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PROLOGUE

For neither at any time have we used flattering words,
as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness,
nor of men sought we glory.

(I Thess. 2:5)

It is possible to find a middle word that between two
views will signify both. But a middle view between two
opposite views concerning the same thing is impossible...
There is no room for compromise in matters of the
Orthodox Faith.

(St. Mark of Ephesus)

Truly «great is the mystery of piety», as the blessed Apostle Paul says. Piety and faith, because they are mysteries, yield fruits that knowledge cannot give.

The author of this book is not a theologian trained in the schools where they study the unstudyable - theology. He studied medicine, something which can be studied because it is worldly, human knowledge. He drew his Orthodox Faith and piety from Tradition. He received it in the way, as he himself says, faith and piety are transmitted - from teacher to disciple, from parent to child, from elder to disciple, from Christian to Christian. For this reason he «is one who experiences divine things, not one who learns about them», having faith as a guide and not knowledge. «He walks by faith and not by sight», as the Apostle Paul says. And this is why his book is harsh; it does not have the compromises that reveal little faith, nor accommodations to avoid unpleasantness for people of contrary views, nor any false brotherliness. Devotion to truth permits no concessions. His book is harsh and brusque, although the author himself is in fact humble, peaceable, meek, gracious, and modest. But faith gives him the sword of the Spirit, and this humble, sensible, and gracious man, filled with love, appears harsh and brusque. Does not St. John the Theologian, the preacher of love, seem to be harsher and brusquer than the other Apostles and preachers of the Gospel, as he appears in his First Epistle and in the Book of Revelation?

The author of this book is young. But «let no one disdain his youth». I made his spiritual acquaintance when he was studying medicine in Switzerland, and we were publishing the periodical Kibotos (the Ark). He wrote me a letter then about some satanic articles by a Roman Catholic in the newspaper Le Courier, and asked us to protect our Orthodox Faith from the snares of heretics. Afterwards, he wrote me many letters, and to the present day he writes me letters which are always very informative and beneficial, and which have the sweet fragrance of deep faith and love for our holy Tradition. This is why I insistently urged him to write at greater length on the subjects he briefly outlined in his letters. And I asked him to consent to their being printed in a book, knowing his modesty. Finally he consented, and this small book is the first which he has sent to the publisher, Mr. Alexander Papademetriou, who offered with pleasure to publish it.

We realize this book, written «with much understanding», will be condemned by many people as rude and bad-tempered, for in our hypocritical time only those men are respected as genuine Christians who do not have within their hearts the fire of faith, and especially of the Orthodox (that is, the true) Faith - and this is why they are lukewarm, spiritless, compromising, and obliging, as are many of those persons

systematically involved in theology. The world has learned to regard such people as good and forbearing Christians, whereas it detests those who are like the author of this book - that is, «fervid in spirit» - as fanatics, intolerant, superstitious, and narrow-minded worshippers of empty forms. Alas! today theologians have ended up being «disputers of this world». Men who are concerned with religion write piles of books, big and important, filled with so-called «theological learning» which, owing to its method of inquiry into religious matters, is nothing else than the worldly knowledge the Apostle Paul calls «vain deceit» and «cunning deception». The Holy Gospel, which is simplicity itself, is dissected, examined, and dismembered according to systems of philosophy, of «vain deceit». Confusion, complexity, theories which confuse man, «foolish searchings and geneologies and legalistic battles», mud which clouds the clear water springing up unto eternal life, all these things are written in the name of Him Who came into the world to save the lost sheep - the man of vain knowledge - from the burden of his sinful mind, crying: «Come unto Me all ye who are heavy laden in the name of Christ and His Gospel, which the simplest heart experiences; while those who write these innumerable books have been wandering around in the maze and the darkness of their own wisdom, far from the Christ they have forgotten, engulfed by the vanities of their own intellects. Their hearts no longer feel the breath of God; they are deadened and dried up by their self-conceited wisdom for which men horror them

The divine-tongued Apostle Paul meant them when he wrote, «For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own desires shall they heap to themselves teachers, tickling their hearing; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables» (II Tim. 4:3, 4). «They shall heap to themselves teachers» - they shall bring forth many teachers, and in hearing them they shall be gratified because their empty wisdom shall tickle their ears. But in order that they may not hear the truth, the simple truth of religion, they shall stop up their ears while they wish to be told myths, that is, theories and fantasies void of meaning. Thus today do we not see such «heaps» of teachers who with their talk tickle the ears of students and other Christians?

And so Kalomiros' book will upset those spirits who have reduced the religion of Christ to a system of worldly knowledge, to rationalism, who detect and mock every «sound doctrine», which for them is a naive conception of religion, filled with the superstitions of tradition. In fact, what can anything written by a man like Kalomiros who has not been to a big school (especially a foreign one) be to them?

But fortunate Kalomiros drank from the spring of the living water, from Tradition, and studied the Fathers day and night. And having faith as his guide he was «taught by God». Christ says, «When the good shepherd putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth forth before them, and the sheep follow him for they know his voice» (John 10:4). That is, «My disciples hear My words with a simple spirit, and they accept them in their hearts without passing them through their complicated intellects and creating theories; they accept them with faith like the innocent sheep which hear the voice of the shepherd and run close to him». Faith opens the mouth of the believer, and His preaching opens the hearts of Christians, according to the saying of Christ Who said: «He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water» (John 7:38).

Those of «foolish wisdom» who teach «in persuasive words of human wisdom» do not accept the true preachers of the Gospel, and this is because the true preachers do not conform to this world, but are «transformed by the renewal of their mind» (Rom. 12:2).

They will find, therefore, many occasions in this book for condemnation. They will condemn the author for not having the hypocritical affability they have towards heretics, in spite of the fact that the author is not impertinent, but has the courage of a soldier of Christ and proceeds according to the words of the Apostle Paul, who said: «For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of wisdom» (II Tim. 1:7).

Another fault they find is that his message is watered with affliction in Christ, with gladdening sorrow; whereas they are optimistic, having their minds turned to the things of this world. But let them see what the Apostle Paul says: «Sorrow in God worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death» (II Cor. 7:10). The sorrow a man who believes in God goes through is sorrow which is sweetened by hope, and this is why it is a joyful sorrow, «gladdening sorrow», and with repentance it brings him to the salvation of his soul.

I praise this blessed young man* who has written such an edifying book - one that breathes forth the spirit of true Orthodoxy. And I glorify and laud the all-honorable name of the Lord, Who gives to the Orthodox Church jewels such as these, which shine in the darkness of error and ruin. May our very merciful Lord and God be glorified and blessed, Who makes steadfast the Orthodox Faith with such stones that «the builders reject».

Photios Kontoglou

* I beg the reader to permit me to add a few lines here which I think should be read from a letter which Mr. Kalomiros sent me.

«I thank you very much for your kind words. They are an encouragement for me, which I need very much. Here where I live, I do not know anyone who thinks this way and who understands me. I do not have discussions with atheists and the indifferent. And then again, the pious look upon me with distrust and suspicion. Only when I read the Fathers and lives of the Saints do I find consolation. Sometimes I fear that perhaps I am in error. Whatever I regard as important, everyone else regards as trivial; and again whatever I consider trivial, everyone else, both the pious and the atheists, consider important.

«Moreover, I thank you for cautioning me about arrogance. This is how I know that you are a true friend. Pray that I do not fall into arrogance. At any rate I must be very stupid if something like that happens to me. I see very clearly that all that I write I have borrowed from the Fathers. Nothing is my own. That is why I defend them with so much fanaticism. Yesterday I was telling my wife that many people have no idea about the things I write, and yet they are living them. And I know all these things, but I do not live them. That is why many times as I was writing, I felt that I should quit, but I continued writing, because that way, at least, I was able to gather my thoughts upon God, even if my heart remained frozen.

With the love of Christ,
Alexander»

CHAPTER ONE

I. PEACE WITHOUT TRUTH

The tragic experience of recent generations has brought to humanity an intense thirst for peace. Peace is now considered a good higher than many ideals for which people formerly gladly shed their blood. Contributing very much to this is the fact that war is not what it often was in the past, that is, a conflict between injustice and justice, but has become a conflict without meaning between which the injustice of various parties has used to appear just in the eyes of its followers, has caused people to lose faith in the existence of justice and to fail to see anything before them that is worthy of defending. Thus war, any form, seems to be something completely absurd.

This reluctance on the part of humanity for any kind of conflict would have been something admirable if it were the offspring of spiritual health. If injustice, hatred, and falsehood had ceased to exist, then peace would have been the consummation of human happiness. Unity would have been a natural and not an artificial result. But something totally different is noticeable. Today when everyone is speaking of peace and unity, self-love and hatred, injustice and falsehood, ambition and greed, are at their zenith. All - everyone in his own way - speak of love for man, of love for humanity. But there has never existed a greater hypocrisy than that so-called love. Because love towards something theoretical, for something imaginary, such as the concept «humanity», is equally theoretical and imaginary. It has no relation to love for the particular man we have before us. This love for a particular person, when it exists, is the only real love. It is the love for our neighbor that Christ asked.

This particular man with his imperfections and weaknesses, instead of being loved, has been hated in our time more than in any other age. Not only has he been hated, but he has been scorned and humiliated; he has been regarded as a «thing» without any particular value, a means for the attainment of «high goals», a particle of the mass. Those who speak the most of love towards man and humanity, of peace and union, are precisely those who hate their neighbor, their acquaintance, the most. They love man the creation of their own imagination; they do not love man the reality. This worship of the idol «man» is in reality narcissism; it is the worship of the ego.

It would be naive, therefore, if one were to believe that the pacifist disposition that characterizes humanity today proceeds from love. These words about love are hypocrisy and self-deception. The desire for peace proceeds from the loss of ideals, from fear, and from the love of comfort. It is the desire to be left in peace to enjoy the good things of this earth. It is the conventional cooperation for the acquisition of goods which each person separately would not be able to acquire. It is a universal understanding upon something which has become the passion of the whole earth: sensualism and materialism. It is a product of necessity.

The peace of which the world speaks is an unconditional capitulation of everything good and sacred and great, and the dominance of pettiness, mediocrity, and lukewarmness. It is the blotting out of the personality of individuals and of peoples. It is a marmelade of compromises and calculations, a sea of hypocrisy, indifference for the truth, the betrayal of everything holy and sacred.

War is a terrible thing, a result of the fall of man, and no one is about to praise it. But the peace for which the world is haggling is something infinitely more fearful. A fever is a very unpleasant thing, but it shows at least that the organism is reacting

against something bad which has entered it. The peace which they wish to bring is not, unfortunately, that which comes from the victory over evil, but that which comes from defeat. It is the feverlessness of a corpse.

At bottom, the peace which men pursue is not only a peace of weapons. It is the peace of conscience. They wish to reconcile good with evil, justice with injustice, virtue with sin, truth with falsehood, in order to be able to make peace with their conscience.

II. THERE HAS BEEN NO SEVERANCE

So-called Christians play a significant role in the world's effort for peace. With the slogan «Christians unite», they set out for the bazaar where truth will be sold out.

Once, Christians had faith and were ready to die for their Faith. Today their zeal for the truth has cooled. They have begun to consider it as something secondary. They find the differences between churches, for which in former times Martyrs eagerly sacrificed themselves, the Fathers were exiled, and the faithful mutilated, as unimportant and unworthy of mention.

Most of them are sickly and incorrigible sentimentalists who think that the religion of Christ is an ethical system concerning human relations. Others pursue political purposes and dark interests. All of them together are building the city of Antichrist. They seek union, being indifferent to truth; they seek an external rapprochement, ignoring internal dissensions; they seek the letter, being indifferent to the spirit.

How is it possible for them to hope that what failed in the first centuries of the schism shall be accomplished now that the differences in dogma and mentality have, with the passage of centuries, widened from breaches to gulfs?

The mere fact that they speak of the union of the churches shows that their thought is quite anti-Christian. They thereby concede that the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church which we confess in our Symbol of Faith (Creed) has ceased to exist; that it has been severed into many churches which are no longer catholic, that is, they no longer contain the whole truth and grace as do the local Orthodox churches, but have a greater or lesser part of truth and grace. Consequently, they think that the truth no longer exists upon the earth and that Christ came in vain. For in the confusion of the truth with falsehood, it is impossible for the truth to which Christ came to bear witness to be rediscovered. And hence it is impossible to rediscover Christ, Who is Himself the Truth.

But then why did Christ say that He will be with us until the end of the world? «And I will be with you all the days unto the end of the world». Why did He say that the Holy Spirit will guide the disciples to the fulness of truth and that the gates of Hades will not be able to prevail against the Church?

If the Church has been divided - and if it has need of union, it means it has been divided - then all that Christ has promised has turned out to be lies! But God forbid such blasphemy! The Church lives and will live until the end of the world, undivided and invulnerable, according to the promise of the Lord. All who speak of «union of the churches» simply deny Christ and His Church.

When an Orthodox patriarch accepts the participation of the Orthodox Church in the Protestant World Council of Churches as one among many «churches», what

else is he doing but publicly confessing, like the Protestants, the existence of many churches, and therefore the division of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church? What else is he doing but denying Christ?

But in their profane efforts, these people bring forward the Church's liturgical texts and Christ Himself as their allies. Indeed, Christ prayed for His disciples «that they may be one», and the Church prays at every. Liturgy «for the union of all (*hyper tes ton panton henoseos*)».*

But these phrases do not mean that the Church prays that someday Christians should be united with mutual compromises in their beliefs. They do not refer to pursuits of compromising agreements by which variously named elements are united. They have no relation to the protocols for an alliance, or agreement, or union, such as those between different nations which are signed after many negotiations. No, these phrases mean none of these things. The Church does not pray to God that variously opposed elements be united, but that all men should become ONE. In other words, that they should all accept the truth with great contrition and humbly prostrate before the Church and be numbered among her members. That they come to realize the error under which they have lived and hasten to the light and the truth, that is, to the Church. This is what the Church prays for. Exactly what she also prays for in the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great: «Return [O Lord] those in error and unite them to Thy Catholic and Apostolic Church». Only this prayer and desire proceeds from genuine love, because it seeks the healing of the sick and not their delusion.

III. OFFERING, NOT DISCUSSION

A few naive Orthodox think that this rapprochement of the churches is not taking place for the purpose of union, but for the purpose of enlightenment and mission to the heterodox. «These are», they say, «manifestations of love for our brothers». «If we shut ourselves in our shell», they often say, «if we do not attend the international conferences and send observers to the Papal synods, etc., then how will the Westerners Know the Orthodox Church, and how will they be attracted towards her?»

But how will the Westerners be taught that the Orthodox Church is the One and True Church when they see her consorting with the false «churches» as an equal among equals? Will they not think, therefore, that Orthodoxy is also like the others - relative and partial? Or is it reasonable for one to hope that those councils of fanatic biretta - wearers and befrocted pastors will ever be able to recognize the truth? They are only flattering the Orthodox in order to draw them over to their side. If they had a genuine nostalgia to know Orthodoxy, they would have no need for councils and conferences. They would have gone to drink from her sources, from her Fathers and Saints.

* «All» here does not refer to «churches». In Greek *panton* is a masculine adjective and therefore refers to «all the faithful». If the reference were to all «churches», then the proper adjective would have been *pason*, instead of *panton*. The context evidently indicates that «all» refers to all the faithful, since the immediately preceding prayer is for the «good estate of the holy churches of God», i.e., the local, regional Orthodox churches (parishes) wherever they may be, which comprise the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. «Churches» here does not mean, as many wrongly say, the different denominations outside Orthodoxy. It is natural then that there should follow in the same petition a prayer for the union in Christ of all the faithful who comprise the local Orthodox churches. Those outside the Church (the non-Orthodox) are prayed for by the priest in the secret prayers after the Epiclesis. The whole petition therefore prays «For the good estate of the holy (local Orthodox) churches of God and for the union of all the faithful (though the Eucharist in Christ), let us pray to the Lord». Fr. Michael Gelsinger has rightly translated the phrase from Greek to read «all the faithful». (Editors' note)

No! the best way to convince others of the truth is to believe in it yourself. Do not discuss it, only confess it. The councils and conferences debate the truth. But this is a betrayal, because in such instances it is not a matter of dialogue with and admonition to heretics, but of discussion with «churches». Christ does not ask for debaters, but for confessors. The truth which He taught us is not the kind that is debatable. In the various ecumenical conferences the discussion takes the form of commerce, where an exchange of compromises takes place in matters of faith in order to arrive at a final agreement. Under such conditions even the mere attendance of an Orthodox at an ecumenical conference is a betrayal of Christ. It is the betrayal of Christ to unbelievers for thirty pieces of silver, because by attending, the Orthodox admits his Faith to be debatable, and permits the notion that he too will make compromises if he is given a satisfactory exchange.

If, instead of this, all those who speak of union today would confess Orthodoxy as the only and absolute truth and refuse every official and unofficial ecclesiastical contact with heretics, without fearing to name them as such, then their voice would be heard much farther; and more important, it would be respected and would provoke thought. Whereas now their voice is a voice of compromises, a voice which does not move anyone, a voice which, deep down, no one respects.

The Fathers did not enter into discussions with heretics. They confessed the truth and refuted their claims without courteousness and compliments. They never arrived at mutual understandings with heretical «churches». Their dialogue was always public and had a view to the salvation and edification of souls. The Orthodox Church did not converse with «churches» of the heretics. It was not a discussion of the Church with churches, but a dialogue between the Church and souls who had lost their way. The Church does not discuss, for she does not seek. She simply gives - because she has everything.

IV. SALVATION FROM THE WORLD

But why are our Christians so easily moved by sermons about the union of the churches? And instead of being filled with zeal for the transmission of the truth to this world which lacks it so much, they suck on the caramel of peace, weighing to see which are more, the things which separate or those which unite Christians. It is because they themselves lack knowledge of the truth. Most of them being members of social-Christian organizations and brotherhoods, were catechized from their earliest years in an ethico-philosophical system with a Christian veneer which led them to believe that the purpose of Christianity is to achieve the peaceful coexistence of men in the spirit of love. Eternity and the vision of God are things very distant for these Christians, and often of no interest. Most of them, being extroverts, are men of action who came to Christianity to find an organized and directed *modus vivendi*, a way of living as good and honorable citizens upon this earth. For such people, God is the Great Servant of their personal interests, and eternal life is a good but, fortunately, distant hope of restoration.

In Christians such as these, the sermons about union take root very easily. How good it would be, really, if the circle of our own honest and virtuous people were to be extended on a world-wide scale. We could have transactions without fear of perhaps being fooled; we could have good and peaceful relations without ever being in danger of persecution or of having to struggle. As for the truth, «What is truth?» We all believe in Christ, that is sufficient. Besides, the world today faces difficult times. Christians must be united quickly to face communism, for example. They ask, «Who will guide and who will save this contemporary world? Only a single, united Christian Church», they reply.

But Christ did not become man in order to save this world which abides in wickedness. Rather, He came to save His own from the world, to pull them away from the ranks of the evil one, to unite them to Himself and to deify them by grace, and with them to save the entire groaning creation. The world is walking the way of death. It is following the ruler of this world, the enemy of God. «I do not pray for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me» (John 9:17).

But such people take the part of the world and sacrifice the jewels of the Christian faith and life for that diabolical party which will never be saved. It is not Christ Who asks for the so-called union of the churches, but the world. Christ does not ask for the union of falsehood with truth, but it is the world that seeks to adulterate the truth, to make it relative and partial. This is why, when a discussion arises about the union of the churches, one sees that it is supported enthusiastically by people who were never previously interested in matters of religion. Union is the best way of neutralizing Christianity that the devil's party has discovered. It is the beginning of the dissolution of Christianity and its submission to the whims of politics; it is the conversion of Christianity into a servant of the interests of the world.

With union, Christianity may acquire greater world power, but it will lose all its spiritual strength, exactly what troubles the world. Has it not already happened to the Roman Catholic «Church»? The Papists' thirst for world power has made them descend to the well-worn path of political machinations, from which they have emerged as tools of the great political trends.

All those who speak of union have not understood why Christ came into the world. They think that He came to preach an artificial ethical message like their own, that He came to teach us how to live upon this earth as good citizens. They say over and over again that people must follow the law of Christ in order that the Kingdom of God might finally come upon the earth. Some speak of a «Christian Greece», others, of «Christian democracies», others of «Christian Kingdoms», and none of them realize how much their expectations resemble the expectations of the Jews who wanted the Messiah to be an earthly King.

They do not want Christ as He is; they do not want the Christ Who refused to submit to the devil's temptations in the desert. They want a Christ Who will submit to them. They want a Christ Who desires the Kingdoms of the earth, a Christ Who will turn the stones into bread so that men may be satiated, a Christ who will overwhelm the world with miracles that inspire awe and constrain men to submit.

In other words, these people do not wait for Christ, but for the Antichrist. Until the Second Coming, Christ will remain humble and hidden, far from earthly powers and earthly comforts, without forcing anyone to follow Him, and only asking of those who would come near Him to resemble Him in humility and obscurity, and to expect nothing earthly.

The «Christians» who speak of a «nation of God», «Christian Greece», «world Christianity», and «union of the churches» do not want that kind of Christ. Like the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoyevsky, they are ready to cast Christ into the fire because He upsets their plans which they have been persistently cultivating for years. «You came and taught us a Christianity which is inhuman and hard», says the Inquisitor to Christ, «and we've labored for so many centuries now to make it a human religion. And now that we've succeeded, you've come to spoil our efforts of so many centuries? But you won't accomplish it. Tomorrow I shall order them to burn you as a heretic».

Yes, people want a Christ Who will talk about this life and not the other, a Christ Who will offer the pleasures of this life and not of the next. They do not want wealth that cannot be weighed and touched, but wealth that is tangible here and now. They do not want Him as ruler of the future age, but of the present one.

This is why they do not care what will become of the truth when the wavering and so-called Christian churches unite after a thousand and one compromises. This is why they are not interested in what will become of the life in Christ after the invasion of the clean land of Orthodoxy by so many religious barbarians and spiritual nitwits. The truth does not interest them; Christ does not interest them, nor the life in the Spirit and grace. They are interested only in the earthly power that unity gives and world rule under a single world-view.

These people want to be called Christians without really being Christians. Most of them believe that they are true Christians, because they do not know what Christianity is and confuse it with philosophical theories and «world theories», to use a favorite term of theirs. In actuality, they are followers of the Antichrist like the Jews of Christ's time, like the Jews of every age.

The Jews awaited the Messiah for centuries, and when He came they did not accept Him; instead, they hung Him on the Cross. And why? Because Christ was not what they were waiting for. And that is why they were not able to recognize the Messiah in His person. They were waiting for an earthly king, a world conqueror. They awaited someone who would subject all the races of the world at the feet of the nation of Israel, who force the Roman rulers of the world to bow and worship him, who would give power and glory to his followers.

When they saw Him poor and humble, meek and full of peace, one Who offered no earthly goods but spoke of heavenly things, and not only that, but even asked them to deny the earthly and tangible so that liberated they could reach the heavenly and intangible, they realized that He was not for them. He was not the Messiah they awaited, but exactly the opposite. He Who refused to turn the stones into bread for all to be filled, Who refused to overwhelm the mobs with His power and did not agree to subjugate the kingdoms of the earth, was not the appropriate leader for them. That is why they crucified Him and began awaiting another. And they still await him. And along with the Jews are millions of people awaiting the Messiah of the Jews, and most of them are called Christians. And they have no idea that they await the same Messiah as the Jews.

V. THE ANTICHRIST

The tragedy is that the Messiah whom the Jews await will come. It was said by the mouth of Christ and by the mouth of the Apostles; it is written in the books of the New Testament. The Messiah of the Jews shall come. He will give the bread which Christ refused to give, and along with that, all the material things which He refused to give. He will overwhelm them with signs and wonders which people unto the ends of the earth will fear and be amazed at, and they will come grovelling to fall at his feet. He will unite all the nations and races and kingdoms of the world into one state. He will fill the hearts of the Scribes of the law and the Pharisees with joy - the hearts of every race of «Jews». Yes, the Messiah of the Jews shall come. He will be what Christ is not, and he will not be what Christ is. He will be the Antichrist.

«Children, it is the last hours, and as ye have heard that the Antichrist cometh...» (I John 2:18).

«Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity already doth work, only until he who withholdeth be taken out of the way. And then shall the wicked one be taken out of the way. And then shall the wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume by the breath of His mouth and by the brightness of His coming shall destroy him, him whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders and with every deception of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a working of delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness» (II Thess. 2: 1-12).

The Antichrist will not appear in history with a fearful and shocking manner by which all would recognize him, nor will he have an ugly appearance, nor yet will he do immoral works. He will come in such a way that very few will realize who he is. He will come after a long preparation of centuries which started in the first days of the Church and which continues with increasing progress in our days. Humanity will see in his person its greatest benefactor.

So many centuries of apostasy have cultivated humanity and have prepared it to accept him. Humanity awaits him as its ideal leader. All the developments of history lead to the Antichrist.

VI. THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

Catholicism permitted the worldly spirit to nourish the Christianity of the West. It steeped Christian thought in the rationalism and the pagan disposition of the ancient Greeks. Finally, with the Infallibility of the Pope, Catholicism brought a mechanical element into the relation between God and man, teaching that God promised to speak through the mouth of sinful and haughty men, as many of the Popes have been. The Renaissance and humanism were the completion of the Western Christian world's turn toward idolatry. In reality these were manifestations of men's disillusionment with an adulterated Christianity. Today humanism has become the religion of the age, unfortunately preached even by so-called Christians as «Hellenic - Christian» civilization.

Protestantism drew Papist rationalism to its extreme conclusions. Protestantism rejected the holiness of the Church and her guidance by the Holy Spirit because it saw neither holiness nor truth in the «church» of the West. Thus it abolished Tradition and left its believers with no criterion of truth or falsehood, estranging the grace of God from its realm forever.

From Protestantism to atheism and materialism, there was no longer a great distance. Many kinds of philosophies began to lay claim to the position of Christian faith in the minds of man, and in the end scientism conquered the world. It had a special power of winning over the masses because its achievements in the field of technology evoked the wonder and rapture of the masses, which, lacking spiritual

criteria, fell an easy prey to materialism. Science further gave humanity the false sense of knowledge. It may have changed its views and theories at every moment, but each time these views and theories had the sanctity of proven knowledge; and that influences peoples' minds in a magic way.

Finally, when humanity, having descended by such steps, became enslaved to the passion of materialism, communism sprang forth. When people even came to believe that the only real good is money, it was natural to demand its equitable distribution from governments which were apathetic towards the pain of the impoverished people. This demand filled souls with hate and malice and made them even more unhappy, opening unbridgeable chasms between people and leading many to the hate of Cain. (Whatever we write here does not mean that the fair distribution of money is not an obligation, and a rather fundamental one, of government). That is how the war started between capitalism and communism, which are actually two sister systems identically materialistic and money-worshipping, and divided only by their own interests and the battle over the distribution. The program of both is to turn stones into bread, to unite the world under their influence, and to astonish the world with accomplishments that man could not even imagine. Thus humanity has gradually reached the outer gates of the Antichrist's kingdom. It has arrived at the point where it has not only the will, but also the ability to respond positively to the three temptations of Lucifer. In a little while, all that will remain will be for the Antichrist himself to take over the general leadership of the universal state, to do away with hunger and poverty forever, and to provide men abundantly with material goods so that in their hearts, filled with pleasure and comfort, there will no longer be a place for God.

VII. UNION OF RELIGIONS

When one considers all this, he realizes that in a humanity concerned with nothing else but its own tranquility, which holds nothing sacred and holy but its own materialistic interests, that in a world of pragmatic men who regard any discussion concerning truth as useless babbling, not only is the union of the churches not difficult, but on the contrary, it is inevitable. Moreover, I dare say that not only is the union of the so-called Christian churches inevitable, but the union of all religions generally.

In his kingdom the Antichrist will not tolerate discord; he will not tolerate religions or quarrels over religious questions. He will sit in the temple of God as God, and all the people of the earth will worship him, because «power was given him over every race and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life» (Rev. 12: 7-8). For those people, then, «whose names are not written in the book of life», only one religion will exist, the religion of the Antichrist.

Already, right now there are specimens of religions such as can comprehend all religions - forerunners of the religion of the Antichrist. One such religion is Freemasonry. It has already been embraced by the more progressive of the world's leaders. With its syncretism it can reconcile in the minds of fools all the religious antitheses of humanity and overcome all the obstacles and difficulties to union which the various churches will meet. What reason is there, indeed, for exerting so much effort to find acceptable solutions for dogmatic and other differences between the various denominations, and afterwards for the differences between religions, and not for advancing directly to the union of all religions? To a kind of Freemasonry?

And having realized this, most of today's religious leaders, at least the «greatest» and most «important», have hot-footed it (progressive as they are) to become Masons, without its preventing them from wearing their cassocks or vestments, or from celebrating their Liturgies. But because the laity are not quite ready yet, it is necessary that the former keep up appearances and proceed first to union of the churches, and then to union of the religions.

VIII. A GLANCE INTO THE PAST

These, then, will be the developments in the not-so-distant future. That is why the Lord asks whether He will find any faithful when He comes to the earth again. «When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?» (Luke 18Q8).

A glance into the past will teach us much about the course ecclesiastical matters have taken and will take.

The Byzantine emperors' first tendencies to unify with Papal error fortunately were cut off by the attitude of the people and the subjugation of Byzantium to the Turks. But as soon as the Greek nation found its liberty, the old temptation knocked at its door again. In the beginning, the true Greeks, men of the people and of the traditions, resisted the current of Europeanization. But they were unlettered, and even though they had shed their blood for the freedom of their land, they were quickly pushed aside by the newly learning creates, had the power of King Otto's court. «These degraded the fatherland and the religion which is now shaken by the irreligious. In the time of Turkish occupation, not one stone from the old churches was disturbed. Phanariotes and the like who were contaminated in Europe, and they spoiled our monasteries and churches, befouling some and turning others into stables. We suffered these things from many such priests, and from laymen, military men, and politicians. Even though we shed our blood, we are in danger of losing our fatherland and our religion» (Macriyiannis, *Memoirs*, p. 398).

These half-educated intellectuals scorned the Greek people with the passion of fifth columnists. They disdained their language, their customs and manners, and their mentality. They used all possible means at their disposal to adulterate the truth of their Faith and to graft secularism and rationalism onto the holy tree of Orthodoxy, which for so many centuries remained undefiled under the barbarian conqueror. To strike the Church at her heart, they struck at her monasteries. They closed some, confiscated the property of others, and to others they sent «progressive» abbots who dissolved them more easily than any double-edged sword of state.

Without her monasteries, and with her bishops enslaved to the state, the Church became an unfenced vineyard. The education of the nation left the Church's hands and fell into the hands of a Christian civilization, was and remains completely pagan. Everything began to be adapted to the taste of the *nouveau riche* and provincial Athenian society.

The worship of the Church began to deteriorate to something more worldly. Byzantine music began to be Europeanized and degenerated into theatrical four-part harmony. The icons began to look too austere and ugly to the eyes of the women of the «upper» classes, who wanted «sweet Jesuses» full of indulgence for their iniquities, incapable of evoking awe and reverence. The beards and long hair of the clergy began to bother them, and the clergy, responsive to the demands of the contemporary public, began to groom atmosphere was replaced by Edison's lights, making the church resemble an imperial hall appropriate for the weddings and official appearances of the ruling class.

But that was not all. Not only primary and secondary but also higher education left the hands of the Church. Thus the theologians, future priests, and hierarchs were not born in the bosom of the Church, their natural mother, but in the bosom of a state university full of the stench of rationalism and spiritual shallowness, without any possibility of tasting of the mystical life of holiness in Christ, which alone makes true theologians. And so there sprouted up, like tares in the Church, theologians who had their minds filled with many philosophical theories of Protestant or Roman origin, but their hearts empty of the life of Orthodoxy.

These people were incapable of seeing the chasm that divides the Eastern Church from the Western «churches». They considered it only a question of dogmatic formulas, not a matter of life and essence. For them life in Christ was a series of emotional states and ethical acts, just as it is for Westerners. The revelation (the inner vision) of God, the living experience of the presence of Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that is, the abiding of truth in a man's heart, were unknown to them. When they speak of truth, they mean a cut-and-dried dogma. Dogma, however, for them as for the Westerners, was a separate world of intellectual formulas, burden some enough, and whose value, after this split between life and faith, they were incapable of appreciating.

The foundations, then, upon which even our most well-intentioned theologians were going to build in order to defend their Orthodoxy, were rotten to the core. It is frightening when one considers that the whole of contemporary Greek religious life is built upon these rotten foundations. At one time the piety of the people sprang from the monasteries, which were its spiritual bulwark and guide; in the Greek Kingdom piety came to be founded on the theologian, lay or clerical, whom we have described. This theologian, imitating Western examples, organized brotherhoods and Christian unions and took preaching and catechism into his own hands. And whereas before, the piety of a place had as its center the local monastery and the priests of the Church, and the Christian of Area A did not differ in any way from the Christian of Area B because all were children of the same Orthodox Church, now the theologian organized factions; and now in one and the same place there are Christians of Faction A and Christians of Faction B, always rivals and distrusting, divided - without either side understanding what their differences are. But in spite of all the hate and schisms between them, the factions agree that as far as the Westerners are concerned, «there are more things uniting us than there are separating us», and «we must look to the things which unite us and overlook those which separate us». In other words, they regard union and love with their Western «brothers» (whom they have never seen or known) easier than with their Orthodox compatriots and neighbors, whom they see daily and know. As we have said, today people labor for the love of man, for the abstract love of humanity, at the same moment that they are incapable of loving their neighbor.

IX. THE OLD CALENDAR QUESTION

In this atmosphere of deterioration, there suddenly came, after pressure from the state, the first official step of the Greek Church towards the Pope: the adoption of the Papal calendar.

Unfortunately, few have understood the significance of the «old calendar» issue, as the matter is called. Most attribute the resistance of the Old Calendarists[^] to the narrow-mindedness of the uneducated, this being another indication of the deep contempt nurtured by the conceited educated towards the unlearned. But in order for these uneducated people to resist the way they did, they must have had, if

nothing else, a religious zeal and spiritual concern lacking in the masses of the indifferent who, not knowing the true nature of the problem, followed the majority of the hierarchy. None of the enlightened theologians and their followers even showed any indication of pain over the division of the Greek Church, nor did any of them seek to answer the painful cries of so many thousands of faithful. The majority were on their side; their numbers always gave them a sense of security. In actuality, though, they did not even have the numbers on their side. For although there were only a few thousand Old Calendarists and millions of followers of the new calendar, those few thousands were thousands of faithful suffering for the Church. Whereas among the millions of the indifferent, the materialists and atheists, followers of the new calendar, it is doubtful that one could find a few thousand really faithful people. They only sneered at those simple new confessors of Orthodoxy, saying that they refused out of superstition to correct their calendar which is not accurate.

But the problem did not lie there. They were unjustified in accusing the Old Calendarists of fighting over a calendar. The issue was not over which of the two calendars is correct. It is a known fact that both calendars are inaccurate. Neither had the Old Calendarists insisted on the old calendar, nor had the New Calendarists brought forth the new calendar, for reasons of astronomical accuracy. The reason that prompted the decision for the introduction of the new calendar into Greece was neither astronomical nor theological. It simply involved one of the many capitulations of the state-enslaved hierarchy to its lord, which asked it of them in order to facilitate its business transactions.

The reason for the Old Calendarist refusal to comply was very theological and sprang from a deep ecclesiastical consciousness. Actually, the liturgical unity of the Church was risked in favor of political interests. With the change of the calendar there followed a severance of the liturgical accord between the Greek Church and the other Orthodox Churches, which preserve the old calendar to this day. And it was not only a matter of discord in the liturgical life of the militant Church - the continuity of the liturgical life of the militant Church with the triumphant also was broken.

In Greece when the church bells call the faithful to celebrate Christmas and the chanters chant joyfully the «Christ is born, glorify ye», millions of our Orthodox brothers throughout the rest of the world and on the Holy Mountain are still in the fast of Advent: and they do not hear the bells, nor chant with us the joyful hymns of Christmas.

Can one imagine anything worse for the Church than this break in liturgical concord which estranges us spiritually not only from the triumphant Church of those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and from the Saints who celebrated and performed the Liturgy according to the old calendar which we rejected?

So many efforts of our Fathers, so many synods were needed to enact that festal calendar - and all this so that there would be liturgical harmony between the Christian churches, because this harmony and accord expresses the internal liturgical unity of the Church. This is what makes the Church visibly one, despite the multiplicity of local churches. The Church is not made one the way the Pope thinks, by hard discipline and obedience to a prescribed hierarchy which has as its head a single individual who claims to replace Christ on earth, but the Church is made one by the mystical communion in the Body and Blood of Christ. Every church where the Holy Eucharist is performed and where the faithful are gathered «in the same place» comprises the whole image of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. What makes one parish comprise one body with all other parishes, and one diocese

comprise one body with all other dioceses, is the mystical communion of all in the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Spirit and truth.

The unity of the Church, therefore, is a mystical bond which is forged during the Holy Eucharist when the faithful partake of the Body and Blood of Christ. Christians are one body, those who live upon the earth today and those who have lived before us in past centuries, and also those who will live in the years to come; and this is because we have a common root, the Body of Christ. «We many are one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one Bread».

The unity of the Church, therefore, is not administrative, is not disciplinary or organizational, but liturgical. That is why the festal calendar is so important. The unity which springs from the Holy Eucharist, the one Faith, and the one Baptism ceases to be manifested externally when there is liturgical anarchy. The form and the words of the Liturgy have been prescribed so that all the churches can worship God in the same way. And the service book for each month (Menaion) contains the daily hymns commemorating the Saints of the day and the chants for every holy day. In this way no discord can disrupt the liturgical harmony. Even the music and the iconography, which are called liturgical arts, have similarly been prescribed so that no icon painter or chanter can paint an icon or chant according to his own imagination, but is compelled to adapt his personal skill and ability to prototypes of the most austere spiritual realism. And similarly, the calendar of festivals has been prescribed in order that no priest can celebrate the holy days whenever he wishes, but that there be complete communion of prayer among all the faithful upon the earth.

Therefore, what the artist does who paints the icons of the Church according to his own tastes, disdaining the Tradition, and what the chanter does who destroys the liturgical harmony by singing theatrically in church instead of chanting, the Greek hierarchs have likewise done, spoiling the liturgical harmony of the Orthodox Church by deciding to follow a different calendar of festivals in Greece than that which the other Orthodox churches and the Holy Mountain of Athos follow. Thus on the Holy Mountain they celebrate a different Saint and chant different hymns than they do in Thessalonika; the Transfiguration of the Lord is celebrated on one day in Athens and on another in Jerusalem, Sinai, and Moscow.

The tragedy of this discord is difficult to conceive of in this country [i.e., Greece] because of the distances. But it becomes painfully perceptible to one who travels to Europe and sees in the neighborhoods of the same city the Russians celebrating one holiday and the Greeks another, or one hears the bells of the Greek church calling the faithful while the bells of the Russian church remain silent. And then one asks himself if both churches are Orthodox.

It has not been realized in Greece how serious a compromise with the elements of the world and how serious a blow against the Church was the abolition of the old calendar in favor of the new. And if a few did understand, they did not have the strength to raise their stature and proclaim the truth. No one of worldly wisdom and strength found the words to protest. Thus it was proved once again that «God has chosen the weak of the world to shame the strong», and that «God hath made foolish the wisdom of the wise», because whereas the wise were silent and accepted it, the uneducated faithful were aroused. And they «spake not foolishness as did the foolish wise of the world». They did not resort to astronomical theories and mathematical calculations, but they spoke in the name of Tradition, which they felt was something holy which no one can trample upon in favor of science which continually rejects its own theories, or in favor of the political and economic interests of a country.

But «the disciples of the wise men of this world consider those taught by God fools». Thus from the beginning until today, they consider the Old Calendarists fools, religious fanatics, superstitious, etc., and they rejoice at their own knowledge which places them above such «trifles» so that they do not make issues out of «nothing».

X. THE UNRAVELING

But when you reckon one element of Tradition as trivial, then at the first opportunity you will consider trivial whatever other things you do not like in the Tradition. That is what happened with the iconography; that is what happened with the psalmody; that is what happened with the appearance of the priests. Now the robes seem too black for them; later the beards and the hair will seem too long. They want to put musical instruments in the church. They do away with the stalls on the sides of the church and replace them with comfortable pews. They revile monasticism, slander the monks, confiscate the properties of the monasteries, carry on systematic propaganda against monasticism. They overlook the canons which pray together with them. They are indifferent to the opinion of the Liturgy and cut out sections from the services «so that people won't get tired». In other words, they change the Orthodox customs according to the tastes of a decadent society full of the worship of the flesh and materialism.

In this way the fabric of the Tradition begins to unravel, and no one knows where it will stop or if it will stop. And besides, this unraveling is so easy today because it has the approval of the world, of the influential, and of the educated. The educated especially consider it their honor not to agree with the Fathers of the Church, but to agree with a certain great, scholarly professor of Protestant theology or with a certain Jesuit professor who is famous in Europe, and so on.

How then shall the Orthodox Tradition and Faith not be adulterated? And how, under such conditions, shall we not discuss the union of the churches and not consider it something which can easily have acquired the same mentality and the same dispositions as the Western «churches» to be united with them? Is the day far off when we shall go to church on Sunday and hear the priest praying: «and for our Father the Pope of Rome»? Will anyone react if such a thing happens? Or will it seem natural to all that we have finally jumped over the differences which separate East and West?

XI. GOD IS NOT MOCKED

But let all who speak so lightly about the union of the churches understand that the unity of the Church is a mystical gift of the divine presence. It is not something which is decided upon at conferences, but something which either exists or does not exist. No decision of men can constrain God.

Of course, externally union can come about, and all can declare - Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox - that now we are at last one church, and we can commemorate the Pope of Rome, and the Pope of Rome can commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople. If we all agree upon one «minimum of truth», upon one simplified creed, and if a few other issues are settled there can be union. It will be a legally and externally valid system, but it will be a system that has no relation with the Church of Christ, even if all the external appearances make it resemble the Church. «God is not mocked». When the conditions of His presence do not exist in men, God does not come to men.

The Church of Christ was never a human system. The Church was born, it was not made. The discussions of men can make something to which they can give the name «Church». But this fabrication will be something with no life. The living Church will have no relation to it. She will exist somewhere far from all these fabrications, unaltered, full of truth and light, pure of every falsehood of compromises, with the Holy Spirit lighting her steps and enveloping her like the light of the sun, guiding her «to the fulness of truth».

As for how many true Christians there will be, it does not matter, even if they can be counted on one hand. They will be the bearers of the Tradition, which they will not simply have learned, but have lived, having had its living experience. Christians live in the Tradition as in an element, as fish live in water.

Let all who truly seek God stop talking about the union of the «churches». The Church does not admit of union because she was never broken. Men leave her, even if they retain many of her external marks. Let all who love God return to the Church and humble themselves that they may enter, because her gate is narrow and one must bend very low in order to pass through.

XII. THE INFALLIBLE CRITERION

But in the chaos and hypocrisy of the contemporary world, it is not easy to discern the Church of Christ and to draw near her, because it is not sufficient for a church to be named Orthodox in order to be such literally. Unfortunately, apostasy exists even under the externally Orthodox cassock, and under Orthodox domes, and among the practicing Orthodox people. But this is nothing new; the Church it from her first steps, but now it has reached unusual dimensions.

We must learn to discern the Church behind appearances. As far as appearances are concerned, in the Orthodox Church today confusion and chaos prevail externally. Everyone - educated or uneducated, believer or unbeliever - has his own view of what Christianity or Orthodoxy is and supports his view fanatically. And in this storm it is impossible to find your course without a compass. There is one infallible criterion: the continuation of Tradition. Wherever the Tradition is preserved living and pure without disruption or change from the times of the Apostles, as many faithful - bishops, priests, or laymen - live and transmit this Tradition, there is the Orthodox Church, and they constitute the Body of Christ. All others, priests or laymen, who wish to be called Orthodox without following the living Tradition of the centuries are intruders; they are tares in Christ's field.

Today the tares are very many and the ears of wheat very few, but the field is God's field, and in spite of the variety of tares, the wheat remains the same from generation to generation, from seed to seed, the same as that first wheat which the Holy Spirit planted in that same divine field on the day of Pentecost.

That living Tradition has never been disrupted, because the very mouth of Christ promised the Church that «the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her», and the mouth of God does not lie. Those who search to find the Tradition of the Christian Church of the first centuries or of the centuries before the schism in order to follow it confess that they have lost the continuity of Tradition. But they are very going to find it no matter how much they push forward their researches, because the Tradition is something living and transmitted as life from the living to the living. It is not something which is discovered through scholarly studies, nor is it something which is learned intellectually.

XIII. HIDDEN BUT LIVING

Those millions or tares which have sprung up in the bosom of the Orthodox Church in recent times have brought a secular spirit with them, so that no Orthodox Church has been able to keep her outward marks unchanged. Even the Old Calendarists, who have kept such a good line in the calendar issue, in the case of iconography clearly bear stigmas of betrayal of the Tradition. This fact is a common sin of all the Orthodox churches of late.

Fortunately up to now, all the deviations from the Tradition which we have described have not cut off the Orthodox churches from their root. The tree remains alive and thriving in spite of all the garnishes which they have added to it. The Orthodox churches have not withered as has happened to the «churches» of the West. If you just shake off the dust which the secular spirit has scattered upon them, you will find the fresh leaves of the authentic Tradition. Tradition has never ceased to live and to be in force in the sphere of Orthodoxy. There are still monks who live Orthodox monasticism. There are still genuine theologians who have not defiled the truth, but keep it shining and pure, far from every alien mingling. There are still Byzantine chanters and true bearers of the Orthodox iconographic tradition. There are still priests like the old ones dedicated to their sacred function, whose constant contact with God does not permit them to be distressed over their long beards and black robes, but rather makes these things radiate holiness. There are still simple people who are worthy of seeing great miracles.*

The true Tradition, then - the life, the spiritual experience, and the teaching of the Apostles and the Holy Fathers of all ages, these imprints of the walking of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians - exists and continues alive among the living without any break from the Apostolic times. There is a constant harmony in all the actions of Orthodox of all ages up to the present day, written and unwritten; and this is the golden rule upon which everyone must measure his thoughts and actions in order to see if he is within or out of the scope of Orthodoxy. The outward signs might give the impression that the continuity has been corrupted or broken, but if one looks a little further he will see that it still blossoms and refreshes those who seek it.

The Tradition exists and will continue to exist until the end of the world. But every passing day makes its discovery more difficult. Every passing day adds more garnish upon the tree of Orthodoxy, and that is how people become confused and do not know where the truth lies.

XIV. THE ARK

Someday sooner or later, no one knows exactly when, the «churches» and the religions will be united. In that chaos of falsehood even the chosen will be in danger of losing their way. It will be the age of the Antichrist.

How and when the Antichrist will come, no one can say. And it is unknown how many shall be able to recognize him when he comes, because he will come as a benefactor of humanity. For the present, one thing can be said with certainty: all these movements towards union among nations and churches, all these compromises, all this uniformity of humanity gradually produced under the

* See A Great Sign by Photios Kontoglou, published in Greek by «Astir», which describes the amazing events in Mytilene, when in these last days the Saints Raphael, Nicholas, and many others have revealed their lives and relics five hundred years after their martyrdoms.

steamroller of technological culture are paving the way for the coming of the Antichrist.

This development of humanity, according to the criteria of the world, is wonderful. But according to Christian criteria, it is a development towards destruction.

This does not surprise or frighten the Christian. He knows that the world has condemned itself. And that is why Christ refused to pray for the world. «I do not ask for the world». The ruler of this world is the devil, and the devil «from the beginning was a murderer».

Death will find the world at the height of its glory, at the height of self-conceit, at the summit of the tower of Babel, when man will be at the zenith of his very old attempt to become god by his own powers, apart from God. When the Son of man comes, he shall find man in the fully glory of his satanic mania.

God does not ask the Christian to save the world. Any attempt on the part of Christians to change the course the world has taken would be futile and ridiculous. The world is a sinking ship, and it is sinking because its very structure is rotten. God does not ask the Christian to save the ship, but to save as many of the shipwrecked as he can.

The new Ark of Noe, the Church of Christ, sails near the site of the shipwreck. Any who wish to be saved from the waters must seek refuge in her. But in order to find refuge they must forsake the world, not so much geographically as essentially. «Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not any unclean thing, and I will receive you» (II Cor. 6:17).

But here is where the difficulties begin. How can you forsake the world when your whole life is bound up in it? But to answer this question is not the purpose of the present book. One finds it in the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers. Besides, the whole life in Christ is a struggle for freedom from the world, from the «Egypt» of the passions, and for refuge in the Ark of the Church.

But when the age of the Antichrist approaches, even the Ark of the Church shall be difficult to discern. Many will say, «Behold, here is Christ», and «There is Christ», but they will be false prophets. Whatever will be accepted officially as the Church, having little by little already betrayed the treasures of the Faith, will have been assimilated by the indescribable, unifying marmelade which will retain most of the outward signs of the Church with satanic cleverness. Here and there small groups of faithful with some priest will still preserve the true Tradition alive.

But who will be able to recognize the Church of Christ in those small, scorned groups of faithful that lack all worldly splendor? Yet at the end of time the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church will be just those forgotten and outwardly disunited little parishes which may even be ignorant of the others' existence, but will be united among themselves by the mystical bonds of the Body and Blood of the Lord, in the Holy Spirit, with the common Faith and Tradition which they will preserve undefiled.

In those days even the chosen will be in danger of being led astray. Much courage is needed for one to side with the few and to go against the currents of the world, with the danger of being ridiculed by the «smart» and abused by the strong. Much wisdom is needed in order for one to discern the truth there exactly where the whole world sees nonsense and stupidity. Besides, the followers of falsehood will have the miracle on their side, the miracle which the devil asked of Christ in the

desert, the signs and wonders of the false prophets and the false Christs. «For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and they shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect» (Mat. 24:24). How many shall be able to find their way when all the beacons will be misguiding? Then, «he who persists to the end shall be saved».

XV. THE MASKS

For the present, let all who wish to live near Christ hasten to acquire discretion in order to recognize beforehand the false prophets and false Christs, and let them wear the armor of the Faith so that they will be able to strike them and their followers invincibly.

For our age is a cunning age, where falsehood is disguised and poison is offered sugar-coated, where the roads are full of snares and well-camouflaged pits. Whoever is misled by appearances is lost.

We must learn to distinguish the Church from the world, for the destiny of the Church is one thing and that of the world another. We must have as much distrust of the world as we have faith in the Church, as much hate towards the world (not towards men, but the world) as we have love for the Church, as much pessimism for the world as we have optimism for the Church.

The world is the camp, the mentality, and the intentions of those who have rejected the offering of God, who have turned their backs when He wanted to speak to them, who have separated themselves from Him forever. These people have given preference to death over life. They are not punished, just as the demons are not punished, for no one wishes them any harm. Of their own accord they chose death, of their own accord they chose to be enemies of God and to stand far away from Him.

This choice is made in life, independent of moments and time, in the depths of our heart, and it is irrevocable. Freedom separates the spiritual beings into two camps. There are two types of people, as there are two types of angels: the friends of God and the enemies of God.

Freedom does not lie in individual actions, but in the whole inclination and disposition of man, in the final positive or negative response to God's call. Freedom lies in the general direction of man's life, and not in the details of that life.

The details are deceiving: they make the Pharisees and Scribes appear to be friends of God, and the thief, the harlot, the publican, and Saul [Paul] appear to be His enemies.

We must be able to recognize the true enemies and the true friends of God under the masks of hypocrisy or weakness.

We are in an age where the masks of hypocrisy have multiplied and reached an astonishing degree of perfection. From one moment to the next we are in danger of being deceived by men who, while wearing the mask of the friends of God, are actually His enemies.

Such are those who speak of the union of the churches. They are the Church's most dangerous enemies, the false prophets of the Gospel.

The enemies who appear without any mask - the atheists, the materialists, the communists - cannot fool anyone. They are the ones who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But the others - «Orthodox» patriarchs, bishops and archbishops, leaders of Christian organizations, theologians and professors of theology - all who speak with hypocritical Christian love for our «brothers» the heretics and spread the message of union, all of these mask-wearers may not be killing the body, but they are surely killing the soul. This is why the battle against them must be relentless.

CHAPTER TWO

XVI. CONTEMPORARY IDOLATRY

And now let us see who are those Europeans with whom they want us to be united as a state and as a Church?

A frightening antinomy characterizes, the Europeans: it is the antithesis between the inward and outward man. The European appears to be one thing, but is really something else. He lives and moves in the falsehood of compromises. His entire culture is a collection of conventional lies to which he has adapted himself. He is extremely egocentric, but he conducts himself with absolute and almost exaggerated courtesy.

In the «underdeveloped» countries where the people still lack the finesse of European culture, everyone more or less expresses his inner world with some freedom and simplicity which you cannot find in Europe. Their manners are coarse, but the people are more genuine. In Europe this is considered a lack of culture and spiritual development.

In this way, the constant game of hypocrisy has come to be regarded as culture, where the white-washed tombs are full of stench, and the outside of the cup always cleaned for the sake of the appearance to the people.

But as it happens with Pharisees, that constant lie in which they live does not humble them. On the contrary, their outward perfection makes them certain of their superiority. The most characteristic mark of the Europeans is their conceit. They look down upon all the people whom they consider uncultured or underdeveloped.

A few of them might have a great concern for the needs of others, of persons, of groups, or even of nations, and especially the underdeveloped ones, towards whom they nurture compassionate sentiments, but deep down they are concerned for others the way an entomologist is concerned for insects. The sentiments they nurture for people are inferior to the love they have for their dogs.

They have the same high idea of their civilization as they have of themselves. Having critical minds, they do not accept anything unquestioned, and are proud of it. They consider all values relative, even those which they accept; and they discuss with apparent profundity all that humanity has ever believed.

Their customary position is that of well-disposed agnostics who are willing to agree with whatever you tell them, but let you understand that, of course, there is no way of proving anything you say, and therefore, it leaves them neither hot nor cold.

One thing, though, which these agnostics never think of doubting is the value of their own civilization. For them there never arose a higher civilization than their own. There might be sharp criticism about particular cultural problems and great disagreements over details, but the soundness of their culture's general direction has never been questioned.

The civilization of Europe is based upon a religion, but upon a religion which no one wishes to name as such, because this religion is not the worship of one or many gods, but the worship of man.

The religion of the ancient Greeks and their civilization was nothing else than the worship of man. If the civilization of ancient Greece found such a good reception in the hearts of Europeans, one can attribute it exactly to this inward kinship.

Like the ancient Greeks, the Europeans deified man's reason, his passions, the powers and weaknesses of his soul; in a word, they made man the center, measure, and purpose of all things. The culture of Europe proceeds from man; it exists for man; and it receives its justification from man.

There might be disagreements about the ways in which the improvement of man's life may be attained; there might be differences in the manner of worshipping man; there might be different conclusions drawn from man's measurement; but for all and always, man is the center around which they revolve, the source of their inspiration and purpose of their actions.

This is the European. Whatever religion he thinks he might have, deep down his religion is the worship of the idol «man». The European has ceased to see the image of God in man: he sees only the image of himself.

In other words, the religion of Europe is the old religion of humanity, the one which separated man from God. God's purpose is to deify man. But man, deceived by the devil, thought that he could become god without the grace of his Creator, on his own initiative and with only his own powers. He rushed to eat of the tree of knowledge before he was mature enough for such food.

The result was that his eyes were opened to know good and evil, to see his bodily and spiritual nakedness, and he was shocked. He could no longer bear to face his Lord and God, and he ran to hide from His face. He realized that a great chasm had been opened between him and his Creator. Then his merciful Father cursed the first cause of his destruction, the devil - «that old serpent» - and in His infinite love even promised salvation: «And I will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman [the all-holy Virgin], and between thy seed and her seed [Christ]; and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel» (Gen. 3;15). And in order that man should not live eternally in that condition of spiritual death. He cast him out of Paradise, «that he should not extend his hand and take from the tree of life and eat and live unto the ages» (Gen. 3; 22). Thus out of His compassion and love, God permitted bodily death and corruption, which, like spiritual death, was the result of the broken communion with the Source of life, so that man would not carry about through the ages his spiritual death, misfortune, and nakedness. And man, being separated from God and living in the constant reality of death, became a slave to the devil.

It was, therefore, as a reaction to the experience of his own nothingness that man worshipped man, proclaiming him god. In fact, the ancients taught that the human soul is a part of the divine nature, in other words, that it is divine in essence and therefore has no need of God.

This inward will of man to believe in his own divinity, together with the fact of his submission to the demonic powers, is the basis of every form of idolatry.

The religion of Europe, then, is none other than that primordial idolatry in modern form. Papacy, Protestantism, humanism, atheism, democracy, fascism, capitalism, communism, and anything else European, are expressions of the same humanistic spirit.

The civilization of Europe is nothing but the result of man's agonized and persistent effort to place his throne above the throne of God. It is nothing but the erection of a new tower of Babel; confusion about the method of erection may prevail, but the goal remains common for all concerned.

The ideal of the European is identical with the ideal of Lucifer. Deep down, it is the same contempt for the goodness of God, the same insult against His love, the same revolt and estrangement from His providence, the same ingratitude, the same desolate path which, instead of leading upward as man thinks he is going, leads to the abyss of death.

XVII. WITH THE CROSS AS BANNER

But the real religion of Europe is concealed and appears formally with a Christian mask.

For all the world, Europe is a Christian land. The devil is truly the clever one par excellence, and his jests have the most tragic consequences for humanity.

The greatest evil which ever befell the world had the Cross as a banner. The Aristotelianism of Western theologians and their discipleship to the idolatrous rationalistic thought of ancient Greece, the transformation of theology into philosophy, the adulteration of the Faith, the Papacy, the thirst for power and worldly authority, the Crusades, the mixing of religion with politics, the Inquisition, the missions which proved to be advance guards for colonizing powers, conquests, wars, the systematic blood-sucking of nations, orgies, frauds, humiliations, and tyranny took place in the name of the Crucified One.

In the face of this tragic deterioration of religion, it was natural that atheism and Protestantism should spring up as an aspiration for deliverance and health.

One should note that the atheism which appeared in Europe was not just an indifference, or agnosticism, or a simple epicurean disposition. The atheism of Europe was not an academic denial. It was a strong hate for the God of the Christians as they had come to know Him in Europe; it was a strong passion, a blasphemy, an indignation of the human soul.

In the Orthodox Christian East, from the time of Constantine the Great until the Greek Revolution, such epidemics never appeared. The people of the East had come to know a God completely different from the god which the people of the West had known; that is why they never came to deny Him, no matter how sinful they were. The first atheists in Greece came from Europe. Their denial, without their even knowing it, was against the religion which they had come to know in Europe. Their atheism was nourished by the faults of the Christians and the adulteration of the Christian truth which had taken place in the West.

Similarly, Protestantism might appear to be a separate heresy. But in actuality, it originated as a rejection of Catholicism. Protestantism never had a religious position. On the contrary, it was and is a religious denial. What justifies it is the presence of Catholicism. If Catholicism would disappear, then Protestantism would have no reason for existence.

XVIII. THE WAY OF KNOWLEDGE

Today, atheism as well as Protestantism might be turned against Orthodoxy. But this assault is based on a deception. They detest Orthodoxy because they see her with their own criteria, with their own mentality. They see her as a variant of Catholicism. This is not due to an ill disposition on their part, but to a total inability to judge by other standards and to think with another mentality.

Catholicism, Protestantism, and atheism are on the same level. They are offsprings of the same mentality. All three are philosophical systems, offsprings of rationalism, that is, of the notion that human reason is the foundation of certainty, the measure of truth, and the way of knowledge.

Orthodoxy is on a completely different level. The Orthodox have a different mentality. They regard philosophy as a dead end which never led man to certainty, truth, and knowledge. They respect human reason as no one else, and they never violate it. They regard it as one of the useful factors in detecting falsehood and uncovering error. But they do not accept it as capable of giving man certainty, of enlightening him to see the truth, or guiding him to knowledge.

Knowledge is the vision of God and of His creation in a heart purified by divine grace and the struggles and prayers of man. «Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God».

Truth is not a series of definitions, but God Himself, «Who appeared concretely in the person of Christ, Who said: «I am the Truth».

Certainty is not a matter of intellectual harmony; it is a deep assurance of the heart. It comes to man after inner vision and is accompanied by the warmth of divine grace. Intellectual harmony, which is the outcome of a logical ordering of things, is never accompanied by this assurance.

Philosophy is characterized by conceptualization. The human intellect cannot accept reality as it is. It transposes it first into symbols and then elaborates upon the symbols. But the symbols are counterfeit figures of reality. The concepts are as distant from reality as a picture of a fish from a live fish.

The truth of the philosopher is a series of figures and images. These symbols present one great advantage; they are comprehensible. They are cut to man's measurements and satisfy the intellect. But they also present a great disadvantage; they have no relation to living reality.

Living reality does not fit into the categories of the human intellect. It is a condition above reason. Philosophy is an attempt to transpose the suprarational into rational. But this is counterfeit and fraudulent. That is why Orthodoxy rejects philosophy and does not accept it as a way to knowledge.

The only way to knowledge is purity of heart. It alone permits the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in man. In this way alone is God and His whole creation known, without being conceptualized. He is known as He really is without becoming comprehensible and without being diminished in order to fit into the stiffing limits of the human intellect. Thus the mind (*nous*) of man, living and uncomprehending, comes into union with the living and incomprehensible God. Knowledge is the living contact of man with the Creator and His creation, in mutual love.

The experience of knowledge is something which cannot be expressed in human words. When the Apostle Paul came to know, he said that he had heard unspeakable words - something which is impossible for man to express.

Such is the deeper Christian theology - inexpressible. Dogmas are helpful formulations. But they are not actual knowledge; they simply guide and protect from error. A man can have knowledge without knowing the dogmas, and he can know all the dogmas and accept them without having knowledge. This is why, beyond the affirmative theology of dogmas, the Fathers placed the deep mystery of negative theology where no definition is acceptable, where the mind is silent and ceases to move, where the heart opens its door to receive the Great Visitor «Who stands at the door and knocks», where the mind sees Him Who Is.

And let no one think that these things are true only in regard to the suprarational knowledge which is a movement of God towards man. Man can know nothing with his reason, and he can be certain of nothing - neither of himself, of the world, nor even of the most ordinary and common things.

Who honestly waited to hear Descartes' syllogism «I think, therefore I am» to be certain that he truly exists? And who waited for the philosophers to prove that the world around him is real in order to believe that it is? Besides, such a proof has never existed and will never exist, and they who are engaged in philosophy well know it. No one has ever been able to actually prove by his reason that our thoughts and our own selves, as well as the world around us, are not fantasies. But even if someone were to prove it logically, which is impossible, that logical proof would not be able to assure anyone.

If we are certain that we exist and that our friends are not figments of our imagination, this is not due to the proofs of the philosophers, but to an inward knowledge and an inward consciousness which gives us certainty of everything without syllogisms and proofs.

This is natural knowledge. It is the knowledge of the heart and not of the brain. It is the sure foundation for every thought. Reason can build upon it without fear of toppling. But without it, reason builds upon sand.

It is this natural knowledge which guides man in the way of the Gospel and enables him to separate truth from falsehood, good from evil. It is the first step which raises man to the throne of God. When man his free will ascends the first steps of natural knowledge, then God Himself leans over and covers him with that heavenly knowledge of the mysteries «which are not permitted for man to utter».

The preaching of the Apostles and Fathers, the Prophets, and the Gospel, the words of Christ Himself, are directed to man's natural knowledge. This is the province of dogmas and affirmative theology. It is the manger where faith is born.

The beginning of faith is the heart's ability to grasp that the truth speaks in the small book called the Gospel, that in that commonplace church of poor and faithful people, God descends and dwells. When fear takes hold of one because he steps on the earth which the hand of God laid out, because he gazes at the great and broad sea, because he walks and breathes, then his eyes will begin to shed tears - tears of repentance, tears of love, tears of joy - and he will feel the first caresses of unspeakable mysteries.

Natural knowledge exists in all men, but it is not of the same purity in all. Love of pleasure has the power to darken it. The passions are like a fog, and that is why few men find the road to truth. How many people have been lost in the maze of philosophy, seeking a little light which they shall never see?

In this maze it is not important if one is a Christian or atheist, Protestant or Catholic, Platonist or Aristotelian. There is one common identifying mark on them all - darkness. Whoever enters the cave of rationalism ceases to see. And whatever garments he is wearing, they take on the same dark color. In their discussions they understand each other very well because they have the same presuppositions, the presuppositions of darkness. But it is impossible for them to understand those who are not in the maze and who see the light. And no matter what those on the outside tell them, they understand everything with their own presuppositions and cannot see in what way the others might be superior.

XIX. THE SCHOOL OF THE WEST

The debate which started centuries ago in the West takes place with amazing ease, and that is because the participants, although having different views, belong to the same school.

It is very difficult for Europeans, especially for Protestants, atheists, and the religiously indifferent, to realize how deeply their mentality has been marked by the seal of the Papacy and to understand that their negative views have been determined by the corresponding positions of the Papists.

The Papacy was the great pedagogue of the West. It taught the Europeans their first letters and initiated them into the rationalism which it had inherited from ancient Greece via Rome.

Rationalism was the soul of all heresies which warred against Christianity. All the theological battles of Christianity were fought against it. Heresy is the denial of the suprarational and the attempt to change it into something rational. It is the denial of the living reality and the acceptance of a concept, only because a concept is something comprehensible, whereas the living reality is not.

The Western Church began to be permeated with rationalism long before the schism. The Papacy and the various heresies which now embellish the «Church» of Rome had rationalism for a father. They were born and grew little by little through the centuries.

The remoteness of Rome and the difficulties in communications contributed to the fact that the first deviations were not detected in the beginning. Students of history will observe that for Christianity the West was always spiritually provincial. Nearly all of the spiritual and theological issues were born in the East, and their solutions were found there also. In the East the Christians were under constant spiritual tension. All the currents of heresy passed through there, and the spiritual battles took place there. The Westerners lived in a kind of bliss; they were the chocolate soldiers of Christianity.

The illnesses of the East were acute - the kind which create antibodies and immunity. However at the same time, in the West a chronic illness started - the kind that assuredly leads to death.

Rationalism brings with it self-conceit; self-conceit brings estrangement; and estrangement grows with worldly power. Thus, at the time when more than ever the West needed the spiritual assistance and guidance of the East, the chasm appeared, terrifying to the eyes of all.

In the meantime, in its effort to Christianize the peoples of Europe who were still barbarian, the Latin Church, instead of trying to raise them to the difficult heights of Christian Faith and life, tried to present Christianity as something easy and pleasurable, hoping in that way to bring the barbarians more quickly to Christ. Thus instead of raising the barbarian it lowered the Church. It made its teaching more comprehensible, more categorized, more systematic, more academic. In this way began the spread of rationalism and the adulteration of the Christian Faith. From a mystery and life in the Holy Spirit, Christianity became an ethical-philosophical system, which later found its best expression in the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas.

Those who later rejected Catholicism received their culture from it. They grew up in it, and it had taught them how to think and philosophize. Protestants, humanists, atheists - the whole series of European philosophers - all graduated from the school of Catholicism. That is why they all speak the same language, the language of rationalism, and this is why, in spite of all their variances, they understand each other so famously.

XX. FEARFUL MYSTERIES

A discussion between atheism and Catholicism is possible. They speak on the same philosophical level, with arguments of the same order.

But a discussion between atheism and Orthodoxy is impossible, because Orthodoxy speaks a language which is completely incomprehensible to atheism. She understands atheism's language amazingly well, but if she speaks the same language, she will stop being Orthodox.

As an example, let us take the discussion concerning the nature of man.

Catholicism believes that man is composed of a body and a soul. Atheism does not accept the existence of the soul and teaches that man consists solely of the body. This denial was a response to Catholicism's view of man.

In an attempt to express the deep mystery of human nature in a simple form, the Catholics borrowed the Greek ideas about the soul and body, which were wonderfully comprehensible. They gave a definition of the body and a definition of the soul, which were both absolutely comprehensible. Like the ancients, they described the soul as an independent, self-existent entity, which man is primarily; they lowered the body to the level of an unnecessary burden which, as the Greeks believed, imprisons the soul and prevents it from developing freely.

In this way, the mystery of human existence fell to the naive level of a philosophical definition. That is where atheism found it and began to discourse about it, since atheism also moves on the level of philosophical definitions. Thus an endless exchange of philosophical-scientific arguments began, which will continue until the end of the world without proving anything, because the proof is sought in the sphere of pure reason and not in that which transcends it. Reason has only an auxiliary value; alone, it leads neither to knowledge nor certainty.

How could Orthodoxy, therefore, take part in such a childishly naive discussion without descending to the same level of naivete? Orthodoxy refuses to give philosophical definitions of what man is, what the body is, or the soul. She knows that man is more than what is apparent, but she also knows well that she can neither describe nor define the soul, nor is she able to regard the body of matter as something which is comprehensible to the human mind. As much as the human mind might analyze things, it can only comprehend the symbols which it creates itself, but not the essence.

Here is what St. Gregory of Nyssa says about man: «For as it seems to me, the make-up of man is awesome and inexplicable, portraying many hidden mysteries of God in itself.»

Orthodoxy uses the words «soul», «flesh», «matter», «spirit», without always meaning the same things with the same words. She uses words which are taken from human vocabulary because she must express herself. But she never consents to enclosing within the narrow limitations of a human concept a whole mystery which even the angels cannot grasp. Neither does she consent to the dividing of man into air-tight compartments of body and soul, or, like some modern heretics, into body, soul, and spirit. Nor does she account little value to the flesh; rather, she often speaks of it as of the whole human nature: «And the Word became flesh».

But this is not our present theme. Orthodoxy is a spiritual experience, a life in God, a series of ontological contacts, and not a system of human syllogisms. Her syllogisms do exist, and they are most logical, but they are only aids. Her foundations are not of syllogisms and philosophical speculations, but living experiences of the divine energy in the pure hearts of the Saints. How, then, can atheism carry on a discussion with her?

XXI. THE LIGHT

Yet, there have been Orthodox in name who have entered into discussion with atheism and with philosophy generally. From various religious organizations of our land, scholars have been trying to prove for years that science also accepts the existence of God, but in spite of all their discussions, they have only managed to show how great is their own regard for science and philosophy and their ignorance of Orthodoxy. Being living examples of the Europeanization which we have undergone in our land [i.e., Greece], they did not wish nor were they capable of drawing strength from Orthodoxy to confound any and every philosophy. For all their theoretical Orthodoxy, they remain true Westerners.

The Orthodox has the power to prove logically to the philosophers that philosophy, if it wishes to remain rational, can only end in agnosticism, the denial of every knowledge. Every other claim it makes is unreasonable, and even though it appears to proceed from reason, it is founded upon imagination.

There is only road to knowledge, the one which God has marked through the centuries. It is not a way of syllogisms but a way of life, because truth is not a system of philosophical theories but a personal existence: «I am the Way, the Truth, the Life».

But in order for one to walk this road, it is not sufficient to say and believe that one is a Christian. «Not everyone who says to me, «Lord, Lord», shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven». Something else is necessary: the lifelong struggle of the Christian, and that is purity of heart, which renders man worthy to receive the

illumination of the Holy Spirit. All the moral and ascetical struggles of Christianity are aimed at this purity of the heart, with the purpose of the indwelling of the Holy Trinity in man. «Whoever loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him».

This direct communion with the Holy Trinity, this contact with divinity, the revelation of God, is knowledge. It alone enlightens man. It gives him to understand what God is and His creation. It enables man to penetrate into the reason of things and see what he himself is, beyond the phenomena and philosophical definitions.

In the face of this knowledge, what do the philosophers and atheists have to say? Will they deny it? They can. A blind man who has never seen light, of course, can deny that light exists. But this denial cannot carry any weight for anyone who does see.

One cannot prove the existence of light to the blind man. But if the blind man is well disposed, he will believe him and hasten to fall on his knees before Christ, beseeching Him to grant him eyesight. If he does not believe him, he will remain forever blind, and no one will ever be able to make him understand the greatness of his lack.

This is the relation of an Orthodox to the philosopher, the relation of one who sees to one who is blind. And just as it is not possible for the one with sight to carry on a discussion with the blind about the beauty of the earth, about colors and light, so is it impossible for the Orthodox to discuss the magnificence of knowledge with the philosopher.

Knowledge is something which you must taste in order to understand. No one can speak or understand what you tell him without the proper prerequisites.

Should, then, every dialogue of the Orthodox with the rationalists be cut off? Certainly not. The dialogue will continue as long as the blind and those who see live together. The blind will always talk as blind men. But the only thing is that those who see should not talk as blind men, since how then will the blind be made aware of their blindness? Those who see must continue to speak as men who see, even though it is not likely that they will be understood. At least in this way they shall be able to understand each other, and who knows, perhaps in hearing, some of the blind might come to see that without eyes one cannot come to know the light.

XXII. SALVATION

Many so-called Orthodox take great pleasure in participating in the discussions between Catholics and Protestants. And the blind would lead the blind.

For example, let us take the question of justification: that is, if it is faith of good works which save man.

The Catholics teach that man is saved by the number and the quality of good works he shall show at the end of his life. For a period of time the Popes even declared that the good works of the saints were much more than were necessary for their own salvation and that the merits which remained over could be disposed to the sinners if the latter could pay the appropriate price.

Rejecting the position of the Catholics, the Protestants taught that good works have no merit, that «man is not justified by works of the Law», and that faith alone saves man.

The debate has continued for centuries now with an uninterrupted exchange of an increasing number of arguments which convince no one, but turn around in the vicious circle of anthropocentric concepts which are so characteristic of rationalism.

What is the position of the «Orthodox» when they are confronted by this debate of the West? A feeling of inferiority and disorientation grips our theologians who stand ecstatic with admiration before the complexity of their Western colleagues' arguments. They do not know what to say. Inwardly they reproach Orthodoxy, which did not take a clear position in this problem. Some ally themselves with the Catholics with a few reservations; others try to reconcile the two views. The Apostles and Fathers do not help them at all; they seem to contradict each other and even themselves.

What darkness, truly, into which rationalism leads man! How can the rationalists understand the Apostles and Fathers, since the Apostles and Fathers, who were not rationalists, speak a language unknown to all rationalists?

For the rationalists, Holy Scripture, the simplest book in the world, is full of contradictions. For them every word and every expression has only one pre-defined meaning. Either the Apostle Paul is correct who teaches that justification is by faith or the Apostle James, who writes: «What is the profit, brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but has not works? Can faith save him?... Even the demons believe and tremble». That is why many Protestant theologians have characterized the Epistle of James as «chaff» and unworthy of being numbered among the books of the New Testament. But even the Apostle Paul seems to contradict himself in speaking one time about justification by faith and another about recompense «to each according to his works». That is why some Protestants have begun speaking of «two justifications».

The thought of the Apostles and Fathers is so clear, so simple, yet in the hands of rationalist theologians it has been filled with mist and darkness. They want Christianity to be a system. A system does not admit of antitheses. Everything must be in its place, properly classified. In their restricted thought, every antithesis is a contradiction. But reality is full of antitheses. Only when man accepts the antitheses as they are without trying to smooth them out does he approach the truth.

The Orthodox should glorify God because such a problem as this never arose in the Orthodox Church. The debate over justification which has continued for so many centuries in the West is void of any content. Salvation is not given as a reward for something good which man has accomplished, either faith or works. Salvation is not a reward, nor damnation a punishment. Such a concept, like all rationalistic concepts, is anthropocentric. It is a projection into the spiritual world of what happens in the daily life of men in society, where a good word or work is rewarded and a bad word or a bad work is punished by the laws which men have decreed.

Like the ancient Greeks, the West likewise made God according to the likeness of men. They see Him as a judge who judges and punishes on the basis of the existing laws. But the justice of God does not have a vindictive or legalistic significance. God does not punish to satisfy His own justice. Such a concept is out-and-out un-Christian. God never punishes anyone; He only chastises as a father chastises his son in order to raise him. Even Gehenna is not a place of torment but of

self-exile, far from the presence of God. It is a condition of willful blindness, a place which never receives the rays of the sun. God is just, that is, good: for this reason He has no place or communion with the unjust, that is, the wicked. And this is not because God does not want to come near to the sinners, but because evil men turn away from the righteousness of God and do not want to have any communion with Him. «It is not He Who is hostile, but we; God is never hostile» (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XI on II Cor. 3).

Salvation, like knowledge, is a matter of communion with God. Works and faith, virtues and efforts are those things which open the door of our heart to the Lord. But that which gives salvation is not works, nor faith, nor virtues, nor efforts, nor all these together. A man might have all these and not enjoy the betrothal of the Spirit, not become an abode of the Holy Trinity. Salvation, like knowledge, is the vivifying of man by the grace of God and the vision of God, of which pure hearts are deemed worthy in this life according to the measure of their purity. It is not a reward forced from God by toils and labors, which might not have purified the heart at all, neither is it a reward for an intellectual faith, which might not have changed man's life at all.

XXIII. A GREAT CHASM

Catholicism, Protestantism, and atheism, like all other philosophies, speak the same language. One understands the arguments of the other, and in spite of all their controversies they can communicate with each other. But a great chasm separates Orthodoxy from all these systems, because it is something essentially different.

All the erroneous beliefs of the West and the drying up of its spirituality have rationalism as a basic cause. Europeans judge heavenly things with earthly standards and live their religion with the criteria and perspective of this life. One can cite such a multitude of examples that he could fill many books. But the two examples we have mentioned (i.e., the mystery of man and of salvation) are sufficient for one to realize the difference between the Eastern Church and those of the West is not one of various characteristics, but a difference of essence.

Even if we were to presume that there was the best disposition on the part of the West to draw near and to live Orthodoxy - something which does not occur except, perhaps, in the case of the Old Catholics - this disposition would not render them able to understand and to live Orthodoxy. So many centuries of apostasy have not passed without leaving their seal on the souls of these people. And this seal is so indelible that it cannot be erased except by the grace of God, and then only from humble hearts.

In recent years, many in Europe have taken the name Orthodox and have been chrismated with the Chrism of the Orthodox Church, but very few of them have really become Orthodox. Most of them have embraced Orthodoxy intellectually, enchanted by the wealth of knowledge it offered them and fascinated by a new acquaintance with Christianity which bridged the gaps left in their minds by the mutilated Christianity of the West. But before they even received Communion for the first time and before they even shed a tear for their sins, before they sought the grace of Christ in silence and struggle, they considered it their imperative duty to preach Orthodoxy to the Orthodox. Scandalized by the ignorance of the Orthodox in theoretical matters in which they themselves shone, they scorned the Orthodox people who, although in ignorance, lived the Orthodoxy of their fathers and were ready to die for it. But God does not dwell in proud minds. Their theoretical preparation did not save them from error, and as blind leading the blind, they fell into

the ditch of heresies leading others astray also, or they returned «as a dog to its own vomit» to their former worldly ways.

In order for one to understand the Saints and the Fathers of the Church, it is not sufficient merely to read them. The Saints spoke and wrote after having lived the mysteries of God. They personally experienced the mysteries. In order for one to understand them, he too must have progressed to a certain degree of initiation into the mysteries of God by personally tasting, smelling, and seeing. You can read the books of the Saints and become very well versed in them with a «cerebral» knowledge without even minutely tasting that which the Saints tasted who wrote these books through their personal experience. In order to understand the Saints essentially, not intellectually, you must have the proper experiences for all that they say; you must have tasted, at least in part, of the same things as they. You must have lived in the fervent environment of Orthodoxy; you must have grown in it. You must have tasted of training, effort, and struggle for Christian perfection. You must have bent very low to pass through the narrow door that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. You must have been humbled; you must have been freed from the vain burden of human values and have detached the heart from that which men consider great and worthy of respect. You must have shed tears of repentance for the vanity in which you lived, tears of fervent supplication to the Lord to deliver you from darkness and to send down a ray of the Holy Spirit into your heart.

A whole new world must be born in a Westerner's heart in order for him to understand something of Orthodoxy. How can someone who has breathed the dry air of rationalism from the cradle and learned to worship human cleverness as an idol be humbled and become simple as a child? How can one who has learned to pursue those things esteemed «high by men» and «abominations before God» and has been taught to regard the turn to the inner man as «navel gazing» be saved from the thorns of worldly cares? How can he who has been taught to regard vanity as a value shed tears over the vanity of life?

What has Catholicism or Protestantism honestly done to protect the world from the relentless whirlpool into which it has fallen? But was it not the religion of the West that sent man running and panting to gain whatever Christ declared vain? Monasticism, the heart of religion, it either abolished or changed to utilitarian orders which either through their activity or through their thought had as their mission to serve the earthly well-being of men and the worldly wisdom which «God has made foolish». It made politics the province of Christian activity, swaying kingdoms and spilling blood in order to acquire power and money. It used missions as a decoy to subject colored peoples to the inhuman sovereignty of Europe. It pursued leisure and comfort, teaching that wealth is a gift of God. It gave Christianity a utilitarian, social purpose, causing men to believe that Christ was a moral teacher who is concerned above all with the orderly functioning of society, and the Church is the guardian *par excellence* of human laws and the overseer of law enforcement. It created the model for the pharisaic Christian, the good citizen, who thinks he has approached perfection because he has never harmed anyone, or because he has given money to philanthropic organizations.

How can men emerge humble, seeking the light from above with pain and tears, from a civilization ruled by the pursuit of human comfort and characterized by a satanic pride in the triumphs of its science?

How can a man who searches the depths of his heart to find in the silence and motionlessness of his «treasury» the «pearl of great price» emerge from a civilization which is characterized by unceasing motion and concern for externals?

Such a thing would be equal to a miracle of the rarest kind.

But if the savor of Orthodoxy is such a difficult thing for one individual, how is it possible for the entire Roman Catholic «Church» as a whole or all the Protestant «churches» together to savor her? Most of the millions of people of the West do not even know that Orthodoxy exists. How is it possible after one or more conferences of representatives of the various «churches» for a return to the truth to be accomplished collectively for souls walking in darkness for centuries now?

Do those who speak of the union of churches possibly think they are dealing with political affairs where the rulers of nations lead their subjects as a whole to either war or peace? People do not come to Christ and His Church in great masses. They come as free persons.

Let us suppose that a Pope suddenly decides to become Orthodox and to bring all the Catholics to Orthodoxy. With that outward change would even one of the millions of Catholics really become Orthodox? And even if they all had the best disposition to memorize and believe all the doctrines of Orthodoxy, they would not be able to take even one step towards her, because Orthodoxy is not only a system of doctrines or a series of customs, but something much deeper and substantial. It is a whole orientation of life and thought. Orthodoxy is a spirit, the spirit of Tradition, which cannot be acquired from books but is transmitted from the living to the living, from father to son, mother to daughter, brother to brother, friend to friend, priest to priest, monk to monk, from spiritual father to spiritual child, «not by means of ink and paper, but from mouth to mouth», from soul to soul. And all this within the life of the Holy Mysteries of the Church, within the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit, with the passing of time, little by little, with the slow development of an organism.

But those who speak of union are not naive. They know very well that the Catholics as well as the Protestants will never become Orthodox as a body. But that does not interest them. They are not interested in the return of lost sheep to the fold of Christ. They reckon on a compromise and content with a superficial agreement. Besides, for some time now they have ceased being Orthodox. They are not concerned for truth or the life in Christ. Already the mystery of the Antichrist is working in them, and they are distressed until it be accomplished.

XXIV. THE FALLING AWAY

O unhappy Greek race! You who gave so many Fathers and so many Saints to the Church of Christ, you who enlightened so many barbarians and made them children of God, you who watered these rocks with tears of humility and contrition and made the garden of Orthodoxy blossom on them, you who brought God to walk on this soil through your prayers, why do you now turn your eyes ecstatically to where the sun never rose? And you who of old were God's servant, why do you fall upon your knees with servility to worship the servants of Lucifer?

Are you so overwhelmed by the signs and wonders of progress that you are ready to fall down and worship that glittering but empty idol? Do you not see the darkness behind the fireworks? Do you not see the despair of death behind the artificial smile? Do you not see the poverty hiding beneath the royal appearance?

What have you envied? The power of the Pope? But have you forgotten the power of your God which has enabled you to preserve your Faith intact to this day?

What have you desired? Knowledge? Yes, you should desire knowledge, because you are beginning to lack it, lack it dangerously. But there where you seek it, knowledge does not exist: only substitutes for knowledge are found there - the academic philosophies and academic theologies. But these will only fill your stomach without nourishing you, for they do not have life in them; they are dead letters. They are the study of the shadow of things. They are not the study of God and His creation, but the study of the idea we have of God and His creation, the study of the concepts of our brain.

But if you desire an easy life, if Europe enchants you because it promises comfort and carnal pleasures, well then, go there. It will certainly give you that comfort and pleasure. But along with these, it will give you emptiness and death, the spiritual and eternal death it is tasting today.

XXV. THE SUMMIT OF THE TOWER

Let us not fool ourselves. The Greek race like all others will continue its way. And its way is the way of the masses. The way of the many is always the easiest. The way of the masses is always the way that leads to comfort and pleasure. And in spite of all we might say and all we might do, we would accomplish nothing because of the state the world has reached. The evil is irrevocable.

The most tragic thing is that evil appears to men's eyes as something good. The condemnation, which is not imposed by God but into which man falls by himself, will not be a destruction or some nuclear annihilation as people imagine. Actually the death of the body would be a very small evil for humanity. But that which is about to come will be something unimaginably more harsh and inhuman. It will be the masterpiece of diabolic imagination, the greatest hoax that ever has happened. The destruction towards which humanity is headed will have the appearance of its greatest success. It will be the summit of the tower of Babel, the peak of human vainglory, the crown of human self-conceit.

the destruction will be the fulfillment of the desires of the masses, in which every passion and every evil will swim about freely and unhindered. It will be a complete emptying of the heart, a void, a tedium, a boredom, in other words, spiritual and eternal death.

There will no longer be a place for God in the hearts of men. «In the abounding of iniquity, the love of the many shall grow cold» (Mat. 24:12). The Source of life will no longer have a place among the great majority of people. The Gospel will have been preached to the whole of humanity, «unto a witness to men». All will know it, and almost all will have essentially rejected it.

In the luxury of the cities, amidst the creations of the human brain and the signs and wonders of the Antichrist, there will circulate human creatures without life, dead men who think they are living the most intense life that ever was, but who in truth will be biting with mania their own flesh.

XXVI. CIVILIZATION

They say the Pope is optimistic about the future of mankind. And he certainly should be! Humanity has become what for centuries he has been dreaming it to be. Let him marvel, therefore, at the work of his own hands.

All these learned, clever, and respectable people are his pupils. He first taught them arithmetic and letters. He introduced them to Aristotle. He taught them philosophy when they were still barbarians. To him they owe their civilization.

The Papacy did not preach Christianity. It had neither in appearance nor in thought anything in common with the fishermen of Galilee. The Papacy brought civilization to the Europeans. If anyone has the right to speak of a Greco-Christian civilization, it is the Papacy.

But what relation has Christianity to civilization? What relation can a religion which says «for here we have no abiding city, but seek the one to come» have with civilization, that is, with man's efforts to establish himself as comfortably as possible in the earthly city?

Yet if one carefully observes the sermons and pursuits of most «Christians», he will see that what they seek and hope for is not so much the glory of the Church as the glory of civilization.

Such «Christians» the world wants and accepts, because basically they have the same goals. But the others who do not speak of a Hellenic-Christian civilization but of monasticism, struggles, prayer, who have as their daily bread the continuous striving for the future city, these the world hates, for it does not recognize them as its own. It characterizes the former as truly religious people, and the latter as overzealous, religious fanatics, deniers of life.

The kinship that exists between those Orthodox who speak of Greco-Christian civilization and the views of the Papists is astonishing. They have the same mentality, the same goals, the same indifference for the truth and the mystical life. Their «Christianity» is a cover, a world-view to fill the gaps in their mind and to make their earthly life even more comfortable.

Such «Christians» who are ever ready to make compromises in order to have the majority on their side will never disappear.

They too, like the Pope, are optimistic about the future of mankind, and they are justified. For both are struggling to build civilization, and civilization is being and will be built better every day, to their great joy. It will be a civilization which will respect values, since a civilization without values is impossible, and the values are values because they are useful for society. But values will not prevent death from filling men's hearts. For values will not prevent death from filling men's hearts. For values are sacrifices offered to the idol Man; they are not worship offered to God.

XXVII. THE DIFFICULT WAY

All that is written here is directed neither to the world nor to those «Christians». It is directed to the chosen few who themselves will be in danger of being deceived in the last times.

Within Christian organizations and within Papism and Protestantism, there are souls who truly desire God and seek the future city. But their environment and their teachers do not let them find the way which their hearts desire.

Those chosen few must be careful, very careful. The devil does not always act as devil; most of the time he appears as an angel of light. He preaches a Christianity just a little different from the real one, and with this trap many more are

caught in his net than he would have gained by sending forth an entire army of atheists or Diocletians.

He stigmatizes the faithful, characterizing them as intolerant, narrow-minded, fanatics, letter-worshippers. In this way he has aroused against the Church of Christ the most frightful persecution ever. People are often more afraid of characterizations which diminish their honor and reputation than of the persecutor's sword. Very few are those who can accept the sacrifice of being considered stupid. But in today's world it is inevitable that every true Christian will be characterized as a fool, or at least narrow-minded. Very few have the courage to advance with such a prospect which approaches martyrdom. That is why most people prefer the easy way of compromises, and they preach it with fanaticism.

The pagan never hated the Christian as much as the «Christian» world does today. Formal tolerance is deceptive. The world tolerates only those so-called Christians who walk in step with it, those who try to apply a social Christianity and attempt to be always up-to-date. The others who do not agree to adulterate their Faith it hates. But the world's hate is a criterion for us to know if we are true Christians. «If they have hated Me, they shall hate you too».

CHAPTER THREE

XXVIII. ECCLESIOLOGY

The commotion about union of the churches makes evident the ignorance existing as much among the circles of the simple faithful as among the theologians as to what the Church is.

They understand the catholicity of the Church as a legal cohesion, as an interdependence regulated by some code. For them the Church is an organization with laws and regulations like the organizations of nations. Bishops, like civil servants, are distinguished as superiors and subordinates: patriarchs, archbishops, metropolitans, bishops. For them, one diocese is not something complete, but a piece of a larger whole: the autocephalous church or the patriarchate. But the autocephalous church, also, feels the need to belong to a higher head. When external factors of politics, history, or geography prevent this, a vague feeling of weak unity and even separation circulates through the autocephalous churches.

Such a concept of the Church leads directly to the Papacy. If the catholicity of the Church has this kind of meaning, then Orthodoxy is worthy of tears, because up to now she has not been able to discipline herself under a Pope.

But this is not the truth of the matter. The catholic Church which we confess in the Symbol (Creed) of our Faith is not called catholic because it includes all the Christians of the earth, but because within her everyone of the faithful finds all the grace and gift of God. The meaning of catholicity has nothing to do with a universal organization the way the Papists and those who are influenced by the Papist mentality understand it.

Of course, the Church is intended for the extended to the whole world independent of lands, nations, races, and tongues; and it is not an error for one to name her catholic because of this also. But just as humanity becomes an abstract idea, there is a danger of the same thing happening to the Church when we see her as an abstract, universal idea. In order for one to understand humanity well, it is enough for him to know only one man, since the nature of that man is common to all men of the world.

Similarly, in order to understand what the catholic Church of Christ is, it suffices to know well only one local church. And as among men, it is not submission to a hierarchy which unites them but their common nature, so the local churches are not united by the Pope and the Papal hierarchy but by their common nature.

A local Orthodox church regardless of her size or the number of the faithful is by herself alone, independently of all the others, catholic. And this is so because she lacks nothing of the grace and gift of God. All the local churches of the whole world together do not contain anything more in divine grace than that small church with few members.

She has her presbyters and bishop; she has the Holy Mysteries; she has the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Within her any worthy soul can taste of the Holy Spirit's presence. She has all the grace and truth. What is she lacking therefore in order to be catholic? She is the one flock, and the bishop is her shepherd, the image of Christ, the one Shepherd. She is the prefiguring on earth of the one flock with the one Shepherd, of the new Jerusalem. Within her, even in this life, pure hearts taste of the Kingdom of God, the betrothal of the Holy Spirit. Within

her they find peace which «passeth all understanding», the peace which has no relation with the peace of men: «My peace I give unto you».

«Paul, called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ... to the Church of God which is at Corinth...» Yes, it really was the Church of God, even if it was at Corinth, at one concrete and limited place.

This is the catholic Church, something concrete in space, time, and persons. This concrete entity can occur repeatedly in space and in time without ceasing to remain essentially the same.

Her relations with the other local churches are not relations of legal and jurisdictional interdependence, but relations of love and grace. One local church is united with all the other local Orthodox churches of the world by the bond of identity. Just as one is the Church of God, the other is the Church of God also, as well as all the others. They are not divided by boundaries of nations nor the political goals of the countries in which they live. They are not even divided by the fact that one might be ignorant of the other's existence. It is the same Body of Christ which is partaken of by the Greeks, the Negroes of Uganda, the Eskimos of Alaska, and the Russians of Siberia. The same Blood of Christ circulates in their veins. The Holy Spirit enlightens their minds and leads them to the knowledge of the same truth.

There exist, of course, relations of interdependence between the local churches, and there are canons which govern them. This interdependence, though, is not a relation of legal necessity, but a bond of respect and love in complete freedom, the freedom of grace. And the canons are not laws of a code, but wise guides of centuries of experience.

The Church has no need of external bonds in order to be one. It is not a pope, or a patriarch, or an archbishop which unites the Church. The local church is something complete; it is not a piece of a larger whole.

Besides, the relations of the churches are relations of churches, and not relations which belong exclusively to their bishops. A bishop cannot be conceived of without a flock or independent of his flock. The Church is the bride of Christ. The Church is the body of Christ, not the bishop alone.

A bishop is called a patriarch when the church of which he is the shepherd is a patriarchate, and an archbishop when the church is an archdiocese. In other words, the respect and honor belongs to the local church, and by extension it is rendered to its bishop. The Church of Athens is the largest and, today, most important local church of Greece. For this reason the greatest respect belongs to her, and she deserves more honor than any other church of Greece. Her opinion has a great bearing, and her role in the solution of common problems is the most significant. That is why she is justly called an archdiocese. Consequently, the bishop of that church, because he represents such an important church is a person equally important and justly called an archbishop. He himself is nothing more than an ordinary bishop. In the orders of priesthood - the deacon, the presbyter, and the bishop - there is no degree higher than the office of the bishop. The titles metropolitan, archbishop, patriarch, or pope do not indicate a greater degree of ecclesiastical charism, because there is no greater sacramental grace than that which is given to the bishop. They only indicate a difference in prominence of the churches of which they are shepherds.

This prominence of one church in relation to the others is not something permanent. It depends upon internal and external circumstances. In studying the history of the Church, we see the primacy of prominence and respect passing from church to church in a natural succession. In Apostolic times, the Church of Jerusalem, without any dispute, had the primacy of authority and importance. She had known Christ; she had heard His words; she saw Him being crucified and arising; and upon her did the Holy Spirit first descend. All who were in a communion of faith and life with her were certain that they walked the road of Christ. This is why Paul, when changed that the Gospel which he taught was not the Gospel of Christ, hastened to explain it before the Church of Jerusalem, so that the agreement of that church might silence his enemies (Gal. 2: 1-2).

Later, that primacy was taken by Rome, little by little. It was the capital of the Roman Empire. A multitude of tried Christians comprised that church. Two leading Apostles had lived and preached within its bounds. A multitude of Martyrs had dyed its soil with their blood. That is why her word was venerable, and her authority in the solution of common problems was prodigious. But it was the authority of the church and not of her bishop. When she was asked for her view in the solution of common problems, the bishop replied not in his own name as a Pope of today would do, but in the name of his church. In his epistle to the Corinthians, St. Clement of Rome begins this way: «The Church of God which is in Rome, to the Church of God which is in Corinth». He writes in an amicable and supplicatory manner in order to convey the witness and opinion of his church concerning whatever happened in the Church of Corinth. In his letter to the Church of Rome, St. Ignatius the God-bearer does not mention her bishop anywhere, although he writes as though he were addressing himself to the church which truly has primacy in the hierarchy of the churches of his time.

When St. Constantine transferred the capital of the Roman state to Byzantium, Rome began gradually to lose her old splendor. It became a provincial city. A new local church began to impose itself upon the consciousness of the Christian world: the Church of Constantinople. Rome tried jealously to preserve the splendor of the past, but because things were not conducive to it, it developed little by little its well-known Papal ecclesiology in order to secure theoretically that which circumstances would not offer. Thus it advanced from madness to madness, to the point where it declared that the Pope is infallible whenever he speaks on doctrine, even if because of sinfulness he does not have the enlightenment of sanctity the Fathers of the Church had.*

* Actually, if we believe the Papists, we must either accept that all the Popes were saints and were enlightened because of their sanctity, or we must accept that God speaks through their mouth in a mechanical way, as He spoke through the mouth of Balaam's ass.

The first hypothesis is refuted when the life and works of most of the Popes who sat on the throne of Rome are examined.

The second hypothesis means that the mouth of a sinful Pope is moved by God and dogmatizes correctly, but he himself does not experience the truths that his mouth pronounces.

It is a basic truth of Christianity that God does not enter into communion with sin. He does not dwell in unclean hearts, and He does not enlighten proud intellects.

Sin is precisely the lack of light. It is darkness, the condition of men who wilfully remain in darkness because they «hate the light and neither come to the light». God, of course, could constrain them to come towards the light; He could make them saints by force, but His love towards His rational creatures does not permit Him to do violence to the freedom with which He has endowed them. Such a thing would be a refutation of Himself.

It is therefore equivalent to blasphemy for us to accept that God would forcibly enlighten the sinful Popes. If God had given the promise that the Popes would, in any case, teach His word correctly regardless of who they were, that would mean that He would speak with their mouth the way He spoke with the mouth of Balaam's ass. But just as the ass did not have any consciousness of what its mouth was saying, similarly, the sinful Pope would not have any consciousness of the truths which he was pronouncing.

You can give the entire Holy Scripture to an atheist to read. That atheist may be an able philologist and a theologian with a degree. But will he really understand anything from all that he has read? Give a miser the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus, or an unjust man the Beatitudes to read, and then observe to see if

The Church of Constantinople played the most significant role throughout the long period of great heresies and of the Ecumenical Councils, and in her turn she gave her share of blood with the martyrdom of thousands of her children during the period of the Iconoclasts.

Besides these churches which at different times had the primacy of authority, there were others which held the second or third place. They were the various patriarchates, old or new, and other important churches or metropolises. There exists, therefore, a hierarchy, but a hierarchy of churches and not a bishops. St. Irenaeus does not advise Christians to address themselves to important bishops in order to find the solution to their problem, but to the churches which have the oldest roots in the Apostles (*Adv. Haer*, III, 4, 1).

There are not, therefore, organizational, administrative, or legal bonds among the churches, but bonds of love and grace, the same bonds of love and grace which exist among the faithful of every church, clergy of lay. The relationship between presbyter and bishop is not a relationship of employee and employer, but a charismatic and sacramental relationship. The bishop is the one who gives the presbyter the grace of the priesthood. And the presbyter gives the layman the grace of the Holy Mysteries. The only thing which separates the bishop from the presbyter is the charism of ordination. The bishop excels in nothing else, even if he be the bishop of an important church and bears the title of patriarch or pope. «There is not much separating them [the presbyters] and the bishops. For they too are elevated for the teaching and protection of the Church... They [the bishops] surpass them only in the power of ordination, and in this alone they exceed the presbyters» (Chrysostom, Hom. XI. on I Tim).

Bishops have no right to behave like rulers, not only towards the other churches but also towards the presbyters of laymen of the church of which they are bishop. They have a responsibility to oversee in a paternal way, to counsel, to guide, to battle against falsehood, to adjure transgressors with love and strictness, to preside in love. But these responsibilities they share with the presbyters. And the presbyters in turn look upon the bishops as their fathers in the priesthood and render them the same love.

All things in the Church are governed by love. Any distinctions are charismatic distinctions. They are not distinctions of a legal nature but of a spiritual authority. And among the laymen there are charisms and charisms.

The unity of the Church, therefore, is not a matter of obedience to a higher authority. It is not a matter of submission of subordinates to superiors. External relations do not make unity, neither do the common decisions of councils, even of Ecumenical Councils. The unity of the Church is given by the communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, the communion with the Holy Trinity. It is a liturgical unity, a mystical unity.

The common decisions of an Ecumenical Council are not the foundation but the result of unity. Besides, the decisions of either an ecumenical or local council are

they have understood anything from what they've read. As much will be understood by a sinful, proud, opportunist, and perhaps even an atheist Pope, of what God would put in his mouth.

But is that the way in which God promised to lead the Church to the fulness of truth? Do the Catholics believe such a thing? Let those who are not fanatical examine carefully how foreign such a mentality is to the Church of Christ, foreign to the thought and practice of the first centuries of the Church of Rome.

If they see this, perhaps they might not even need to search the Scriptures in order to find there the condemnation of every such teaching of Infallibility and of every form of Papism.

valid only when they are accepted by the consciousness of the Church and are in accord with the Tradition.

The Papacy is the distortion *par excellence* of Church unity. It made that bond of love and freedom a bond of constraint and tyranny. The Papacy is unbelief in the power and confidence in the power of human systems.

But let no one think that the Papacy is something which exists only in the West. In recent times it has started to appear among the Orthodox too. A few novel titles are characteristic of this spirit, for example, «Archbishop of all Greece», «Archbishop of North and South America». Many times we hear people say of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the «leader of Orthodoxy», or we hear the Russians speaking of Moscow as the third Rome and its patriarch as holding the reins of the whole of Orthodoxy. In fact, many sharp rivalries have begun. All these are manifestations of the same worldly spirit, the same thirst for worldly power, and belong to the same tendencies which characterize the world today.

People cannot feel unity in multiplicity. Yet this is a deep mystery. Our weakness or inability to feel it originates from the condition of severance into which the human race has fallen. People have charged from persons into separated and hostile individuals, and it is impossible for them now to understand the deep unity of their nature. Man, however, is one and many; one in his nature, many in persons. This is the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and the mystery of the Church.

XXIX. PSEUDO - BISHOPS

It is imperative that Christians realize that the Church has sacramental and not administrative foundations; then they will not suffer that which has happened to the Westerners who followed the Pope in his errors because they thought that if they did not follow him, they would automatically be outside the Church.

Today the various patriarchates and archdioceses undergo great pressures from political powers which seek to direct the Orthodox according to their own interests. It is known that the Patriarchate of Moscow accepts the influence of Soviet politics. But the Patriarchate of Constantinople also accepts the influence of American politics. It was under this influence that the contact of the Ecumenical Patriarchate with the similarly American-influenced, Protestant, World Council of Churches was brought about, and its servile disposition toward the Pope started to take on dangerous dimensions and even to exert over-bearing pressure upon the other Orthodox churches.

America thinks that it will strengthen the Western faction against communism if, with these artificial conciliations, it unifies its spiritual forces. But in this way the Church becomes a toy of the political powers of the world, with unforeseeable consequences for Orthodoxy.

Are the Orthodox people obliged to follow such a servile patriarchate forever? The fact that this patriarchate for centuries held the primacy of importance and honor in the Christian world cannot justify those who will follow it to a unifying capitulation with heresy. Rome also once had the primacy of importance and honor in the Christian world, but that did not oblige Christians to follow it on the road of heresy. The communion with and respect for one church on the part of the other churches remains and continues only as long as that church remains in the Church, that is, as long as it lives and proceeds in spirit and truth. When a patriarchate ceases to be a

church, admitting communion with heretics, then its recognition on the part of the other churches ceases also.

The Orthodox people must become conscious of the fact that they owe no obedience to a bishop, no matter how high a title he holds, when that bishop ceases being Orthodox and openly follows heretics with pretenses of union «on equal terms». On the contrary, they are obliged to depart from him and confess their Faith, because the moment he ceases being Orthodox. The bishop is a consecrated person, and even if he is openly sinful, respect and honor is due him until synodically censured. But if he becomes openly heretical or is in communion with heretics, then the Christians should not await any synodical decision, but should draw away from him immediately.

Here is what the canons of the Church say on this: «... So that if any presbyter or bishop or metropolitan dares to secede from communion with his own patriarch and does not mention his name as is ordered and appointed in the divine mystagogy, but before a synodical arraignment and his [the patriarch's] full condemnation, he creates a schism, the Holy Synod has decreed that this person be alienated from every priestly function, if only he be proven to have transgressed in this. These rules, therefore, have been sealed and ordered concerning those who on the pretext of some accusations against their own presidents stand apart, creating a schism and severing the unity of the Church. But as for those who on account of some heresy condemned by Holy Synods or Fathers sever themselves from communion with their president, that is, because he publicly preaches heresy and with bared head teaches it in the Church, for walling themselves off from communion with the so-called bishop before synodical clarification, but they shall be deemed bishops and false teachers have they condemned, and they have not fragmented the Church's unity with schism, but from schisms and divisions have they earnestly sought to deliver the Church» (Canon XV of the so-called First and Second Council).

XXX. AT THE END OF TIME

The world and the devil are leading the Church to such frightening trials that the day might come when all the bishops of the land will enter into communion with the heretics. What will the faithful do then? What will the few do who have the heroism not to follow the masses, not to follow their kin, their neighbors, and their fellow citizens?

All the faithful will have to understand that the Church is not there where it appears to be. Liturgies will continue to be performed and the churches will be filled with people, but the Church will have no relation with those churches or those clergy and those faithful. The Church is where the truth is. The faithful are those who continue the unbroken Tradition of Orthodoxy, that work of the Holy Spirit. The real priests are those who think, live, and teach as the Fathers and the Saints of the Church did, or at least do not reject them in their teaching. Where that continuity of thought and life does not exist, it is a deception to speak of the Church, even if all the outward marks speak of it.

There will always be found a canonical priest, ordained by a canonical bishop, who will follow the Tradition. Around such priests will gather the small groups of the faithful who will remain until the last days. Each one of these small groups will be a local catholic Church of God. The faithful will find in them the entire fulness of the grace of God. They will have no need of administrative or other ties, for the communion that will exist among them will be the most perfect there can be. It will be communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, communion in the Holy Spirit. The

golden links of the unalterable Orthodox Tradition will connect those churches among themselves as well as with the churches of the past, with the Church triumphant of heaven. In these small groups the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church will be preserved intact.

Of course, it is wonderful that order and coordination should exist in the outward functionings of the various churches, and that the less important churches should receive their direction and guidance from the more important churches, the way it is now between dioceses, metropolises, archdioceses, and patriarchates. But in the last days, such outward relations and contacts will be impossible most of the time. There will be such confusion in the world that one church will not be able to be certain of the orthodoxy of another because of the multitude of false prophets who will fill the world and who will be saying, «Here is Christ», and «There is Christ». There might even be misunderstandings among the really Orthodox churches because of the confusion of tongues which exists in the contemporary Babel. But none of that sever the essential unity of the Church.

A contemporary example of that condition is presented by the Russians of the dispersion who have been divided into three opposing factions. One group wishes to belong to the Patriarchate of Moscow. Another, in order to be free from Soviet political influence, belongs to the Patriarchate of Constantinople and is influenced by pro-Papal politics.* The third and most down-to-earth group, the Russian Synod Abroad, remains independent. And the three groups, at least up to the present, are Orthodox with full essential communion among them.** Formal intercommunion and external contacts, however, they do not have, and this because they have been lost in the web of legalistic concepts and debates about which patriarchate should govern them. Such a mentality is wrong in its very basis since there is no essential need for dependence on a patriarchate, particularly at a time when immense distance and

* Since this book was written, this group has declared itself autonomous. Its counterpart in the United States is the Metropolia. (Editors' note)

** These three groups have no formal or external communion with each other or concelebration because of various canonical differences, and, of late, doctrinal differences as well. So long as each group professed the full Orthodox Faith in both word and life, they were true Orthodox Churches of Christ. However, since the author wrote the above in 1963, a number of decrees have been synodically enacted by both the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the Soviet Church, which place them Anathemas of 1054 on the part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Papal see, and (2) the decision of the Soviet Church to administer Holy Communion to Roman Catholics. Both of these acts contravene the commandment of love and the principle of faithful adherence to the truth which has been enjoined us by Our Saviour, the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church. Furthermore, the incorporation of these jurisdictions into the WCC as «organic members» belies their professed membership in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, Orthodoxy in faith and life, and not jurisdictional dependence or adherence to a so-called «World Orthodoxy», is the criterion used to recognize an Orthodox Church. (Editors' note).

A good example is the schism of the Church of Bulgaria. For nearly two generations they were in schism with the Church of Constantinople for administrative and nationalistic reasons. Thus no Greek-speaking church had any communion with the Church of Bulgaria, but the Slavic-speaking churches continued their relations with them and with the Greek churches. The Greek churches, however, did not refuse communion to the Slavic churches because the latter recognized the Bulgarian Church. When the schism was healed, there were no reordinations or repetition of Mysteries performed during the schism since the Bulgarians had adhered to the Faith.

The Russian situation is a little more complicated. The existence of an official church (Moscow Patriarchate) and an unofficial church (the Catacomb church) poses a problem, even if one leaves aside the question of collaboration of the Soviet Church with the atheist state, which has been undisputedly demonstrated on many occasions. See the Encyclical of Metropolitan Philaret entitled «The Catacomb Church» (*Orthodox Word*, April-May-June 1966), and the letters of the priests Nicholas Eshliman and Gleb Yakunin to the Soviet Government and Patriarch Alexei (*Religion in Communist Dominated Areas*, vol. V, nos. 9-10, 10-11), and the shameful Encyclical of Patriarch Alexei in «answer» to the facts stated in the letters (idid. nos. 15-16, and also *A History of the Russian Church Abroad, 1917-1971*, published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery). Moreover, Patriarch Pimen, the successor Alexei, has continued and furthered the policies established by his two immediate predecessors, as the official reports printed in the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* manifestly reveal (as, indeed, is also the case with Demetrios, Athenagoras's successor). Above all this, the official decision of the Soviet Church in January of 1970 to give communion to Roman Catholics of the Soviet Church in January of 1970 to give communion to Roman Catholics clearly violates the precepts of the Holy Gospel and of Holy Tradition. This open betrayal of the Faith «with bared head» places the Soviet Church in direct conflict with traditional Orthodoxy and brings the validity of its own mysteries into serious question. (Editors' note)

frontiers of nations separate them from these patriarchates. Nothing impedes an Orthodox church in Paris, for example, from being in essential communion with the Patriarchate of Moscow or with the Church of Constantinople, even though it has no jurisdictional dependence upon them. The notion that the interruption of jurisdictional dependence of a local church from a patriarchate cuts this church off from the Orthodox Church is not Orthodox but Papal. Besides, even the existence of jurisdictional dependence of churches upon one patriarch is of Papal inspiration. An Orthodox patriarch is a president, a coordinator of efforts, an adviser of great importance, but he is not a despot, not a sovereign. He can do nothing beyond the bounds of his diocese without the agreement of all the other bishops (XXXIV Apostolic Canon).

It is possible, then, in the last days when the various churches and religions will have been united and will appear as single whole, that the genuine Orthodox Church will appear disintegrated, fragmented into small, scattered, sparse parishes, so that it is even possible that one will suspect the other from lack of confidence, just as soldiers suspect each other when it is learned that the enemy is wearing the same uniform.

In the last days all will claim to be Orthodox Christians, and that Orthodoxy is as they understand it to be. But in spite of all this, those who have a pure heart and a mind enlightened by divine grace will recognize the Orthodox Church despite the apparent divisions and utter lack of external splendor. They will gather around the true priests, and they will become the pillars of the Church. Let the people of the world do whatever they will. Let there be ecumenical conferences; let the churches be united; let Christianity be adulterated; let the Tradition and life be changed; let the religions be united. The Church of Christ will remain unaltered, as Chrysostom says, because if even of her pillars remains standing, the Church will not fall. «Nothing is stronger than the Church. She is higher than the heavens and broader than the earth. She never grows old; she always flourishes».

A pillar of the Church is every true believer who adheres to the Tradition of the Fathers in spite of all the frightful currents of the world which attempt to pull him away. Such pillars will exist until the end of the world, whatever might happen. Besides, when these things come to pass, the coming of the Lord will not be far off. That state of affairs will be the most fearful sign that His coming is approaching. Precisely then will the end come.

XXXI. THE SIGN OF THE COMING

Sugary, or unsalted and sentimental Christians regard the above as extreme and repulsive pessimism. As allies of the world, they cannot see the seal of the devil on that witch they approve. Neither can they estimate the horrendous gulf which separates the world from God, for then they would be required to admit that the same gulf separates them too from God.

They cannot, therefore, tolerate anyone being pessimistic about the contemporary Babel. They are that content with their era. They see such a bright future. Christianity for them is very much in step with the world, and they are so pleased with this that they will never forgive you if you show them that they are deceived.

They visualize in the future a united world-church with all men united by the bond of love. The heretics of the various sects are to them their Christian brothers from whom they were separated by the egotisms and narrow-mindedness of bygone

eras. They admit that there are dogmatical differences, but these differences shall be overcome by love, or to speak more openly, they shall be forgotten by love.

But what relation does that sniveling love have to the love of God? How can they shamelessly claim that they have more love in their hearts than did the Saints who were not able with their love to overcome the barriers which divided them from heresy, but on the contrary, they made these barriers higher so they could protect the sheep from the wolves?

But that which they take for love of men is in its essence nothing but love of the world. It is a coming to terms with falsehood by men who cannot bear the hardships of the war with the powers of darkness.

And their dream, that idyllic image of good and kindly people who make Christ reign on this earth - that temptation of the desert - is a dream condemned by the Lord Himself.

Let the super-optimists cast a glance at the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew - to see how the Lord prophesies concerning the last days.

And Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, «See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be throw down».

And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, «Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?» And Jesus answered and said unto them, «Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, «I am Christ», and shall deceive many: And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places: all these are the beginnings of sorrows.

«Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise and deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

«When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand), then let them who be in Judea flee unto the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in winter, neither on the sabbath day. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Then if any man shall say unto you, «Lo, here is Christ», or «There», believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, «Behold he is in the desert», go not forth; «Behold, he is in the secret chambers», believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

«Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, 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; and He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

«Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

«But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left. Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh».

The disciples ask the Lord to tell them what will be the sign of His coming and the end of the world; and Christ, answering, begins with the words: «Take heed that no man deceive you». The danger of deception, then, shall be frightening in the last days; and that because «many shall come in My name, saying, «I am Christ», and shall deceive many». Many will come saying that they are Christ, or that they are His representatives or have been sent by Him, or are teachers of Christianity - people who will claim to be Christians without really being so. And they will not remain without evoking a response in men's hearts, but they will lead many into deception.

Christ, then, is not speaking of God's obvious enemies; He is not speaking of the materialists, of the communists, of the atheists, but of those who appear as friends of God, as Christians without being so in truth. It is from them that Christ wishes to save the faithful, because they are His great enemies, the hypocrites, «those able to deceive».

Then Christ describes a few signs which shall be the beginning of sorrows: wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes. All these shall not yet be the end, but the beginning of the end. «Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you», and the whole world shall hate you for My name's sake. Then many of the Christians shall be scandalized, and they shall begin to betray and hate one another. And many false prophets shall go among them and lead many astray. And as iniquity abounds, the love of many for God and for neighbor shall grow

cold. The only one who shall be saved is he who shall bear all those temptations with patience and fortitude until the end.

In that chaos of apostasy and coldness, the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world shall be completed in order that all men may know it, in order that all men might hear the call of God. However, because «many are called, but few are chosen», people shall hear that Gospel, but they shall not accept it; they shall learn it, but they shall not live it. It shall remain «for a witness unto all nations», a fearful testimony that people know the truth, and that if they do not follow it, this cannot be attributed to ignorance but to an aversion for the light. Then «shall the end come». When these things come to pass and deliberate apostasy has reached its height, then the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ shall come.

Then Christ begins talking about something outwardly unrelated to the end of the world: the destruction of Jerusalem. But that destruction which happened forty years later is in reality a prefiguring of the end of the world. When Israel's apostasy was complete, when they knew Christ and instead of accepting Him they crucified Him and persecuted His disciples, then the end of Jerusalem came. Then, as Daniel prophesied, the abomination of desolation came and stood in the holy place of the temple, and there was not left «one stone upon another», and everything holy and sacred of the Israelites was scattered and lost. The same thing shall happen to the new Israel, the Christian world. Just like the old Israel it too was called to become a child of God, but just like the old Israel it too spurned its benevolent Father, and instead of seeking the kingdom of God it sought the kingdom of man. Therefore when its apostasy can progress no further, the prophecy of Daniel shall be fulfilled for it also. There shall be an abomination of desolation for it too, which shall stand in the holy place of God, in His Church and in His temples. The Antichrist shall come, who shall sit in the place of God and ask men to worship him instead of God. Then the sacred and holy things of the new Israel, the true Church of Christ, shall be scattered, hunted to the ends of the earth, and, as happened then when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, as many as remained faithful to God and followed His Christ passed into the new Israel, so it shall happen at the end of the world, the true and eternal Israel, the true children of God, shall pass into the new Jerusalem, the city which is eternal and not made with human hands, and which the love of God has prepared.

Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place of God, let as many as are really faithful leave for the mountains; let them raise their minds to the peaks of the spiritual life; let them cut off their ties with the dead people of the world. Whoever has ascended to the high chambers of prayer, let him not descend from that heavenly conversation to the vain cares of this world; and he «who is in the field, who puts his hand to the plow», who does the works of God, let him not turn back to the vain works of men. But woe unto those souls which will still have the child in their belly and will not have borne any spiritual fruit, and woe unto as many as are still nourished on milk and have not tasted the solid food of the Spirit. Pray, therefore, that the end of the world may not find you under difficult conditions with your heart frozen and the feet of your spirit bound. For in that time great tribulation shall come to the faithful such as there never was from the beginning of the world. And if those days were not made short, no soul would be saved, but those days shall be shortened for the sake of the elect, so that they might not be deceived and lost.

Then if anyone tells you that Christ has come and that He is here or there, do not believe him, because there shall appear false Christs and false prophets who shall do signs and wonders in order to deceive, if they can, even the elect. And the

Lord continues, «Behold, I have foretold it to you». So then, I have told you everything beforehand. If they tell you that Christ has come and is in some desert or some city, do not believe them; because when Christ comes He shall not come secretly, but His light shall appear to men like the light of a flash of lightning from east to west, and before Him shall be drawn up, against their will, all mankind.

Immediately after the tribulation which the faithful will suffer in those last days of the world, the sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall fall from the sky. And then the Cross shall appear in the heavens, «the sign of the Son of man», and then shall weep all the races of the earth, and they shall see the Son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And His angels shall gather up all the elect of God from the four corners of heaven and the earth.

When you see the fig tree bring forth leaves, you know from this sign that summer is coming. In the same way when you see all the things happening which I have foretold to you, you will know that the end is approaching. I speak truly in saying that before this generation of men passes, Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and before the generation of Christians passes away, before the evils which shall find them blot out their generation, all that I have told you shall happen. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.

Do not ask Me which day or after how much time all these things will happen, for of that day not even the angels of heaven know. Only be always ready for that day, so that it will not come like a thief and find you unprepared. The days when the Son of man comes again shall be like the days of Noe. Just as in the days a little before the deluge men carefreely ate, drank, and married as though nothing were to happen, until the day when Noe entered the ark and the flood began which drowned them before they could understand what was happening, so shall the days be when the Son of man comes. At that time men shall be working together, and from them one shall be taken up near to God by the angels and the other shall be left far away from Him.

Remain, therefore, vigilant, because you do not know at what hour your Lord is coming.

XXXII. PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME

Where, then, is the optimism for the last days? When the Lord foretells that deception shall cover the whole earth so that even the chosen shall be in danger of being deceived at their every step by the false Christians and false Christs who shall be everywhere, how can we be optimistic about the future? How can we be optimistic when the Lord foretells the multiplying of iniquity and the chilling of men's love?

Of course, there are forecasts of the union of churches, of the union of all those who come in His name to deceive many. But «take heed that no man deceive you; behold, I have foretold it to you». The union which the false Christians of our times seek is one of the most perfect machinations of falsehood, a snare of hypocritical piety from which the Lord wants to save us by making us cautious. If the unity and worldwide expansion of Christianity is the final destiny of mankind as they teach, why then does Christ foretell tribulation for His elect in those days? If the Gospel will be accepted and lived by all the nations of the earth, why does Christ say that the days at the end of the world will be like the days of Noe, when apostasy had covered the earth, and only a handful of people were found faithful to God and entered the ark, which symbolizes the Church?

If the last days of the earth are characterized by the idyllic image of which the sentimental, the «spiritual» Christians dream, how does the Apostle Paul write these words to Timothy? «This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, slanderers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof» (II Tim. 3:1-5).

Where, then, is the optimism of the Apostle Paul when he writes to the Thessalonians, who were awaiting from minute to minute the coming of Christ? «Let no man deceive you by any means [that is, that Christ is coming right now], for except there come apostasy first and that man of sin [the Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God», Christ shall not come. «Remember ye not that when I was yet with you I told you these things?» And later he continues about the Antichrist: «And then shall the wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming, even him whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all deception of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a working of delusion that they should believe a lie, so that they all may be judged who have believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness» (II Thess. 2:3-5, 8-12).

The future then is not as beautiful as «they who perish» imagine, they who «receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved». It will be characterized by apostasy, the worst falling away the world has ever known. Because it will not be a clean and honest denial of God, but a hypocrisy, a falsification of the Faith and of the truth.

Did not the Fathers of the desert and the great cloud of Saints of our Church prophesy the same things about the last days? Here is a conversation between a disciple and his spiritual father taken from the *Evergetinos* (1958 edition, Vol. II, p. 114): *And the brother said to him, «What then? Shall the customs and Traditions of the Christians change, and shall there be no priests in the Church so that such things happen?» And the elder said, «In times such as those, the love of many shall grow cold, and there shall be not a little tribulation: overrunning of nations and movement of peoples, apostasy of kings, prodigality of priests, negligence of those in monastic life; and there shall be superiors disdainful of their own salvation and that of their flock, all of them eager and outstanding at banquets, contentious, indolent in prayers, and eager to slander, ready to condemn the lives of the Elders and their sayings, neither imitating nor hearing them, but rather reviling them and saying, «If we lived days shall be respecters of powerful persons, making decisions according to gifts, not defending the poor under judgement, oppressing widows, abusing orphans; and unbelief shall enter into the people, depravity, hatred, enmity, jealousy, rivalries, thievery, drunkenness.» And the brother said, «What then is one to do in those times and years?» And the elder said, «Child, in such days as those, he who can save, let him save his own soul, and he shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven».*

From these prophecies which in great part have already been fulfilled, one can easily come to a conclusion about where man-kind is headed. Its future is a spiritual bankruptcy, where love for God and neighbor will have grown cold, and men

will have become to the extreme limit agotists, covetous, boasters, blasphemers, lovers of pleasure.

But that spiritual bankruptcy will not appear bare and monstrous as it is, but will be covered by an amazing appearance of religiosity. These people with their many spiritual ulcers will have none the less an appearance of piety. There will be many who will preach in the name of Christ and will deceive with their false piety and religiosity those «who perish», all those who do not have in their hearts the love of the truth in order to be able to discern the wolves in sheep's clothing. And furthermore, the false Christs and false prophets in the last days will accompany their message with signs and great wonders which they shall effect through the power of Satan (spiritualism, magic, fakirism, etc.).

Finally, when the faith of the great masses of humanity has been corroded by these false prophets and their souls have been prepared, then he whom the Jews awaited and still await will be revealed; it is he whose way mankind has been preparing now for centuries, he who will become the symbol and god of the entire lost generation of the last people, «the man of sin» - the great Satanic sin of the spirit - the son of perdition, the adversary, who like Lucifer exalts himself above everything which men have honored until then. He will sit in the temple of God as God, and by means of fearful powers and signs and wonders which he will perform with the power of Satan, he will prove to the darkened and shortsighted minds of men that he and no one else is God.

He will make the desired union of the sentimentalists a reality. Before his throne people of all the religions and spiritual currents will bow to worship as brothers. He will unite all the nations of the earth under his scepter because «power has been given to him over every race and people and tongue and nation. And all who 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» (Rev. 13:7-8).

For worldly people, that preview of a universal state and universal religion is something very pleasant. It is the same today with those who desire the union of the churches and do not care about the truth. For the latter, dogmatical subjects are futile Byzantinologies. But «for this cause, God shall send them a working of delusion that they should believe a lie, so that they all may be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness».

XXXIII. THE NEW JERUSALEM

In that society of the Antichrist, the few who will remain genuine Orthodox Christians will be a rock of scandal, the only dissonance in all that diabolical harmony. For them, these days will be days of great tribulation: «And you shall be hated by all nations for My name's sake». It will be a new period of martyrdom, a martyrdom more of the soul than of the body. In that vast, universal state, the Orthodox Christians will be the outcasts of society. «And [he shall] cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark on their hand, or on their foreheads, and that no man might buy or sell he that had the mark, or the name of the best, or the number of his name» (Rev. 13:15-17). Yes, «then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and they shall kill you». «For the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time» (Rev. 12:12). «But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved». «But for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened». Because «immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the

moon shall not give her light, ... and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, ... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory».

Let the faithless mock, and let them pity us. The Christians do not live for this world. They have never accepted this world of exile as their fatherland, neither have they wished to adorn it as if they were to live in it forever. They live on this earth as refugees with a nostalgia, a nostalgia for the Paradise which they lost, a nostalgia for the fatherland. They may have been born on this earth, but the fatherland lives in their hearts, and in their every step they hear it calling them. They long for that moment, the moment of the trumpet, the moment when they will stand before the «serene eye» of their Lord, the moment when His gladsome countenance will face their countenance.

Christians are strangers in this world (St. Macarius the Egyptian). They are estranged, disdained, having a contrite heart and a sorrowful mind, living in a manner different from that of other people (St. Isaac the Syrian). They are as people holding their blood in their hands, not having confidence in themselves or thinking that they are something, but being despised and rejected more than all other men (St. Macarius the Egyptian).

You say that our religion is an opiate; you are correct. For you who have not experienced the presence of God, and whose heart has never leaped from the whisperings of divine grace, and whose eyes have never shed tears of divine love, for you who have never seen anything beyond the horizon of this earth, it is natural that our religion which denies the world should appear as an opiate. Truly, «if Christ be not risen, we are of all men most miserable». But Christ is risen, and every risen soul has lived this resurrection. It is natural for those who have not lived that resurrection to laugh at the Christians.

Many times Christians with irrefutable reason have shown the world how ridiculous are those who ridicule their Faith. But what of it? Did reason prevent them from believing? It is the mists from the mire in their hearts which do not permit them to see. Reason alone never enabled man to understand anything. So let them laugh. Their laughter brings faithful souls closer to the Lord.

We will allow you therefore to laugh. But what we will not allow you to do is to change the Gospel, to distort our religion and make it a servant of your own ends. We will never allow you to attribute worldly utility and expediency to our religion. «The Gospels do not speak of earthly things, but of heavenly things, teaching us a different life and polity, new riches and poverty, unprecedented freedom and bondage, another kind of life and death, a different world and other - not like Plato, who contrived that ridiculous *Republic* of his, nor like Zeno and the other politicians, philosophers, and lawmakers. For all of them had the following common attribute: they revealed that the evil spirit secretly inspired their souls. Our own conscience which protests proves that all their ideas were demonic devices, and all their teachings contrary to nature» (St. John Chrysostom, Homily I on the Gospel According to St. Matthew).

Christianity does not, therefore, prepare any earthly kingdom, any earthly city. It has nothing in common with civilizations and worldly systems. It has nothing in common with the caesars and the caesaro-papists. All the things which the people of the world pursue are on the level of corruptibility. The Christian thinks, lives, and moves in the world of incorruption.

Those who want to unite the so-called Christian churches do not believe in the Church, do not believe in the religion of Christ. They simply use it. They use it for their own purposes. Their goal is the earthly city to which they wish to subjugate all men.

In reality, there is no question of union of the Christians. True Christians were, are, and always will be united. They were, are, and will be one flock with one Shepherd. Men, regardless of what name they have or to what religion they belong, have one destiny: to find the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ, and to drink from the water «springing up unto everlasting life». The Church is one. People are many, and few of them are her children.

The city which is destined for the friends of God has nothing from this world. It is eternal, not made with hands, the existence of another earth, another world: «And I saw a new heaven and a new earth... And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, «Behold, God's tabernacle with men^{*}, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, 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». And He that sat upon the throne said, «Behold, I make all things new... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely»... And they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no lamp, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever and ever» (Rev. 21, 22).

* The tabernacle in which God will live together with men.