

ASCETICALLY SPEAKING

(A Journey through Suffering Orthodoxy led by
Christ's Saints, Martyrs and other true Followers)

compiled by Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

TRUE CHRISTIANS WILL BE HATED

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

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

...Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely for My sake. (St. Matthew 10:22 and 5:11)

CHURCH NUMBERS DO NOT MATTER

St. Athanasius the Great

Even if Christians faithful to tradition are reduced to a handful, they are the ones who are the true (emphasis supplied) Church of Jesus Christ.

THE 'MARKETPLACE' DOES NOT RULE

St. Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus)

Thus, as briefly as possible I have set forth for you our love of wisdom, which is dogmatical and not dialectical, in the manner of the fishermen and not of Aristotle, spiritually and not cleverly woven, according to the Church and not (emphasis supplied) the marketplace.

STRUGGLE

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville

Without the Cross, without struggle, there can be no salvation! This is what true Christianity teaches.

MARTYRDOM

St. Lawrence, Archdeacon of Rome

When slow, consuming heat had seared the flesh of Lawrence for a space, He calmly from his gridiron made this terse proposal to the judge:

'Pray turn my body, on one side already broiled sufficiently, and see how well your Vulcan's fire has wrought its cruel punishment.'

The prefect bade him to be turned. Then Lawrence spoke: 'I am well baked, and whether better cooked or raw, make trial by a taste of me'.

He said these words in jest; then rising shining eyes to heaven and sighing deeply, thus he prayed (emphasis supplied) with pity for unholy Rome.

FAITH

St. Vincent of Lerins stated that faith was that:

which is believed always, that which is believed by everyone, and that which is believed throughout the whole world.

St. Basil the Great

We do not have one faith in Seleucia, another in Constantinople, another in Zelis, another in Lampsake, and a different one in Rome. The faith that is professed today is not different from the one that came before; it is the one and same faith (emphasis supplied).

WHAT ARE WORKS OF FAITH?

St. Seraphim of Sarov

Faith without works is dead (James 2:26), and the works of faith are: love, peace, long-suffering, mercy, humility, rest from all works (as God Himself rested from His works), bearing the Cross, and life in the Spirit. Only such

faith can be considered true. True faith cannot (emphasis supplied) be without works; one who truly believes will unfailingly have works as well.

CHRIST, THE APOSTLES AND FATHERS ARE OUR TEACHERS

St. Nil Sorsky

The Divine Scriptures and the words of the Holy Fathers are as numerous as the sand of the sea. Diligently searching them out, we teach them to those who come to us and who are in need of them. More correctly, it is not we who teach, because we are unworthy to do so, but it is the blessed and Holy Fathers who teach from (emphasis supplied) Divine Scripture.

FACING MARTYRDOM - ST. POLYCARP'S LAST PRAYER

St. Polycarp

O Father of Thy Beloved and blessed Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have come to know Thee, the God of angels and powers and all creation, and of the whole family of the righteous who live in Thy presence, I bless Thee for counting me worthy of this day and hour, that in the number of the martyrs I may partake of Christ's cup, to the resurrection of eternal life of both soul and body in the perishability that is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Among them may I be received into Thy presence today, a rich and acceptable sacrifice as Thou has prepared it beforehand, foreshadowing it and fulfilling it, Thou God of truth that canst not lie. Therefore for every cause I praise Thee, I glorify Thee, through the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ Thy Beloved Son, through whom and with whom in the Holy Ghost glory be to Thee, both now and in the ages to come. Amen.

THE JESUS PRAYER, A SPIRITUAL DEFINITION OF

Old Monk in His Cell The Way of a Pilgrim

The continuous interior prayer of Jesus is a constant uninterrupted calling upon the divine name of Jesus with the lips, in the spirit, in the heart, while forming a mental picture of His constant presence, and imploring His grace, during every occupation, at all times, in all places, even during sleep. The appeal is couched in these terms, 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' One who accustoms himself to this appeal experiences as a result so deep a consolation and so great a need to offer the prayer always that he can no longer live without it, and it will continue to voice itself within him of its own accord. Now do you understand what prayer without (emphasis supplied) ceasing is?

LOVE VERSUS SELF-LOVE

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

A Christian's love for God is love for Christ, and love for our neighbour is love for Christ in (emphasis supplied) our neighbour

St. Theophan the Recluse

The seed of all moral evil is - self-love....when a man separates himself from God - in his thoughts, his heart, his desires - and consequently also from his neighbour, then naturally he comes to dwell upon himself alone: his 'I' becomes the focus towards which he directs everything else, to the neglect even of his divine precepts and the good of his neighbour.

THE TRUTH OF THE NICENE CREED aka THE CREED OR SYMBOL OF FAITH

Anonymous

Every true Orthodox Christian must accept the truths of The Creed, reciting and then saying "Amen" to it means we acknowledge everything in it is absolutely true.

FAITH WITHOUT 'WORKS'

St. James the Just of Jerusalem

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.
(St. James 2:26)

IS IT NECESSARY FOR CHRISTIANS TO SUFFER?

St. Innocent of Alaska

We must bear crosses because we call ourselves and wish to be Christians, that is, disciples, followers and members of Jesus Christ. Whatever the Master, Leader and Head is like, such ought also His disciples, followers and members to be. Jesus Christ entered into His glory through sufferings; consequently we too can enter there only by the way of sufferings.

IN HOLY ORTHODOXY ALL ARE CALLED TO ASCETICISM, NOT JUST MONASTICS

Professor I.M. Kontzevitch

...asceticism, although to various extents and to various forms, is obligatory for all (emphasis supplied) Christians without exception, according to the words of the Saviour, Who requires that His followers make an effort....In patristic writings the term 'ascesis' was commonly used in the meaning of: fasting, praying, solitude, vigil and other endeavours and deprivations.

ASCETIC LABOURS

St. Seraphim of Sarov

One should go by a middle path: turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left (Prov. 4:27); and one should render unto the spirit what is spiritual, and unto the body what is bodily; for the maintenance of temporal life, one should render what is necessary, and for life in society that which is lawfully demanded by it in accordance with the works of Holy Scripture: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21).

HESYCHASM: EMPHASIS ON STILLNESS, INNER SPIRITUALITY AND UNCEASING PRAYER LEADS TO

Professor I.M. Konzevitch

...a particular inexplicable state of blessedness, to the vision of a certain heavenly Light which is not (emphasis supplied) of this world, uncreated and similar to the Light which surrounded the Saviour on Mt. Tabor.

FILIOQUE CLAUSE

Lay Theologian Alexei S. Khomiakov

The Church does not deny that the Holy Spirit is sent not only by the Father, but also by the Son; the Church does not deny that the Holy Ghost is communicated to all rational creatures not only from the Father but also through the Son; but what she does reject is that the Holy Ghost had the principle of His procession in the God-head itself, not merely from the Father, but also from the Son (emphases supplied).

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST ON THE 'FILIOQUE'

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father (emphasis supplied), he shall testify of me: (St. John 15:26)

THE WORLD'S HATRED OF CHRIST

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. (St. John 15:18)

TEARS

St. Seraphim of Sarov

All saints and monks who have renounced the world, have spent their whole lives in weeping, in the hope of eternal consolation, according to the

assurance of the Saviour of the world: Blessed are they that mourn (weep), for they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:4). And thus should we weep for the forgiveness of our sins.

THE CHOSEN FEW

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

Those chosen few must be careful. The devil does not always act as devil; most of the time he appears as an angel of light. He preaches a Christianity just a little bit different from the real one (emphasis supplied), and with this trap many more are caught in his net than he would have gained by sending forth an entire army of atheists and Diocletians.

WAR AND PEACE

St. Isaiah the Solitary

He who receives no help at war should feel no confidence at peace.

RIGHT WAY TO FOLLOW THE GOSPEL

St. John Cassian

If we want to follow the gospel commandment and the practise of the whole Church as it was founded initially upon the apostles, we should not follow our own notions or give wrong meanings to things rightly said. We must discard faint-hearted, faithless opinion and recover the strictness of the Gospel. In this way, we shall be able to follow also in the footsteps of the Fathers, adhering to the discipline of the coenobitic life and, truly renouncing this world (emphases supplied).

HUMBLE AND QUIET LABOURS WITH PERSISTENT SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Fr. Seraphim Rose

Our times, above all, call for humble and quiet labours, with love and sympathy for other strugglers on the path of the Orthodox spiritual life and a deep resolve that does not become discouraged because the atmosphere is unfavorable. We Christians of the latter (emphasis supplied) times are still called to work persistently on ourselves, to be obedient to spiritual fathers and authorities, to lead an orderly life with at least a minimum of spiritual discipline and with regular reading of the Orthodox spiritual literature which Blessed Paisius was directly responsible for handing down to our times, to watch over our sins and failings and not judge others. If we do this, even in our terrible times, we may have hope - in God's mercy - of the salvation of our souls.

PATIENCE AND HUMILITY

St. Seraphim of Sarov

Bear it in silence when an enemy offends you, and open your heart to the Lord...What is not in the light is all dark; likewise without humility there is nothing in a man but darkness alone.

WE NEED NEW HEARTS!

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

A whole new world must be born in a Westerner's heart in order for him to understand something of Orthodoxy. How can someone who has breathed the dry air of rationalism from the cradle and learned to worship human cleverness as an idol be humbled and become as simple as a child? (emphases supplied)

THE CHURCH IS UNITED!

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

In reality, there is no question of union of the Christians. True (emphasis supplied) Christians were, are, and always will be united.

LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

Love for our neighbour is preceded and accompanied by humility in our human relationships. Hatred towards our neighbour is preceded by condemnation and criticism of him, detraction and disparagement, slander and backbiting, scorn for him, otherwise pride (emphasis supplied).

LOVING CHRIST IN OUR NEIGHBOUR

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

By loving our neighbour - by loving him in the Lord, that is, as the Lord commands us - we acquire love for Christ, and love for Christ is love for God.

UNSEEN WARFARE

St. Nicodemus(ed.)

If you want to gain a speedy and easy victory over your enemies, brother, you must wage ceaseless and courageous war against all passions, especially and pre-eminently against self-love, or a foolish attachment to yourself, manifested in self-indulgence and self-pity. For it is the basis and source of all passions and cannot be tamed except by constant voluntary self-inflicted sufferings and by welcoming afflictions, privations, calumnies, persecutions by the world and by the men of the world.

GOD'S TREATMENT OF OUR SOULS

St. Maximos the Confessor

20. When Physicians are treating the body they do not administer the same remedy in all cases. Neither does God, when treating the illnesses of the soul, regard a single kind of therapy as suitable for all conditions; but He allots to each soul what is suitable for it and effects its cure. So let us give thanks while we are being treated, however great our suffering, for the result is blessed.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS!

St. Maximos the Confessor

86. God may be called and actually is the Father by grace only of those whose will and disposition have been reborn in the Spirit through the practice of the virtues. By means of this birth they bear in their soul and manifest in the virtues the imprint of God their Father. Through their way of life they they make those who see them glorify God by reforming themselves, and so they provide an excellent pattern of virtue for others to imitate. For God is glorified not by mere words but by works of righteousness, which proclaim the majesty of God far more effectively than words (emphases supplied).

PROTECT THE SOUL!

St. Makarios of Egypt

46. The soul must watch and anticipate carefully so that it is not even for the twinkling of an eye taken captive by the devil's power. Even if only one part of an animal is caught in a trap, the whole animal is held fast and falls into the hands of the hunters; and the same thing is liable to happen to the soul at the hands of its enemies. The psalmist makes this quite clear when he says: 'They prepared a trap for my feet and bowed down my soul' (Ps. 57: 6. LXX).

NO CONTRADICTIONS IN HOLY SCRIPTURE

St. Peter of Damaskos

Whenever a person even slightly illumined reads the Scriptures or sings psalms he finds in them matter for contemplation and theology, one text supporting another. But he whose intellect is still unenlightened thinks that the Holy Scriptures are contradictory. Yet there is no (emphasis supplied) contradiction in the Holy Scriptures: God forbid that there should be. For some texts are confirmed by others, while some were written with reference

to a particular time or a particular person. Thus every word of Scripture is beyond reproach. The appearance of contradiction is due to our ignorance.... The person who searches for the meaning of the Scriptures will not put forward his own opinion, bad or good; but as St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom have said, he will take as his teacher, not the learning of this (emphasis supplied) world, but Holy Scripture itself.... For no one is more foolish than he who forces the meaning of the Scriptures or finds fault with them so as to demonstrate his own knowledge - or, rather, his own ignorance. What kind of knowledge can result from adapting the meaning of the Scriptures to suit one's own likes and from daring to alter their words? The true sage is he who regards the text as authoritative and discovers, through the wisdom of the Spirit, the hidden mysteries to which the divine Scriptures bear witness.

PRAYER - KEEP TO THE ROYAL ROAD

St. Gregory of Sinai

If some have gone astray and lost their mental balance, this is because they have in arrogance followed their own counsels. For when you seek God in obedience and humility, and with the guidance of a spiritual master, you will never come to any harm, by the grace of Christ who desires all to be saved (cf. I Tim. 2:4). Should temptation arise, its purpose is to test you and to spur you on; and God, who has permitted this testing, will speedily come to your help in whatever way He sees fit. As the holy fathers assure us, a person who lives an upright and blameless life, avoiding arrogance and spurning popularity, will come to no harm even if a whole host of demons provoke him with countless temptations. But if you are presumptuous and follow your own counsel you will readily fall victim to delusion. This is why a hesychast must always keep to the royal road.

MAN IN GOD'S IMAGE

St. Gregory Palamas

62. Man is created more perfectly in God's image than the angels, both because he possesses in himself a sustaining and quickening power and because he has a capacity for sovereignty....God, then, by virtue of our capacity for sovereignty, has given us lordship over all the earth.... 64. Even though we still bear God's image to a greater degree than the angels, yet as regards the likeness of God we fall far short of them.

WE CAN'T BE SAVED BY OUR OWN EFFORTS!

St. John of Kronstadt

When you have sinned, and your sins torment you, then seek at once the only sacrifice for sins, eternal and living, and lay your sins before the face of that sacrifice. Do not think that you can be saved by your own efforts.

A PRIEST'S SOUL

St. John Chrysostom

For the priest's soul must be purer than the rays of the sun, in order that the Holy Spirit may never leave him desolate, and that he may be able to say, 'I live; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me'.

BELIEVE IN HIM YOU HAVE NOT SEEN!

King Abgarus of Edessa's Letter to Christ and His Reply

...For it is reported, that you cause the blind to see, the lame to walk; do both cleanse lepers, and cast out unclean spirits and devils, and restore them to health who have been long diseased; and raisest up the dead; All which when I heard, I was persuaded of one of these two, viz: either you are God Himself descended from heaven, who do these things, or the son of God. On this

account therefore I have wrote (sic) you, earnestly to desire you would take the trouble of a journey hither, and cure a disease which I am under... Jesus' answer sent by Ananias the footman declining to come but promising to send one of His disciples to cure him after His Ascension, accompanied by the towel with His image, the "Ikon made without hands":

Abgarus, you are happy, forasmuch as you have believed on me, whom ye have not seen (emphasis supplied). For it is written concerning me, that those who have seen me should not believe on me, that they who have not seen might believe and live...

PAVEL FLORENSKY, MARTYR, PRIEST, ICONOGRAPHER

"But the deeper work of his last ministry was hidden from the eyes of the authorities: he served the needs of the poorest, most ravished prisoners. A crucial image survives the darkness - Fr. Pavel saved the scraps of bread from his own meagre meals and fed them to the starving and dying." KGB file on Pavel Florensky, found in 1987 "Florensky, Pavel Alexandrovich is to be shot... The sentence of the Special Triad of the UNKVD concerning Florensky, Pavel Alexandrovich was carried out 8 December 1937."

ORTHODOX DIVINE LITURGY: FROM OUR LORD TO JAMES THE JUST OF JERUSALEM

Divine Prayers and Services (ed. Nassar)

This service of the Divine Mass, in its present arrangement, was transmitted to the Catholic Orthodox Church by St. James the Apostle, who was the first Bishop consecrated by Christ before His Ascension, to the throne of the Church of holy Jerusalem, God's dwelling-place and throne, and the mother of all the churches of the world, where Christ was born, where he came together with His Disciples, performed the sacramental Supper, and where the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost. The Church of Jerusalem was followed by that of Antioch, the first seat of St. Peter. This same church was the house of Theophilus, which he endowed it as a church after embracing the faith in Christ. And it was Christ Himself Who taught His brother [note: not His real (blood) brother of course] James the service of the Mass, having first appeared to him and later to him and the Apostles (emphases supplied).

THE FIRST BISHOP

St. Epiphanius

He (St. James) was the first to receive the Cathedra of a bishopric, and the first to whom Christ had delivered His seat on earth, as he was also known as the brother of the Lord.

THEY TOOK THE THRONE WITH THEM

Eusebius, Church Historian

When the faithful fled from Jerusalem at the time it was besieged by Titus they took with them the episcopal throne of St. James.

CHRIST, AN EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY

St. Clement of Rome's First Epistle to the Corinthians

For Christ is of those who are humble-minded, and not of those who exalt themselves over His flock. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sceptre of the majesty of God, did not come in the pomp of pride or arrogance, although He might have done so, but in a lowly condition, as the Holy Spirit had declared regarding Him.

IN STUDYING HOLY SCRIPTURE, WE ARE NOT ALONE!

Constantine Callinicos

He has close to him others who are more capable than he, ready, to aid him in any time of wonderment and questioning. He has Holy Tradition, the Councils

and the Fathers of the Church. He has the Church, which is older than the New Testament, even more ancient than the Old Testament, which was appointed by God as guardian of the Truth, and which for this reason is the only proper place to turn for the explanation and simplification of the difficult passages (emphases supplied).

CHRIST CAME FOR SINNERS

St. Justin the Martyr

For Christ called not the just nor the chaste to repentance, but the ungodly, and the licentious and the unjust; His words being, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' For the heavenly Father desires rather the repentance than the punishment of the sinner. And of our love to all, He taught thus: 'If ye love them that love you, what new thing do ye? for even fornicators do this. But I say unto you, Pray for your enemies, and love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.'

FOOD FOR THE WILD BEASTS

St. Ignatius' Epistle to the Romans

I write to the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless ye hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb, and may leave nothing of my body; so that when I have fallen asleep [in death], I may be no trouble to any one. Then shall I truly be a disciple of Christ, when the world shall not see so much as my body.... when I suffer, I shall be the freedman of Jesus, and shall rise again emancipated in Him...

WHO ARE THE CLEAN?

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Now the law has figuratively predicted all these, delineating man by the [various] animals: whatsoever of these, says [the Scripture], have a double hoof and ruminates, it proclaims as clean; but whatsoever of them do not possess one or other of these [properties], it sets aside by themselves as unclean. Who then are (emphasis supplied) the clean? Those who make their way by faith steadily towards the Father and the Son; for this is denoted by the steadiness of those which divide the hoof; and they meditate day and night upon the words of God, that they may be adorned with good works: for this is the meaning of the ruminants. The unclean, however, are those which do neither divide the hoof nor ruminates; that is, those persons who have neither faith in God, nor do they meditate on His words: and such is the abomination of the Gentiles. But as to those animals which do indeed chew the cud, but have not the double hoof, and are themselves unclean, we have in them a figurative description of the Jews, who certainly have the words of God in their mouth, but who do not fix their rooted steadfastness in the Father and in the Son; wherefore they are an unstable generation.

A CHRISTIAN'S 'BUSINESS'

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

The business of the Christian is nothing else than to be ever preparing for death.

DENIAL

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

...the first thing is to deny one's self and to follow Christ; and those who do

this are borne onward to perfection, having fulfilled all their Teacher's will, becoming sons of God by spiritual regeneration, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; those who seek which first shall not be forsaken.

IMPACT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Constantine Callinicos

...the results of the Holy Spirit depend upon the attitude and acceptance of the person whom the Holy Spirit seeks to aid.

THE TOLLHOUSES

St. Theognostes, a Father of the Philokalia

Unutterable and unspeakable is the sweetness of the soul that departs from the body and is informed of its salvation.... Accompanied by the angel (sent for it), it goes without hindrance through the aerial spaces, not in the least disturbed by the evil spirits; joyfully and boldly it ascends to exclamations of thanksgiving to God, and comes finally to worship its Creator.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO REPENT AND THUS, BELIEVE

St. Ambrose of Milan

He then who has faith has life, and he who has life is certainly not shut out from pardon; 'that every one,' it is said, 'that believeth on Him should not perish.' Since it is said, Every one, no one is shut out, no one is excepted, for He does not except him who has lapsed, if only afterwards he believes effectually.

IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO SIN

St. Ambrose of Milan

And the Lord indeed came to a sinner, though indeed He had no sin, and desired to be baptised, having no need of cleansing; who, then, can tolerate you, who think there is no need to be cleansed by penance, because you say you are cleansed by grace, as though it were now impossible for you to sin?

UNJUST DESIRE FOR FORGIVENESS

St. Ambrose of Milan

...are you so pure who are so unrighteous as to have no tenderness, as to see the mote in your brother's eye, but not to consider the beam which is in your own eye? For with God no one who is unjust is pure. And what is more unjust than to desire to have your (emphasis supplied) sins forgiven you, and yet yourself to think that he who entreats you ought not to be forgiven? What is worse than to justify yourself in that wherein you condemn another, whilst you yourself are committing worse offences?

IT IS POSSIBLE TO DENY GOD IN WORD BUT WORSHIP HIM IN HEART

St. Ambrose of Milan

... Let us now consider the meaning. 'Every one,' He says, 'who shall confess Me,' that is to say, of whatever age, of whatever condition he may be, who shall confess Me, he shall have Me as the Rewarder of his confession.

Whereas the expression is, 'every one,' no one who shall confess is excluded from the reward. But it is not said in like manner, 'Every one who shall deny shall be denied,' for it is possible that a man overcome by torture may deny God in word, and yet worship Him in his heart.

FINDING YOUR WAY TO LIFE

St. Maximos the Confessor

If you wish to find the way that leads to life, look for it in the Way who says, 'I am the way, the door, the truth and the life' (John 10:7; 14:6), and there you will find it. Only let your search be diligent and painstaking, for 'few there are that find it' (Matt. 7:14) and if you are not among the few you will find yourself with the many.

HUMILITY AND ASCETICISM FREE US

St. Maximos the Confessor

Humility and ascetic hardhip free a man from all sin, for the one cuts out the passions of the soul, the other those of the body. This is what the blessed David indicates when he prays to God, saying, 'Look on my humility and my toil, and forgive my sins' (Ps. 25:18).

SINNERS AND SUFFERINGS

St. Maximos the Confessor

No sinner can escape future judgment without experiencing in this life either voluntary hardships or afflictions he has not chosen.

PEACE IS NOT 'GOOD'

St. Isaac the Syrian

When you find unchanging peace on your way, then fear, because you are far from the right path by which the righteous go with suffering feet.

ACCEPT CORRECTION: RECEIVE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS

St. John of the Ladder

He who will not accept a reproof (correction), just or unjust, renounces his own salvation. But he who accepts it with pain, or even without pain, will soon receive the remission of his sins.

UNION OF THE MIND AND THE HEART

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

The union of the mind with the heart is the union of the spiritual thoughts of the mind with the spiritual feelings of the heart.... Mind and heart cannot be united otherwise than by the mediation of the Spirit and Truth. This means that the mind and heart cannot be united unless we completely renounce our fallen nature, unless we surrender ourselves entirely to the guidance of the Gospel, unless we attract the grace of the Holy Spirit to heal us by constant and increased obedience to the Gospel commandments, unless we are healed and restored to life by the touch of grace, by the overshadowing of the Spirit.

HOW TRUE PRAYER BEGINS

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

Through humility in your dealings with your neighbour, and through love for your neighbour, hardness and callousness is expelled from the heart. it is rolled away like a heavy rock from the entrance to a tomb, and the heart revives for spiritual relations with God for which it has been hitherto dead. A new vista opens to the gaze of the mind: the multitudinous wounds of sin with which the whole of fallen nature is riddled. It begins to confess its wretched state to God and implore Him for mercy. The heart assists the mind with mourning and compunction. This is the beginning (emphasis supplied) of true prayer.

CHRIST DOESN'T SAVE 'CONVENIENTLY'

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

God desires and seeks the salvation of all. And He is always saving all who wish to be saved from drowning in the sea of life and sin. But He does not always save in a boat or in a convenient, well-equipped harbour. He promised to save the Holy Apostle Paul and all his fellow-travellers, and he did save them. But the Apostle and his fellow-passengers were not saved in the ship, which was wrecked; they were saved with great difficulty, some by swimming and others on boards and various bits of the ship's wreckage.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

For God seeks nothing else from us, save a good purpose. Say not, How are

my sins blotted out? I tell thee, by willing, by believing. What can be shorter than this? But if, while thy lips declare thee willing, thy heart be silent, He knoweth the heart, who judgeth thee. Cease from this day from every evil deed. Let not thy tongue speak unseemly words, let thine eye abstain from sin, and from roving after things unprofitable.

LOOK INWARD

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

The call of the world is never sent naked but cloaked in the delusion of love. 'Go save your brothers. Don't you see that they need help?' And the hesychast goes into the world or concerns himself with the world, and ceases to be a hesychast. And once a Christian believes he can save and help people, he has become a victim of the evil one. None of us can help or save anyone. The only saviour and helper is God. And once we lose this truth, we lose everything.... Orthodox Christians do not seek after the salvation of others. They labour for their own salvation and leave the salvation of others to God. And thus if they are made worthy of becoming an abode of God, and God speaks through their eyes and their mouths and their hearts, they might become instruments of the salvation of others. But they will never seek on their own to become such an instrument. And if in fact they were to become instruments of the salvation of others, only God would know it.

AUTHENTIC ORTHODOXY?

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

What is the profoundest characteristic of Orthodox life, the quintessential characteristic of Orthodox piety, the sign of authentic Orthodoxy as well as a premise of the true faith? It is turning inward.

TRUE SATISFACTION

St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow, Enlightener of America

Truly not a single earthly pleasure can satisfy our heart. We are strangers on earth, pilgrims and travelers; our home and fatherland are there in heaven, in the heavenly Kingdom; and there do not exist on earth things which could perfectly satisfy our desires. Let a man own the whole world and all that is in the world, yet all that will not interest him for more than a minute, so to speak, and it will never satisfy his heart: for the heart of man can be fully satisfied only by the love of God and therefore God alone can fill the heart and soul of man and quench the thirst of his desires.

FAMILY RESPECT

St. Innocent, Enlightener of America

All through His life Jesus Christ truly respected, obeyed, honoured and loved His Mother and Joseph His foster-father, and even respected the chiefs and elders, and paid attention to the earthly emperor.

SALVATION, OR? OUR CHOICE!

St. Innocent, Enlightener of America

Christian, your salvation or perdition depends on your own will! In His unspeakable wisdom and love, the Lord has given you freedom to do what you like, and He does not wish to take this most precious gift away from you. And so, if you wish to follow Jesus Christ, He will show you the way into the Kingdom of Heaven and will even help you along the way. But if you do not wish to follow Him, do as you like; no one is going to compel or force you. But beware of despising the call of Jesus Christ and His loving kindness. In His great goodness, Jesus Christ knocks for a long, long time on the door of everyone's heart in order to awaken his soul and arouse in it a desire for salvation. But woe to the man whom He finally abandons and whom He casts

out as a son of perdition!

THE HOLY SPIRIT -FREE!

St. Innocent, Enlightener of America

The Holy Spirit, as God, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, is also Almighty, like the Father and the Son. He vivifies, animates and gives creatures their powers. He gives animals life, men mind, and Christians high spiritual life. Thus the Holy Spirit enlightens man and helps him to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The Holy Spirit is not given according to our merits, but is a free gift sent by the mercy of God for the salvation of men.

HOW WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

St. Innocent, Enlightener of America

The true and recognised means of receiving the Holy Spirit according to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the experiences of the great Saints, are the following: (1) Purity of heart and chastity. (2) Humility. (3) Listening to the voice of God. (4) Prayer (5) Daily self-denial (6) Reading and listening to Holy Scripture. (7) The Sacraments of the Church and especially Holy Communion.... These then are the ways of receiving the Holy Spirit.... Of course, each of these means is effectual for receiving the Holy Spirit, but the best and surest way is to use them all together; (emphasis supplied) then you will undoubtedly receive the Holy Spirit and become holy.

THE WAY OF CHRIST IS UNIQUE

St. Innocent, Enlightener of America

And I shall repeat that the way into the heavenly Kingdom revealed to us by Jesus Christ is unique, and that there is not and was not and never will be another way besides the one which Jesus Christ has shown us (emphasis supplied).

MAKE SURE IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

St. Innocent, Enlightener of America

But when the doors of the heavenly Kingdom are closed to you, that is, if you die without repentance and good works, then however much you may want and however much you may try to enter, you will not be admitted.

THE RACE IS ON!

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

The race is on for our soul: our hope is of things eternal: and God, who knoweth our hearts, and observeth who is sincere, and who a hypocrite, is able to guard the sincere, and to give faith to the hypocrite: for even to the unbeliever, if only he give his heart, God is able to give faith.

THE TRUTH OF THE RESURRECTION

St. Athanasius the Great

Both from the confession of the evil spirits and from the daily witness of His works, it is manifest, then, and let none presume to doubt it, that the Saviour has raised His own body, and that He is very Son of God, having His being from God as from a Father, Whose Word and Wisdom and Whose Power He is. He it is Who in these latter days assumed a body for the salvation of us all, and taught the world concerning the Father. He it is Who has destroyed death and freely graced us all with incorruption through the promise of the resurrection, having raised His own body as its first-fruits, and displayed it by the sign of the cross as the monument to His victory over death and corruption.

THE ICONPAINTER - A UNIQUE STATUS

Fr. Pavel Florensky

Rather, they are holders of an unique Church office. For in the consciousness

of the Church, they hold this special office in the sacred hierarchy, in the true theocracy, of the Church, and, as members of the Church, they are recognised in their function as iconpainters. They occupy a place midway between those who serve at the altar and the ordinary layman. They live a prescribed life, almost semi-monastic, under the direct supervision of the Metropolitan, the local bishop, and the specially designated wardens of iconpainters. The Church honours Her iconpainters by giving them this unique status.... the Church recognises the necessity to scrutinise attentively not only the work of Her iconpainters but their very lives.

PROTECTING THE TRUE FAITH THROUGH THE FATHERS

Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky

For guidance in questions of faith, for the correct understanding of Sacred Scripture, and in order to distinguish the authentic Tradition of the Church from false teachings, we appeal to the works of the holy Fathers of the Church, acknowledging that the unanimous agreement of all of the Fathers and teachers of the Church in teaching of the faith is an undoubted sign of truth.

UNSEEN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

St. Nicodemus

... the warriors who take part in this unseen warfare are all who are Christians; and their commander is our Lord Jesus Christ, surrounded and accompanied by His marshals and generals, that is, by all the hierarchies of angels and saints. The arena, the field of battle, the site where the fight actually takes place is our own heart and all our inner man. The time of battle is our whole life (emphases supplied).

THE VIRGIN MARY HAD NO OTHER CHILDREN

Constantine Callinicos

And the so-called brothers and sisters of Jesus are Joseph's children by a previous marriage. This is mentioned by many of the Church Fathers. For this reason, as we have recorded by John, Jesus delivers His mother into John's care, something He certainly would not have done had Mary had any other (emphasis supplied) children. And the very term 'first-born', according to St. Basil, 'does not have reference to any children preceding or following; a child is called first-born because it is he who first opens his mother's womb'.

Therefore, later-born children are not an issue here.

MY GREATEST ENEMY (AND YOURS) and READ THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE

Unseen Warfare (as edited by St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by St. Theophan the Recluse)

Love, as much as you can, silently to stand with Mary at the feet of Christ our Lord and listen to what He has to say to your soul. Beware, lest your enemies, the greatest of whom is you yourself (emphasis supplied), hinder this holy standing before the Lord.... When you read the Holy Scriptures, do not have in mind to read page after page, but ponder over each word; when some words make you go deep into yourself, or stir you to contrition, or fill your heart with spiritual joy and love, pause on them. It means that God draws near to you; receive Him humbly with open heart, as He Himself wishes you to partake of Him. If for the sake of this you fail to complete the spiritual exercise (i.e. reading) allotted to you, do not worry. For the purpose of this as of all spiritual exercises is to become worthy to partake of the Lord, and when this is granted, there is no point in worrying about means. In the same way, when you reflect on some divine subject, especially some instance of the passion of

Christ our Lord, pause at the part, which touches your heart, and keep your attention longer on it, to prolong this holy feeling.

ABOUT ANY PROPHET

The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)

Any prophet that teaches the truth, yet does not live up to his teaching, is a false prophet.

THIS COUNSEL IS GOOD FOR ALL OF US TODAY

St. Polycarp in his Epistles to the Philippians

Indeed, whoever does not acknowledge Jesus Christ to have come in human flesh is Antichrist; whoever does not admit the testimony of the Cross is sprung from the devil; whoever wrests the Lord's Gospel to suit his own lusts and denies both resurrection and judgment - such a one is the first-born of Satan. Therefore let us leave untouched the senseless speculations of the masses and the false doctrines, and turn to the teaching delivered to us in the beginning; let us be temperate and ready for our prayers, persevere in fasting, and fervently implore the All-seeing God not to expose us to temptation, since the Lord has said: The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

SAINTLY ADVICE ON PRAYER

St. John of Kronstadt

When you pray, keep to the rule that it is better to say five words from the depth of your heart than ten thousand words with your tongue only. When you observe that your heart is cold and prays unwillingly, stop praying and warm your heart by representing vividly to yourself your own wickedness, your spiritual poverty, misery and blindness, or the great benefits which God bestows every moment upon you and all mankind, especially upon Christians; and then pray slowly and fervently.

OUR CONFESSION OF FAITH IS THE SAME AS HIS

St. Patrick

For there is no other God, nor ever was before, nor shall be hereafter, but God the Father, unbegotten and without beginning in whom all things began, whose are all things, as we have been taught and His Son Jesus Christ who manifestly always existed with the Father, before the beginning of time in the spirit with the Father, undescribably begotten before all things, and all things visible and invisible were made by Him. He was made man, conquered death and was received into heaven, to the Father Who gave Him all power over every name in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell, so that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, in Whom we believe. And we look to His imminent coming again, the judge of the living and the dead, Who will render to each according to his deeds. And He poured out His Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and pledge of immortality, which makes the believers and the obedient into sons of God and co-heirs of Christ Who is revealed, and we worship one God in the Trinity of holy name.

ALL MATTERS OF FAITH ARE INTEGRAL AND CANNOT BE SEPARATED INTO 'PRIMARY' AND 'SECONDARY'

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

Pastors and flocks have understood that there cannot be things of primary and things of secondary importance in matters of faith, for our faith resembles a knitted object which begins to unravel when one stitch is undone.

CHRIST'S PORTRAYAL

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

In the portrait of any given man, we do not represent human nature, which is

undepictable and incomprehensible; even so, in the icon of Christ, we do not portray nor represent the Divine Nature, which is inaccessible and incomprehensible. Only the Person of Christ (emphasis supplied), who voluntarily made Himself man, is portrayed.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION VS. RELIGIOUS MINIMALISM

St. Anthony (Khrapovitsky)

Bishop Theophan teaches us how to make one's life meet the standards of Christian perfection, while the Western Bishop (*sit venia verbo*) takes from Christianity only as much as is consistent with the standards of modern secular life. That is, the former accepts Christianity as the eternal foundation of normal life, and demands that we forcibly change ourselves to bring our lives into compliance with that norm; the latter accepts the realities of modern secular life as unchangeable, and only where they allow some variations does he indicate which options are preferred from the Christian viewpoint. The former calls for moral heroism, for a life-long struggle; the latter selects whatever elements of Christianity are suited to us in our current way of life. For the former, the true life to which man is called is the life eternal, while our current life on earth with all its historically shaped devices is all but an illusion; for the latter the notion of the future life is merely an uplifting, noble idea, an idea which contributes to continual improvement of our real life here on earth.

In the difference between these two teachers of morality is manifest the difference between the Orthodox faith and the Western religions. One is based upon the concept of Christian Perfection, or sanctity, and from this standpoint evaluates the present reality; the other is firmly established on the status quo of the earthly life and strives to determine the minimum of religious practice which still allows for salvation - if eternity truly exists....

And the reason for these follies is the failure to grasp the simple truth that Christianity is an ascetic religion, a teaching on gradual liberation from the passions, on the means and conditions of gradual acquisition of virtues, conditions both internal, that is, personal struggle, and external, that is, dogmatic tenets and grace-filled Mysteries, all having one purpose: to heal human sinfulness and lead us to perfection.

UNBEGOTTEN, GENERATION & PROCESSION

Fr. John Romanides

Everyone at the Second Ecumenical Council knew full well that this question was settled once and for all by the use in the Creed of the word "procession" as meaning the manner of existence of the Holy Spirit from the Father which constitutes His special individuality. Thus, the Father is unbegotten, i.e. derives His existence from no one. The Son is from the Father by generation. The Holy Spirit is from the Father, not by generation, but by procession. The Father is cause, the Son and the Spirit are caused. The difference between the ones caused is the one is caused by generation, and the other by procession, and not by generation.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PROCEEDS ONLY FROM THE FATHER

St. Photios the Great

It was openly preached as doctrine by the Seven Holy Councils - the Second, that the Spirit proceeds from the Father, to be followed by the Third, confirmed by the Fourth, also agreed by the Fifth, also preached by the Sixth, and was sealed with the bright struggle of the Seventh.

STEADFASTLY PREACH AND LIVE THE PERFECT TEACHING REVEALED BY CHRIST

St. Mark of Ephesus

The Councils of the Church have condemned as rebels those who have transgressed against some dogma and have preached thus and fought for this, for which reason also they are called "heretics"; and from the beginning the Church has condemned the heresy itself, and only then has it condemned the leaders of the heresy and its defenders. But I have by no means preached my own teaching, nor have I introduced anything new in the Church, nor defended any foreign and false doctrine; but I have held only that teaching which the Church received in perfect form from our Saviour, and in which it has steadfastly remained to this day: the teaching which the Holy Church of Rome, before the schism that occurred between us, possessed no less than our Eastern Church; the teaching, which, as holy, you formerly were wont to praise, and often at this very Council you mentioned with respect and honour, and which no one could reproach or dispute. And if I hold it and do not allow myself to depart from it, what Council will subject me to the interdiction to which heretics are subject? What sound and pious mind will act thus with me? For first of all one must condemn the teaching which I hold; but if you acknowledge it as pious and Orthodox, then why am I deserving of punishment?

ADDRESS OF ST. MARK OF EPHEBUS ON HIS FINAL DAY HERE ON EARTH

I wish to express my opinion in more detail, especially now that my death is approaching, so as to be consistent with myself from beginning to end, and lest anyone should think that I have said one thing and concealed another in my thoughts, for which it would be just to shame me in this hour of my death. Concerning the Patriarch I shall say this, lest it should perhaps occur to him to show me a certain respect at the burial of this my humble body, or to send to my grave any of his hierarchs or clergy or in general any of those in communion with him in order to take part in prayer or to join the priests invited to it from amongst us, thinking that at some time, or perhaps secretly, I had allowed communion with him. And lest my silence give occasion to those who do not know my views well and fully to suspect some kind of conciliation, I hereby state and testify before the many worthy men here present that I do not desire, in any manner and absolutely, and do not accept communion with him or with those who are with him, not in this life nor after my death, just as (I accept) neither the Union nor Latin dogmas, which he and his adherents have accepted, and for the enforcement of which he occupies this presiding place, with the aim of overturning the true dogmas of the Church. I am absolutely convinced that the farther I stand from him and those like him, the nearer I am to God and all the saints; and to the degree that I separate myself from them am I in union with the Truth and with the Holy Fathers, the Theologians of the Church; and I am likewise convinced that those who count themselves with them stand far away from the Truth and the blessed Teachers of the Church. And for this reason I say: just as in the course of my whole life I was separated from them, so at the time of my departure, yea and after my death, I turn away from intercourse and communion with them and vow and command that none (of them) shall approach either my burial or my grave, and likewise anyone else from our side, with the aim of attempting to join and concelebrate in our Divine services; for this would be to mix what cannot be mixed. But it befits them to be absolutely separated from us until such time as God shall grant correction and peace to His Church.

ONLY ORTHODOXY IS 'TRUE AND HOLY'!

St. Kosmas the Aitolos and Equal to the Apostles

My brothers, I studied for forty and fifty years. I read many books about the Jews, the idolaters, and about the impious and heretics. I studied the depths of wisdom. All the other faiths are false and counterfeit. Only our faith, the Orthodox Christianity, is True and Holy.

FEW WILL ENTER

Blessed Elder Philotheos Zervakos of Greece

I am not aware of the reasons which pushed you to deny Orthodoxy (which was founded by the Holy Fathers through the Seven Ecumenical Councils, illumined by the Holy Spirit) and bow down to Papism which is a forerunner of the Antichrist because it was pride and arrogance that ruled over the Pope who desired to become the highest authority of the Church and of the state. By this action, he tore apart the Church of Christ accepting the addition to the Creed and going against the words of the Lord who told His disciples when He was about to be crucified, "The Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father" (John 15:26-27). Following this, the Pope worshippers fell into innumerable innovations (cacodoxies) and heresies turning upside down all the sacraments of the Orthodox Church... You may tell me that we Orthodox have many faults, this I also confess and I preach that clergy and laity have lost their purpose in life but this is no reason for us to betray our religion because of the sins of others. Christ said that many are called but few are chosen and that the gate that leads to life is narrow and sorrowful and few will enter through it. The path to perdition is wide and spacious and many are walking through it.

THE CHURCH IS OUR SPIRITUAL HOSPITAL

St. John of Kronstadt

The Holy Church is God's most supreme, most holy, most good, most wise, and most necessary establishment upon the earth.... The Church is a union of people established by God, united among themselves by the Faith, Doctrine, Hierarchy, and Mysteries. She is Christ's spiritual army, equipped with spiritual weaponry against the numberless armed hordes of the devil: 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places' (Eph. 6:12). She is a spiritual hospital where mankind, enfeebled by the open wound of sin, is cured by grace-filled treatments given by God - by repentance and communion in the Holy Mysteries of Christ, in Christ's Body and Blood, and by the word of God, by the instructions and counsels and consolations of the shepherds of Christ's rational flock. She is a common laver of purification, rebirth, and sanctification; She is God's sanctuary in which all are sanctified by the Holy Spirit through Baptism, Chrismation, the Divine Service, and other Mysteries. She is the spiritual sun of the world, enlightening and giving life to all who sit in the darkness of the shadow of death, and who are dead through sin.

NO HUMAN BEING IS INFALLIBLE

St. John of Kronstadt

The most harmful thing in Christianity, in this God-revealed, heavenly religion, is the leadership of one man in the Church - for instance, the pope, and his supposed infallibility. It is precisely in the dogma of his infallibility that the greatest mistake is contained, for the pope is a sinful man, and O the disaster if he fancies himself to be infallible! How many great errors, destructive of the souls of men, has the Catholic, papal church thought up-in-dogmas, in rites, in canonical rules, in the Divine Services, in the deadly and malicious relations of the Catholics with the Orthodox, in blasphemies and slanders

against the Orthodox Church, in revilings directed against the Orthodox Christians! And of all this the professedly infallible pope is guilty, with his and the Jesuits' teaching, their spirit of falsehood, duplicity, and every sort of unrighteous means ad maiorem Dei gloriam (for the - alleged - greater glory of God).

We are the members of the Holy Orthodox Church, members of the Body of Christ, whose Head is Christ God Himself, but wherein each is a member individually, as Christ is holy, and as He is the Head of the body, therefore the members also must be holy.

HOLY SCRIPTURES MANY TIMES (BUT NOT ALWAYS) ARE NOT MEANT TO BE LITERAL

St. Isaac the Syrian

Very often many things are said in the Holy Scriptures and in it many names are used not in a literal sense... those who have a mind understand this.

ECUMENISM IS A GRAVE HERESY ATTACKING 'THE VERY FOUNDATION OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH'

Bishop Artemije

First ecumenism is an ecclesiological heresy, for its primary attack is directed against the very foundation of the Orthodox Faith; against the Holy Church, in an effort to transform it [the Church] into an ecumenist organisation deprived of the Theanthropic Grace of the Body of Christ, thereby opening the way for the coming of Antichrist.

BEWARE OF THESE PSEUDO-PRIESTS!

Kostas Matsourakis, Editor (then), Orthodox Heritage, Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen

Our priests come out of the seminaries full of modern psychology theories, with fully protestant views, taught very little about the Church Fathers and fully unprepared to lead flocks. Their sermons are full of antitheses and heretical ideas. I have heard one repeatedly eulogise mother Teresa [as if we run short of Orthodox saints]. Another prominent graduate calls the symbol of Byzantium 'burnt chicken' and he tells us that this title was common among his colleagues. Another informs his flock that Christ was not really perfect until after he died on the Cross. Finally, one brought a Catholic Bishop during Liturgy and placed him on the Orthodox Bishop's throne.

ANTICHRIST PROMOTES EARTHLY 'PROGRESS'; ARE YOU WITH HIM OR JESUS?

Archbishop Averky of Syracuse

The word of God does not give us even the slightest foundation for belief in the establishment of a 'Kingdom of God on earth,' or in any worldly progress for humanity; quite the contrary. It foretells much suffering for true followers of Christ and the 'bearing of the Cross' in imitation and following of the Lord Who bore the Cross; and for this world, which lieth in wickedness, it foretells an inevitable end. The promised 'Kingdom of Christ on earth' is by no means tangible, but noetic - within the souls, of those who truly believe in Christ, for Whom the Lord became King.... What, then, can be said of these who not only do not consider the possibility of the nearness of the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ, which many signs indicate to us, but believe in some imaginary progress of humanity and the approach of a general well-being and prosperity, although all of modern life, with its total decline of true faith and morality, with its terrible, destructive inventions which deal death to man, simply cries out against this. Such people are totally alien to Christianity (emphasis supplied), even though they bear the exalted positions

and titles of Christian clerics and hierarchs!

One must know and remember that it is such earthly 'Progress,' such illusory well-being and prosperity of man on earth, that Antichrist, Christ's opponent, promises to give to the people. His servants, who are preparing for his reign on earth, are already striving beforehand in like manner to influence the people, shouting and preaching everywhere about this 'paradise on earth' which supposedly awaits the people. And all those who strive for this earthly 'progress' forgetting Christ's words: But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Mt. 6:33), who avoid bearing their cross as Christ commands, but think only of how they might make the world better and more free, richer and more carefree, enjoying all the earthly goods and pleasures, are in the same camp with the servants of the imminent Antichrist, working consciously or unconsciously for his appearance and reign in the world.

Such as these are not of Christ, but of Antichrist.

THE FUNCTION AND PURPOSE OF CELEBRATING THE HOLY EUCHARIST

St. Nicholas Cabasilas

The function of the celebration of the sacraments is to convert the gifts offered into the Body and Blood of Christ, and its aim is to sanctify the faithful who, through receiving the sacraments, gain remission of sins, the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven, and similar good things.

NO CREMATION

Archpriest Victor Potapov

People who agree with the custom of burning the bodies of the dead may not necessarily think that they are denying life beyond the grave. But this does not change the fact of the matter, that at the root of the recent practice of cremation lies the denial of eternal life. The practice is anti-Christian. The faithful children of the Orthodox Church must flee from it.

One ought not to forget that the incorruption of the remains of many saints testifies to God's particular good will toward these righteous ones and their flesh. Holy relics are the visible expression of an existence transfigured and glorified. Holy relics remind us that the body of a Christian can be incorrupt and can become a relic. In the Church's Order of the Funeral Service, the body of the deceased is plainly called relics: And so, taking up the relics, we go forth to the grave, followed by all to the grave. The hierarch, or the priest, taking a shovelful of soil, streweth it crosswise over the relics saying: The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world, and all that dwell therein. And then the grave is filled up in the usual manner.... The Church teaches us to bury the bodies of the dead in the earth. Everything that the Church has decreed is for our salvation. If we seriously strive for the blessed life of eternity, let us submit to the will of God and His Holy Church, for everything else is truly vanity and corruption.

WE'RE HELPLESS WITHOUT PRAYER!

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

As a bird without wings, as a soldier without arms, so is a Christian without prayer.

THE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE ARE VERY IMPORTANT!

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

In all matters, the Holy Fathers of the Church sought always, insofar as it was possible, in combatting the diverse heresies, to make use of the very words of the Holy Scriptures themselves. This was true also of their strategy in refuting the iconoclasts of the 8th century.

THE BIBLE ANSWERS ALL QUESTIONS:WHEN THERE IS ANY DOUBT AS TO MEANING THE HOLY FATHERS ARE CONSULTED

St. Justin (Popovich)

All that is necessary for this world and the people in it - the Lord has stated in the Bible. In it He has given the answers to all questions. There is no question which can torment the human soul, and not find its answer, either directly or indirectly in the Bible.... Just as important as knowing why we should read the Bible is knowing how we should read the Bible. The best guides for this are the holy Fathers, headed by St. John Chrysostom who, in a manner of speaking, has written a fifth Gospel (emphasis supplied).... By reading the Bible you are adding yeast to the dough of your soul and body, which gradually expands and fills the soul until it has thoroughly permeated it and makes it rise with the truth and righteousness of the Gospel.

SERMONS (HOMILIES) ALWAYS ON THE LORD'S DAY

Egeria's (4th century) Description of the Divine Liturgy as this Nun Observed it on her Pilgrimage

Morning Services

XXV. 1 Now at daybreak because it is the Lord's Day every one proceeds to the greater church, built by Constantine, which is situated in Golgotha behind the Cross, where all things are done which are customary everywhere on the Lord's Day. But the custom here is that of all the priests who take their seats, as many as are willing, preach, and after them all the bishop preaches, and these sermons are always on the Lord's Day, in order that the people may always be instructed in the Scriptures and in the love of God. The delivery of these sermons greatly delays the dismissal from the church, so that the dismissal does [not] take place before the fourth or perhaps the fifth hour.

LENTEN FASTS IN 4th CENTURY JERUSALEM

Egeria

XXVII And when the Paschal days come they are observed thus: Just as with us forty days are kept before Easter, so here eight weeks are kept before Easter. And eight weeks are kept because there is no fasting on the Lord's Days, nor on the Sabbaths, except on the one Sabbath on which the Vigil of Easter falls, in which case the fast is obligatory. With the exception then of that one day, there is never fasting on any Sabbath here throughout the year. Thus, deducting the eight Lord's Days and the seven Sabbaths (for on the one Sabbath, as I said above, the fast is obligatory) from the eight weeks, there remain forty-one fast days, which they call here Eortae, that is Quadragesimae.

DAVID'S AND THE OTHER GREAT SAINTS' WRITINGS

Elder Barsanuphius of Optina

I don't wish to say that reading the works of our great writers is a sin - but there is reading more profitable and edifying. In the first place, there is the reading of the Psalter - this book was written by the holy King and Prophet David at the urging of the Holy Spirit. The Prophet David himself says, my tongue is the pen of a swiftly writing scribe (Ps. 44:1). And the Lives of the Saints are indispensable readings, which act beneficially upon the soul, especially if you read them in Slavonic.

OPTINA MONASTERY

Elder Barsanuphius of Optina

Our holy Monastery attracts many worshippers. And one often hears the opinion that whoever visits Optina even once will gravitate towards it with his whole soul. Our Monastery has neither wonder-working icons nor glorified

relics; but here, it seems, the whole earth is covered with the blood and sweat of the holy Elders, and their prayers send down grace upon the souls of believers. Even our Vladyka who, being a bishop, has visited many monasteries, has said there is something special in Optina.

In Russia there are not many sketes.... But our Skete is the only one in which there are very rarely outsiders in the church - and then, only for the Liturgy. But we always celebrate Matins only with our skete family. Our skete church makes a powerful impression on the visitor: such singing of ancient chants, moving services, the absence of people. The monks each have their specific places in which they regularly stand. Special also is the sound of the skete bells - quiet and monastic. One pious man once donated a bell to us weighing 5,400 pounds, but it never made it to the Skete and was taken away. The very largest we have weighs 1,400 pounds.

WE CAN BE SAVED ANYWHERE!

Elder Barsanuphius of Optina

Yes! It's hard to be saved in the world. St. Nicholas, the Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, went to the desert to labour there in fasting and prayer, but the Lord didn't bless him to remain there. Appearing to the Saint, the Lord commanded him to go to the world. This is not the field upon which you will bring forth fruit for me, said the Saviour. Saints Thaisia, Mary of Egypt and Eudocia likewise did not live in monasteries. It's possible to be saved anywhere, only don't leave the Saviour. Cling to the robe of Christ, and Christ will never leave you.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A BISHOP TO BE A CHURCH FATHER!

Dr. Father Michael Azkoul

But, as we know, the universal Church has anointed many Christian writers beneath the rank of bishop as 'Fathers of the Church,' such as Sts. Justin Martyr, Macarius of Egypt, Hesychius of Jerusalem, Maximus the Confessor, Ephraim the Syrian, John of Damascus, John Cassian etc.. In truth, then, any man can be a Father of the Church if his life is characterised by holiness and his doctrine by apostolic orthodoxy.

BAR YOURSELF FROM RATIONALISING

Patriarch Jeremias II, the Illustrious

Let us accept, then, the traditions of the Church with a sincere heart and not a multitude of rationalisations. For God created man to be upright; instead they sought after diverse ways of rationalising (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Let us not allow ourselves to learn a new kind of faith which is condemned by the tradition of the Holy Fathers. For the Divine Apostle says, if anyone is preaching to you a Gospel contrary to that which you have received, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:9).

SIT AT THE FEET OF THE SAINTS!

Fr. John Whiteford

The Holy Scriptures are perhaps the summit of the Holy Tradition of the Church, but the greatness of the heights to which the Scriptures ascend is due to the great mountain upon which it rests. Taken from its context, within the Holy Tradition, the solid rock of Scripture becomes a mere ball of clay, to be molded into whatever shape its handlers wish to mold it. It is no honour to the Scriptures to misuse and twist them, even if this is done in the name of exalting their authority. We must read the Bible; it is God's Holy Word. But to understand its message let us humbly sit at the feet of the saints who have shown themselves doers of the Word and not hearers only (James 1:22), and have been proven by their lives worthy interpreters of the Scriptures. Let us

go to those who knew the Apostles, such as Saints Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp, if we have a question about the writings of the Apostles. Let us inquire of the Church and not fall into self-deluded arrogance.

**ST. JAMES, NOT ST. PETER, PRESIDED OVER THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM;
ST. PETER DID NOT CLAIM OR POSSESS UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION**

Fr. Alexey Young (convert from Roman Catholicism)

This priest [note: Roman Catholic] urged his flock to shut their ears to those who criticise the pope and others in authority, because the pope's power is 'derived from St. Peter, who presided over the first Church Council of Jerusalem'.

Of course, the average Catholic, accustomed to believe everything he hears from the pulpit, does not know that the pope could not derive his position from St. Peter because St. Peter did not possess or claim universal jurisdiction, primacy, infallibility, or any of the things popes claim for themselves. As I said at the outset, Catholics don't know this because they have, from youth, been told otherwise. But if they have read the Book of Acts, they would at least know that the Council of Jerusalem was presided over **NOT BY ST. PETER, BUT BY ST. JAMES**, the first Bishop of Jerusalem!
NOT JUST HIS OPINION

Fr. Alexey Young

Many of you will think that my confession of Orthodoxy is just my opinion (in which case it would be worth nothing). It is not my opinion; it is the experience of the apostles and saints from the earliest times until our own: the Orthodox Church is not nourished by opinion or by what is 'fashionable', but by the living experience of the saints. The saints and fathers actually **LIVED** the experience of God; this enabled them fully to express the spiritual beauty of Christ's Church and witness to it. As St. John of Kronstadt writes:

'The holy men of God would not betray the Faith by even as much as a word.'

THE TRUE CHURCH'S ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES

Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky (of blessed memory)

The ninth article of the Symbol of Faith indicates the four signs of the Church: 'We believe...in One, Holy, Catholic & Apostolic Church.' These attributes are called essential, that is, those without which the Church would not be the Church.

THE UNITY OF GOD'S GRACE

Alexei Khomiakov, a Lay Theologian of the true Church

The unity of the Church follows of necessity from the unity of God; for the Church is not a multitude of persons in their separate individuality, but a unity of the grace of God, living in a multitude of rational creatures, submitting themselves willingly (emphasis supplied) to grace.

TRUMPETERS, AWAKEN US, ARISE TO FIGHT FOR OUR SALVATION

St. Nikolai (Velimirovich)

...If someone says: The danger to our Church was in the past, and today the danger is gone, he is terribly wrong. He is a trumpeter who plays to put us to sleep. And in this age we need as many trumpeters as possible who will play to awaken us, to arouse us, to prepare us, to defend ourselves. For the Unmentionable, whom our sacred people and their clergy prevented from becoming 'embodied in the form of law' [referring to the Concordat of 1937] nevertheless still walks upon this earth like a ghost, like a specter - agitating, agitating, agitating.

CHURCH UNITY ALREADY EXISTS

Hierodeacon Andrew

Thus, the Holy Church, in the petition 'for the union of all the holy Churches of God,' prays not for something which does not exist and is necessary to attain, but for that unity of the Church which already exists (emphasis supplied), that it might always exist and not be destroyed by some heresy or schism.

INDIVISIBLE HARMONY

St. Cyprian of Carthage

The tunic of Christ, completely woven together, indicates the indivisible harmony of all of us who have been clothed in Christ. With the mystical sign of His clothing the Lord prefigured the unity of the Church.

ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV'S FOREST ASCETICISM & ST. MARY'S NUMEROUS APPEARANCES TO HIM

Mother Nectaria McLees

St. Seraphim prepared himself to receive the spiritual gifts so abundantly given by God through a disciplined, constant struggle with the passions. During one period of forest asceticism he spent the better part of a thousand days and nights kneeling in prayer on a large rock. He was granted visions, both of the demonic world - which he would only describe as 'foul' - and of the heavenly realm. The Mother of God appeared to him no less than twelve times. During his earthly life, pilgrims said that even to look on him was a joy, and so it remains today. As one approaches the saint's sepulcher, the almost tangible grace of his relics fills the soul with a sense of 'present eternity' and the certainty of God's love.

WHEN THE FAITH IS ATTACKED, ALL CHRISTIANS MUST DEFEND IT!

Alexei Khomiakov, Lay Theologian

Every Christian, when faced with an attack on the faith he confesses, is obliged to defend it to the extent of his intellectual ability, not waiting for any special authorisation, since the Church has no official advocates.

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION ARE HARMONIOUSLY UNITED

Alexei Khomiakov, Lay Theologian

The whole Church wrote the Holy Scriptures and then gave life to them in Tradition. To put it more accurately, Scripture and Tradition, as two manifestations of one and the same Spirit, are a single (emphasis supplied) manifestation. Scripture is nothing but written Tradition, and Tradition is nothing but living Scripture. Such is the mystery of this harmonious unity; it is formed by the fusion of the purest holiness with the highest reason, and only by way of this fusion does reason acquire the ability to comprehend things in that realm where reason alone, separated from holiness, is as blind as matter itself.

TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES FROM ONE'S HUMILITY

St. Isaac the Syrian

The truly righteous always think within themselves that they are unworthy of God. And that they are truly righteous is recognised from the fact that they acknowledge themselves to be wretched and unworthy of God's concerns and confess this secretly and openly and are brought to this by the Holy Spirit so that they will not remain without the solicitude and labour which is appropriate for them while they are in this life.

A GREAT SAINT'S APPEAL TO AMERICAN ORTHODOX YOUTH

St. Nikolai (Velimirovich)

America is your cradle and your earthly motherland. It is a wonderful God's country, and you are expected to be wonderful God's people in this country. Remember that our greatest contribution to America is of a spiritual and

moral nature. And that is precisely what America needs today. That is what every Christian country today needs most of all - in boundless measure. For all nations, especially the Christians nowadays traveling as if in a wilderness of confusion created by senseless materialism and its blind daughter atheism. I offer this to what leading American men and women are saying: 'The only hope for us and for the world is to return to religion.' Again I say: 'Our hope is in the Church.' You ought to listen to these words, too, and to ponder them. We live in very tragic times, which are made more tragic by easy-going and self-indulgent people who have never read the story of Sodom, of Laish, or of Capernaum.

If I am correct in my observations, the greatest struggle of America these days is the struggle for the priority and superiority of spiritual and moral values over techniques and technological lordship: in other words, for predominance of the spiritual over the material, of goodness over cleverness. The Serbs often say of a clever man: 'He is clever as the devil.' They never say: 'He is good as the devil.'

TRAVEL THE MIDDLE PATH

St. Seraphim of Sarov

One should go by a middle path: turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left (Prov. 4:27); and one should render unto the spirit what is spiritual, and unto the body what is bodily; for the maintenance of temporal life, one should render what is necessary, and for life in society, that which is lawfully demanded by it, in accordance with the words of Holy Scripture: Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's (Matt. 22:21).

ACTIVE TO CONTEMPLATIVE

St. Seraphim of Sarov

Everyone who desires to traverse the spiritual life must begin with the active life, and only then come to the contemplative: for without the active life it is impossible to enter the contemplative.

IF YOU SPIRITUALLY FALL, GET UP BY REPENTING

St. Seraphim of Sarov

Question: Can a man who has received grace rise after falling? Answer: He can, according to the Psalmist, I was overturned that I might fall, but the Lord supported me (Ps. 117:13); for when Nathan the prophet accused David in his sin, the latter repented and immediately received forgiveness (II Kings 12:13).

THE INNER BEHOLDING OF THE ETERNAL LIGHT

St. Seraphim of Sarov

When a man beholds the eternal light interiorly, his mind is pure and has in it no sensory representations, but, being totally immersed in contemplation of uncreated (emphasis supplied) goodness, he forgets everything sensory and wishes not even to see himself; he desires rather to hide himself in the heart of the earth, if only he be not deprived of this true good - God.

THE 'WORLD' IS GOD'S ENEMY

St. James the Just of Jerusalem

Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

GOOD DEEDS ARE ESSENTIAL

Abbot Nazarius of Valaam

One must know that without good deeds you do not show love toward Him; for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified (Rom. 2:13).

And thus, see how good and merciful is the Lord. He gave Christians the law for no other reason than for the destruction of our malice, for a cleansing from sins, and for the conquering of the passions that war against God's law. Therefore, we must not only keep God's commandments, but must also offer gifts in accordance with the commandments: just as the holy Fathers offered, each according to his own strength, one five talents, another ten, another thirty. In the same way we also must prosper in doing good and in love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SPIRITUALLY DEPART FROM THIS WORLD!

Elder Nazarius of Valaam

Know that the Son of God came down to earth not in order to ruin human souls, but to instruct us in the true path. He, by the example of His life and not by words alone, taught us to despise the world. The Lord had no place of repose in the world, and those who followed Him He commanded to flee it. Beguiling and deceptive is the life of the world, fruitless its labour, perilous its delight, poor its riches, delusive its honours, inconstant, insignificant; and woe to those who hope in its seeming goods: because of this many die without repentance. Blessed and most blessed are those who depart the world and its desires.

FLEE FROM THE SHEPHERD HERETIC!

St. Photios the Great

Is the shepherd a heretic? Then he is a wolf! You must flee from him: do not be deceived to approach him even if he appears gentle and tame. Flee from communion and conversation with him even as you would flee from a poisonous snake.

AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL SIMPLY CONFIRMS THE SPIRITUAL DEATH, LOSS OF GRACE OF A PERSON

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

However, it is not a Council that removes grace. God does not take orders from men. The Council simply confirms that grace has departed, and it proclaims this fact through its decree.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE SOMETIMES PREFERABLE TO PEACE

St. Gregory the Theologian

Better is a praiseworthy war than a peace that separates us from God.

THE HERETIC IS SPIRITUALLY DEAD BEFORE ANY ORTHODOX COUNCIL

Dr. Alexandre Kalomioros

The separation of a heretic from the Church, therefore, has no relation with the decisions of a council of the hierarchy. The Orthodox Council is the surgeon which amputates the rotten member from the Body of the Church. it is not (emphasis supplied) the Council, however, that put the member to death. The member was dead before the Council decided to excise it.

ST. PHOTIOS THE GREAT ABOUT POPE JOHN VIII: JOHN WAS ALWAYS ORTHODOX

St. Photios the Great

My John I call him mine, for in other things also and more than the others, he has befriended our views therefore, this, our John, valorous of mind, valorous in piety, valorous also in hating and suppressing every injustice and impiety... this most gracious bishop of Rome...

THE CHURCH 'HOSPITAL' CURES!

Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

Again, if we compare Orthodox spirituality with other Christian traditions, the difference in approach and method of therapy is more evident. A

fundamental teaching of the Holy Fathers is that the Church is a 'Hospital' which cures the wounded man.

THE GLORIFICATION OF SAINTS IN ORTHODOXY

Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky (of blessed memory)

The glorification of the saints is among the most important activities of the Church. In its basic, elementary aspect, glorification consists of turning from prayers 'for the dead' to requests for a saint's intercession before God, and in his prayerful glorification by services from the general menaion or with specially composed services. The glorification of a saint and the uncovering of his relics do not constitute a single, inseparable act, although they are often performed together. The Orthodox Church does not maintain that it is essential that a fixed period of time pass between the repose of a righteous man and his numbering among the choir of the saints, as is accepted in the Roman Catholic confession, which has instituted a period of several decades (usually fifty years from the date of death for 'beatification,' a process which corresponds roughly to local veneration, and eighty years for canonisation).

TRUE FAITH IS ABLE TO CURE

Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos (in Orthodox Heritage)

A faith, thus, is a true faith inasmuch as it has therapeutic benefits. If it is able to cure, then it is a true faith. If it does not cure, it is not a true faith. The same thing can be said about medicine: a true scientist is the doctor who knows how to cure and his method has therapeutic benefits, whereas a charlatan is unable to cure. The same holds true where matters of the soul are concerned. The difference between Orthodoxy and the Latin tradition, as well as the Protestant confessions, is apparent primarily in the method of therapy. This difference is made manifest in the doctrines of each denomination. Dogmas are not philosophy, neither is theology the same as philosophy.

GOD, THE SON, JESUS, IS CLEAR ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT'S PROGRESSION

St. Photios the Great

When God the Son was speaking concerning the Holy Spirit, He said not once, but twice in the course of the same speech that the Holy Spirit is from the Father. Why did He not say, and from Me? Our opponents reply that He was speaking humbly as a man; but, we, answering quickly, convict them at once of a lie. The words, Whom I will send unto you, were not spoken as man, but rather as God; for a man does not send God, if the Holy Spirit is indeed God. Therefore, twice He said from the Father in order to confirm such a sublime utterance and to stop the mouths of those who in the future would say that the Spirit proceeds from the Son....

BE GENTLE AND MEEK, HAVE HUMILITY

St. Ambrose of Milan

Therefore had the Lord Jesus compassion upon us in order to call us to Himself, not frighten us away. He came in meekness. He came in humility, and so He said: Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.... Whence it is clear that they are not to be counted amongst the disciples of Christ, who think that harsh and proud opinions should be followed rather than such as are gentle and meek, persons who, while they themselves seek God's mercy, deny it to others, such as are the teachers of the Novatians, who call themselves pure.

YOUR CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SCRIPTURE DIFFER FROM THOSE OF THE EARLY CHURCH? YOU NEED TO CHANGE YOUR PRESUPPOSITIONS!

Daniel F. Lieuwen

Scripture is only properly interpreted in the context of the Church. If one's presuppositions are leading one to conclusions that differ from those of the early Church, one needs to change one's presuppositions. The simplest and safest way to do this is to learn and obey the tradition of the Church.

THE FOLLOWING ARE SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATIONS IN SOME LETTERS FROM LAY THEOLOGIAN ALEXEI KHOMIAKOV TO ANGLICAN CLERGYMAN WILLIAM PALMER IN THE MID-19TH CENTURY

Third letter to William Palmer

INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS DO NOT DETERMINE COMMUNITY FAITH

Many bishops and divines of your communion have been quite orthodox. But what of it? Their opinion is only an individual opinion, it is not the Faith of the Community.... We may, and do, sympathise with the individuals; we cannot and dare not sympathise with a community which interpolates the Symbol and doubts her right to that interpolation, or which gives communion to those who declare the Bread and Wine of the High Sacrifice to be mere bread and wine, as well as to those who declare it to be the Body and Blood of Christ.

Fourth Letter to William Palmer

LOCALITY IS IRRELEVANT

The undue exaltation of any locality whatever is exactly the antipodes of the very idea of a Christian Church which claims a living communion with the past and the future, with the visible and invisible world.

Fifth Letter to William Palmer

ALL THE PEOPLE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST!

The pope is greatly mistaken in supposing that we consider the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy to be the guardian of the dogma [of the Church]. The case is quite different. The unvarying constancy and the unerring truth of Christian dogma does not depend upon any Hierarchical Order; it is guarded by the totality, by the whole people of the Church, which is the Body of Christ.

Sixth Letter to William Palmer

GOD IS NOT IN NUMBERS!

In England, as everywhere else, incredulity, worldly cares, ignorance, prejudice, custom, and apathy hold the great number in their slavery; but God is not (emphasis supplied) in numbers. Let a few speak and act boldly, and though as few as the first Apostles, they may begin a rapid course of spiritual conquest, as did the ancient teachers of Christianity. I consider the present moment as eminently favourable, because it is eminently dangerous, and because the danger is manifest.

Seventh Letter to William Palmer

MUTUAL LOVE IS INFINITE: WE MUST MEET OUR TRIALS

The Lord has visited me with a heavy trial. On the 26th of January (O.S.) my wife died, and with her every possibility of earthly happiness for me. God's will be done! I try to be thankful. Fifteen years and a half of almost unlimited bliss is more than one man in a million has been allowed to enjoy, and a million times more than I ever deserved. Our mutual love was as boundless as an earthly feeling can be. It is not dead. We interchange prayers for one another, just as we interchanged words of affection during her lifetime. She was a pure, loving, and deeply religious soul. How often in our conversation about England have I heard her say: 'When shall we be so happy as to praise God in the same Church with MM. Palmer and William?' Her death has been childlike: no fear, no affliction, but a full reliance on God's mercy. We may be sure that she has met in heaven a greater love than any love she could have found on earth. God's will be done!

Eighth Letter to William Palmer

BEWARE OF THE ETHNIC 'GHETTO'!

But I will confess that I am somehow suspicious of the Greeks. They have no lack of zeal or freedom (the two great reproaches brought against them by the Latins); but they cannot get rid of a dangerous inheritance from Antiquity. They are Christians, but they are, perhaps, unconsciously too proud of their having been useful to the Church; Christianity belongs too much to their national history, and their hearts are not completely free from a certain un-Christian aristocratic feeling which makes them look down on other Christian nations, though Orthodox, as their inferiors. This feeling is akin to the one that has given rise to the Latin usurpation. Though being checked by a deeper understanding of the true doctrine, it cannot go the whole lengths it has gone in the West, yet it is not completely conquered; and it gives the Greeks that unbending stubbornness and that unamiable disposition which you have noticed and experienced.

Tenth Letter to William Palmer

OUR INWARD SPIRITUAL LIFE BELONGS TO THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

A Christian, dear sir, belongs to his local church only in his outward life (Discipline, Rite, etc.). In his inward life, he belongs to the universality of the Catholic Church and is in no way affected by the vices of the local church's hierarchy, which he counteracts in a mild and peaceful way, as long as the local church itself has not run into separatism, as the Latin See, or rather, the whole of the Western Communions have done.

AMERICANS, THANK GOD FOR OUR POLITICAL FREEDOM!

I am sorry I can say nothing about your tracts, either in the Greek or the English edition. The very simple reason of my silence is that I have not as yet received them. It is, as you may see, no easy thing to send books over to Russia if their contents are not agreeable to our ecclesiastical or political rules. The thing becomes still more difficult if the books bear my address.

Eleventh Letter to William Palmer

THE SPIRITUAL SOLDIER NEEDS NO NOTORIETY

The idea you have suggested to our chaplain of publishing in England the newest polemical writings of our Church is an excellent one, and I should be happy and proud to appear in the company of such men as our Metropolitan, though always under the condition of my pamphlet remaining anonymous. I am quite content to do my duty as a soldier in a line of battle, and do not feel any ambition to appear alone in the lists, or to undertake a battle single-handed as a Knight errant or fabulous Hercules.

ORAL AND WRITTEN TRADITION ARE SPIRITUAL EQUALS

St. Basil the Great

Some things we have from written teaching, others we have received from the Apostolic Tradition handed down to us in a mystery; and both these things have the same force for piety.

ICONOGRAPHERS TREAD IN THEIR PREDECESSORS' FOOTSTEPS

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

To paint the icon of a saint, one must have tasted of sanctity; one must have lived the experience of the Grace of God. One must have received the Divine Light, as far as this is possible to the soul. The painter who does not possess all this must be very careful, for every brush stroke can lead him to heresy. There is only one path left to him: He must walk faithfully in the footsteps of the ancient iconographers, and paint strictly as they did. This is how he can keep himself from all error, and thus give his works the seal of eternity. And

spiritually he will be profited, for by adhering to the types left by our Fathers, he also will taste of eternity and participate in the experience of the holy iconographers of the past, that is, the life of the Church.

MAN HAS REPLACED GOD IN BOTH PAPIISM AND PROTESTANTISM

St. Justin (Popovich)

Both in Papism and in Protestantism, man has been put in the place of the God-Man, both as the highest value and as the highest criterion. A painful and sad correction of the God-Man's work and teaching has been accomplished. Steadily and stubbornly Papism has tried to substitute the God-Man with man, until in the dogma about the infallibility of the pope - a man, the God-Man was once and for all replaced with ephemeral, infallible man; because with this dogma, the pope was decisively and clearly declared as something higher than not only man, but the holy Apostles, the holy Fathers, and the holy Ecumenical Councils. With this kind of a departure from the God-Man, from the ecumenical Church as the God-Man organism, Papism surpassed Luther, the founder of Protestantism. Thus, the first radical protest in the name of humanism against the God-Man Christ and His God-Man organism - the Church - should be looked for in Papism, not in Lutheranism. Papism is actually the first and oldest Protestantism.... And the Protestants merely accepted this dogma in its essence, and worked it out in terrifying magnitude and detail. Essentially, Protestantism is nothing other than generally applied Papism. For in Protestantism, the fundamental principle of Papism is brought to life by each man individually. After the example of the infallible man in Rome, each Protestant is a cloned infallible man, because he pretends to personal infallibility in matters of faith. It can be said: Protestantism is a vulgarised Papism, only stripped of mystery (i.e., sacramentality), authority and power.

HERETICS - ABANDON YOUR HERESIES, REPENT AND THEN THE MOTHER CHURCH WILL LOVINGLY RECEIVE YOU!

George Karras, Orthodox Heritage

A true union with the Latins, or the Protestants (or any other non-Orthodox group) would be a blessing for humanity (and Orthodoxy) and for the Glory of our Trinitarian God only if we do not compromise our 2,000-year old theology, dogmas, teachings of the Holy Fathers and Holy Traditions. For the first 1,000 years, we all shared the same religion. If we do not share it today, it is because they abandoned the True Church. For the Orthodox to commit the errors of the 1054 A.D. Latins would be a greater travesty than the one committed by them. Should any group wish to reunify with the Orthodox, all they have to do is abandon the heresies and return to the Mother Church. She has been awaiting their return with open arms for 1,000 years. This must be the one and only criterion for any union with any non-Orthodox grouping. To do anything else is to betray our ancestors whose blood has spilled as great rivers, in many parts of the world, to defend this Faith that some Orthodox representatives wish to now give away.

OUR LORD CAME FOR THE HUMBLE

St. Clement to the Corinthians

For Christ is of those who are humble-minded, and not of those who exalt themselves over His flock. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sceptre of the majesty of God, did not come in the pomp of pride or arrogance, although He might have done so, but in a lowly condition, as the Holy Spirit had declared regarding Him.

HE CAME FOR THE SINNER

St. Justin the Martyr

For Christ called not the just nor the chaste to repentance, but the ungodly, and the licentious and the unjust; His words being, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. For the heavenly Father desires rather the repentance than the punishment of the sinner. And of the love to all, He taught thus: If ye love them that love you, what new thing do ye? For even fornicators do this. But I say unto you, Pray for your enemies, and love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.

RECIPROCAL DUTIES BETWEEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES

St. Ignatius

Speak to my sisters, that they may love the Lord, and be satisfied with their husbands both in the flesh and spirit. In like manner also, exhort my brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ, that they love their wives, even as the Lord the Church. If any one can continue in a state of purity, to the honour of Him who is Lord of the flesh, let him so remain without boasting. If he begins to boast, he is undone; and if he reckon himself greater than the bishop, he is ruined. But it becomes both men and women who marry, to form their union with the approval of the bishop, that their marriage may be according to God, and not after their own lust. Let all things be done to the honour of God.

YOUR BODY IS GOD'S/CHRIST'S TEMPLE

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Whence also he says, that this handiwork is the "temple of God," thus declaring Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man, therefore, will defile the temple of God, him will God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are. Here he manifestly declares the body to be the temple in which the Spirit dwells. As also the Lord speaks in reference to Himself, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.... And not only does he (the Apostle) acknowledge our bodies to be a temple, but even the temple of Christ, saying thus to the Corinthians, Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ?

PRESERVE YOUR SOUL, BODY AND SPIRIT IN A BLAMELESS STATE FOR THE LORD'S COMING

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

... the Apostle, explaining himself, makes it clear that the saved man is a complete man as well as a spiritual man; saying thus in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, Now the God of peace sanctify you perfect (perfectos); and may your spirit, and soul and body be preserved to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what was his object in praying that these three - that is, soul, body, and spirit - might be preserved to the coming of the Lord, unless he was aware of the [future] reintegration and union of the three, and [that they that should be heirs of] one and the same salvation? For this cause also he declares that those are "perfect" who present to the Lord the three [component parts] without offence. Those, then, are the perfect who have had the Spirit of God remaining in them, and have preserved their souls and bodies blameless, holding fast the faith of God, that is, that faith which is [directed] towards God, and maintaining righteous dealings with respect to their neighbours.

MONASTIC DEVELOPMENT

Professor I.M. Kontzevitch

It was from the beginning of the 4th century that monasticism began to develop. There were instances of individual hermits leaving cities even before

that time, as for instance, under Emperor Decius (249-251), when they hid from their persecutors in deserts, caves, and underground pits.... The first guide of ancient monasticism was St. Anthony the Great (born 251)... The longing for the monastic life, the resettlement into the desert, began during the reign of St. Constantine the Great.

HOLD TIGHT TO THE GRACE YOU HAVE!

Fr. Seraphim (Rose) (of blessed memory)

Orthodox Christians! Hold fast to the grace which you have; never let it become a matter of habit; never measure it by merely human standards or expect it to be logical or comprehensible to those who understand nothing higher than what is human. Let all true Orthodox Christians strengthen themselves for the battle ahead, never forgetting that in Christ the victory is already ours.

SPIRITUAL STANDING OF THE RUDDER (PEDALION) SECOND ONLY TO THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

St. Nicodemus, The Rudder, p. Li

This Handbook, in effect, is next after the Holy Scriptures a holy Scripture, and next after the Old and New Testaments a Testament... This book, it may be said, is replete with the everlasting bounds set by our Fathers, and the laws which endure forever and which are above all external and imperial laws of the Digests, of the Institutes, of the Codes, and of the Novels for the latter were issued by mere emperors, whereas the former were laid down by Councils, ecumenical and regional, through the Holy Spirit, and emperors ratified them. This book is truly, as we have entitled it, the Rudder of the Catholic Church, which when thereby steered, conveys the sailors and passengers in it, those in holy orders, I mean, as well as laymen, safely to the unruffled haven of the Kingdom above.

TRUE CHRISTIANS DON'T FOLLOW THE MARKETPLACE

St. Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzus)

Thus, as briefly as possible I have set forth for you our love of wisdom, which is dogmatical and not dialectical, in the manner of the fishermen and not of Aristotle, spiritually and not cleverly woven, according to the rules of the Church and not of the marketplace.

DEIFICATION IS BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION

St. Gregory Palamas

On this account, although we have written at length about stillness, whether enjoined to do so by the Fathers, or at the request of our brethren, we have never dared to write about deification. But now, since there is need to speak, we will speak, reverently, with the Lord's grace, though to describe it is beyond our skill. For even when spoken of, deification remains unutterable: as the Fathers say, it can be identified only by those who have been blessed by it.

ST. LAWRENCE DIDN'T WANT TO BE LEFT BEHIND

St. Ambrose of Milan

... his bishop led to martyrdom, began to weep, not at his sufferings but at the fact that he himself was to remain behind. With these words he began to address him: 'Whither, holy priest, art thou hastening without thy deacon? Never was thou wont to offer sacrifice without an attendant. What art thou displeased at in me, my father? Hast thou found me unworthy? Prove, then, whether thou hast chosen a fitting servant. To him to whom thou hast entrusted the [distribution] of the Saviour's Blood, to whom thou hast granted fellowship in partaking of the Sacraments, to him dost thou refuse a

part in thy death? [Note: St. Lawrence was weeping because he was being left behind.]

BE COURAGEOUS AND CONFESS ME

Our Lord Jesus Christ

And I say unto you, my friends. Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more they can do. Also, I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say (Luke 12:8-12).

STRUGGLE: ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION!

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville

Without the Cross, without struggle, there can be no salvation! This is what true Christianity teaches. The teaching on struggle, on the bearing of the Cross, runs like a scarlet thread through all the Sacred Scriptures and all of the history of the Church, and the lives of those holy ones who were pleasing unto God, the spiritual athletes of Christian piety, clearly bear witness to this.

THE CLERGY DO NOT TEACH: THE HOLY FATHERS DO

St. Nil Sorsky

The Divine Scriptures and the words of the Holy Fathers are as numerous as the sand of the sea. Diligently searching them out, we teach them to those who come to us and who are in need of them. More correctly, it is not we who teach, because we are unworthy to do so, but it is the blessed Holy Fathers who teach from Divine Scripture.

ALL-HOLY AND GOOD WITH NOTHING OF EVIL

St. Justin (Popovich)

Having become the Church by His incarnation out of an unparalleled love for man, our God and Lord Jesus Christ sanctified the Church by His sufferings, Resurrection, Ascension, teaching, wonder-working, prayer, fasting, mysteries, and virtues; in a word, by His entire Theanthropic life.

AVOID A LIFE OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS & SELF-SATISFACTION

Fr. Seraphim (Rose)

The life of self-centeredness and self-satisfaction lived by most of today's "Christians" is so all-pervading that it effectively seals them off from any understanding at all of spiritual life, and when such people undertake 'spiritual life,' it is only as another form of self-satisfaction. This can be seen quite clearly in the totally false religious ideal both of the 'charismatic' movement and the various forms of 'Christian mediation': all of them promise (and give very quickly) an experience of contentment and peace. But this is not the Christian ideal at all, which, if anything, may be summed up as a fierce battle and struggle (emphasis supplied).

THE GOSPEL MEANING OF 'BROTHERS' and 'SISTERS'

Archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy

'Brothers and sisters' of the Lord, as used in the Gospels, has a meaning completely different than what is meant by brothers and sisters of the Lord in contemporary terms. According to the custom of Eastern peoples of that time, as is now kept in the life of the Arabic people living in Palestine and Asia Minor, 'brothers' meant not only the relation of brother, but also cousins,

second cousins and, in general, close relatives.

There could not have been any actual (emphasis supplied) brothers of the Lord, as the Mother of God bore only one Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and is called by the Holy Church Ever-Virgin because she was so until the birth of Christ, and in giving birth and after the birth of Christ remained the same, as she vowed to God never to enter into marriage. St. Joseph was not a real husband to her, he was only betrothed, the custodian of her virginity.

FROM THE GOSPEL OF THE HEBREWS RE JAMES THE JUST

Blessed Jerome quoting from the Gospel of the Hebrews

And when the Lord had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, He went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him risen from among them that sleep. And shortly thereafter the Lord said: 'Bring a table of bread!' And immediately it is added: He took bread, blessed it and brake it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: 'My brother eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep.'

THE LOGOS IS ALWAYS IN THE FATHER AND THE FATHER ALWAYS IN THE LOGOS

St. Athanasius

That the Son is not only like to the Father, but that, as his image, he is the same as the Father, that he is of the Father, and that the resemblance of the Son to the Father, and his immutability, are different from ours: for in us they are something acquired, and arise from our fulfilling the divine commands. Moreover, they wished to indicate by this that his generation is different from that of human nature; that the Son is not only like to the Father, but inseparable from the substance of the Father, that he and the Father are one and the same, as the Son himself said: 'The logos is always in the Father, and, the Father is always in the Logos,' as the sun and its splendour are inseparable.

THE POWER OF TRADITION IN PREACHING THE HOLY TRINITARIAN TRUTH

St. Irenaeus

Although the Church is dispersed throughout the whole inhabited world, to the ends of the earth, it has received faith in one God the Father Almighty,... and in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, Who was incarnate for the sake of our salvation, and in the Holy Spirit Who has proclaimed the economy of our salvation through the prophets... Having received such a preaching and such a faith, the Church, although it is dispersed throughout the entire world, as we have said, carefully preserves this faith as if dwelling in a single house. It believes this (everywhere) identically, as if it had a single soul and a single heart, and it preaches it with one voice, teaching and transmitting it as if with a single mouth. Although there are many dialects in the world, the power of Tradition is one and the same. None of the leaders of the churches will contradict this, nor will anyone, whether powerful in words or unskilled in words, weaken the Tradition (all emphases supplied).

ST. ATHANASIUS STOOD FOR THE UNADULTERATED TRINITY

C.S. Lewis

He stood for the Trinitarian Doctrine, 'whole and undefiled,' when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius - into one of those 'sensible' synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many cultivated clergymen. It is to his glory that he did not move with the times; it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do,

have moved away.

DIVINE JUSTICE ILLUSTRATED

St. Isaac the Syrian

... Be a herald of God's goodness, for God rules over you, unworthy though you are; for although your debt to Him is so great, yet He is not seen exacting payment from you, and from the small works you do. He bestows great rewards upon you. Do not call God just, for His justice is not manifest in the things concerning you. And if David calls Him just and upright (cf. Ps. 24:8, 144:17), His Son revealed to us that He is good and kind. 'He is good,' He says, 'to the evil and to the impious' (cf. Luke 6:35). How can you call God just when you come across the Scriptural passage on the wage given to the workers? 'Friend, I do thee no wrong: I will give unto thee this last even as unto thee who worked for me for the first hour. Is thine eye evil because I am good?' (Matt. 20:12-15) How can a man call God just when he comes across the passage on the prodigal son who wasted his wealth with riotous living, and yet only for the contrition which he showed, his father ran and fell upon his neck and gave him authority over all his wealth? (Luke 15:11 ff). None other but His very Son said these things concerning Him, lest we doubt it; and thus He bare witness concerning Him. Where then is God's justice, for whilst we are sinners Christ died for us! (cf. Rom. 5:8). But if here He is merciful, we may believe that He will not change.

'JUST' MEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Dr. Alexandre Kalomiros

When we say that God is just, we do not mean that He is a good judge Who knows how to punish men equitably according to the gravity of their crimes, but on the contrary, we mean that he is kind and loving, forgiving all transgressions and disobediences, and that He wants to save us by all means, and never requites evil for evil.

FORGIVE!

St. John Climacus

In times of despondency, never fail to to bear in mind the Lord's commandment to Peter, to forgive a person who sins seventy times seven, For He who gave this command to another will Himself do far more.

BEING HOSTILE

St. John Chrysostom

It is not God who is hostile, but we, for God is never hostile.

HELL

St. John (Maximovitch) of Shanghai and San Francisco

A 'fiery gehenna' - such is the inner fire. 'Here there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.' Such is the state of hell.

BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED!

Our Lord Jesus Christ

And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Matt. 10:22)... BLESSED are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for My sake (Matt. 5:11).

A COUNCIL WHICH CONVEYS THE PATRISTIC WITNESS OF THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH; IT IS AS RELEVANT TODAY AS EVER

Council Convened by Patriarch Jeremias II, the Illustrious, of Constantinople
The Sigillion of the Council in Constantinople of 1583

Anathematising false beliefs about the Dogma of the Procession of the Holy Spirit, Holy Communion, unleavened bread, the Judgment, Purgatory, the

heretical Pope, the Paschalia, and the New Calendar Innovation.

To all the genuine Christian children of the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ of the East in Trigovyst and in all places, be grace and mercy from Almighty God.

Not a little distress took possession of that Ark of old, when, storm-tossed, it was borne upon the waters; and if the Lord God, remembering Noe, had not in His good will calmed the water, there would have been no hope for salvation in it. In a like manner with the new Ark of our Church, the heretics have raised up a relentless war against us, and we have deemed it well to leave behind the present tome against them so that with the things written in it you may be able more surely to defend your Orthodoxy. But in order that the document may not be burdensome to simpler people, we have decided to set forth the entire subject to you in simple speech as follows:

From Old Rome have come certain persons who learned there to think like Latins; and the bad thing is that from being Byzantines (that is, Greeks) born and bred in our own parts, they not only have changed their faith, but they also battle the Orthodox and true dogmas of the Eastern Church which Christ delivered Himself to us. Whereupon, having cut them off as rotten members we order:

I) Whosoever does not confess with heart and mouth that he is a child of the Eastern Church baptised in an Orthodox manner, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father, essentially and hypostatically, as Christ says in the Gospel, although He proceeds from Father and Son in time, let such a one be out of our Church and let him be anathematised.

II) Whosoever does not confess that in the Mystery of the Holy Communion laymen should commune with two kinds, both of the precious Body and Blood, but says that it is enough to receive only the Body, for the Blood is also there, even though Christ has spoken and has given each one separately, and they do not keep it, let such be anathematised.

III) Whosoever says that our Lord Jesus Christ at the Mystical Last Supper used unleavened bread as do the Hebrews and not leavened bread, that is, raised bread, let him be far from us and under the anathema as one who thinks like a Jew and as one who introduces the doctrines of Appolinarios and of the Armenians into our Church, on which account let him be anathematised a second time.

IV) Whosoever says that when our Christ and God comes to judge He does not come to judge the souls together with the bodies, but comes in order to decide only for the body, anathema to him.

V) Whosoever says that when they die the souls of the Christians who repented in this life but did not do their penance go to Purgatory - which is a Greek myth - where fire and torment purify them, and they think that there is no eternal torment, as did Origen, and give cause by this to sin freely, let such a one have the anathema.

VI) Whosoever says that the Pope is head of the Church and not Christ, and that he has authority to admit into Paradise with his letters, and can forgive as many sins as will be committed by one who with money received an indulgence from him, let such a one have the anathema.

VII) Whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church which the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils have decreed, and the Holy Pascha and calendar which they enacted well for us to follow, but wants to follow the newly-invented Paschalion [method of fixing the date of Pascha] and the new calendar of the atheist astronomers of the Pope; and opposing them, wishes

to overthrow and destroy the doctrines and customs of the Church which we have inherited from our Fathers, let any such have the anathema and let him be outside of the Church and the Assembly of the Faithful.

VIII) We exhort all pious and Orthodox Christians: remain in those things which you have learned and in which you were born and bred, and when the times and circumstances call for it, shed your very blood in order both to keep the Faith given us by our Fathers and to keep your confession. Beware of such people and take care, that our Lord Jesus Christ help you. May the blessing of our humility be with you all. Amen.

The 1583rd year from the birth of the God-man, Indiction 12, November 20th. Jeremias, of Constantinople, Sylvester, of Alexandria, Sophronios, of Jerusalem (and the rest of the Bishops of the Synod who were present)

ORTHODOXY'S MOST PROFOUND, YET HUMBLE PRAYER

The Apostle Paul

Pray without Ceasing (I Thes. 5:17)

HEAVENLY LIGHT COMING FROM UNCEASING PRAYER

Old Monk in The Way of a Pilgrim

It has been granted to you to understand that the heavenly light of unceasing interior prayer is attained neither by the wisdom of the world, nor by the mere outward desire for knowledge, but that on the contrary it is found in poverty of spirit and in active experience in simplicity of heart.

MUTUAL LOVE

St. John, the Beloved Apostle

... our mutual love must be built up by the action of faith in the Lord, Who came to save us, and consequently it is not all right to believe as you want...

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God. (John 4:7) If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. (I John 4:12) God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. (I John 4:16)

LOVE THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART AND THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF

Our Lord Jesus Christ

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?'

And Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is, Hear O Israel;

The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

There is none other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:28-31)

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT SERVES AS A FOUNDATION FOR THE FIRST

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

Although the commandment of love for God is as far superior to the commandment of love for God's image (man) as God is superior to His image, yet the commandment of love for our neighbour serves as a foundation for the commandment of love for God. he who has not laid a foundation labours in vain to construct a building; it cannot possibly stand without a foundation. By love for our neighbour we enter into love for God. A Christian's love for God is love for Christ, and love for our neighbour is love for Christ in our neighbour. By loving our neighbour - by loving him in the Lord, that is, as the Lord commands us - we acquire love for Christ, and love for Christ is love for God.

WE MUST CONQUER THE 'SEED' OF ALL MORAL EVIL - SELF-LOVE

St. Theophan the Recluse

The seed of all moral evil is - self-love. It lies in the very depths of the heart. Man, according to his calling, should forget about himself - his life, his activities, he should live solely for God and for others. In consecrating all that he does by elevating this as a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God the Saviour, he should offer his life and all its activity entirely for the benefit of his neighbours, and shower upon them all that he receives from the Bountiful One, i.e., God. One does not exist without the other; it is impossible to love God without loving one's neighbours, just as it is impossible to love one's neighbour unless one loves God. Likewise, in loving God and one's neighbour it is impossible not to sacrifice oneself for the glory of God and the good of one's neighbour. But when a man separates himself from God - in his thoughts, his heart, his desires - and consequently also from his neighbour, then naturally he comes to dwell upon himself alone, his 'I' becomes the focus towards which he directs everything else, to the neglect even of the divine precepts and the good of his neighbour.

ST. CONSTANTINE THE GREAT WAS TO 'CONQUER BY THIS'

Eusebius

He [Constantine] said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline, he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription CONQUER BY THIS. At this sight he himself was struck with amazement, and his whole army also, which followed him on this expedition, and witnessed (emphasis supplied) the miracle.

CHRIST APPEARED TO ST. CONSTANTINE

Eusebius

..., then in his sleep the Christ of God appeared to him with the same sign which he had seen in the heavens, and commanded him to make a likeness of that sign which he had seen in the heavens, and to use it as a safeguard in all engagements with his enemies.

BELIEF IN CHRIST IS NOT ENOUGH; WE MUST ALSO LIVE AND ACT ON EARTH AS HE DID!

St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow, Enlightener of America

Without faith in Jesus Christ no one can return to God and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. 2) No one, even though he believes in Jesus Christ, can be called a disciple of Jesus Christ or live with Him in Heaven, unless he acts and lives as Jesus Christ acted and lived on earth. 3) No one can follow Jesus Christ without the help of the Holy Spirit. 4) Whoever wishes to receive the Holy Spirit must use the means given by God for that purpose.

EXPLANATION OF THE SICKNESS OF SPIRITUAL DECEPTION (DELUSION)

St. Seraphim of Sarov

...spiritual delusion, imagining oneself to be near to God and to the realm of the divine and supernatural... they are seers of divine visions, or at least of dreams inspired by grace. In every event of their lives, they see special intentional directions from God or their guardian angel... imagining that they are God's elect... often try to foretell the future. The Holy Fathers armed themselves against nothing so fiercely as against this sickness (emphasis supplied).

UNANIMITY OF THE FATHERS AND TEACHERS ON A SPIRITUAL ISSUE IS CONCLUSIVE

Fr. Michael Pomazansky

For guidance in questions of the faith, for the correct understanding of

Sacred Scripture, and in order to distinguish the authentic Tradition of the Church from false teachings, we appeal to the works of the holy Fathers of the Church, acknowledging that the unanimous agreement of all the Fathers and teachers of the Church in teaching of the Faith is an undoubted sign of truth.

NO FATHER EVER TAUGHT THAT TO BE A 'CANONICAL' ORTHODOX ONE MUST BE IN COMMUNION WITH THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE: THIS IS COMPLETELY UNTRUE!

Bishop Ephraim of Boston (on behalf of the Fathers)

... Constantinople... has in recent times begun to teach that one cannot be a canonical Orthodox Christian if he is not in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Since not one (emphasis supplied) holy canon or Saint of the Church has ever taught such a doctrine, the pronouncement of this teaching by the mentors of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is evidence of how far their own 'Orthodoxy' has departed from the 'spirit' and 'truth' of Christ. In view of the fact that their disdain of the holy canons is totally unabashed, their advancement of this doctrine is certainly most incongruous.

EVERY COMMANDMENT IS ABOUT LOVE

St. Gregory the Great

Why does He speak of love as if it were a special commandment? It is because every commandment is about love, and they all add up to one commandment because whatever is commanded is founded on love alone. The branch which is our good works has no sap unless it remains attached to the root of love (emphases supplied).

LOVE ALL

St. Maximus the Confessor

We must love every person with all our hearts, place our trust in God and serve only Him with all our strength. For, while He protects us, all our friends will remain favorable, while our enemies will be powerless. When He departs from us, then will our friends turn from us and our enemies secure ascendancy over us. Friends of Christ genuinely love all, though they themselves are not beloved at all.

EACH OF THE TWO COMMANDMENTS IS HELD TOGETHER BY THE OTHER

St. Theophylact

How are these two commandments alike? In that the two commandments are held together by each other. He who loves God, also loves God's creation; and that part of His creation which is the most akin to God is man. Therefore he who loves God will also love all mankind. And shall not he who loves his neighbour love God all the more? For if he loves men, who so often cause offence and bear hatred, how much more will he love God Who is always his Benefactor? Listen to what the Lord says also: He who loves me will keep My commandments, and that the substance of His commandments is that we love each other. And again, By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another. Do you not see again that for us to love Christ, and to be His disciples and friends, comes from loving each other?

JUST TWO OR THREE ARE NEEDED

Our Lord Jesus Christ

For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

REFUSING TO ENTER COMMUNION WITH THE THRONE OF CONSTANTINOPLE; IT'S NOTHING NEW

St. Maximus the Confessor

... they have excommunicated themselves from the Church many times over and accused each other of erroneous thinking. In addition to having excommunicated themselves from the Church, they have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?... Even if the whole universe holds communion with the Patriarch, I will not communicate with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul: the Holy Spirit declares that even the angels would be anathema if they should begin to preach another Gospel, introducing some new teaching.

ONE SIMPLE MONK WAS RIGHT (ST. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR)!

Fr. Christopher Birchall

When the Sixth Ecumenical Council was finally convened, among those condemned for heresy were four Patriarchs of Constantinople, one Pope of Rome, one Patriarch of Alexandria, two Patriarchs of Antioch and a multitude of other Metropolitans, Archbishops and Bishops. During all those years, that one simple monk was right, and all those notable bishops were wrong.

FALSE GOSPEL PREACHING IS ACCURSED!

The Apostle Paul

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again. If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

UNITY: NO MORE MASTERS AND SLAVES

Alexei Khomiakov

The catholic Church is the Church that is according to all, or according to the unity of all, the Church of free unanimity, of perfect unanimity, the Church in which there are no more nationalities, no more Greeks or barbarians; in which there are no more differences in conditions, no more masters and slaves. This is the Church prophesied by the Old Testament and realised by the New. This, finally, is the Church as Saint Paul defined her.

ALEXEI KHOMIAKOV ON ST. ATHANASIUS'S VIEW OF CATHOLICITY

Alexei Khomiakov

... The Church attributes to herself other traits than a universality to come. Whatever may be the destiny of the world's material forces, the intellectual movements of nations, or even the success of the Apostolate, the character of the Church's catholicity is independent of all this. This character does not change and never will change. That is how Saint Athanasius understood it. He did not say, We are more populous, or more widely distributed in the universe (that would have been doubtful in relation to the Arians and even more doubtful in relation to the Nestorians, who came later). Instead, he said: in whatever country you may be, you are everywhere only Arians, Ebionites, or Sabellians. But, as for us, we are everywhere catholics and recognised as such. (Not having Saint Athanasius's works in front of me, I give his meaning, not his exact words.) It is a question not of numbers, or extent, or of geographical universality, but of something much loftier. Your names are due to human chance; ours come from the very essence of Christianity. This is how Saint Athanasius understands catholicity. (all emphases supplied)

THE FATHERS PRESENT THE DIVINE MEAL THROUGH OUR LIPS

Blessed Theophan of Poltava

The teaching of the Holy Trinity is the pinnacle of Christian theology.

Therefore I do not presume to set forth this teaching in my own words, but I

set it forth in the words of the holy and Godbearing theologians and great Fathers of the Church: Athanasius the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Basil the Great. Mine are only the lips, but theirs the words and thoughts. They present the Divine meal, and I am only the servant of their Divine banquet.

GOD IS ONLY GOOD

St. John of Damascus

Since God is good, He is the Author of all good and is not subject to malice or to any passion. For malice is far removed from the Divine Nature, which is the impassible and only good.

THERE ARE HELL'S ETERNAL FIRES FOR THE 'UNJUST'!

Fr. John Romanides

In the Orthodox Tradition, both the just and the unjust will have the vision of God in His uncreated glory, with the difference that for the unjust this same uncreated glory of God will be the eternal fires of hell. God is light for those who learn to love Him and a consuming fire for those who will not.

JAMES THE RIGHTEOUS

Eusebius quoting Hegesippus

Control of the Church passed to the apostles, together with the Lord's brother James, whom everyone from the Lord's time till our own called the Righteous, for there were many Jameses, but this one was holy from his birth: he drank no wine or intoxicating liquor and ate no animal food; no razor came near his head; he did not smear himself with oil, and took no baths. He alone (emphasis supplied) was permitted to enter the Holy Place, for his garments were not of wool but of linen. He used to enter the Sanctuary alone, and was often found on his knees beseeching forgiveness for the people. Because of his unsurpassable righteousness he was called the Righteous or Oblias - in our language 'Bulwark of the People, and Righteousness' - fulfilling the declarations of the prophets regarding him.

JAMES THE RIGHTEOUS TESTIFIES FOR CHRIST AND PRAYS TO OUR FATHER TO FORGIVE THEM

St. James the Just

Why do you question me about the Son of Man? I tell you, He is sitting in Heaven at the right hand of the Great Power, and He will come on the clouds of Heaven.... I beseech Thee, Lord God and Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.

JAMES, THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR OF THE DIVINE LITURGY, RECEIVED IT ORALLY FROM CHRIST!

The Rudder (Pedalion)

James the Apostle is the original author of the Divine Liturgy, of the bloodless sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ; and just as he received the mystery of the Divine Eucharist orally (emphasis supplied) from Christ he delivered it in writing to be celebrated with leavened bread and wine. To save time St. Basil the Great shortened the Liturgy of St. James; and St. Chrysostom shortened that of St. Basil to that which we Orthodox Christians have kept to this very day.

HIS SACRIFICE DID TWO THINGS

St. Athanasius the Great

For by the sacrifice of His own Body He did two things: He put an end to the law of death which banned our way; and He made a new beginning of life for us, by giving us the hope of resurrection.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S PROFOUNDLY BEAUTIFUL WORDS

St. John the Baptist, Forerunner of Christ

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

IF YOU'RE A FREEMASON, YOU'RE NOT A CHRISTIAN!

The Rudder (Pedalion)

The doctrines of Freemasonry are contrary and opposed to the doctrines of Christianity, and especially to the fundamental dogma of the Faith, which consists in the belief that Jesus Christ is a Son of God and a Son of man....

Freemasonry and Christianity are two opposite and contrary systems, of which each annuls the other.

MASONRY IS COMPLETELY INCOMPATIBLE WITH ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY!

The Act of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (1932). The Declaration Against Freemasonry - by Metropolitan Anthony of Kiev

All clergy are duty-bound to question those who come to Confession whether they are members of Masonic Orders, and in case it will appear that they are Masons and believe and share Masonic teachings, they should be informed that membership of the Masonic Organisation is incompatible with Orthodox Christianity, and that such should immediately resign from Masonry, otherwise they will be deemed unworthy to receive Holy Communion, and their future impenitency will bring them to excommunication from the Orthodox Church.

WORK PERSISTENTLY ON OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES EVEN IN TODAY'S LATTER TIMES

Fr. Seraphim (Rose)

Our times, above all, call for humble and quiet labours, with love and sympathy for other strugglers on the path of Orthodox spiritual life and a deep resolve that does not become discouraged because the atmosphere is unfavorable. We Christians of the latter times are still called to work persistently on ourselves, to be obedient to spiritual Fathers and authorities, to lead an orderly life with at least a minimum of spiritual discipline and with regular reading of the Orthodox spiritual literature which Blessed Paisius was chiefly responsible for handing down to our times, to watch over our own sins and failings and not judge others. If we do this, even in our terrible times, we may hope - in God's mercy - of the salvation of our souls.

SOME SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE THAT THE CHURCH MUST BE ONE!

Scriptural Passages

That they may be one (John 17:11); One Lord, one faith (Eph. 4:5); Be like-minded one toward another (Rom. 15:5); Be ye of one accord, of one mind (Phil. 2:2); Be ye all of one mind (I Peter 3:8); Be ye of the same mind toward one another. Mind not high things... Be not wise in your conceits (Rom. 12:16)

THE DIVINE PRESENCE IS EVERYWHERE

St. Benedict

We believe that the Divine Presence is everywhere and that 'the eyes of the Lord are looking on the good and the evil in every place'. But we should believe this especially without any doubt when we are assisting at the Work of God. To that end let us be mindful of the Prophet's words, 'Serve the Lord in Fear' and again, 'Sing praises wisely' and 'In the sight of the Angels I will sing praises to Thee.' Let us therefore consider how we ought to conduct ourselves in the sight of the Godhead and of His Angels, and let us take part in the psalmody in such a way that our mind may be in harmony with our voice.

ST. BENEDICT'S RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FATHERS, ESPECIALLY ST. BASIL THE GREAT AND ST. JOHN CASSIAN

St. Benedict in his Rule recommended:

... the collations of the Fathers, and their institutes (comment - presumably St. John Cassian's) and lives, and the rule of our holy Father, Basil - what are they but the monuments of the virtues of exemplary and obedient monks?

ST. BENEDICT BROUGHT THE FAITH OF CHRIST TO THE PEOPLE THROUGH HIS CONTINUAL PREACHING

St. Gregory the Great

The man of God coming hither, beat in pieces the idol, overthrew the altar, set fire to the woods, and in the temple of Apollo, he built the oratory of St. Martin, and where the altar of the same Apollo was, he made an oratory to St. John, and by his continual preaching, he brought the people dwelling in those parts to embrace the faith of Christ.

ST. BENEDICT'S RULE WAS ALWAYS ALIVE IN THE MONASTIC TRADITION OF THE EAST BECAUSE HIS RULE HAD ITS ORIGINS THERE

Orthodox America, St. Benedict

Among Orthodox Christians there was never any need to use the 'Rule' of Saint Benedict, for the teachings of this 'Rule' were always alive in the monastic tradition of the East, from where, indeed, they originally came to Saint Benedict. Therefore, one may say that St. Benedict's Rule was preserved in spirit in the Orthodox east, just as was the memory of the saint himself, whose feast is still kept by the Orthodox on March 14. The ideal of a hidden life of labour and solitude remained continually alive in the Orthodox Church, blossoming like a flower in the desert. In this same spirit, St. Benedict's Rule, with its emphasis on virtue and repentance rather than organisation, contained the very essence of Christ's teachings about other-worldliness.

ST. BENEDICT, THE WONDERWORKER, HAD THE GIFT OF PROPHECY AND RAISED THE DEAD

Orthodox America, St. Benedict

Not only was St. Benedict a great missionary, man of prayer, and spiritual director of souls, but God also vouchsafed him the grace of wonderworking. Thus, he was able to cast out demons from those possessed, had the gift of prophecy, could read human hearts and thoughts, cure the sick, and miraculously provide money for the poor, but most wonderful of all, he also raised the dead!

ST. BENEDICT AND THE BREAKING OF THE DRINKING GLASS

St. Gregory the Great, Second Dialogue (Life of St. Benedict)

Not far from the place where he remained there was a monastery, the Abbot whereof was dead: whereupon the whole Convent came unto the venerable Bennet, entreating him very earnestly that he would vouchsafe to take upon him the charge and government of their Abbey: long time he denied them, saying that their manners were divers from his, and therefore that they should never agree together: yet at length, overcome with their entreaty, he gave his consent.

Having now taken upon him the charge of the Abbey, he took order that regular life should be observed, so that none of them could, as before they used, through unlawful acts decline from the path of holy conversation, either on the one side or the other: which the monks perceiving, they fell into a great rage, accusing themselves that ever they desired him to be their Abbot, seeing their crooked conditions could not endure his virtuous kind of government: and therefore when they saw that under him they could not live in unlawful sort, and were loath to leave their former conversation, and found it hard to be enforced with old minds to meditate and think upon new things:

and because the life of virtuous men is always grievous to those that be of wicked conditions, some of them began to devise, how they might rid him out of the way: and therefore, taking counsel together, they agreed to poison his wine: which being done, and the glass wherein the wine was, according to the custom, offered to the Abbot to bless, he putting forth his hand, made the sign of the Cross, and straightway the glass, that was holden far off, brake in pieces, as though the sign of the Cross had been a stone thrown against it: upon which accident the man of God by and by perceived that the glass had in it the drink of death, which could not endure the sign of life: and therefore rising up, with a mild countenance and quiet mind, he called the monks together, and spake thus unto them: 'Almighty God have mercy upon you, and forgive you: why have you used me in this manner? Did I not tell you before hand, that our manner of living could never agree together? Go your ways, and seek ye out some other father suitable to your conditions, for I intend not now to stay any longer amongst you.' When he had thus discharged himself, he returned back to the wilderness which so much he loved, and dwelt alone with himself, in the sight of his Creator, Who beholdeth the hearts of all men.

ST. BENEDICT RAISES UP A DEAD CHILD!

St. Gregory the Great, Second Dialogue, (Life of St. Benedict)

Being upon a day gone out with his monks to work in the field, a country man carrying the corpse of his dead son came to the gate of the Abbey, lamenting the loss of his child: and inquiring for holy Bennet, they told him that he was abroad with his monks in the field. Down at the gate he laid the dead body, and with great sorrow of soul ran in haste to seek out the venerable father. At the same time, the man of God was returning homeward from work with his monks: whom so soon as he saw, he [country man] began to cry out: 'Give me my son, give me my son!'

The man of God, amazed at these words, stood still, and said: 'What, have I taken away your son?' 'No, no,' quoth the sorrowful father, 'but he is dead: come for Christ's sake and restore him to life.'

The servant of God, hearing him speak in that manner, and seeing his monks upon compassion to solicit the poor man's suit, with great sorrow of mind he said: 'Away, my good brethren, away: such miracles are not for us to work, but for the blessed Apostles: why will you lay such a burthen upon me, as my weakness cannot bear?' But the poor man, whom excessive grief enforced, would not give over his petition, but swore that he would never depart, except that he raise up his son.

'Where is he, then?' quoth God's servant.

He answered that his body lay at the gate of the Abbey: to which place when the man of God came with his monks, he kneeled down and lay upon the body of the little child, and rising, he held up his hands towards Heaven, and said: 'Behold not, O Lord my sins, but the faith of this man, that desireth to have his son raised to life, and restore that soul to the body, which thou hast taken away.'

He had scarce spoken these words, and behold the soul returned back again, and therewith the child's body began to tremble in such sort that all which were present did behold it in strange manner to pant and shake. Then he took it by the hand and gave it to his father, but alive and in health. Certain it is, Peter, that this miracle was not in his own power, for which prostrate upon the ground he prayed so earnestly.

THE STARETS (SPIRITUAL ELDER) IS SOUGHT OUT BY OTHERS; ONE DOES NOT DECLARE SPIRITUAL ELDERSHIP!

Bp. Kallistos (Ware)

Within the continuing life of the Christian community, it becomes plain to the believing people of God (the true guardian of Holy Tradition) that this or that person has the gift of spiritual fatherhood. Then, in a free and informal fashion, others begin to come to him or her for advice and direction.

It will be noted that the initiative comes, as a rule, not from the master but from the disciples. It would be perilously presumptuous for someone to say in his own heart or to others, 'Come and submit yourselves to me; I am a starets, I have the grace of the Spirit.' What happens, rather, is that - without any claims being made by the starets himself - others approach him, seeking his advice or asking to live permanently under his care. At first, he will probably send them away, telling them to consult someone else. Finally the moment comes when he no longer sends them away but accepts their coming to him as a disclosure of the will of God. Thus it is his spiritual children who reveal the starets to himself.

SUFFERING ORTHODOXY

Fr. Seraphim Rose

... and so it has been from the beginning, throughout the whole history of the Church. The followers of the crucified God have suffered persecutions and tortures. Almost all the Apostles died as martyrs, Peter being crucified upside-down, and Andrew being crucified on an x-shaped cross (Note: also remember the martyrdoms of St. Stephen and St. James the Just, Head and First Bishop of the Christian Church in Jerusalem.) During the first three centuries of Christianity, believers fled to the catacombs and endured tremendous sufferings. It was in the catacombs that the Church's Divine Services - which we celebrate today in a form little changed since that time - were worked out in an atmosphere of constant expectation of death. After the age of the catacombs there was a struggle to retain the purity of the Faith, when many teachers tried to substitute personal opinions for the divinely revealed teachings given by our Lord Jesus Christ. In later centuries, there were the invasions of Orthodox countries by Arabs, Turks, other non-Christian peoples, and finally - in our own days - by communists. Communism, which has persecuted religion as it has never been persecuted before, has attacked first of all precisely the Orthodox lands of Eastern Europe. As can be seen, therefore, our Faith is a suffering Faith, and in this suffering, something goes on which helps the heart receive God's revelation.

OUR GREATEST DUTY IS TO SUFFER

St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov)

Since you follow the Saviour Jesus Christ through your devotion to the angelic way of life, your greatest duty is to bear all suffering, whether it comes from nature, indolence, sins or people.

DO NOT BE ASHAMED TO SUFFER AS A CHRISTIAN

St. Peter

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him cease being ashamed, but keep on glorifying God in respect to this. For it is the time for the judgment to begin from the house of God; but if first from us, what shall be the end of those who disobey the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator (I Peter 4:16-19).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FLEEING FROM CHRIST

St. Irenaeus

For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns (Jer. 2:13) out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mire, fleeing from the faith of the Church lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed.

TWO WAYS

The Twelve Apostles as in The Didache

(1) There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways.

(2) Now this is the way of life: first, 'you shall love God, who made you'; second, 'your neighbour as yourself;' and 'whatever you do not wish to happen to you, do not do to another.'

FOLLOW RIGHTEOUS TEACHING ONLY

The Twelve Apostles, The Didache

But if the teacher himself goes astray and teaches a different teaching that undermines all this, do not listen to him. However, if his teaching contributes to righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, welcome him as you would the Lord.

THE LAST DAYS

The Twelve Apostles, The Didache

For in the last days the false prophets and corrupters will abound, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate.

PRAY AS THE LORD COMMANDED

The Twelve Apostles, The Didache

Nor should you pray like the hypocrites. Instead, 'pray like this,' just as the Lord commanded in His Gospel:

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors; and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one; for Thine is the power and the glory forever.

(Matt. 6:9-13)

VANITY

St. John Chrysostom

When do you beat the air and run in vain? Every occupation has a purpose, obviously. Tell me then, what is the purpose of all the activity in the world?

Answer, I challenge you! It is vanity of vanity: all is vanity.

SEEKING HUMILITY

St. Gregory of Sinai

Those who seek humility should bear in mind the three following things: that they are the worst of sinners, that they are the most despicable of all creatures since their state is an unnatural one, and that they are even more pitiable than the demons, since they are slaves to the demons. You will also profit if you say this to yourself: how do I know what or how many other people's sins are, or whether they are greater than or equal to my own? In our ignorance you and I, my soul, are worse than all men, we are dust and ashes under their feet. How can I not regard myself as more despicable than all other creatures, for they act in accordance with the nature they have been given, while I, owing to my innumerable sins, am in a state contrary to nature.

ORTHODOXY NOT JUST THEORY

Archbishop Averky

Orthodoxy is not only the sum total of dogmas accepted as true in a purely formal manner. It is not only theory, but practice; it is not only right faith but a life that agrees in everything with this faith. The true Orthodox Christian is not only he who thinks in an Orthodox manner but who feels according to Orthodoxy and lives Orthodoxy, who strives to embody the true Orthodox teaching of Christ in his life.

FORGIVENESS GOSPEL

St. John (Maximovitch) of Shanghai and San Francisco

Let us hasten to forgive each other all hurts and offences. Let us ever hear the words of the Gospel of Forgiveness. Sunday: If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14-15).

WE MUST PRACTICE ASCESIS AND LIVE THE DIVINE ENERGIES

Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain

Theology that is taught like a science usually examines things historically and, consequently, things are understood externally. Since patristic asceticism and inner experience are absent, this kind of theology is full of uncertainty and questions. For with the mind one cannot grasp the Divine Energies if he does not practice asceticism and live the Divine Energies, that the grace of God might be energised within him. Whoever thinks that he can come to know the mysteries of God through external scientific theory, resembles the fool who wants to see Paradise with a telescope.

OUR SECOND BIRTH (BAPTISM) IS A WONDERFUL TREASURE NO ONE CAN TAKE AWAY

St. Cyprian of Carthage

We have received the seal of the Holy Spirit. Our task now is to preserve the integrity of what we have received by living a truly Christian life. We must give time to prayer, and to the study of Scripture. Now speaking to God; now listening to His word to us, and letting His teaching mold us. He has enriched us with a treasure no one can take away.

We have eaten and drunk at His heavenly banquet, and can never again know the pinch of poverty.

TRUE LOVE FROM THE MURDERED TO THE MURDERER

An account by Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand, heroic imprisoned minister, as in Orthodox Heritage, Message of the Month (March 2003)

At my right hand was an Orthodox priest by the name of Iscu. He was Abbot of a monastery. This man, perhaps in his 40's, had been so tortured he was near to death. But his face was serene. He spoke about his hope of heaven, about his love of Christ, about his faith. He radiated joy.

On my left side was the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest almost to death. He had been arrested by his own comrades.

And so it happened that the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest nearly to death had been tortured nearly to death by his comrades. And he was dying near me. His soul was in agony.

During the night he would awaken me saying, 'Pastor, please pray for me. I can't die, I have committed such terrible crimes.'

Then I saw a miracle. I saw the agonising priest calling two other prisoners. And leaning on their shoulders, slowly, slowly he walked past my bed, sat on the bedside of his murderer, and caressed his head - I will never forget this gesture. I watched a murdered man caressing his murderer! That is love - he found a caress for him.

The priest said to the man, 'You are young; you did not know what you were doing. I love you with all my heart.' But he did not just say the words. You can say 'love,' and it's just a word of four letters. But he really loved. 'I love you with all my heart.'

Then he went on, 'If I who am a sinner can love you so much, imagine Christ, Who is Love incarnate, how much He loves you! And all the Christians whom you have tortured, know that they forgive you, they love you, and Christ loves you. He wishes you to be saved much more than you wish to be saved. You wonder if your sins can be forgiven. He wishes to forgive your sins more than you wish your sins to be forgiven. He desires for you to be with Him in Heaven. He is love. You only need to turn to him and repent.'

In this prison cell in which there was no possibility of privacy, I overheard the confession of the murderer to the murdered. Life is more thrilling than a novel - no novelist has ever written such a thing. The murdered - near to death - received the confession of the murderer. The murdered gave absolution to this murderer.

They prayed together, embraced each other, and the priest went back to his bed. Both men died that same night. It was Christmas Eve. But it was not a Christmas Eve in which we simply remembered that 2000 years ago Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It was a Christmas Eve during which Jesus was born in the heart of a Communist murderer.