

# APOSTASY and ANTICHRIST

Translated from the Russian



Τὴν πορὰφίλᾳ πρὸπ. Ἰωβὰ Ποτάμσκατω.  
Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N. Y.

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

"First, be aware of this: In the last days scoffers will enter . . . saying, 'where is the promise of His coming? For . . . all things continue to be as they were since the dawn of creation'."

True to this prophecy of the Holy Apostle Peter, there are now many such scoffers amongst us. There are even many who bear the name Christian who have, nevertheless, ceased to hope on the return of Christ. Now they are planning better things of their own. Having resolved that there will be no God-created "new heaven and new earth"<sup>2</sup>, these scoffers have decided to forge a man-created new world in the same way that Protestantism decided to build a man-created church in opposition to the Church of Christ.

To this, Saint Paul admonishes, "Let no man deceive you by any means! That day will not come before there first comes the great apostasy and that man who is sin personified is revealed, the inheritor of perdition who will oppose himself to and exalt himself above all that is called divine or that is worshipped by man, even sitting in the temple of God, claiming to be a god himself . . . Therefore, brethren, stand firm and hold fast to all the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle."<sup>3</sup>

Are the last days upon us? Is the "son of perdition", Anti-christ, about to appear? An increasing number of Orthodox Christians express an affirmative reply to this question. The reasons for this apocalyptic feeling are many and are quite valid. This view differs sharply from the emotional expectations of the return of Christ which occurred on occasions in past centuries, particularly during the fall of Rome and at the fall of Constantinople. The apocalyptic views in those particular times were based upon immediate physical sufferings and terror rather than upon a sound analysis of obviously fulfilled prophecies of the Holy Scripture.

Until this century, there had been fulfilled very few of the

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. 3:3.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. 21:1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Thes. 2:15.

specific prophecies of Christ, the Holy Apostles and the Fathers of the Church, related to the culmination of time and the second advent of Christ. Yet the prophecies of the Holy Scripture have always been made clear to the faithful by means of iconic prototypes before they have been actually fulfilled. Now it seems that even the last and most difficult to understand of these prophecies have been clarified by actual, historical events in our own century. What appeared to be unfathomable mysteries, in the book of Revelation, are no longer such mysteries, for even the most startling and unbelievable of these things have been and are being experienced in our present time.

For example, both Christians and materialists have long agreed that the existing order and civilization will perish as a result of a massive holocaust, a holocaust described in the Holy Scripture in such massive, terrifying, universal and all-encompassing terms that, before Dresden, Hiroshima, Bikini and other manifestations of the napalm and nuclear age, the descriptions simply transcended the mind and imagination of mankind.

The Orthodox Christian Church has always taught that the cause of such a destruction will be the religious and moral decay of humanity; that the time would arrive when vast segments of the Holy Orthodox Church would apostatize, when a counter church, formed under Satan's leadership, would arise and when evil will reign so strongly in the life of mankind that life on earth will become virtually impossible. Then the world will lose its right and its reason for existence. The destruction will come about according to God's sentence, but the cause of the sentence will be the evil of mankind.

Materialists point to the application of nuclear arms as the means of this destruction, but only people who have gone insane with evil could resort to such armaments. Consequently, even according to the ideas of learned materialists, the cause of the destruction of order and civilization will be a humanity which has fallen into evil. Contemporary material science has arrived at a confirmation of the Orthodox Christian view and, de facto, though unwillingly, testified to the correctness of the Holy Scripture. This can only strengthen true-Orthodox Christians in the conviction that everything else which the Holy Church teaches concerning the culmination of time will also come to pass. Our faith and the facts and events of our time convince us that the "great tribulation"<sup>4</sup> will occur in the near future.

In the Holy Scripture we read that the "beginning of the illness", that is, the beginning of the culmination of the ages, will be general, terrible wars, geophysical and social miseries. The words of this prophecy are being fulfilled before our eyes. That periods of war and elementary misery have occurred often before this century is of no consequence to our view. Contemporary wars and miseries differ sharply from wars and disasters of earlier times by the fact that they possess an almost universal nature and also by their terrible power which at once brings to mind the possibility of universal catastrophe. The general or "world" war is strictly a phenomenon of the twentieth century. It is only with the advent of the incredible universality and unbelievable destructive forces loosed by these general wars that the prophecies of Revelation 9:15-21 become fathomable. Even the destruction of Dresden with the horrifying "firestorms" once staggered the imagination — and these "firestorms" were caused by what mankind can now casually refer to as "conventional weapons".

Concerning the fulfilment of such prophecies, our attention must also turn to Revelation 8:7-12 and the ninth chapter, where the visionary, St. John, persistently emphasizes that various disasters and miseries will descend upon one-third of mankind and upon one-third of the earth's surface at the beginning of the culmination of time. "If one considers," says Father Alexander Kolesnikov, "those nations and peoples which have become a sacrifice to wars and revolutions in the twentieth century, then it will be seen that they make up approximately one-third of the earth's surface and population."

Indeed, in the last decade alone, we have observed the fulfilment of Revelation 8:7-12, for scientists have revealed to us that mankind, as a result of pride and greed, has paved, stripped or poisoned nearly one-third of the arable land surface, has caused, by pollution, a substantial reduction in the quantity of solar energy which reaches the earth (i.e., reduced the amount of sunshine) and is well on the way to having poisoned fully one-third of the seas, killing the living creatures which dwell in them.

It is worthy of our attention that the disasters of the twentieth century have descended primarily upon Christian peoples.

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<sup>4</sup> Mat. 24:21; cf. Rev. 7:14.

As a result of the experiences of these peoples during the first half of this century, millions of Christians have become sceptical, lost their faith and turned cold toward God and each other.<sup>5</sup> Most especially, the "permanent" disasters, which include true martyrdoms and open warfare against the Church, have befallen Orthodox Christian nations — almost entirely in the first half of the twentieth century and generally as one of the results of the first general war. Communism captured all of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus before 1950. Nor was Greece spared, for the Venezelists and several defiled Church leaders launched their attacks upon Holy Orthodoxy in Greece in the 1920's, almost as if to counter the holy teaching and saintly example of Saint Nectarios of Pentapolis. Alexandria, Antioch and the Church in China have also fallen under Communist controlled governments since the second general war. One cannot help but have the impression that the evil forces of the world have set themselves to the task of weakening the Orthodox Christian peoples in order to remove the main obstacle to the realization of their future plans.

In addition to the shock of world events and of man's inhumanity to his fellow man, authors of anti-Christian philosophical, political and religious theories and systems have attacked Christianity especially heavily in recent times. For the most part, these philosophers have taught, and still are teaching, that a "law of progress" reigns in the history of mankind. Accordingly, humanity, in all aspects of its existence, has, throughout its history, evolved upward. These philosophers teach that the political, social and ideological forms of the life of the human race are continually improving and that man will eventually find and bring about, by his own power and human development, the most complete and ideal political and social order of life; an order in which reason, science, peace, safety, justice and material well-being will be complete. As a matter of fact, a large number of defiled, nominal Orthodox Christian leaders have begun to present such thesis. Most notable amongst these are hierarchs of the present Ecumenical Patriarchate which has begun to teach these things "so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect".<sup>6</sup>

Christ, on the other hand, taught something completely the opposite. Christ foretold that there would be "wars and rumours

of wars"; that there would be "not peace, but the sword"; that the "love of many will grow cold because of the violence of mankind". Let us look at the history of the twentieth century and ask: who has been proven to be right, Christ or the wistful philosophers? There has arrived no reign of reason, but rather a reign of the most coarse materialism and animalistic passions in man. In place of peace and safety there are terrible wars and the almost daily rumour of new wars; instead of justice we have witnessed violence, rioting, CHEKA, the Gestapo, GPU, mass executions, concentration camps, Siberian exile camps of a new and indescribable severity, chemical obliterations of the minds of confessors of the faith and of other dissenters in the USSR; instead of material well-being, there are regular reports of mass starvations and deprivations of millions—inspite of the fact that a large segment of mankind has food to throw away, two homes, two or three automobiles, etc. Instead of accord with the reason of religion, there is the almost daily appearance of sects with the darkest of teachings — "I AM", freemasonry, Theosophy, Bahai, open Satan worship and witchcraft cults to name only a few.

What is more significant is the fact that the will to resist all these evil movements has begun to leave mankind. Now, people can accept Satan cults with little or no shock, pausing only briefly to be dismayed or transitorily horrified at the literal cannibalism which has occurred in the United States as a result of these cults, or the insane murders which only recently occurred in California. Week by week, month by month, the number of deaths or terrible Satanic acts practised in Satanic cults mounts up and society at large does not really trouble itself about these things. That society in general is willing to condone Satanic acts is clearly demonstrated in that abortion, the mass extermination of babies, has not only ceased to shock most people, but has even become accepted as a "norm". Moreover, it is becoming "un-fashionable" to be anti-Communist and those who keep faith with the holy new martyrs in the Communist world are scoffed at and ridiculed. Could it be that "... the love of many" has already "grown cold"<sup>7</sup>; could it be that the season of the great famine, "not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water, but for the hearing of

<sup>5</sup> Mk. 13:7; Mat. 24:6; 10:34; 24:12.

<sup>6</sup> Mat. 2:16.

<sup>5</sup> Mat. 24:12.

<sup>6</sup> Mk. 13:22.

the word of God"<sup>9</sup> is already upon the world of mankind? Could it be that the reign of Antichrist is virtually upon us?

The prophecies of the Holy Scripture concerning the kingdom of Antichrist were, in the past, beyond the reach of man's understanding. The Bible gives us pictures of terrible things which will occur in the kingdom of Antichrist and the fathers of the Church present us with warnings and descriptions of enslavement and persecutions not easily grasped by the imagination. Yet are all these pictures and descriptions so unbelievable?

This brings us to the point of this book: to show that these prophecies are, in fact, no longer unbelievable, but are now comprehensible and that their fulfilment is actually observable in the world today. Here the author presents, in clear, easily understandable terms, the origin of evil and its struggle against good and its culmination in the reign of Antichrist. We are primarily interested in warning Orthodox Christian people about the impending tribulations for mankind and of the rise of Antichrist. In order to do this, it is necessary first to introduce people to an understanding of the person of Satan and to Biblical demonology; for without a concept of demonology, it is not possible to comprehend the Christology, the Ecclesiology, or the Eschatology of the Holy Church which are absolutely inseparable from the message of salvation.

In order to carry out this task, the monk, who prepared this work, has compiled material which is easy to understand and which is not obscured in technical terminology. He has not compiled for the musing of intellectuals but for the saving of souls.

No one will read this work and fail to be disturbed by it. For the thinking, concerned Orthodox Christian, it will be well to turn now to the service books of the Holy Church, for in them the traditions and the conscience of the Church speak on all these matters, teaching, admonishing and expounding sound doctrines for the defence of all true believers. Above all the reader must be led to re-double his prayer life and cling all the more steadfastly "to all the traditions which you have been taught".<sup>10</sup>

Glory to God for everything.

<sup>9</sup> Amos. 8:10 etc.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Thes. 2:15.



### THE VISIBLE UNIVERSE AS A REVELATION ABOUT THE CREATOR

**T**HE UNBEGOTTEN AND UNCREATED GOD, living in Holy Trinity, being all powerful and wholly perfect, is completely self-sufficient and had no need of created beings. His infinite love, however, longed to have participants in His eternal blessedness. For this reason, God prepared His heavenly kingdom and created the heavenly beings.

Love is not coercive, it does not force love from others. All of God's created beings, the angels, were made with free wills. This was necessary so that they could render true love to their Creator, rather than a mindless, meaningless obedience.

One of the brightest and most powerful of these angels, Lucifer (Satan), exercising his free will, chose to love himself instead of God. Because of his self-love, he became self-willed, and being self-willed, he became ambitious and resolved to create a new kingdom in opposition to that of God, even usurping God's position and power. The consequences of this act of rebellion (apostasy) are well known to all. Lucifer and his followers were cast out of heaven and remain today as the enemies of God and of all His creatures. The temptation and disobedience of Lucifer infected many of the heavenly beings so that the new kingdom of evil was filled with disciples of the prince of darkness.

Those who stood firm during the destructive temptations were strengthened by God's help and became eternal sons of truth.

According to the love of the Creator, the heavenly kingdom could not remain unfulfilled and in order to effect its fulfilment, God created a new creature — man. Adam and Eve were brought

forth from nothing into a universe especially created for them and they appeared as the jewels in the crown of the Creator's works.

The grandeur of the Creator was revealed even in the basic atoms which, though formless, invisible and in disarray, served as the material for the establishing of all nature and man himself.

### CREATION

We do not know the original state of the void universe or how long the elements existed in chaotic conditions, for the Holy Scripture commences its history at the time when the Life-Giving Holy Spirit was already moving across the face of the deep, ordering the universe. The history of the visible world, however, actually begins with the formation of the simple particles.

That the elements which surround us today comprised nothing more than formless particles in the beginning is evident from the testimony of God's word (Prov. 8:26). Scientific investigations of the realm of nature have confirmed this testimony that the elements of the world are composed of a single type of material, i.e., they have a singleness of nature. These insignificant, tangible particles were gifted by the Creator with a strength of action incomprehensible to us. As a result, they formed, from their unions, joinings and partings, a countless variety of forms and bodies in the natural realm.

The physical creation of light, with energies emanating from it, occurred on the first day of the creation in response to God's word: "Let there be light." On the fourth day of creation, the light gathered into great bodies which were foreordained to rule other, lesser bodies which were taken from them; to rule by means of attraction, to heat and illuminate them. These great bodies we call the (so-called) fixed stars, of which our own sun is one.

The "waters" of the great atomic "ocean", submitting to God's command and the action of His Holy Spirit, divided and ordered into various great bodies and these, in turn, divided into the multitude of planets and like bodies on the second day of creation.

On the third day, by an evaporation and mixing of the waters from the seas which covered the land, there were created air, clouds, and fresh water. By God's power, great upheavals cast the continents up from the seas. The third day has a special sig-

nificance in the creation of the universe, for on that day, vegetation began on the earth — the earth produced the first and most luxuriant fruit for the use of the inhabitants of the realm of nature. From that day on, the earth, like a good mother, began to spend her energy, at first strong and mighty, for the benefit of humanity and other living creatures.

This will continue until that very time when, in the end, the earth is weakened by the carelessness of man in its cultivation and exploitation. Then it will grow poor and weak and will have great difficulty feeding mankind — yet it will continue to produce until the very end of time, as the Scripture says, "As long as the earth lasts, sowing and reaping ... will not cease" (Gen. 8:22). The end of time will come upon the earth and find her yielding up her last poor harvest to mankind.

The end of this world will not be a destruction, but a restoration and renewal (Rev. 21:1). Its restored powers will serve eternally for the renewal of the creatures of the new life.

### THE MIRACLE OF LIGHT

The radiant beginning commenced on the fourth day. The great bodies of the universe, clothed in golden radiance, are appointed to rule smaller ones and to clothe them with light on that side which is turned toward their radiance, leaving in darkness that side which is turned away.

But no place is deprived of the opportunity of receiving the benefits and illumination poured forth by the sun, for the lesser bodies were assigned rotary motion on their own sloping axis and a yearly migration around the central globe from which they were called forth. By means of these double motions, the planets are gifted with changes of season, and of days and nights, all of which are necessary for their temporary existence; for the renewal of their weakened physical strengths and to enable nature to execute its temporary assignment.

By these movements, every point on the earth's surface falls under the actions of the sun's rays. There is a diversity in the energy of the rays, for their contact is either direct or indirect (at an angle) so that various belts on the earth's surface receive more or less light and warmth.

This phenomenon of nature reveals that in miracles of physical light the Creator has shown us a likeness (ikon) of the



wonders of the Light of Divinity. Sensible, intelligent creatures are by themselves, darkness (i.e., not only in darkness, but having no light of their own whatever). Only upon receiving inner illumination and warmth from the Spirit do they cease to be in dark and approach that moral beauty which was ordained for them according to the plan of the *economia* of the Creator.

The division of the white light into seven bright colours reminds us of the seven blessed gifts of the Holy Spirit, which strengthen the soul by means of the Holy Mysteries of the Church so that it (the soul) might grow in virtue for the glory of God. Each visible object manifests a hue according to that object's own inner ability to reflect one or the other of the rays of the seven-coloured spectrum.

So with the spirit of man. In itself, it is dark and would remain a dark object were it not for God's gift of grace which allows man's soul to receive this blessed Light and warmth from its Creator. The light of man's soul, like the light of the moon, is reflected from the Spiritual Sun, the Sun of Truth. Without this gift, the soul would remain in darkness, despondency, despair and evil.

Just as no point on earth is deprived of the possibility of receiving the life-giving rays of the sun, so no intelligent being is denied the possibility, if he wishes, of receiving the life-giving Spiritual Sun, the Creator and Saviour of mankind.

The first man turned away from the Sun of Truth and fell into a realm of moral darkness. From that time until the advent of Christ, the Never-Setting Sun, very few people turned toward this Light. Man became accustomed to the conditions of moral darkness which were more convenient for doing evil, so much so that he got to like his chains and shackles. Those who did choose light over darkness grieved heavily at the sight of God's created image enslaved by moral darkness. These holy ones yearned for the time which was promised to man when the Blessed Light would be made manifest and provided to all those who had not completely lost the ability to accept the spiritual Light of Truth.

How fortunate our own era has been as compared with the centuries before the advent of the promised Light — Christ Jesus. In Orthodox Christian countries which were long ago converted to the Light of Truth, people had the opportunity to grow up ac-

cepting the Light. Here in the heterodox countries of the West, this is not the case, for we are surrounded by the darkness of those who have rejected Christ's Church and who even struggle against it. We are surrounded by customs and traditions which are completely adverse to the Holy Orthodox Church and for this reason, we must turn back upon the traditions of Orthodox Christian countries in order to truly accept this Light of Truth.

Of course, it has never been without a struggle that we accept the abundance of Christ. There has always been the unseen warfare. But where is the field of this struggle? Where must one go to battle? The battlefield is within us. We recognize it in feelings, thoughts, intentions and sensations. Darkness appears in words and deeds which reflect our actual condition — a condition alien to the actual tint which Christ, the Sun of Truth, imprints upon our thoughts, words and deeds.

It was pleasing to the almighty Creator of the universe to trace out, in visible manifestations, the mysteries of the invisible world, revealing how, before, a multitude of "stars" fell from heaven just as now a multitude of souls are falling away from the Holy Orthodox Church. Yet for all those which fall away, we have assurance from the Creator Himself that no enemy forces will be able to destroy the Church, even to the last day.

### A NEW BABYLON

As the day of the glorification of the Holy Church approaches, however, a new edifice arises in the world, an edifice contradictory to the truth of Christ's Building — this is the mystery Babylon. The actions of the ancients who dreamed of immortalizing themselves on earth, of creating a name for themselves, is being repeated. Today's Chaldeans, like those of former times, do not dream of having their names written in heaven, but rather of leaving a name and a memory of their deeds on earth.

Here is a new Babylon in the fulness of the word: mixing truth with untruth. Instead of the clear light of the teaching of the Holy Church, founded on the Gospels, the prophets, apostles, fathers of the Church and the Councils, these new Babylonians thirst for apostate teachings and dark philosophical systems in which truth is mixed with lies and interwoven with untruth. This manner of thinking is the foundation of the new Babylon.

One can guess what will eventually develop from this by looking at those man-created societies which lead to the confusion of people and of their understanding, just as occurred with ancient Babylon.

The same fate awaits this new Babylon, however, as fell upon the ancient one, even though both of them claimed and claim to be reaching for heaven. This tower of false teaching grows not merely daily but even hourly. Great indeed is the danger of losing one's way on the path of salvation because of the spreading dust from this Babylonian construction of a monument to the dreamers and those who seek to inscribe their own names on earth.

Where can one flee from this dust which blinds the eyes to the truth and fills the lungs with choking falsehoods? Where else if not to the peaceful shelter which is open and eternal, to the Edifice erected, not by human hands, but by the Creator of the world Himself — where else if not to the true-Orthodox Church of Christ? How much better it is to be a nameless servant in God's house than to be an eminent and famous architect in this new Babylon, the end of which is utter ruin and damnation.

### THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

As we behold the stars in heaven which light up the night and guide sea-farers to safe harbours, let our minds be drawn to that special constellation of spiritual stars known as the fathers of the Church, for they light up the night of the present darkness and help guide the soul to its port of destination, the Kingdom of Heaven. The fathers teach the art of finding the path of salvation through the ever thickening dust created by the Babylonian construction work.

The Kingdom of Heaven which awaits those who persevere is beyond all human understanding, but the ways of God are not entirely hidden from us. We can and must believe in the eternal blessedness of the future as if we had seen it, heard it and understood it with our minds, for everything in the natural realm points the way and testifies to the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. The intolerable noise of the sea of life can detract our attention from God's Kingdom and rivet our minds to this earthly sphere so much that we cease thinking about the future. Our faith becomes re-

mote from that faith which is a foretaste of the joy of the future life so that we often feel an unaccountable fear at the thought of eternity, at the necessity of crossing over into the other world. This does not occur if the mind becomes used to being there with God instead of here in the world.

A sinful condition hinders much of the freedom which is natural in the relationship between innocent children and their parents when there is no guilt which pushes the children away from parental love. In order to delight in the hope of the future bliss, it is necessary to become like innocent children, removed from sin and everything vain and worldly, and particularly from life's pride. When sin and worldly considerations no longer separate one from the Father, the impossible becomes possible and what the "eye has not seen nor the ear heard" and what has not yet even come to the mind, becomes accepted by the inner, contemplative self, cleansing by tears of repentance. Then faith comes close to that condition which is a vision of what lies beyond death.

To embrace, by meditative faith, the joy of the future life, provides a great happiness and the aim of earthly life becomes more clear. All this troubled existence becomes more easy to endure with patience in the hope that the end is near when the rewards of patience will make one not only forget these sufferings, but even regret that more was not endured. Amidst all the misfortunes and vicissitudes of life, it is not easy to philosophize about heavenly things, but in those respites which are offered from the trials of life's path, it is necessary to talk about the heavenly and to pray about the bliss of God's Kingdom. In order to taste the spiritual struggle within oneself, it is necessary to call out to Christ our God and Saviour for mercy. Fortunate are those people who have maintained the habit of praying constantly, blessed are they for whom prayer has become a second nature so that even their breathing praises God. The Most sweet name of Jesus Christ must be on our lips, in our breathing, even in our sleep, always and everywhere.

Today, the great book of nature is being opened up more and more as a revelation about the Creator. Does it not speak most clearly about the unity of the Creator, about the unity of the Master and Lord, the Perfecter and Provider of all? Where is there more calmness and peace than in the natural universe? In what family is there such good order as there where the limitless



Father arranges all matters Himself? It is evident that good order is possible only where there is one master and supervisor.

The realm of nature also reveals to us the incomprehensible mystery of the Trinitarian unity of the Creator. The seal of this mystery lies engraved deep within the nature of all created things as a basic consciousness which glorifies the Holy Trinity. The omnipresence of God is also visible in His creation. Glance at the heavens, seeded with numberless bodies, held in the spaces of the universe by an unseen hand. Look closely around you and ask: whose hand is it that does not tire of maintaining the universe in which all the bodies are spherical and expand out from the centre in a great sphere. All these spherical formations, which have no visible point of beginning or ending, reflect the omnipresence, beginninglessness and limitlessness of the Creator.

Such a task is possible only for an all-perfect Spirit, the Creator of all things. In fact, the Creator Himself has inscribed the image of His own beginningless and limitless divinity upon a multitude of creatures and things of which some species are so small that there may be many millions of them in a glass of water? In order to maintain all this, God must be all-mighty and omnipresent, everywhere at one and the same time.

### THE INVISIBLE WORLD

According to the teaching of the Holy Church, the spiritual world contains two types of spirits: God's angels who, during the rebellion of Lucifer, chose, of their own free will, to remain obedient to the Creator, thus retaining their estate forever, and the demons, these angels who were created good but, by their personal will, became irrevocably evil, following Lucifer in his rebellion against God.

Both God's angels and the demons are referred to as angels because this title does not signify a nature or state of being but rather indicates a position. The title "angel" signifies a herald or a messenger. In this sense, the Holy Scripture also uses this title to refer to prophets and apostles, persons who were sent to announce God's will.

The Holy Church teaches that the sole motive for the creation of the world was God's desire to have recipients for His endless love and mercy. The aim and purpose of the world is the glorification of the Creator. Being an all-perfect and all-blessed Essence, God cannot be in need of anything. He existed alone from

all ages without the world and He could have existed alone for all eternity if He Himself had not deigned to create beings.

God desired that men should appear as ikons of Himself, tasting the sweetness of existence and becoming partakers of His blessedness. Thus, man appeared, intelligent beings, inheritors of God's kingdom and glory through the grace of the adoption. In this kingdom the source of blessedness is from eternal co-dwelling with the most-blessed Essence, God Himself, and in constant participation in Divine Glory, to the degree that is possible for a created being. God, Who knows the innermost depths of each person, will fulfill every mind and soul which is thirsting for truth and good.

The measure by which the degree of perfection attained by moral beings can be ascertained is this: the higher the degree of perfection one attains, the greater and more all-encompassing becomes one's love for the Creator and the more one strives to live as an icon and likeness of Him, becoming perfect in obedience to His holy will.

On the other hand, moral beings which have turned away from the purpose of their existence — the glorification of their Creator, attain an opposite condition. This condition is eternal, moral death, a most fierce torment which results from the departure from God, the source of life and blessedness. There is a phenomenon of the material universe which provides a likeness of this eternal death. This is the total eclipse of the sun. This is a very rare occurrence and lasts only a few minutes but it creates a profound impression on all living things.

If the eclipse were to last for an indefinite time, then every thing living would be subject to degeneration and a deathly decomposition. Every living thing would begin to return to the dust from which it was created. Such a slow, agonizing, degenerative death would be accompanied by much suffering as everything comes into confusion at the beginning of the eclipse, awaiting its ruin.

For moral beings, there is a Spiritual Sun — the source of life and blessedness, God Himself Who called all things from non-existence into existence. If, for moral beings who live not only a physical but a spiritual life, there should occur a total eclipse of the Spiritual Sun, suffering, degeneration and decay would become unavoidable. According to the properties of spiritual nature, such suffering cannot be temporary, for the spirit is deathless and

eternal. This condition of eternal suffering is called a second death, eternal torment, an unquenchable fire and an unsleeping worm.

The last judgement will present to some moral beings the kingdom of eternal blessedness in the light of God's face, and to others, a full eclipse of the countenance of God from Whom all life and blessedness flow.

The Holy Orthodox Christian Church has always believed that the torments of hell will be eternal, understanding these torments to be those which will come upon moral beings who are cast out of God's presence after the final, general judgment. This belief was formally expressed at the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

### **SATAN AND HIS ANGELS**

From the concept of God as an all-perfect Essence, it is evident that everything brought into being by Him was created good since He could not create evil. Where, then, did evil come from? From the pride of one of the highest spirits who developed such a high opinion of himself that he thought to become equal with his Creator. In an attempt to realize this desired equality, he enticed a multitude of other spirits to follow him in rebellion against God's will.

Having been cast out of God's presence and thereby becoming the prince of darkness, Satan desired to increase his following by seducing the first-created humans into disobedience, thus increasing his own earthly principality. From ancient times, Christ's Church has believed that the pride of one of the highest spirits was the cause for the arising of evil in both the spiritual and material world.

The eternal salvation of mankind is closely connected with the deposition of Satan and the abolition of evil from the world. The inventor of evil, this enemy of God and mankind, described in the Holy Gospel as "... a murderer from the beginning," "who does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a falsehood, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar himself and the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44).

There have always existed opinions denying the personal existence of the devil and of evil spirits. Such an error is extremely dangerous for mankind because it leads him into a state of moral carelessness which leads to his own destruction. In fact, it is Satan himself who inspires man to disbelieve in him.

Evil spirits have lost, irrecoverably, all love toward God and with that they have also lost the wisdom that comes from above, which is composed of verity, truth and goodness.

Why can the evil spirits not come to repentance? Because there are definite borders of obduracy beyond which there is no turning back to good (cf. Heb. 6:4-6). Not being subject to the temptations to which man is now subject, the angels fell deliberately, led by the false philosophy that full freedom is incomparably more desirable than obedience (the same philosophy which helped to create Protestantism). They hardened themselves so much in this erroneous idea that they preferred their rebellious passions to the blessedness of the angels which stood before God's throne in humility, meekness and love.

This bitter mis-calculation reveals that even higher beings that have lost the divine light become extremely limited in the understanding of truth. As beings higher than man's spirit, they were gifted with higher abilities and strengths to stand firmly in the truth, they were gifted with a higher understanding of goodness and obedience to God's will. In spite of all this, the disastrous mis-calculation took the upper hand and, at that very point, turning back to the truth was already impossible. Their state of evilness went beyond correction because these higher beings fell as a result of a stubborn and obdurate uprising against God Himself.

Warning mankind against such extreme hardness and uncorrectable evil, Christ told the Pharisees, "... every sin and blasphemy of man can be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (Mat. 12:31).

The very nature of intelligent creatures carries within itself a need of divine worship, an inborn concept of God's grandeur and the knowledge that life is from God. In order to cast aside these inborn intuitions, one must exert force over one's personal nature — these intuitions do not merely vanish, they are forced out of one's nature and this is what makes the sin unforgivable. If we rebel against the awareness of God in our own souls, we become God's enemies.

Enmity with God is unforgivable, not because God's mercy has definite borders, but only because man, in forcibly turning away from God, can reach the outer limit of obduracy from which there is no recall. If man rejects the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit can no longer lead him to repent. The spirit of an intelligent being can

soften only by the Divine grace of God's Spirit, but without this grace, it is consigned to pride and darkness.

How great the enmity between Satan's principality and the kingdom of God is has been revealed to us in the Revelations, especially at 12:1-8 and 13:14. According to the Holy Fathers, these words reveal to us that, in the last days, Satan will be allowed to make war against the saints of God, and the Church (the woman vested in the sun) will flee away into the wilderness. These will be the very last times and Satan will slay them. The Holy Church will have returned to the catacombs, becoming very small in the number of Her members and heavily persecuted. This terrible persecution, worse than that of Rome, will last for three and a half years and will end with the glorious second coming of Christ (Rev. 20:7-12).

Christ's Church has been persecuted and oppressed in all ages by the prince of this world, but these oppressions have not always been so clearly defined.

The first centuries of the Church passed under open physical persecution which ended with the triumph of the Church. The next few centuries presented a more subtle, but infinitely more dangerous oppression of the Church — the great heresies and false teachings. Satan attacked the lives of the members of the Holy Church first, next he attacked the dogmas of the faith, seeking to create disunity and to destroy the doctrines necessary for salvation. To be sure, in both periods, many souls abandoned the Holy Church and joined the ranks of Satan, but this second period ended in the triumph of Orthodoxy.

A third more or less clearly defined period began with the rise of Satan's warrior Mohammed and again the Church was submitted to open physical persecution. During this period the Orthodox Christian population of entire areas of the East was slaughtered for refusing to renounce Christ. It is notable that the Moslem conquest of the Orthodox Christian world took place at about the same time as the new and greatest heresies were arising in Western Europe, first Papism and then the paganistic Protestant sects and finally such openly Satanic cults as Freemasonry. This time Satan began using both the former types of oppression against the Holy Church at the same time.

A fourth period of heavy oppressions against the Holy Church followed closely behind the third. In addition to the new heresies Satan began leading men into the anarchist and social revolution

movements, attacking every social order on earth, striving to throw the world into a state of confusion, paving the way for Antichrist and the militant attempt to exterminate Christianity.

The variety of temptations which comes from the devil is very great and not all of them can be grasped by human understanding. It is known from the Holy Scripture that, with some unbelievers, he "has blinded" their minds "to prevent them from seeing the light shed by the glad tidings of the glory of Christ Who is the image of God" (II Cor. 4:4), while with others, upon whom the light has already shone, "the devil comes and carries away the word from their hearts lest they should believe and be saved" (Luk. 8:12), and again, as with the righteous Job, he persecutes some with troubles, chains and prison (cf. Rev. 2:10).

As a defence against these oppressions one must maintain a constant disposition of repentance, prayer, fasting and spiritual vigilance over the heart. Christ the Saviour commanded His disciples, "be vigilant and pray in order not to fall into temptation" (Mat. 26:41).

In the past several decades, many people have ceased to hope on the Kingdom of God and have turned to artificial means of attaining a paradisiacal kingdom. The Satan-created means include anarchy and social revolution. The special snare-words which Satan has drawn into use in order to entice people into these movements include: "freedom", "brotherhood", "equality", and "unity of mankind". How many are already following after these meaningless slogans, not caring who originated them or what the actual manifestations of these so-called humanitarian movements are. How clearly they are being led by the prince of this world, by artificial enticements, how quickly they are headed for the anarchy which will bring about the last tormentor of mankind, Antichrist.

### **THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THIS WORLD AND OF THE EARTHLY SOJOURN OF CHRIST'S CHURCH**

According to the teaching of the Holy Scripture and the holy Fathers of the Church, the end of the world and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be heralded by a great, visible spread of lawlessness and impiety amongst all peoples, the completion of the preaching of the Gospels throughout the world to all peoples, including to the Jews in a restored Israel, heavy phys-

ical misfortunes and the coming of Antichrist and his struggle with Christ's Holy Church.

The Apostles once asked their Divine Master, "Tell us, what sign will herald Your coming and the end of the ages?" (Mat. 24:3).

The Saviour replied: "Take care that no one deceives you; because many will come using My name and saying, 'I am Christ', and they will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars ... but the end will still not come. Nation will war against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in diverse places but all this will only be the beginning of the birthpangs.

"Then they will hand you over to be tortured and put to death; and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. And then many will fall away; men will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise deceiving many, and with the increase of lawlessness, love in most men will grow cold; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved.

"These glad tidings of the kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world as a witness to all nations and then the end will come."

The holy Fathers of the Church explain how these words point to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. as a prototype of the future, greater tribulations when the full fury of this prophecy will be fulfilled in the last times. The fall of Jerusalem was symbolic of the end of the world, but terrible though it was, it was only a pale shadow of what is to come upon mankind at the very end.

We must follow the interpretations of the holy Fathers of the Church, observing the signs of the end of the world in these words of the Saviour. From them we discover that, in the last times, the lawlessness of mankind will reach the extremity of its limits. Evil and hatred will rule in the world. There will be neither love nor compassion amongst people for one another; love will dry up; not completely, of course, but it will become cold in the majority of mankind. People will hate one another violently, will care only about themselves and will try to do harm to their neighbors.

In addition, many believers will begin to sway in their faith and some will follow after deceivers and false prophets — the fore-runners of Antichrist. Lawlessness and impiety will

become so great that people will not even notice the threatening forewarnings of the end of the world, which God will begin to send in the form of various physical troubles and subsequently in the person of Antichrist.

"As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the flood came and swept all away. It will be thus when the Son of man comes" (Mat. 24:37-40).

In these words the Saviour clearly explains the condition of mankind at the end of time. We know that, just before the flood, the lawlessness and impiety of mankind was beyond measure; people were satiated with base pleasures and were blind and insensitive to everything spiritual. It will be the same before the end of the world. Unrestrained sensuality, lechery, gluttony and drunkenness will become the norm, deadening man's mind so that even the troubles which God will send as a warning (famine, earthquakes, plagues and finally the great agony of Antichrist) will create no feeling of fear or remorse in people drunken with their own corruption.

The holy Apostles teach that in the very last times, the various ruinous heresies and false teachings will multiply and gather great strength while unbelief will increase. Mankind as a whole will be morally deaf and blind and insensitive to everything that concerns its salvation. People will willingly believe any falsehood and will completely forget Christ's law. Every possible vice and error will be accepted by the world at large.

Paul, in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, says that when Antichrist appears, he will be allowed to entice many. "... there will be all sorts of miracles and a deceptive show of signs and portents, and everything evil that can deceive those who are bound for destruction because they would not grasp the love of the truth which could have saved them. The reason why God will send a power to delude them and make them believe what is untrue is to condemn all those who refused to believe in the truth and chose wickedness instead" (II Thes. 2:10-12).

In his epistle to Timothy, the Apostle instructs, "You may be quite certain that in the last days there are going to be difficult times. People will be self-centred and grasping; boastful, arrogant and rude; disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious; heartless and unappeasable; they will be slanderers,

profligates, savages and enemies of everything that is good; they will be treacherous and reckless and demented by pride, preferring their own pleasure to God. They will keep up the outward appearance of religion but will have rejected the inner power of it. Have nothing to do with people like that" (II Tim. 3:1-5).

Of course, all these vices have always been present in the world, but in the last days their power over mankind will become almost absolute, so that people will become even more insensitive, willfully suppressing all the good inclinations within themselves and following only the inclinations of their passions. Once the Gospel has been preached throughout the entire world, amongst all peoples, mankind will be all the more guilty and unjustifiable at the dread judgement.

The evangelization of the whole world will be completed with the preaching of the Gospel to the Jews in a restored Israel. If we read the words of our Lord recorded at Matthew 24:14, we can see that the completion of the evangelization of the entire world is the sign nearest to the end of the ages and the second glorious coming of Christ. But the majority of mankind will remain deaf and dumb to the preaching of the Gospel and will not listen to the truth but will refuse it, listening instead to the voice of their own passions.

### THE APPEARANCE OF ANTICHRIST

After all this, God will permit Antichrist, the last and most extraordinary opponent of Christ and His Holy Church, to come into the world. Throughout the history of the Church of Christ, there has appeared a multitude of opponents who have striven to destroy Christ's faith: Nero, Valerian and others, Mohammed, all the false-teachers and heretics from Simon Magus to the present. But in the last times, there will arise a special, infinitely more powerful opponent of Christ in the person of Antichrist. This will be the last and the mightiest battle of the devil against the Church. Depicting the last times before the end of the world, the Saviour said, "then, if anyone tells you, 'Here is the Christ' or 'there He is', do not believe it, because false Christs and false prophets will arise and produce great signs and wonders sufficient to deceive, if it were possible, even the chosen ones. Now I have forewarned you" (Mat. 24:23-26).

With these words, according to the interpretation of Saint John Chrysostom and others of the Fathers of the Church, Christ

is speaking about Antichrist having to come before the end of the world, and about the false prophets. In addition, we find certain passages in the Epistles of the Apostles, which teach about Antichrist. Saint John the Theologian clearly reveals that Antichrist must come in the last time, before the end of the world (I John 2:18). Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, also teaches about Antichrist: "Let us turn, brethren, to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we shall all be gathered round him: do not become alarmed too soon by any prediction or rumour or any letter claiming to be from us, implying that the Day of the Lord has already arrived. Never let anyone deceive you in any way. That day will not come until the Great Apostasy has occurred and that man of sin, the inheritor of perdition, has appeared" (II Thes. 2:18).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem and other teachers of the Church refer the prophecy of Daniel (7:23-35) to Antichrist who has to come before the end of the world and who will be the ruler of the Jews. Once he is received by the Jews and, having become their king, Antichrist will begin his struggle with Christ's Church. He will strive to repudiate the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and will try to destroy His Church and Mysteries, replacing them with himself, claiming to be a god and demanding that people bow to him as to God. The Lord teaches about this clearly when He says that Antichrist "will come in My name."

"Antichrist," explains St. John Chrysostom, "will not say that he is sent from the Father, that he came according to His will; but completely the reverse, he will violently usurp everything that does not belong to him and call himself God. This is what Christ meant when He said that Antichrist 'will come in My name'."

According to the teachings of the Holy Fathers, every moment in the life of Antichrist will be dominated by Satan. This domination will appear even from his conception and birth. The devil's instrument, in the words of Saint Ephraim the Syrian, "In truth, will be born from a defiled maiden", and St. John Damascene concludes: "The man (Antichrist) will be born of prostitution".

The fathers Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Ambrose of Milan as well as the early Christian writers Jerome and Augustine, mention that Antichrist will be of the Jewish race from the tribe of Dan.

In the Synaxarion for Meat-fare Sunday we read: "Antichrist will arrive (as St. Hippolytus says), born from a defiled woman, a supposed virgin from amongst the Jews, from the tribe of Dan." These words from the Triodion of the fast are founded on the word of God:

1. In the prophecy of the patriarch Jacob concerning each of his sons who became the founders of the tribes of Israel, the fate of the posterity of Dan is portrayed in such a way as to relate to Antichrist: "Dan will be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path" (Gen. 49:17).

2. In the prophecy of Jeremiah: "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come and have devoured the land and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein" (Jer. 8:16).

3. In the prophecy of the Revelation which enumerates the remnant of all the tribes of Israel which are sealed by the angel for salvation, the tribe of Dan is completely excluded (Rev. 7:4-8).

From the teachings of the Holy Fathers, we learn that Satan, in establishing Antichrist, will strive to give him all the appearances and signs of the coming of the Son of God on earth. This is especially pointed out in Saint Cyril of Jerusalem's "150th Word to Catechumens"; St. Ephraim the Syrian's "Word 39"; Blessed Theodoret's "A Short Exposition of the Divine Dogma", Ch. 23; St. Hippolytus' "Treatise on Christ and Antichrist".

Of course, the resemblances of Antichrist with Christ will be only external and, in essence, only illusory, for the whole life of Antichrist will be an obstinate revolt against Christ and His Church. This false external likeness will appear even at the birth of Antichrist. Since Christ was born of an all-pure virgin, Satan will bring forth his special instrument from an impure maid who appears as a maiden. She will be filled with every vice and satanic filth.

Then, just as the Lord remained in obscurity until His thirtieth year, so Antichrist, one must suppose, will remain hidden until a like age. As Christ began His saving work by the preaching of His holy teaching and with miracles, so also will Antichrist begin his pernicious work by deceiving men with his false teaching and with great, disgraceful spectacles of false miracles; as it was pleasing to the Lord to reveal Himself publicly as the Messiah by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and into the tem-

ple, so Antichrist will reveal himself as the (false) Messiah expected by the Jews, the monarch of all the world, in his own triumphant ceremony of entering into Jerusalem and taking up his seat in the temple of Jerusalem, which by that time will be restored.

In his book, "The Last Days of the Earthly Life of Jesus Christ", Archbishop Innokenty of Kherson states that Christ's entry into Jerusalem was "a general declaration for all Jews that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah. His own words, which He spoke before the gates of Jerusalem, serve as an indisputable testimony of this: 'If you had known,' He said, turning to the people, 'even you at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace' (Lk. 19:42). On that day, with their rejection of the Messiah, the fate of the Israelite people was decided forever."

On that future day of the coming into Jerusalem of the false messiah, Antichrist, the fate of mankind contemporary with him will also be decided irreconcilably and eternally. Blessed are those who, on that last day given by God for the final exercise of man's self-determination, will be able to recognize Antichrist as the servant of Satan and to see the inescapable destruction awaiting him and all of mankind which acknowledges him.

Finally, just as the Lord revealed Himself to the world and accomplished His work as Prophet, King and High Priest, so also will Antichrist concentrate this threefold authority in his own hands and accomplish his pernicious work as the teacher of all mankind, as the monarch of a universal monarchy and as the supreme high priest of all religions, demanding worship of himself as a god.

## THE EPOCH OF ANTICHRIST

The entire life and activity of Antichrist can be viewed in three periods:

THE FIRST PERIOD of Antichrist, from the day of his birth to the moment of his debut will pass in obscurity. St. John Damascene says that "Antichrist will be raised secretly" (*Precise Exposition*, B. 4, ch. 26).

THE SECOND PERIOD of the life of Antichrist will be opened with his conspicuous entry into the role of universal teacher or "prophet". It is very possible that he will begin his activity under the conditions of a world war, when man, having endured all the horrors of it, will not see any way out of his



calamitous blind alley, because all the means for the resolution of it will be in the hands of a secret society co-acting with Antichrist. He will offer a plan for the successful resolution of the world crisis, based on social and political wisdom — the establishing of a uniform political and social structure over the whole world.

Having wearied of the agitation of war, mankind, being spiritually blind, will not recognize this project as a cunning snare luring it into the most merciless, continual slavery. To the contrary, man will hail Antichrist's manifestations of great erudition, wisdom and genius.

Worldwide publicity of Antichrist as a genius-thinker, a new leader and a saviour of all peoples will flash throughout all nations in the shortest period of time. "Evil spirits dispersed over the universe will excite in men a universal, most exalted opinion of Antichrist; a general rapture and irresistible attraction to him," says St. Ephraim the Syrian (Word 16).

During this period of his activity, Antichrist will not use any violent methods but will strive to win the confidence and affection of people by means of deceit and a hypocritical, theatrical mask of virtue. He will, says Vladimir Soloviev, "throw a shining cover of good and truth over the mystery of iniquity." St. Ephraim states that he will come "in such a manner as to deceive all. He will appear humble, meek, a hater (as he will say himself) of unrighteousness, shunning idols, showing a preference to piety, good, a lover of the poor, beautiful to the extreme, steadfast, affable to all and especially esteeming the Jewish people because the Jews will await his coming ... He will take cunning measures to please everyone in order that the people will quickly come to love him; he will not accept gifts nor speak in anger nor show a gloomy appearance, but with a decent exterior he will set about deceiving the world, until he is enthroned."

From the richest ascetic experience of our great spiritual athletes, it is known to us that when the dark demon cannot vanquish the spiritual athlete, encountering his steadfast resistance, a more powerful devil comes in the image of "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). This "angel of light" strives to instill sympathy and confidence towards himself into the spiritual athlete, thus luring him to his destruction. Therefore, we are able to conceive how easily and quickly the radiant image of Antichrist will be able to attract general sympathy.

The result of this deceit will be that, from mankind, there "will arise a demand for an invitation to Antichrist. A voice of appeal will issue forth in human society, expressing the urgent need for a 'genius of geniuses', who would elevate material development and progress to a higher plane and bring about prosperity on earth" (Bp. Ignaty Brianchaninov, "Works, vol. 4, p. 313).

The hypocrisy of Antichrist during this period will go so far that he will not only demonstrate tolerance toward Christianity, but will even offer his readiness to patronize it. Externally, he will strive to imitate Christ. The majority of Christians, not being guided by the spiritual understanding of the Church, but rather by worldly wisdom, will not see through this deceit and will acknowledge Antichrist to be Christ in His second advent.

The monks of the Solovetsky Monastery have handed down an answer which Saint Zosima gave to his spiritual children who asked him how to recognize Antichrist when he comes. The holy monk gave this precise reply, "When you hear that the Christ has come to the earth or has appeared on earth, then know that it is Antichrist." And this answer is also most precise: "The world of man will not recognize Antichrist; it will acknowledge him to be Christ, it will proclaim him as Christ ... But it will be neither necessary nor even possible for men to give report to each other of the coming of the Son of God. He will appear suddenly; He will appear in His omnipotence to all men and the whole world at one time" (Bp. Ignaty Brianchaninov, Works, vol. 4, p. 275).

The Saviour Himself forewarned, "Then if any man shall say to you, 'Lo, here is Christ, or there,' do not believe it ... Wherefore if they shall say unto you, 'behold, he is in the desert'; do not go out: 'behold, he is in the secret chambers'; do not believe it. For as the lightning comes out of the east and flashes unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be" (Mat. 24:23-27).

In order to deceive men, Antichrist will show forth many stupifying miracles. His "coming", says the Apostle Paul, "is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders" (2 Thes. 2:9). And St. Cyril of Jerusalem adds, "Being the father of falsehood, he will deceive the imagination by means of false actions so that the multitudes may think that they see a dead man raised who is not raised and lame men

walking or blind men seeing when no cure has been wrought" (*Catechetical Lectures*, 15, 14).

All these measures of Antichrist — his teaching and fame as a genius, his false miracles and his whole hypocritical, theatrical life — will have one goal: to seize in his own hands all the power of the world over all people. The attaining of popularity amongst the Jews will be the first stage on this road. Antichrist will make every effort so that the Jews will acknowledge him as their promised Messiah. He will succeed in completing the organization of the Jewish government and will set about realizing the age-old dream of the Jews — the restoration of the temple of Solomon. After this "he will be constrained by men and will be proclaimed king and the multitudes of the Jewish people will love him; he will restore Jerusalem and will erect the temple for them" (Synaxarion on Meat-Fare Sunday, Triodion of the Fast).

## TWO PROPHETS

The efforts of Antichrist to pass himself off as the true Messiah, however, will meet with an unexpected and miraculous counteraction in the persons of two Old Testament prophets. The very two who, by the will of God, not having tasted death, were taken into heaven until a certain time, will re-appear on earth before the end of the world in order to fulfill their mission and suffer death. The names of these two holy prophets are Enoch and Elias. The Lord will send them into Jerusalem in order to give people in those last days a final and miraculous warning against the deception encompassing them. Without hindrance they will convict all the falsehood of Antichrist for three and a half years, the duration of his second period, when he will be preparing himself for the seizure of world power. Not being able at that time to take leave of his appearance of meekness and benevolence even towards his enemies, Antichrist will not be able to hinder or take any sort of violent action against the prophets.

It is in vain that some strive to interpret this miraculous appearance of Enoch and Elias allegorically. Holy Scripture and the Tradition of the Church speak precisely of their actual coming on earth seven years before the end of the world, of their resurrection and translation into heaven.

In the book of Revelation it is written, "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut the heaven so that it will not rain during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them and shall overcome them and kill them" (Rev. 11:3-7).

In the book of the Prophet Malachi one of the witnesses is directly named: "Behold, I will send you Elias the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (4:5).

The Holy Fathers St. Ephraim the Syrian (*Word on the Coming of the Lord*) and St. John the Damascene (*A Precise Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*) teach definitely that we must understand that the "two witnesses" who are to appear before the end of the world are the Holy Prophets Elias and Enoch.

The Tradition of the Holy Church, expressed in our Orthodox service books, also speaks for the literal understanding of the prophecy of God's word concerning the appearance of Elias and Enoch before the end of the world, giving no basis whatsoever for an allegorical understanding. In the Synaxarion read on Meat Fare Sunday it is said: "Seven years before (the end of the world), as Daniel foretold, Enoch and Elias will come preaching to them that they not receive him (Antichrist): Antichrist will torture them and will behead them" (Triodion of the Great Fast). Again in the service for the Holy Prophet Elias, in the Stikhira on "O Lord, I have cried unto thee," we sing, "Elias the Thisbite, having been made incorruptible in order not to taste death until you have preached the end to all," and in the troparion the Prophet Elias is called, "The second Forerunner of the coming of Christ". In the sedalion after the polyelion we sing, "the prophet and forerunner of the coming of Christ, Elias very glorious" (Menaion, July 20).

In the Menaion we read: "The Holy Prophet of God Elias was taken up in the flesh in a fiery chariot and is alive even now, kept by God in the mansions of paradise. He was seen in the flesh by the three Apostles at the time of the transfiguration of the Lord on Mt. Tabor, and will be seen again in the flesh by mortal men before the Lord's second coming on the earth. Having fled before from the sword of Jezebel, he will suffer at that time from the sword of Antichrist, not only as a prophet, but as a martyr and will be found worthy of greater glory by the Reward-giver, God." In the "Prologue" for the same day it is said: "Elias will come with Enoch before the second coming of Christ, in order to convict the utter impiety of Antichrist and to comfort the piety of believers."

Despite all these divine warnings, however, the majority of people, due to the nature of their own carnal minds, not only will fail to see the total fraud in the exterior behaviour of Antichrist, but will surround him with their praise and glorification. "When the nations and peoples see such virtues and powers (in Antichrist), all will have one thought — to pronounce him ruler, saying to each other: 'Will another man so good and so truthful be found?' " (St. Ephraim the Syrian).

So deeply will Antichrist impress the world with his premeditated behaviour, manifesting himself everywhere as the divine envoy, the true Messiah, that the Jewish people, before all others, will proclaim him as their ruler, in total disregard for the accusations leveled against him by the Holy Prophets Elias and Enoch.

### THE THIRD PERIOD

The third period and the final activities of Antichrist will begin with the seizure of all world power into his own hands. A condition of utter ruin of the nations of the earth from a great world war will greatly assist him in this. The majority will see a world-wide administration under Antichrist as the only possible way to avoid new wars and bring about a new, peaceful blossoming of mankind.

The word of God portrays Antichrist's coming to world power in the following manner: on the face of the earth, devastated and ruined by war, "then kings shall arise" (Dan. 7:24). Seven of them will have "the same thoughts" as Antichrist and will "submit their power and authority to him" (Dan. 17:13).

The other three rulers will attempt to maintain their independence: Antichrist will have to defeat them by military force (Dan 7:8, 20, 24).

After Antichrist's victory over the three "kingdoms", removing the only obstacle in his path to world mastery, the book of Revelation portrays him in the form of a red beast, having ten horns (i.e. the ten kingdoms submitted to him and seven heads (i.e. the seven rulers who voluntarily submitted themselves to him and act in the capacity of his plenipotentiary representatives in their countries) (Rev. 13:1, from the interpretations of that verse by the Holy Fathers St. Irenaeus of Lyons and St. Cyril of Jerusalem).

Concerning the world wide power of Antichrist, the book of Revelation says: "And power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations" (13:7). Although the usual human endeavours and means will have significance, the main source of his success will not stem from them. "And his power shall be mighty, but it will not be his own power" (Dan 8:24). Antichrist will receive his authority and power from Satan. "And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority" (Rev. 13:2). Only by this constant satanic cooperation with him will it be possible to explain Antichrist's unusual success in seizing power over the earth so quickly and his exceptional strength which no human force will be able to resist or hinder.

"Antichrist," says Belyaev, "will act with power and miracles from Satan, and this power will be very great ... he will have a great many powerful helpers ... with rapid means of communication and methods of coordination, it will be possible to bring about a revolution all over the world at once" (*Concerning Atheism and Antichrist*, vol. 1, p. 765).

The general acknowledgement of Antichrist as worldwide ruler will occur simultaneously with the universal acknowledgement of him as the one spiritual leader of all religions. Vladimir Soloviev in his last work, *Three Conversations*, expressed the opinion that Antichrist, having attained power, will gather some form of ecumenical council with representatives from all religions. In this council (in Jerusalem) Antichrist will offer to unite all into one fold under one pastor. He will turn his main attention to the Christians of all confessions, promising every sort of protection in return for their acknowledgement of his leadership. St. Ephraim the Syrian writes,

"He will herald himself as the precursors heralded him; he will call himself the preacher and re-establisher of true knowledge of God. Those not comprehending Christianity will see in him a representative and champion of the true religion and will join with him. He will herald himself, calling himself the promised messiah and the children of worldly wisdom will hail his presentation. Because of his renown, might, genial capabilities and his widest development of the elements of the world, they will proclaim him a god and will make themselves his accomplices" (Word 106, pt. 2. cf. Bp. Ignaty Brianchaninov, vol. 4, p. 301).

It is, by the way, very important to note that all the Holy Fathers consider the main cause of the rapid captivation of mankind by Antichrist to be the lack of spiritual understanding and its total submersion in worldly matters. Since spiritual understanding can be found and developed only under the conditions of true spiritual life, preserved by the true-Orthodox Christians (that is not to include all the nominal Orthodox), only the very small proportion of them who will remain true-Orthodox Christians to the last, living a spiritual life in accordance with the rules of the Holy Church, will at that time be in full weaponry and be able to discern all the snares and cunning of Antichrist.

Antichrist will subtly substitute worship for himself, the man-god in place of the worship of the God-man, Jesus Christ. In Holy Scripture he is portrayed as "exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped by Man" (2 Thes. 2:3-4), as speaking "great things and blasphemies," as blaspheming God and "His tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13:5-6).

According to the prediction of the Holy Apostle Paul, Antichrist will "... sit as God in the temple of God, presenting himself as God" (2 Thes. 2:4).

There is no doubt that "Antichrist cannot sit in the temple constantly. He will do this only on special, triumphant and important occasions; at the proclamation of himself as ruler of the world and a god, for example. He will have already given this sign, however, by having sat in the temple just once. Moreover, he will order that his image be placed in all Christian and non-Christian temples and that all people worship them as they would the image of God. Eventually, service to Antichrist as a god will begin in the churches" (Belyaev, *Concerning Atheism and Antichrist*, Vol. 1, p. 384).

St. John the Theologian says that Antichrist will perform great wonders "so that he causes fire to come down from heaven onto the earth in sight of men" (Rev. 13:13). "This sign is indicated by the Scripture as being the greatest of Antichrist's miracles — and the place of this sign will be in the air. It will be a magnificent and terrifying spectacle which will act mainly upon the sense of sight, bewitching and deceiving it" (Bp. Ignaty Brianchaninov, vol. 4, p. 302). Antichrist's signs, worked by the power of Satan, will produce an irresistible influence on spectators. "Men will not grasp the fact that his miracles do not have any good, intelligent aim, that they are freakish, evil and aimless theatricalism, able to produce amazement, to bring the mind into perplexity and self-forgetfulness, to delude and deceive and to captivate one by the enchantment of splendorous, empty performances" (Bp. Ignaty Brianchaninov, vol. 4, p. 300).

Having seen these "miracles", men, because of their (spiritual) blindness and the triumph of their carnal understandings, will immediately acknowledge these demonstrations of Satanic power to be the greatest manifestation of the power of God and they will ecstatically receive Antichrist as a god. "Antichrist will terrify with his threatening and amazing miracles. With them he will satisfy imprudent curiosity and coarse ignorance, he will satisfy superstition and bring human knowledge into perplexity. All men led by the guidance of their fallen nature, estranged from guidance by the light of God, will be allured into submission by the deceiver" (Bp. Ignaty Brianchaninov, vol. 4, p. 302. cf. Rev. 13:8).

The power of Satan over the kingdoms of the world is testified to several times by the word of God. The Lord Himself calls the devil "the prince of this World." St. John the Theologian writes in the book of Revelation that Satan gives his servant "his power and his seat and great authority" (Rev. 13:2). The power of Satan is strengthened and confirmed by deception, delusion and violence. The Lord Jesus Christ, however, came to confirm His power by a freely accepted moral act and filial obedience to God the Father. That which Christ rejected (during the temptation in the wilderness), Antichrist will accept and actualize in full measure. Antichrist will receive all his power over the world from Satan in return for complete submission to him. He will reward others with this same demonic power in accordance

with the measure of their submission and service to the will of Satan.

Saint Ephraim the Syrian has left us the following teaching in one of his God-inspired sermons:

"Yet I shall begin my sermon with pain and with sighs shall I speak concerning the end of the present world and of the most shameless and appalling serpent who will bring the world into turmoil and will put fear, cowardice and terrible disbelief into the hearts of men. He will work wonders, signs and terrifying spectacles, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Mat. 24:24), deluding all by false signs and semblances of miracles wrought by himself. For by permission of the Holy God, he will receive the power to receive the world, because impiety will have filled the earth and every sort of horror will be committed everywhere. Therefore, the most pure Master will permit, because of the godlessness of the people, that the world should be tempted by the spirit of falsehood, since men desired to separate from God and love the evil one.

"Great will be the contest, O brethren, in those times, especially for the faithful, when signs and wonders will be wrought with great authority by the serpent himself; when he will show himself in awful apparitions as being similar to God — he will fly about in the air and all the demons, like angels, will exult before the tormentor. For he will cry aloud with might, transforming his countenance and dismaying all men without measure. Who, brethren, will then prove to be guarded, unshakable, having in his soul the faithful sign — the holy coming of the Only-Begotten Son, our God — when he beholds the unspeakable afflictions which will come from every direction upon every soul and from which there will be utterly no comfort, no respite whatever, neither on earth nor on the sea, who will persevere when he beholds the whole world in turmoil, everyone fleeing to hide himself in the mountains and some dying from hunger, others melting like wax from thirst and no one who will take pity; when he sees every eye pouring forth tears and with strong desire asking, 'Is the word of God to be found anywhere on the earth?' and hearing the answer, 'Nowhere!'

"Who will endure the insufferable affliction when he sees the gathering of the peoples who will come from the ends of the earth to see the tormentor, many worshipping him, crying with trembling, 'You are our saviour!' ? The sea will rebel, the earth will

dry up, the heavens will not give rain, plant life will wither, and all those living in the eastern parts of the earth will flee to the west because of the great terror and those living in the western parts will flee to the east with trepidation. But the shameless one, having then taken power, will send the demons to all the ends of the earth to preach: 'The great king has appeared in glory, come and see him.' And who will have such an adamant soul as to endure all these temptations? Where, as I said, will such a man be found whom all the angels would bless?" (*Concerning Antichrist*).

Having attained world power, Antichrist will abruptly change his behaviour. Instead of a hypocritical and cautious attitude toward people and a false good-will toward his enemies, he will turn to the merciless persecution of all believing Christians who refuse to worship him as a god. He will "wear out the saints of the Most High and think to change the times and the law" (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:13-17; 13:6-7). Open public Christian worship (the Liturgy) will have to cease. Antichrist and his adherents, writes Belyaev, "will destroy the books of the Holy Scripture, will pursue and torture the preachers of the word of God and the celebrants of Christian worship services. They will watch so that the Eucharist will not be celebrated anywhere. All the same, however, the preaching of the word of God will not be silenced and divine services will not cease and the Eucharist will be celebrated" (ibid. p. 346), but, of course, only in hidden places as in the first centuries of Christianity (and in the Catacomb Church in Russia today).

Antichrist will have an active helper in the persecution of Christians and the forcing of them to worship him as God. Because of his cruelty and mercilessness, the helper of Antichrist is named "the second beast" in the Holy Scripture. St. John the Theologian writes: "Then I saw another beast rising up out of the land ... He exercises all the power of the first beast and causes the earth and those who dwell upon it to exalt and deify the first beast ... and because of the miraculous signs which he is allowed to perform in the presence of the (first) beast, he deceives those who inhabit the earth, commanding them to erect an image in the likeness of the beast ... And he was granted power to impart life to the image of the beast so that the image could actually speak and to cause those who would not bow down and worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Rev. 13:11-12, 14-15).

"The trial of the saints of God will be terrible: the evil, hypocrisy and miracles of the persecutor will increase in order to deceive and delude them. The subtly devised persecutions and impediments, covered with sly inventiveness and the unlimited power of the torturer will place them into the most difficult position and the small number of them will seem insignificant before the mass of mankind ... general disdain, hatred, calumny, oppression, violent death will be their fate ... The enemies of Antichrist will be counted as rebels, as enemies of the public good and order, they will be submitted to both secret and open persecutions, to tortures and to executions ... " (Bp. Ignaty Brianchaninov, vol. 4, p. 302-303).

Antichrist's first murders will be the accusers, the holy prophets Enoch and Elias. "And when they will have finished their testimony, the beast that ascended out of the pit shall make war against them and shall overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified (Jerusalem). For three and a half days men from all races and tribes and languages and nations will look on their dead bodies and will not allow them to be put in a grave. And those who dwell upon the earth will gloat over them, rejoicing and sending gifts one to another because these two prophets had tormented the dwellers of the earth.

"But after three and a half days, the Spirit of life from God entered into them and they stood on their feet; and great terror fell upon those who saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven calling to them, 'Come up here!' And they ascended into heaven in a cloud; and their enemies saw them. In that same hour there was a great earthquake and one tenth of the city fell and seven thousand persons perished in the earthquake. The remainder were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Rev. 11:7-13).

### THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS

As a result of the preaching of these two holy prophets, their miraculous resurrection and ascension into heaven, a remarkable occurrence will come to pass. A considerable number of Jews will be converted to Christ. Blessed Theophilact the Bulgarian writes concerning this: "Elias will come as a fore-runner of the second coming and bring to faith in Christ all the Jews who will prove

obedient, leading, as it were, to their paternal inheritance those who had fallen away from Him." This statement is based on the following prophecies:

1. "Behold, I will send you Elias the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the child and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

2. "And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and such as are saved of the house of Jacob shall no more stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God" (Is. 10:20-21).

3. "Isaiah also cries concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved'" (Rom. 9:27; cf. Is. 10:22).

4. "And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of compassion: and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced and they shall mourn Him as one mourns for one's only son, and they shall be in bitterness for Him as one is in bitterness for one's first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo" (Zech. 12:10-11).

5. "For if you (converted gentiles) have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree and, against nature, grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much easier will it be to graft these natural branches (the Jews who will become converted) back on to their own tree. Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers: a hardening has overcome part of Israel until the full number of the ingathering of the gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:24-25).

The conversion of the Jews to Christ will evoke from Antichrist the most intense malice towards all Christians. Then they will be made to suffer the "great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mat. 24:15-21), for "it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (Rev. 13:7).

The salvation of a small remnant of the faithful will be dependent only on the shortness of Antichrist's reign. "And



except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened" (Mat. 24:22).

The world rule of Antichrist will last three and one half years. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away and the setting up of the abomination of desolation there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (Dan. 12:11; cf. 12:7). This is the same as the length of time given for the reign of Antichrist in the Revelation: "and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" (13:5).

No human power whatever will be able to stand up against Antichrist. Only the Lord Himself, coming a second time in all His glory, will vanquish him. Then the terrible judgment by Christ and the end of the world will come (Mat. 24:30-31; 25:31-46; Rev. 1:7; 20:11-15; 21:1-8). "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles for him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were slain with the sword that issues from the mouth of Him Who is mounted on the horse..." (Rev. 19:20-21). And the devil who had led them astray was hurled into the fiery lake of burning brimstone with the beast and the false prophet; and they were tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev. 20:10).

The Revelation of John the Theologian, as well as the prophecy of Daniel and of the Apostle Paul, reveals to the world that the son of ruin will be not only a political leader, but also the prophet of a new religion with himself as its deity, as the God incarnate Who was promised to the Jews by the ancient prophets. The triumph of Judaism will be great, for there will be the command to celebrate the Jewish sabbath and follow the Jewish law. The countless sects, like sheep without a shepherd, will gather to Antichrist as to their own pastor in the re-built temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. Here the self-styled "Christ" will receive divine worship, seated on the throne of David. At the same time, the Christian sanctuary will be closed and in it will be placed an idol of Antichrist — a lifelike, speaking statue. This was called "the abomination of desolation" by the prophet Daniel. From that time on, the bloodless sacrifice of the Eucharist will cease on earth.

Reading the book of Revelation (10:11:5), we see an angel

crying in Christian lands to those who have apostatized from the true Church of Christ. The Angel reminds all of the Creation and of the One Who created all things, Who became flesh and lived amongst us, Whose glory was seen, the glory of the Only-Begotten Son of the Father — the Son Who descended to earth so that, because of His worthiness, all can receive grace. But people, by that time, will have turned their backs on grace and will have already fallen into neglect of the Holy Mysteries, and will willingly become attracted by the so-called signs of the false-Christ and false prophets.

When the offerings cease in the Church on earth, when all these things come to pass, the second coming of the Lord will follow immediately. The Lord Himself warns in the Holy Gospel: "Be aware of this, that: if the householder had known at what time the thief was coming, he would have been awake and watching and would not have left his house to be broken into, you must likewise be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke 12:39-40). Truly no one in that time will suspect that the world is coming to an end or will imagine in what hour the Son of Man will come and so mankind will be taken unaware. The plagues caused by the two prophets will have ceased and the accusers will have vanished from the earth; those two bothersome prophets who chastised the followers of Antichrist, warning the merry-makers of their fate. Progress will have reached an apex and the fight against illnesses and disease will be reaching such an advanced stage that it will seem as if even death would soon be conquered. Then, suddenly the vessels of wrath will be poured out upon the followers of Antichrist: sores and boils will afflict those bearing the mark of the beast and the waters of the earth will be turned to blood. Where then will the great physicians and scientists be? Where will the preachers of materialism be? No help will be found, not in progress, not in books and not in medicine. When the departure of man from God has reached its extreme limit during the reign of the son of perdition, this putrifying illness will fall upon his followers, the last Sodomites, just as suddenly as destruction fell upon the first Sodomites. The Gospel warns: "... as it was in the day of Lot — they (the Sodomites) ate, drank, bought, sold, planted and built, but on that day when Lot departed from Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from heaven and destroyed them all. So it will be on that day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-30).

The end of Antichrist and his followers will be terrible. We read in the book of Revelation that, on the great day of the Lord, Satan and Antichrist and his deputy will dispatch demons to call all the rulers of the world together for a great battle. When this great army has been gathered at Armageddon, the seventh wrath of God will pour forth onto the earth: a great storm of lightning, thunder and explosions and an earthquake of unimaginable proportions — an earthquake so great that islands will vanish and mountains will be leveled. In an instant all man's pride will crumble to rubble and vanish — his great manufacturing centers, of culture, art and learning, all the things which man worshipped in place of God.

### THE LAST JUDGEMENT

After this will begin the Dread Judgement. The Saviour frequently taught about the last, universal judgement over humanity — both in parables and in discourses that were unmistakably clear in meaning. He said: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works (Mt. 16:27). The Lord said similar things about the Last Judgement in many other places (Mat. 25:31-42, Jn. 5:22, 27 etc.) In accordance with the teachings of their Lord, the Apostles proclaimed that the Son of God will pass judgement over the whole world. St. Paul says, "We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). In another place the Apostle writes to the Corinthians, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). In his epistle to the Romans St. Paul teaches that, at the Last Judgement, God will "render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath ... for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:5-11; compare Acts 17:13, 1 Peter 4:5, 2 Peter 2:4 and 2 Thess. 1:7-10). From this clear evidence in Holy Scripture, as well as

from many other similar places, we can find out about the last universal judgement of humanity and can tell to some extent what it will be like. At this judgement will be judged all people, without exception, who have lived from the beginning of the world until the end, both evil and good, not only Christians, but unbelievers also. This judgment will be final. It will decide the fate both of men and of the fallen angels, whom God has "reserved ... unto the judgement of the great day" (Epistle of St. Jude, v. 6). The judge of the world will be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He Who announced the good tidings of God's law and perfectly fulfilled it, Who gave Himself, taking the form of a slave in His Divine outpouring, and redeemed the human race through His sufferings and death, will appear in all the glory of His Divine majesty and judge all men. The Lord, Who knows all the secrets of men's hearts, will judge not only the deeds which we have done during the course of our earthly life, but also our words and our thoughts, intentions and desires. All our most hidden thoughts will then be revealed and laid open. The judgement will be righteous and impartial: the Lord will reward each according to his works. To some He will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34). Others will hear this terrible sentence: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41). Then, says St. Ephraim the Syrian, "all of humanity will find itself between the kingdom and condemnation, between life and death, between joy and necessity, and all will stand before the judgement seat, looking downwards and not daring to raise up their eyes. All will be interrogated and strictly tried, especially we who have lived in carelessness, and seeing all this will start thinking over all their deeds. Each person will see his own deeds, bad and good. All those whose deeds are good will joyfully draw near to the judgement seat in the hope of obtaining a crown. If anyone who has serious sins on his conscience leaves this life without repenting, he will become sick at heart when he sees his sins standing before him, accusing him and condemning him, and he will say, 'Why did I the poor one not struggle with them, but wasted time playing games and so became myself a plaything? ... Why did I not repent before

Him to takes away the sin of the world, but spent my years in delusion? ... What am I to do? The time for repentance has passed by'. While pondering over this within themselves, they will hear the awful voice of the Judge, Who will cry out and say, 'Show your deeds and receive your reward'. At that hour all the orders of humanity will come forward — bishops, priests, deacons and all the orders of the Church, as the Apostle said: they will rise each in his own rank, 'every man in his own order' (1 Cor. 15:23), to render homage to the Lord. Then the rulers, the wise and the rich will shake with fear, because the hour has come in which everyone's deeds will become known both to angels and to men, and each will reap what he has sowed. ... After each one has been tried before men, and all dominions and powers have been abolished and all God's enemies have been placed under His feet; then at last, as the Lord said, 'He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left' (Mt. 25:32-33). ... Then parents will be separated from children, fathers from sons, mothers from daughters, friends and relatives from each other. Then false spouses who have not kept their bed undefiled will be separated. But I will pass by much in silence in my description; for fear restrains me from telling about this" (Sermon on the Honourable and Life-Creating Cross and on the Second Coming).

#### ETERNAL BLESSEDNESS AND ETERNAL TORMENT

After the final and decisive sentence has been passed at the universal judgement, the eternal blessedness of the righteous in the kingdom of heaven will begin, as well as the eternal torments of sinners in hell (Lk. 16:23), a place of all woes, sufferings and punishments, where there is only disorder, terror and confusion, where there is no joy of any kind nor any hope whatever of any alleviation (Mk. 9:44, 46-48). Eternal separation from God and deprivation of all God's gifts, tormenting pangs of conscience, eternal disgrace and shame, reproaches, mockery and cursing from those who had been drawn into sin by the condemned; the onslaught of demons, living together with them and with all the condemned — will bring about that "gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 22:13) which the Saviour mentions. For the right-

eous, on the contrary, a great reward is prepared. They will be led into the most perfect and beautiful place, which in Holy Scripture is called paradise (Lk. 23:43), heaven (Mt. 6:9), and the heavenly kingdom (Mt. 5:3). Here the righteous will enjoy the direct vision of God, seeing Him "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). This means that the glory and majesty of the Lord will become accessible for the righteous; in God they will see all that is most majestic, elevated, sacred and perfect, and will take the impression of the majesty of God and the Son of God directly upon themselves. In this contemplation they will find complete satisfaction for the mind, will and heart, and an inexhaustible source of eternal enjoyment and blessedness; eternal joy and eternal gladness will be their heritage. Contemplating God, the righteous will see the whole world in its proper form, will fathom the mystery of our redemption and will enjoy the fulness and perfection of divine knowledge, as the Apostle says: "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (Cor. 13:12). Beloved of God, they themselves will come to love God with the most holy love. The righteous in heaven will be like the angels of God (Mk. 12:25). Then the thousands of angels will receive men into their midst as brothers, and will share with them their feelings of love and thanksgiving towards God (Heb. 12:22,23). Each one of the righteous will likewise be united in a close and unbreakable union of love with all the saints (Mat. 8:11). They will all make up the one flock of Christ (Jn. 10:16), or one family, united by pure love (Jn. 17:21).

The terrible scourges of the human race, the spirits of malice which have brought men to death and hell, will then receive their reward for having killed each and every person in the most torturous way. They offered the cup of murderous poison both to the innocent child and to the old man crowned with virtues so that, after their death, they could gain power over their souls, as battle trophies in their war with God. However, this torment will not continue eternally. Death! where is thy sting? Hell! where is thy victory? The seer tells us that "death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them" (Rev. 20:13). What happens after that? "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14).

"And I heard", says the seer, "a great voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). He who lives in the unapproachable light will establish a dwelling place on high where He will dwell together with men. Before, He had revealed Himself like a shape "in a glass darkly", that is to say, vaguely, scarcely accessibly and extremely obscurely. Only the inner voice of the heart had sometimes said that it was He, here with us in the temple, in the Holy Mysteries of faith, Who awaited from us ever newer and newer struggles of faith, hope and love towards Him in victory over ourselves and struggle with sin. But there, on the holy mountain, in the heavenly tabernacle, whose appearance will be capable of drying all tears and filling the heart with hitherto unknown joy in the contemplation of unearthly beauty, of the perfect nature of the heavenly paradise, — there the blessed will see God not in obscure figures, but face to face. A single vision of the heavenly flowers, as occurred according to tradition at the burial of the Mother of God, fills one with inexpressible consolation. The sounds of heavenly words and hymns are so wonderful and joyous that it is impossible to compare such a harmony of sounds with earthly music even when performed in the best manner possible. St. Paul, who was once caught up into paradise, bears witness to this. What must a thankful heart experience when it sees the Saviour Himself and will not ever be separated from the blessed thirsting to contemplate Him face to face? Then will be fulfilled that which has been foretold: "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 (Rev. 21:4).

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