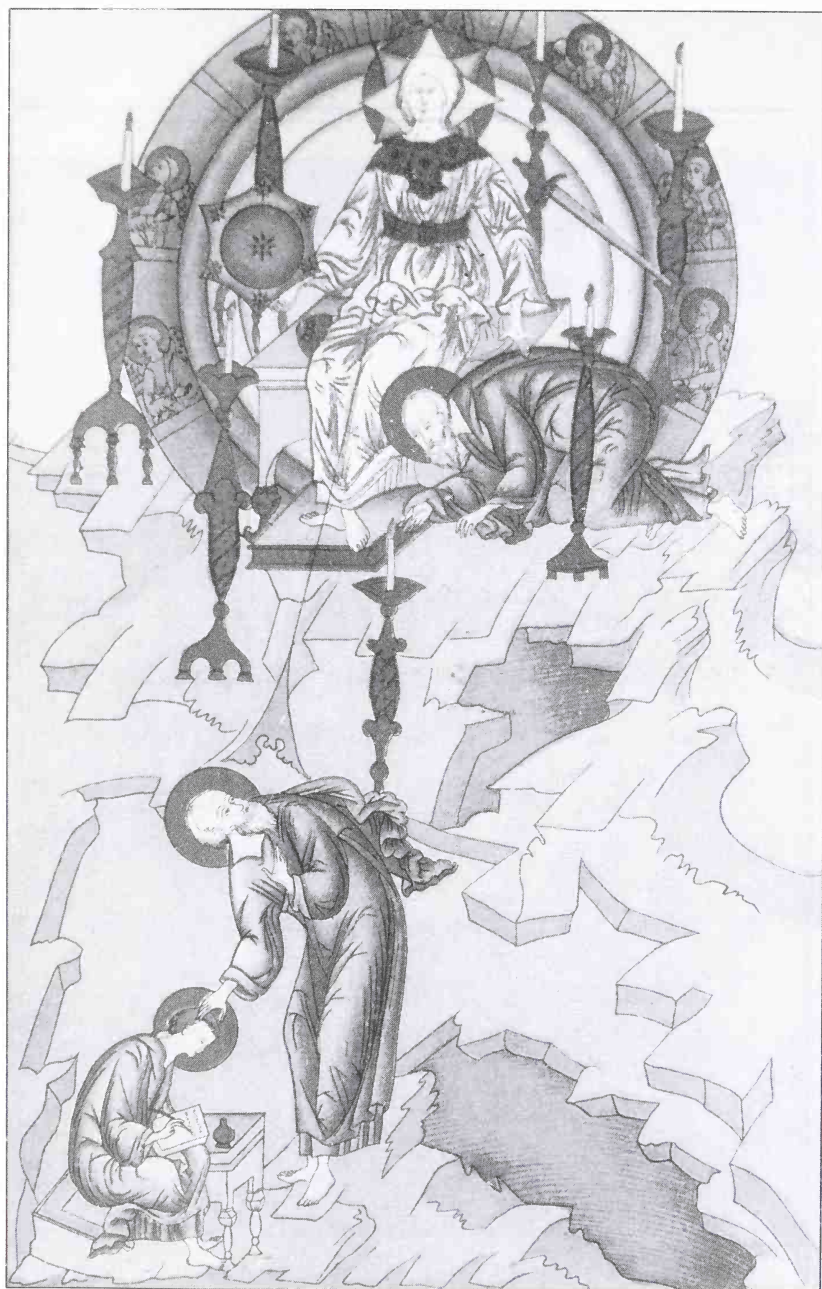


Figure 1. Icon depicting St. John hearing *a great voice, as of a trumpet* (ch. 1:10), and relating his visions to his disciple on Patmos. St. John is also shown falling down before the Son of Man, Who is laying His hand upon him (1:17). The Son of Man holds seven stars, and around Him are seven candlesticks representing the seven churches (1:20).

CHAPTER ONE

THE PURPOSE OF THE APOCALYPSE AND THE MEANS BY WHICH IT WAS GIVEN TO JOHN

1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.*

These words clearly define the character and purpose of the Apocalypse as a prophetic book. By this the Apocalypse is to be essentially distinguished from the other books of the New Testament, the content of which is primarily one of instruction in faith and morals. The importance of the Apocalypse is evident here from the fact that its writing was the result of a direct revelation and a direct command given to the holy Apostle by the Head of the Church Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. The expression “shortly” indicates that the prophecies of the Apocalypse began to be fulfilled right then, immediately after the book was written, and likewise that in the eyes of God *a thousand years are as one day* (II Peter 3:8). The expression of the Apocalypse concerning the revelation of Jesus Christ, “which God gave unto Him,” one must understand as referring to Christ in His human nature, for He Himself during His earthly life spoke of Himself as of one who did not know everything (Mark 13:32), and as one who receives revelations from the Father (John 5:20).

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1:1-2 *And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

1:3 *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.*

The book of the Apocalypse has, consequently, not only a prophetic, but also a moral significance. The meaning of these words is as follows: Blessed is he who, reading this book, will prepare himself by his life and deeds of piety for eternity; for the translation to eternity is near for each of us.

1:4 *John to the seven churches which are in Asia.*

The number seven is usually taken as an expression of fullness. St. John addresses here only the seven churches with which he, as one who lived in Ephesus, was in especially close and frequent contact. But in these seven he addresses at the same time the Christian Church as a whole.

1:4 *Grace be unto you, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.*

"Grace to you and peace from the Tri-Hypostatical Divinity. The phrase 'which is' signifies the Father, Who said to Moses: *I am He that Is* (Ex. 3:14). The expression 'which was' signifies the Word, Who *was in the beginning with God* (John 1:2). The phrase 'which is to come' indicates the Comforter, Who always descends upon the Church's children in holy baptism and in all fullness is to descend in the future age (Acts, ch. 2)" (St. Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, ch. 1).

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1:4 *And from the seven spirits which are before His throne.*

By these "seven spirits" it is most natural to understand the seven chief angels who are spoken of in Tobit 12:15. St. Andrew of Caesarea, however, understands them to be the angels who govern the seven churches. Other commentaries, on the other hand, understand by this expression the Holy Spirit Himself, Who manifests Himself in seven chief gifts: the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of might, the spirit of light, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of the Lord or the spirit of piety and inspiration in the highest degree (compare Is. 11:1-3).

1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.*

The Lord Jesus Christ is called here "the faithful witness" in the sense that He has witnessed His Divinity and the truth of His teaching before men by His death on the Cross.

"As Life and Resurrection, He is *the first-born from the dead* (Col. 1:18, I Cor. 15:20), and those over whom He rules will not see death, as did those who died and rose before, but will live eternally.* He is 'prince of kings,' as King of kings and Lord of lords (I Tim. 6:15), equal in might to the Father and one in essence with Him" (St. Andrew, ch. 1).

* St. Athanasius the Great interprets this passage as follows: "He is said to be 'the First-begotten from the dead,' not that he died before us, for we had died first; but because having undergone death for us and abolished it, He was the first to rise as man, for our sake raising His own Body. Henceforth, He having risen, we too from Him and because of Him rise in due course from the dead" (*Second Discourse Against the Arians*, ch. 21, Eerdmans translation, p. 381). (*Translator.*)

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1:5-6 *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

“Kings and priests” are to be understood here not in the strict meaning, of course, but in the sense in which God has promised this to His chosen people through the prophets (Exodus 19:6); that is, He has made us, the true believers, to be the best, the holiest people, which is the same thing that a priest and king are with relation to the rest of mankind.*

1:7 *Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.*

Here is depicted the second glorious coming of Christ, in complete agreement with the depiction of this coming in the Gospels (compare Matt. 24:30 and 25:31; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; see also John 19:37). After the greeting (in the first verses of the book), in this verse the holy Apostle immediately speaks of the Second Coming of Christ and of the Last Judgment in order to signify the *chief theme* of this book; this is done in order to prepare readers to accept the great and fearful revelations which he has received about this.

* St. Peter in his first catholic epistle also speaks of Christians as *a royal priesthood, a holy nation* (I Peter 2:9) in the sense that they have direct access to God, as only priests did—and that imperfectly—in the Old Testament. By this, of course, he does not deny the specific office of priesthood in the New Testament, as modern sectarians do; in this specific sense, only those ordained to the office of priesthood can be ministers of God's grace through the Holy Mysteries. (*Translator.*)

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1:7-8 *Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

To confirm the unchangeableness and inevitability of the Second Coming and the Last Judgment of God, the holy Apostle adds on his own part: "Even so, Amen," and then testifies to the truth of this by indicating Him Who is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" of everything existing: The Lord Jesus Christ is the One alone Who is without beginning and without end, the cause of everything existing; He is eternal; He is the end and the aim towards which everything strives.*

1:9 *I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

As for the means by which he was given revelations, St. John indicates first of all the place where he was vouchsafed to

* In verse 4 above the words "Which is, and which was, and which is to come" refer to the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, as explained by St. Andrew; this is clear because the same sentence continues (in verse 5), "and from Jesus Christ." Here, however, with the addition of the words "the Almighty," the same words refer to One Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, and are used by St. Gregory the Theologian in his treatise "On the Son" as a proof that Jesus Christ is truly God (*Third Theological Oration*, ch. 17; Eerdmans tr., p. 307). St. Athanasius the Great, in his *First Discourse Against the Arians*, uses the same quote from the Apocalypse to prove the same thing (ch. 4, Eerdmans tr., p. 312). Concerning this St. Andrew says in his Commentary (ch. 1), "The divinely splendid words are fitting equally for each of the Persons separately and for All together." (*Translator.*)

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receive them. This is the island Patmos, one of the Sporades islands in the Aegean Sea, a desert and precipitous place 40 miles in circumference, located between the island of Icaria and the Cape of Miletus, little inhabited because of the lack of water, the unhealthy climate and the barrenness of the earth. In a cave in a certain mountain, even now there is indicated the place where St. John received the revelations. Here there is a small Greek monastery, called the "Monastery of the Apocalypse."

In the same verse there is mentioned also the time when St. John received the Apocalypse. This was at the time when St. John was in exile on the island of Patmos, in his own expression, "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," that is, for his fervent apostolic preaching of Jesus Christ. The fiercest persecution against Christians in the first century was under Emperor Nero. Tradition says that St. John first of all was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, out of which he came unharmed and with renewed strength. The expression "in tribulation," according to the meaning of the original Greek expression, signifies here the "suffering" which occurred from persecution and torment—the same thing as "martyrdom."

1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.*

In this verse St. John gives the very day on which he was vouchsafed the revelations. This was "the Lord's day" (in Greek, *Kyriaki imera*), which is Sunday.* This was the first day of the week, which the Jews called *mia savvaton*, that is, "the first day after Saturday"; but the Christians called it "the Lord's day" in honor of the Resurrected Lord. The very existence of such a

* The same expression is still used for Sunday in modern Greek.

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name already indicates that the Christians celebrated this day in place of the Old Testament Sabbath.

Having mentioned the place and time, St. John indicates likewise his own condition, in which he was vouchsafed the apocalyptic visions. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," he says. In the language of prophets, "to be in the Spirit" is to be in the spiritual condition when a man sees, hears and feels not with his bodily organs, but with all his inward being. This is not a dream, for such a condition occurs also when one is awake.

In such an extraordinary condition of his spirit, St. John heard a loud voice as of a trumpet:

1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and, what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

There follow the descriptions of four visions, according to which many divide the contents of the Apocalypse into four chief parts: The first vision is set forth from chapter one, verse 12, through chapter three; the second vision, in chapters four through eleven; the third vision, in chapters twelve through fourteen; and the fourth vision, in chapters fifteen through twenty-two.

The first vision is the apparition to St. John of a certain one "like unto the Son of Man" (verse 13). The loud voice, like that of a trumpet, which John heard behind him, belonged to Him. He called Himself not in Hebrew, but in Greek: "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." To the Jews in the Old Testament He revealed Himself under the name "Jehovah," which signifies, "He that exists from the beginning," or "He that Is"; but here He calls Himself by the first and last letters of

the Greek alphabet, indicating by this that He contains within Himself, like the Father, everything existing in all the manifestations of being from the beginning to the end. It is characteristic that He declares Himself here as it were under a new name, and it is a Greek name, "Alpha and Omega," as if desiring to show that He is the Messiah for all peoples, who at that time spoke everywhere the Greek language and used the Greek written language.

The revelation is given to the seven churches comprising the metropolia of Ephesus, which St. John the Theologian then governed, having his permanent dwelling in Ephesus. But of course, in the person of these seven churches the revelation is given also to the whole Church. The number seven, moreover, has a mystical meaning, signifying completeness. Therefore it may be placed here as a symbol of the Ecumenical Church, to which as a whole the Apocalypse is addressed.

1:12-13 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

In the 12th to 16th verses is described the outward appearance of the One Who appeared to John "like unto the Son of Man." He stood in the midst of seven candlesticks, symbolizing the seven churches (as explained below, verse 20), and was clothed in a "garment down to the foot"—the *ephod*, the long garment of the Jewish chief priests (Ex. 28:31). He was, like kings, girded about the breast with a golden belt. These features indicate the high-priestly and royal dignity of the One Who appeared.

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“The voice which the Apostle heard was not sensory. This he makes clear by the word ‘turned’: That is, he turned not in order to hear it, but to *see* it; for spiritual hearing and seeing signify one and the same thing” (St. Andrew, ch. 2).

1:14 *His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire.*

Whiteness of the hair serves usually as a sign of old age. This sign testifies that the Son of Man Who appeared is one with the Father, that He is the same as the “Ancient of Days” Whom the holy prophet Daniel also beheld in a mystical vision (Dan. 7:9-10; 13-14), that He is the same eternal God as is God the Father.* His eyes were like a fiery flame, which signifies His Divine zeal for the salvation of the human race, that before His

* The Orthodox church service for the Meeting of the Lord (Feb. 2) identifies the “Ancient of Days” with God the Son (“The Ancient of Days appears this day as a babe”). Thus, in this interpretation, when Daniel beheld the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man together, it was a vision of the Divine and human natures of Christ. Some Fathers, however, understand the Ancient of Days to be God the Father; in this case, the vision is of Two Persons of the Holy Trinity, and as St. John Chrysostom says in his commentary on Daniel, this prophet “was the first and only one (in the Old Testament) to see the Father and the Son, as if in a vision.” For the devout student of Scripture, of course, there is no “contradiction” between these two interpretations; in such mystical visions we do not see a “literal picture” of the Godhead (such as to believe that God is really an “old man,” but only a hint of Divine mysteries). Thus, in his commentary on the same passage of Daniel, St. John Chrysostom adds: “Do not seek clarity in prophecies, where there are shadows and riddles, just as in lightning you do not seek a constant light, but are satisfied that it only flashes momentarily.” (*Translator.*)

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glance there is nothing hidden or dark, and that He is flaming with anger against every iniquity.

1:15 And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.

Brass is a precious metallic mixture with a fiery red or golden yellow sheen (compare Daniel 10:5-6).

"The feet are the Apostles, as the support of the church.... The feet of Christ are the Apostles, who have been heated, in emulation of Christ, in the furnace of temptations" (St. Andrew, ch. 2).

1:15 And His voice as the sound of many waters.

That is, His voice was like the voice of a threatening judge who strikes with trembling the disturbed souls of condemned men.

1:16 And He had in His right hand seven stars.

According to the explanation given to John by the One Who appears, these seven stars signify the seven representatives of the churches, or bishops, called here the "angels of the churches." By this we are told that the Lord Jesus holds in His right hand the shepherds of the Church.

1:16 And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.

This symbolizes the all-penetrating power of the word which comes from the mouth of God (compare Heb. 4:12).

1:16 And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

This is an image of that unutterable glory of God by which the Lord shone on Mount Tabor (Matt. 17:2). All these charac-

CHAPTER ONE

teristics present to us the whole image of the fearful Judge, Chief Priest and King, as the Lord Jesus Christ will one day appear on earth in His Second Coming to judge the living and the dead.

1:17 *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.*

From this one may conclude that the beloved disciple, who had once lain on the breast of Jesus, did not recognize in the One Who had appeared a single familiar feature. And this is not surprising; for if the disciples did not easily recognize their Lord after His Resurrection in His glorified body on earth, all the more difficult would it be to recognize Him in this resplendent heavenly glory.

1:17-18 *And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

From these words St. John had to understand that the One Who appeared was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, and that his appearance could not be fatal for the Apostle, but on the contrary would be life-giving. To have the keys to something signified among the Jews to receive authority over something. Thus, "the keys of hell and of death" signify authority over the death of the body and the soul.*

* One might add here that Christ has authority over hell and death in that He Himself tasted of death in the body and descended to hell in His soul after death (I Peter 3:19), but in His Resurrection gained victory over both. The Divine services of the Orthodox Church are full of this teaching; for example: "O Lord our Saviour, Who has taken hell captive and trampled on death...." (*Octoechos*, Tone 5, Sunday Vespers, "Lord I have cried.") (*Translator*.)

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1:19-20 *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

In conclusion, The One Who had appeared commands John to write down that which he has seen and what is to be, explaining that the seven stars are the angels or the representatives of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks signify these churches themselves.

“Since Christ is *the true Light* (John 1:9), those who have become enriched by His illumination are like candlesticks which illuminate the darkness of the present life” (St. Andrew, ch. 2).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER ONE

1:1

II Peter 3:3-4, 8-10. *There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying: Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.... But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night....*

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Mark 13:32. *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

John 5:20. *The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth; and He will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.*

1:4

Tobit 12:15. *I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One (Sept.).*

Isaiah 11:2. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord .*

1:5

Colossians 1:18. *Christ is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.*

I Corinthians 15:20-21. *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

I Timothy 6:15. *Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.*

1:5-6

Exodus 19:6. *And ye shall be to Me a royal priesthood and a holy nation (Sept.).*

I Peter 2:9. *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

APOCALYPSE

1:7

Matthew 24:30. *And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

Matthew 25:31-32. *When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations.*

Mark 13:26. *And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.*

Luke 21:27. *And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

John 19:37. *And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*

Zechariah 12:10. *And they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

1:12-13

Exodus 28:31. *And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue.*

1:14

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14. *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, Whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool; His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.... And behold, one like the Son of Man came with the*

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clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

1:15

Daniel 10:5-6. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

1:16

Hebrews 4:12. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Matthew 17:1-2. And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.

1:17-18

I Peter 3:19. By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.

1:19-20

John 1:9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.



Figure 2. The Lord's message to the church of Pergamos, a city so corrupted by paganism that it is called *satan's seat* (2:12-13). This seat is depicted in the lower left corner, next to a representation of the church which has remained faithful in the midst of evil and persecution.

CHAPTER TWO

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR: EPHESUS, SMYRNA, PERGAMOS, AND THYATIRA

In the second, as in the third chapter, are set forth the revelations received by St. John concerning each of the seven churches of Asia Minor, as well as corresponding instructions to them. These revelations contain praises of their Christian life and faith, a reproof of their insufficiencies, exhortations and consolations, threats and promises. The content of these revelations and instructions has the closest relationship to the condition of church life in the churches of Asia Minor at the end of the first century. But at the same time it refers also to the whole Church in general for the whole course of its existence on earth. Some even see here an indication of seven periods in the life of the whole Christian Church from the time of the Apostles to the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ.

To the Church of Ephesus

2:1-7 *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, Who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are*

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apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

First of all the Lord commands him to write to the angel of the church of Ephesus. The church of Ephesus is praised for its first works—for its labors, patience and for opposing false teachers; but at the same time it is condemned for leaving off its first love, and it hears the fearful threat that the candlestick will be taken away from its place if it does not repent. Further, it was good that the Ephesians hated “the deeds of the Nicolaitans.” To those who overcome temptations and passions the Lord promises to vouchsafe the eating of the fruits of the tree of life.

Ephesus was a most ancient trading city on the shore of the Aegean Sea, famous for its wealth and immense population. There the holy Apostle Paul preached for more than two years, and towards the end of this period he ordained as bishop of Ephesus his beloved disciple Timothy. There also the holy Apostle John the Theologian lived for a long time and died. Subsequently in Ephesus there was the Third Ecumenical Council, which confessed the Most Holy Virgin Mary to be Theotokos. The threat to remove the candlestick of the church of Ephesus was fulfilled. From a great world center Ephesus was soon turned into nothing: from a previously splendid city there

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remained only a heap of ruins and a small Moslem village. The great candlestick of earliest Christianity was completely extinguished.

The Nicolaitans mentioned here were heretics who were a branch of the Gnostics and were noted for their immoral life. They are also accused in the catholic epistles of the holy Apostles Peter and Jude (II Peter 2:1, and Jude 4). The beginning of this heresy was made by the proselyte Nicholas of Antioch, who was one of the original seven deacons of Jerusalem (Acts 6:5), who fell away from the true faith. The reward for those among the Ephesian Christians who overcome is the tasting of the tree of life of paradise. By this one must understand in general the good things of the future blessed life of the righteous, a prefiguration of which was the tree of life in the original paradise, where our first ancestors lived (Gen. 2:9).

"The removal of the candlestick of the church is the deprivation of Divine grace, to which it will be subjected in agitation and shaking from the spirits of malice and the evil men who help them.... *He that hath an ear, let him hear:* Every man has a physical ear, but only the spiritual man acquires a spiritual ear.... To such a man, who has overcome the temptations of the demons, He promises to give to taste of the tree of life, that is, to make him a participant in the good things of the future age" (St. Andrew, ch. 3).

To the Church of Smyrna

2:8-11 *And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive: I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are*

APOCALYPSE

not, but are the synagogue of satan. Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

To the church of Smyrna, which was composed of poor people who were, however, rich spiritually, there are foretold tribulations and persecutions from the Jews, whom the Lord calls "the synagogue of satan" (compare Rom. 2:28-29). The prophecy of tribulations is accompanied by an exhortation to endure to the end these tribulations, which will continue "ten days"; and the promise is given of deliverance from "the second death."

Smyrna also was one of the most ancient cities of Asia Minor, renowned and glorious in pagan antiquity. Not less remarkable was Smyrna in the history of the earliest era of Christianity as a city which was very early illumined by the light of Christianity and kept in the midst of persecutions the pledge of faith and piety.

The church of Smyrna, according to tradition, was founded by the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and the disciple of the latter, St. Polycarp, who was bishop there, glorified this church by his exploit of martyrdom. According to the information given by the church historian Eusebius, almost immediately after the prophecy given in the Apocalypse, the first persecution against Christians in Asia Minor broke out, during which St. Polycarp of Smyrna also suffered.

Christ is "the *first* as God, and the *last* as having become man in the latter times and opened to us eternal life by His death of three days" (St. Andrew, ch. 4) (compare Is. 44:6).

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According to some commentaries, the "ten days" signifies the shortness of the time of the persecutions; but according to others it indicates a certain extended period, for the Lord commanded the people of Smyrna to be "faithful unto death," that is, for some long period. Some understand by this the persecution which was under Domitian and continued for ten years. Others see in this a prophecy of the ten persecutions which, altogether, the Christians endured from pagan emperors for the course of the first three centuries.

By the "second death" which is to come for unbelievers after the death of the body is to be understood their condemnation to eternal torments (compare Apoc. 21:8, Matt. 10:28).

To him that overcomes, that is, to him that endures all persecutions, is promised "a crown of life," or the inheritance of eternal good things.

Smyrna to this day remains a significant city and has the dignity of an Orthodox metropolia.

To the Church of Pergamos

2:12-13 *And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges: I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where satan dwelleth.*

The church of Pergamos is praised by the Lord for the fact that it holds fast His name and has not renounced faith in Him, even though the church was planted in the midst of a city extremely corrupted by paganism, which is the meaning of the figurative expression "thou dwellest even where satan's seat is," and it was subjected to a severe persecution, during which the

Lord's martyr Antipas was slain. Although many have attempted to understand the name Antipas symbolically, it is known from the martyrologies that have come down to us that Antipas was bishop of Pergamos and for his zealous confession of the Christian faith was burned inside a heated bronze bull.*

2:14-16 *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

But then the Lord indicates also the negative manifestations in the life of the church of Pergamos, namely, that there also the Nicolaitans have appeared, who have made lawful the eating of that which was offered to idols and every kind of fornication—things to which, in another epoch, the Israelites had been led by Balaam.

Balaam, who taught Balak: "By these words He indicates the mental Balaam, the devil, who through the sensual Balaam taught Balak to tempt the Israelites to fornication and idol-worship; for by the sweetness of this pleasure they fell so low that they offered sacrifices to Beelphegor" (see Num. 25:1-3) (St. Andrew, ch. 5).

* Hieromartyr Antipas, bishop of Pergamos, was a disciple of St. John the Theologian. He died a martyr's death in the year 92 and was noted, both during his lifetime and after his death, for his healings of various afflictions, especially of the teeth. He is commemorated on April 11, when there is a church service to him. (*Translator.*)

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Pergamos is to the north of Smyrna and in antiquity it competed with Smyrna and Ephesus. In it there was a temple to the pagan god Aesculapius, the patron of physicians. Its sorcerers occupied themselves with medicine and offered great opposition to the preachers of Christianity. Pergamos, under the name of Bergamo, and the Christian church in it, have been preserved up to the present day, although in great poverty, since of its previous splendor nothing at all remains apart from the immense ruins of a once splendid church in honor of St. John the Theologian, erected by Emperor Theodosius (4th century).

2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

The first image here is taken from the Old Testament manna (Ex. 16:14-15), which was a prefiguration of the *bread which cometh down from heaven* (John 6:50), that is, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. By this manna one must understand living communion with the Lord in the future blessed age.

The metaphorical expression, "white stone," has its foundation in a custom of antiquity, according to which the victors at the public games and contests were given white stone tablets, which they later presented in order to receive the rewards conferred on them. Among Roman judges it was the custom to collect votes by means of white and black stones. White signified freedom; black signified condemnation. In the mouth of the seer of mysteries, John, the white stone symbolically signified the purity and innocence of Christians, for which they receive a reward in the future age.

To give names to new members of a kingdom is characteristic of kings and masters. The Heavenly King also will give to all the chosen sons of His Kingdom new names which will signify their inward qualities, their designation and service in the Kingdom of Glory. But since no one *knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him* (I Cor. 2:11), so also the new name given to a man by the All-knowing Master will be known only to the one who receives this name (compare Is. 62:2).

To the Church of Thyatira

2:18-20 *And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

Thyatira was a small town in Lydia which has no particular significance in history, but it is known in the history of Christianity because from it there came Lydia, who was enlightened with the light of faith in Christ by the holy Apostle Paul during his second journey of preaching in the city of Philippi (Acts. 16:14, 15, 40). Probably this also aided the speedy establishment of Christianity in Thyatira. It is evident from the words, "thy last works are more than thy first," that all the good Christian qualities of the inhabitants of Thyatira, indicated before this in the text, are developing with time and becoming stronger.

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The name Jezebel is used here evidently in the same metaphorical sense as the name Balaam above. It is known that Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon, having entered into marriage with Ahab, the king of Israel, drew him into worshipping all the vile things of Tyre and Sidon and was the cause of the fall of the Israelites into idol-worship (III Kings 16:31). We may suppose that the name "Jezebel" here indicates the same inclination to idol-worship and fornication of the Nicolaitans.

2:21-23 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

"Continuing to speak in figurative manner, He compares the cunning and deception of the heretics to a harlot,* threatening to strike her with death and afflictions, as well as all who have defiled themselves with her and committed fornication before God, unless they return to Him through repentance. This is addressed to the heretics who have been deceived and who seduce others" (St. Andrew, ch. 6).

2:24-25 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the

* In the Apocalypse, and in the Sacred Scripture in general, heresy is often indicated by the symbols of "fornication" and "adultery"—that is, "impurity" with regard to teaching—and heretics by the symbols of a "harlot" and those who commit fornication with her (see especially chapter 17 below). (*Translator.*)

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depths of satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already, hold fast until I come.

“To the simple people He says: ‘Since you, in your simplicity, are not able to stand against the cunning and clever, for, as you affirm, you do not fully know the depths of satan—therefore I do not ask of you to wage battle by words, but only to preserve the teaching which you have received, until the time when I shall take you from here’”(St. Andrew, ch. 6).

The “depths of satan” is the name given here to the teaching of the Nicolaitans, as predecessors of the Gnostics, who called their false teaching “the depths of God.”

2:26-27 And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father.

“To him who does My works *will I give power*, as promised in the Gospel, over five or ten cities (Luke 19:17-19). Or else this indicates the judgment of unbelievers, through which those who have been deceived, being judged by the believers in Christ, will be crushed as a crock is by the rod: *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it* (Matt. 12:41). The words, ‘even as I received of My Father,’ are spoken of His human nature, because of His acceptance of flesh” (St. Andrew, ch.6).

Paganism fell (historically) as a result of the battle with Christianity. In this sense the Lord promises (in general) “power over the nations” to the one who overcomes.

2:28 And I will give him the morning star.

There are two interpretations of these words. The Prophet Isaiah calls satan the morning star (Lucifer) which fell from

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heaven (Is. 14:12). In that case these words signify the dominion of the faithful Christian over satan (compare Luke 10:18). On the other hand, the holy Apostle Peter, in his second catholic epistle, by the "morning star" which shines forth in the hearts of men means the Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:19). In this sense, the true Christian is promised the enlightenment of his soul by the light of Christ and participation in the future heavenly glory.*

2:29 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

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2:6

II Peter 2:1-2. *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

Jude 4. *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning*

* St. Andrew says of the "morning star," that there is nothing astonishing in the fact that it could have two opposite interpretations, a thing which happens often in Holy Scripture. What is important to understand is the meaning of the image. Here it means the same thing that victorious Christians have Christ the "morning star" shining in their hearts, and to say that they have dominion over satan the "morning star" through the grace of Christ. (*Translator.*)

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the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 6:5. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas a proselyte of Antioch.

Genesis 2:9. And God made to spring out of the earth every tree beautiful to the eye and good for food, and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of learning the knowledge of good and evil.

2:8

Isaiah 44:6. Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides Me there is no God.

2:9

Romans 2:28-29. For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

2:11

Matthew 10:28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

2:17

Exodus 16:4, 14-15. Then said the Lord unto Moses: Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day.... And when the dew

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that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna; for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

John 6:49-51. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.

Isaiah 62:2. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

2:28

Isaiah 14:12. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

Luke 10:17-18. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name. And He said unto them, I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven.

II Peter 1:19. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.



Figure 3. The Lord's message to the church of Philadelphia. The Son of Man is depicted at top with the key of David and with the door that he *openeth*, and no man *shutteth*; and he *shutteth* and no man *openeth* (3:7-9).

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INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR: SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA, AND LAODICEA

To the Church of Sardis

3:1-3 *And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

To the angel of the church of Sardis the Lord commands to write in a tone more reproaching than consoling. This church has only the name of living faith, but in actual fact is spiritually dead. The Lord threatens the Christians of Sardis with sudden misfortune if they do not repent. There are, however, among them a very few who "have not defiled their garments." Those who overcome (the passions) the Lord promises to clothe in white garments, and their names will not be erased from the book of life, but they will be confessed by the Lord before His heavenly Father.

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Sardis in antiquity was a large and wealthy city, the capital of the region of Lydia, and now it is the poor Turkish town of Sard. There are few Christians and they do not have their own church. Under Julian the Apostate the spiritual deadness of this city was clearly manifest: It quickly returned to idol-worship, for which the chastisement of God overtook it; it was destroyed to its foundations.*

3:4-5 *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.*

By those who “have not defiled their garments” are metaphorically depicted here the defilements of the soul, and therefore those who have not defiled their garments are those whose minds have not participated in the false teachings of heretics, while their lives were not spotted by passions and vices. By “white raiment” is to be understood the wedding garments in which the guests at the wedding banquet of the King’s Son will be clothed; in this image the Lord set forth in the parable the future blessedness of the righteous in His Heavenly Kingdom (Matt. 22:11-12). These garments will be like the garments of the Saviour at the time of the Transfiguration which became *white as the light* (Matt. 17:2).

3:5 *And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.*

* The image of the Lord’s coming unexpectedly like a thief to chastise evil-doers is found elsewhere in the Apocalypse (16:15) and is used by the Lord also in the Gospel; see Matt. 24:42-44, and I Thes. 5:2-4. (*Translator.*)

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The decrees of God concerning the fate of men are symbolically depicted in the image of a book in which the Lord, as the All-knowing and All-righteous Judge, records all the doings of men. This symbolical image is often used in Sacred Scripture (Ps. 68:28, 138:16; Is. 4:3; Dan. 7:10, 12:1; Mal. 3:16; Ex. 32:32-33; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; see also Apoc. 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 15). According to this conception, he who lives worthy of the highest purpose is as it were inscribed in the book of life, while he who lives unworthily is as it were blotted out of this book, thereby being deprived of the right to eternal life. And therefore the promise to the one who overcomes sin, that his name will not be blotted out of the book of life, means the same thing as a promise not to deprive him of the heavenly goods which are prepared in the future life for the righteous.

3:5-6 *But I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

The promise to “confess his name” is the same thing that the Lord promised during His life on earth to His true followers (Matt. 10:32, Luke 12:8), that is, “I will acknowledge and proclaim him to be my faithful disciple.”

To the Church of Philadelphia

3:7-9 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.*

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

To the angel of the church of Philadelphia the Lord commands to write much that is consoling and praiseworthy. Despite its "little strength" (evidently referring to the fewness of its inhabitants), this church has not renounced the Name of Jesus before the satanic synagogue of its Jewish persecutors. For this the Lord will so arrange that they will come and bow down before her, and in the difficult time of temptation for all the universe she will find defense and safekeeping in the Lord Himself. Therefore, the aim of the people of Philadelphia is to keep only that which they have, lest anyone take away their crown. The one who overcomes, the Lord, promises to make a pillar in the temple and to write upon him the Name of God and the name of the city of God—the New Jerusalem—and the new name of Jesus.

Philadelphia was the second greatest city of Lydia and was named for its founder, Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamos. This city, alone of all the Asia Minor cities, for a long time did not give in to the Turks. It is remarkable that even at the present time Christianity in Philadelphia is in a more flourishing condition than all the other cities of Asia Minor. Here there has been preserved a numerous Christian population, having its own bishop and twenty-five churches. The inhabitants are distinguished by their great hospitality and kindness. The Turks call Philadelphia "Alakh-Sher," that is, "city of God," and this name involuntarily reminds one of the promise of the Lord: "I will write upon him (that overcometh) the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God" (3:12).

The Son of God calls Himself He that has the key of David in the sense of having the highest authority in the house of

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David, for a key is a symbol of authority. The house of David or the kingdom of David means the same thing as the Kingdom of God, of which it was a prefiguration in the Old Testament (see Is. 22:22). Further, it is said that if the Lord deigns to open the doors of this kingdom to anyone, no one can hinder this, and the contrary likewise. Here also is contained a figurative indication of the firmness of the faith of the Philadelphians which could not be broken by the Judaizing false teachers. The latter will come and bow down before the feet of the Philadelphians, that is, evidently they will acknowledge themselves to be defeated.

3:10-11 *Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

By the “hour of temptation” during which the Lord promises to preserve His faithful Philadelphians, some understand the terrible persecutions against Christianity on the part of the pagan Roman Emperors who seized “all of the world,” as the Roman Empire was then called (compare Luke 2:1). Other commentators suppose that by Philadelphia one must understand one of the Christian churches, or all the Christian Church in general in the last times before the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. In this latter sense especially understandable is the exhortation “Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” At that time there will be an increased danger of losing faith because of the multitude of temptations, but thereby the reward for faithfulness will be, so to speak, right at hand, and therefore we must

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be especially vigilant lest out of light-mindedness we lose the possibility of salvation—as, for example, the wife of Lot lost it.*

3:12-13 *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him My new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

The placing of a “pillar” in the Church of Christ which has not been vanquished by the gates of hell (figuratively represented here in the form of a house) indicates that the one who overcomes in temptations belongs to the Church of Christ inviolably; that is, he has a most solid position in the Kingdom of Heaven. The high reward for such a one will also be the writing upon him of a triple name: the name of a child of God, as belonging inseparably to God; the name of a citizen of the new or heavenly Jerusalem; and the name of Christian, as an authentic member of the Body of Christ. The New Jerusalem, beyond any doubt, is the heavenly triumphant Church (Apoc. 21:2, Gal. 4:26) which *cometh down out of heaven* because the very origin of the Church from the Son of God, Who came down from heaven (John 3:13), is heavenly; it gives to people heavenly gifts and raises them to heaven.

* In this second interpretation, the “hour of temptation” is virtually synonymous with the “great tribulation” which will come just before the end of the world, when “the days will be shortened” for the sake of the elect and “immediately after the tribulation of those days” the end of everything will come (Matt. 24:21, 22, 29). (*Translator.*)

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To the Church of Laodicea

3:14 *And unto the angel of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*

To the angel of the church of Laodicea, the seventh and last of the churches, he is commanded to write much by way of accusation. The Lord does not utter about it a single favorable word. He reproaches it for the fact that it is neither hot nor cold, and therefore He threatens to spit it forth from His mouth like lukewarm water which causes nausea. Despite the opinionated self-confidence of the Laodiceans in their moral perfections, the Lord calls them wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, exhorting them to take care to cover their nakedness and to heal their blindness. At the same time He calls them to repentance, saying that with love He stands at the doors of the heart of everyone who repents and is ready to come to him with His mercies and forgiveness of everything. The one who overcomes his pride and in general his own moral infirmities the Lord promises to place together with Himself on His throne.

Laodicea, now called by the Turks, "Eski-Gissar," that is, "Ancient Fortress," is in Phrygia on the river Likos, near the city of Colossae. In antiquity it was famous for its trade, the fertility of its soil, and its domestic animals. Its population was very numerous and wealthy; of this there are the testimonies of the excavations at which there have been found many precious pieces of sculpture, fragments of luxurious marble decorations, pedestals, baskets, etc. One may suppose that it was its wealth that made the Laodiceans so lukewarm to the Christian faith, for which the city was subjected to the chas-

risement of God—its total destruction and desolation by the Turks.

The Lord is called "the beginning of the creation of God" not, of course, in the sense that He is the first creation of God, but in the sense that *all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made* (John 1:3), and likewise in the sense that He is the cause of the re-creation of fallen man (Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:10, 1:15, 18).

3:15-16 *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth.*

The cold man, who has not known faith, can more easily believe and become a fervent believer than a cooled-off Christian who has become indifferent to the faith. Even an open sinner is better than a lukewarm pharisee who is satisfied with his moral condition. This is why the Lord Jesus Christ reproached the Pharisees, preferring to them the repentant publicans and harlots. Open and evident sinners can more easily come to an awareness of their own sinfulness and to true repentance than people with a lukewarm conscience who do not acknowledge their moral infirmities.

3:17-18 *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.*

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“Gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eye salve,” which the Lord advises the Laodiceans to buy from Him, signify respectively: the love and good will of God acquired by repentance; good works, pure and undefiled conduct; and the highest heavenly wisdom which gives spiritual sight.

“If you wish to become rich, I counsel you, with flaming desire and a fervent heart, to acquire from Me, the Enricher, gold cleansed by the fire of temptations. From it you will have in your heart a treasure that cannot be stolen and will be clothed in a most bright garment of virtues, with which you will cover your nakedness of sin” (St. Andrew, ch. 9).

We may suppose that the Laodiceans actually trusted excessively in their wealth, striving to join together the service of God and mammon. Some think that what is referred to here is pastors who are striving to enrich themselves by means of earthly wealth and have become of the opinion that through wealth they are called to lord it over the inheritance of God, overawing people through their wealth. The Lord advises such ones to buy from Him, that is, not merely to ask and receive freely, but to buy—that is, to acquire from Christ Himself at the price of labors of repentance, these things: “gold tried in the fire,” that is, the authentic grace-given spiritual wealth, which for a pastor consists among other things in a word of instruction mixed with salt; “white raiment,” that is, the gift of doing good to one’s neighbor; and “eye salve,” or the virtue of non-acquisitiveness, which opens one’s eyes to the vanity and emptiness of all the wealth of this corruptible world.*

* St. Cyprian of Carthage comments on this passage as follows: “You are mistaken, and are deceived, whosoever you are, that think yourself rich in this world. Listen to the voice of your Lord in the Apocalypse, rebuking

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3:19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.* (See Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-8.)

3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.*

“Not by compulsion, He says, is My presence: for I knock at the doors of the heart and rejoice with those who open over their salvation. This salvation I consider food and supper, and I eat what they eat, and thus they banish the *famine of hearing the word of the Lord* (Amos 8:11, Sept.) and the darkness of errors” (St. Andrew, ch. 9).

3:21-22 *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

To him that overcomes is given the promise that he will sit on the throne of God, by which is to be understood the highest

men of your stamp with righteous reproaches: ‘Thou sayest,’ says He, ‘I am rich, and increased with goods....’ You therefore, who are rich and wealthy, buy for yourself of Christ gold tried by fire, that you may be pure gold, with your filth burnt out as if by fire, if you are purged by almsgiving and righteous works. Buy for yourself white raiment, that you who had been naked according to Adam, and were before frightful and unseemly, may be clothed with the white garment of Christ. And you who are a wealthy and rich matron in Christ’s Church, anoint your eyes... with Christ’s eye salve, that you may be able to attain to see God, by deserving well of God, both by good works and character” (The Treatises of St. Cyprian: “On Works and Alms,” in Eerdmans’ *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V, pp. 479-480). (*Translator.*)

CHAPTER THREE

dignity of an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven, one who reigns together with Christ Himself, the Conqueror of the devil (see Matt. 19:28, Luke 22:30).

The Seven Churches as Seven Christian Epochs

There is an opinion that the seven churches signify seven periods in the life of the whole Church of Christ from its foundation to the end of the world:

1) The church of Ephesus signifies the first period, the Apostolic Church which labored and did not faint while fighting with the first heretics, the Nicolaitans, but soon abandoned the good custom of doing good to others—the “communion of goods” (“thy first love”).

2) The church of Smyrna signifies the second period, the period of persecutions against the Church, of which there were ten in all.

3) The church of Pergamos signifies the third period, the epoch of the Ecumenical Councils and the battle with the heresies by the sword of the word of God.

4) The church of Thyatira is the fourth period, the period of the blossoming of Christianity among the new peoples of Europe.

5) The church of Sardis is the epoch of humanism and materialism of the 16th to 18th centuries.

6) The church of Philadelphia is the next-to-last period in the life of the Church of Christ, the epoch contemporary to us, when the Church will in fact have “little strength” in contemporary humanity and new persecutions will begin, when patience will be required.

7) The church of Laodicea is the last, most frightful epoch before the end of the world, characterized by indifference to the faith and outward prosperity.*

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER THREE

3:3

Matthew 24:42-44. *Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.*

I Thessalonians 5:2-4. *Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

3:4

Matthew 17:2. *And was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.*

3:5

Matthew 22:11-12. *And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment;*

* Has not this last epoch already begun in our midst in the 1980's? Judging from the indifference of Orthodox Christians who should be burning with faith and enlightening others, the widespread phariseism and satisfaction with the outward show of Orthodoxy, and the lukewarmness that so easily steals into the hearts of all of us who are not directly under persecution—this epoch has indeed begun. (*Translator.*)

CHAPTER THREE

and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Psalm 68:28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and let them not be written with the righteous (Sept.).

Psalm 138:16. All men shall be written in Thy book (Sept.).

Isaiah 4:3. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.

Daniel 12:1. And at that time Michael the great prince shall stand up, that stands over the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of tribulation, such tribulation as has not been from the time that there was a nation on the earth until that time. At that time thy people shall be delivered, even every one that is written in the book (Sept.).

Malachi 3:16. And the Lord gave heed, and hearkened, and He wrote a book of remembrance before Him for them that feared the Lord and revered His name (Sept.).

Exodus 32:32-33. (Moses said:) And now if Thou wilt forgive their sin, forgive it; and if not, blot me out of Thy book, which Thou hast written. And the Lord said to Moses, If any one has sinned against Me, I will blot them out of My book (Sept.).

Luke 10:20. In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

Phillipians 4:3. Help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life.

3:5-6

Matthew 10:32. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.*

Luke 12:8. *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God.*

3:7-8

Isaiah 22:22. *And I will give him the glory of David; and he shall rule, and there shall be none to speak against him. And I will give him the key of the house of David upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and there shall be none to shut; and he shall shut, and there shall be none to open (Sept.).*

3:10

Luke 2:1. *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*

Matthew 24:21-22. *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 be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

3:12

John 3:13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

Galatians 4:26. *Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

CHAPTER THREE

3:14

Galatians 6:15. *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

Colossians 3:10. *Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.*

Colossians 1:15, 18. *(The Son) Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.... Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.*

3:19

Proverbs 3:11-12. *My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked by him; for whom the Lord loves, he rebukes, and scourges every son whom He receives (Sept.).*

Hebrews 12:5-8. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*

3:21

Matthew 19:28. *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Luke 22:29-30. *And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

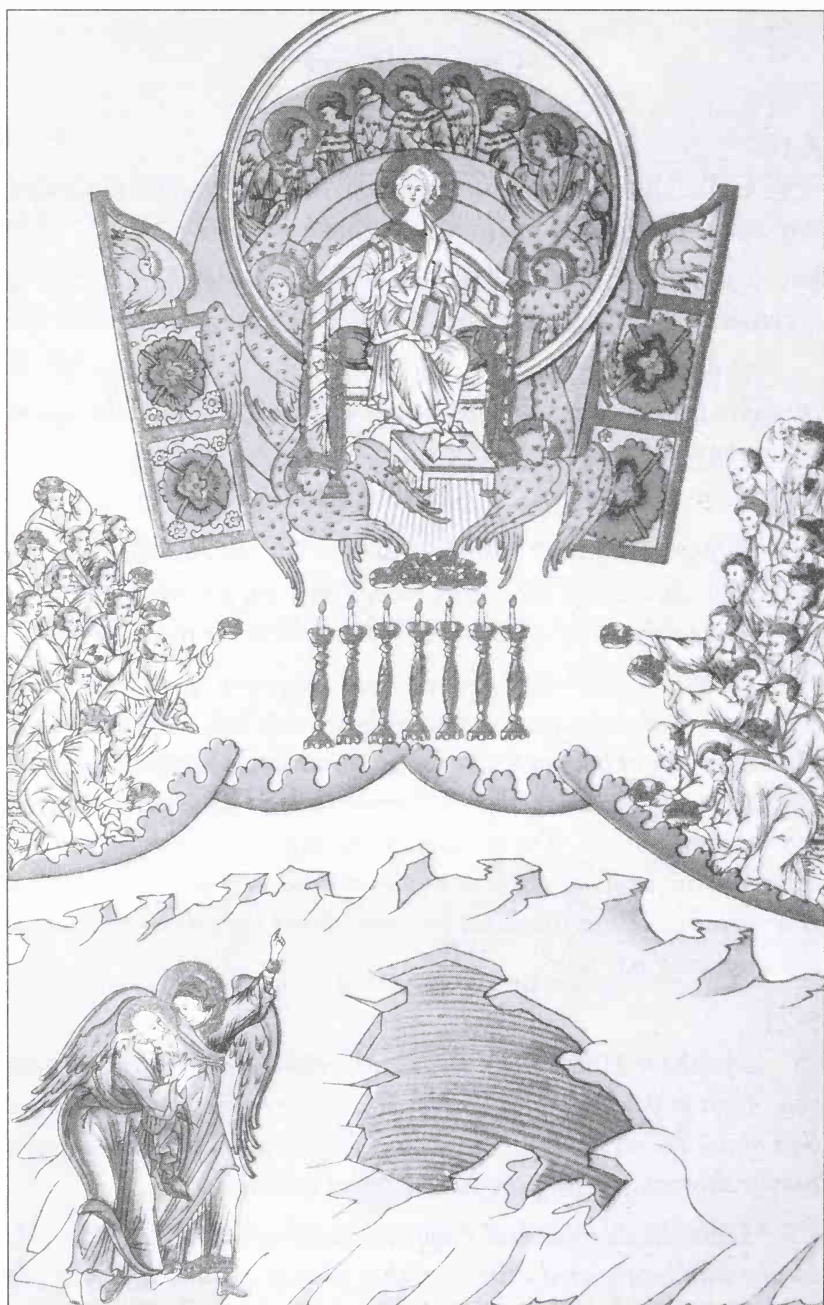


Figure 4. St. John's vision of the opening of heaven's doors and the Lord sitting upon His throne. The throne is encircled by a rainbow (4:3), and round about it are *four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment* (4:4). These elders *fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him That liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne* (4:10).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SECOND VISION: THE VISION OF GOD SITTING ON THE THRONE, AND THE LAMB

4:1 *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.*

The fourth chapter contains the beginning of a new, a second vision. The depiction of a new and magnificent spectacle which opens before the gaze of St. John begins with a commandment to him to ascend through an open door in heaven so as to see "things which must be hereafter." The opening of the door signifies the revelation of the hidden mysteries of the Spirit. By the words "Come hither," the hearer is commanded to put off entirely earthly thinking and be converted to heavenly thinking.

4:2-3 *And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*

"And immediately I was in the Spirit"; that is, again in a state of ecstasy, St. John saw this time God the Father Himself, sitting upon a throne. His appearance was like the precious

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stone jasper (a stone green like an emerald) and a sardine stone (sard, of a fiery color). The first of these colors, green, according to the commentary of St. Andrew of Caesarea, signifies that the Divine nature is ever flourishing, life-bearing, and gives food. The second, the fiery yellow red, indicates purity and sanctity, which ever remain in God, and His threatening anger towards those who transgress His will. The union of these two colors indicates that God chastises sinners, but at the same time is always ready to forgive one who sincerely repents. The apparition of the One sitting on the throne was surrounded by a rainbow like an emerald, a stone of green color which signifies, as does also the rainbow which appeared after the Flood, the eternal mercy of God towards mankind.

The sitting on the throne itself signifies the opening of the Judgment of God which is to be revealed in the last times. This is not yet the terrible Last Judgment, but a preparatory judgment like those judgments of God which have occurred many times in the history of mankind to people who have sinned. (For example, the universal Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Jerusalem, and many others.)

The precious stones jasper and sardine, and likewise the rainbow around the throne, being a symbol of the ceasing of the wrath of God and the renewal of the world, signify that the judgment of God upon the world, that is, its fiery destruction, is to end with its renewal. This is especially indicated also by the quality of jasper to heal wounds received by the sword.

"Since in this vision he presents the Father, he does not give to Him, as previously to the Son, the signs of a bodily image, but likens and compares Him to precious stones" (St. Andrew, ch.10) (see Ezekiel 1:26-28).

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4:4 *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*

Around the throne on twenty-four other thrones sat twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. There are the most varied opinions and suppositions as to whom one must understand by these elders. One thing is certain: that these are representatives of humanity who have pleased the Lord. Many suppose, basing themselves on the promise given to the holy Apostles: *Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matt. 19:28), that by these twenty-four elders one must understand twelve representatives of the Old Testament humanity—the holy patriarchs and prophets—and twelve representatives of the New Testament humanity—namely, the twelve Apostles of Christ. The white garments are a symbol of purity and eternal feasting, and the golden crowns are a sign of victory over demons.

4:5 *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices.*

This indicates how frightful and terrible God is for unrepentant sinners who are unworthy of His mercy and forgiveness. (Compare the manifestation of God on Mount Sinai, Ex. 19:16.)

“But for those worthy of salvation, the lightnings and thunderings do not cause fear, but sweetness and enlightenment: the one enlightens their spiritual eyes, while the other gives pleasure to the hearing” (St. Andrew, ch. 10).

4:5 *And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.*

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By these seven spirits one must understand either the seven chief angels, as St. Irenaeus interprets it, or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which are enumerated by the holy Prophet Isaiah. (See commentary on Apocalypse 1:4.)

4:6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal.

The crystal sea, being unmoving and still, as opposed to the stormy sea seen later by St. John (Apoc. 13:1), must signify, in the opinion of many interpreters, "the multitude of the holy heavenly powers," pure and immortal (St. Andrew of Caesarea). These are the souls of men who have not been disturbed by the storms of the sea of life, but like crystal reflect the seven colors of the rainbow, being penetrated by the seven gifts of the grace of the Holy Spirit.*

*4:6-8 And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.** And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living*

* More simply, perhaps, as St. Andrew also says (ch. 10), the sea of glass (which appears also in Apoc. 15:2, but nowhere else in Scripture) indicates the "undisturbability of the future life" as opposed to the changeability of the stormy sea of this life, from which Antichrist, being of earth, comes (Apoc. 13:1). (*Translator.*)

** Unfortunately, the KJV translates by the one word "beast" two entirely different Greek words: *Zoon*, which is more correctly translated in the Revised Standard Version as "living creature" (as also in the KJV when it appears in Ezek. 1:5); and *therion* (Apoc. 6:8, 13:1, etc.) which is more properly "(wild) beast." Therefore, in Apoc. 4:6-9 we have replaced the KJV "beast" with the RSV "living creature." (*Translator.*)

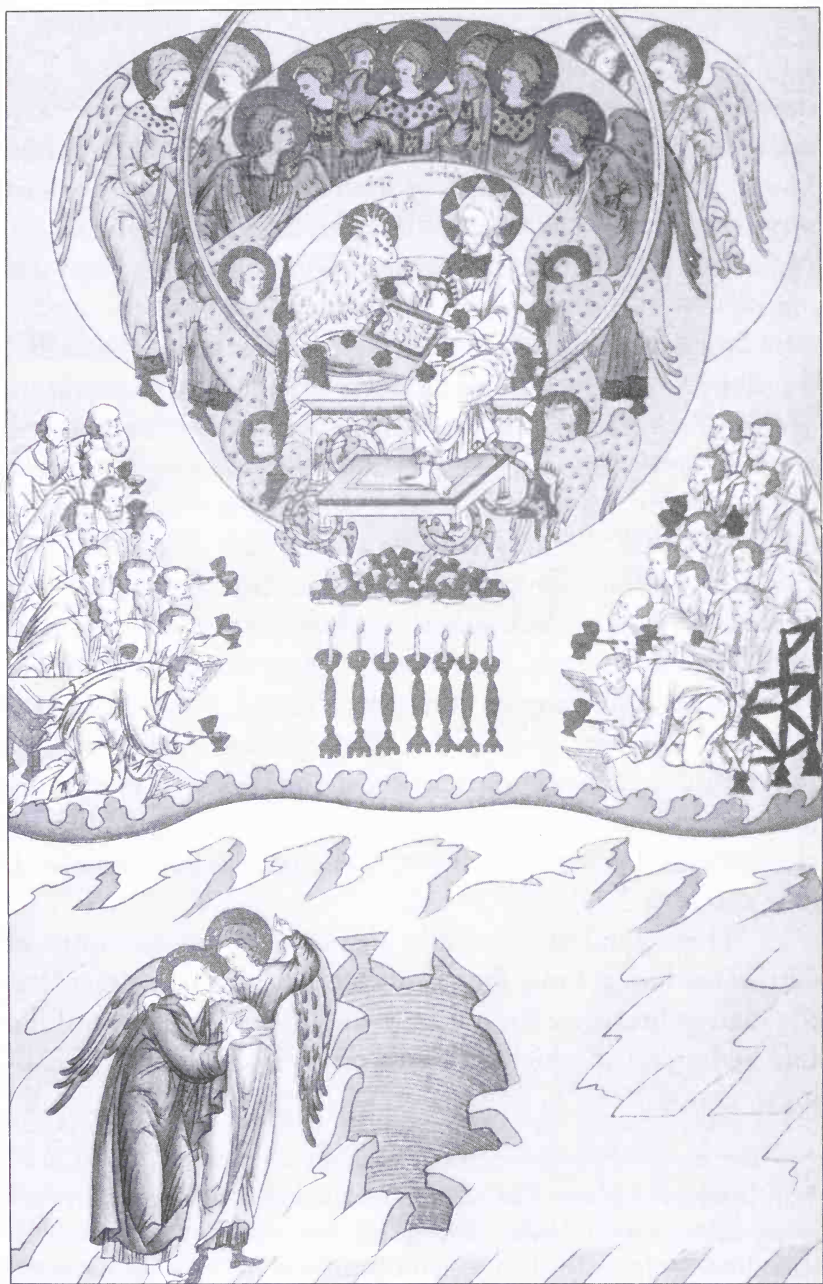


Figure 5. Seven lamps representing the *seven spirits of God* (4:5) are also shown before the throne, as is a *sea of glass like unto crystal* (4:6). Round about the throne are *four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.... And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within* (4:6-8).

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creature like a calf, and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come.

Some think that by these living creatures should be understood the four elements and God's governance and preservation of them, or God's dominion over the regions of heaven, earth, sea and the underworld. However, as is clear from the further description of the appearance of these living creatures, without doubt they are the very angelic powers who in the mystical vision of the holy prophet Ezekiel (Ez. 1:5-25) on the river Chobar, supported the mystical chariot on which the Lord God sits as a King.

These four living creatures have served as it were as emblems of the four Evangelists. The multitude of their eyes indicates the Divine omniscience, the knowing of everything past, present and future. These are the highest angelic beings, closest to God [the Seraphim—tr.] who ceaselessly glorify God. (See also Is. 6:2-3.)

"These symbols probably signify also the economy of Christ: the lion as king, the calf as chief priest or rather sacrifice, the man as incarnate for our sake, and the eagle as giver of the Life-giving Spirit which descends on us from above" (St. Andrew, ch. 10).*

* St. Irenaeus of Lyons (2nd century) was the first to identify the four living creatures with the four Evangelists. According to early Orthodox icons (for example, the mosaics in the basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna) the lion is identified with St. Mark, the calf with St. Luke, the man with St. Matthew, and the eagle with St. John. (*Translator.*)

CHAPTER FOUR

“Which was, and is, and is to come signifies the Holy Trinity” (St. Andrew, ch. 10).*

4:9-11 *And when those living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, Who liveth forever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.*

“The four and twenty elders fall down”: These words signify that the elders are participants in the hymns of the heavenly powers and confess that they received from God the power of victory over spiritual enemies.

“They say: Inasmuch as Thou, O Master, art the Cause and Giver of the glorious victory, to Thee should be sent up thanksgiving from all creatures” (St. Andrew, ch. 10).

* St. Athanasius the Great says also that “Holy, Holy, Holy,” here also indicates the Holy Trinity and the equality of the Three Persons: “The Triad, praised, revered, and adored, is one and indivisible and without degrees. It is united without confusion, just as the Monad also is distinguished without separation. For the fact of those venerable living creatures (Is. 6, Apoc. 4:8) offering their praises three times, saying ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ proves that the Three Hypostases are perfect; just as in saying ‘Lord’ they declare the One Essence.” (*Translator.*)

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER FOUR

4:2-3

Ezekiel 1:26-28. *And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of His loins even upward, and from the appearance of His loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.*

4:5

Exodus 19:16. *And it came to pass on the third day, as the morning drew nigh, there were voices and lightnings and a dark cloud on Mount Sinai: the voice of the trumpet sounded loud, and all the people in the camp trembled (Sept.).*

4:6-8

Ezekiel 1:5-11. *And in the midst as it were the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: the likeness of a man was upon them. And each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. And their legs were straight; and their feet were winged, and there were sparks, like gleaming brass, and their wings were light. And the hand of a man was under their wings on their four sides. And the faces of them four turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. And the likeness of their faces was the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right to the four; and the face of a calf on the left to the four; and the face of an eagle*

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to the four. And the four had their wings spread out above; each one had two joined to one another, and two covered their bodies (Sept.).

Isaiah 6:1-3. And it came to pass in the year in which king Ozias died, that I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, and the house was full of His glory. And Seraphim stood round about Him: each one had six wings; and with two they covered their face, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one cried to the other, and they said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory (Sept.).



Figure 6. *The Lion of the tribe of Judah opening the book with seven seals (5:5). The book is being taken by the Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes (5:6-7), before Whom fall the twenty-four elders holding harps and golden vials full of odours (5:8).*

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTINUATION OF THE SECOND VISION: THE SEALED BOOK AND THE LAMB AS IT HAD BEEN SLAIN

5:1-3 *And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*

The Lord Almighty Whom St. John has seen sitting on the throne holds in His right hand a book written outside and inside with seven seals. Books in antiquity consisted of pieces of parchment rolled up in a roll or placed on a round stick. Inside such a scroll there was a kind of stick and the whole thing was bound outwardly and sealed by a seal. Sometimes the book consisted of a piece of parchment which was folded in the form of a fan and tied from above with string, sealed with seals on each bend or fold of the book. In such a case the opening of one seal gave opportunity to open and read only one part of the book. The writing was usually made only on the inner side of the parchment, but in rare cases both sides were written on. According to the explanation of St. Andrew of Caesarea and other commentators, by the "book" which St. John mentions one must understand "the most wise memory of God," in

which are registered all things, likewise, "the depths of the decrees of God." In this book were consequently registered all the mystical decrees of the most wise providence of God concerning the salvation of men.

"The seven seals signify either the complete confirmation which is known to none, or the economy of Him Who tests the depth of the Divine Spirit, something which can be unsealed by no created being. The book is also to be understood as the prophecies concerning which Christ Himself has said that in part they were fulfilled in the Gospel (Luke 24:44), but that the others will be fulfilled in the last days" (St. Andrew, ch. 11).

One of the mighty angels with a loud voice cries out that someone should open this book, taking off its seven seals, but there was found none worthy, no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth who would dare to do this. This signifies that to none of the created beings is accessible the knowledge of the mysteries of God. This inaccessibility is yet increased by the expression, "neither to look thereon," that is, even to look at it.

5:4-6 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

St. John grieved much about this, but he was consoled by one of the elders who said: "Weep not. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof." The lion signifies

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here a powerful one, a hero. By this is indicated the prophecy of the patriarch Jacob concerning the "lion from the tribe of Judah," by which is to be understood the Messiah, Christ (Gen. 49:9-10).

Having looked, the seer of mysteries John beheld "a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes." This Lamb, carrying in himself the traces of the fact that he had been offered in sacrifice, is, of course, *the Lamb of God That taketh away the sin of the world* (John 1:29), that is, Our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is manifest as worthy to open the book of God's decrees; for He, having offered Himself as sacrifice for the sins of men, is Himself revealed as the fulfiller of God's decrees for the salvation of the human race. Further, the later opening by Him of the seven seals of the book signifies the very fulfillment of the Divine decrees by the Only-begotten Son of God as the Saviour of mankind. The seven horns are symbols of His power (Ps. 74:10), and the seven eyes signify, as is immediately explained, "the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth," that is, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which repose in Christ as the Anointed of God. The Prophet Isaiah already spoke of this (Is. 11:2), as did also the holy Prophet Zacharias (ch. 4). The seven eyes symbolize at the same time God's omniscience. "The Lamb stood in the midst of the throne," that is, there where the Son of God should be, at the right hand of God the Father.

5:7-8 *And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him That sat upon the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elder fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.*

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The Lamb took the book from the One sitting on the throne and immediately the four creatures (the Seraphim) and the twenty-four elders falling down gave to Him divine worship. The harps which they had in their hands signify the harmonious singing of their souls. The golden cups, as is immediately explained, filled with incense, are the prayers of the saints.

"The odors, 'incense,' signify the fragrant sacrifice of the faithful which they offer by an undefiled life, for, as the divine Paul says, *We are ... a sweet savor of Christ* (II Cor. 2:15). The vials are thoughts from which come the fragrance of good deeds and pure prayer" (St. Andrew, ch. 12).

5:9-14 *And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb That was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him That sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him That liveth for ever and ever.*

And they sang a hymn to the Son of God, the Redeemer of mankind, an authentically "new song" not heard from the

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creation of the world, concerning which the Psalmist King David already prophesies (Ps. 97:1).

The new song is that which the Holy Spirit teaches to those who have been delivered from the oldness of the letter and who are enlightened from among all tribes and peoples. Of them he (John) says that they will reign on that earth which the Lord has promised to the meek (Matt. 5:5).

In this song is glorified the new Kingdom of the Son of God, in which He reigns as the God-Man Who bought this Kingdom with the high price of His own blood. The redemption of mankind, although it refers only to man, still was so astonishing, so splendid, so touching and sacred, that it aroused the most lively participation in the whole choir of heaven so that all together angels and men glorify God for this work and "worshipped Him That liveth for ever and ever."

"By the four living creatures and the elders is signified the fact that from angels and men has been formed a single flesh and a single church through Christ God Who has joined together what was separate and has destroyed the middle wall of separation. And so, together with the four living creatures who surpass the other orders of angels, the elders also, who signify the fullness of those being saved, are worthy of the song and worship of God. May we also be vouchsafed this in Christ Himself the Giver of peace and our God, with Whom together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, may there be glory, dominion, honor, now and ever and unto the unending ages. Amen." (St. Andrew, ch. 12).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER FIVE

5:1-3

Luke 24:44. *And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.*

5:5

Genesis 49:9-10. *Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

5:6

John 1:29. *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

Psalms 74:10. *And all the horns of the sinners will I break, but the horn of the righteous man shall be exalted (Sept.).*

Isaiah 11:2. *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

5:9

Psalms 97:1. *O sing unto the Lord a new song, for the Lord hath wrought wondrous things (Sept.).*

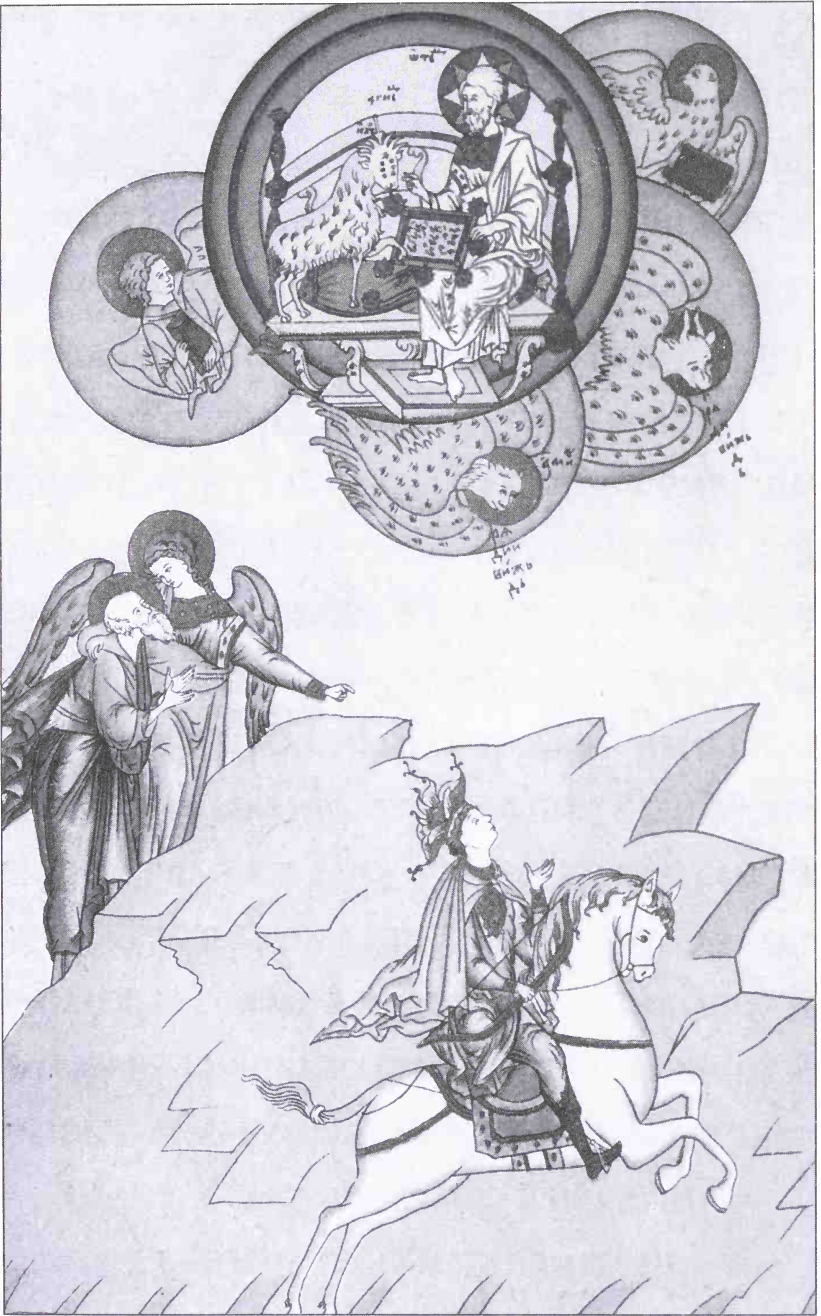


Figure 7. The first seal: the vision of a white horse with a rider holding a bow (6:1-2).



Figure 8. The second seal: the vision of a red horse with a rider to whom power was given to take peace from the earth (6:3-4).

CHAPTER SIX

THE OPENING BY THE LAMB OF THE SEALS OF THE MYSTICAL BOOK: THE FIRST TO SIXTH SEALS

6:1-2 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four living creatures saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

In the sixth chapter there is related the taking away by the Lamb one by one of the first seals of the mystical book, and the signs that accompanied this. By the opening of the seals one must understand the fulfillment of the Divine decrees by the Son of God Who has given Himself as a Lamb to be slaughtered.

In the explanation of St. Andrew of Caesarea the taking away of the first seal is the sending into the world of the holy Apostles who, like a bow which directs the preaching of the Gospel against demons, by their saving arrows have brought the wounded ones to Christ and received a crown because by the Truth they have conquered the chief darkness. This is what is symbolized by the white horse and the one that sits upon it with a bow in his hands.

“Here among those in heaven is to be observed the good order which descends from the first choirs to the second. For

the first voice, who commands the coming of the angel who mystically depicts the vision, was heard from one of the living creatures—the lion. It seems to me that the lion signifies the royal authority of the Apostles over the demons.... *He went forth conquering, and to conquer*: the first victory is the conversion of the pagans, and the second is (the Apostles') voluntary departure from the body joined with tortures" (St. Andrew, ch. 13).

6:3-4 *And when He had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say: Come and see. And here went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*

The taking away of the second seal and the appearance of the red horse, to the one sitting upon which "power was given to take peace from the earth," signifies the arousal of the unbelievers against the believers when peace was destroyed by the preaching of the Gospel in the fulfillment of the words of Christ: *I came not to send peace but a sword* (Matt. 10:34); and then the earth was abundantly watered by the blood of the confessors and martyrs for Christ. "The 'red horse' is the sign either of the shedding of blood or of the heartfelt zeal of those who suffer for Christ" (St. Andrew, ch. 14).

"Since the first living creature signifies apostolic authority, I suppose that the calf, the second living creature, indicates the sacred sacrifices of the holy martyrs" (St. Andrew, ch. 14).

6:5-6 *And when He had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, A*

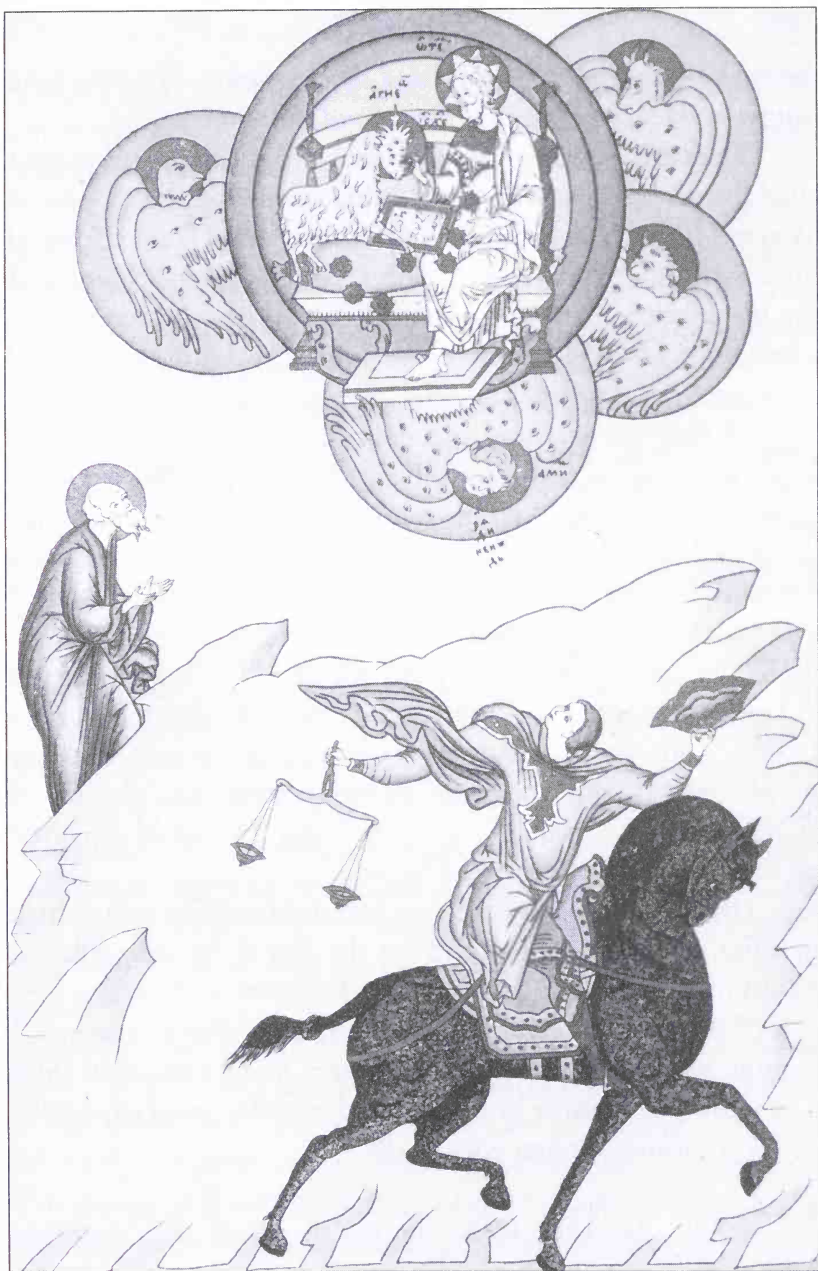


Figure 9. The third seal: the vision of a black horse with a rider holding a pair of balances in his hand (6:5-6).

measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

The taking away of the third seal and the appearance right after this of the black horse with his rider who has "a pair of balances in his hand" signifies the falling away from Christ of those who do not have firm faith in Him. The black color of the horse symbolizes "lamentation over those who have fallen away from faith in Christ by reason of the difficulty of the torments" (St. Andrew, ch. 15).

"A measure of wheat for a penny" signifies those who have lawfully struggled and carefully have preserved the image of God given to them. "And three measures of barley for a penny" signifies those who like cattle, because of lack of courage, have submitted to the persecutors out of fear, but later have repented and with tears have washed away their defiled image. "And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine" signifies that one should not out of fear renounce the healing of Christ or leave without Him those who are wounded and have fallen among thieves, but they should be brought the wine of consolation and the oil of compassion (St. Andrew, ch. 15). Many by the black horse understand the misfortune of famine.

"By the third living creature I understand the man, which signifies the fall of men, and by the power of free will, the punishment for inclination to sin" (St. Andrew, ch. 15).

We must help our brethren who have fallen in the persecutions, giving them consolation (wine) and compassion (oil). The wheat for a penny indicates good price for good wheat; the barley indicates cheaper goods.

6:7-8 And when He had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death,

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and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The taking away of the fourth seal and the appearance of the pale horse with its rider whose name is Death signifies the manifestations of the wrath of God in revenge for the pious and the punishment of sinners. These are the various misfortunes of the last times prophesied by Christ the Saviour (Matt. 24:6-7).

“The high flight and the swooping fall upon its prey of the fourth living creature, the eagle, indicates that the wounds come from above from the wrath of God for the revenge of the pious and the punishment of the impious, if only these latter will not be converted through correction to the better” (St. Andrew, ch. 16).

6:9-11 *And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

The taking away of the fifth seal reveals the prayer of the holy martyrs at the throne of God for the hastening of the end of the world and the coming of the Last Judgement. The souls of the righteous who have suffered for Christ, as is evident from this passage, are under the altar of the heavenly temple, just as on earth from the time of the martyrs there entered the custom of placing in the foundations of Christian temples and altars particles of the relics of the holy martyrs. The prayer of the

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righteous ones is explained, of course, not by a desire for any personal revenge but by a desire for the speeding up of God's righteousness on earth and His rewarding of each according to his works, which is to occur at the Last Judgement and will make them participants of eternal blessedness since they have given their lives for Christ and His Divine teaching. To them are given white garments, a symbol of their virtue, and it is told them to endure "yet for a little season" until their fellow laborers and the brethren who will be killed just as they were, shall fill up the number so that all might receive the worthy reward from God.

6:12-17 And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chieftains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

The taking away of the sixth seal symbolizes those elemental misfortunes and horrors which will occur on earth in the last period of its existence immediately before the end of the world, before the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. These will be those very signs concerning which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself prophesied not long before His suffering on the Cross (Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25-26).

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These signs will evoke mortal fear and terror among people of all conditions who will live then on the earth, beginning with kings, nobles and generals and ending with slaves. All will tremble with the coming of "the great day of His wrath" and will entreat the mountains and stones: "Hide us from the face of Him Who sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." Similar horrors were experienced by the murderers of Christ at the destruction of Jerusalem. On a yet greater scale such horrors will overtake the whole of mankind before the end of the world.

"The earthquake, of which we often read in Scripture, is a change of things; wherefore also, the expression *yet once more I shake the earth* (Hag. 2:7) signifies as the Apostle says, *the removal of these things that are shaking* (Heb. 12:26-27).

"The blackness of the sun and the darkness and bloody appearance of the moon indicate, as the Blessed Cyril has often expressed it, the darkness of soul of those upon whom the wrath of God will come. And that 'the stars fell,' as has been written also of those deceived by Antiochus, indicate that those who think themselves to be the lights of the world will fall, being crushed and defeated by what will happen at that time, when as the Lord has said, *If it were possible they shall deceive the very elect* by reason of the great tribulation (Matt. 24:24). This is perhaps why there is given here the indication of the fig tree, which, at the blowing of the wind of the devil, casts down its fruit while still unripe, since they have not ripened in the heat of temptations and are not sweetened by grace....

"Whether all this will turn out in a physical form at the glorious Coming of Christ the King is known by Him Who possesses the mystical treasury of knowledge and wisdom" (St. Andrew, ch. 18).

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"The heaven is not to be subject to corruption and destruction but, as it were, to a certain rolling up and change for the better. Irenaeus, in his fifth accusatory *Homily Against Reason* (falsely so-called), says: 'Neither the essence nor the being of the creation will perish or will be destroyed, for true and strong is He Who created it, but *the fashion of this world passeth away* (I Cor. 7:31), the world in which the transgression was performed'" (St. Andrew, ch. 18).

"At the coming of Antichrist, those (called here symbolically mountains) who are leaders either over the good order of the Church or over the worldly dominions, and the churches of the faithful which are presented here under the image of islands ... will fall from their places, changing them one for another—something which we too experienced and underwent according to His love for mankind on account of our sins before His Coming" (St. Andrew, ch. 18).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER SIX

6:8

Matt. 24:6-7. *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours 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.*

6:12-17

Matt. 24:29. *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*

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Luke 21:25-26. *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*

6:17

Hebrews 12:26-27. *Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

I Cor. 7:31. *And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*



Figure 10. *Four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth (7:1). Another angel holds the seal of the living God (7:2), by which are sealed Israelites from the twelve tribes (7:4).*

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE APPEARANCE AFTER THE OPENING
OF THE SIXTH SEAL OF THE ONE HUNDRED
AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND SEALED UPON
THE EARTH AND CLOTHED IN WHITE
GARMENTS IN HEAVEN

7:1 *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.*

These four angels appeared evidently as the fulfillers of the chastisement of God upon the world. One of the purposes set before them is "holding the four winds." As St. Andrew of Caesarea explains, this "clearly testifies concerning the end of the submissiveness (natural order) of the creation and the inevitability of evil because everything growing upon the earth sprouts and is nourished by winds; and with their cooperation men also sail on the sea, . . . we think that all this in the greatest possible degree will occur at the coming of Antichrist, and not in the Jewish land only, but over the whole earth, on the four corners of which, he says, there will stand angels as the performers of a service pre-assigned to them by God, but for us unknown" (St. Andrew, ch. 19).

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7:2-3 *And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

But here there appeared also "another angel" who had the "seal of the living God" in order to place this seal on the foreheads of the servants of God and thereby deliver them from the approaching chastisements. This is something like what was revealed once to the holy Prophet Ezekiel about the man clothed in a *podir*, that is, a long linen garment, who places a seal *upon those who groan* (Ezekiel 9:4) so as not to destroy the righteous together with the unrighteous (for the hidden virtues of the saints are unknown even to the angels).

In what this seal consists we do not know, and there is no need to seek this out. Perhaps this will be the sign of the Precious Cross of the Lord, by which it will be possible to distinguish believers from unbelievers and apostates; or perhaps it will be the seal of martyrdom for Christ.

"This will primarily be fulfilled during the time of the coming of Antichrist, when the seal of the Life-giving Cross will distinguish the unfaithful from the faithful, who will bear the sign of Christ before them unashamed and with boldness...the virtuous will need the angelic help before the coming of disasters, and this will be by the power of the seal of the Spirit which will be given us; but this seal will reveal its power only to the extent that we show our own activity" (St. Andrew, ch. 19).

7:4-8 *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thou-*

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sand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

This sealing will be with the Israelites, who before the end of the world will be converted to Christ, as St. Paul predicts (Rom. 9:27; 11:26). In each of the twelve tribes there will be twelve thousand sealed, and 144 thousand in all. Of these tribes only the tribe of Dan is not mentioned, because from it, according to tradition, will come Antichrist. In place of the tribe of Dan is mentioned the priestly tribe of Levi which previously had not entered into the twelve tribes. Such a limited number is mentioned, perhaps, in order to show how small is the number of the sons of Israel who are saved in comparison with the uncountable multitudes of those who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ from among all the other peoples of the earth who had been pagans.

“The precise equality of the numbers of those saved from each tribe, it seems to me, indicates the fruitfulness of apostolic seed, because the number twelve taken twelve times and multiplied by a thousand gives the number indicated here, for they were the disciples of the seed which fell on the ground and brought forth the multiple fruit of universal salvation” (St. Andrew, ch. 19).

7:9-14 After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed

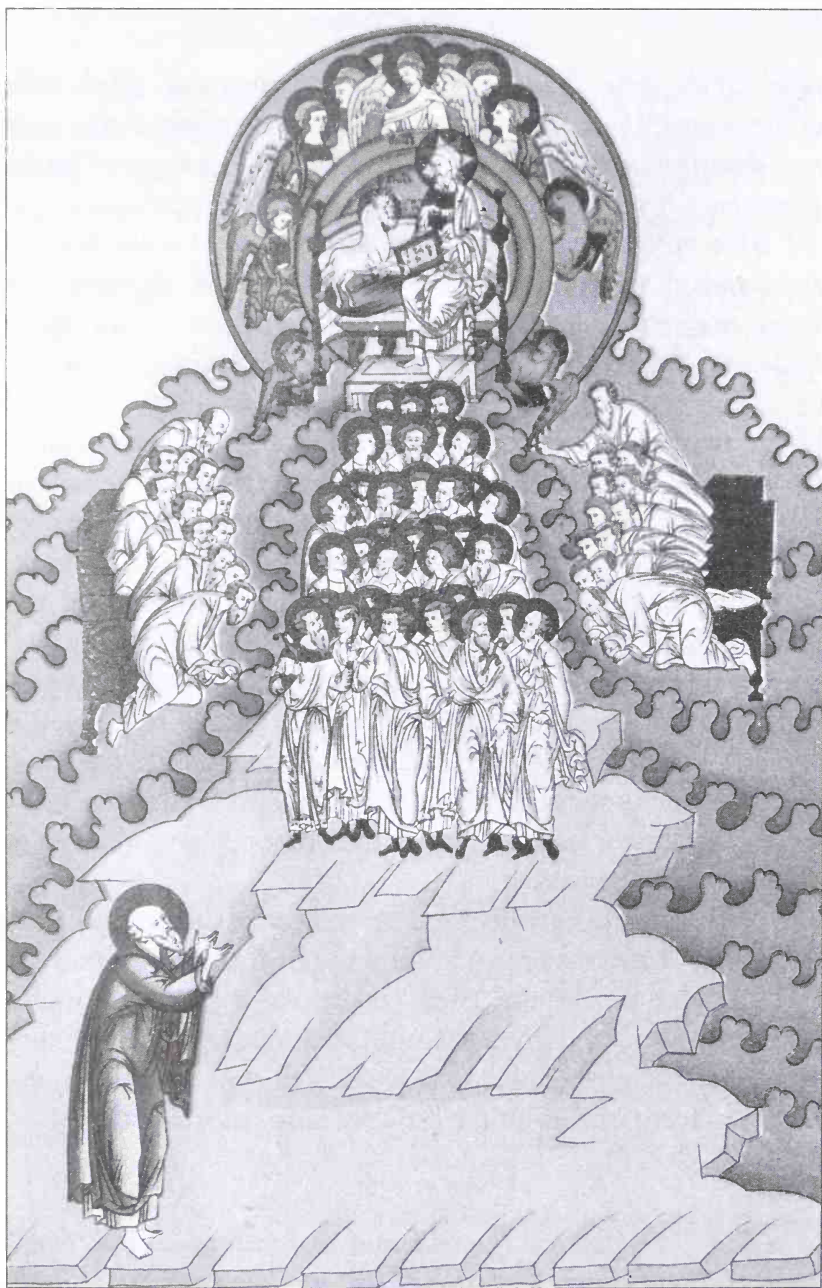


Figure 11. The multitude standing before the throne, clothed in white robes and holding palms in their hands (7:9).

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with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

According to St. Andrew of Caesarea, these in white robes "are those of whom David speaks: *if I should count them they are more in number than the sand* (Ps. 138:18, Sept.)—those who earlier suffered as martyrs for Christ and those who, from every tribe and people, are to receive sufferings with courage in the last times. By the pouring out of their blood for Christ some of them have made white, and others will make white, the garment of their deeds" (St. Andrew, ch. 20).

In their hands they have palm branches—signs of victory over the devil. Their lot is one of eternal rejoicing before the throne of God.

One of the heavenly elders explains to St. John that *these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb*. All these signs indicate clearly that these are martyrs for Christ, and the reference to *great tribulation* causes some commentators to suppose that these are the Christians who will be killed by Antichrist in the last period of the world's existence. For Christ the Saviour Himself has declared concerning this tribulation: *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the*

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beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21). This will be in addition to the number of the martyrs mentioned in Apocalypse 6:11.

7:15 *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

As the highest award that they will receive, it is indicated that they shall remain before the throne of God, serving Him "day and night"—indicating figuratively the uninterruptedness of this service; for, as St. Andrew says, "There will be no night there, but a single day, illuminated not by a material sun, but by the spiritual Sun of Righteousness. And perhaps by 'night' is to be understood hidden and profound mysteries, and by 'day' what is clear and easy to receive. The *temple of God* is the creation which has been renewed by the Spirit, or, more precisely, those who have preserved the pledge of the Spirit whole and unquenched; in which ones God has promised to *dwell and walk* (cf. II Cor. 6:16)" (St. Andrew, ch. 20).

7:16 *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.*

These words, indicating the characteristics of the blessedness of these righteous ones, mean that they will not endure any kind of misfortunes. "They shall have the bread of heaven and the water of life, and they will have no pain and will endure no misfortunes such as are depicted in the form of the sun and heat, for the time of sufferings has passed" (St. Andrew, ch. 20).

7:17 *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

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The “Lamb” Himself “shall feed them,” that is, guide them, and they shall be vouchsafed an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit (“living fountains of waters”). The Lord said also of the believer that *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water* (John 7:38). The saints, being then abundantly nourished by it, having acquired perfect knowledge after the cessation of private knowledge, and being delivered from corruption and change, will remain in endless rejoicing and joy.*

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER SEVEN

7:4-8

Romans 9:27. *Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.*

Romans 11:26. *And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

7:15

II Cor. 6:16. *What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.*

* This is the Kingdom of Heaven. (*Translator.*)



Figure 12. The seven angels standing before God, to whom were given seven trumpets. *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne (8:2-3).*

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TAKING AWAY OF THE SEVENTH SEAL: THE VOICES OF THE ANGELIC TRUMPETS: THE FIRST TO FOURTH

8:1 *And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.*

Thus is it also in the physical world: the coming of a storm is often preceded by profound silence. This silence in heaven signifies the concentration of reverent attention on the part of the angels and men who stand before the throne of God in expectation of the fearful signs of the wrath of God before the end of this age and the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ.

8:2-3 *And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*

Before the first seven' angels, as chastisers of the erring human race, the saints, with an angel at their head, stand before God in prayer for men. St. Andrew of Caesarea says that the saints will entreat God that "after the disasters which strike at the end of the world, the torments of impious and lawless men might be lessened in the future age and by His coming He might reward those who have labored" (St. Andrew, ch. 21).

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At the same time, the saints again and again will entreat God, just as they entreated Him at the taking away of the fifth seal (Apocalypse 6:9-11), that God might manifest His righteous judgment against the lawless and the persecutors of the faith of Christ and might cause to cease the fierceness of the torturers.

"The *golden altar*, on which is established every ministering holy power and on which the sacrifices of martyrdom are offered, is Christ the prefiguration of Whom was shown to Moses on the mountain together with the tabernacle (Ex. 25:9; Heb. 8:5)" (St. Andrew, ch. 21).

8:4-5 *And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*

The punishments described immediately after this are without doubt the consequences of this prayer. The Lord shows here that He doesn't leave without attention the prayers of His faithful servants. The voices and thunderings and the rest "indicate the horrors which are to occur before the end (of the world), just as on Mt. Sinai they served as symbols of the Divine Presence which frightened everyone and brought the most sensible of them to conversion" (St. Andrew, ch.21).*

* The casting of the fire of the censer on the earth indicates the Divine Judgement manifested on earth. See Ezekiel 10:2 where the coals of fire scattered over the city indicate the chastisement of Jerusalem. (Translator.)

CHAPTER EIGHT

8:6 *And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*

Here there follow the sounding of the trumpets one after the other, of all seven angels, which are accompanied each time by great disasters and punishments for the earth and its inhabitants.

8:7 *The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*

The chastisements of God follow gradually, indicating the mercy and long-suffering of God, calling sinners to repentance. At first the chastisement of God strikes a third of the trees and all the green grass. Wheat and other grasses are burned to the root—those things which are necessary for the feeding of men and animals. By “hail and fire mingled with blood ... cast upon the earth,” many commentators understand a war of extermination. Does this not refer to an aerial bombardment with its destructive and incendiary bombs?

“The fire mingled with blood indicates the destruction of cities...their fires and blood-letting, during which, as we see, there will be killed not less than a third part of all the creatures living on earth: wars exterminate not only men, but also everything produced on earth. Our supposition and opinion regarding this is confirmed by the blessed Joel, for he says that before the coming of the great day there will be sent on earth *blood and fire and vapour of smoke* (Joel 2:30)” (St. Andrew, ch. 22).

8:8-9 *And the second angel sounded, as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and a third part of the creatures which were*

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in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

One may suppose that on the bottom of one of the oceans there will open up a volcano whose fiery lava will fill the third part of the water basins of the earth, bringing death to everything alive. Others think that what is referred to here are fearful bloody sea battles with the help of newly invented murderous weapons.

8:10-11 *And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*

Some think that this is a meteor which will fall upon earth and will cause the poisoning of the sources of waters on the earth which will become fatal. But perhaps this is also one of the newly discovered weapons of a fearful war of the future.

"The star indicates either that all this comes upon men from the heavens, or it signifies the devil, of whom Isaiah says: *How has Lucifer, that rose in the morning, fallen from heaven!* (Isaiah 14:12). For he, making men drunk through pleasures by his stormy and bitter corruption, is allowed by God to bring a tormenting tribulation, if not upon all, then at least upon the third part" (St. Andrew, ch. 24).*

8:12 *And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part*

* Wormwood, it would seem, indicates in general the sorrows and bitterness of the last times. (Translator.)



Figure 13. The sounding of the second angelic trumpet: *A great mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea (8:8), and sea creatures and ships are destroyed (8:9).*

APOCALYPSE

of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

It is not possible for us to understand this at the present time. One thing is clear, that this is to be accompanied by various disasters for men—bad harvest, famine, and so forth.

“We think that this is akin to what is said about the sun and the moon by Joel (Joel 2:10) and which has already been ordained by the decree of the Master for the end. We repeat that the third part of the luminaries and stars indicates the third part of the duration of the day and night. From this we understand that God at that time will bring about disasters not all at once; for, allowing to be damaged only a third part of time, in the remaining and large part he secretly calls to repentance. Indeed, who can bear the cup of Divine wrath unmingled?” (St. Andrew, ch. 25).

8:13 *And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!*

This voice of the angel indicates the love of mankind and the compassion of the Divine angels, who have pity for the unrepentant men who are subjected to such disasters. By angels with trumpets some commentators understand Christian preachers who call to correction and repentance.

“For those who have their dwelling in the heavens, the disasters and sufferings are the cause of receiving unfading crowns and rewards” (St. Andrew, ch. 25).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER EIGHT

8:1-3

Exodus 25:9. *And thou shalt make for me according to all things which I shew thee in the mountain; even the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all its furniture: so shalt thou make it (Sept.).*

Hebrews 8:5. *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.*

8:12

Joel 2:10. *Before them the earth shall be confounded, and the sky shaken; the sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their light.*

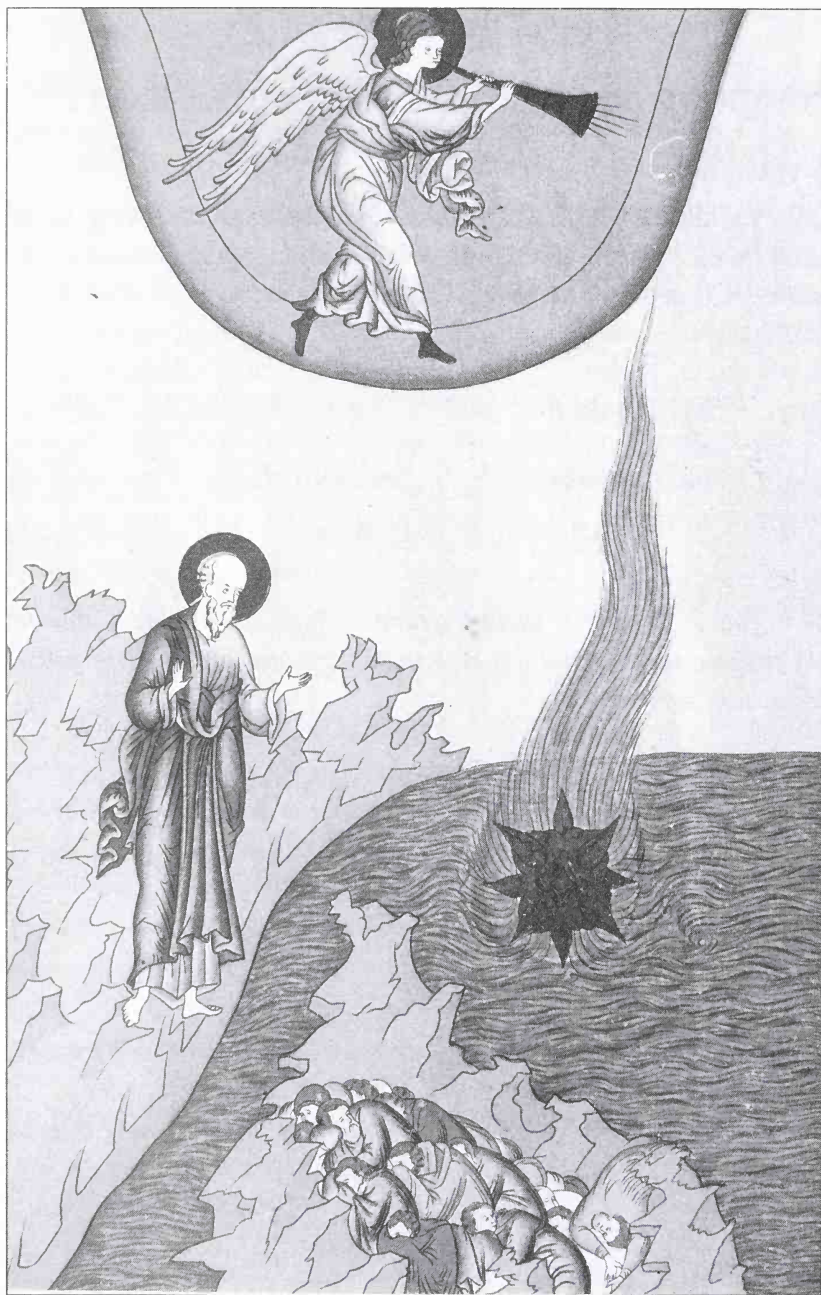


Figure 14. The sounding of the fifth angelic trumpet: *a star falls from heaven unto the earth* (9:1).

CHAPTER NINE

THE SOUNDING OF THE FIFTH AND SIXTH OF THE ANGELIC TRUMPETS: THE LOCUSTS AND THE ARMY OF HORSEMEN

9:1-3 *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*

St. Andrew of Caesarea by this star understands an angel for the chastisement of men, by the “bottomless pit” he understands gehenna, and by the locusts he understands the worms of whom the prophet said, *Their worm will not die* (Is. 66:24); the darkening of the sun and air indicates the blindness of soul of men.

“Of the star I think it is an angel of God: by God’s allowance he leads out of the pit the evil demons who have been condemned, those whom Christ bound when He was Incarnate, so that they might do their work before the end and then be subjected to endless torment” (St. Andrew, ch. 26).

On the binding of the devil and his loosing see below, Apocalypse 20:7; compare also John 12:31.



Figure 15. The sounding of the fifth angelic trumpet: the bottomless pit is opened and smoke arises from it, darkening the sun and the air (9:2). From the smoke comes *locusts* with bodies like those of horses and faces like those of men (9:7). Behind them is seen their king, the *angel of the bottomless pit* (9:11).

CHAPTER NINE

The smoke indicates the darkness which precedes the evil deeds done at their (the demons') instigation, after the performance of which they will be given authority to torment men.

9:4-5 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months; and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

According to St. Andrew the "five months" indicate the shortness of this chastisement, since *except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved* (Matt. 24:22). One may see here also a correspondence to the five outward senses, through which sin enters the soul of a man. And that these locusts "*should not hurt the grass of the earth ... but only men*" is because the whole creation will be delivered from corruption, being now in bondage to corruption because of us" (St. Andrew, ch. 26).

"And that the mental locusts sting men like scorpions signifies that at the end of evil deeds there is hidden the death of the soul" (St. Andrew, ch. 26).

"That death does not come even though men desire it, indicates that this depends upon the decree of God, Who by the bitterness of the disasters which are sent considers it profitable to make hateful to men the sin which is the very cause and consequence of such disasters" (St. Andrew, ch. 26).

9:7-10 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound

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of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

This description of the monstrous locusts causes some commentators to think that these locusts are nothing else than an allegorical description of human passions. Each of such passions when it reaches a certain limit has all the signs of these monstrous locusts. In describing the coming of the day of the Lord, the holy prophet Joel describes also the appearance before it of destroyers who in part remind one of these locusts.

"I suppose that by these locusts one should most likely understand the evil demons who have prepared themselves for battle with us and, as signs of victory, wear on their heads *crowns like gold* with which we also think to be crowned when we submit to them as having received an evil victory through pleasure. The *hair of women* testifies of the demons' love of pleasure and arousal to fornication; *the teeth of lions* indicate their hardheartedness; their tails, which are likened to those of scorpions indicate the consequences of sins, which produce the death of the soul, *for sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death* (James 1:15)" (St. Andrew, ch. 26).

Contemporary commentators, not without a certain reasonableness, find a kinship of these locusts with airplanes and their bombing attacks.

9:11 *And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.*

By the king of these locusts, who bears the name "angel of the bottomless pit"—*Abaddon* in Hebrew, or *Apollyon* in Greek—the commentators understand the devil.

CHAPTER NINE

9:12 *One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.*

“So that we might wage an uncompromising battle against the devil, it is said by way of threatening that after this *two more woes* will come upon us” (St. Andrew, ch. 26).

9:13-16 *And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.*

“I think that these four angels are the most cunning demons who were bound at the coming of Christ and who, by the command of God which comes from the heavenly altar (an image of which was the ancient tabernacle), are loosed by the Divine angel to agitate the peoples not only against Christians, but also against each other, so that through this some might be manifested as tested, faithful, and worthy of the best rewards, the highest mansions and dwellings like ripe wheat; while others, like tares, the impious, constant sinners and unrepentant and here justly punished, might receive a yet harder condemnation at the judgment. And that they were bound at the Euphrates is nothing strange, for, by God’s allowance, some were condemned until the time in the bottomless pit, others in wine, and some in other places, so that after the final end of the battle against men they might be subjected to eternal torments. Perhaps the mention of the Euphrates is an indication that Antichrist will come from those lands” (St. Andrew, ch. 27).

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9:17-18 *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.*

"The horses signify either men who are like beasts and lust after women, or those who are subject and under the authority of the demons. Those that sit on them are those that govern them. The *breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone* indicate, we believe, the aerial being and devouring activity of evil spirits, the murderousness and bestiality of which are described by the image of *the heads of lions*. *Out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone by which a third part of men will be killed* indicate either sins which burn the fruits of the heart by the poisonousness of the demons' instigations, instructions, and temptations; or (it may be), by God's allowance, the laying waste by barbarians of cities and the shedding of blood" (St. Andrew, ch. 27).

9:19 *For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.*

Their tails are like serpents which have heads, for the end of the sowing of demons is poisonous, in which is the death of the soul.

Some commentators understand by these depictions an allegorical representation of a frightful war of bloodshed, a monstrous and pitiless one. Truly rare in its terrors and pitilessness was indeed the Second World War which we have not long ago endured. Some people see also in this frightful mounted army tanks which spurt forth fire.

CHAPTER NINE

9:20-21 *And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

Such will be the end of the world, the general cruelty and stony insensibility of which are already to be observed now.

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER NINE

9:1-3

John 12:31. *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*



Figure 16. The appearance of the angel clothed with a cloud, having a rainbow upon his head, and setting his right foot upon the sea and his left foot upon the earth (10:1-2). The angel lifts his hand to heaven and swears that there should be time no longer (10:5-6).

CHAPTER TEN

THE ANGEL CLOTHED WITH A CLOUD AND A RAINBOW WHO PROCLAIMS THE END

10:1-2 *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.*

This appearance has the form of an introductory account before the seventh and final trumpet. It stops the continuation of the prophetic allegories but does not interrupt them.

Some think that this angel is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, or the Holy Spirit, but St. John calls him "an angel" and St. Andrew of Caesarea considers that this is precisely an angel, perhaps one of the Seraphim adorned with the glory of the Lord. His standing on the sea and on the earth signifies the dominion over the elements of the earthly world: "The pillars of fire signify the fear and punishment brought by the angel upon the impious who have robbed on the earth and on the sea" (St. Andrew, ch. 28).

The little book which he holds in his hand, according to St. Andrew, contains "the names and deeds of those of the evil ones who have lived by thievery or in some other way have done lawless deeds on earth and have killed on the sea" (St. Andrew, ch. 28). According to other commentators the book contains in

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general the prophecy concerning the future fate of the world and mankind.

10:3-4 *And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.*

St. Andrew of Caesarea supposes that these seven thunders should be understood as either "seven voices of one thundering angel or of seven other angels who declare concerning the future." That which they say "is now unknown but will be revealed later by experience and the course of events themselves.... The final knowledge and explanation of what they declare belongs to the last times" (St. Andrew, ch. 28).

Some suppose that these are seven periods in the history of mankind: 1) the triumph of Christianity over paganism; 2) the great settling of peoples and the fall of the Roman Empire, in whose place there arise new Christian governments; 3) the appearance of Islam and the collapse of the Byzantine Empire; 4) the epoch of the Crusades; 5) the fall of piety in Byzantium already subjected to Islam and in the old Rome where the spirit of papism came to dominate as a result of which there appeared apostasy from the Church in the form of the Reformation; 6) the revolution and the installing everywhere of social anarchy out of which the son of perdition, the Antichrist, is to come; 7) the restoration of the Roman, i.e. the worldwide empire, with Antichrist at its head, and the end of the world. There was no need to depict in advance all these events for they will be revealed in time.

CHAPTER TEN

10:5-6 *And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.*

“There should be time no longer,” i.e., the usual cycle of the elements of the world is to cease; there will be no time as measured by the sun and there should begin eternity. Here it is important that the angel swore “by Him that liveth for ever and ever,” i.e., by God Himself. Consequently those sectarians are wrong who consider that no oath whatsoever is to be allowed.

10:7 *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.*

That is, there shall soon begin the last of the seven epochs of the existence of the world and the seventh angel shall trumpet. Then there will be finished “the mystery of God” prophesied by our prophets, that is, the end of the world and everything that is to occur in connection with it.

10:8-11 *And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

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Here is indicated the fact that St. John has received the prophetic gift just as the Old Testament prophets received it: for example, the holy prophet Ezekiel to whom likewise it was commanded to eat a scroll of a book before he was sent by the Lord to preach to the house of Israel (Ez. 2:8-10; 3:1-4).

The sweetness and bitterness in the explanation of St. Andrew signify the following: "Sweet for you, he says, is the knowledge of the future; at the same time it is bitter for the belly, i.e., the heart, the dwelling place of the food of the Word because of compassion for those who will have to endure the punishments sent down by God's decrees. This is also to be interpreted in another way inasmuch as the holy Evangelist had not experienced evil deeds; by this swallowing of the book which contained the deeds of the impious is indicated to him that at the beginning of sin there is sweetness, and after the accomplishment, bitterness, by reason of revenge and reward" (St. Andrew, ch. 29). The compassionate heart of the apostle could not but feel the whole bitterness of the grief which awaits sinful mankind. In conclusion St. John received the command to prophesy.

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER TEN

10:8-11

Ezekiel 2:8-10. *And thou, son of man, hear Him that speaks to thee; be not thou provoking, as the provoking house: open thy mouth, and eat what I give thee. And I looked, and behold, a hand stretched out to me, and in it a volume of a book. And He unrolled it before me and in it the front and the back were written upon: and there was written in it Lamentation, and mournful song and woe* (Sept.).



Figure 17. St. John is shown hearing a voice from heaven that tells him to *go and take the little book* (10:8). Below this, he is again shown receiving the book from the angel, who says *take it and eat it up* (10:9).

Ezekiel 3:1-4. *And He said to me, Son of man, eat this volume, and go and speak to the children of Israel. So He opened my mouth, and caused me to eat the volume. And He said to me, Son of man, thy mouth shall eat, and thy belly shall be filled with this volume that is given to thee. So I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet honey. And He said to me, Son of man, go thy way, and go in the house of Israel, and speak My words to them.*



Figure 18. The *two witnesses* of God (lower left) are here shown preaching repentance until the *beast* ascends out of the bottomless pit and kills them (11:7). Above this, their dead bodies are shown *in the street of the great city*, not being given burial (11:8-9).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PROPHECY OF THE TEMPLE, OF ENOCH AND ELIAS, THE VOICE OF THE TRUMPET OF THE SEVENTH ANGEL

11:1-2 *And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

According to the commentary of St. Andrew, “the temple of the living God is the Church in which the rational sacrifices are offered by us. The *court which is without* is the society of unbelievers and Jews who are unworthy of the angelic measuring (i.e., the definition of the degree of their moral perfection and corresponding blessedness) because of their impiety” (St. Andrew, ch. 30).

The treading underfoot of the Holy City, Jerusalem, or the ecumenical Church for the course of forty-two months signifies that at the coming of Antichrist the faithful will be persecuted for the course of three and a half years.

Some interpreters suppose that this measurement of the temple signifies the speedy destruction of the Old Testament temple in Jerusalem on the site of which there is to be raised a New Testament Christian church, just like a similar measure-

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ment of the temple by means of a reed was given in a vision to the prophet Ezekiel (chaps. 40-45), signifying the restoration of the destroyed temple. Others consider that the inner court which was measured by the Apostle signifies "the church of the firstborn in heaven" (cf. Heb. 12:23), the heavenly sanctuary; and that the outer court left without measurement is the Church of Christ on earth which must endure persecution at first from the pagans and then, in the last times, from Antichrist. The miserable condition of the earthly Church is limited, however, to this period of forty-two months. The fulfillment of the prophecy of forty-two months some interpreters have seen in the persecution of Diocletian which was distinguished by its great cruelty and lasted from February 23, 305 to July 25, 308, which is about three and a half years. The persecution touches only the outward court; that is, the outer side of the life of Christians whose property will be taken away. They will be subjected to tortures, while the inner sanctuary of their souls will remain untouched.

11:3-6 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

For the course of this whole time, 1,260 days, "two witnesses of God" will preach repentance to men and convert them from the deception of Antichrist. By these two witnesses

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all the Holy Fathers and teachers of the Church understand almost unanimously the Old Testament righteous ones Enoch and Elias, who were taken alive into heaven. During their preaching, while possessing authority and power over the elements in order to chastise and bring to their senses the impious, they themselves will be unharmed.

“O wondrous grace of God! for He offers a treatment equal in power to the wound. Just as the false Christ will possess every diabolical activity and all false signs and miracles, and will be more glorious than all sorcerers and deceivers, so also will God arm these saints with the power of true signs and miracles, so that by offering truth and light they might overthrow the lie and darkness and convert the deceived either by the word of teaching or by the blows of chastisement (drought, fire, changes in the elements, and so forth), and might expose the deceiver himself without themselves suffering in the least either through him or others” (St. Andrew, ch. 30).

11:7-8 *And when they shall 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.*

Only at the end of their mission, after a course of three and a half years, “the beast that ascendeth from the bottomless pit” (i.e., Antichrist) will be allowed by God to kill the preachers, and their corpses will be thrown into the streets of the great city, which is evidently the city of Jerusalem where the Antichrist will found his kingdom, giving himself off as the messiah who was prophesied by the prophets.

“In this city he will establish his kingdom and royal throne in the likeness of David...so as to prove that he is Christ who



The Prophet Enoch.
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek, 14th century.



The Prophet Elias.
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek, 14th century.

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fulfills the Prophet's word: *I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen and will rebuild the ruins of it* (Amos 9:11, Sept.). These words the Jews will accept and refer to his coming" (St. Andrew, ch. 30).

11:9-10 *And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.*

These people will be deceived by the false miracles of the Antichrist who, with the cooperation of the devil, will be the most glorious of all sorcerers and deceivers; he will not allow for the prophets to be given over to burial, and the people will rejoice in their death, "because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt upon the earth," arousing their conscience.

11:11-12 *And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*

The evil joy of the impious will not be long in duration. In three and a half days the holy prophets will be brought to life by God and raised up to heaven.

11:13 *And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*



Figure 19. The two prophets are brought back to life after three and a half days and ascend to heaven in a cloud (11:11-12). At this time there occurs a great earthquake (11:13), which is depicted here under the figure of St. John.

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At the same time a great earthquake will occur, a tenth part of the city will be destroyed and seven thousand men will perish, and the remainder being seized with fear will send up glory to the God of heaven. Thus, to the work of Antichrist will be given a decisive blow.

“When the impious will be punished, the martyrs of Christ will be glorified, and those worthy of salvation will glorify God” (St. Andrew, ch. 31).

11:14-17 *The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned.**

“Here he again says that the angels and those who have lived like angels will send up thanksgiving to God. For our sake, He has willed as man to receive the kingdom which as God He possessed from the beginning” (St. Andrew, ch. 32).

11:18 *And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*

* The seventh trumpet indicates the end of this world and the beginning of the kingdom of Christ. (Translator.)

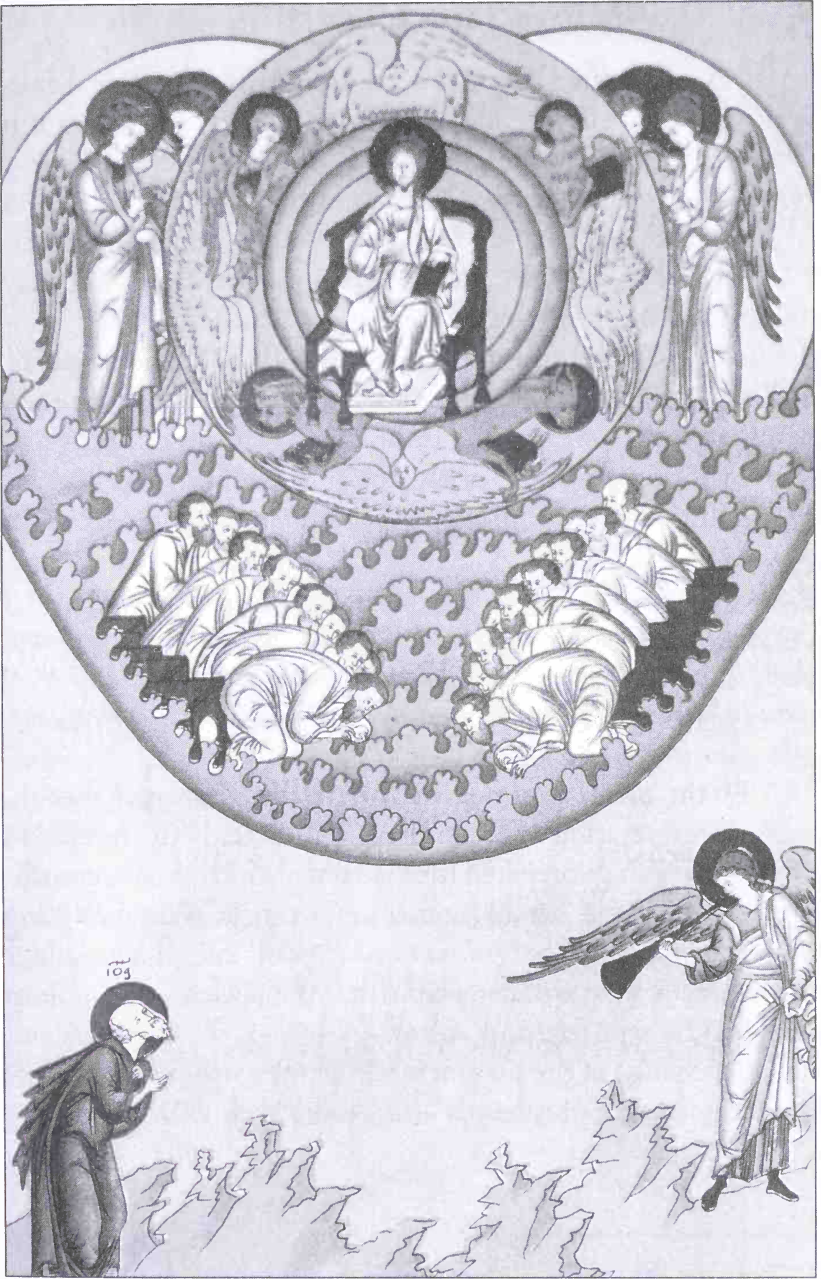


Figure 20. *The seventh angel sounded.... And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God (11:15-16).*

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“Finally, after having been long-suffering, He sends against the unbelieving nations, which are angry at this as if it were a new or strange teaching, their punishment. The *time of the dead* indicates the time of the resurrection of the dead, in which to each will be given a reward corresponding to his deeds.

“By *prophets, saints, and them that fear His name*, one may understand three degrees of men: those who offer fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold (Matt. 13:23). The prophets, however, will receive the first place and sit on twelve thrones. *Small and great*, we think, refer either to the lesser saints and those who surpass them; or else the small are sinners who have been belittled, and the great are the righteous” (St. Andrew, ch. 32).

11:19 *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.**

By the opening of heaven and the appearance of the ark, in the interpretation of St. Andrew, is indicated “the revelation of the good things prepared for the saints, which things, according to the Apostle, are all hidden in Christ, in Whom *dwelleth the whole fulness of the Godhead bodily* (Col. 2:9). These things will be revealed at the same time that the lawless and impious ones will be sent frightful voices, lightnings, thunderings, and hail; the change of the present world in the earthquake symbolizes the torments of gehenna” (St. Andrew, ch. 33).

* Compare the heavens opening to St. Stephen, Acts 7:55-56. (Translator.)

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER ELEVEN

11:1-2

Hebrews 12:23. *To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

11:19

Colossians 2:3-9. *In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

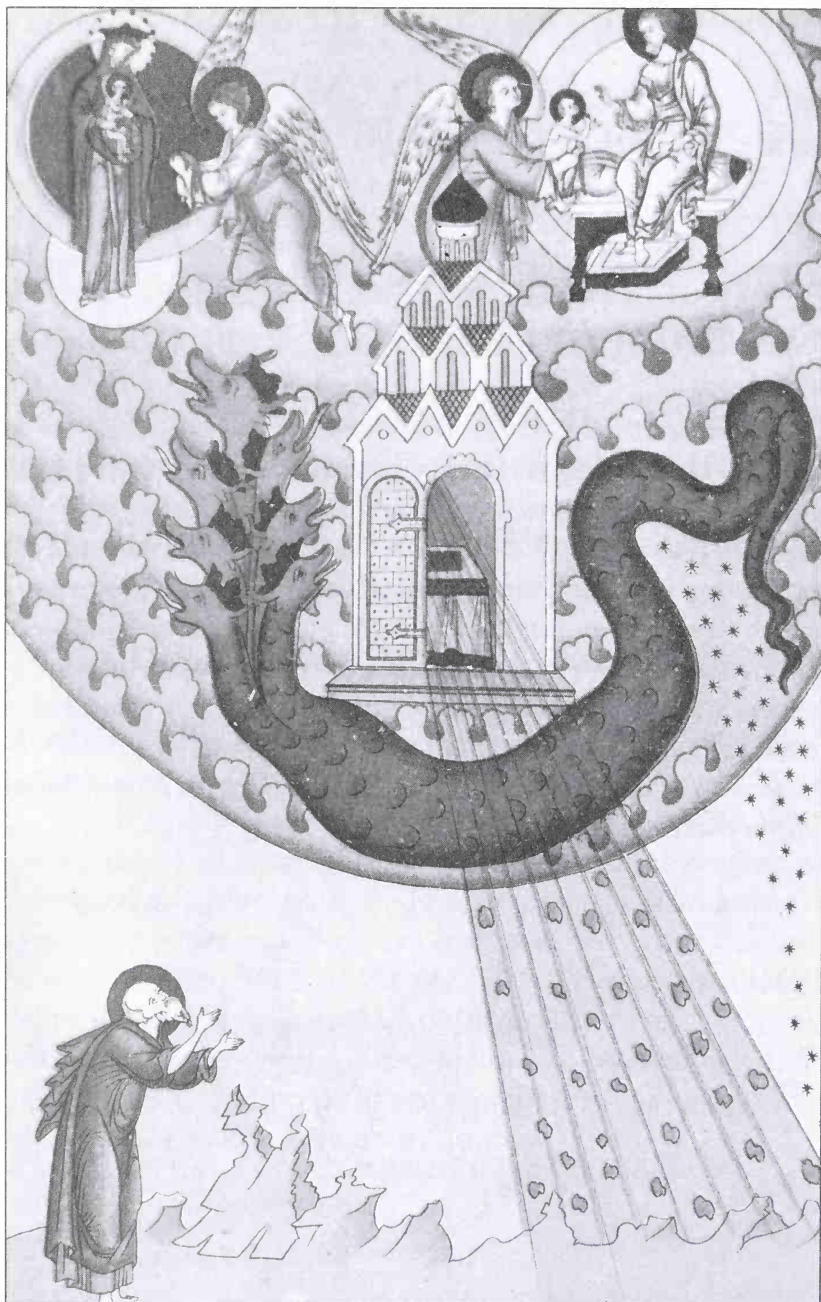


Figure 21. The appearance of *the woman clothed with the sun* (top left), who represents the Church (12:1). A red dragon with seven heads also appears, casting stars to earth with his tail (12:3-4). The woman's child (top right) is caught up unto God, and to His throne (12:5).

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE THIRD VISION: THE BATTLE OF
THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITH THE POWER
HOSTILE TO IT OF ANTICHRIST:
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UNDER THE IMAGE
OF THE WOMAN TRAVAILING IN BIRTH

12:1-2 *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

Certain commentators have seen in this mystical woman the Most Holy Theotokos, but such outstanding commentators as St. Hippolytus, St. Methodius, and St. Andrew of Caesarea find that this is “the Church clothed in the Word of the Father, shining more brightly than the sun.” This brilliance of the sun signifies likewise that she possesses the true knowledge of God and His laws and contains His revelations. The moon under her feet is a sign of the fact that she is above everything that changes. St. Methodius considers the moon allegorically as the “faith of those cleansed of corruption by the bath, that is, baptism, since upon the moon depends the nature of moisture.”

On her head is a crown of twelve stars that, being originally gathered together from the twelve tribes of Israel, she

subsequently was guided by the twelve apostles who comprise her light-bearing glory.

From the fact that she is in pain during childbirth, it is evident that it is incorrect to see in this woman the Most Holy Theotokos, for the giving birth from Her of the Son of God was without pain. These torments of birthgiving signify the difficulties which had to be overcome by the Church of Christ when it was being established in the world (martyrdom, the spreading of heresies). At the same time it signifies, in the explanation of St. Andrew, that "the Church is pained for each one of those who is reborn by water and the Spirit until, as the divine Apostle has said, *Christ shall be formed in them* (Gal. 4:19). St. Methodius says, "The Church is pained giving rebirth from natural to spiritual men and transforming them in appearance and image in the likeness of Christ" (St. Andrew, ch. 33).

12:3 *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.*

In this image of the dragon one cannot but see the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, of whom it will be spoken below (verse 9). The red color signifies his blood-thirsty cruelty; the seven heads signify his extreme slyness and cunning, as opposed to the seven spirits of God, the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the ten horns are his evil power and might which are directed against the ten commandments of the Law of God. The crowns on his head signify the royal authority of the devil in his dark kingdom. As applied to the history of the Church, some see in these seven crowns seven kings who rise up against the Church; and in the ten horns, ten persecutions against the Church.

CHAPTER TWELVE

12:4 *And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth; and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

By these stars which the devil draws after himself in his fall, commentators understand the fallen angels or demons. By them are also understood representatives of the churches and teachers who are corrupted by satanic power. As for the dragon standing before the woman, St. Andrew writes: "The devil always arms himself against the Church and increasingly strives to make those reborn by her his food" (St. Andrew, ch. 33).

12:5a *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.*

This is an image of Jesus Christ, as St. Andrew says: "In the person of those who are baptized, the Church ceaselessly gives birth to Christ; just as, according to the Apostle, we come *unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13)" (St. Andrew, ch. 33). St. Hippolytus says likewise, "The Church will not cease to give birth from its heart to the Word which is persecuted in the world by unbelievers." The Church always gives birth to Christ through men, and from the very beginning Satan has striven to devour Christ as he did in the person of Herod.

12:5b *And her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne.*

Thus the Lord Jesus Christ was caught up to heaven on the day of His glorious ascension and sat upon the throne of His Father at His right hand; so also all the saints in whom Christ is depicted are caught up unto God so as not to be conquered by temptations which surpass their powers. So also are all

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Christians of the last times to be caught up to *meet the Lord in the air* (I Thess. 4:17).

12:6 *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

By this flight of the woman into the wilderness, many see the flight of Christians from Jerusalem which had been besieged by the Romans at the time of the great Jewish War, 66-70 A.D. Then people fled into Pella and the desert beyond the Jordan. This indeed lasted for three and a half years. By this wilderness one may see also that wilderness where the first Christians saved themselves from the persecutors, and also that wilderness in which the holy ascetics saved themselves from the nets of the devil. It is not improbable also that the literal wilderness, as it did before for the martyrs, will save those who flee from the attacks of the apostate and false Christ into mountains, caves, and holes of the earth. The three and one-half years, signified by the twelve hundred sixty days, is the time for the course of which the apostasy will reign.

12:7-9 *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.*

In the commentary of St. Andrew of Caesarea, these words "may refer to the first casting out of the devil for his pride and envy from the angelic order; likewise to his defeat by the Cross of the Master when the Lord said, *Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out* (John 12:31; see Ezekiel 28:16)" (St. Andrew, ch. 34).



Figure 22. The war in heaven: Michael and his angels fight against the dragon (12:7). By the *blood of the Lamb* (top right) the dragon is overcome (12:11).

Under the image of this battle likewise, commentators see the victory of Christianity over paganism, insofar as the devil and his demons have aroused and armed with all their power the pagans to battle against the Church of Christ.

12:10-12 *And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

In this victory over the devil, an active part was taken by Christians themselves who “overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” Such were the holy martyrs. Being conquered in two battles, one with the Archangel Michael and his heavenly host in the heavens, and the other with the martyrs of Christ on earth—Satan has preserved yet a certain appearance of authority on earth, crawling about it like a serpent, living out his last days on earth devising ways in which to wage a final and decisive battle with God and believing Christians with the help of Antichrist and his helper, the false prophet.

12:13-14 *And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 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*

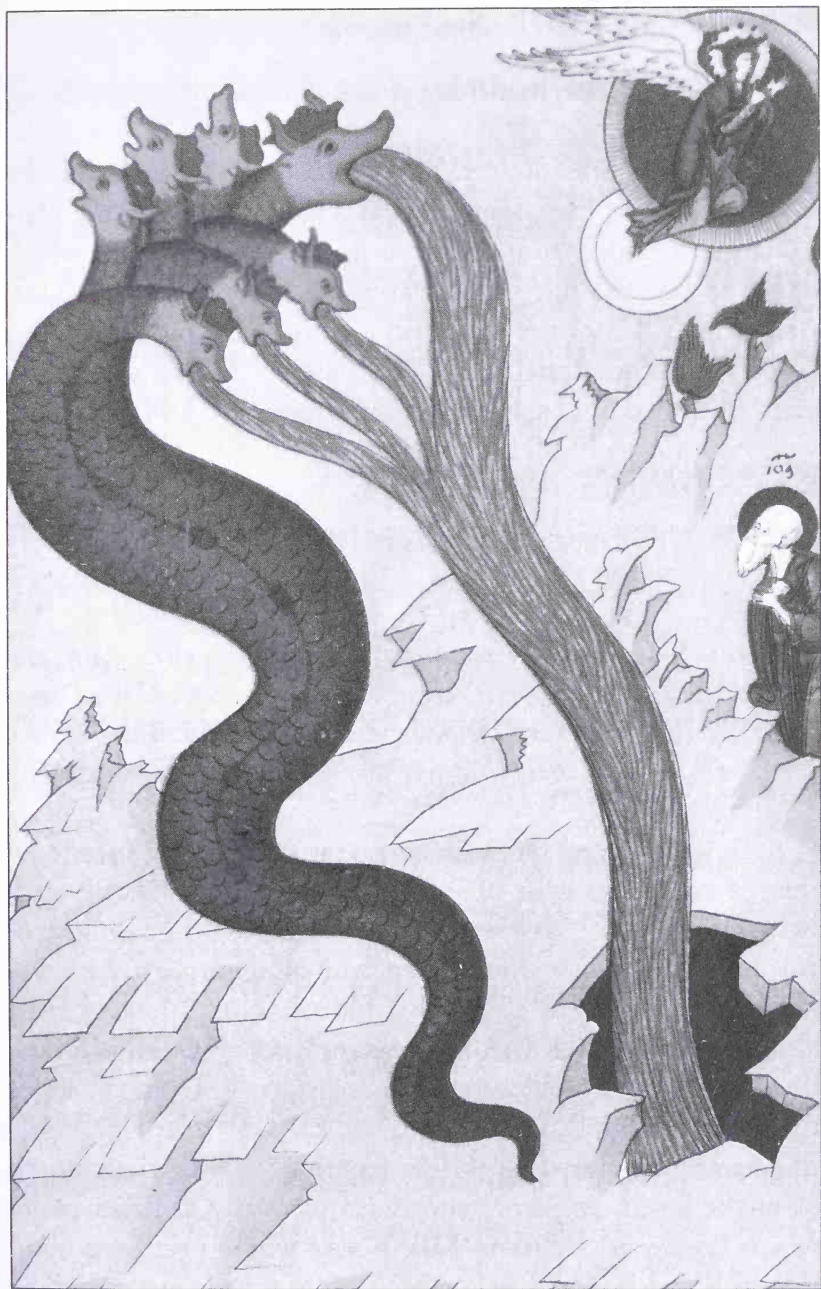


Figure 23. The *woman clothed with the sun* flees into the wilderness on the wings of a great eagle (12:14). The serpent casts out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, but the earth opens and swallows up the flood (12:15-16).

nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

The devil does not cease to persecute the Church, but the Church, having two wings of an eagle, the Old and New Testaments, hides from the devil in the wilderness; by which one may understand both the spiritual and the literal wilderness in which the true Christian ascetics have hid themselves and are hiding themselves. St. Andrew of Caesarea says: "And so it is always, but especially at the coming of Antichrist who will reign for three and one-half years. At that time it may be there will escape from him those who have hidden in the literal wilderness—the mountains, holes, and caves" (St. Andrew, ch. 35).

12:15-16 *And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

By this 'water' St. Andrew understands "a multitude either of evil demons or of various temptations." By the earth which swallows up this water he understands "the humility of wisdom of the saints who, saying from all their heart, *I am but earth and ashes* (Gen. 18:27), by this very confession rip apart all the nets of the devil. For, as was revealed by the angel to the divine Anthony, nothing so crushes and cuts off the power of the devil as humility" (St. Andrew, ch. 35). Certain people understand by this, frightful persecutions against the Church from the pagan emperors and the streams of Christian blood which flowed at that time. Like a river which overflows upon the earth and is swallowed up by it, all the malicious powers of Satan were destroyed and vanished without a trace when

CHAPTER TWELVE

Christianity triumphed over paganism under Emperor Constantine the Great.

12:17 *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

This refers to that unceasing and age-old battle which the devil has waged against all true sons of the Church from the time of the foundation of Christianity upon the earth, and which he will wage with an ever increasing degree to the end of the world until his efforts will be worn out and will end in the person of Antichrist.

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER TWELVE

12:5a

Ephesians 4:13. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

12:5b

I Thessalonians 4:17. *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

12:7-9

Ezekiel 38:16. *Therefore thou hast been cast down and wounded from the mount of God, and the cherub has brought thee out of the midst of the stones of fire (Sept.).*

12:15-16

Genesis 18:27. *And Abraham answered and said, Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but earth and ashes (Sept.).*



Figure 24. At top left, the beast rises up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and being like unto a leopard. Below, the dragon gives the beast his power, and his seat, and great authority (13:1-2).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE BEAST: THE ANTICHRIST AND THE BEAST: THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS HELPER THE FALSE PROPHET

13:1-2 *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat and great authority.*

By this “beast which rises up out of the sea” almost all interpreters understand Antichrist who comes out of the “sea of life,” that is in the midst of the human race which is agitated like a sea. From this it is clear that Antichrist will not be some kind of spirit or demon, but a heinous offspring of the human race. He will not be an incarnate devil as some have thought, but a man. Some by this beast have understood a God-fighting government such as during early Christian times was the Roman Empire and in the last times will be the worldwide kingdom of Antichrist. The holy seer of mysteries, John, depicts in dark colors this last enemy of the Church of Christ. He is like unto a leopard with feet like a bear’s and with the mouth of a lion. Thus in the person of Antichrist is united the characteristics, the qualities of the most wild beasts. He has likewise seven heads just like the devil, the dragon himself, and these heads are

crowned with names, blasphemous names, for the open depiction of his inward impiety and his despising of everything holy. His ten horns are crowned by diadems as a sign of the fact that he will make use of his God-fighting power with the authority of a king on earth. This authority he will receive with the help of the dragon or the devil who will give him his throne (compare Daniel 7:2-6 and the three empires).

13:3-4 *And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*

St. John notes that one of the heads of the beast is as it were, mortally wounded. But this mortal wound has been healed, and this has astonished the whole earth which follows after the beast. And this has caused frightened people to submit both to the dragon who gives power to the beast and to the beast himself. All bow down to him saying, "Who is like unto this beast? Who can compare with him?" All this signifies that it will not be easy for Antichrist to acquire authority over all mankind; but at the beginning he will have to wage fierce wars and even experience a mighty defeat. But then there will follow his astonishing victories and his reign over the world. "The words, *I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death* indicates either that one of his princes, being put to death, through the magic charms of Antichrist will be falsely shown as resurrected, in a way similar to what Simon the sorcerer did for which he was accused by the chief apostle Peter; or that the Roman Empire, having endured a kind of death through a division from the autocracy of Antichrist, will be seen to be restored as was Caesar Augustus" (St. Andrew, ch. 36). [This false resurrection is a kind

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of parody of Christ's Resurrection, a part of the imitation of Christ by Antichrist—tr.]

13:5-6 *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*

Thus his reign will not be long, since otherwise, in the words of the Saviour, *no flesh would be saved* (Matt. 24:22).

"The *tabernacle of God* is the dwelling of God the Word in the flesh—that is, His incarnation and repose in the saints, against whom—just as against the angels—the beast will direct his blasphemy" (St. Andrew, ch. 36).

And he said, "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on earth, which shall excel all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and trample and destroy it. And his ten horns are ten kings that shall arise: and after them shall arise another, who shall exceed all the former ones in wickedness, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change time and law: and power shall be given unto his hand for a time and times and a half a time" (Daniel 7:23-25).

13:7-10 *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. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be*

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killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

In these verses is indicated the manner of the activity of Antichrist. He will be distinguished by blasphemy, by violence against men who do not submit to him and "it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them," that is, the power to force them to submit to him—of course in a purely outward fashion—for only those will bow down to Antichrist whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb. Only by patience and faith will the saints be able to defend themselves against the Antichrist. And they are consoled by St. John with the assurance that "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword," that is, that a righteous recompense awaits the Antichrist. (Compare Matt. 10:22: *He that endureth to the end will be saved.*)

13:11-13 *And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.*

In these verses St. John speaks of the helper of the Antichrist—the false prophet—and his activity. This is also a beast, in Greek *THYRION*, which signifies a beast whose beastly nature is especially manifest, as for example in wild animals—hyena, jackal, tiger. But he is depicted not as coming out of the sea like the first one, but out of the earth. This signifies that all his feelings and conceptions are entirely earthly, of a sensuous character. He will have "two horns like a lamb." In the explanation of St. Andrew this is so as to "cover with lamb's skin the

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

murderous nature of a hidden wolf, and because in the beginning he will strive to have an image of piety. St. Irenaeus of Lyons says that this is 'the weapon-bearer of the Antichrist and the false prophet. To him will be given a power of signs and miracles so that going before the Antichrist he might prepare his path of perdition. The healing of the wound of the beast we say is either a seeming union for a short time of the divided kingdom, or a swiftly passing-away restoration by the Antichrist of the dominion of Satan which was destroyed by the Cross of the Lord; or a false resurrection of someone from the dead who was close to him. He will speak like a serpent, for he acts and speaks according to the qualities of the founder of evil, the devil'" (St. Andrew, ch. 37).

Imitating the Lord Jesus Christ, he will use for the establishment of authority of the Antichrist, two powers—the power of the word and the power of miracles. But he will speak "like a dragon," that is, blasphemously, and the fruit of his talking will be atheism and extreme impiety. For the deception of men, he will begin to perform "great wonders" such as bringing down fire from heaven.

"The forerunner of the apostate—the false christ—will perform everything through sorcery and deceit for the deception of men, so that Antichrist might be considered as God. He will be the glorious performer of such miracles and worthy of undoubted glory, like St. John the Baptist who brought believers to the Saviour; for the lie also, for the deception of men, will strive to imitate the truth. Therefore it is not at all astonishing that for deceived eyes fire will be seen coming down from heaven, since from the history of Job we know that, by God's allowance, fire came down from heaven by the activity of Satan and burnt his flock" (St. Andrew, ch. 37). But these will be not true miracles, as God alone performs, but "false miracles" (cf. II

Thess. 2:9). They will consist of cunningness, of the deception of the senses and of the use of natural but hidden powers of nature, with the help of the devil within the limits of the authority of his diabolic powers. .

“He will deceive those whose hearts have their constant dwellings upon earth; but he will not deceive the senses of those who have acquired a dwelling in the heavens—they will be made perfectly firm by the prophecy of his coming” (St. Andrew, ch. 37).

13:14-15 *And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the 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 the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*

“There are accounts of how the demons, by sorcery, have often spoken by means of images, statues, trees, water, etc., and even perhaps through dead bodies.... Therefore, there is nothing unfitting in the fact that the weapon-bearer or forerunner of Antichrist, acting with the help of demons, should make an image of the beast and falsely show it to be speaking, or that he should command that those who do not worship him should be killed” (St. Andrew, ch. 37).

13:16-17 *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.*

To all who bow down to the Antichrist will be placed “a mark on the right hand or in their foreheads, just as slaves in

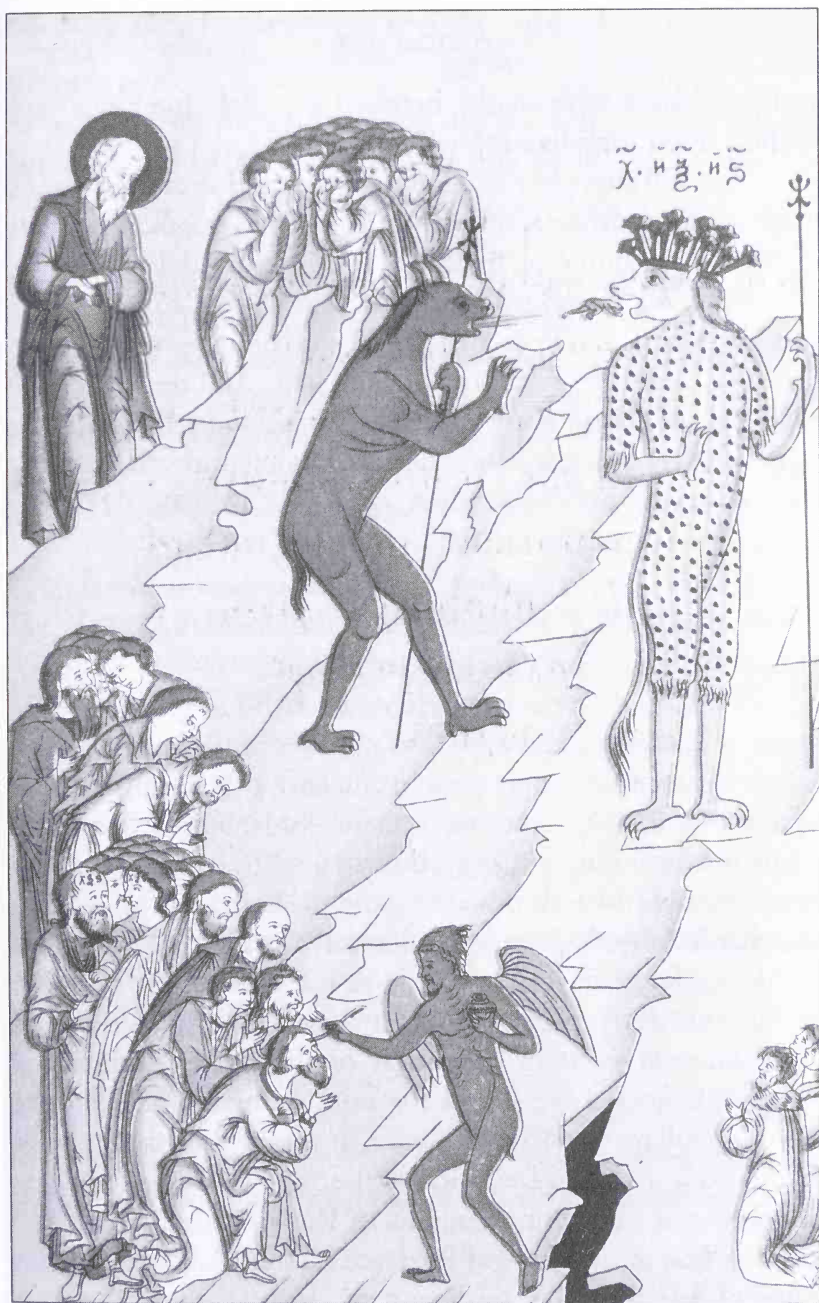


Figure 25. The beast is shown at right, and beside him is the other beast who causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast (13:12). People are depicted below receiving the beast's mark on their right hands or foreheads (13:16).

antiquity once bore marks branded on their foreheads and soldiers upon their hands.

“He will strive to place upon all the outline of the ruinous name of the apostate and deceiver, *in their right hands*, in order to cut off the doing of right and good deeds, and likewise *in their foreheads*, in order to instruct the deceived to be bold in deception and darkness. But it will not be received by those sealed in their faces with the Divine Light. And the seal of the beast will be spread everywhere, in buying and selling, so that those who do not receive it will suffer a violent death from the want of necessities” (St. Andrew, ch. 37).

13:18 *Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

An extraordinary mysteriousness is bound up with the name of Antichrist and with the “number of his name.” There have been many attempts even in ancient times to unriddle the significance and the meaning of these words, but they have not resulted in anything positive. Most frequently of all, there have been attempts to seek out the name of Antichrist by putting together letters which have a numerical significance. In various alphabets, for example, according to the guess of St. Irenaeus, the number of the beast, 666, is formed from the combining of the numerical value of the letters of the name “Latinos” or “Titan.” Certain have found the number of the beast in the name of Julian the Apostate; later in the title of the Pope of Rome—*Vicarius Filii Dei*, Vicar of the Son of God; in the name of Napoleon, etc. Our sectarians in Russia strove to find the number 666 in the name of Patriarch Nikon. Reflecting on the name of Antichrist, St. Andrew says, “If it were needed for us to know this name, the seer of mysteries St. John would have

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revealed it. But the grace of God did not will that this ruinous name should be written in the Divine Book." If we examine words, then, in the opinion of St. Hippolytus, one might find a multitude of names—both personal names and titles—which correspond to this number. "A careful examination of the number, and likewise of everything else written about him, will reveal the time of temptation to those who think soundly and are vigilant by the time of temptation" (St. Andrew, ch. 38).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER THIRTEEN

13:1-2

Daniel 7:2-6. *I Daniel beheld and, lo, the four winds of heaven blew violently upon the great sea. And there came up four great beasts out of the sea, differing from one another. The first was as a lioness, and her wings as an eagle's: I beheld until her wings were plucked, and she was lifted off from the earth, and she stood on human feet, and a man's heart was given to her. And, behold, a second beast like a bear, and it supported itself on one side, and there were three ribs in its mouth, between its teeth: and thus they said to it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this one I looked, and behold another wild beast as a leopard, and it had four wings of a bird upon it: and the wild beast had four heads, and power was given to it (Sept.).*

13:7-10

Matthew 10:22. *And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.*



Figure 26. The Lamb upon Mount Sion, surrounded by the *hundred forty and four thousand* (14:1). In the center are the harpers singing a *new song* (14:3).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PREPARATORY EVENTS BEFORE THE GENERAL
RESURRECTION AND THE LAST JUDGEMENT;
THE HYMN OF PRAISE OF THE ONE HUNDRED
FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND RIGHTEOUS ONES;
AND THE ANGELS WHO ANNOUNCE
THE FATE OF THE WORLD

14:1-5 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

In this vision is depicted the Church, the pure bride of Christ, at the time of the flourishing of the empire of the beast. The number 144,000 here has a similar significance as in

chapter 7:2-8. In this instance, the chosen of God are from *all* the peoples of the earth, presented figuratively in the form of the twelve tribes of Israel. That the name of the Father of the Lamb is written upon their brows signifies the distinguishing qualities of their inward attitude: their moral character and form of life, their entire dedication to the service of God. To them is joined the choir of those playing upon harps "as it were a new song." This is the song of the new creation of God, the song of the redemption and renewal of mankind by the blood of the Lamb of God. Only that part of mankind which has been redeemed sings this song. Therefore "no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." Certain commentators, by "virgins," understand here not virgins in the literal meaning of the word but those who were saved from the grasp of paganism and idol worship, in as much as in the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament, idol worship is often called adultery.

14:6-7 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

Immediately after this, there appears to St. John a second vision—three angels soaring in the heavens. One declares to men the "everlasting gospel" and as it were says: "Fear God and do not be afraid of Antichrist who cannot destroy your souls together with your bodies, and oppose him with boldness for judgment and reward is close and he has power only for a short time" (St. Andrew, ch. 40). Certain ones by this angel understand the preachers of the gospel in general.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

14:8 *And there followed another angel saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

Another angel declares the fall of Babylon by which is usually understood the kingdom of evil and sin in the world. Some commentators understand by this Babylon ancient pagan Rome which gave all the peoples to drink "the wine of fornication" or idol worship. Others understand by this symbol the false Christian empire; and by the wine of fornication the false teaching of religion (compare Jer. 51:7).

14:9-12 *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*

The third angel threatens with eternal torments all those who serve the beast and bow down to him and his image and receive his mark upon their brow or hand. By the "wine of the wrath of God" one must understand the difficult decrees of God which bring people into a state of almost unconsciousness and, like drunken people, into a state of disturbing spirit. In Palestine wine was never used whole, unmixed with water. Therefore the wrath of God in its powerful activity is likened here to unmixed wine. The impious will be subjected to eternal torments and the saints will be saved by their own patience. "By



Figure 27. The angel says, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication (14:8).*

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the *smoke of their torment* is to be understood either the sighing of those being tormented which ascends from below together with lamentation, or the smoke which proceeds from the fire by which the fallen will be punished. From the fact that the smoke *ascendeth up for ever and ever* we see that the torments of sinners are just as endless as the blessedness of the righteous is eternal" (St. Andrew, ch. 42).

14:13 *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.*

The "heavenly voice" St. Andrew explains, "does not bless everyone, but only those who, mortifying themselves to the world, die for the Lord and bear in their bodies the death of Jesus, and suffer together with Christ. For these, the departure from the body in truth is a rest from labors" (St. Andrew, ch. 42). Here we find yet another testimony of the significance of good deeds for salvation—something which is denied by Protestants.

14:14 *And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud One sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*

"By the cloud we understand either a sensuous cloud like the one that hid our Lord Jesus Christ from the eyes of the apostles, or else a certain angelic power which is called 'cloud' by reason of its purity and lightness.... The One sitting on the cloud and like unto the Son of Man is Christ. The crown upon His head signifies His royal authority over everything visible and invisible; it is golden by reason of the high value of this material among us. The sharp sickle indicates the end of the

world, which the Lord Himself has called a harvest" (St. Andrew, ch. 43).

14:15-16 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

By this harvest one must understand the end of the world (Matt. 13:39). "That the harvest of the earth is ripe indicates that the final time has come when the seed of piety, which has matured like ripe wheat and has offered to the husbandman fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold will be vouchsafed the heavenly granaries" (St. Andrew, ch. 43).

14:17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

"He is come out to perform the cutting off of the very impious" (St. Andrew, ch. 44).

14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to Him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

"From this we learn that some of the angelic powers which are placed over creatures are in charge of waters, others of fire, and others of some other part of creation; that this one is placed over fire indicates that he is one of the highest angels and his duty is to punish, for with a loud voice he commands the one having a sickle to cut off the clusters of the vine of the earth" (St. Andrew, ch. 44).



Figure 28. The Son of Man, wearing a crown and holding a sickle, hears the angel's message that *the harvest of the earth is ripe* (14:14-15). Below, He is shown reaping the earth (14:16).

By "clusters of grapes" is to be understood the enemies of the Church whose iniquity has reached an extreme ("are fully ripe"), so that the measure of their crimes overflows.

14:19-20 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and the blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Here there is reference to the city of Jerusalem outside of which, on the Mount of Olives, there were many wine presses in which were pressed olives and grapes (cf. Joel 3:13). The abundance of the harvest of grapes is described in the fact that the wine poured out on the earth in such abundance that it reached the horses' bridles. The hyperbolic expression used here by the holy seer of mysteries indicates that the defeat of the enemies of God will be so terrible that the blood will flow as if in rivers. 1,600 furlongs is a definite number taken in place of an indefinite one and signifies in general the abundant field of battle. "Inasmuch as those who gave themselves over to pleasures became ferocious horses, therefore they will be taken by tortures up to the bridles—that is, they will be restrained by torments, for they knew no bridling in their pleasures. 1,000 signifies the multitude of evil, and 600 the fervent pursuit of sin through the misuse of creation which was made in six days, and also that in the 600th year of Noah the earth was inundated" (St. Andrew, ch. 44).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER FOURTEEN

14:8

Jeremiah 51:7. *Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed.*

14:15-16

Matthew 13:39. *The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.*

14:19-20

Joel 3:13. *Bring forth the sickles, for the vintage is come: go in, tread the grapes, for the press is full: cause the vats to overflow; for their wickedness is multiplied.*



Figure 29. In the center is shown the sea of glass with *them that had gotten the victory over the beast* (15:2). Above this, the seven angels are shown coming out of the temple, *having seven plagues, clothed in pure white linen* (15:6).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE FOURTH VISION: THE SEVEN ANGELS WHO HAVE THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

15:1 *And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*

With this chapter begins the final, fourth vision which embraces in itself the eight final chapters of the Apocalypse, Chapters 15-22.

“Everywhere he takes the number 7, signifying thereby that what has been brazenly done in the seven days of this present life of unrighteousness will be bridled by the seven plagues and the seven angels” (St. Andrew, ch. 45).

15:2 *And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*

The sea of glass in the interpretation of Saint Andrew of Caesarea “signifies the multitude of those being saved, the purity of the future repose, and the brightness of the saints, by the virtuous rays of which brightness they *shine like the sun* (cf. Matt. 13:43) and the fact that the fire is mixed in with the glass may be understood by what has been written by the Apostle, *Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare*

it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (I Cor. 3:13). It does not in the least harm those who are pure, undefiled because, in the phrase of the Psalmist (Psalm 28:7), it has two attributes: one scorches the sinner and the other, as St. Basil the Great has understood, illumines the righteous. It is likely that by fire is to be understood the Divine knowledge and the grace of the life-giving Spirit, for God revealed himself in the fire unto Moses and in the form of fiery tongues the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles." (St. Andrew, ch. 45).

The harps signify the harmony of virtues in the well-ordered spiritual life of the righteous or the harmony which is to be observed in them between the word of truth and the deeds of righteousness.

15:3-4 *And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.*

"By the song of Moses we suppose that hymns are sent up to God from those justified before grace under the law; and by the song of the Lamb that those who lived righteously after the coming of Christ offer up to Him unceasing hymns and thanksgiving" (St. Andrew, ch. 45). The song of Moses is likewise sung as a hymn of victory: "It is fitting for those who are celebrating the last most important victory over the enemy to remember the first successes of their battle, such as in the history of the chosen people of God, in the victory of Moses over Pharaoh. It is his song that is sung now by Christian victors." This hymn sounds most triumphant: "Let us sing unto the Lord for gloriously has

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He been glorified,” and in the present case it is most fitting. [The song of Moses, which is sung in the Orthodox Church at the Vespers of Great Saturday, is contained in Exodus 15:1-21—tr.] The righteous, in their song, glorify God also for the manifestation of His Judgment: “for Thy judgments are made manifest.”

15:5-6 *And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.*

“It is in this image, that God commanded Moses in the Old Testament to build the earthly tabernacle.

“The seer of mysteries says that the angels were clothed in pure white linen garments, as a sign of the purity and brightness of their virtue. And they were girded on their breast with golden girdles, as a sign of might, and the purity of their being, their honesty and the limitlessness of their service” (St. Andrew, ch. 45).

15:7 *And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, Who liveth for ever and ever.*

From one of the four “living creatures,” that is the eldest angels, they receive “seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, Who liveth for ever and ever.” These “living creatures,” the Cherubim or Seraphim, are the highest zealots of the glory of God, filled with the most profound knowledge of the decrees of God, both of the past and of the future, which is indicated by the very appearance of these blessed beings who are filled with eyes before and behind. It is they who receive the commandment of God to assign the seven other angels to pour out upon

the earth the seven vials of the wrath of God, before the end of the world and the final judgment of the living and the dead (see Ezekiel 5:13).

15:8 *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.*

Through this smoke, says St. Andrew, "we recognize that the wrath of God is frightful, terrible and tormenting, and it, filling the temple, in the day of Judgment, visits those who are worthy of it and above all those who have submitted to Anti-christ and done the deeds of Apostasy. This is confirmed also by what follows, for he says *and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled*. First the plagues had to be completed," that is, the punishment of sinners, "and then it was to be given to the saints to dwell in the city on high" (St. Andrew, ch. 45).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

15:2

Matthew 13:43. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Psalms 28:7. *There is a voice of the Lord Who divides a flame of fire* (Sept.).

15:3

Exodus 15:1-21. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song to God, and spoke, saying, Let us sing to the Lord, for He is very greatly glorified: horse and rider He has thrown into the sea. He was to me a helper and protector for salvation: this is my God,*

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and I will glorify Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord bringing wars to nought, the Lord is His name. He has cast the chariots of Pharaoh and his host into the sea, the chosen mounted captains: they were swallowed up in the Red Sea. He covered them with the sea: they sank to the depth like a stone. Thy right hand, O God, has been glorified in strength; Thy right hand, O God, has broken the enemies. And in the abundance of Thy glory Thou hast broken the adversaries to pieces: Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, it devoured them as stubble. And by the breath of Thine anger the water parted asunder; the waters were congealed as a wall, the waves were congealed in the midst of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoils; I will satisfy my soul, I will destroy with my sword, my hand shall have dominion. Thou sentest forth Thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty water. Who is like to Thee among the gods, O Lord? who is like to Thee? glorified in holiness, marvelous in glories, doing wonders. Thou stretchedst forth Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them up. Thou hast guided in Thy righteousness this Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed, by Thy strength Thou hast called them into Thy holy resting-place. The nations heard and were angry, pangs have seized on the dwellers among the Philistines. Then the princes of Edom, and the chiefs of the Moabites hasted; trembling took hold upon them, all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. Let trembling and fear fall upon them; by the greatness of Thine arm, let them become as stone; till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till this Thy people pass over, whom Thou hast purchased. Bring them in and plant them in the mountain of their inheritance, in Thy prepared habitation, which Thou, O Lord, hast prepared; the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thine hands have made ready. The Lord reigns for ever and ever and ever. For the horse of Pharaoh went in with the chariots and horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought upon them the water of the sea, but the children

of Israel walked through dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, having taken a timbrel in her hand—then there went forth all the women after her with timbrels and dances. And Miriam led them, saying, Let us sing to the Lord, for He has been very greatly glorified: the horse and rider has He cast into the sea (Sept.).

15:8

Ezekiel 5:13. And My wrath and Mine anger shall be accomplished upon them: and thou shalt know that I the Lord have spoken in My jealousy, when I have accomplished Mine anger upon them (Sept.).



Figure 30. The first angel pouring his vial of the wrath of God upon those who have the mark of the beast and worship the beast's image (16:2).



Figure 31. The second angel pouring out his vial on the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea (16:3).

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE SEVEN ANGELS POURING OUT THE SEVEN VIALS OF THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE EARTH

16:1 *And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*

In this chapter there is depicted God's judgment upon the enemies of the Church under the symbol of the seven vials or seven cups of the wrath of God poured out by the seven angels. The symbol of these plagues is taken from the plagues which struck ancient Egypt, whose defeat was the prefiguration of the defeat of the false Christian kingdom which above (Apoc. 11:8) has been called Egypt, and then Babylon.

16:2 *And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*

This symbol is taken evidently from the sixth plague which struck Egypt. According to the interpretation of some, here one should understand a physical epidemic. In the interpretation of St. Andrew of Caesarea, the noisome sores are "the grief which occurs in the hearts of the apostates, and which torment them in the likeness of affliction of the heart; for those

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who are punished by God receive no help from the Antichrist which they have deified" (St. Andrew, ch. 46).

16:3 *And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea.*

Here is to be understood international and civil wars, with much shedding of blood.

"It is not astonishing that in order to expose the weakness of Antichrist and the light-mindedness of the deceived, the Divine power through the prophets Enoch and Elijah will turn the sea, as it were, into the blood of one who has been killed, and will destroy everything in the sea as God once did in Exodus 7:18.... Another supposition is also possible, in that by this is signified a defeat during battles at his coming; for when Gog and Magog will attack each other in all parts of the world and when the kings who did not submit to Antichrist will be exterminated with their armies and there will be many murders, then, as the result of sea battles, the sea will be defiled by blood and the rivers also will become red from those who are killed there" (St. Andrew, ch. 47).

16:4-6 *And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, Which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

To this St. Andrew says, "From this it is evident that angels have been placed over the elements" (St. Andrew, ch. 48). What is referred to here is likewise the frightful shedding of blood which will occur before the end of the world, during the time of Antichrist.

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16:7 *And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.*

“Thus he says that from this altar was heard a voice praising the righteousness of God’s judgment, which surpasses every mind in word. From the Gospels we know that the mental powers are glad and rejoice over the salvation of those who are converted through repentance, while they grieve over the seduction from the true path and give thanks to God for the punishment of those who have transgressed the Divine commandments, so that at least in part they may receive the forgiveness of sins” (St. Andrew, ch. 48).

16:8-9 *And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory.*

St. Andrew says this punishment may be understood either literally or that by this heat one should understand “the heat of temptations so that men through enduring sorrows might hate their cause which is sin” (St. Andrew, ch. 49). The people who have become senseless, however, in their hardness of heart, will not be capable of repentance.

16:10-11 *And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.*

This reminds one of the ninth plague in Egypt (Exodus 10:21). By this plague one must understand the significant decrease of the greatness and authority of Antichrist whose



Figure 32. The fourth angel pouring out his vial on the sun; *and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire* (16:8).

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magnificence up until then had struck people, and at the same time one must understand the stubborn lack of repentance of those who worshipped the Antichrist.

16:12 *And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.*

Here the Euphrates is depicted as a hindrance, which prevented the kings with their armies from coming for the completion of the decrees of God upon the kingdom of Antichrist. This symbol is taken from the position of the ancient Roman Empire for which the Euphrates served as a barrier against the attacks of the eastern peoples.

16:13-14 *And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

By these spirits of devils one is to understand false teachers, chatterers, intruders, who are lovers of their stomachs, shameless, puffed up, who will attract the people to themselves by false miracles. The great day of God Almighty is the time when God will reveal His glory for the punishments of the enemies of the Church.

16:15 *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

What is meant here is the suddenness of the Second Coming of Christ. (Compare Matt. 24:43-44.)

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“To watch and keep one’s garments means to be vigilant and to be unwaveringly concerned for good deeds, which comprise the garment of the saints” (St. Andrew, ch. 51).

16:16 *And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

“Armageddon” signifies cutting up or murder. Here, St. Andrew says, “in this place let us suppose the peoples who have been gathered and led by the devil will be killed, for he, the devil, is comforted by the blood of men” (St. Andrew, ch. 51). This name is taken from the valley of Mageddo, where King Josias fell in battle with Pharaoh Nechao (II Chron. 35:22).

16:17-18 *And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*

By the pouring out of the seventh vial, the kingdom of the beast will receive its final defeat.

“The earthquake signifies a change in the existing world as the Apostle has said: *Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the heaven* (Heb. 12:26)” (St. Andrew, ch. 52).

16:19 *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*

By this great city St. Andrew understands the capital of the kingdom of Antichrist which will be Jerusalem.

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"The division of the city into three parts indicates, we suppose, the Christians, Jews, and Samaritans living in it.... There will occur their division into three parts: the pious, the impious, and sinners; and all will go to those one in mind with themselves. The falling of the cities of the nations signifies either their destruction or decrease and the ceasing of pagan life with the coming of the Divine Kingdom. Great Babylon, as if forgotten by reason of [God's] long-suffering, will come into remembrance, and for trampling on the righteous and her impious words and deeds, will drink the cup of God's wrath" (St. Andrew, ch. 52).

16:20 *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

St. Andrew explains this: "From the Divine Scripture we are instructed to understand, by islands, the holy Churches, and by mountains, those who are the heads of them. That they flee away at the coming of everything that has been preordained, this we have heard from the Lord Who said, Those who are in the east will flee to the west, and those who are in the west will flee to the east, *for then shall be great tribulation, such as there was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be* (Matt. 24:21)—when some as a punishment for sins and others for a testing of virtue will endure misfortunes and unhappiness, not only from Antichrist in torments for Christ, but also in flight, in torments and sufferings in mountains and caves, which for the preservation of piety they will prefer to living in cities" (St. Andrew, ch. 52). If one is to understand these words in a literal sense, this will be a picture of frightful destruction which in our times—when atomic and hydrogen bombs have been discovered—is not difficult to imagine.

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16:21 *And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*

Is it not bombs we should understand by this murderous hail? In our times also we often observe such a hardness of heart when nothing causes men to come to their senses, but they only blaspheme God.

“By the hail coming down from heaven we understand God’s wrath sent by Him and coming down from above. And that this hail is the size of a talent indicates the fullness of wrath by reason of the full weight and extremity of sin; an indication of this is the talent which Zechariah saw (Zech. 5:7)” (St. Andrew, ch. 52).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER SIXTEEN

16:3

Exodus 7:18. *And the fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall stink thereupon, and the Egyptians shall not be able to drink the water from the river* (Sept.).

16:10-11

Exodus 10:21. *And the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out thy hand to heaven, and let there be darkness over the land of Egypt—darkness that may be felt* (Sept.).

16:15

Matt. 24:43-44. *But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken*

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up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

16:16

II Chronicles 35:22. However Josias turned not his face from him, but strengthened himself to fight against him, and hearkened not to the words of Nechao by the mouth of God, and he came to fight in the plain of Mageddo (Sept.).

16:21

Zech. 5:7. And behold a talent of lead lifted up: and behold a woman sat in the midst of the measure.

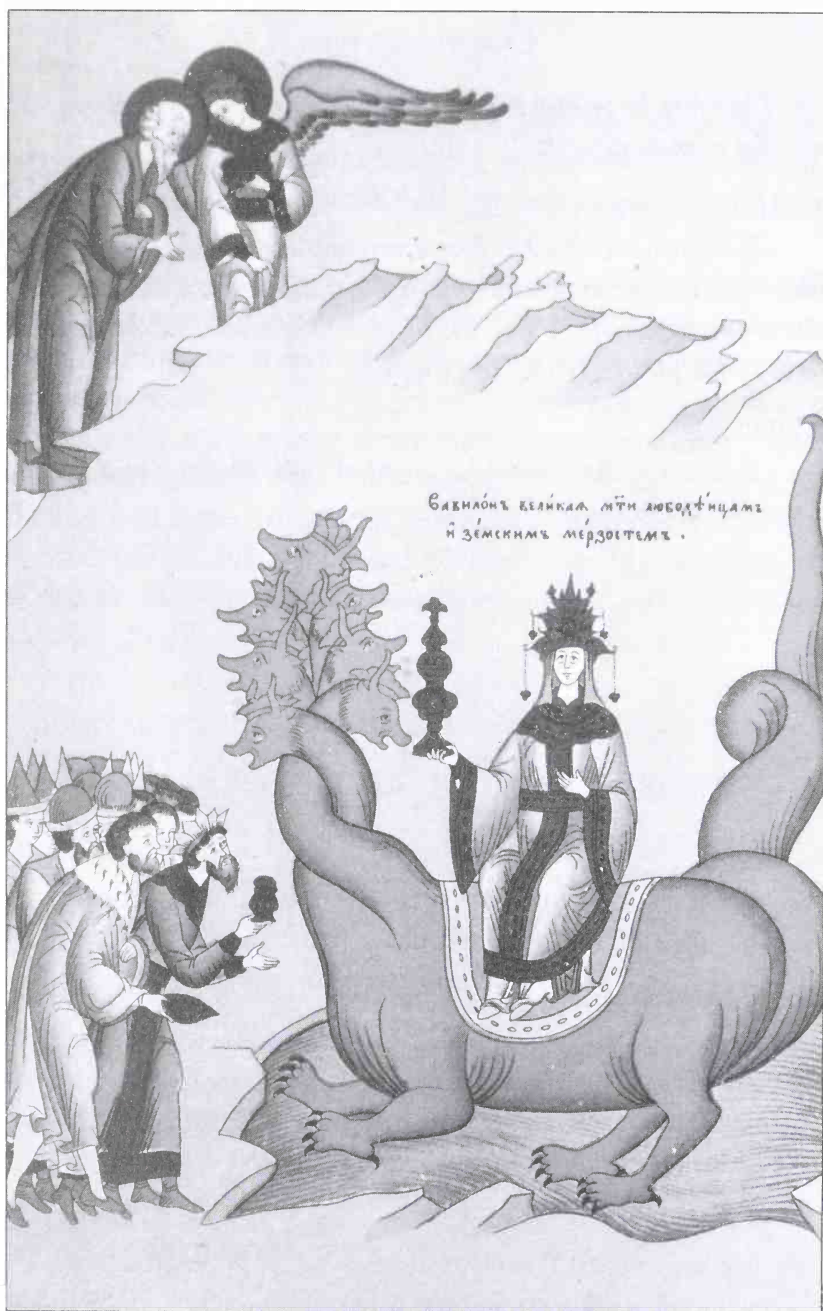


Figure 33. One of the seven angels shows St. John the great whore who sits upon a scarlet beast and holds a golden cup *full of abominations* (17:4). Before her stand *the kings of the earth* (17:2).

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE JUDGMENT ON THE GREAT HARLOT WHO SITS ON MANY WATERS

17:1-3 *And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

One of the seven angels offered to St. John to show him the judgment on the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication and with the wine of whose fornication those upon the earth became drunk.

Some have understood this harlot to be ancient Rome, as being disposed upon seven hills; they consider the seven heads of the beast as the seven most impious of all the Emperors who, from Domitian to Diocletian, persecuted the Church (1st-4th centuries). St. Andrew, citing this opinion says further: "But we, being guided and forming our conception according to the sequence of events, think that the harlot is in general the earthly kingdom, represented as it were in one body, or the city which

is to reign even unto the coming of Antichrist" (St. Andrew, ch. 53).

Some commentators see in this harlot the church which is unfaithful to Christ, which is bowed down to Antichrist, or the society of the apostates of God—that part of Christian humanity which will enter into close contact with the world of sin, will serve it and depend entirely upon its crude power—the power of the beast, Antichrist, which is why this woman is shown to the Seer of Mysteries as sitting on a scarlet beast. "For the beast himself and his scarlet appearance serve as an indication of severity, cruelty, and a predisposition to murder" (St. Andrew, ch. 53).

17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

The purple, scarlet, and gold are symbols of her royal authority and dominion. St. Andrew says to this, "The cup signifies the sweetness of evil deeds before they are tasted and the gold indicates their preciousness" (St. Andrew, ch. 53).

The members of this church which is unfaithful to Christ, or the society of the apostates of God, will be fleshly men given over to sensuality. As one of the commentators says, "Being filled with outward piety and at the same time not foreign to feelings of a crude love of honors, and a vain-glorious love of fame, the members of the unfaithful church will love luxury and comfort, and will begin to arrange luxurious ceremonies for the powerful of the world (see Apoc. 17:2 and 18:3-9) to attain holy aims by sinful means and they will preach exclusively by the sword and gold" (N. Vinogradov).

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17:5 *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

St. Andrew says to this, "The writing upon the forehead indicates the shamelessness of unrighteousness, the fullness of sins and disturbance of heart; she is a mother for she leads those in the cities under her by her fornication of soul, giving birth thereby to iniquities which are vile before God" (St. Andrew, ch. 53).

A more general commentary is inclined to see in this harlot—who bears the name of Babylon—the whole crudely sensual and anti-Christian culture of mankind in the last times in general, for which is prepared a frightful universal catastrophe at the end of the world in the Second Coming of Christ. The fall of this "Babylon" is presented in the Apocalypse as the first act of victory in the worldwide battle of the Church of Christ with the sinful kingdom of the devil.

17:6 *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

Here is meant all the martyrs for Christ who have suffered in the course of the history of the world, especially during the time of Antichrist.

17:7-8 *And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition:*

Further, the angel who showed the harlot to St. John gives him an explanation of the whole vision. St. Andrew says that

“this beast is Satan who, having been put to death by the Cross of Christ, will again, as it is said, come back to life at the end. By false signs and miracles he will, through the Antichrist, act for the overthrowing of the Cross. Therefore he was and acted up to the time of the Cross and then he was no longer, inasmuch as by the saving passion he was made powerless and was deprived of the authority which he had over the peoples through idol worship” (St. Andrew, ch. 54).

At the end of the world, Satan again “will come in the way indicated by us, coming out of the pit, or from the place where he was condemned and where the demons, banished by Christ, begged him not to send them, but rather into the swine (Luke 8:30-32); or he shall come out of the present life which is called the pit metaphorically by reason of the depth of sin in this life, which is tossed about and agitated by the winds of the passions. For the destruction of men, Antichrist will also come out from this place, having Satan in himself, so as to receive his perdition quickly in the age to come” (St. Andrew, ch. 54).

17:8 *And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

“By reason of the false miracles, he says those that are not written in the book of those who live eternally and who have not studied this in accordance with the prophecies of Christ, will be astonished at the coming of the beast. They will be astonished also, reflecting on how he has again received his previous authority” (St. Andrew, ch. 54). (See also Apoc. 13:8.)

17:9-10 *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And*

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there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

Inasmuch as this is said spiritually, he says, to understand it requires spiritual wisdom.

In these seven heads and seven mountains, St. Andrew sees seven kingdoms which have a special worldwide significance and power: Assyria, the Medes, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, Rome, and its two periods—the period of the Republic and the period of the Empire, or the ancient Roman period and the newer Roman period from Emperor Constantine. “Under the name of five kings who have fallen out of the seven, Blessed Hippolytus understands ages, of which five have already passed. The sixth, in which the Apostle saw this, is still going on, and the seventh age which follows upon the sixth has not yet come, but when it comes will not continue long ... or [the kings] are the seven kingdoms which have been from the beginning of the world until now; five have already fallen, the sixth—under which the revelation was made—was ancient Rome, and the seventh is yet to come—this is the new Rome” (St. Andrew, ch. 54).

17:11 *And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*

This beast is the Antichrist. He is called the eighth because: “After the seven kingdoms, he will arise for the deception and laying waste of the earth” (St. Andrew, ch. 54). He is “of the seven,” because he has made his appearance from one of these kingdoms.

17:12-14 *And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings 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: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Here, no amount of guessing or supposition can lead anywhere. Some have wished to see in all these kings, as in the beast, Roman emperors, but all these are forced interpretations. What is being discussed here is, of course, the last times. All these kings who are of one mind with the beast, that is, Antichrist, will wage war with the Lamb, that is, Christ, and will be conquered. "Daniel also saw seven horns coming before Antichrist, which were altogether uprooted by the cursed one, and the others submitted to him (Daniel 7:20-24). *One hour* indicates either the shortness of time or a single part of the year, that is, the three-month period after which they will submit to Antichrist as their chief" (St. Andrew, ch. 54).

17:15-18 *And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

It is noteworthy that the harlot bears the name of Babylon, of whom the holy seer of mysteries says directly in verse 18 that "She is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," and that the waters upon which she sits are "peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues." She will be punished and

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annihilated by the beast, Antichrist himself, whose ten horns will do this work.

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

17:7-8

Luke 8:30-32. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion; because many devils were entered into him. And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them.

17:12-14

Daniel 7:20-24. And concerning its ten horns that were in its head, and the other that came up, and rooted up some of the former, which had eyes, and a mouth speaking great things, and his look was bolder than the rest. I beheld, and that horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and He gave judgment to the saints of the Most High; and the time came on, and the saints possessed the kingdom. And he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on the earth, which shall excel all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and trample and destroy it. And his ten horns are ten kings that shall arise; and after them shall arise another, who shall exceed all the former ones in wickedness, and he shall subdue three kings (Sept.).

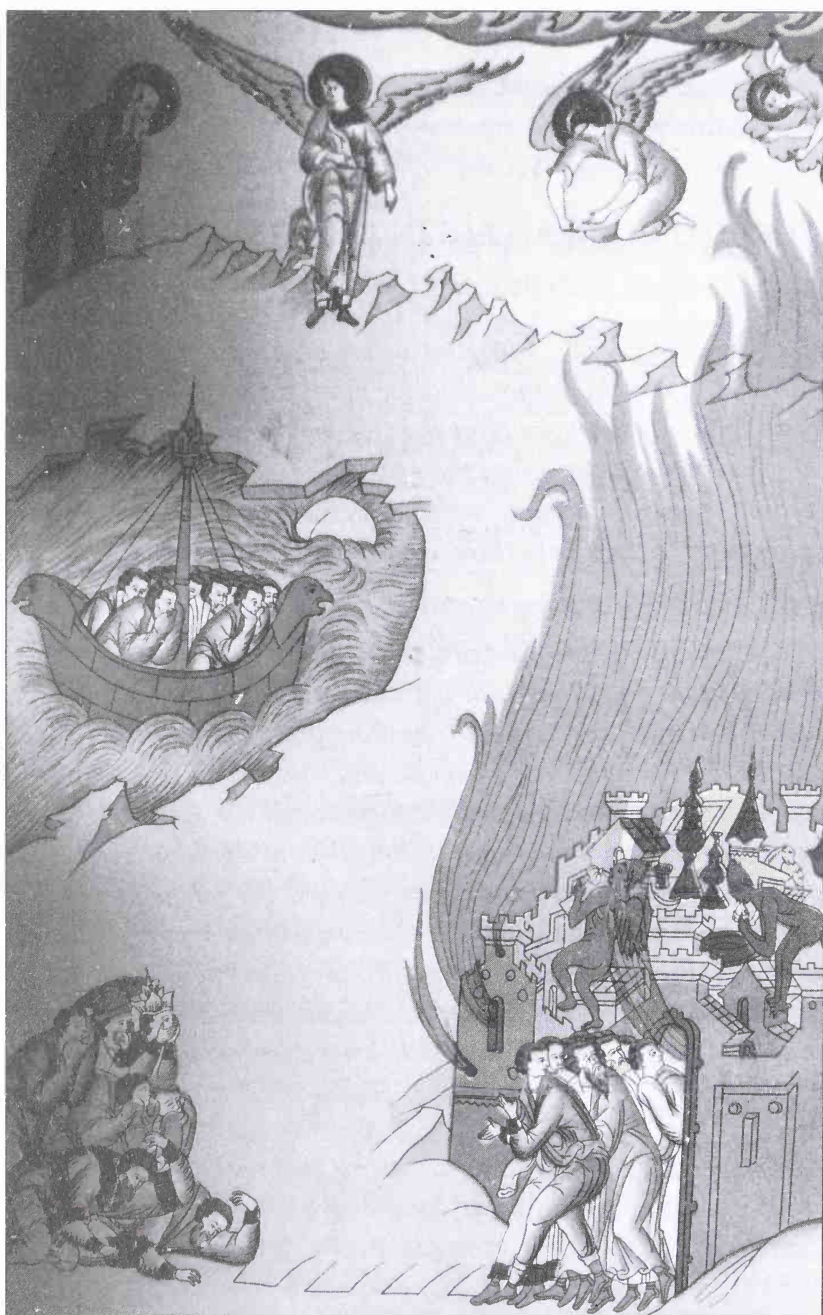


Figure 34. The fall of Babylon: kings, merchants and sea-traders stand afar off and bewail the burning of the city that had made them rich (18:9-17).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE FALL OF BABYLON, THE GREAT HARLOT

In this chapter there is depicted in a most vivid way the destruction of Babylon, the great harlot, which is accompanied on the one hand by the lamentations of the kings of the earth who had committed fornication with her, and of the merchants of the earth who had sold her various precious goods. On the other hand, it is accompanied by rejoicing in heaven because of the righteous judgment of God.

Certain contemporary interpreters suppose that this Babylon will actually be some kind of immense city, a world center, the capital of the Kingdom of Antichrist, which will be distinguished for its wealth and at the same time for the extreme corruption of its morals, which has generally been characteristic of large and wealthy cities.

18:1 *And after these things I see another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

Here is shown the brightness of the heavenly powers and their purity—several times more superior in radiance and beauty than the stars and their light (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:2 *And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation*

of devils and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

“About the Chaldean capital of Babylon, captured by Cyrus and the Persians, something similar was foretold by Isaiah (Is. 13:21-22; 21:9), that by reason of its utter desolation, it would be filled with wild beasts and unclean spirits” (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:3 *For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

And how did Babylon make the nations drink the wine of its fornication? It was their leader in all manner of lawlessness, and it sent gifts to those cities which were obedient—to their chiefs and rulers who were enemies of truth.

18:4-5 *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

“Come out of her, My people.” As it was spoken to Lot in Sodom, *Escape for thy life* (Gen. 19:17), and in Isaiah (Is. 52:11), so it is said here; for one should avoid contact and cohabitation with those who offend God (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:6 *Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.*

“This speaks of those who, although innocent, suffered here from the rulers of that city, and whose endurance of sorrows elicited a most cruel punishment of their tormentors.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

It may also indicate one's transition from one state to another, i.e., from one who is being punished to one who is a holy punishing force. The chalice is called *double* either because the sinners and lawless will receive terrible punishments both here and in the future life; or because both the soul and body will suffer torments for their common deeds; or because sin will be punished not only through outward suffering, but even more so inwardly, through the conscience" (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:7 *How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

"If there is no fear of God in them, those living in complacency and glory are wont to say, *I shall never be moved* (Ps. 29:6, Sept.). So also does this city speak of itself" (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:8 *Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God Who judgeth her.*

"One day means either the suddenness and shortness of time in which—from the sword, sores and hunger—a wailing will arise from this city which will be overtaken by destruction and consuming flames; or, the course of that same day in which, according to the prophecy, it will suffer. When the enemies seize the city, one day will suffice to defeat the people through all manner of provocation and various forms of death. God is almighty to save those who please Him, and likewise to punish unrepentant sinners" (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:9-10 *And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and*

APOCALYPSE

lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

“Here, we think, ‘kings of the earth’ indicates the rulers, just as the Psalmist said of Jerusalem: *The rulers gathered themselves together* (Ps. 2:2, Sept.). Of those who have forsaken the Divine commandments it is said that they will burst into weeping, looking at its desolation and listening to its burning, being terrified by the sudden change which occurred in such a short time” (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:11-14 *And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, and cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.*

“Through these expressions it should be understood that no one will buy.... We should re-examine and re-evaluate that which is traded in the cities and what articles and goods are acquired for excessive pleasure.

“The use of horses, chariots, and the bodies of men will be unnecessary.... There will not be an enslaving free trade of men’s souls; neither will there be a return to the enjoyment of the previous prosperity and magnificence”(St. Andrew, ch. 55).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

18:15-17 *The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off.*

Here attention is turned to the sufferings of this Babylon, the weeping over it indicating the great misfortune and frightful destiny which will punish the city, once the boast of royal favor.

18:18-19 *And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.*

"It is very possible that the *sea* in a figurative sense indicates the present life, as it is subject to constant agitation; and *merchants* are swimmers, like fish, amid the worldly agitation.... The merchants of the worldwide Babylon—i.e., Confusion (cf. Gen. 11:9)—at the demise of the visible world will likewise suffer and sob inconsolably, both on account of being deprived of the pleasures of this present life, and also on account of the reproach of their conscience" (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

The word "heaven" indicates here either angels or saints, who dwell therein. With these the apostles and prophets are enjoined to rejoice, thus avenging those who were reproached or offended, or those who—however unsuccessful their preaching among the inhabitants of the aforementioned city—were often subject to dishonor; or those that were dispersed through

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all the earth and were slaughtered for the sake of God, as servants of His Word. So also were the prophets killed by the Jews, and the apostles by the pagans to whom they gave precedence in their preaching.

“They rejoice in the coming punishments, not with a perverse joy, but ardently desiring to cut off sin. Furthermore, these temporal punishments serve that there might be less suffering in the age to come” (St. Andrew, ch. 55).

18:21-24 *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*

In the last verses of this chapter there is indicated the suddenness of God's chastisement which will overtake this city. St. Andrew says that its perdition will occur just as swiftly as a millstone sinks into the sea, and this perdition will be so extraordinary that there will remain not a single trace of this city. This is indicated figuratively: “and the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee.”

In the final verse there is indicated another reason for the destruction of Babylon—that in her was found “the blood of

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prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

18:2

Isaiah 13:21-22. *But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.*

Isaiah 21:9. *And behold, he comes riding in a chariot and pair: and he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen: and all her images and her idols have been crushed to the ground (Sept.).*

18:4

Isaiah 52:11. *Depart ye, depart, go out from thence, and touch not the unclean thing; go ye out from the midst of her; separate yourselves, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord (Sept.).*

18:19

Genesis 11:9. *On this account its name was called Confusion, because there the Lord confounded the languages of all the earth, and thence the Lord scattered them upon the face of all the earth (Sept.).*

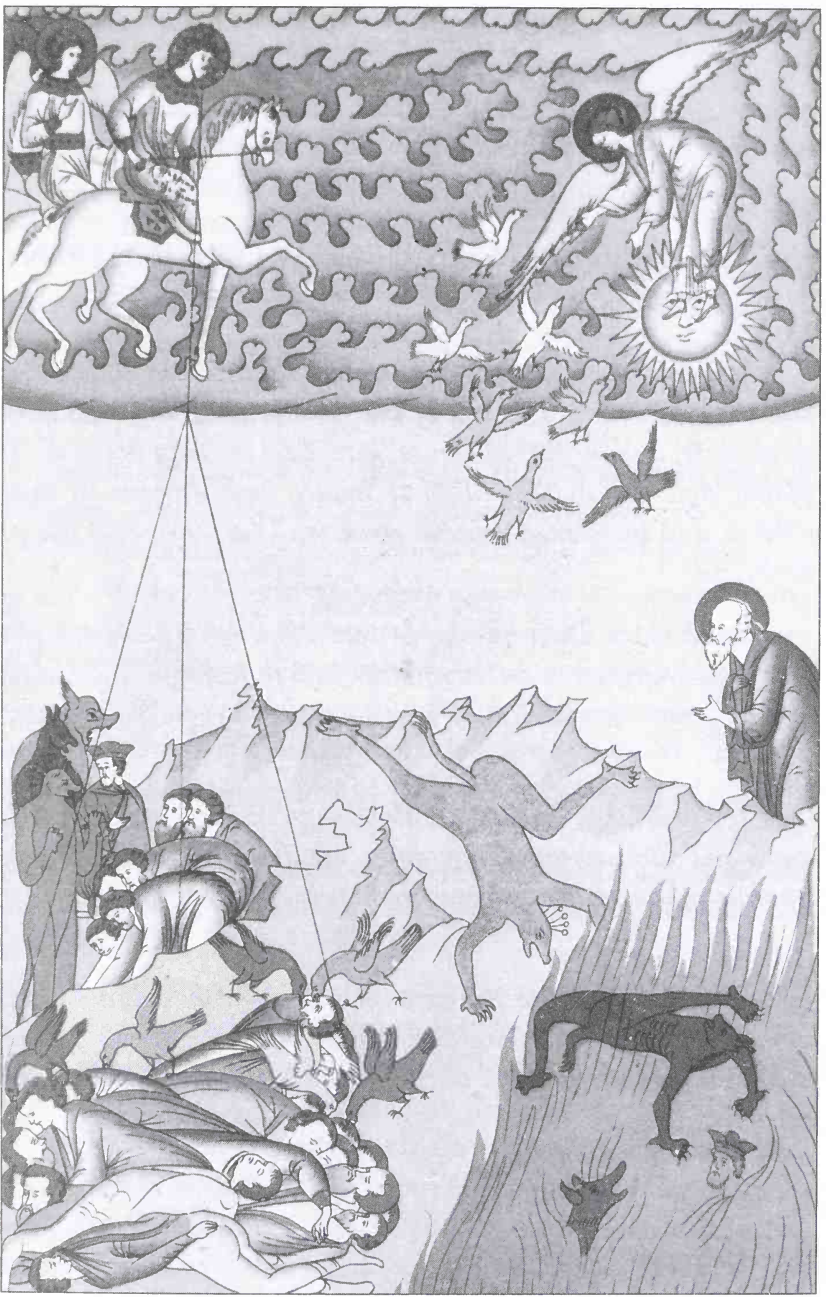


Figure 35. St. John's vision of the white horse, upon which sits Christ, the Word of God (19:11-13). The *angel standing in the sun* (19:17) is seen at top right, calling *all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven*. Below, the beast and his false prophet are cast alive into a lake of fire (19:20).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE BATTLE OF THE WORD OF GOD WITH THE BEAST AND HIS ARMY, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE LATTER

19:1-4 *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are His judgments; for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

In the first ten verses of this chapter there is described also very vividly the rejoicing in heaven in the midst of numerous choirs of saints on account of the destruction of the hostile kingdom of Antichrist and the coming Kingdom of Christ. The latter is depicted in the form of the wedding feast of the Lamb and the participation therein of the righteous (cf. Matt. 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24).

In the explanation of St. Andrew of Caesarea, "Alleluia" signifies "divine glorification" and "Amen" means "truly, may it be." This, he says, is sung in praise unto God by the angelic powers together with men equal-to-the-angels. It is sung thrice by reason of the three Hypostases of Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit, the One God, Who has avenged the blood of His servants upon Babylon, and has done good by punishing its inhabitants and cutting off sin. "Alleluia" is from the Hebrew *hallelu yah*, and means literally, "Praise ye God."

"And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." This refers to the fact that the punishment which has overtaken Babylon the harlot will endure forever.

19:5-7 *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.*

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come." The reason for rejoicing lies in the fact that the time has come to celebrate the marriage of the Lamb. By "marriage" or "wedding banquet" is to be understood in general the state of spiritual rejoicing of the Church. By the Bridegroom of the Church is to be understood the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of His Mystical Body. By the bride and wife of the Lamb is to be understood the Church (cf. Eph. 5:25). The wedding itself signifies the intimate union of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church, which is sealed by faithfulness and confirmed on both sides by the Covenant, as by mutual agreement (cf. Hosea 2:18-20). The wedding feast signifies the enjoyment of the fullness of God's grace which, by virtue of the redeeming merits of Christ, will be abundantly given to all true members of Christ's Church, that they may rejoice and be glad in these unutterably good things.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

19:8-9 *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

"That the Church is adorned in fine linen signifies her brightness in virtues, her refined understanding and the height of her reflection and contemplation of the Divine judgments."

"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." "The marriage supper of Christ," explains St. Andrew, "is the triumph of those that are saved and the joy in harmony with it, which the blessed will receive when they, being pure in soul, enter into the eternal Bridal Chamber with the Holy Bridegroom, *for He Who has promised is faithful* (Heb. 10:23). Just as there is a multitude of good things in the future age which surpass every thought, so also there are many and varied names by which they are named. They are sometimes called 'Kingdom of Heaven,' because of its glory and uprightness; sometimes 'paradise' by reason of the never-ending repast of delights; sometimes the 'bosom of Abraham' because of the consolation there of those that have reposed; and sometimes 'bridal chamber' and 'marriage,' not only by reason of the eternal rejoicing, but also because of the pure, true and unutterable union of God with His servants, a union which surpasses bodily communion one with another, in the same measure as light is distinct from darkness, and fragrance from foul odor" (St. Andrew, ch. 57).

19:10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

The angel, to whom St. John wished to bow down, forbade him to do this, saying, "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The meaning of these words is as follows: Do not bow down to me for I am only your fellow servant. But that Holy Spirit Who speaks and acts through the apostles, and in particular through St. John who has preached the testimony of Jesus, speaks also through the angels as through the same kind of emissaries of God. "Your dignity is the same as mine," the angel, as it were, says. "Having been given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, you testify of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ; and I, receiving from that same Holy Spirit the revelation of future events, communicate them to you and to the Church." In other words, the Spirit of the testimony of Christ is also the Spirit of prophecy, that is, having the same dignity and the same purpose. St. Andrew of Caesarea notes here the humility of the angels "who do not ascribe to themselves—like the evil demons—any divine glory, but ascribe it to the Master" (St. Andrew, ch. 57).

19:11-12 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself.*

These verses describe the appearance of the Divine Bridegroom Himself—the Word of God, His battle with the beast and his army, and His final victory over them. St. John saw the heaven open, from whence descended on a white horse the Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a horseman, after Whom followed likewise on white horses the heavenly hosts. The white horse, according to St. Andrew, "signifies the brightness of the saints

CHAPTER NINETEEN

upon whom is seated the One Who will judge the nations, emitting from His flaming and fiery eyes, that is, from His all-seeing power, a fiery flame which does not scorch the righteous but illumines them. Sinners, however, are devoured by the flame without being illumined. Like a king, He appears with a multitude of crowns on His head, which signifies that to Him is given all authority in heaven and on earth" (cf. Matt. 28:18) and over all the kingdoms of the world (St. Andrew, ch. 58).

"And He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself." The fact that the name is unknown indicates the incomprehensibility of His Divine Essence.

19:13 And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.

Here is named the Word of God. This indeed is incomprehensible to men, for it refers to the essence and origin of the Divine nature of Jesus Christ, which cannot be understood by any mortal. In the Old Testament scripture it is therefore called wondrous (cf. Judges 13:18; Isaiah 9:6; Proverbs 30:4).

"And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." "The vesture of the Word of God," says St. Andrew, "is His most pure and incorrupt flesh made purple with His Blood during the time of His voluntary sufferings" (St. Andrew, ch. 58).

19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

"These are the heavenly powers who are distinguished by the refinement of their nature, the height of their understanding, and the brightness of their virtues, and who are revered for the inseparability of their strong and intimate union with Christ" (St. Andrew, ch. 58).

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19:15 *And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations; and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

The "sharp sword" is the sword of Christ Who, in the present case, appears not so much as a teacher (cf. Apoc. 1:16), but more as a King Who wields His judgments like weapons for the punishment of the impious (Is. 11:4). They will be ruled with a rod of iron—this expression is taken from Psalm 2:9, and is explained in Apocalypse 2:27 and 12:5.

19:16 *And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

This name, testifying to the Divine dignity of its bearer, was written on His thigh, that is, on the royal cloth near that part of the body where, in the custom of the eastern people, a sword hung from the belt.

19:17-19 *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.*

Further, the seer of mysteries saw an angel standing in the sun, who, calling all to rejoice over the punishment of sinners and the cutting off of sin, cried out, "Come and gather yourselves together, unto the supper of the great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of mighty men." This appeal

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of the angel to birds of prey symbolically signifies that the defeat of the enemies of God will be most frightful, as in a bloody battle, when the bodies of the dead, because of their great number, will remain unburied and will be devoured by the birds.

19:20 *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

Such is the result of the ensuing battle. St. Andrew says, "It may be that they will not be subjected to the common death, but being killed in the twinkling of an eye, they will be condemned to a second death in the fiery lake. In the same way the Apostle Paul says about those going to judgment, that those who remain among the living will be changed *in the twinkling of an eye* (I Cor. 15:52). But these two enemies of God will, on the contrary, go not to judgment but to condemnation. This supposition is based on the words of the Apostle that the Antichrist will be killed by the spirit of the mouth of God (II Thess. 2:8), and on the opinion of a certain teacher that some men will remain alive after the killing of Antichrist (although some understand this differently). But we affirm that the living will be those whom Daniel blesses,* while these two, after God cuts off their power, will be cast with their incorruptible bodies into the fire of Gehenna, which for them will comprise death and their being killed by Christ's Divine command" (St. Andrew, ch. 59). Just as the blessed life begins already in this life, so also the hell for the hardhearted and those torn by evil

* That is, the righteous. Cf. Daniel 7:27. (*Translator.*)

conscience begins already in this life and continues to a greater extent in the life to come.

19:21 *And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

“There are two deaths,” explains St. Andrew, “one is the separation of the soul from the body; the other is being cast into gehenna. Applying this to those who battle together with Antichrist, we have reason to suppose that with the sword, or by the commandment of God, they will be brought to the first death—the death of the body, and only after it will follow the second; and this is correct. If they are not brought to the first death, then they, together with those by whom they were deceived, will be participants of the second death, i.e., eternal torment” (St. Andrew, ch. 59).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER NINETEEN

19:7

Matthew 22:1-14. *And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies,*

CHAPTER NINETEEN

and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Luke 14:16-24. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So the servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

APOCALYPSE

Ephesians 5:25. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.*

Hosea 2:18-20. *And I will make for them in that day a covenant with the wild beasts of the field, and with the birds of the sky, and with the reptiles of the earth: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle from off the earth, and will cause thee to dwell safely. And I will betroth thee to Myself forever; yea, I will betroth thee to Myself in righteousness, and in judgment, and in mercy, and in tender compassions; and I will betroth thee to Myself in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord (Sept.).*

19:12

Matthew 28:18. *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

19:13

Judges 13:18. *And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why dost thou thus ask after my name; whereas it is wonderful? (Sept.).*

Isaiah 9:6. *For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, whose government is upon his shoulder: and his name is called the Messenger of great counsel: for I will bring peace upon the princes, and health to him (Sept.).*

Proverbs 30:4. *Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?*

19:15

Psalms 2:9. *Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them to pieces as a potter's vessel (Sept.).*

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Isaiah 11:4. *But He shall judge the cause of the lowly, and shall reprove the lowly of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the word of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He destroy the ungodly one* (Sept).

19:20

I Corinthians 15:52. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

II Thessalonians 2:8. *And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.*

Daniel 7:27. *And the Kingdom and the power and the greatness of the Kings that are under the whole heaven were given to the saints of the Most High; and His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all powers shall serve and obey Him* (Sept.).

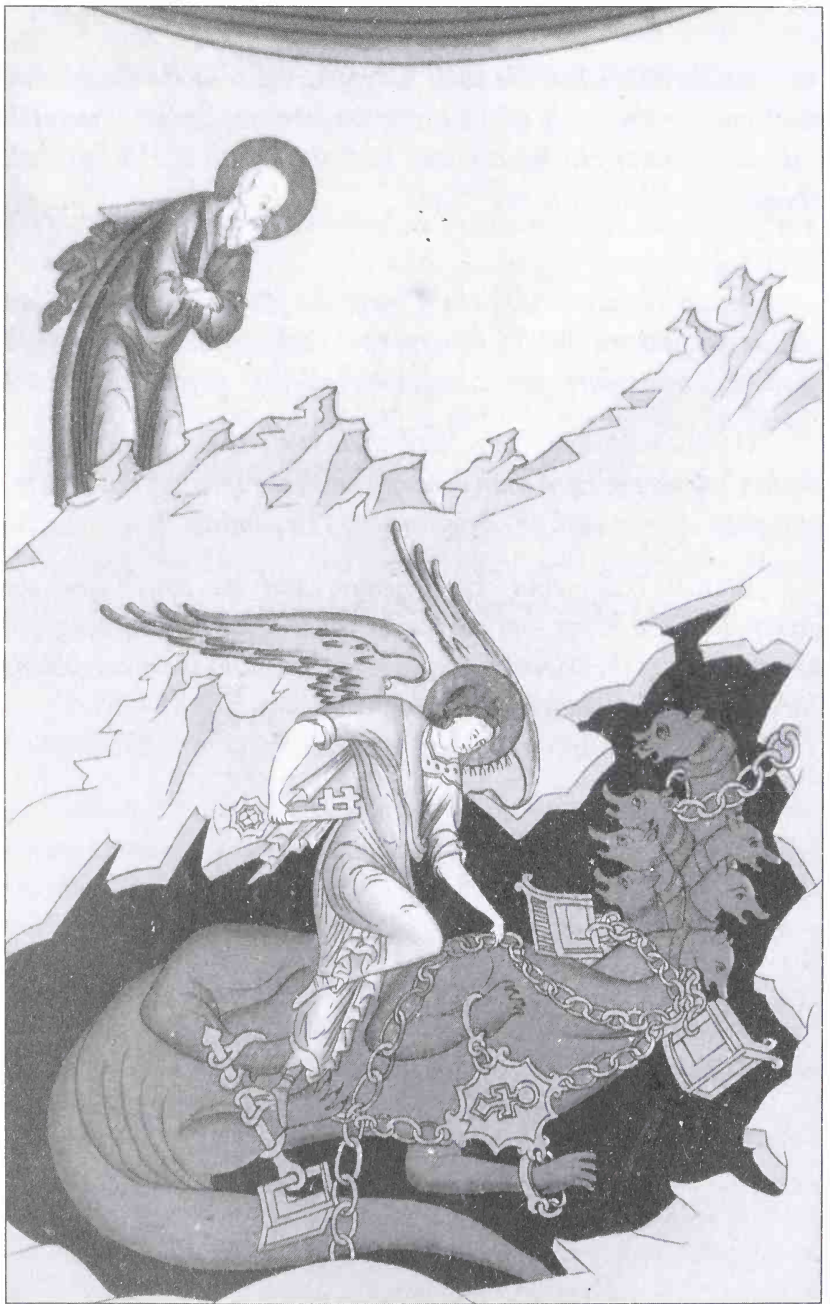


Figure 36. The angel, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain, binds Satan for *a thousand years* (20:1-3).

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION AND THE LAST JUDGMENT

20:1-3 *And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

After the defeat of Antichrist, St. John saw an angel descending from heaven who had a key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. This angel "laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent ... and bound him a thousand years...." St. Andrew of Caesarea interprets this passage in this way: by this "thousand years" one must understand the whole time "from the incarnation of Christ to the coming of Antichrist" (St. Andrew, ch. 60). With the coming of the Incarnate Son of God on earth—and in particular from the moment of His redemption of mankind through His death on the Cross—Satan was bound, paganism was cast down, and there came upon earth the thousand-year reign of Christ. The thousand-year Kingdom of Christ on earth is to be understood as the victory of Christianity over paganism and the establishment on earth of the Church of Christ. The definite number one thousand is used here in place

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of an indefinite number, signifying the long period of time until the Second Coming of Christ.

20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This picture symbolically depicts the kingdom of the Christian faith after the overthrow of paganism. Those who have assumed judgment and sit on the thrones are all Christians who have attained salvation, for to them has been given the promise of the Kingdom and the glory of Christ (I Thess. 2:12). From this choir, the holy Seer of Mysteries singles out in particular "those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God," that is, the holy martyrs. St. John says, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded." From this it is clear that these saints who participate in the thousand-year reign of Christ are reigning with Christ and performing judgment not on earth but in heaven, for it speaks here only concerning their souls which are not yet united with their bodies. From these words it is evident that the saints take part in the governing of the Church of Christ on earth, and therefore it is natural and proper to appeal to them with prayers, asking their intercession before Christ with Whom they reign.

"And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Their "living" is of a moral and spiritual nature. The holy Seer of Mysteries calls this "the first resurrection" (verse 5), while further on he speaks of the second bodily resurrection. This reigning of the saints with Christ will continue until the final victory over the dark impious powers under Antichrist. Then

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the resurrection of bodies will occur, and the last frightful Judgment will begin, when the souls of the saints will be reunited with their bodies and will reign with Christ forever.

20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

The expression "lived not again" means the dark and difficult condition of the souls of the impious sinners after bodily death. It continues "until the thousand years were finished." As in many other places in Sacred Scripture, this particle "until" (in Greek *eos*) does not signify the continuation of an action only to a certain boundary; on the contrary, it is a complete denial of any limit (see, for example, Matt. 1:25). In other words, it means that the impious dead are denied *forever* the blessed life.

20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

"From the Divine Scripture we know that there are two lives and two deaths: the first life is temporal and fleshly because of the transgression of the commandments, while the second is the eternal life promised to the saints for the keeping of the Divine commandments. Corresponding to these there are two kinds of death: one fleshly and temporal, and the other eternal as chastisement for sins, which is the fiery gehenna" (St. Andrew, ch. 62). Consequently, it is understood that if here on earth one has lived in Christ Jesus and has come before Him after the first death (that is, bodily death) with fervent faith in Him and filled with His grace, then one has no need to fear the second death, that is, the fiery gehenna.

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These first six verses of the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse have served as a pretext for the development of a false teaching concerning the "thousand-year reign of Christ on earth" which has received the name of Chiliasm. In essence it teaches that not long before the end of the world, Christ the Saviour will come again to earth, defeat Antichrist, resurrect the righteous, and make a new kingdom on earth. As a reward for their struggles and sufferings, the righteous will reign together with Christ for the course of a thousand years, and will enjoy all the good things of temporal life. Only then will there follow the second, universal resurrection of the dead, the universal judgment, and the general giving of eternal rewards. This teaching is known in two forms. Some say that Christ will restore Jerusalem in all its beauty and reinitiate the fulfillment of Moses' ritual law with all its sacrifices; and that the blessedness of the righteous will consist in all manner of sensual enjoyments. In the first century this teaching was held by the heretic Cerinthus and other judaizing heretics: the Ebionites, the Montanists, and in the fourth century by the Apollinarians. Others, on the contrary, have affirmed that this blessedness will consist in purely spiritual delights. In this latter form, chiliastic ideas were expressed first by Papias of Hieropolis; later they are to be found in the holy Martyr Justin, in St. Irenaeus, in Hippolytus, Methodius and Lactantius. In recent times it has been revived with certain peculiarities by the Anabaptists, the followers of Swedenborg, the Illuminati and Adventists. One must be aware, however, that neither in its first nor in its second form can the teaching of Chiliasm be accepted by an Orthodox Christian for the following reasons:

1. According to the chiliast teaching, the resurrection of the dead will take place twice: the first, a thousand years before the end of the world—when only the righteous will be resur-

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rected; and the second, at the very end of the world, when sinners also will be resurrected. However, Christ the Saviour clearly taught only one universal resurrection of the dead, when both the righteous and the sinners will be resurrected and all will receive their final recompense (John 6:39-40; Matt. 13:37-43).

2. The Word of God speaks of only two comings of Christ in the world: the first in lowliness, when He came to redeem us; and the second in glory, when He will appear to judge the living and the dead. Chiliasm introduces one more—a third coming of Christ a thousand years before the end of the world. The Word of God knows no such thing.

3. The Word of God teaches only of two kingdoms of Christ: the Kingdom of Grace which will continue until the end of the world (I Cor. 15:23-26), and the Kingdom of Glory which will begin after the Last Judgment and will have no end (Luke 1:33; II Peter 1:11). Chiliasm, however, allows yet a third, as it were, a middle kingdom of Christ, which will last only a thousand years.

4. The teaching of a sensual kingdom of Christ clearly contradicts the Word of God, according to which the Kingdom of God is not "food and drink" (Rom. 14:17); in the resurrection of the dead they do not marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30); the rites of the law of Moses had only a prefiguring significance and were forever done away with by the more perfect New Testament law (Acts 15:23-30; Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 10:1).

Certain ancient teachers of the Church—Justin, Irenaeus and Methodius—held Chiliasm only as a personal opinion. At the same time there were those who decidedly rose up against it such as Caius the Presbyter of Rome, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Basil the Great, St.

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Gregory the Theologian, St. Epiphanius, Blessed Jerome, and Blessed Augustine. To hold Chiliasm even as a private opinion was no longer permissible after the Church, at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, condemned the teaching of the heretic Apollinarius concerning the thousand-year reign of Christ. At the same time this was confirmed by the introduction into the Symbol of Faith of the words "of His Kingdom there will be no end."

One must likewise know that the Apocalypse is a book which is profoundly mystical, and therefore to understand and interpret literally the prophecies contained in it—especially if such a literal understanding contradicts other passages of Sacred Scripture—is entirely opposed to the rules of hermeneutics. In such cases, it is correct to seek in perplexing passages a metaphorical or allegorical meaning.

20:7-8 And 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.

By the "loosing of Satan out of his prison" is to be understood the appearance of Antichrist before the end of the world. The liberated Satan will strive in the person of Antichrist to deceive all the nations of the earth, and will raise up Gog and Magog in battle against the Christian Church. St. Andrew says: "Some people think that Gog and Magog are the northern and most remote Scythian peoples or, as we call them, Huns, the most militant and numerous peoples of the earth. They are restrained from taking possession of the whole world only by the Divine right hand, until the liberation of the devil. Others, translating from the Hebrew, say that Gog signifies 'one who

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gathers' or 'a gathering' and that Magog signifies 'one who is exalted' or 'exaltation.' And so, these names signify either a gathering of peoples or their exaltation" (St. Andrew, ch. 63). One must suppose that these names are used in a metaphorical sense to denote those fierce hordes who, at the end of the world, will arm themselves under the leadership of Antichrist against the Church of Christ.

20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.

This means that the enemies of Christ will spread over the whole earth and will begin everywhere the persecution of Christianity.

20:9 And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

The holy prophet Ezekiel drew a similar picture of the defeat of the wild hordes of Gog (Ez. 38:18-22; 39:1-6). This a depiction of God's wrath which will be poured out upon the enemies of God at the Second Coming of Christ.

20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Such will be the eternal lot of the devil and his servants—Antichrist and the false prophet; they will be condemned to the unending torments of hell.

After this final victory over the devil, there will follow the universal resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment.

20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it.

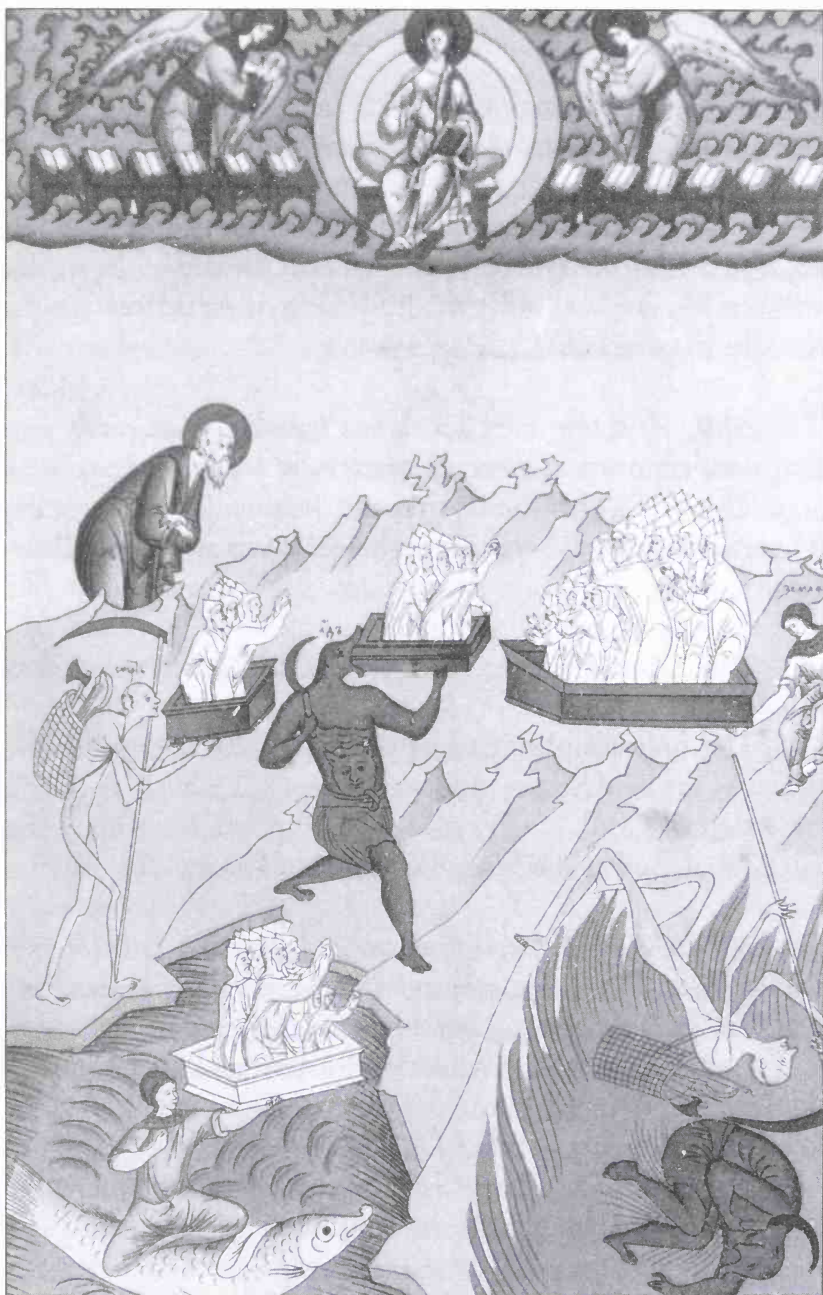


Figure 37. Above, the Lord sits upon a *great white throne* (20:11), next to the open books by which the dead are judged (20:12). The *sea* and representations of *death and hell* deliver up the dead (20:13). At bottom right, death and hell are again depicted, this time being *cast into the lake of fire* (20:14).

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This is a picture of the universal judgment of God upon the human race. The whiteness of the throne upon which the Chief Judge of the universe sits, signifies the sanctity and righteousness of this Judge.

20:11 From Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Here is depicted the great and frightful changes in the universe, which will occur before the final and Dread Judgment (cf. II Peter 3:10).

20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

The opened books symbolically signify the omniscience of God Who knows all the works of men. That there is only one book of life is a sign of the small number of the chosen ones of God, who are to inherit salvation. St. Andrew says: "The opened books represent the acts and conscience of each person. One of them is the book of life in which are written the names of the saints" (St. Andrew, ch. 64).

20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

The meaning here is that all men, without exception, will be resurrected and stand before God's Judgment.

20:14-15 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

This is said in the sense that those people who are glorified and saved will no longer fear either hell or death; for them, death and hell will cease to exist forever. By the "lake of fire" and the "second death" are to be understood the eternal condemnation of sinners whose names did not appear to be written in the Lord's book of life.

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS FOR CHAPTER TWENTY

20:4

I Thessalonians 2:12. *That ye would walk worthy of God, Who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.*

20:5

Matthew 1:25. *And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.*

20:6

John 6:39-40. *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

Matthew 13:37-43. *He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seeds are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of this world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth His*

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angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

I Corinthians 15:23-26. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Luke 1:33. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

II Peter 1:11. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Romans 14:17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 22:30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

Acts 15:23-30. And they wrote letters by them after this manner: The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled

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with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle.

Romans 6:14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

Galatians 5:6. *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

Hebrews 10:1. *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*

20:9

Ezekiel 38:18-22, 39:1-6. *And it shall come to pass in that day, in the day when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that My wrath and my jealousy shall arise, I have spoken in the fire of Mine anger, verily in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; and the fish of the sea shall quake at the presence of the Lord, and the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the field, and all the reptiles that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are on the face of the earth; and the mountains shall be rent, and the valleys shall fall, and every wall on the land*

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shall fall. And I will summon against it even every fear, saith the Lord: the sword of every man shall be against his brother. And I will judge him with pestilence, and flood, and sweeping rain, and hailstones; and I will rain upon him fire and brimstone, and upon all that are with him, and upon many nations with him.... And thou, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, Rhos, prince of Mesoch and Thobel: and I will assemble thee, and guide thee, and raise thee up on the extremity of the north, and I will bring thee up upon the mountains of Israel. And I will destroy thy bow out of thy left hand, and thine arrows out of thy right hand, and I will cast thee down on the mountains of Israel; and thou and all that belong to thee shall fall, and the nations that are with thee shall be given to multitudes of birds, even to every fowl, and I have given thee to all the wild beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall on the face of the field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord. And I will send a fire upon Gog, and the islands shall be securely inhabited; and they shall know that I am the Lord (Sept.).

20:11

II Peter 3:10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

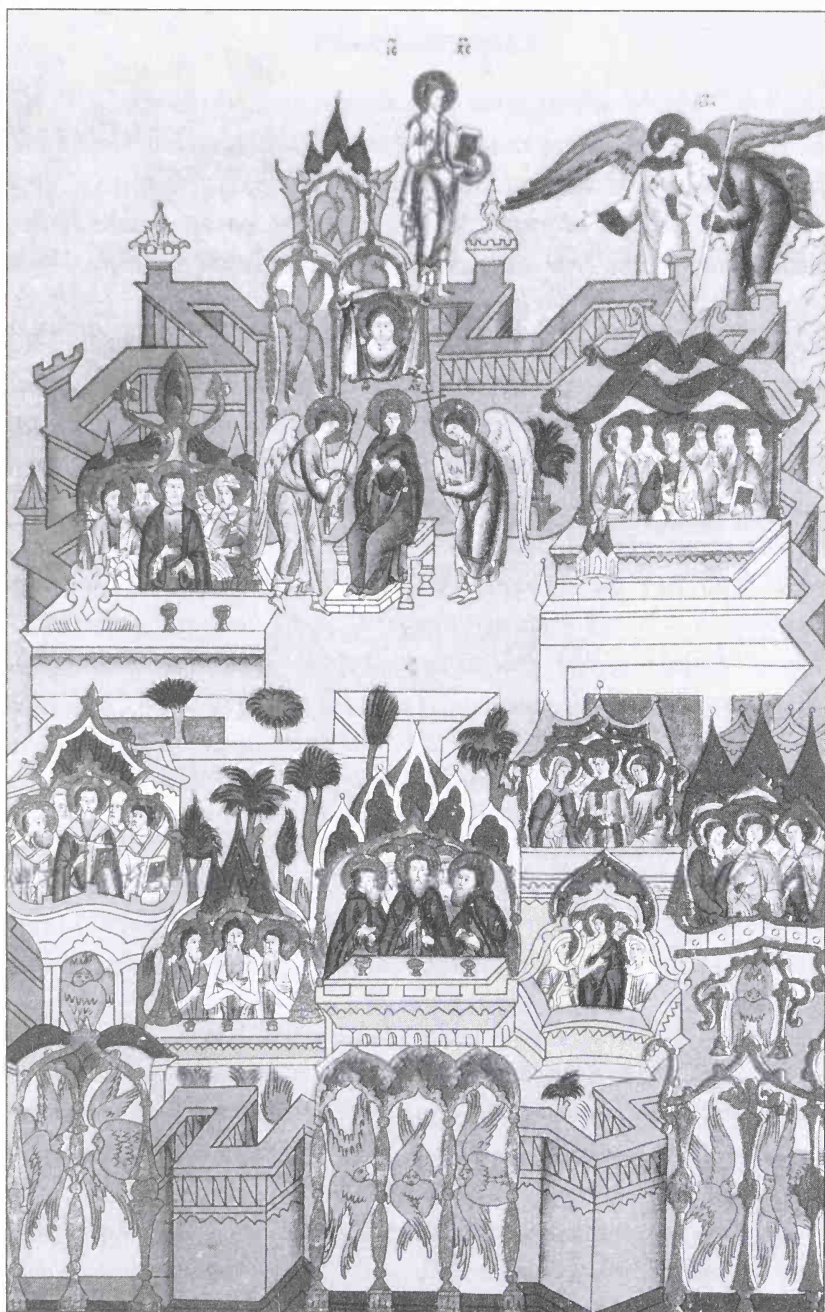


Figure 38. The New Jerusalem, with *twelve gates*, and at the gates *twelve angels* (21:12).

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THE OPENING OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH: THE NEW JERUSALEM

Immediately after this, St. John was shown the spiritual beauty and grandeur of the New Jerusalem, that is, the Kingdom of Christ, which is to be revealed in all its glory in the Second Coming of Christ, after the victory over the devil.

21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

Here is meant not the nonexistence of the creation, but its change for the better as the Apostle testifies: *The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God* (Rom. 8:21). The divine Psalmist says: *Like a vesture shall it be cast off and it shall be changed* (Ps. 101:27, Sept.). "The renewal of what is grown old does not signify its obliteration and annihilation, but the putting away of its agedness and wrinkles" (St. Andrew, ch. 65). This newness of heaven and earth will consist of their transformation through fire and the newness of their forms and attributes, but not in the changing of the essence itself. The sea, whose nature is inconstant and agitated, will vanish.

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21:2 *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

The image of this "new Jerusalem" represents the triumphant Church of Christ, adorned as the Lord's Bride in the purity and virtues of the saints. St. Andrew says of this: "This city, which has Christ as its cornerstone, is composed of the saints concerning whom it is written: *They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land*" (Zech. 9:16) (St. Andrew, ch. 65).

21:3-4 *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

The Old Testament tabernacle was only a prefiguration of the dwelling of God with men, which begins in the future, eternal blessed life, and will be a source of blessedness for those who are liberated from all the sorrows of the present earthly life. The Church is presently the image of the true tabernacle.

21:5-6 *And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

By the water of life is understood the grace of the Holy Spirit which is presented figuratively in Holy Scripture under the image of living water (cf. John 4:10-14, 7:37-39).

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21:7 *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.*

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things ...” that is, those who overcome the invisible demons in battle will receive all these good things, and they will become sons of God.

21:8 *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

The fearful, and those who lack courage in the battle with the devil, and sinners who are given over to passions and vices, will be condemned to the “second death,” that is, the eternal torments of hell (St. Andrew, ch. 66).

21:9 *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

From what follows, it is evident that the bride, “the Lamb’s wife,” named here is the Church of Christ. St. Andrew says: “He correctly calls the bride ‘the Lamb’s wife,’ for when Christ was slaughtered like a lamb, He betrothed the Church to Himself by His own blood. Just as a wife was created for Adam during his sleep through the taking of a rib, so also the Church, fashioned by the shedding of blood from the side of Christ at the time of His voluntary repose on the Cross in the sleep of death, was united with Him Who was wounded for our sakes” (St. Andrew, ch. 67).

21:10-14 *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of*

God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The wife of the Lamb, the holy Church, appeared before the spiritual gaze of the holy seer of mysteries in the form of a splendid great city descending from heaven—Jerusalem. The rest of the chapter is devoted to a detailed description of this wondrous city. Shining with precious stones, this city had twelve gates named for the twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles. It is characteristic of this city that “her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone.” St. Andrew says: “The light of the Church is Christ who is called *Jasper* as one who is always alive, blossoming, giving of life, pure” (St. Andrew, ch. 67). A high wall surrounds the city as a sign that not a single unworthy person can enter therein. This same idea is expressed by the angels of God, who stand guard on the twelve gates. The gates bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, for just as on earth tribes comprise the society of the chosen people of God, so the same names are used by the chosen ones of heaven—the new Israel. On the twelve foundations of the wall are written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; this, of course, is a sign that the apostles are the foundation on which the Church is established, as the founders of the Christian faith among all peoples of the earth. Here one cannot but see a refutation of the Latin dogma that the Church of Christ is founded solely upon the Apostle Peter.

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21:15-18 *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.*

The city is measured by an angel before the holy seer of mysteries with the aid of a golden reed. St. Andrew says, "The golden reed indicates the honesty of the measuring angel, whom he saw in human form, and likewise the dignity of the measured city by whose *wall* we are to understand Christ" (St. Andrew, ch. 67).

The city has the form of a right angle square; the equality of its height, length and breadth—twelve thousand furlongs each—indicates the form of a cube, which signifies its firmness and solidity. The height of the wall of the city is 144 cubits. All these numerical expressions are used, one must suppose, to signify the perfection, solidity and astonishing symmetry of the whole building of the Church of God.

21:19-21 *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

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The wall of the city is built of jasper, symbolizing the Divine glory (cf. verse 11), and the ever-blossoming and unfading life of the saints. The city itself was of pure gold, like clear glass, symbolic of the honor and brightness of its inhabitants. The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with all kinds of precious stones; in particular, each of the twelve foundations had the appearance of being formed of a single precious stone. As St. Andrew notes, eight of the twelve stones were worn in the mantle of the chief priest; the other four are added in order to show the harmony of the New Testament with the Old, and the preeminence of those who shone forth in it. And this is true, for the Apostles—symbolized by the precious stones—were adorned with every virtue.

According to the interpretation of St. Andrew, the significance of these twelve stones is as follows. "The first foundation, *jasper*, is a stone of greenish color and symbolizes the chief Apostle Peter, who bore in his body the death of Christ and showed a blossoming and unfading love toward Him. The second stone is *sapphire* from which comes the color azure; it symbolizes the blessed Paul, who was raised up even to the third heaven. The third, *chalcedony*, evidently the same as anthracite which was on the mantle of the chief priest, symbolizes the blessed Apostle Andrew, who is like a coal ignited by the Spirit. The fourth, *emerald*, is of a green color and is mixed with oil which gives it a shine and beauty; it symbolizes the holy Evangelist John, who softens with Divine oil the grief and despondency which occur in us through sin, and by the precious gift of theology grants us faith which never grows faint. The fifth, *sardonyx*, a stone which has the color of a shining human fingernail, symbolizes James, who was first to endure bodily death for the sake of Christ. The sixth, *sardius*, is a brilliant stone, orange in color, which has healing properties against

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swellings and wounds from irons; it symbolizes the beauty of the virtues of the blessed Philip, a beauty which was illumined by the fire of the Divine Spirit and which heals the wounds of those souls who have been deceived. The seventh, *chrysolite*, shines like gold and symbolizes, perhaps, Bartholomew, who shone with precious virtues and Divine preaching. The eighth, *beryl*, the color of the sea and air, symbolizes Thomas, who undertook distant voyages for the salvation of the Indians. The ninth, *topaz*, is a black stone which, they say, gushes forth a milky substance containing properties beneficial to those suffering from eye diseases; it symbolizes the blessed Matthew, who heals by means of the Gospel those who are blind in heart and gives milk to those newly born in the Faith. The tenth, *chrysoprasus*, surpassing in its brilliance gold itself, symbolizes the blessed Thaddeus, who preached to Abgar the King of Edessa the Kingdom of Christ—signified by gold, and the death in it—signified by ashes. The eleventh, *jacinth*, an azure or sky-colored hyacinth, probably symbolizes Simon, the zealot of the gifts of Christ, who possessed heavenly wisdom. The twelfth, *amethyst*, a purple stone, symbolizes Matthias, who was vouchsafed the Divine fire at the distribution of tongues, for his fiery desire to please the One Who chose him to take the place of the one who had fallen away” (St. Andrew, ch. 67).

The twelve gates of the city were built of twelve whole precious stones. St. Andrew says: “The twelve gates are evidently the twelve disciples of Christ, through whom we have come to know the door and the path of life. They are also the twelve precious pearls, having received their light and brilliant luster from the one precious pearl of great price, which is Christ. The street of the city is of pure gold, like transparent glass. All these details express one and the same idea: everything in the heavenly Church of God is holy, pure, beautiful and constant;

everything is magnificent, spiritual and precious" (St. Andrew, ch. 67).

21:22-23 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Further there is described the inner way of life of the inhabitants of this marvelous heavenly city. First of all, there is no visible temple in it, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Since worship will be given there to the Lord God without intermediary, there is no need either of a material temple or of any kind of rites or sacred activities. Secondly, this heavenly city will have no need of any kind of illumination, "for the glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof." Where the mental Sun of Righteousness is, there is no need for the material sun (St. Andrew, ch. 67). Thirdly, the population will be the most various and mixed, for "all who have been crowned with victory over the passions will offer there the glory and honor of good deeds" (St. Andrew, ch. 67). Fourthly, the gates of the heavenly city will not be closed all day, and there will be no night (cf. Isaiah 60:11). All this means that the heavenly Church will not be threatened by any danger from attack of any kind of enemies.

21:24-27 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

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The general inner sign, which distinguishes this heavenly Church from the earthly, is the fact that while in the earthly Church good exists along with evil and tares grow together with good wheat, in the heavenly Church only what is good, pure and holy is gathered together from all the peoples of the earth. Everything evil, defiled and unclean, which has accumulated over the whole period of the world's history, will be separated out from there and, as it were, poured out together into a single, foul-smelling cistern, whose impurity cannot in any way come into contact with this wondrous dwelling-place which belongs to the blessed alone.

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

21:6

John 4:10-14. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto Him, Sir, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou that living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

John 7:37-38. *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*



Figure 39. St. John's vision of a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1).

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE FINAL FEATURES OF THE IMAGE OF
THE NEW JERUSALEM. THE CONFIRMATION OF
EVERYTHING SAID, THE COMMAND TO KEEP
THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND TO
EXPECT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST
WHICH WILL BE SOON.

22:1 *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

The unceasing blessedness of the members of the heavenly Church is depicted in a series of symbols. The first symbol is "a pure river of water of life." This symbolically depicts the grace of the Life-giving Spirit, which fills the streets of the holy city, that is, the multitude of its inhabitants who, in the words of the Psalmist, are *more in number than the sand* (Ps. 138:18, Sept.). This is the grace and mercy of God which will always be poured out inexhaustibly upon the inhabitants of the heavenly city, filling their hearts with unutterable blessedness (cf. Isaiah 35:9-10).

22:2 *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

APOCALYPSE

The second symbol is the "tree of life," just as there was one in the earthly paradise before the fall of our first ancestors. The tree of life in the heavenly Jerusalem will possess special qualities of surpassing excellence: twelve times a year it will bring forth fruit, and its leaves will serve to heal nations.

St. Andrew considers "the tree of life to signify Christ, understood through the Holy Spirit, for in Him is the Spirit, and He is worshipped in the Spirit and is the giver of the Spirit; through Him also the twelve fruits—i.e., the Apostles—give us the inexhaustible nourishment of the knowledge of God." "The leaves of the tree of life—that is, of Christ—signify the most refined, exalted, and enlightened understanding of the decrees of God, and its fruits are the most perfect knowledge revealed in the age to come. These leaves will be for healing, that is, for the cleansing of the ignorances of those people who are lower than others in the accomplishment of virtues, for *there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars* (I Cor. 15:41), and *In My Father's house are many mansions* (John 14:2). So it is that according to the character of their works, one shall be granted less and another greater brightness" (St. Andrew, ch. 68).

22:3-4 *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.*

Every curse shall be taken away from the inhabitants of this holy city, and those that are vouchsafed to become inhabitants of the city will behold God face to face, "not in riddles but, as the great Dionysius testifies, in the same form in which He was beheld by the holy Apostles on the holy mountain. Instead of the plate of gold worn by the ancient high priest (Exodus

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28:36-37), they will have the mark of the name of God—not on their foreheads only, but also in their hearts: that is, firm, unchanging and bold love for Him, for the mark on the forehead signifies an adornment of boldness” (St. Andrew, ch. 68).

22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

All these features indicate the unceasing and most complete communion of the members of the heavenly Church with their Master Whom they behold face to face. This will be for them a source of inexhaustible blessedness (cf. Ezekiel 47:12).

In the concluding verses of the Apocalypse, the holy Apostle John confirms the truth and faithfulness of everything said, and speaks of the nearness of the fulfillment of all that which was shown to him, and likewise the nearness of the Second Coming of Christ when also each will be rewarded according to his deeds.

22:6-11 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still:



Figure 40. The Lord says to St. John, *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end ...* (22:13).

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and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

“Behold, I come quickly.” In the explanation of St. Andrew, “these words indicate either the shortness of the present life in comparison with the future, or the suddenness or quickness of the end of each person, since departure from here comprises the end for each individual. Inasmuch as one does not know *in what hour the thief will come*, we are commanded to watch and have our loins girded and our lamps lit (cf. Luke 12:35-39)” (St. Andrew, ch. 69). One must remember that for God there is no time, that one day before Him is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a single day (cf. II Peter 3:8).

22:12-17 *And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

He will come soon, because He comes without delay—nothing will stop His coming, just as nothing will stop or destroy His unchanging decrees and promises. Men count days, months, and years, while the Lord counts not time, but the righteousness and unrighteousness of men; and by the measuring stick of His chosen ones He decrees the measure of the coming of that great and bright day, when “time shall be no

more" (cf. Apoc. 10:6) and there begins the unsetting day of His Kingdom. The Spirit and the Bride—that is, the Church of Christ—call everyone to come and freely scoop up the water of life, so as to be vouchsafed to become citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

22:18-21 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

St. John concludes the Apocalypse with a blessing upon those who fulfill the commandments of God, and a strict warning not to distort the words of the prophecy under threat of the application of those plagues that are written in this book. In conclusion St. John expresses the desire for the speedy coming of Christ in the words, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Then he gives the customary apostolic blessing, from which it is evident that the Apocalypse was originally intended as an epistle to the churches of Asia Minor (cf. Apoc. 1:4).

The content of the Apocalypse clearly indicates that it has an historical foundation and great significance for the Church of all times. It represents the natural culmination of the canon of the sacred books and, in depicting the future and final fate of the Church and the world, it places us, as it were, immediately before the face of the coming Judge.

The end, and glory be to God!

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

22:1

Isaiah 35:9-10. *And there shall be no lion there, neither shall any evil beast go up upon it, nor at all be found there; but the redeemed and gathered on the Lord's behalf, shall walk in it, and shall return, and come to Sion with joy, and everlasting joy shall be over their head; for on their head shall be praise and exaltation, and joy shall take possession of them: sorrow and pain, and groaning have fled away (Sept.).*

22:4

Exodus 28:36-37. *And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forehead of the mitre it shall be.*

22:1-5

Ezekiel 47:12. *And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.*

22:6-11

Luke 12:35. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.*

II Peter 3:8. *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day.*



Archbishop Averky teaching Orthodox Christian youth, 1955.

Appendix I:

On “Neo-Chiliasm”

by Archbishop Averky

Editor's Note: *The following was translated from Archbishop Averky: Sermons and Speeches, Vol. III, pp. 259-265, and appeared in Orthodox Life, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 23-25. It is included here because it concerns the true Christian attitude toward spiritual life and the future of the world, contrasting this with the false ideas and hopes found in today's society. In addition, it offers testimony to Archbishop Averky's pastoral zeal and Patristic outlook.*

The Lord said: “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”

(Mark 8:34)

THE GREAT FAST is a season of repentance; and repentance is that struggle to contend against sinful passions and lusts which is so difficult for man that the Lord, the Judge of the contest Himself, likened it to the bearing of a cross. We are vividly reminded of this at the very midpoint of the Great Fast, on the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross. Just as the Lord bore the Cross for the sake of our salvation, so each of us must

"bear his cross" is order to attain the salvation prepared for us by the Lord.

Without the cross, without struggle, there can be no salvation! This is what *true* Christianity teaches. The teaching on struggle, on the bearing of the cross, runs like a scarlet thread through all the Sacred Scriptures and all of the history of the Church; and the lives of those holy ones who were pleasing unto God, the spiritual athletes of Christian piety, clearly bear witness to this. The Great Fast is merely an annually repeated exercise in the bearing of one's cross in this life, an exercise in spiritual struggle inseparably bound up with the entire life of the true Christian.

But now, in the twentieth century of the Christian era, "wise men" have appeared—"neo-Christians," as some of them refer to themselves—who do not wish to hear of this. They preach a new sort of saccharine, sentimental, rosy-hued neo-Christianity devoid of all labor and struggle, an imaginary, all-encompassing pseudo-Christian love and the unrestricted enjoyment of all the delights of this transitory earthly life. They totally ignore the innumerable passages in Holy Writ which forcefully and eloquently speak of spiritual struggles, of emulating Christ the Saviour in crucifying oneself, of the many sorrows which await the Christian in this life, beginning with words which Christ the Saviour Himself addressed to His disciples at the Mystical Supper: *In the world ye shall have tribulation* (John 16:33). And this is because, as the Lord Himself explained, true Christians are *not of the world* (John 15:19), since *the whole world lieth in wickedness* (I John 5:19). This is why Christians must not love this world and *the things that are in the world* (I John 2:15); *the friendship of the world is enmity with God*, and *whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God* (James 4:4).

ON "NEO-CHILIASM"

These modern "wise men" somehow fail to see that the Word of God nowhere definitely promises Christians full spiritual satisfaction and paradisiacal blessedness in this earthly life, but, quite the contrary, emphasizes that life on earth will move further and further away from the Law of God; that, in respect to morality, men will fall lower and lower (see II Tim. 3:1-5); that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived* (II Tim. 3:12-13); and that, finally, *the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up* (II Peter 3:10). But there will appear *new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness* (II Peter 3:13)—a wondrous *new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven* (Apoc. 21:2), which was shown to John, the beholder of mysteries, during the revelation accorded him.

All of this is not to the liking of the "neo-Christians." They want blessedness here in this world, burdened with its multitude of sins and iniquities; and they await this blessedness with impatience. They consider one of the surest ways of attaining it to be the "ecumenical movement," the union and unification of all peoples in one new "church" which will comprise not only Roman Catholics and Protestants, but also Jews, Moslems and pagans, each retaining his own convictions and errors. This imaginary "Christian" love, in the name of the future blessedness of men on earth, cannot but trample upon the Truth.

The destruction of this earth with everything on it, although clearly foretold by the Word of God, is considered by them to be something indescribably horrible, as though it were not consistent with the omnipotence of God and, apparently, quite undesirable. They reluctantly admit the destruction of the earth (for how can one not accept something prophesied in the Word of God?), but with the condition that it will take place in

the far, far distant, mist-enshrouded future; not centuries, but millions of years from now.

What is the reason for this? One might say, because they are weak of faith, or lacking entirely in faith in *the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come*. For them *everything* is in this earthly life, and when it ends for them, everything does.

In a few of its points—especially in the expectation of the blessed life in this world—such a frame of mind closely resembles the widespread heresy of the first centuries of Christianity called *chiliasm*. This is the expectation of a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth; therefore the modern manifestation of this heresy may be termed “neo-chiliasm.”

One should be aware and keep in mind that chiliasm was condemned by the Second Ecumenical Council in the year 381; and therefore to believe in it now in the twentieth century, even in part, is quite unforgivable. Besides which, this contemporary “neo-chiliasm” is far worse than the ancient chiliastic heresy in that at its basis indubitably lies a disbelief in the *life of the age to come*... and the passionate desire to attain blessedness here on earth, using all the improvements and achievements of the material progress of our times. This false teaching wreaks terrible harm, lulling to sleep the spiritual vigilance of the faithful and suggesting to them that the end of the world is far away (if in fact there will be an end), and therefore there is no particular need to *watch and pray*, to which Christ the Saviour constantly called His followers (cf. Matt. 26:41), since everything in the world is gradually getting better and better, spiritual progress keeping step with materialism. And the terrible phenomena which we observe at the present time are all *temporary*; all has happened before, and all will ultimately pass away, and an extraordinary flourishing of Christianity will replace it, in

ON "NEO-CHILIASM"

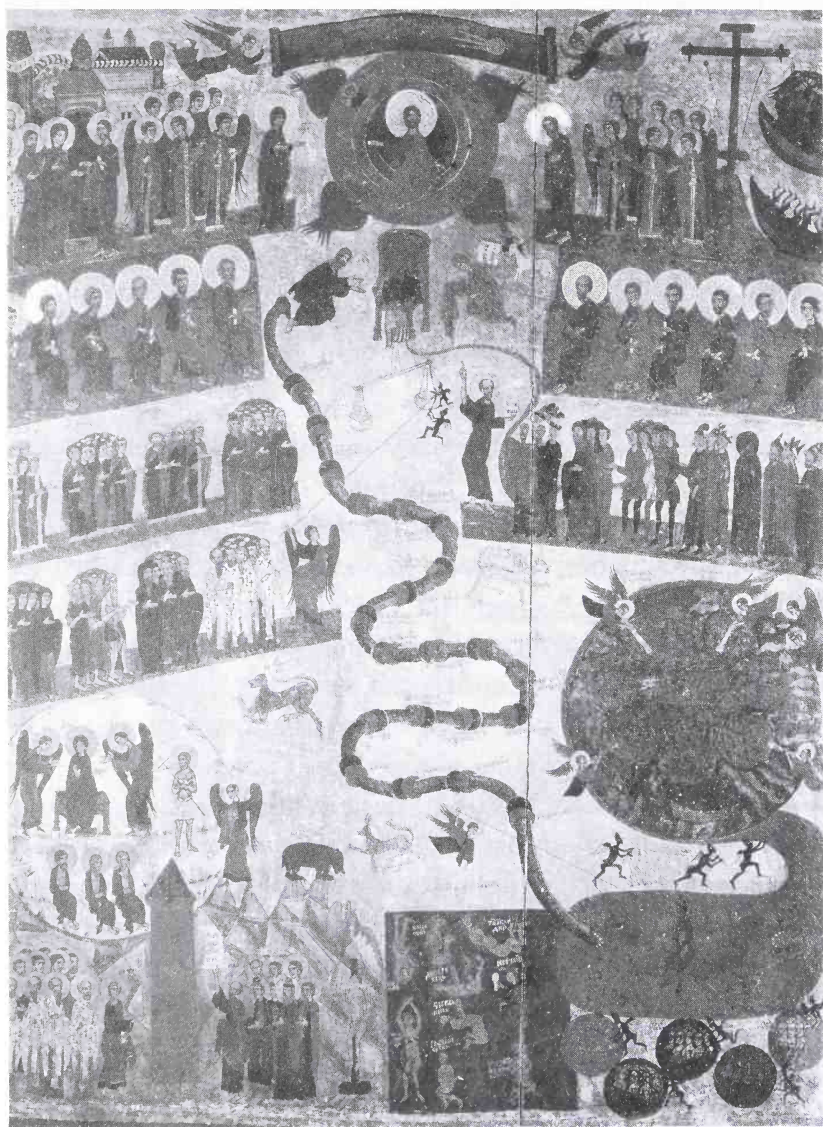
which, of course, the ecumenists will occupy the principal and most honored places.

Thus, everything is fine! It is not necessary to labor over oneself, and no spiritual struggle is required; the fasts may be abolished. Everything will get better *all by itself*, until the Kingdom of God is finally established on earth with universal earthly satisfaction and blessedness.

Brethren! Is it not clear where the ultimate source of this alluring false teaching is to be found? Who suggests all these thoughts to contemporary Christians with the purpose of overthrowing all of Christianity? As an infectious plague, as fire, must we fear this "neo-chiliasm" which is so profoundly contrary to the teaching of the Word of God, the teaching of the Holy Fathers, and all of the centuries-old teachings of our Holy Church, by which many, many thousands of the righteous have been saved.

Without spiritual struggle there is not, and cannot be, true Christianity! Therefore, our path does not lie with all the modern movements, nor with ecumenists, nor with the "neo-chiliasts."

Our faith is the faith of the holy ascetics, *the apostolic faith, the faith of the Fathers, the Orthodox Faith* which *hath made the whole world steadfast*. This faith and only this faith will we firmly adhere to in these evil days in which we now live. Amen.



16th-century icon of the Last Judgment,
from the village of Polana, Poland.

Appendix II:

Before the Face of Antichrist

by Archimandrite Constantine Zaitsev

Editor's note: *The following article was written by a colleague and monastic brother of Archbishop Averky. The author, the late Archimandrite Constantine of Jordanville, was a brilliant thinker who, being fully within the tradition of the Church, was able to see beyond the externals and into the heart of the Orthodox faith, wherein lies its mystical, unseen essence and its living apostolic power. His vision is expressed in these reflections on the end times, and on the ways in which true Christianity will manifest itself in the midst of growing apostasy.*

IT is becoming increasingly clear, from the perspective of true Christians, that the world is leaving Christ and that it is united in this movement, taking with it even those things which are in the various manifestations of Christendom (including Orthodoxy, which until now has continuously maintained the original Church of Christ). This is already calling forth certain actions of self-defence on the part of those who want to remain with Christ. But the consciousness of that Unity, which disre-

gards all the boundaries that until the present "ecumenical" period of the history of the Church have been accepted as being absolutely impassable (especially in regard to faithfulness to Christ, however subjectively it might have been understood), has by no means yet defined itself.

Christ once spoke perfectly clearly about the character of a similar unity. Before us stand two statements of two completely different hues of meaning. *He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad* (Matt. 12:30). This is the first: he who does not manifest active solidarity with Christ is not only not Christ's, but is a force already inimical to Christ! But inasmuch as He speaks about the disciples following Him, the Lord gave a completely different explanation when they told Him that they had forbidden a man who did not associate with them to cast out demons in the name of Christ. *Forbid him not; for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part* (Mark 9:39-40). This is repeated in the Gospel of St. Luke (9:49-50). This is the second statement, according to which service to Christ is by no means limited formally; it can be accepted by Christ in any form—by grace adopted and clothed by Him in His power, to one degree or another. Both these sayings of the Lord cannot but have a permanent significance and, perhaps, it is now that they must be revealed in full measure—at a time when, although in a reverse direction, an atmosphere akin to early Christianity arises.

Those who are not actively united with the true Christ—those, by the force of things, turn out to be against Him. This is manifest today with an astounding clarity which takes on an ever-increasing mass character. But as for the forms of communion with Christ, they are losing more and more their character

BEFORE THE FACE OF ANTICHRIST

of formal successiveness. Communion with Christ, with an entirely new and ever-growing force, is capable of being born anew, on any soil! And thus there is formed a mass phenomenon, characteristic of the end of the world, which will be met by the most decisive counteraction on the part of Antichrist—a counteraction so disastrous that, as the Lord Himself told us, He will be prepared to hasten His coming in order to intercept this destruction.

This phenomenon, which will decisively define itself only in the time of the Antichrist, nonetheless can be noted in our times in the natural, mutual attraction to one another of those who want to remain with Christ. Thus there appears a certain contrasting analogy to the ecumenism of Antichrist—in the spiritual kinship of all the appearances of faithfulness to Christ, wherever they may be found, even if in the manifestation of a heterodoxy far from the fulness of Truth. Be it the colossus of Catholicism or some crumb of an ecclesiastical body on the most distant periphery of heterodoxy, if there arises a reaction against the ecumenism of Antichrist in the form of a defence of the minimal bit of the genuine Christ which remains in that ecclesiastical body, then this cannot but arouse sympathy from all the “faithful,” regardless of the degree to which they are “orthodox.” And here, of course, is not excluded any formulation of such a unity in faithfulness to Christ. Moreover, if this unity embraces all the “faithful,” regardless of the fulness of their faithfulness, then does there not quite naturally arise a striving for the *general* possession of the fulness of Truth?

And here one saying of Christ attracts special attention, a saying which until the present time remained unrevealed in its concrete content. So often we hear the following words of the Saviour in church: *I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.... I am*

the good shepherd and know My sheep and am known of Mine.... 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 10:9-16).

Is the meaning of that which is proclaimed in these words revealed in what must naturally arise at the present time, under the conditions of the epidemic degeneration in the direction of Antichrist of all church "denominations," even Orthodoxy? All those, each in their own denomination, who courageously remain with Christ, thus separate themselves from their own denomination, which, as a whole, is joining Antichrist. And is not their mutual drawing together generated into a general preparedness to rise to the level of the fulness of Orthodoxy? And in this, does there not seem to be realized just what Christ spoke of as the one fold which will arise, uniting around the one Shepherd?

Thus there appear two conflicting processes which cannot but develop more and more clearly, in the process of the unfolding of apostasy: on the one hand, the appearance within all Christian denominations of a certain kernel of "faithful" who are prepared to endure all in their faithfulness to their denomination in its original form, not corrupted by the influence of Antichrist, and at the same time the appearance, completely natural, with the drawing together in the name of faithfulness to Christ, of a sympathetic interest in the content of the faith of all the denominations thus drawn together, an interest which will extend just as naturally to the realization of the alienation of all heterodox denominations from the fulness of Christianity, which is presented only in Orthodoxy.

Thus two new phenomena appear in the atmosphere of the thickening apostasy: mutual, sympathetic interest and an inclination to rapprochement from all sides in all Christian

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denominations as far as faithfulness to the true Christ is concerned, and at the same time, as a result of mutual trust in the atmosphere of faithfulness to the true Christ on the part of all denominations which have left the original fulness of Christianity, a mutual inclination to acquire this fulness.

To define the Orthodox point of view more precisely in this process of thickening apostasy, it can be said that all, in the eyes of Orthodoxy, are her own, if only they manifest a faithfulness to even that little bit of genuine Christianity which they receive in their denomination. But, on the part of Orthodoxy, more than ever before, a missionary effort must be directed to these heterodox in the name of forming, before the face of Antichrist, one fold following one Shepherd.



The door leading to the Cave where St. John received the Revelation on the island of Patmos.



The Cave where St. John received the Revelation.
Photographs courtesy of Dennis Engleman.

Appendix III:

A Pilgrimage to the Cave of the Apocalypse

ON THE SUNDAY of the Second Coming of Christ of this year (1995), I and another nun from our convent were on pilgrimage on the island of Patmos. We had arrived the day before and been invited to attend Liturgy at the Cave of the Apocalypse the next morning. At dawn we left from the Evangelissmo (Annunciation) Convent, on the western side of the island, for the Monastery of the Apocalypse. It had rained with lightning and thunder the night before, and the early morning sky was still cloudy, but with hints of clearing. We walked a pathway by rock fences and wet grass that was vividly green, sprinkled with wildflowers. The wetness brought out a pungent smell of the neighbor's sheep and goats.

The pathway led up to the old town, Chora, at the top of the hill, built around the thousand-year-old Monastery of St. John the Theologian. A maze of narrow streets and walkways winds through the little whitewashed town. We passed to the west of the towering fortress-like monastery, originally founded by St. Christodulos, the first abbot. Coming out on the other side of the hill, we took the footpath down to the Seminary of St. John and on to the Monastery of the Apocalypse.

APOCALYPSE

We found the church in the Cave of the Apocalypse this morning almost completely full of young men and boys of all ages from St. John's Seminary. They made up both choirs, with one choir directed by their instructor. Their fervent singing of the service and eager young faces were enough to melt the hardest heart, and brought to mind Christ's words: *Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* (Matt. 18:3).

On the walk over to the Monastery that morning I had at times contemplated the significance of being there, by God's planning and not ours, in the Cave of the Apocalypse, on the Sunday of the Second Coming of Christ. I think I had almost expected to experience something dramatic during the service—something akin, I suppose, to the lightning and thunder of the night before. But, instead, there came during the course of Matins and Liturgy a profound and deep peace, together with a simple, guileless love which made one want to forgive everyone and to be united for the love of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There was the desire and prayer to be converted from the depths of one's heart, so that nothing would take one from the love of God. We felt this to be a gift of God, through His servant St. John, giving us a little taste of the peace of Paradise, and reminding us that the way there is one of humble and childlike trust in God and wholehearted love for Him and for our neighbor. Glory be to our God!

A nun of St. Xenia Skete
Third Day of the Holy Trinity, 1995

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