

BRYN GEFFERT & THEOFANIS G. STAVROU

Eastern Orthodox Christianity

Supplemental Texts



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Eastern Orthodox Christianity

Supplemental Texts

Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou

A Companion to
Eastern Orthodox
Christianity

The Essential Texts

Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou

Yale UNIVERSITY PRESS
New Haven and London

This volume, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: Supplemental Texts*, serves as a companion volume to Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

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Preface

This volume serves as a supplement to Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (Yale University Press, 2016). As noted in the introduction to that work, no study of a topic so vast as Eastern Orthodox history can make any reasonable claim to comprehensiveness, and this supplement brings us no closer to that elusive goal. It does, however, do two things: it explores in greater depth some of the topics addressed in *The Essential Texts*, and it tackles other topics ignored entirely in that work.

One might think of this supplement as the expansive volume, a roomier space for freer-ranging explorations, and a place for material that does not fit easily between the covers of a modest-sized book: film, paintings, posters, photographs, literature, and longer works of prose.

This supplement does not intend to stand on its own, and it does not contain introductions to sections first introduced in *The Essential Texts*. It does, however, contain full introductions to its unique sections.

As in *The Essential Texts*, this volume employs translations by others when possible, although we regularly revised those translations to clarify meaning, to improve awkward prose, to conform to modern style and conventions, and to ensure consistency when consistency seemed desirable. We produced translations of our own (or sought them from others) when no good options were available in English.

Introduction from *The Essential Texts*

Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts*
(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

Before you is a peculiar history of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, a tradition itself considered peculiar—if considered at all—by those who know Christianity only in its Protestant and Roman Catholic variants, or by those who know Christianity not at all.

The phrase “Eastern Orthodox Christian” tells us at least three things about those who identify themselves as such. To wit, that they consider themselves ...

- ... “Christians,” that is, followers of Jesus of Nazareth (born ca. 7–2 BCE; died ca. 30–33 CE), whom they believe to be the “Christ” (a Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*), namely the “anointed one,” the savior of humankind; and not only the son of God, but God himself.
- ... “Orthodox,” which can be translated as “right believing” or “right worshipping”; in other words, they consider themselves to believe the right things and to worship in the right ways. The degree to which other Christians may or may not believe correctly or worship properly has been (and remains) a matter of great dispute in Eastern Christendom, but virtually all Eastern Christians agree that they themselves are uniquely orthodox.
- ... “Eastern,” that is, faithful to a tradition that developed in the “East”: in Egypt, Greece, Constantinople (now Istanbul), Palestine/Israel, Syria, Georgia, and Armenia, and, later, in Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. Today Eastern Orthodox Christians can be found throughout the world; large populations live in Western Europe, the United States, Canada, Central Asia, and Australia, but most of these communities consist of or at least derive from immigrants from “the East.”

Scholars of Eastern Orthodox Christianity frequently note its long tradition of *apophatic* theology, that is, a theology that readily acknowledges how little we know or can know about an ultimately unknowable God. In other words, Eastern Orthodox theologians focus to a degree unique within the Christian tradition on what God is *not*. Given this tradition, we thought it appropriate to begin by noting what this book is not. It is not ...

- ... *religious history*. It does not, in other words, present history through any particular religious, philosophical, or theoretical lens. We strive to portray the beliefs and history of Eastern Orthodox Christians with sympathy and respect, and we strive as well to avoid rendering any judgments—positive or negative—on those beliefs. While acknowledging the practical limits of pure objectivity, we seek objectivity nevertheless.
- ... *a traditional, historical narrative*. This book is a collection of primary sources, woven together with introductions and narratives, which, we hope, together provide a coherent history of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Hence this is a history of religion through the eyes of those who lived it, shaped it, wrestled with it, opposed it, abandoned it, fought it, and drew inspiration from it. It is history as told by those who experienced it.
- ... *comprehensive*. Everybody who knows anything about Eastern Orthodoxy will immediately object to our decision not to include [name your source here]. And virtually every objection will have merit. Thousands of interesting and important sources did not make the cut, for no other reason than—unlike the infinite God the Eastern Orthodox worship—space is finite. A supplement to this volume includes additional sources—and entire subjects—not covered here. But, the supplement too, fails the test of comprehensiveness.

So what is this book? We hope that it is ...

- ... *accessible*. We assume little knowledge on your part about theology or the history of religion. Those with scant background in Christianity or the history of Eastern Orthodoxy should face no serious obstacles here. However, this is not “history lite.” We include serious and sometimes difficult readings, while doing all we can to guide readers through the more challenging passages. Our introductions place sources in their historical contexts, discuss their significance, explain unfamiliar concepts, and tie the sources to larger themes and problems. Footnotes explain terms, ideas, places, and objects with which readers may be unfamiliar.
- ... *liveby*. We selected sources to entice and engage. Three undergraduate editorial assistants reacted frankly to potential sources, fought for some,

persuaded us to withdraw others, and unearthed and inserted some of their own. We shared drafts with other students, and we surveyed professors who teach courses in Eastern Orthodox history, asking them to suggest additions. The resulting 300+ sources, we believe, are intriguing, often absorbing, and sometimes riveting.

- ... *diverse*. We cover a vast range of subjects, time periods, and themes across two volumes.
- ... *multidisciplinary*. This work contains readings in anthropology, art, film, history, law, literature, music, politics, theology, and women's studies.
- ... *multicultural*. Although the Eastern church understands itself as the one true church and its faith as constituting the *oikoumene* (a term used in the Greco-Roman world to denote the entire, inhabited earth), Eastern Christianity developed in particular ways in particular settings. This book grapples repeatedly with tensions between Orthodoxy as an ecumenical, universal confession and Orthodoxy as multiple representations of distinct cultures. We discuss the ways that ethnicity, language, geography, nationalism, emigration, political struggles, missionary excursions, and invasions shaped Orthodox Christianity around the world. We give special attention to Greece, Byzantium, and Russia, that is, to the historic centers of Eastern Orthodoxy. We examine the ways Byzantine culture influenced Russian Christianity; the ways Byzantine Christianity defined itself against Islamic, Arabic, and North African culture; and Russia's increasingly nationalistic understanding of Christianity. But we also range far beyond these major centers of the faith: we consider Orthodoxy in Alaska, Armenia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Mount Athos, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Syria, and Ukraine, asking how these cultures received, modified, or rejected aspects of a faith and regional identities that originated elsewhere.
- ... *multisensory*. Sight and sound play an outsize role in Orthodox worship, a role greater than in any other variant of Christianity. To be sure, much of this work consists of texts: biographies, poems, short stories, sermons, saints' lives, novels, treaties, treatises, primers, laws and regulations, manifestos, polemics, field reports, personal letters, official communiqués, pamphlets, newspaper articles, certificates, hagiographies, statements of faith, travelogues, eyewitness accounts, instructional manuals, liturgical books, scripture, forged documents, grants, and commentaries. But a history of Orthodoxy based on texts alone would provide an incomplete account of its warp and weft. We thus reproduce icons in sections on iconography. We gathered recordings overseen by academic musicolo-

gists, which attempt to reproduce Byzantine chants as they may have sounded at their inception. We include recordings of Tchaikovsky's, Rachmaninov's, and Stravinsky's church music. The section on Orthodoxy in the Soviet Union reprints antireligious propaganda, including posters and photographs of museums and parades. We offer portrayals of Orthodoxy in film—excerpted from twelve movies—ranging from anti-Orthodox propaganda to pro-Orthodox themes. These clips explore many of the themes raised elsewhere in the work, while illustrating the profound influence of Orthodoxy on artists and the larger cultural milieu.

Our work uses translations and explanatory glosses by others when possible, although we regularly revised those translations and glosses to clarify meaning, to improve awkward prose, to conform to modern style and conventions, and to ensure consistency when consistency seemed desirable. We produced translations and glosses of our own when no good options were available in English.

Acknowledgements from *The Essential Texts*

This book owes a great deal to many people, most of all to the brilliant undergraduates who assisted us. Kate Lichti and Margaret Barter Gipson spent a summer with Bryn Geffert at the beginning of this project choosing and editing sources. Their frank assessments of potential texts—their advocacy for striking some and adding others—did a great deal to set the book’s tone. Their energy and goofiness (including their bicycle liberation project) made the summer one of the most rewarding in memory. Rachel Gucker did superb work on the book’s maps, essentially teaching herself cartography on the fly. She also suggested sources and edited many others; her editorial fingerprints can be found throughout.

Daniel Rono assumed the formidable task of gathering permissions to use work under copyright. A dogged pursuer and a shrewd negotiator, Rono immersed himself in the often surreal world of publishing mergers, rival claimants, disappearing rights-holders, and orphaned works. If any lesson can be drawn from his work, it is that U.S. copyright law desperately needs wholesale reform. Katherine Duke, a fantastic editor, improved the text of this supplement in ways both large and small.

Robert Nichols, a friend and mentor to both of us for many, many years, offered regular advice. He first suggested the four-part structure the book eventually assumed.

St. Olaf College and Amherst College provided significant monetary support. Both institutions zealously support faculty research, and, perhaps even more important, encourage and enable partnerships between faculty and undergraduates for said research.

Sarah Miller, Heather Gold, Ash Lago, and Jessie Dolch at Yale were great. Miller encouraged our project when we first approached her and arranged a survey of faculty and scholars in the field to ascertain interest. Gold and Lago helped us surmount many small obstacles. Dolch helped us produce a final text much better than the one we submitted.

Four translators helped with sources that frustrated us: Kevin Kain tackled Old Church Slavonic in “Questions of Kirik,” Andrey Kvasyuk parsed the archaic verbiage spouted by the fast-talking Petr Mamonov in *Tsar*, Jack Kollman translated legalese from the *Stoglav* Council, and Soterios Stavrou translated the Greek Holy Synod’s condemnation of Nikos Kazantzakis.

We conclude by thanking our students at Amherst College and the University of Minnesota, and all the figures in the field of Eastern Orthodox history who offered advice: Rosalie Beck, Peter Bouteneff, Chris Chulos, Flora Curta, Michael S. Flier, Paul Gavrilyuk, Robert H. Greene, Bruce F. Holle, Matt Miller, Bradley Nassif, Theophilus C. Prousis, Roy Robson, Franklin Sciacca, Vera Shevzov, Stephen J. Shoemaker, Edward Siecienski, Jaroslav Skira, Mark Steinberg, Christine D. Worobec, and Viktor Zhivov. We are grateful for their advice on broad themes and small particulars. Of course we, not they, are to blame for all final decisions, inclusions, exclusions, and errors.

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PART I:

Origins and Metamorphoses

1. Church in Scripture

The decades immediately following Jesus's death were years of turmoil in the Jewish community. While the Gospels tell us that Jesus's closest followers believed him to be the long-expected messiah, most Jews did not recognize him as such. Angered by Roman taxes and interference in their affairs, Jews expected a messiah who would mount a military campaign to overthrow their Roman overlords.

Simmering hatred toward the Romans came to a boil in 66 CE, when Jews throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee launched a suicidal uprising. Rome crushed the rebellion and conquered all of Galilee in the year 67. Roman troops took Jerusalem in 70 and destroyed the Jewish temple, an event triggering apocalyptic speculation about the end of time.



Figure 1. Jerusalem

Jewish refugees from Jerusalem fled to the wilderness fortress of Masada—a treeless mound rising above the Red Sea. Here they hunkered down for a long siege by Roman battalions, at the conclusion of which some 960 Jews killed themselves and their families rather than surrender.

The New Testament as we know it thus emerged in a time of crises. Mark was written shortly before the Romans conquered Galilee and shortly after the deaths of Peter and Paul in either 64 or 65. Matthew was probably written after the destruction of the temple in 70. John likely appeared in 85, and Luke between 85 and 95. In fact Luke reports Jesus predicting the destruction of the temple and the Jewish flight to Masada: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then those in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those inside the city must leave it ... for these are days of vengeance, as a fulfillment of all that is written” (Luke 21:20–22, NRSV). Early Christian writings are full of questions about the very survival of Judaism and Christianity, the strange new sect that Judaism had spawned.



Figure 2. Masada

1.1 The Acts of the Apostles (ca. 85–95)

New Revised Standard Version (Washington DC: National Council of Churches, 1989). © 1989 the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Some footnotes derive from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd ed., ed. Michael Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).



Figure 3. Eastern Mediterranean Sea

The book of Acts recounts the origin and growth of the church during its first thirty years: from Luke’s concluding account of Jesus’s ascension into Heaven until the Apostle Paul’s arrival in Rome. It chronicles the expansion of the early Christian community in Jerusalem, the persecutions that followed, the conversion to the faith of its chief persecutor, Saul (who changed his name to Paul), and Paul’s and his compatriots’ missionary journeys throughout the northeastern Mediterranean.

Acts was likely composed sometime around 85–95 CE. Acts does not identify its author, although he is the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke. Tradition holds that “Luke, the be-

loved physician” (Colossians 4:14) wrote Acts, but neither Acts nor Colossians makes such a claim, and most scholars discount any connection between doctor and author. Whoever wrote Acts probably relied on information handed down from others, supplemented by his own investigations. He may have been present at some of the events described in later portions of Acts. From the outset, devout Christians believed this account of the church’s history to be divinely inspired by God.

Acts is not history as we understand history today. It does not cite sources, quote eyewitnesses, or reference transcripts of speeches. It is, rather, history as religious instruction, a demonstration of God’s providential care of his church during its formative years. The church’s growth appears in Acts as inevitable: in Frederick Bruce’s words, Acts is “concentrated on the advance of the Gospel,” which “has been launched into the world by the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit, and nothing can stop it.”¹

Christopher Matthews notes that Acts “was intended to imbue Christians of [the] day with an unshakable confidence in their future through a didactic survey of their past. In carrying out that overarching purpose, it addresses and tries to solve potential and actual social and theological problems brought about by the church’s relationship to its Jewish heritage and its Roman cultural and political environment.”² Is Christianity consistent with Jewish beliefs? What is the place of Jews in the new faith? Acts answers these questions decisively: the Christian church continues the work that God began with the Jews, and Jews are fully welcome in the new faith. Yet “Gentiles,” (non-Jews) are welcome too, and Christians need not follow the rituals of Jewish law to be good Christians.

In Acts, Christians in Jerusalem believe themselves to be faithful Jews until persecution drives them from the city. Christians did not abandon Judaism, Acts suggests: rather Judaism abandoned them.

1. F. F. Bruce, “Acts of the Apostles,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9.

2. Christopher Matthews, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in Coogan, *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 183.

Acts also grapples with Christianity's relationship to the Roman Empire. Its author argues that—although Christianity differs markedly from the official paganism of the Roman Empire—it poses no threat to law and order or to Rome's values.

Acts devotes significant attention to Jesus's "apostles," the men whom Jesus appointed to continue his work on earth. This notion of Christ's successors—a concept eventually termed "apostolic succession"—would inform the church's later efforts to establish a structure for appointing leaders and hierarchs in its ranks.

The Holy Spirit—whose relationship to God and Jesus remains poorly defined in Acts—nevertheless emerges as a major force. It is the Holy Spirit who guides the church and who intervenes at crucial moments. The Spirit's prominent role here helps explain the considerable time theologians would spend during the next two centuries trying to define what, exactly, the Holy Spirit is.

• Chapter 1 •

In the first book, *Theophilus*,³ I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to Heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?"⁴ He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set

3. *Theophilus*—literally "dear to God." Perhaps the name of a patron who sponsored the author's work. The author refers here to the Gospel of Luke.

4. *restore the kingdom to Israel*—the disciples appear to believe that Jesus will restore the great kingdom of Israel to its former glory as it existed under King David.

by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward Heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward Heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into Heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into Heaven.”

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath-day’s journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers. [...]

• Chapter 2 •

When the day of Pentecost⁵ had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from Heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.⁶ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under Heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and

5. *Pentecost*—the Jewish “Feast of Weeks,” which occurs fifty days after Passover and coincides with the spring barley harvest. Jewish tradition holds that God gave his law to the Jews on this day.

6. *a tongue rested on each of them*—in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John the Baptist predicts a baptism “with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”⁷

But Peter,⁸ standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

In the last days it will be, God declares,

that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the Heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

“You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. [...]”

7. *They are filled with new wine*—they are drunk.

8. *Peter*—the disciple whom Jesus called the rock upon which he would build his church.

“Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’ This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”’ Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away,⁹ everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

9. *all who are far away*—an indication that the church intended from the outset to be a universal institution.

• Chapter 3 •

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's Portico,¹⁰ utterly astonished.

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus,¹¹ whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the holy and righteous one and asked to have a murderer given to you,¹² and you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

10. *Solomon's Portico*—a colonnade on the east side of Jerusalem.

11. *The God of [...] has glorified his servant Jesus*—the author is intent on linking Jesus to the Jewish patriarchs, and, by implication, to Judaism itself.

12. *asked to have a murderer given to you*—Luke 23:18–19 says that the Jews asked that Barabas, a murderer, be released from his death sentence rather than Jesus.

“And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance,¹³ as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, who must remain in Heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets. Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people.’ And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days. You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

• Chapter 4 •

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple,¹⁴ and the Sadducees¹⁵ came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand.

The next day their rulers,¹⁶ elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are

13. *you acted in ignorance*—the Jews are not entirely to blame for their actions.

14. *captain of the temple*—the officer in charge of the temple’s police.

15. *Sadducees*—a group of priestly and lay nobility. The book of Luke reports that Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead (23:6–8).

16. *rulers*—possibly the priests.

asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.’ There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.” Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus. When they saw the man who had been cured standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

So they ordered them to leave the council while they discussed the matter with one another. They said, “What will we do with them? For it is obvious to all who live in Jerusalem that a notable sign has been done through them; we cannot deny it. But to keep it from spreading further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” So they called them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.” After threatening them again, they let them go, finding no way to punish them because of the people, for all of them praised God for what had happened. For the man on whom this sign of healing had been performed was more than forty years old. [...]

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. [...]

• Chapter 5 •

But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property; with his wife’s knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. “Ananias,” Peter asked, “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold,

were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God!” Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard of it. The young men came and wrapped up his body, then carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you and your husband sold the land for such and such a price.” And she said, “Yes, that was the price.” Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear seized the whole church and all who heard of these things.

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. None of the rest¹⁷ dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

Then the high priest took action; he and all who were with him (that is, the sect of the Sadducees), being filled with jealousy, arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, “Go, stand in the temple and tell the people the whole message about this life.” When they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and went on with their teaching. When the high priest and those with him arrived, they called together the council and the whole body of the elders of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the temple police went there, they did not find them in the prison; so they returned and reported, “We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” Now when the captain of the temple and the chief

17. *None of the rest*—non-believers.

priests heard these words, they were perplexed about them, wondering what might be going on. Then someone arrived and announced, “Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!”

Then the captain went with the temple police and brought them, but without violence, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, saying, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man’s blood on us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.¹⁸ And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. [...]

• Chapter 8 •

[A] severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. [...] Saul¹⁹ was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison. [...]

• Chapter 9 •

[...] Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the way,²⁰ men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from Heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” He asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what

18. *God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins*—the theology of Acts in a nutshell.

19. *Saul*—a Jewish zealot intent on eradicating Christianity.

20. *the way*—Christianity.

you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias.²¹ The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” He answered, “Here I am, Lord.” The Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.” But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” All who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?” Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. When he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he

21. *Ananias*—apparently a Christian leader in Damascus (in modern Syria). Acts does not tell us how Christians came to be in Damascus.

was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He spoke and argued with the Hellenists;²² but they were attempting to kill him. When the believers learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. [...]

• Chapter 10 •

In Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion²³ of the Italian Cohort, as it was called. He was a devout man who feared God with all his household;²⁴ he gave alms generously to the people and prayed constantly to God. One afternoon at about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." He stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" He answered, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Now send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter; he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside." When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his slaves and a devout soldier from the ranks of those who served him, and after telling them everything, he sent them to Joppa.

About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the heavens opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean."²⁵ The voice said to him again, a second

22. *Hellenists*—Greek-speaking opponents of the Jews.

23. *centurion*—an officer in the Roman army.

24. *He was a devout man who feared God with all his household*—one can be a good Christian and a Roman official.

25. *profane or unclean*—Jewish law prohibits eating many animals, including

time, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.” This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to Heaven. Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon’s house and were standing by the gate. They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Look, three men are searching for you. Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them.” So Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?” They answered, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” So Peter invited them in²⁶ and gave them lodging. The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him. The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. On Peter’s arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshipped him. But Peter made him get up, saying, “Stand up; I am only a mortal.” And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; and he said to them, “You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean.²⁷ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?” Cornelius replied, “Four days ago at this very hour, at three o’clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me. He said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the

pigs, camels, bears, horses, shellfish, and many birds. In Mark 7:14–19 Jesus declares all food to be clean. This statement does not appear in Luke’s Gospel and here Peter appears to be unaware of it.

26. *Peter invited them in*—Peter has no qualms about associating with Gentiles.

27. *God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean*—Peter now understands his vision.

presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.”

Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues²⁸ and extolling God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

• Chapter 11 •

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him,²⁹ saying, “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?” Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from Heaven, being lowered by

28. *speaking in tongues*—speaking in other languages.

29. *the circumcised believers criticized him*—until this point all male Christian believers were circumcised in accord with Jewish law.

its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ But I replied, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ But a second time the voice answered from Heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to Heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.’ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?” When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.” [...]

• Chapter 12 •

About that time King Herod³⁰ laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James,³¹ the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of unleavened bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover.

While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him. The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.”

30. *Herod*—appointed king of Judea in 41 CE by the Roman Emperor Claudius.

31. *James*—one of Jesus’s original apostles.

And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, “Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.” He did so. Then he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel’s help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.” [...]

• Chapter 13 •

[...] When some apostles arrived in Antioch on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it.” So Paul³² stood up and with a gesture began to speak: “You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel³³ chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance for about four hundred fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, ‘I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.’ Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus, as he promised; before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his work, he said, ‘What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.’ “My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God, to us the

32. *Paul*—Saul has now changed his name to "Paul."

33. *The God of this people Israel* ...—the following survey of biblical history is designed to show that Jesus represents the fulfillment of that history.

message of this salvation has been sent. Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.' As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, 'I will give you the holy promises made to David.' [...] Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you: 'Look, you scoffers! Be amazed and perish, for in your days I am doing a work, a work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you.'"

As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people urged them to speak about these things again the next Sabbath. When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy; and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul. Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread throughout the region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Bar-

nabas, and drove them out of their region. So they³⁴ shook the dust off their feet in protest against them,³⁵ and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. [...]

• Chapter 15 •

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, “My brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the

34. *they*—Paul and Barnabas.

35. *shook the dust off their feet in protest against them*—a sign that their responsibility for these recalcitrants has come to an end.

dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago.’ Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every Sabbath in the synagogues.” [...]

• Chapter 17 •

[...] While Paul was waiting for [his colleagues] in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols.³⁶ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Also some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers³⁷ debated with him. Some said, “What does this babbler want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities.” (This was because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus³⁸ and asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? It sounds rather strange to us, so we would like to know what it means.” Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of

36. *idols*—statues of Greek gods.

37. *Epicurean and Stoic philosophers*—Paul is now ministering to Greeks rather than to Jews. Epicureans promoted a form of intellectual hedonism, arguing that the highest good can be found in a state of imperturbable, emotional calm. The Stoics considered passionate emotions to indicate a lack of self-mastery. Those who achieved moral and intellectual perfection would enjoy complete control of their desires.

38. *Areopagus*—the chief Roman court in Athens.

Heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” [...]

Back in Jerusalem Paul is seized by a mob of people, who begin to beat him. A Roman tribune³⁹ intervenes and leads Paul to his barracks. Just outside the barracks Paul delivers the following speech.

• Chapter 22 •

“Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense that I now make before you.” When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet. Then he said:

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. I persecuted this way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.

39. *tribune*—a high-ranking officer who commanded a detachment of one thousand troops.

“While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from Heaven suddenly shone about me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’” [...]

Paul repeats his tale of conversion.

Up to this point they listened to him, but then they shouted, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.” And while they were shouting, throwing off their cloaks, and tossing dust into the air, the tribune directed that he was to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by flogging, to find out the reason for this outcry against him. But when they had tied him up with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who is uncondemned?” When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen.”⁴⁰ The tribune came and asked Paul, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” The tribune answered, “It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship.” Paul said, “But I was born a citizen.” Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him. Since he wanted to find out what Paul was being accused of by the Jews, the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and the entire council to meet. He brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

40. *This man is a Roman citizen*—again, the author of Acts seeks to show that Christianity and Roman life are compatible.

• Chapter 23 •

While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, “Brothers, up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God.” Then the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth. At this Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?” Those standing nearby said, “Do you dare to insult God’s high priest?” And Paul said, “I did not realize, brothers, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a leader of your people.’”

When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead.” When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) Then a great clamor arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees’ group stood up and contended, “We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” When the dissension became violent, the tribune, fearing that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go down, take him by force, and bring him into the barracks. That night the Lord stood near him and said, “Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome.”

In the morning the Jews joined in a conspiracy and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who joined in this conspiracy. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the council must notify the tribune to bring him down to you, on the pretext that you want to make a more thorough examination of his case. And we are ready to do away with him before he arrives.” [...]

The conspiracy is thwarted. After much adventure Paul arrives in Rome, where he lives under house arrest.

• Chapter 28 •

[...] [Paul] called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. When they had examined me, the Romans wanted to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor—even though I had no charge to bring against my nation. For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.” They replied, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you. But we would like to hear from you what you think, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, ‘Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them.’ Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

1.2 First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (ca. 53–57)

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By all accounts the Apostle Paul emerged as the most active and successful of early Christian missionaries.



Figure 4. Major Stops on the Apostle Paul's Journeys

His first surviving letter to the church in Corinth offers a vivid portrait of the challenges facing a fledgling Christian congregation.

So far as we know, Corinth was the first major city to which Paul brought his mission. Judging from this letter, the mission was not altogether successful: in fact the congregation Paul established in Corinth devolved into chaos. Richard Horsely notes that “Paul’s attempts to persuade [members of the congregation] to see and do things his way reveals just how difficult it was for people rooted in the Hellenistic [Greek] culture of a large metropolis such as Corinth to assimilate Paul’s Gospel of Christ and its implications for personal and community life and for their relations with the larger Roman imperial society.”⁴¹ Members of the Corinthian congregation disagreed on issues both practical

41. Richard Horsely, “The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians,” in Metzger and Coogan, *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 267.

and philosophical, hauling one another into court to settle disputes.



Figure 5. Corinth

Paul wrote this letter partly in response to second-hand reports of disorder, and partly in response to questions mailed to him by members of the congregation. While adjudicating disputes—adjudications that would significantly influence the development of the church’s theology, priorities, and practices—he repeatedly reiterated his overarching theme: the evils of factionalism and the need for unity among believers.



Figure 6. Temple of Apollo, Corinth

• Chapter 1 •

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,⁴²

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [...]

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos,"⁴³ or "I belong to Cephas,"⁴⁴ or "I belong to

42. *Sosthenes*—the identity of Sosthenes is unknown.

43. *Apollos*—a Christian from Alexandria known for his eloquent preaching and knowledge of scripture.

Christ.” Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. [...]

• Chapter 3 •

[...] What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building. [...]

• Chapter 5 •

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father’s wife. And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?

For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. [...]

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons—not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge? God will judge those outside. “Drive out the wicked person from among you.”

• Chapter 6 •

When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels—to say nothing of ordinary matters? If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer and another, but a believer goes to court against a believer—and before unbelievers at that?

In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud—and believers at that.

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

• Chapter 7 •

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is well for a man not to touch a woman.” But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another⁴⁵ except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. This I say by way of concession, not of command. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind.

To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you. Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Cir-

45. *Do not deprive one another*—Do not refrain from sexual relations.

circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called.

Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever. For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters. In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God.

Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that, in view of the impending crisis,⁴⁶ it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a virgin marries, she does not sin. Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that. I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. [...]

• Chapter 8 •

[...] [A]s to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in Heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. “Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no

46. *impending crisis*—Paul believes the end of the world is near—see also later passages in this section.

worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling-block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall. [...]

• Chapter 11 •

[...] I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God. [...]

Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. [...]

• Chapter 14 •

[...] When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. If anyone speaks in a tongue,⁴⁷ let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

(As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?)

Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. [...]

47. *speaks in a tongue*—prays in the Spirit; speaks ecstatic prophesy in an unknown language.

• Chapter 15 •

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. [...]

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. [...]

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead [...]

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. [...]

1.3 Letter of Paul to the Romans (ca. 55–57)

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In this letter to Christians in Rome, Paul offers a detailed meditation on the significance of Jesus’s death on the cross. Why did Jesus die? Why did God’s son sacrifice himself? What does Christ’s death mean for Jews and non-Jews (Gentiles) alike?

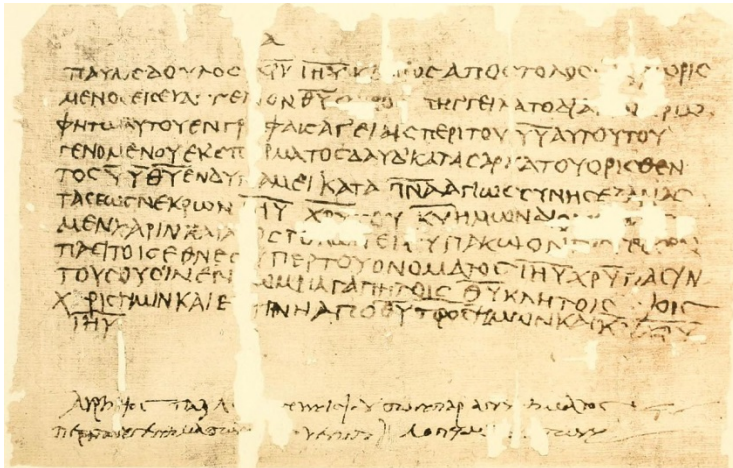


Figure 7. Page from the Letter to the Romans, ca. 316

Paul answers these questions with a reflection on God’s “law,” that is, on the detailed regulations and prohibitions that Jews follow to remain right with God. This law, Paul notes, makes clear what constitutes sin: “through the law comes knowledge of sin.” All failures to heed God’s law constitute sin, and all failures thus estrange us from God and from God’s mercy.

And here lies an enormous problem, since no human ever lives in perfect accord with the law. No human ever lives a fully legal life. Everyone fails. We all sin. Hence everyone, “both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin,” which God will “repay according to one’s deeds.” “There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek.”

So, to return to our opening question: Why did Jesus die on the cross? He died, according to Paul, to save us from the sin we commit, that is, to save us from the consequences of sin defined by and condemned by the law. Because of Christ's death, all who have sinned "are now justified by [God's] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith." In other words, Christ sacrificed himself on our behalf. (Here Paul evokes the animals Jews sacrificed to atone for some types of sin.) But now Christ's blood, rather than the blood of animals, makes us right with God. God justifies (makes worthy of salvation) those who have faith in Jesus: "we have been justified by his blood."

But unlike earlier sacrifices, Christ's sacrifice need not be repeated every time we sin. "Our old self was crucified with [Jesus] so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin." You "must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Because of the grace effected by Christ's death, we are dead to sin, new people, living not under the old law but under a new 'law of grace,' which grants us eternal life."

This assertion—that Christ's death saves us and makes us new creatures—would become *the* defining feature of Christian theology in both the East and the West.

• Chapter 2 •

Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. You say, "We know that God's judgment on those who do such things is in accordance with truth." Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. For he will repay according to each one's deeds: to those who by patiently doing

good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles,⁴⁸ who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all.

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual

48. *Gentiles*—non-Jews, that is, those outside God's covenant with the Jews, a covenant that requires strict observance of all God's laws.

and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God.

• Chapter 3 •

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written,

“So that you may be justified in your words,
 and prevail in your judging.”

But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world? But if through my falsehood God’s truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), “Let us do evil so that good may come”? Their condemnation is deserved!

What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written:

“There is no one who is righteous, not even one;
 there is no one who has understanding,
 there is no one who seeks God.

All have turned aside, together they have become worthless;
 there is no one who shows kindness,
 there is not even one.”

“Their throats are opened graves;
 they use their tongues to deceive.”

“The venom of vipers is under their lips.”

“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

“Their feet are swift to shed blood;
 ruin and misery are in their paths,
 and the way of peace they have not known.”

“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole

world may be held accountable to God. For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

But now, irrespective of law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. [...]

• Chapter 5 •

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved

by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

• Chapter 6 •

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe

that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [...]

• Chapter 9 •

[...] What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling-stone, as it is written,

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall,

and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” [...]

• Chapter 11 •

[...] So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved; as it is written,

“Out of Zion will come the Deliverer;
he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.”

“And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all. [...]

2. Chalcedon and Non-Chalcedonian Churches

Following the turmoil of the mid-300s spawned by Arian emperors, a pagan emperor, and multiple emperors governing different parts of the empire simultaneously, a remarkably ambitious emperor, Theodosius, assumed power in 379. Theodosius reunited the eastern and western portions of the empire, proclaimed Nicene christology¹ to be official Christianity, and in 391 declared Christianity the official religion of the empire.

But religious divisions remained, and Theodosius, following the example of Constantine, summoned a council to sort through stubborn controversies and hash out the particulars of church administration. The council assembled in 383 in Constantinople.

Centralization and standardization were the concepts of the day: laymen, the council ruled, could no longer address congregations whenever the Spirit moved them. The honor of delivering sermons fell only to clergy. The council established prerogatives and boundaries for bishops, and it outlined procedures for admitting heretics (those found guilty of professing doctrine contrary to church teaching) into the church.

1. See document “The Creed of Nicaea (325)” in Part I, section “Incarnational Theology and Arian Controversies” of *Essential Texts*.



Figure 8. Theodosius I, n.d.

A contentious declaration at this council—the infamous “third canon”—insisted that the bishop of Constantinople “shall have the prerogative of honor after the bishop of Rome; because Constantinople is the new Rome.” Such sentiment, to put it mildly, did not sit well with bishops in the West who did not want to share “the prerogative of honor” (even if it was a secondary prerogative); who saw no need for a “new Rome”; and who, incidentally, received no invitations to attend the council. And although the pope of Rome—an honorary title adopted by bishops of Rome—at the time seems to have accepted the council’s creed, he did not accept the canons, and certainly not the third canon, which suggested his city had been supplanted by a new upstart. Still piqued sixty-eight years later, papal legates emphatically rejected the third canon at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (see below).

Debate and recriminations swirled around the third canon for centuries hence. Papal legates to the Fourth Council of Constantinople (869–870) insisted that Constantinople stood a clear second in patriarchal rank to Rome. During the medieval era some Western theologians and popes insisted that the third canon was inauthentic, illegitimate, or both.

The point in recounting such bickering is to illustrate that (a) in the 300s the East’s pretensions were coming to the fore; (b) these pretensions conflicted with the long-standing pretensions

of Rome; and (c) such conflicts between East and West would breed an unending history of controversy.

Diarmaid MacCulloch, one of the great historians of the Christian church, has noted that, in the late 300s and early 400s, theological debate shifted from questions about the relationship between the Father and the Son (the central argument of the Arian-Athanathian debates) to the nature of the Son himself, namely how human and divine natures could unite in the single person of Jesus. If “Christ was of one substance with the Father,” asks MacCulloch, “what did that say about his human substance—as seen in his tears, his anger, his jokes, his breaking of ordinary bread and wine in an upper room? To what degree could one distinguish the human Christ from the divine Christ?”² Two sides formed around this question, one led most forcefully by bishops in the Egyptian port city of Alexandria, and one by bishops from Antioch in Syria.



Figure 9. Alexandria and Antioch

2. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three-Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2009), 223.

Theologians from Alexandria tended not to draw firm distinctions within Christ, while theologians from Antioch—always more inclined to emphasize Christ’s humanity—evidenced greater comfort talking about “two natures” in Christ. The “Alexandrian view of Christ’s humanity and divinity contained in a single Person,” writes MacCulloch, “has been likened (although not by Alexandrians themselves) to a vessel which contains wine and water, perfectly and inextricably mixed,” in contrast to the views of the Antiocheans, in which “the vessel of Christ’s person could be said to contain two natures as it might oil and water, mingling but not mixing.”³

Debates about Christ’s nature grew particularly lively over the following question: If Christ is the same essence as God—i.e., if his “essence” is fully divine—what does this indicate about his relationship with his mother, Mary? Could the same essence as God have developed, uncontaminated, in the womb of a human mother?

The growing veneration of the Virgin Mary in the church led some to refer to her as the *Theotokos*, literally the “God-bearer.” Indeed the Orthodox churches in the East still refer to Mary by this term. Nestorius (ca. 386–ca. 451), a great preacher in Antioch who became bishop of Constantinople (428–431), argued that any understanding of Mary as the *Theotokos* or God-bearer made no sense: a human being could not possibly give birth to a divine being. Nor could a divine being exist as an infant. One of Nestorius’s priests created a firestorm when he preached a sermon declaring, “Let no one call Mary the Mother of God, for Mary was a human being, and that God should be born of a human being is impossible.” Calling Mary the *Theotokos*, according to this argument, compromised Christ’s humanity.

To his critics it seemed that Nestorius denied the divinity of Christ. He emphasized Christ’s humanity to such a degree, his opponents alleged, that he practically divided Christ into two persons. Only a small portion of Nestorius’s writings remain, so it is difficult to know exactly what he believed, but most scholars today suggest it is unfair to assert he wanted to split Christ into two persons. In fact Nestorius repeatedly affirmed the perfect

3. Ibid.

unity of the incarnate Christ and repudiated any suggestion that two persons existed side-by-side in Jesus.

However, Cyril (378–444), the archbishop of Alexandria (who, like most bishops of Alexandria, had no compunctions about sparring with bishops of Constantinople), went after Nestorius with a vengeance. Their verbal melee engaged most of the Christian world and threatened to rip apart the church.

Worried about the unity of his own empire, Emperor Theodosius II summoned bishops to Ephesus to sort through the mess. The council (431) responded by condemning Nestorius, but the condemnation did little to stem the vitriol. A second council in Ephesus (449) again condemned the Antiochean side and forbade any talk of “two natures.”



Figure 10. Ephesus

2.1 Tome of Leo (449)

“The Tome of St. Leo,” in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Scribner’s, 1916), 14:254–258. Public domain.



Figure 11. Francisco de Herrera el Mozo, “St. Leo Magnus,” 1600s

Into this controversy waded the bishop of Rome, Leo I (ca. 400–461). Like many in the East and West, Leo poorly understood Nestorians’ arguments but felt entitled to weigh in nevertheless. He dispatched emissaries to deliver the following letter to Flavian, the bishop of Constantinople, for use at the 449 Council of Ephesus.

Here Leo argues strongly for Christ’s divinity but also for recognizing distinct, dual aspects of Christ’s natures as a necessary means of achieving salvation. Leo criticizes both Nestorius, and Nestorius’s rival, Eutyches, a presbyter who condemned

Nestorius at the 431 Council of Ephesus. Both, to Leo's mind, got it wrong: Nestorius appeared to deny Christ's divinity, but Eutyches appeared to deny Christ's humanity.

Leo to his dear brother Flavian.

Having read your Affection's letter, the late arrival of which is a matter of surprise to us, and having gone through the record of the proceedings of the bishops, we have now, at last, gained a clear view of the scandal that has risen up among you,⁴ against the integrity of the faith; and what at first seemed obscure has now been elucidated and explained.

By this means Eutyches,⁵ who seemed to be deserving of honor under the title of presbyter, is now shown to be exceedingly thoughtless and sadly inexperienced, so that to him also we may apply the prophet's words, "He refused to understand in order to act well: he meditated unrighteousness on his bed." What, indeed, is more unrighteous than to entertain ungodly thoughts, and not to yield to persons wiser and more learned? But into this folly do they fall who, when hindered by some obscurity from apprehending the truth, have recourse, not to the words of the prophets, not to the letters of the apostles, nor to the authority of the Gospels, but to themselves; and become teachers of error, just because they have not been disciples of the truth. For what learning has he received from the sacred pages of the New and the Old Testament, who does not so much as understand the very beginning of the Creed?⁶ And that which, all the world over, is uttered by the voices of all applicants for regeneration, is still not grasped by the mind of this aged man.

If, then, he knew not what he ought to think about the incarnation of the Word of God, and was not willing, for the sake of obtain-

4. *clear view of the scandal* ...—in fact Leo had a very limited understanding of the debates afoot.

5. *Eutyches*—presbyter in Constantinople who made a name for himself by condemning Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus in 431. In 448 Flavian presided over a gathering in Constantinople that found unsatisfactory Eutyches' arguments that Christ's human nature and divine nature together constituted a single nature. Eutyches was defrocked and excommunicated.

6. *Creed*—Nicene Creed. See "The Creed of Nicaea (325)" in Part I, section "Incarnational Theology and Arian Controversies" of *Essential Texts*.

ing the light of intelligence, to make laborious search through the whole extent of the holy scriptures, he should at least have received with heedful attention that general confession common to all, whereby the whole body of the faithful profess that they “believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.” By which three clauses the engines of almost all heretics are shattered. For when God is believed to be both “Almighty” and “Father,” it is proved that the Son is everlasting together with himself, differing in nothing from the Father, because he was born as “God from God,” almighty from almighty, God coeternal from eternal; not later in time, not inferior in power, not unlike him in glory, not divided from him in essence, but the same only begotten and everlasting son of an everlasting parent was “born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.”

This birth in time in no way detracted from and in no way added to that divine and everlasting birth, but expended itself wholly in the work of restoring man, who had been deceived, so that it might both overcome death, and by its power “destroy the devil who had the power of death.” For we could not have overcome the author of sin and of death unless he who could neither be contaminated by sin, nor detained by death, had taken upon himself our nature, and made it his own. For, in fact, he was “conceived of the Holy Spirit” within the womb of a Virgin Mother, who bore him as she had conceived him, without loss of virginity. But if [Eutyches] was not able to obtain a true conception from this pure fountain of Christian faith because by his own blindness he had darkened for himself the brightness of a truth so clear, he should have submitted himself to the evangelist’s teaching; and after reading what Matthew says, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham,” he should also have sought instruction from the apostle’s preaching; and after reading in the Epistle to the Romans, “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called an apostle, separated to the Gospel of God, which he had promised before by the prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was made for him of the seed of David according to the flesh,” he should have bestowed some devout study on the pages of the prophets, and finding that God’s promise said to Abraham, “in your seed shall all nations be blessed,” in order to avoid all doubt as to the proper meaning of this “seed,” he should have attended to the apostle’s words, “To Abraham and to his seed were the promises made.”

He said not, “and to seeds,” as in the case of many, but as in the case of one, “and to your seed,” which is Christ. He should also have apprehended with his inward ear the declaration of Isaiah, “Behold, a Virgin⁷ shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel,” which is, being interpreted, God with us, and should have read with faith the words of the same prophet, “To us a child has been born, to us a son has been given, whose power is on his shoulder; and they shall call his name angel of great counsel, wonderful, counselor, strong God, prince of peace, father of the age to come.” And he should not have spoken idly to the effect that the Word was in such a sense made flesh, that the Christ who was brought forth from the Virgin’s womb had the form of a man, and had not a body really derived from his mother’s body.

Possibly his reason for thinking that our Lord Jesus Christ was not of our nature was this—that the angel who was sent to the blessed and ever-Virgin Mary said, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the highest shall overshadow you, and therefore also that holy thing that shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God” as if, because the Virgin’s conception was caused by a divine act, therefore the flesh of him whom she conceived was not of the nature of her who conceived him.

But we are not to understand that “generation,” peerlessly wonderful, and wonderfully peerless, in such a sense as that the newness of the mode of production did away with the proper character of the kind. For it was the Holy Spirit who gave fecundity to the Virgin, but it was from a body that a real body was derived; and when “Wisdom was building herself a house,” the “Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” that is, in that flesh that he assumed from a human being, and which he animated with the spirit of rational life.

Accordingly, while the distinctness of both natures and substances was preserved, and both met in one person, lowliness was assumed by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity, and, in order to pay the debt of our condition, the inviolable nature was united to the passible,⁸ so that as the appropriate remedy for our ills, one and the same “mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,” might from one element be capable of dying and also from the other be incapable.

7. *Virgin*—the original Hebrew translates literally as “young woman,” but Greek texts often translated the word as “Virgin.”

8. *passible*—capable of feeling or suffering.

Therefore in the entire and perfect nature of very man was born very God, whole, in what was his, whole in what was ours. By “ours” we mean what the creator formed in us at the beginning and what he assumed in order to restore; for of that which the deceiver brought in, and man, thus deceived, admitted, there was not a trace in the Savior, and the fact that he took on himself a share in our infirmities did not make him a partaker in our transgressions. He assumed “the form of a servant” without the defilement of sin, enriching what was human, not impairing what was divine, because that “emptying of himself,” whereby the invisible made himself visible, and the Creator and Lord of all things willed to be one among mortals, was a stooping down in compassion, not a failure of power.

Accordingly, the same who, remaining in the form of God made man, was made man in the form of a servant. For each of the natures retains its proper character without defect;⁹ and as the form of God does not take away the form of a servant, so the form of a servant does not impair the form of God. For since the devil was glorying in the fact that man, deceived by his craft, was bereft of divine gifts and, being stripped of his endowment of immortality, had come under the grievous sentence of death, and that he himself, amid his miseries, had found a sort of consolation in having a transgressor as his companion, and that God, according to the requirements of the principle of justice, had changed his own resolution in regard to man, whom he had created in so high a position of honor, there was need of a dispensation of secret counsel, in order that the unchangeable God, whose will could not be deprived of its own benignity, should fulfill by a more secret mystery his original plan of loving-kindness toward us, and that man, who had been led into fault by the wicked subtlety of the devil, should not perish contrary to God’s purpose.

Accordingly, the Son of God descending from his seat in Heaven, and not departing from the glory of the Father, enters this lower world, born after a new order, by a new mode of birth. After a new order, because he who in his own sphere is invisible, became visible in ours. He who could not be enclosed in space, willed to be enclosed; continuing to be before times, he began to exist in time. The Lord of the universe allowed his infinite majesty to be overshadowed, and took

⁹ *each of the natures retains its proper character without defect*—this phrase, in particular, bothered those at the later Council of Chalcedon (451) who wished to put Nestorian theology behind them.

upon himself the form of a servant; the impassible God did not disdain to be passible man, and the immortal one to be subjected to the laws of death. And born by a new mode of birth, because inviolate virginity, while ignorant of concupiscence,¹⁰ supplied the matter of his flesh. What was assumed from the Lord's mother was nature, not fault; nor does the wondrousness of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as born of a virgin's womb, imply that his nature is unlike ours. For the selfsame who is very God, is also very man; and there is no illusion in this union, while the lowliness of man and the loftiness of Godhead meet together.

For as "God" is not changed by the compassion [exhibited], so "man" is not consumed by the dignity [bestowed]. For each "form" does the acts that belong to it, in communion with the other: the Word, that is, performing what belongs to the Word, and the flesh carrying out what belongs to the flesh; the one of these shines out in miracles, the other succumbs to injuries. And as the Word does not withdraw from equality with the Father in glory, so the flesh does not abandon the nature of our kind. For, as we must often be saying, he is one and the same, truly Son of God and truly Son of man. God, inasmuch as "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Man, inasmuch as "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." God, inasmuch as "all things were made by him, and without him nothing was made." Man, inasmuch as he was "made of a woman, made under the law."

The nativity of the flesh¹¹ is a manifestation of human nature; the Virgin's child-bearing is an indication of divine power. The infancy of the babe is exhibited by the humiliation of swaddling clothes; the greatness of the highest is declared by the voices of angels. He whom Herod impiously designs to slay is like humanity in its beginnings; but he whom the magi rejoice to adore on their knees is Lord of all.

Now when he came to the baptism of John his forerunner, lest the fact that the Godhead was covered with a veil of flesh should be concealed, the voice of the Father spoke in thunder from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Accordingly, he who, as man, is tempted by the devil's subtlety, is the same to whom, as God, angels pay duteous service. To hunger, to thirst, to be weary, and to sleep, is evidently human. But to satisfy five thousand men with five

10. *concupiscence*—strong desire.

11. *nativity of the flesh*—birth of Jesus.

loaves, and give to the Samaritan woman that living water, to draw what can secure him who drinks of it from ever thirsting again, to walk on the surface of the sea with feet that sink not, and by rebuking the storm to bring down the “uplifted waves” is unquestionably divine.

As then—to pass by many points—it does not belong to the same nature to weep with feelings of pity over a dead friend and, after the mass of stone had been removed from the grave where he had lain four days, by a voice of command to raise him up to life again; or to hang on the wood, and to make all the elements tremble after daylight had been turned into night; or to be transfixed with nails, and to open the gates of Paradise to the faith of the robber; so it does not belong to the same nature to say, “I and the Father are one,” and to say, “the Father is greater than I.” For although in the Lord Jesus Christ there is one person of God and man, yet that whereby contumely attaches to both is one thing, and that whereby glory attaches to both is another; for from what belongs to us he has that manhood that is inferior to the Father; while from the Father he has equal Godhead with the Father.

Accordingly, on account of this unity of person that is to be understood as existing in both natures, we read, on the one hand, that “the Son of man came down from Heaven,” inasmuch as the Son of God took flesh from that Virgin of whom he was born; and on the other hand, the Son of God is said to have been crucified and buried, inasmuch as he underwent this not in his actual Godhead; wherein the only-begotten is coeternal and consubstantial with the Father, but in the weakness of human nature. Therefore we all in the very Creed confess that “the only-begotten Son of God was crucified and buried,” according to that saying of the apostle, “for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Majesty.”

But when our Lord and Savior himself was by his questions instructing the faith of the disciples, he said, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” And when they had mentioned various opinions held by others, he said, “But whom do you say that I am?” That is, “I who am Son of man, and whom you see in the form of a servant, and in reality of flesh—whom do you say that I am?”

Whereupon the blessed Peter, as inspired by God, and about to benefit all nations by his confession, said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Not undeservedly, therefore, was he pronounced blessed by the Lord, and derived from the original rock that solidity that belonged both to his virtue and to his name, who through revelation from the Father confessed the selfsame to be both the Son of God and

the Christ, because one of these truths, accepted without the other, would not profit for salvation, and it was equally dangerous to believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be merely God and not man, or merely man and not God.

But after the resurrection of the Lord—which was in truth the resurrection of a real body, for no other person was raised again than he who had been crucified and had died—what else was accomplished during that interval of forty days than to make our faith entire and clear of all darkness? For while he conversed with his disciples and dwelt with them and ate with them and allowed himself to be handled with careful and inquisitive touch by those who were under the influence of doubt, for this end he came to the disciples when the doors were shut, and by his breath gave them the Holy Spirit and opened the secrets of holy scripture after bestowing on them the light of intelligence, and again in his selfsame person showed to them the wound in the side, the prints of the nails, and all the fresh tokens of the passion, saying, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have,” that the properties of the divine and the human nature might be acknowledged to remain in him without causing a division, and that we might in such sort know that the Word is not what the flesh is, as to confess that the one Son of God is both Word and flesh. On which mystery of the faith this Eutyches must be regarded as unhappily having no hold, who does not recognize our nature to exist in the only-begotten Son of God, either by way of the lowliness of mortality, or of the glory of resurrection. Nor has he been overawed by the declaration of the blessed apostle and evangelist John, saying, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which dissolves Jesus is not of God, and this is Antichrist.”

[...] But when Eutyches, on being questioned in your examination of him, answered, “I confess that our Lord was of two natures before the union, but after the union I confess one nature,” I am astonished that so absurd and perverse a profession as this was not rebuked by a censure on the part of any of his judges, and that an utterance extremely foolish and extremely blasphemous was passed over, just as if nothing had been heard that could give offense, seeing that it is as impious to say that the only-begotten Son of God was of two natures before the incarnation as it is shocking to affirm that, since the Word became flesh, there has been in him one nature only. [...]

Leo's Tome created more confusion than clarity. Some readers in the East concluded that Leo, who meant to attack Nestorius, instead argued that two agents acted in Christ. But the Roman Church treated this statement as authoritative, hardly endearing itself to the East. According to Bernard Green, the author of the most extensive study of Leo's Tome, "Instead of settling the Christological disputes that had divided the Christian world for over twenty years, it contributed to bitter divisions which have continued for sixteen centuries." Leo's views "sound alarmingly Nestorian to the ears of many."¹²

12. Bernard Green, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), ix, 209–10, 227.

2.2 Statements from the Council of Chalcedon (451)¹³

Emperor Theodosius II, who, we recall, summoned two councils to settle the Christological debates of his era, died in 450. His sister, Pulcheria, then seized power in a palace coup. Pulcheria summoned a council to Chalcedon, a suburb of Constantinople, where, as MacCulloch puts it, “imperial troops could keep an eye on what was going on.”¹⁴ The Council met in 451 and dismissed any suggestion that Christ could be two different *persons*, one human and one divine. It condemned as well any attempt to divorce his two *natures* or “*essences*.” Christ, said the council, is a single person, simultaneously entirely human and entirely divine.

The statement proved phenomenally successful. In fact the second-to-last paragraph in the excerpt below remains today the standard statement on Christ’s nature for Roman Catholics, most Protestants, Anglicans, and many (but not all, as we shall see shortly) Eastern Christians who consider themselves orthodox.

13. “The Fourth Ecumenical Council: The Council of Chalcedon, 451,” in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1: 175–181. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

14. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three-Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2009), 226.



Figure 12. Chalcedon

The sacred and great and universal synod by God’s grace and by decree of your most religious and Christ-loving emperors Valentinian Augustus¹⁵ and Marcian Augustus¹⁶ assembled in Chalcedon,¹⁷ metropolis of the province of Bithynia,¹⁸ in the shrine of the saintly and triumphant martyr Euphemia,¹⁹ issues the following decrees.

In establishing his disciples in the knowledge of the faith, our Lord and Savior Christ said: “My peace I give you, my peace I leave to you,” so that no one should disagree with his neighbor regarding religious doctrines but that the proclamation of the truth would be uniformly presented. But the evil one²⁰ never stops trying to smother the

15. *Valentinian Augustus*—Valentinian III, emperor of the West (425–455).

16. *Marcian Augustus*—emperor of the East (450–457).

17. *Chalcedon*—a suburb of Constantinople situated just across the Bosphorus.

18. *Bithynia*—region in northwestern Asia Minor (i.e., modern-day Turkey).

19. *Euphemia*—an early Christian martyr who, according to tradition, survived a number of execution attempts before being killed by a bear in the circus.

20. *evil one*—Satan.

seeds of religion with his own tares²¹ and is forever inventing some novelty or other against the truth; so the master, exercising his usual care for the human race, roused this religious and most faithful emperor²² to zealous action, and summoned to himself the leaders of the priesthood from everywhere, so that through the working of the grace of Christ, the master of all of us, every injurious falsehood might be staved off from the sheep of Christ and they might be fattened on fresh growths of the truth.

This is in fact what we have done. We have driven off erroneous doctrines by our collective resolution and we have renewed the unerring creed of the fathers. [...]

[...] [T]here are those who are trying to ruin the proclamation of the truth, and through their private heresies they have spawned novel formulas: some by daring to corrupt the mystery of the Lord's economy on our behalf and refusing to apply the word "God-bearer" to the Virgin; and others by introducing a confusion and mixture, and mindlessly imagining that there is a single nature of the flesh and the divinity, and fantastically supposing that in the confusion the divine nature of the only-begotten is passible.²³

Therefore this sacred and great and universal synod, now in session, in its desire to exclude all their tricks against the truth, and teaching what has been unshakable in the proclamation from the beginning, decrees that the creed of the 318 fathers²⁴ is, above all else, to remain inviolate. And because of those who oppose the Holy Spirit, it ratifies the teaching about the being of the Holy Spirit handed down by the 150 saintly fathers²⁵ who met some time later in the imperial city—the teaching they made known to all, not introducing anything left out by their predecessors, but clarifying their ideas about the Holy Spirit by the use of scriptural testimonies against those who were trying to do away with his sovereignty.

And because of those who are attempting to corrupt the mystery of the economy and are shamelessly and foolishly asserting that he

21. *tares*—weeds.

22. *this religious and most faithful emperor*—Theodosius.

23. *passible*—capable of suffering or feeling; susceptible to sensation or emotion.

24. *creed of the 318 fathers*—the Creed of Nicaea from 325; tradition holds that 318 bishops participated.

25. *150 saintly fathers*—Council of Constantinople in 381.

who was born of the Virgin Mary was a mere man, it has accepted the synodical letters of the blessed Cyril,²⁶ pastor of the church in Alexandria, to Nestorius and to the Orientals, as being well suited to refuting Nestorius's mad folly and to providing an interpretation for those who in their religious zeal might desire understanding of the saving creed. [...]

It is opposed to those who attempt to tear apart the mystery of the economy into a duality of sons; and it expels from the assembly of the priests those who dare to say that the divinity of the only-begotten is passible; and it stands opposed to those who imagine a mixture or confusion between the two natures of Christ; and it expels those who have the mad idea that the servant-form he took from us is of a heavenly or some other kind of being; and it anathematizes those who concoct two natures of the Lord before the union but imagine a single one after the union.

So, following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the Virgin God-bearer [*Theotokos*] as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures that undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about them, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed down to us.

Since we have formulated these things with all possible accuracy and attention, the sacred and universal synod decreed that no one is permitted to produce, or even to write down or compose, any other creed or to think or teach otherwise. As for those who dare either to

26. *Cyril*—(ca. 388–ca. 444), patriarch of Alexandria known for his polemics against Nestorius.

compose another creed or even to promulgate or teach or hand down another creed for those who wish to convert to a recognition of the truth from Hellenism or from Judaism, or from any kind of heresy at all: if they be bishops or clerics, the bishops are to be deposed from the episcopacy and the clerics from the clergy; if they be monks or layfolk, they are to be anathematized.

The Chalcedonian statement emerged, by design, as a compromise document. Although it condemned “Nestorius’s mad folly,” spoke confidently of the *Theotokos*, and insisted on the “union” of “both natures,” it also reached out to Nestorius’s supporters by confirming that Christ’s two natures “undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union.” It tried to offer something to everybody. And it succeeded in appeasing many but not all Christian communities.

Perhaps the Council of Chalcedon’s (451) most lasting achievement was its production of a revised version of the Nicene Creed—the version of the creed that most Christians use today. To the creed’s original language the council added: “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” The modern and very Protestant notion of multiple Christian churches believing multiple things was entirely foreign to this body of bishops. There is *one* faith, *one* God, *one* church, and *one* baptism for sins. Unity and uniformity are paramount. Diverse beliefs are not acceptable.

But belief in the need for uniformity proved easier to achieve than uniformity itself. Debates continued. And the emperor’s order to burn all of Nestorius’s writings and to rebaptize and rename all children named “Nestorius” alienated Nestorius’s followers.

Those who opposed Chalcedon have been saddled with many names. In broad strokes, it is sometimes useful to think of them as (a) “Dyophysites,” or those who believed the Chalcedonian formula did not adequately distinguish between Christ’s two natures; and (b) “Miaphysites,” or those who believed Chalcedon did not adequately emphasize the unity of Christ’s nature. Some critics speak of Miaphysites as “Monophysites,” an unhelpful

term that erroneously suggests those who rejected Chalcedon believed that Christ had only one nature—in other words, that his divinity entirely absorbed or supplanted his humanity: non-Chalcedonians usually chafe at the term “Monophysites.”

Such lingering unhappiness created divisions in the Christian East that persist to this day. Subsequent sections in this book focus exclusively on the vast majority of Orthodox believers and churches that accepted Chalcedon. But before turning our attention to these, we will say a few words about and offer a few sources from the non-Chalcedonians—those convinced that Chalcedon got it wrong and argued that such “errors” were sufficiently heinous to necessitate cutting ties with those who believed Chalcedon got it right.²⁷ The non-Chalcedonian churches include the Coptic Orthodox in Egypt, Ethiopian Orthodox, Eritrean Orthodox, some Syrian Orthodox, and Armenian churches.

Alexandria emerged as the primary base for Miaphysite opposition to Chalcedon, and from here missionaries helped spread anti-Chalcedonian doctrine well beyond Egypt. In the early 300s the Miaphysite patriarch of Alexandria received a request from the king of Ethiopia (recently converted to Christianity by a shipwrecked Miaphysite from Syria) to send him a bishop. The patriarch of Alexandria happily dispatched a Miaphysite, and the Ethiopian church has remained Miaphysite ever since, rejecting the Council of Chalcedon and relying on Alexandria to appoint anti-Chalcedonian bishops until Ethiopia appointed its own anti-Chalcedonian patriarch in 1959.

Political calculations as much as theological convictions account for the mistrust that developed between Alexandria and Constantinople. Alexandrians resented Constantinople throwing its weight around in Egypt in both political and religious matters. And Constantinople—the seat of the Byzantine Empire—resented any hint of independence on religious or political matters by those it considered upstarts in Alexandria.

In 452 the Byzantine Empress Pulcheria (who, we recall, summoned the Council of Chalcedon) forcibly installed Proterius, a reliable Chalcedonian, as bishop of Alexandria. Living in a hostile, anti-Chalcedonian enclave, Proterius utterly depended

27. The following discussion draws liberally from “Defying Chalcedon: Asia and Africa (651–622),” in MacCulloch, *Christianity*, 231–254.

on the empress's support. But Pulcheria died in 453, and when her husband died four years later, a mob of angry Miaphysites chased Proterius into a church, slaughtered him and six of his clergy, and then dragged their corpses around the city. "The emperor's authority in Egypt never fully recovered from this appalling incident: increasingly a majority in the Egyptian church as well as other strongholds of miaphysitism denounced Chalcedonian Christians [...] and sneered at them as 'the emperor's people'" or "melkites."²⁸



Figure 13. Pulcheria, n.d.

28. *Ibid.*, 233.

2.3 Copts and Other Dissenters

Language exacerbated the political and theological divisions between the Alexandrians, who spoke Coptic—the local vernacular with its own alphabet—and the Constantinopolitans, who spoke Greek. In theological debates that centered almost entirely on terminology, agreement proved all the more difficult when the warring sides each used different words from different languages.

Over time, different languages produced different literatures, and although Alexandrians relied to a great extent on texts they translated from the Greek, they also developed a body of literature that Constantinopolitans and others in the empire could not read.



Figure 14. Coptic alphabet

During the few centuries following Chalcedon, Constantinople retained hope of enticing Miaphysites back into “the” church.

But overtures to Miaphysites risked alienating those in the Western portion of the empire, whose allegiance lay not with the bishops of Constantinople, but with the bishops of Rome, and who treated the definitions outlined in Leo's Tome as something close to gospel. Hence Constantinople's attempts to find accord with Miaphysites in Alexandria only created tensions with Rome.²⁹

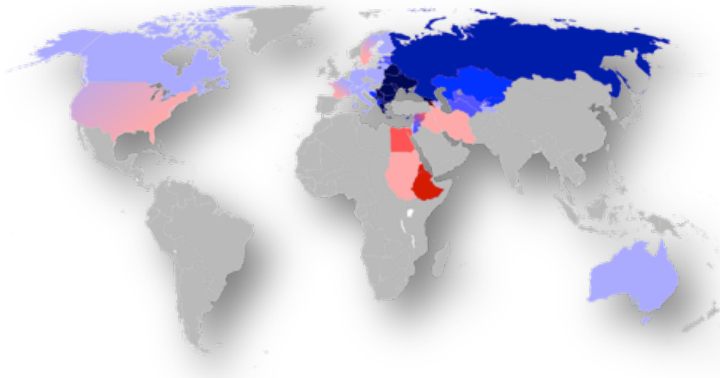
To further complicate matters, Byzantine emperors took inconsistent positions on how to deal with Miaphysites. Emperor Justin I (518–527), for example, ordered that all bishops unwilling to accept Chalcedon be replaced. Justin II (565–574), on the other hand, decided in 567 that the Miaphysite problem was intractable and he thus recognized two patriarchs in Alexandria: one loyal to Chalcedon, and one not. (Most of the Christian populace in Egypt sided with the anti-Chalcedonian patriarch.) Subsequent emperors persecuted Miaphysites to greater and lesser degrees.

Egypt

The conquest of Egypt by Arab tribes (639–642) led by General Amru, largely ended meaningful dialogue with Constantinople. Amru recognized the non-Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria as the only legitimate patriarch. Treatment of the Alexandrian (Coptic) church by subsequent Arab rulers ranged from grudging tolerance to outright persecution. Several revolts by Copts against the Arabs in the 700s and early 800s failed. The Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517 offered some relief, and in the early 1800s the Turks recognized Copts as full Egyptian citizens.

Today Christians constitute around 10 percent of the Egyptian populace. Roughly 95 percent of these Christians—Coptic Christians—still reject Chalcedon.

29. *Ibid.*, 234.



Darker colors = larger percent
 Non-Chalcedonian populations in red

Figure 15. Eastern Christians by percent of populace

The Coptic liturgy distinguishes itself from the liturgy of other Eastern churches most notably by its use of musical instruments—cymbals, flutes, and triangles; music in almost all other Eastern churches limits itself to the human voice.

Syria

In Syria, along the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea, Christians also split over whether to accept or reject Chalcedon. The sad fate of Peter Fuller, a Miaphysite monk, perhaps best illustrates the ferocious jockeying between the two regional camps: between 463 and 464, Peter was enthroned four times as patriarch of Antioch, and dethroned another three.



Figure 16. Syria

Sometime around 510 Miaphysite doctrine gained support from the Ghassānids, a tribe of Arab Christians ruling the region since the early 200s. This support made miaphysitism, for all practical purposes, the official Christian doctrine of the realm. (Some scholars attribute the Ghassānids' embrace of miaphysitism to the bishop Severus, whom we will encounter below.)

The Ghassānids resided on the southeastern flank of the Byzantine Empire. Although they were too weak to resist Constantinople's armies, they never fell fully under Constantinople's control. They proved useful to Constantinople insofar as they served as a buffer between the empire and hostile forces elsewhere, but, like most buffer states, they were never entirely reliable. In fact they could, given their rejection of Chalcedon, be a real pain.

The most accomplished of all Byzantine emperors, Justinian (527–565) made various attempts to appease Miaphysites in Syria without alienating the Chalcedonian watchdogs back home. Making these efforts almost preposterously difficult, however, was Justinian's marriage to Theodora, a brilliant and zealous *Miaphysite*. Anything but the meek and submissive wife idealized

by her contemporaries, Theodora promoted Miaphysite doctrine and clergy whenever she could, never mind her husband's delicate attempts to secure Chalcedonian doctrine within his realm.

In 542 the Ghassānid ruler, al-Harit, asked the Byzantine Empress Theodora to send him two bishops. Theodora, of course, dispatched two Miaphysite bishops. As Miaphysite clergy spread throughout his kingdom, al-Harit positioned himself as a defender of Miaphysite doctrine; in fact during a trip to Constantinople in 563, he pleaded the Miaphysite case before Justinian himself.

As in Egypt, anger over Byzantine rule and suspicion about Constantinople's designs on its territory fueled Syrian opposition to Chalcedon. Constantinople's meddling in Syria explains in large part why small, semantic differences rose to the level of formal schism. In fact the language of Chalcedon and statements adopted by Syrian Miaphysites were not all that dissimilar. Syrian Miaphysites insisted that Christ contained "a single nature without admixture and without confusion" and that "Christ is perfect God and perfect man."³⁰

In 636 the Arabs conquered Syria, largely isolating Syrian Christians from Constantinople. Proving somewhat indulgent toward Syrian Miaphysites, the Arabs permitted them their own Miaphysite metropolitans, and, at times, patriarchs. In the centuries that followed, Arabic treatment of Syrian Christians fluctuated between tolerance and maltreatment.

Today Christianity in Syria remains split. The Miaphysite "Oriental Orthodox" still reject Chalcedon and support their own patriarch. Churches in the regions that accept Chalcedon report to other, competing patriarchates. Centuries of attempts to achieve concord have failed.

30. Fritz Graf, "Syrian Orthodox Church," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Thomson, Gale, 2003), 13:705.

2.4 Severus (ca. 465–538) on Chalcedon and Ordination

Severus, “To Constantine the Bishop,” in *The Sixth Book of the Select Letters of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch in the Syriac Version of Athanasius of Nisibis*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903), 2:5–10. Public domain.

Bishop Severus (ca. 465–538), sometimes credited with converting the Ghassānids to Miaphysite doctrine, wrote the two letters below.

The Byzantine Emperor Anastasius appointed Severus as patriarch of Antioch in 511. Emboldened by the emperor’s support and his own beliefs, Severus immediately pronounced an anathema on the Chalcedonian formula.

But when Anastasius died, the new, pro-Chalcedonian emperor, Justin I (518–527), excommunicated more than fifty bishops and metropolitans who rejected Chalcedon. Among them was Severus, who fled the city to avoid arrest, and whom most of the excommunicated bishops continued to recognize as the true patriarch of Antioch.

As noted above, when Justinian became Byzantine emperor in 527 he worked hard but unsuccessfully to unify anti- and pro-Chalcedonians, while formally defending Chalcedon in the face of efforts by his wife, Theodora, to undermine it.

In Theodora, Severus found a powerful patron. With her support he endorsed the consecration of Miaphysites in Syria to serve as shadow, rival bishops to those bishops appointed by Justinian. Thanks to Severus and his compatriots, a number of sees in the empire found themselves with warring bishops, one appointed by the emperor, and one with the implicit support of the empress. These Miaphysites, again with Severus’s and Theodora’s blessing, launched missionary journeys to the south and southeast, spreading Miaphysite doctrine as far south as Darfur in western Sudan.



Figure 17. Mosaic of Empress Theodora in Ravenna, pre-547

Hoping to resolve this disorder, Justinian summoned Severus to court in 535. The meeting accomplished nothing. The next year, 536, a church council in Constantinople anathematized Severus, a decision Justinian ratified. Anyone found in possession of Severus's writings was ordered to lose his or her right hand.

Severus settled in Egypt, where he died sometime around 538.

Though short, the letters below provide a sense of Severus's passion and refusal to compromise. In the first, he explains his opposition to Chalcedon. By trying to avoid the heresy of Nestorius, Severus contends, Chalcedon in fact fell prey to Nestorianism. He then attempts to justify his practice of establishing rival bishops in sees that already had bishops. While acknowledging that canon law forbids such practice, Severus suggests that the

extraordinary “heresy” of the official bishops justifies these shadow appointments.

[...] If the Synod of Chalcedon introduced the doctrine of Nestorius into the churches, though it called Nestorius “of small intelligence” in order to entice and deceive those who are more simple, how can we say that it rejected the opinion of Nestorius? [...] Owing to the fact that they wished to heal the disorder in an unintelligent way by means of an opposite infection—I mean by the evil impiety of Nestorius—from then on those who were infected with the belief in a fantasy, seeing that they were inviting them to man-worship, recoiled from this vicious remedy, and thought themselves all the more pious, and carried their own corruption further. But, if they had been cured and healed by means of right doctrines, they would perhaps have abandoned their infection. [If] we accept those [who] met together [at] Chalcedon as being adversaries [of] the heresy of Eutyches,³¹ and praise them on the ground that they spoke well up to a certain point, and do not rather blame them, then it is time for us to accept also the Arian heresy, which contends against the evil opinion of Sabellius,³² and agrees up to a certain point with the right doctrines of the church [...]

The canon that forbids a bishop to perform an ordination in provinces or parishes that do not belong to him comes into play in cases where he forces himself upon other men’s countries in a disorderly fashion and without an invitation from anyone, not when he is persuaded to ordain by the bishop of the country or city and by the orthodox clergymen, especially in time of persecution. We may find such instances also if we study church histories. In the times of the Arians, when the servants of piety were persecuted and suffered every kind of evil, Eusebius the bishop of Samosata³³ (this is one of the cities of Mesopotamia) went about the cities and deserts and villages,

31. *Eutyches* (ca. 380–ca. 456)—a fierce opponent of Nestorianism. Eutyches insisted that Christ’s humanity could not be limited.

32. *Sabellius*—a theologian (late 100s to early 200s), who claimed that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were not separate entities. Instead, they were simply manifestations of the same God, much like water, steam, and ice are all manifestations of H₂O.

33. *Eusebius the bishop of Samosata* (died ca. 379)—another opponent of Arianism, martyred by the Roman Emperor Diocletian.

and traveled to countries outside the boundaries, wearing a soldier's dress and having his head covered by a hood, and applied his sacred hand and confirmed priests for places that were in need; who also put on a crown of martyrdom, having his head crushed by a stone by the heterodox,³⁴ and migrated in saintly fashion to Jesus who longed for him, and was admitted to the heavenly mansions.

These things are clearly stated by Theodoret in his church history. The great light of the Cappadocians also, or rather of the whole world, Basil the bishop, the pillar of the church, the "sure foundation" (for these words of the apostle fit him more than any man, as fine raiment a bride), was raised to the throne of the bishopric, receiving ordination to the episcopacy, by bishops outside the boundaries. This Gregory the Theologian says in the funeral discourse on Basil himself, writing thus: "He is raised to the high throne of the bishopric, not without toil nor without envy and contention on the part of the prelates of the country, and of the worst men of the city who ranged themselves with these; however, the Holy Spirit was bound to conquer: yes, and it does conquer, gaining an easy victory. For from outside the boundaries it stirs up men to anoint, men distinguished and zealous in the matter of piety."

But, if Basil, the teacher of orthodoxy and rule and law of all church discipline, was anointed and received ordination (for this is the anointing of a high priest) from those outside the boundaries, because the people of the country or province were jealous of him, on account of the Arian heresy or for other human reasons, which is a very small thing, how can we say that the ordinations that were performed among us by a man outside the boundaries, when the transgression of Chalcedon and the Nestorian heresy bare rule and prevailed, are not to be approved? [...]

But what shall we for our part say of the ordinations that are now performed in the churches? What canon respecting these is not trampled upon? Are not high-priesthoods now everywhere for sale, as we see in the case of civil governorship of cities (the other things I pass over, lest by falling into evil speaking or backbiting and saying things suited to other men I be thought to be choosing for myself matters that do not concern me)?" [...]

34. *heterodox*—non-orthodox.

2.5 Severus (ca. 465–538) on Chalcedonians

Severus, “Of the Same to the Believers in Antioch,” in Brooks, *Sixth Book*, 2:268–270. Public domain.

In the second letter Severus quotes the Cappadocian fathers—Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus (here “Gregory the Theologian”)—in his insistence that Miaphysites sever relations with those who support Chalcedon.



Figure 18. Antioch

To the holy church of God in Antioch, the devout clergymen and those that are among the people, Severus greeting in the Lord. [...]

[The Apostle Paul] wrote in an epistle, “To you it was given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake,” calling it a gift given from God that they should suffer in the cause of piety. It is therefore fit and becoming your intelligence and the earnestness of your character that you are searching and inquiring both about the exact nature of the right faith, and about the way to observe this with care-

fulness. For a man to be polluted by the communion of heretics ruins all the labors and toils even of the solitary life, and leads to Hell and final destruction [...] [St. Basil wrote], “But even if a man comes from Heaven itself, but is not in accord with the sound word of faith, I cannot reckon him as a communicator in the sacraments.” [...] “Let no one therefore cause you to depart from that which is right. For in a very little while he who comes will come and will not tarry”; and “he will render to every man according to his deeds.” For it is in very truth “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

2.6 John Rufus (476–518), Life of Peter the Iberian

John Rufus, *The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem, and the Monk Romanus*, ed. and trans. Cornelia Horn and Robert Phenix (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 121–135, 141–145, 259–263. Used by permission of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Opposition to Chalcedon also materialized in the Caucasus, the region between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea along the southern border of modern Russia.



Figure 19. Caucasus: Black Sea on left and Caspian Sea on right

Both Armenia and a portion of Georgia converted to Christianity in the early 300s. In fact in 314 Armenia became the first kingdom ever to adopt Christianity as its official religion. But torn apart by wars between Rome and Persia (the two empires formally divided Armenia between them in 387), and pressured by Persian rulers to renounce Christianity in favor of Zoroastrianism, Armenia failed to send representatives to Chalcedon in

451. When the decrees from Chalcedon reached Armenia and were translated into Armenian, local church authorities deemed them heretical. In 507 the Armenian Synod of Dvin condemned the council, and in 607 it declared that “one is the nature of the Word of God incarnate,” a formula it proclaims to this day, and a formula at odds with the “two natures” of Chalcedon.³⁵



Figure 20. Dvin

Both Western Georgia and Eastern Georgia—the latter called “Iberia” by the Romans (not to be confused with the Iberian Peninsula of Spain and Portugal)—adopted Christianity in the 300s. Georgian chronicles report that the queen of Iberia converted in 333; the king converted the following year, supposedly at the prompting of a woman his troops captured as a prisoner of war. Princes throughout the kingdom received baptism in 337, and Iberia rejected the Zoroastrianism of its neighbors in Persia.

35. Tiran Nersoyan, “Armenian Church,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan, 2005).



Figure 21. Georgia

The Western part of Georgia retained close ties with Rome. But relations between Rome and Iberia proved much more fraught: Iberia fended off Roman invasions in 30, only to become a tributary of the Persian state in the mid-200s. It then became a vassal state of Rome from 298 to 363, the period when Iberia adopted Christianity. But Rome then ceded Iberia back to Persia in 363. Suffice it to say that such treatment generated no affection within Iberia toward Rome or Persia.

Unlike the church in Western Georgia, which reported to the patriarch of Constantinople, the church in Iberia reported to the patriarch of Antioch in Syria, which, as we've seen above, remained a hotbed of miaphysitism. But despite these ties, communication with Antioch left much to be desired, constantly disrupted as it was by ongoing wars between Persia and Rome. These wars, coupled with Persian persecution of the Iberian church, kept Iberia relatively isolated from the three centers of Christian power in the region: Rome, Constantinople, and Antioch. In 466 the patriarch of Antioch and the Byzantine emperor agreed both that the Iberian church would become autocephalous,

and that its bishop would be a “catholicos,” roughly equivalent to a “patriarch.”

The point of this summary is simply this: given the Iberian church’s isolation, its desire to assert its independence, its mistrust of Roman and Byzantine designs on its territory, and its ties to the anti-Chalcedonian Antiocheans, the church’s decision to reject the Christological definitions of Chalcedon seems almost inevitable.

The text below tells a strange story that nicely illustrates the interplay of religion and politics in Georgia, Constantinople, and Syria.

Some background. Although the K’art’li monarchy of Iberia distrusted Constantinople, it worked to maintain at least cordial relations with the powerful Byzantine Empire on its northern border. Chronicles tell us that, in 423, the Iberian king sent his son Murvan to the imperial court in Constantinople as a political hostage. Murvan reportedly received an excellent education there, supervised by the emperor’s wife, who, like her predecessor Theodora, supported Miaphysites.

It seems that the devout young Murvan adopted his patroness’s Miaphysite views. When his term as hostage ended, Murvan took monastic vows, adopted the name Peter, and settled in Palestine. He made frequent trips around the Middle East, including a stop in Jerusalem to establish the city’s first Georgian monastery.

But Peter’s new neighbors did not behave as he wished. In 451 the bishop of Jerusalem, Juvenal, attended the Council of Chalcedon and threw his lot in with the signatories. When word reached Peter, he erupted. He spent the remainder of his life, until his death in 491, proselytizing against Chalcedon: his fervor led Severus, the Miaphysite patriarch of Antioch, to refer to Peter fondly as “the God-clad man.”

We know only two things about John Rufus, the putative author of Peter’s biography below: Rufus claims to have been ordained in Antioch, and he claims to have known Peter. This text is as much a religious and political tract as it is a biography—it constitutes a rousing defense of Miaphysite theology and a pugnacious condemnation of those who embraced Chalcedon.

When the rejection [of the true faith] by the signature[s] of all those rebellious bishops,³⁶ the ratification of the wicked *Tome of Leo*³⁷ and the renewal of the wicked teachings of Nestorius³⁸ were proclaimed everywhere, [it happened] that Dioscorus³⁹ [...] was cast into exile as long as he was unwilling to consent to the ungodliness.

[Peter] stayed in his holy church for a time of about six months, while everyone was feasting and leaping for joy and calling the inhabitants of the city of Maiuma⁴⁰ blessed because of the good pleasure of God and the protecting care of such a high priest. They were holding him up like an angel and were hanging on his compassion and on his love. [But] the devil, [who] fights against God and is envious, that first rebel and adviser and patron of rebels, because he could not endure to see such great praise of God and the salvation of humans because he was afraid that perhaps there would be a reversal [of the deed] that [his] diligence had contrived in writing at Chalcedon against the fear of God, entered the emperor⁴¹ who at that time was ruling and [who] readily listened to his commands. He made him [issue] an imperial decree to the holy and true high priests, [those] zealous for the fear of God who had been appointed by Theodosius,⁴² the great and apostolic high priest, [that] they should be removed from their thrones in all the cities

36. *rebellious bishops*—bishops who ratified the statements at the Council of Chalcedon.

37. *Tome of Leo*—letters that Pope Leo the Great (440–461) sent to the bishop of Constantinople, detailing his opposition to the teachings of Eutyches, namely, that Christ possessed only one divine nature. Leo’s letters served as the basis for decisions at Chalcedon.

38. *Nestorius*—some who opposed Chalcedon argued that its understanding of Christ as “one person in two natures” vindicated Nestorius, who sought to emphasize Christ’s humanity.

39. *Dioscorus*—the bishop of Alexandria from 444 to 451, deposed by the Council of Chalcedon and a hero to the anti-Chalcedonians

40. *Maiuma*—Mediterranean port city on the southwest coast of what is now the Gaza Strip.

41. *emperor*—Emperor Marcian, Eastern Roman emperor from 450 to 457. In 451 Marcian summoned the ecumenical council that was to become the Council of Chalcedon.

42. *Theodosius*—bishop of Jerusalem, who replaced all bishops in Jerusalem, Scythopolis, and Ashkelon who supported Chalcedon with anti-Chalcedonian bishops.

of Palestine and if they were unwilling they would be expelled by force and be subject to punishment, whereas Theodosius, the head of the shepherds, where[ver] he be found, should suffer capital punishment, since the emperor issued what is called a *firma*⁴³ against him. At that time all [the bishops of the anti-Chalcedonians in Palestine] relented and left [their sees], this being what the Patriarch Theodosius advised in that he judged it more pleasing to God that the preachers of the truth should be preserved and not [that] when they would die and be slain the orthodox faithful would be deprived of those who had edified them and sustained them.

At that time, when the blessed Peter departed for Egypt, and by the will of God came to the city of Alexandria and was hiding there in the days of Proterius,⁴⁴ that rebel, he became a support and consolation for all the orthodox. And while no one from those who were holding on to the truth and lay in hiding dared to show himself, neither cleric nor monk, [Peter] was both celebrating the divine services [in hiding] and was giving to all those who desired the food of life.⁴⁵ He did not allow them to become faint-hearted or to diminish in zeal and faith.

He was also esteemed worthy to see this dreadful vision. When a show for all the people was being performed in the city's so-called "theater," the believing people, fervent in zeal, suddenly began to shout, since they were moved by a divine power, Dioscorus to the city! The orthodox one to the city! The confessor to his throne! May the bones of Proterius be burned! Drive Judas into exile! Cast Judas out!" Other voices joined in, shouting "For Dioscorus, the helper of the fear of God!" demanding his return from his unjust exile and [that he] should take up his throne and that the wolf,⁴⁶ ravenous and contending against God, the new Caiaphas,⁴⁷ should be cast out and utterly driven away from the holy churches. The magistrates, anxious to be pleasing in every way to him who at that time was ruling,⁴⁸ and calculating in the interest of

43. *firma*—an official document with an official seal.

44. *Proterius*—Proterius replaced Dioscorus as bishop of Alexandria in 451. Rufus disliked Proterius as much as he disliked his predecessor.

45. *food of life*—the Eucharist.

46. *wolf*—Proterius.

47. *Caiaphas*—the Jewish high priest who sought false evidence to convict Jesus. See Matthew 26:57–67.

48. *him who at that time was ruling*—Marcian.

their own advantage, commanded the greater part of the armed soldiers to come and surround the theater. Threatening to slay and kill, they alarmed all the people, so that as they were fleeing to the exit[s] they pushed one another down in the narrow entrances of the theater, [and] many died.

During all this, the blessed Peter, being in hiding, as I have said, was celebrating the holy mysteries.⁴⁹ Being in [a state of] amazement, he saw many souls being led by angels and taken up to Heaven. When people from the city came and made known [to Peter] what had happened, those who had died in violence in this destruction and distress were found to be as many in number as the souls whom the blessed one had counted in that vision. In the likeness of that thief to whom the blessing was granted,⁵⁰ in that moment they also wove the same crown in one hour by [their] confession of the faith. For such a reward is kept for those who struggle and truly fight the fight for the orthodox faith, even if they show zeal [only] at the end of their life.

When the blessed Peter was no [longer] able to hide himself from the wicked Proterius, [who] hurried to inflict a mortal blow and had sent out some assassins at night to seize [Peter] and kill him, he was able to flee, since our Lord, his deliverer and his protector, revealed to him the secret plot. Those who were sent approached the door [of the place] where he was hidden inside the city and knocked, pretending to be from the orthodox [faithful] and [claiming] to know [him]. They [were trying to] trick [Peter, saying], “This little boy is [in] danger; he should be baptized before he dies.” [However,] a holy voice said to [Peter], “Do not open [the door]. They are malevolent.” Then [Peter] said to the brethren who were with him, “No one shall open the door, but do what you see me do!” They had hastily bent the knee and got up [when] he and the brethren with him cried out with a loud voice, “Our Father [who is] in Heaven! Behold, thieves! Help!” The neighbors and those who were near heard [them] and [came] running, [and] the ma-

49. *holy mysteries*—the Eucharist.

50. *thief to whom the blessing was granted*—see Luke’s account of the crucifixion. “One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’” (Luke 23:39–43, NRSV)

levolent ones fled. Thus they were delivered from the snares of the hunters, as it is written, [and] left that place and departed to the upper regions of the Thebaid. [...]

It happened while [Peter] was [in the city of Oxyrhynchos in the Thebaid] that the wicked and God-fighting Proterius crafted and composed in writing an anathema for the deception of the simple. He deceitfully, and covertly recounted in it the evil of the Council of Chalcedon with the slyness of great evil and with hypocrisy, mixing poison with honey. However, when this was read in front of the whole people and it could not shake anyone of those [who were] firmly established, he sent a copy of this to those bishops under him, who acceded to submit to his rebellion, while he ordered that it should be read before all the people of every city.

Now when the bishop of Oxyrhynchos received this and read it in front of all the people with the help of the devil, he was anxious to lead astray and to shake [the faith of] many of the orthodox. When [the words] threatened to scandalize many, since they were simple and not trained in such slyness and hypocrisy, the blessed Peter was persuaded by the magistrates of the city, by the zealous one who had received him, and by the holy monks to read it, confute the guile and the plot, and preach the truth openly in front of all the people. Although he greatly demurred, claiming he was not trained in such confrontations and in [speaking with] freedom [of speech] in front of the people, nevertheless, when he was compelled, he gave himself to the testimony. When they lifted him up, they made him stand in a public place, which was high up on the base of a column, upon which stood the statue of the emperor. Bearing in his hands this snare of paper, he was considering and debating [with himself] how he would rebuke the ambush hidden in it. Suddenly he saw the blessed Theodosius, bishop of Jerusalem, that new James,⁵¹ the one who had ordained him, the one who already had been perfected in confessorship and martyrdom in the royal city in the time of the God-hating emperor Marcian. (The manner of his death we will tell at the end, when God permits.) [Peter] saw this [man] standing on his right [hand, who] with his finger was pointing out and showing and rebuking the ungodliness that was hidden in every word. What he heard from him, he recited to the people, while our Lord was near helping [him] and bestowing at the same time free-

51. *James*—the brother of Jesus, who, according to tradition, served as the first bishop of Jerusalem.

dom [of speech] and grace. Having thus persuaded the people and confirmed them all, and being seen and lauded by all of them like an angel, he snatched them from the net of error, putting to shame the rebellious dragon and his servants and his attendants. [...]

Yet this hard and bloodthirsty wolf Proterius was exulting and raving with great joy and cheerfulness as one who now had firm and undisturbed governship. Henceforth he exhibited evil and harsh treatment to those laypeople and monks who were not willing to be in communion with him. He bought the magistrates and through them brought all kinds of insults and intolerable sorrows upon the orthodox, bringing into the city multitudes of wild barbarian soldiers.⁵² He inflicted without pity unrepeatable evils, both full of a myriad of lamentations and against the laws of nature, until he extended his madness even to the holy virgins. Yet the just, powerful, and long-suffering judge⁵³ was no longer willing to continue suffering such evils. He, the Lord, who strikes and heals and chastises and cures, was aroused like one from sleep, who flashed his spear and with it killed the winding dragon—I am speaking of Marcian, the new Assyrian. An angel struck him on his neck [with] an incurable blow as with a sword, as those who saw [it] with their eyes and were assured [of it] bore witness. [...]

[Meanwhile,] that wicked Proterius, defiled in every way, seeing that he himself was in danger, grew more fierce. He had bought the magistrates with much gold, especially the so-called *stratelates*,⁵⁴ Dionysius by name, a man [who was] a murderer and of violent rage. [Dionysius] stirred up such madness: with a gang of armed, cruel, and barbarian soldiers he ran to the holy church of God and mercilessly slayed many of the laypeople as well as monks and nuns. Many [others] he wounded with blows and left them half-dead. Finally, he did not refrain from rushing in against the divine baptistery, and from the holy Jordan, that is, from the font of the worshipful baptism, like a rebel he took by force the holy Timothy along with Anatolius, his brother, and they led him to Taposiris,⁵⁵ a desert fortress fifty kilometers distant from the city. There they imprisoned him under guard by soldiers, so that from then on that impious Proterius, finding a time that was op-

52. *wild barbarian soldiers*—troops from the armies of the Eastern Roman Empire.

53. *judge*—God.

54. *stratelates*—commander.

55. *Taposiris*—near Alexandria.

portune for his madness, again manifested many evils against those monks and laypeople who were unwilling to take part in his wickedness, especially against those responsible for lithe ordination of the blessed Timothy.

Unable to endure such things and desperate, having become sated with grief in their souls, the people were inflamed by a martyr's zeal. Every day they drew up in a line of battle against the soldiers and stirred up a civil war with [acts of] killing and bloodshed.

The city magistrates and the so-called *stratelates* were afraid lest a city of the emperor's such as this should perish, although the emperor had not yet learned [of the events] and [the magistrates] had not yet reported to him these events, lest he be furious with them. In addition, the establishment and the appointment of the new emperor, Leo,⁵⁶ already had been announced everywhere, so they immediately planned to cast Proterius out of the city and bring him somewhere and guard him until they had informed the emperor [and] he had issued command[s] concerning each of them as it pleased him.

When Proterius departed with the soldiers, one of them became moved by zeal and killed him on the fourth of Nisan,⁵⁷ twenty days after the ordination of the blessed Timothy. [Proterius] had been sitting on the throne for five years and six months.⁵⁸ When this happened all the laypeople and soldiers immediately fled, [and] he was left cast down on the street, like a dog, those [animals] like which he had become in his manners and in his mad passion, when he had drawn destruction on himself. The [events], indeed, that then took place [and] that are thoroughly inappropriate for an audience of the God-fearing, we leave to others to tell and to write. For even if he deserved what he suffered, it is not proper for us to hear things this sort or to repeat [them]. Nevertheless, we see that the divine Word was fulfilled concerning him, as it is written, "Evil shall hunt the unjust man to [his] destruction," and this [word], "You humbled the boastful ones like the ones who have been slain," and, "The Lord makes war against the boastful ones," and, "The wicked one is kept for the day of his slaughter." [...]

56. *Leo*—Leo I the Thracian (457–474).

57. *fourth of Nisan*—April.

58. *five years and six months*—Proterius served as bishop of Alexandria from 451 to 457.

Just before [Peter] departed to go on the journey to Jesus⁵⁹ and was lying in great weakness and immobility, he saw a vision. Meanwhile, some of the saints came to visit him, and, finding him in a vision, they stood [there], waiting to see the end. When he returned from the vision, the archdeacon of Maiuma, whose name was Nestabus, a man well-known for fear of God and wise, said to him, “Where have you been, father? We waited a long time for you.” He, however, said, “Where there are words unutterable, which it is not lawful for a man to speak.” [...]

When the blessed one [Peter] had called all the brethren together, he admonished them [with his] last exhortation, witnessing to them these [things] that [are essential] for salvation. First, indeed, they should keep the orthodox faith accurately and without change until death and reject and curse all heresies, expressly the Council of Chalcedon, and reject and curse the wicked *Tome of Leo*, “as many times,” he said, “I have witnessed to you and to all men, when I was saying that if you ever see me, the same who, as you are saying, is a saint for you, having changed and saying to you that there is nothing evil in the Council of Chalcedon, may you be under a curse from the Father and from the Son and from the Holy Spirit, if you do not curse me to my face and flee from me as from a heathen and [as from one] who has part with Judas the betrayer.” [...]

Peter’s church back in Iberia (Georgia) remained firm in its opposition to Chalcedon for the next 132 years: throughout the occupation by Persia, an unsuccessful twenty-year war against Persia (482–502), another insurrection in 523, and tight Persian control after this insurrection failed.

Fed up with its troublesome territory, Persia officially abolished the Iberian monarchy in 580. Now desperate to wiggle out from under the Persian thumb, the Georgian church decided in 583 to reverse course and embrace Chalcedon, hoping the capitulation might persuade Constantinople to revive an independent kingdom of Iberia. The hope went unfulfilled. Instead, Persia and Byzantium simply divided the kingdom between them.

But the new commitment to Chalcedon stuck. Today the church in Georgia—an autocephalous church in an independent

59. ... *journey to Jesus*—just before his death.

nation—remains committed to Chalcedon. But it also continues to venerate Peter the Iberian, its fiercest opponent to Chalcedon.

3. Priests and Bishops

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

3.1 John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) on Bishops

John Chrysostom, “The Character and Temptations of a Bishop,” in *Six Books on the Priesthood*, trans. Graham Neville (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 80–88. Used by permission of SPCK Publishing.

The Christian church invested awesome responsibility in its bishops: the power to administer grace-giving sacraments and the promise—which Christ gave to his disciple Peter—that “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven” (Matthew 16:19, NRSV). Despite—and because of—this power, the early theologians took pains to emphasize the humility and selflessness priests must also possess.

According to John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), a patriarch of Constantinople, bishops must rid themselves of all ambition, choosing to live only for others. Their job is not to create safe and comfortable positions for themselves, but to act with integrity, even if such integrity elicits persecution and the loss of their jobs. On this score John could, in later years, speak from experience: his own tenure as the bishop of Constantinople came to an end when his condemnations of the rich and powerful led to his excommunication and exile.



Figure 22. Mosaic of John Chrysostom. Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, n.d.

There are many other qualities [...] in addition to those I have mentioned, which a priest ought to have, and which I lack. And the first of all is that he must purify his soul entirely of ambition for the office. For if he is strongly attracted to this office, when he gets it he will add fuel to the fire and, being mastered by ambition, he will tolerate all kinds of evil to secure his hold upon it, even resorting to flattery, or submitting to mean and unworthy treatment, or spending lavishly. I pass over for

the moment, for fear of seeming to say things beyond credit, the fact that some men, in contending for this office, have filled the churches with murder and split cities into factions.

The right course, I think, is to have so reverent an estimation of the office as to avoid its responsibility from the start; and, after being appointed to it, not to wait for the judgment of others if you should happen to have committed a sin that calls for deposition, but to anticipate this and depose yourself from office. In this way a man will probably induce God's mercy. But if he clings to a position for which he is not fit, he deprives himself of all pardon and provokes God's anger the more by adding a second and more serious offense. But no one will ever be content to do so; for it is indeed a terrible temptation to covet this honor. And in saying this, I do not contradict St. Paul, but entirely agree with what he says. What are his words? "If a man seeks the office of a bishop, he desires a good work." I meant it was terrible to desire not the work, but the absolute authority and power.

I think a man must rid his mind of this ambition with all possible care, and not for a moment let it be governed by it, in order that he may always act with freedom. For if he does not want to achieve fame in this position of authority he will not dread its loss either. And if he does not fear this, he can always act with the freedom that befits Christian men. But those who fear and dread deposition from this office endure a bitter slavery, full of all kinds of evil, and cannot help often offending man and God.

But the soul ought not to be in this condition. As in war we see soldiers of fine spirit fighting eagerly and falling bravely, so those who have come to this administration should be ready either to be consecrated to the office or to be relieved of it, as befits Christian men, knowing that such deposition earns a crown no less than the office itself.

For when anyone has this done to him because he will not submit to anything that is unbecoming or unworthy of his position, he procures a greater punishment for those who wrongfully depose him, and a greater reward for himself. "Blessed are you," says our Lord, "when men shall reproach you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven." This is surely true even when anyone is expelled by men of his own order, either through envy or to please others or through enmity or any other wrong motive. But when he gets this treatment from his enemies, I do not think any argument is

needed to prove how great a benefit they confer on him by their wickedness.

So we must be thoroughly on our guard against ambition and examine ourselves carefully to prevent a spark of it from smoldering anywhere unseen. It is much to be desired that those who at first were free from this infection should be clear of it when they have entered office. But if he nurtures within himself this terrible, savage beast before attaining office, there is no telling what a furnace he will fling himself into after he has attained it. For my own part (and do not think that I would ever lie to you out of self-depreciation), I possess this ambition in a high degree. And this fact, quite as much as all the other reasons, alarmed me and impelled me to run away as I did. For just as lovers of a human person endure a terrible torment of passion as long as they can be near the objects of their love, but throw off their frenzy when they take themselves as far away as possible from those whom they desire; so also those who covet this office find the evil intolerable while they are near it, but quench the desire along with the expectation as soon as they give up hope.

This, then, was one strong motive, and even if it had been all by itself, it would have been enough to debar me from this dignity. In fact, however, there is another motive quite as strong. What is it? A priest must be sober and clear-sighted and possess a thousand eyes looking in every direction, for he lives not for himself alone, but for a great multitude. But I am sluggish and remiss and scarcely sufficient for my own salvation, as even you should admit, though you are most of all eager to hide my faults for love's sake.

Do not speak to me now of fasting and vigils and sleeping on the ground and other bodily discipline. You know how far short I come even in these. But if these exercises had been most carefully regulated by me, they would have been unable to equip me at all for this responsibility, while my sluggishness remained. They would be a great help to someone shut up in a cell and concerned only about his own soul. But when a man is distracted by such a huge multitude and inherits all the private cares of those who are under his rule, what appreciable help can these practices contribute toward their improvement, unless he has a healthy, robust soul? [...]

The priest's shortcomings simply cannot be concealed. On the contrary, even the most trivial soon get known. The weakest athlete can keep his weakness secret as long as he remains at home and pits himself against nobody; but when he strips for the contest, he is soon

shown up. So with other men: those who lead a retired and inactive life have their solitude as a cloak for their private faults; but when they are brought into public life, they are compelled to strip off their retirement like a garment and to show everyone their naked souls by their outward movements. As, then, their right actions benefit many and challenge them to equal efforts, so their faults make other men careless in the quest of virtue, and encourage them to shirk hard work for the things that matter. Therefore the beauty of his soul must shine out brightly all around, to be able to gladden and enlighten the souls of those who see.

The sins of ordinary men are committed in the dark, so to speak, and ruin only those who commit them. But when a man becomes famous and is known to many, his misdeeds inflict a common injury on all. They make backsliders even more supine in their efforts for what is good, and drive to despair those who want to improve. [...]

For as long as the priest's life is well-regulated in every particular point, their intrigues cannot hurt him. But if he should overlook some small detail, as is likely for a human being on his journey across the devious ocean of this life, all the rest of his good deeds are of no avail to enable him to escape the words of his accusers. That small offense casts a shadow over all the rest of his life. Everyone wants to judge the priest, not as one clothed in flesh, not as one possessing a human nature, but as an angel, exempt from the frailty of others. [...]

3.2 Chrysostom (ca. 347–407) on Lazarus and the Rich Man

“St. John Chrysostom, First Sermon on Lazarus and the Rich Man,” in *On Wealth and Poverty: St. John Chrysostom*, trans. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 19–38. Used by permission of St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

In the excerpts from Chrysostom here and in *Essential Texts*, Chrysostom fails to mention the priestly duty for which he was best known: preaching. Priests not only administered sacraments; they also instructed the faithful in the faith. And Chrysostom developed a reputation as an exceptionally inspiring and eloquent instructor—a reputation that earned him his nickname “Chrysostom” or “Goldenmouth.”



Figure 23. St. John Chrysostom, 1000s, soapstone relief, Louvre, Paris

Chrysostom crafted his sermons for the masses. These sermons paid little attention to the philosophical intricacies and minutia behind the great theological debates of the day. His job, as he saw it, was to teach the thousands of Christians who entered his church how to live. As Paul Harkins puts it,

Chrysostom was no speculative theologian. He felt that few were attracted to the church by the profundity of her dogma; it was the moral teaching of the Gospels, the ideal of Christian charity, the hope that God would rescue them in their miseries that brought men [and women] into the church. His task was to keep them there as worthy members of Christ.¹

And although Chrysostom's homilies might seem

poorly structured, roving from point to point and filled with repetitions ... they have an interior, spiritual unity. He was often interrupted with applause and tears. This rapport made him feel free to say whatever he wished and his audience willing to hear whatever he had to say. Few orators ever roused more enthusiasm or exercised so complete a mastery over their audience.²

Chrysostom structured the sermon below around Jesus's parable in the book of Luke about the rich man and Lazarus:

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades,³ where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." (Luke 16:19–26, NRSV).

1. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 7:948.

2. *Ibid.*, 7:947.

3. *Hades*—Hell.

We include Chrysostom's first sermon on this parable for a number of reasons. First, it challenges the reputation Eastern Orthodoxy developed for paying insufficient attention to the art of preaching. The Eastern church's primary liturgy—the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom—derives its name—if not all its content—from the most famous preacher in the history of the church, whose audience expected, welcomed, and applauded entertaining sermons.

Second, Chrysostom's work represents the church's sincere efforts to connect with the masses. Yes, Chrysostom spent four years in the mountains surrounding Antioch (in what is now south-central Turkey) studying and praying under the direction of a hermit; and yes, he then spent another two living years alone in a cave, reading scripture and practicing extreme asceticism. But when he jumped into the public life of the church he jumped head first—working as a deacon, then as a priest, and ultimately as the bishop of Constantinople—ministering to thousands.

Third, the sermon below illustrates the early church's tremendous concern for the poor. John Kelly writes about Chrysostom's "indignation against conspicuous affluence and the selfishness of the rich, and his passionate championship of the poor, the exploited and the helpless." Chrysostom's descriptions of luxury

are matched by heart-rending ones of impoverished outcasts, stretched out all night, not on silver couches, but on dank straw in the colonnaded entrances to the public baths, frozen stiff with cold and racked with hunger; of the beggar who, while warmly clad citizens saunter home from the baths to well-prepared dinners, hangs about the narrow lanes like a famished dog in the mud and the dark, head bowed and hands outstretched, starving but with nothing to eat; or of convicts in prison, some of them lying there in squalor, chained and in rags, cowering like dogs at the visitor's feet and showing the still bleeding scars received from scourging.⁴

In other sermons Chrysostom drew

a terrifying picture of how, in the effort to soften people's hearts and make their appeals for alms more effective, some [of the

4. J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 97.

poor] have been driven to stick sharp nails into their own heads so that they can present a laughable spectacle, or even to blind their children at an early age. “As for you,” he concludes, “you would let out your own children for your circus charioteers, you would throw away your very souls for your pantomime dancers, but to Christ when he is starving you would not hand over the smallest piece of money. If you do give a few pence, it is as if you had given away your entire fortune ... But when we have to give an account of ourselves, when we hear Christ saying, “You saw me hungry, and gave me nothing to eat, naked and you did not clothe me,” what shall we say, and what shall we plead in our defense?”⁵

And fourth, as Catharine Roth, the translator of the text below, suggests, while Chrysostom’s (and the church’s) concern for the poor was intense, it was not, in the final analysis, a commitment to what today we call “social justice.” Neither the church nor Chrysostom taught that poverty or wealth in and of themselves merited condemnation. Not all rich people deserve damnation, and not all poor people will be saved. (Although the poor, in his telling, certainly stand a better chance.) “The rich man’s chief fault was his failure to give alms; he neglected his duty to help his neighbor. In addition he harmed his own spiritual health by his self-indulgent way of life.” Lazarus, on the other hand, by enduring his misfortune “patiently and without complaint” built up his “spiritual strength” through his suffering. Although Chrysostom “does not deny that poverty is a misfortune, he says nothing about trying to escape from it. He is concerned with spiritual, not material well-being.”⁶

In the sermon below Chrysostom opens by commending his listeners for their commitment to the church, and he then launches into his analysis of the rich man and Lazarus.

Yesterday, although it was a feast day of Satan,⁷ you preferred to keep a spiritual feast, receiving our words with great good will, and

5. *Ibid.*, 98.

6. Catharine P. Roth, “Introduction,” in *On Wealth and Poverty*, 12.

7. *Feast-day of Satan*—the Saturnalia, a Roman festival honoring Saturn, god of agriculture, alcohol, and time. Extensive partying, gambling, and drinking often marked the festivities.

spending most of the day here in the church, drinking a drunkenness of self-control and dancing in the chorus of Paul.⁸ In this way a double benefit came to you, because you kept free of the disorderly dance of the drunkards and you reveled in well-ordered spiritual dances. [...]

It will be best if I read you the whole parable [of the rich man and Lazarus] from the beginning, to keep us from treating it too carelessly.

There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who made merry every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.⁹

We might ask why the master¹⁰ speaks in parables, and why he explained some parables but not others, and what in fact a parable is, and many other such questions—but we will save these for another time, so as not to delay this urgent discussion now. We will ask you only this one question: which of the evangelists it is who tells us that Christ told this parable? Who is it? Only Luke. You must also know this—that all four evangelists reported some of Christ's sayings, but each of them individually chose others to report. Why is this so? To make us read the other Gospels, and to make us realize how remarkable their agreement is. For if all of them told everything, we would not pay careful attention to all of them, because one would be enough to teach us everything. But if everything they tell were different, we would not see their remarkable agreement. For this reason all of them wrote many things in common but each also chose some things to tell individually.

Now, what Christ teaches by the parable is this. There was a rich man, he says, living in great wickedness. The man was not tested by any misfortune, but everything flowed to him as if from a fountain. The very words, "He made merry every day," imply that nothing unexpected happened to him, no cause of distress or disturbance in his life. It is evident that he lived in wickedness both from the end that fell to his lot and, before the end, from his contempt for the poor man. He himself has demonstrated that not only did he neglect that man by the gate but he did not give alms to anyone else either. For if he did not give alms to this man who was continually prostrate at his gate, lying

8. *drinking a drunkenness of self-control and dancing in the chorus of Paul*—adhering to the Apostle Paul's injunction to avoid drunkenness and sexual promiscuity.

9. ... *licked his sores*—Luke 16:19–21.

10. *master*—Jesus.

before his eyes, whom he had to see every day once or twice or many times as he went in and out, for the man was not lying in the street nor in a hidden or narrow place, but where the rich man whenever he made his entrance or exit was forced unwillingly to see him, if (I say) he did not give alms to this man, who lay in such grievous suffering, and lived in such destitution, or rather for his whole life was troubled by chronic illness of the most serious kind, whom of those he encountered would he ever have been moved to pity? [...] And another fact was not less significant than these, that the very appearance of the poor man was pitiful, as he was overcome by hunger and long illness. Nevertheless none of this tamed that savage man.

This cruelty is the worst kind of wickedness; it is an inhumanity without rival. For it is not the same thing for one who lives in poverty not to help those in need, as for one who enjoys such luxury to neglect others who are wasting away with hunger. Again, it is not the same thing to see a poor man once or twice and pass him by, as to look at him every day and not be aroused by the persistent sight to mercy and generosity. Again, it is not the same thing for one who is troubled in his heart by misfortune and distress not to help his neighbor, as for one who enjoys such happiness and continuous good fortune to neglect others who are wasting away with hunger, to lock up his heart and not to be made more generous by his own joy. For you surely know this—that even if we are the most savage of men, we usually are made more gentle and kindly by good fortune. But that man was not improved by his prosperity, but remained beastly, or rather he surpassed the cruelty and inhumanity of any beast in his behavior.

Nevertheless he who lived in wickedness and inhumanity enjoyed every kind of good fortune, while the righteous man who practiced virtue endured the extremes of ill fortune. For again in Lazarus' case, we can prove that he was righteous both by his end and, before his end, by his patient endurance of poverty. Do you not seem to see the whole situation as if it were present? The rich man had his ship full of merchandise, and it sailed before the wind. But do not be surprised: he was hastening to shipwreck, since he refused to unload his cargo with discretion. Shall I tell you another wickedness of his? His daily luxurious and unscrupulous feasting. [...] Hear what the prophet says: "Woe ... to you who are approaching the evil day, who are drawing near and adopting false sabbaths."¹¹ What does this mean, "who are

11. ... *adopting false sabbaths*—Amos 6:3.

adopting false sabbaths”? [...] [It means those who are] working wickedness, feasting, drinking, and doing a multitude of shameful and grievous deeds. To prove that this is true, hear what follows. He reveals what I am saying by what he adds immediately: “Who sleep upon beds of ivory, and live delicately on their couches, and eat kids out of the flocks, and sucking calves out of the midst of the stalls ... who drink filtered wine, and anoint yourselves with the best ointment.”¹² You received the Sabbath to free your soul from wickedness, but you have enslaved it further. For what could be worse than this frivolity, this sleeping on beds of ivory? The other sins, such as drunkenness, greed, and profligacy, provide some pleasure, however small; but in sleeping on beds of ivory, what pleasure is there? What comfort? The beauty of the bed does not make our sleep sweeter or more pleasant, does it? Rather it is more onerous and burdensome, if we have any sense. For when you consider that, while you sleep on a bed of ivory, someone else does not enjoy even sufficient bread, will your conscience not condemn you and rise up against you to denounce this iniquity? But if the accusation is of sleeping on beds of ivory which are also decorated all around with silver, what defense will we have?

Do you wish to see what makes a bed truly beautiful? I will show you now the splendor of a bed, not of a citizen or a soldier, but of a king. For even if you are the most ambitious of all men, I am sure that you will not wish to have a bed more splendid than the king’s; and, what is more, I do not refer to any ordinary king, but the greatest king, more kingly than all other kings, who is still honored in song throughout the world: I am showing you the bed of the blessed David.¹³ What kind of bed did he have? Not adorned all over with silver and gold, but with tears and confessions. He himself tells this, when he says, “I shall wash my bed every night; I shall water my couch with my tears.”¹⁴ He fixes his tears like pearls everywhere on his bed. And consider with me how he loved God in his soul. Since in the daytime many concerns about rulers, commanders, nations, peoples, wars, peace, politics, and troubles in his household or outside or among his neighbors distracted him and diverted his attention, the time of leisure, which everyone else uses for sleep, he used for confession, prayers, and tears.

12. ... *with the best ointment*—Amos 6:4–6.

13. *David*—King David, whose reign over a united Israel appears in the Books of Samuel, 1 Kings, and 1 Chronicles.

14. Psalm 6:6.

He did not do this on one night only, ceasing on the second night, nor on two or three nights, omitting the nights in between, but he kept on doing this every night. For he says, “I shall wash my bed every night; I shall water my couch with my tears,” revealing the abundance and continuity of his tears. When everyone was quiet and at rest, he met God alone, and the unsleeping eye was with him as he wept and mourned and told of his private sins. You also ought to make a bed like this for yourself. Silver surrounding you awakens jealousy from men and stirs up anger from above; but tears like David’s are able to quench the very fires of Hell.

Shall I show you another bed? I mean Jacob’s.¹⁵ He had the bare ground beneath him and a stone under his head. For this reason he saw the spiritual rock¹⁶ and that ladder by which angels ascended and descended. Let us also set our minds on such beds, so that we may see such dreams as well. But if we lie on silver beds, not only will we not gain any pleasure, but besides we will endure distress. For when you consider that in the most extreme cold, in the middle of the night, when you are sleeping on a bed, the poor man has thrown himself on a pile of straw by the door of the bathhouse, wrapping the stalks around him, shivering, stiff with cold, pinched with hunger—even if you are the stoniest of all men, I am sure that you will condemn yourself for providing for yourself unnecessary luxury while not allowing him even what is necessary. “No soldier on service,” it is written, “gets entangled in civilian pursuits.”¹⁷ You are a spiritual soldier; this kind of soldier does not sleep on an ivory bed, but on the ground. He is not anointed with perfumed oils: these are the concern of those corrupt men who dally with courtesans,¹⁸ of those who act on the stage, of those who live carelessly. You must not smell of perfumes but of virtue. Nothing is more unclean for the soul than when the body has such a fragrance. For the fragrance of the body and the clothes would be a sign of the stench and filthiness of the inner man. When the devil attacks and breaks down the soul with self-indulgence, and fills it with great frivol-

15. *Jacob’s [bed]*—see the story in Genesis 28:11–22, in which Jacob, sleeping under the stars during a trip to collect a wife, takes a rock for a pillow, dreams of a ladder to heaven, and receives a promise from God to create descendants so numerous they shall be like “the dust of the earth.”

16. *spiritual rock*—Chrysostom takes the rock in the story to represent Christ.

17. *gets entangled in civilian pursuits*—2 Timothy 2:4.

18. *courtesans*—prostitutes with a wealthy clientele.

ity, then he wipes off the stain of his own corruption on the body also with perfumes. Just as those who are continually afflicted with a nasal discharge and catarrh¹⁹ will stain their clothes, their hands, and their faces as they continually wipe off the discharge from their noses, so also the soul of this wicked man will wipe off the discharge of evil on his body. Who will expect anything noble and good from one who smells of perfumes and who keeps company with women, or rather courtesans, and who leads the life of a dancer? Let your soul breathe a spiritual fragrance, so that you may give the greatest benefit both to yourself and to your companions.

There is nothing more grievous than luxury. Hear what Moses²⁰ says about it: Jacob “grew fat, he became thick and broad. The beloved one kicked out.”²¹ Moses does not say that Jacob walked out, but that the beloved one kicked out, suggesting how haughty and unbridled he had become. And elsewhere Moses says, when you have eaten and drunk, “take heed to yourself, that you forget not the Lord your God.”²² In this way luxury often leads to forgetfulness. As for you, my beloved, if you sit at table, remember that from the table you must go to prayer. Fill your belly so moderately that you may not become too heavy to bend your knees and call upon your God. Do you not see how the donkeys leave the manger ready to walk and carry loads and fulfill their proper service? But when you leave the table you are useless and unserviceable for any kind of work. How will you avoid being more worthless even than the donkeys? Why do I say this? Because that is the time when you most need to be sober and wide awake.” The time after dinner is the time for thanksgiving, and he who gives thanks should not be drunk but sober and wide awake. After dinner let us not go to bed but to prayer, or we may become more irrational than the irrational beasts.

I know that many will condemn what I say, thinking that I am introducing a strange new custom into our life; but I will condemn more strongly the wicked custom that now prevails over us. Christ has made it very clear that after taking nourishment at table we ought to receive not sleep in bed but prayer and reading of the divine scriptures. When

19. *catarrh*—inflammation of the mucous membrane.

20. *Moses*—most theologians in the early church assumed that Moses authored the first five books of the Old Testament.

21. ... *one kicked out*—Deuteronomy 32:15.

22. ... *forget not the Lord your God*—Deuteronomy 8:11.

he had fed the great multitude in the wilderness, he did not send them to bed and to sleep, but summoned them to hear divine sayings. He had not filled their stomachs to bursting, nor abandoned them to drunkenness; but when he had satisfied their need, he led them to spiritual nourishment. Let us do the same; and let us accustom ourselves to eat only enough to live, not enough to be distracted and weighed down. For we were not born, we do not live, in order to eat and drink; but we eat in order to live. At the beginning life was not made for eating, but eating for life. But we, as if we had come into the world for this purpose, spend everything for eating.

Now to make our denunciation of luxury more vehement and more pertinent to those who practice it, let us lead our sermon back to Lazarus. Thus our advice and counsel will be truer and clearer, when you see those who attended to good eating chastised and punished, not in words but in actions. For as the rich man lived in such wickedness, practiced luxury every day, and dressed himself splendidly, he was preparing for himself a more grievous punishment, building himself a greater fire, and making his penalty inexorable and his retribution inaccessible to pardon. The poor man, on the other hand, lay at his gate and did not become discouraged, blaspheme, or complain. He did not say to himself what many people say: "What is this? He lives in wickedness, cruelty, and inhumanity, enjoys everything more than he needs, and does not endure even mental distress or any other of the unexpected troubles (of which many afflict mankind), but gains pure pleasure; but I cannot obtain a share even of necessary sustenance. Everything flows to him as if from a fountain, although he spends all his good on parasites, flatterers, and drunkenness; but I lie here an example for onlookers, a source of shame and derision, wasting away with hunger. Is this the work of Providence? Does any justice oversee the deeds of mankind?" He did not say or even think any of these things. How do we know? From the fact that the angels led him away in triumph, and seated him in the bosom of Abraham. If he had been a blasphemers, he would not have come to enjoy such honor.

Many people admire the man for this reason only, that he was poor, but I can show that he endured chastisements nine in number, imposed not to punish him, but to make him more glorious; and indeed this came about. In the first place poverty is truly a dreadful thing, as everyone knows who has experienced it; for no words can describe how great the anguish is which those endure who live as beggars without knowing wisdom. But for Lazarus this was not his only trou-

ble, but illness was yoked to it, and this to an excessive degree. See how he shows both these misfortunes at their height. Christ showed that the poverty of Lazarus surpassed all other poverty at that time, when he said that Lazarus did not even enjoy any of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Again, he showed that Lazarus' illness reached the same measure as his poverty, beyond which it could not stretch out any farther, when he said that the dogs licked his sores. Lazarus was so much weakened that he could not even shoo the dogs away, but he lay like a living corpse, watching them coming without strength to protect himself from them. His limbs were so weak, so much wasted by disease, so far consumed by his trials. Did you see both poverty and disease besieging his body to the extreme degree? If each of these by itself is dreadful and unbearable, when they are woven together, is he not a man of steel who can endure them? Many people are often ill, but do not lack their necessary sustenance; others live in extreme poverty, but enjoy good health; and one good becomes a consolation for the other misfortune. But here both these misfortunes have run together. But, you say, you can tell me of someone who is both ill and poor. But not in such loneliness. For even if not in his own home, at least in public he could receive mercy from those who see him; but for Lazarus the lack of protectors made his two misfortunes more grievous. And this lack itself was made to seem more grievous by his position at the gate of the rich man. For if he had endured such sufferings and been neglected while lying in a desert and uninhabited place, he would not have felt so much distress. If no one had been present, he would have been persuaded even against his will to endure what was happening to him; but since he did not obtain even ordinary concern from anyone although he lay in the midst of so many drunkards and merry-makers, he came to feel his anguish more keenly [...]. For there was no one to console him with a word or comfort him with a deed, no friend, neighbor, or relative, not even any onlooker, since the rich man's whole household was corrupt.

In addition to these, the sight of another person in good fortune laid on him an extra burden of anguish, not because he was envious and wicked, but because we all naturally perceive our own misfortunes more acutely by comparison with others' prosperity. In the case of the rich man there was something else that could hurt Lazarus even more. He received a keener perception of his own troubles not only by comparing his own misfortune with the rich man's prosperity, but also by considering that the rich man fared well in all respects in spite of living

with cruelty and inhumanity, while he suffered extreme evils with virtue and goodness. Because of this he endured inconsolable distress. For if the man had been just, if he had been good, if he had been admirable, if he had been laden with every virtue, he would not have grieved Lazarus; but since he lived in wickedness, and had reached the height of evil, and was demonstrating such inhumanity, and treated him like an enemy, and passed him by like a stone shamelessly and mercilessly, and in spite of this all enjoyed such affluence: think how he was likely to sink the poor man's soul as if with a series of waves; think how Lazarus was likely to feel, seeing parasites, flatterers, servants going to and fro, in and out, running around, shouting, drinking, stamping their feet, and practicing all other kinds of wantonness. As if he had come for this very purpose, to be a witness of others' good fortune, he lay thus at the gate, alive only enough to be able to perceive his own ill fortune, enduring shipwreck while in the harbor, tormenting his soul with the bitterest thirst so near the spring.

Shall I name another evil in addition to these? He could not observe another Lazarus. We, for our part, even if we suffer a multitude of troubles, can at least gain sufficient comfort and enjoy consolation from looking at him. Finding companions in our sufferings either in fact or in story brings a great consolation to those in anguish. But he could not see anyone else who had suffered the same trials as he had; indeed he could not even hear of anyone among his ancestors who had endured as much. This is enough to darken one's soul. It is possible even to add another evil to these, namely that he could not console himself with any thought of resurrection, but he believed that the present situation was closed within the present life; for he was one of those who lived before the time of grace.²³ But now among us, when so much knowledge of God has been revealed, both the good hope of the resurrection, and the retribution awaiting sinners hereafter, and the rewards prepared for the upright, if some people are so mean-spirited and miserable that they are not upheld even by these expectations, what was he likely to feel, deprived even of this anchor? He could not yet practice any such wisdom because the time had not yet come for these teachings.

There was even something more in addition to these evils, namely that his reputation was slandered by foolish people. For most people,

23. *before the time of grace*—before Christ's birth, which, Christianity teaches, offers the prospect of salvation, resurrection after death, and eternal life.

when they see someone in hunger, chronic illness, and the extremes of misfortune, do not even allow him a good reputation, but judge his life by his troubles, and think that he is surely in such misery because of wickedness. They say many other things like this to one another, foolishly indeed, but still they say them: for example, if this man were dear to God, he would not have left him to suffer in poverty and the other troubles. This is what happened both to Job²⁴ and to Paul. To the former they said, “You have not often been spoken to in distress, have you? Who will endure the force of your words? Whereas you have instructed many, strengthened the hands of the weak, upheld the stumbler with words, and made firm the feeble knees, yet now pain has come to you ... and you are impatient. Is not your fear founded in folly?”²⁵ What he means is something like this: “If you had done something good, you would not have suffered what you have suffered; but you are paying the penalty of sin and transgression.” This was what most distressed the blessed Job. About Paul also the foreigners said the same: for when they saw the viper hanging from his hand, they did not imagine anything good about him, but thought him one of those who have dared the utmost evil.²⁶ This is clear from what they said, “Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.” We also often make an extraordinary uproar with words like these.

Nevertheless, although the waves were so great and came so close together, the boat did not sink, but he strengthened himself with wisdom like dew continually refreshing a person lying in a furnace. He did not say to himself anything like what many people are likely to say, that if this rich man, when he departs to the other world, receives punishment and retribution, he has made one for one, but if hereafter he enjoys the same honors as here, he has made two for nothing. Do not you ordinary people use these expressions in the marketplace, and bring the language of the race-course and the theater into the church? I am ashamed, indeed, and I blush to put these expressions before you,

24. *Job*—see especially chapters 4, 8, and 11 in the book of Job.

25. ... *Is not your fear founded in folly?*—Job 4:2–6.

26. ... *dared the utmost evil*—a reference to a story about the Apostle Paul in the book of Acts. “Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, ‘This man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live’” (Acts 28:3–4, NRSV). Paul survives.

except that it is necessary to say these things, to free you from the disorderly humor, the shame, and the harm that comes from such talk. Many people often say these things with a laugh, but even this belongs to the evil methods of the devil, to introduce corrupt teaching into our life in the guise of humorous expressions. Many people use these phrases continually in workshops, in the marketplace, and in their houses: this is a mark of extreme unbelief, of real mania, and of a childish disposition. To say, “If the wicked are punished when they depart,”²⁷ and not to be thoroughly convinced that they surely will be punished, is characteristic of unbelievers and skeptics. To think that, even if this should happen (and it will happen), the wicked will have enjoyed an equal reward with the righteous indicates the height of foolishness.

What do you say? Tell me. If the rich man departs and is punished hereafter, has he made one for one? How would you figure this? How many years do you want to suppose that he has enjoyed his money in this life? Shall we suppose a hundred? I am willing to say two hundred or three hundred or twice this many, or, if you wish, even a thousand (which is impossible, for, as it is written, “The days of our years ... are eighty years”)—but let us say even a thousand. You cannot show me, can you, a life here that has no end, that understands no limit, like the life of the righteous hereafter?²⁸ Tell me, if someone in a hundred years should see a good dream on one night, and enjoy great luxury in his sleep, will you be able to say in his case “one for one,” and make the one night of those dreams equivalent to the hundred years? You cannot say this. So you must think the same way about the life to come. As one dream is to a hundred years, so the present life is to the future life; or rather the difference is much greater. As a little drop is to the boundless sea, so much a thousand years are to that future glory and enjoyment. What would one need to say more than that it has no limit and knows no end; and as much as dreams differ from the truth of reality, so much this condition differs from that hereafter?

Besides, even before the punishment to come,²⁹ those who practice wickedness and live in sin are punished in this life. Do not simply tell me of the man who enjoys an expensive table, who wears silken

27. *when they depart*—when they die.

28. *like the life of the righteous hereafter*—life that never ends: eternal life.

29. *punishment to come*—the punishment that awaits the unrighteous after death, i.e., Hell.

robes, who takes with him flocks of slaves as he struts in the marketplace: unfold for me his conscience, and you will see inside a great tumult of sins, continual fear, storm, confusion, his mind approaching the imperial throne of his conscience as if in a courtroom, sitting like a juror, presenting arguments as if in a public trial, suspending his mind and torturing it for his sins, and crying aloud, with no witness but God who alone knows how to watch these inner dramas. The adulterer, for example, even if he is immensely wealthy, even if he has no accuser, does not cease accusing himself within. The pleasure is brief, but the anguish is long-lasting, fear and trembling everywhere, suspicion and agony. He fears the narrow alleys. He trembles at the very shadows, at his own servants, at those who are aware of his deeds and at those who know nothing, at the woman herself whom he has wronged, and at the husband whom he has insulted. He goes about bearing with him a bitter accuser, his conscience; self-condemned, he is unable to relax even a little. On his bed, at table, in the marketplace, in the house, by day, by night, in his very dreams he often sees the image of his sin. He lives the life of Cain,³⁰ groaning and trembling on the earth even when no one knows.

Inside he has fire always concentrated. The same happens also to those who practice theft and fraud, to drunkards, and (in a word) to everyone who lives in sin. There is no way to corrupt that court. Even if we do not seek virtue, we still suffer anguish, when we are not seeking it; and if we seek evil, we still experience the anguish when we cease from the pleasure of the sin. Let us not say, about the wicked who are rich here and the righteous who are rewarded hereafter, that one makes one, but that two make nothing. For the righteous, both the

30. *the life of Cain*—see the story of Adam and Eve’s two sons, Cain and Abel, in chapter 4 of Genesis. “Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let us go out to the field.’ And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’ He said, ‘I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?’ And the Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.’ Cain said to the Lord, ‘My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.’” (Genesis 4:8–14, NRSV)

life hereafter and this life provide great pleasure; but the wicked and greedy are punished both here and hereafter. They are punished even here by the expectation of the retribution hereafter, and by the evil suspicion of everyone, and by the very fact of sinning and corrupting their own souls. After their departure from here they endure unbearable retribution. In contrast, even if the righteous suffer a multitude of troubles here, they are nourished by good hopes and have a pleasure that is pure, secure, and permanent; and hereafter the multitude of good things will welcome them, just like Lazarus. Do not tell me that he was afflicted with sores, but consider that he had a soul inside more precious than any gold—or rather not his soul only, but also his body, for the virtue of the body is not plumpness and vigor but the ability to bear so many severe trials. A person is not loathsome if he has this kind of wounds on his body, but if he has a multitude of sores on his soul and takes no care of them. Such was that rich man, full of sores within. Just as the dogs licked the wounds of the poor man, so demons licked the sins of the rich man; and just as the poor man lived in starvation of nourishment, so the rich man lived in starvation of every kind of virtue.

Knowing all these things, let us be wise. Let us not say that if God loved so-and-so, he would not have allowed him to become poor. This very fact is the greatest evidence of God's love: "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."³¹ And elsewhere it is written: "My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast."³² Let us reject from among us, beloved, these frivolous notions and these vulgar expressions. "Let nothing shameful or foolish or ribald," it is written, "come forth from your mouth."³³ Let us not only not say these things ourselves; but even if we see others saying them, let us silence them, let us struggle vigorously against them, let us stop their shameless tongues. Tell me, if you see any robber-chief prowling the roads, lying in wait for passersby, stealing from farms, burying gold and silver in caves and holes, penning up large herds in his hideouts, and acquiring a lot of clothing and slaves from that prowling, tell me, do you call him fortunate because of that wealth, or unfortunate because of the penalty that awaits him? Indeed he has

31. ... *every son whom he receives*—Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6.

32. ... *be steadfast*—Sirach 2:1–2.

33. ... *come forth from your mouth*—Ephesians 5:4; Ephesians 4:29.

not yet been apprehended, he has not been handed over to the judge, he has not been thrown into prison, he has no accuser, his case has not come to the vote, but he eats and drinks extravagantly, he enjoys great abundance. Nevertheless we do not call him fortunate because of his present visible goods, but we call him miserable because of his future expected sufferings.

You should think the same way about those who are rich and greedy. They are a kind of robbers lying in wait on the roads, stealing from passersby, and burying others' goods in their own houses as if in caves and holes. Let us not therefore call them fortunate because of what they have, but miserable because of what will come, because of that dreadful courtroom,³⁴ because of the inexorable judgment, because of the outer darkness that awaits them. Indeed, robbers often have escaped the hands of men; nevertheless, even knowing this we would have prayed both for ourselves and for our enemies to avoid that life with its cursed affluence. But with God we cannot say this: for no one will escape his judgment, but all who live by fraud and theft will certainly draw upon themselves that important and endless penalty, just like this rich man. Collect all these thoughts in your minds, therefore, my beloved, let us call fortunate not the wealthy but the virtuous; let us call miserable not the poor but the wicked. Let us not regard what is present, but consider what is to come. Let us examine not the outer garments but the conscience of each person. Let us pursue the virtue and joy that come from righteous actions; and let us, both rich and poor, emulate Lazarus. For this man did not endure just one or two or three tests of virtue, but very many—I mean that he was poor, he was ill, he had no one to help him. He remained in a house that could have relieved all his troubles but he was granted no word of comfort. He saw the man who neglected him enjoying such luxury, and not only enjoying luxury but living in wickedness without suffering any misfortune. He could not look to any other Lazarus or comfort himself with any philosophy of resurrection. Along with the evils I have mentioned, he obtained a bad reputation among the mass of people because of his misfortunes. Not for two or three days but for his whole life he saw himself in this situation and the rich man in the opposite. What excuse will we have, when this man endured all the misfortunes at once with such courage, if we will not bear even the half of these? You cannot, you cannot possibly show or name any

34. *dreadful courtroom*—Christ's judgment of souls.

other who has suffered so many and such great misfortunes. For this reason Christ set him before us, so that whatever troubles we encounter, seeing in this man a greater measure of tribulation, we may gain enough comfort and consolation from his wisdom and patience. He stands forth as a single teacher of the whole world, for those who suffer any misfortune whatever, offering himself for all to see, and surpassing all of them in the excess of his own troubles.

For all this let us give thanks to God who loves mankind. Let us gather help from the narration. Let us talk of Lazarus continually in councils, at home, in the marketplace, and everywhere. Let us examine carefully all the wealth that comes from this parable, so that we may both pass through the present troubles without grief and attain to the good things that are to come: of which may we all be found worthy, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, honor, and worship, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

3.3 Rules for Bishops and Clergy (ca. 880)

“Passages from the Epanagoge,” in *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium: From Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus: Passages from Byzantine Writers and Documents*, ed. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 89–97. Public domain.

Several centuries after Chrysostom’s treatises on bishops and priests, the Byzantine emperor Basil I (867–886) codified the rights of clergy and the means by which bishops should be elected. In the text below Basil rules on the proper relationship between clergy and the Byzantine state (the remnant of the Roman Empire in the East), an issue to be examined in greater detail in subsequent sections.



Figure 24. Coin with Visage of Basil I, 882

Title VIII: On the election of bishops

3. We ordain that, when a bishop is to be elected, there should be a meeting of the clergy and the principal men of the city, at which votes shall be cast among three persons; and each elector shall certify that he has not given his vote for any gift or promise, or through friendship or favor or any other reason of partiality, but in the

knowledge that the persons concerned are of the orthodox and catholic faith, of good life, over the age of thirty, and not married [...] Let the best of the three persons for whom votes are cast be elected by the choice and judgment of the electors; and let him furnish a letter under his own signature concerning his orthodox faith. [...] The person elected shall also certify, under his own hand, that he has made no gift or promise, either directly or through another, and that he will not hereafter make any gift, either to a person who voted for him, or to any of the persons who cast votes, or to any other person whatsoever, in respect of his election.

4. We ordain that if the persons voting should think that any layman is worthy of the aforesaid election to the office of bishop, they should consider him along with the other three who are clerks or monks; provided, notwithstanding, that the layman thus considered for the office be not [at once] elected bishop, but shall first, in not less than three months from the time of the election, be admitted as a member of the clergy, and shall accordingly be elected bishop after having received instruction in the holy canons and the sacred liturgy of the church.

Title IX: On what is proper to bishops and other clergy

1. We do not permit [...] bishops or monks to act, under any rule of law, as guardians or curators of any person whatsoever. [...]

3. We do not permit a bishop, or a steward, or any other clerk of any degree, or a monk, to be a receiver or demander of taxes, or a farmer of taxes, or a curator of the goods and house of another person, or a summoner in a court, or a surety. [...]

14. Those who are ordained as members of the clergy, or have taken vows in a monastery, and subsequently abandon their proper status and transform themselves into laymen, do not serve in the army or the government, but are equally disfranchised with the persons aforesaid. [...]

16. Monasteries and churches, and more especially metropolitanates³⁵ and bishoprics, are not subject to any *corvee*³⁶ or form of service, whether of a private or a public order. They are exempt from them all

35. *metropolitanates*—bishoprics in major cities.

36. *corvee*—feudal labor owed to another person.

for [the service of] God, even as the tribe of Levi³⁷ was free from all obligation under the Mosaic law. But if any unavoidable emergency should occur, involving the commonweal, and demanding that they too should undertake some form of service in the interest of their own safety, they shall fulfill such obligation, wholly [and solely] through the action of the local bishops, and not through the action of laymen. [...]

37. *tribe of Levi*—one of the tribes of Israel, whose members bore special, religious duties.

4. Early Monasticism

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

4.1 The Life of St. Antony by Athanasius (ca. 356–362)

“Life of Antony,” trans. Archibald Robertson, in Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 4:195–221. Public domain. Revised with occasional reference to Athanasius, “Life of Antony by Athanasius,” in *Early Christian Lives*, trans. Carolinne White (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 7–70.

St. Antony was one of the first Christian ascetics, and certainly the best-known, to completely abandon civilization and settle in the desert, a move that endeared him to many as the father of monasticism. (Many ascetics before Antony tended to seclude themselves on the edges of towns or in graveyards.)



Figure 25. Monastery of St. Antony, est. 361-363, 334 kilometers southeast of Cairo

But Antony’s quest for solitude did not entirely succeed; as his reputation grew, earnest imitators increasingly sought him out. Apparent in the biography below (written by Athanasius, Arius’s great opponent) is the tension between Antony’s desire, on the one hand, to remain apart from the world, and his belief in his obligation, on the other hand, to perform healings and guide the spiritual lives of those drawn to him. The great irony of Antony’s

life was this: his solitary lifestyle proved the very thing that attracted followers.

The reader will note that Athanasius employs his biography of St. Antony to promote his own Christological views. Antony appears here as a defender of orthodox, Christian belief. Some see the following account as religious propaganda—a narrative that says more about Athanasius' ideas than those of Antony. But despite or because of Athanasius's motives, the text significantly influenced the development of monasticism. Full of entertaining descriptions of battles with demons and miraculous healings, the *Life of Antony* remained popular reading well through the Middle Ages and into the modern era. The authors of this anthology worried for a short period that one of their research assistants—utterly smitten with this text—was about to hop a plane to Cairo, purchase a camel, and herself embark on a life of solitude in the Egyptian desert.



Figure 26. Michelangelo, "Torment of St. Antony," ca. 1487-1488

• Preface •

Athanasius the bishop to the brothers in foreign parts:

You have entered a noble rivalry with the monks of Egypt by your determination either to equal or surpass them in your training in the way of virtue. For by now there are monasteries among you and the name of monk merits public recognition. For good reason all men will approve of this determination, and, in answer to your prayers God will fulfill your work. Since you asked me to give you an account of the blessed Antony's way of life, and you want to learn how he began the discipline, what kind of man he was, how he ended his life, and whether the things told about him are true (so you imitate him yourselves), I readily accepted your behest, since the recollection of Antony is great. And I know that you—when you have heard all this—will not only admire the man but also wish to emulate his determination, seeing that the life of Antony is a sufficient pattern of discipline for monks. [...]

• Life of Antony •

Antony, you must know, was an Egyptian: his parents came from good families and possessed considerable wealth. Since they were Christians he was reared in the faith. His parents raised him from infancy and he knew nothing but them and his home. Arriving at boyhood and advancing in years, he could not endure to learn his letters. He did not care to associate with other boys. His sole desire was, as it is written of Jacob, to live as a plain man at home. He used to attend the Lord's house with his parents.¹ He was not idle as a child and he respected his parents when older. He was obedient to his father and mother and attentive to what was read, keeping in his heart what was profitable in what he heard. And though he was raised in moderate affluence, he did not trouble his parents for varied or luxurious fare, nor was such fare a source of pleasure to him. He was content simply with what he found and he sought nothing further.

At the age of about eighteen or twenty he was left alone with one little sister after the death of his father and mother. The care of both home and his sister rested on him. Not six months after the death of his parents, he went, according to custom, into the Lord's house, where he reflected while walking about how the apostles left all and followed the Savior;² how in the Acts of the Apostles they sold their possessions and laid them at the apostles' feet for distribution to the

1. *Lord's house*—church.

2. *the Savior*—Christ.

needy, and how great a hope was laid up for them in Heaven. Pondering these things he entered the church, where the Gospel was being read, and he heard the Lord say to the rich man, “If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give it to the poor, and come follow me, and you shall have treasure in Heaven.” Antony, as though God put him in mind of the saints, and as though the passage had been read on his account, immediately left the church and gave the possessions of his forefathers to the villagers—including three hundred acres, productive and very fair—to prevent anyone from holding a grudge against him and his sister. He sold everything else that was movable, and, earning a good deal of money, gave it to the poor, while reserving a little for his sister’s sake.

Another time as he went into the church, he heard the Lord say in the Gospel, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow.” He could stay no longer and left to give his remaining possessions to the poor. Having committed his sister to known and faithful virgins to raise her in a convent, he then devoted himself to discipline, training himself with patience. There were not yet many monasteries in Egypt, and no monk at all knew about the distant desert. All who wished to help themselves practiced the discipline in solitude near their own village. An old man in the next village had lived the life of a hermit from his youth. Antony, after seeing this man, imitated him in piety. And at first Antony began to abide in places outside the village. Then if he learned about a good man anywhere else, he went and sought him, like a prudent bee, not returning to his own palace until he had seen him. When he returned, it was with good supplies, as it were, for his journey in the way of virtue. So dwelling there at first, he resolved not to return to the abode of his fathers or to the remembrance of his kinsfolk—but to employ all his desire and energy for perfecting his discipline. He worked with his hands, having heard that “He who is idle shall not eat.” Part of what he earned he spent on bread and part he gave to the needy. He was constantly in prayer, knowing that a man ought to pray in secret unceasingly. [...]

But the devil, who hates and envies what is good, could not endure to see such a resolution in a youth, and he endeavored to carry out against Antony what he accomplished against others. First he tried to lead Antony away from the discipline, reminding him of his former wealth, his care for his sister, the claims of kindred, a love of money, a love of glory, the various pleasures of the table, the other relaxations of life, and, at last, the difficulty of virtue and the labor it entails. He

suggested also the infirmity of the body and the length of time required for the discipline. In a word, he raised in Antony's mind a great dust of debate, wishing to debar him from his settled purpose. But when the enemy found himself to be too weak for Antony's determination—conquered by Antony's firmness, overthrown by his great faith and constant prayers—he put his trust in weapons “in the navel of his belly,”³ for they are his first snare for the young. He attacked the young man, disturbing him by night and harassing him by day, so that onlookers saw the struggle between them. The one would suggest foul thoughts and the other counter them with prayers: the one fire him with lust, the other, as one who seemed to blush, fortify his body with faith, prayers, and fasting. And the devil, unhappy creature, one night even took the shape of a woman and imitated all her acts simply to beguile Antony. But Antony, his mind filled with Christ and the nobility inspired by him, remembered the spirituality of the soul and quenched the coal of the other's deceit. Again the enemy suggested the ease of pleasure. But Antony, like a man filled with rage and grief, turned his thoughts to the threatened fire⁴ and the gnawing worm,⁵ arraying these against his adversary, passed through the temptation unscathed. All this was a source of shame to his foe. For he, deeming himself like God, found himself mocked by a young man. He who boasted against flesh and blood was put to flight by a man in the flesh. For the Lord was working with Antony—the Lord who for our sake took flesh and gave the body victory over the devil, so that all who truly fight can say, “Not I but the grace of God that was with me.”

The dragon⁶ could not overthrow Antony and saw himself thrust out of his heart. He gnashed his teeth, as it is written in scripture, as though beside himself, and he appeared to Antony like a black boy, taking a visible shape consistent with the color of his mind. Cringing, as it were, he no longer plied Antony with thoughts, for guileful though he was, he had been bested. At last he spoke in human voice and said, “I have deceived many and I have cast down many, but now, attacking you and your labors just as I attacked many others, I proved weak.” When Antony asked, “Who are you who speaks like this to me?” the devil answered with a lamentable voice, “I am the friend of

3. *weapons “in the navel of the belly”*—lust.

4. *threatened fire*—Hell.

5. *gnawing worm*—death.

6. *the dragon*—the devil.

whoredom, and I have incited many of the young. I am called the spirit of lust. I have deceived many who wished to live soberly; I have swayed many who were chaste! I am the one by whom the prophet reproves those who have fallen, saying, 'The spirit of whoredom caused you to err.' They have tripped because of me. I am the one who troubled you so often; but I have been overthrown by you so often." So Antony, giving thanks to the Lord, said to him with courage, "You are despicable then, for you are black-hearted and weak as a child. From now on I will face no trouble from you, "for the Lord is my helper, and I will look down upon my enemies." Having heard this, the black one fled straightway, shuddering at the words and dreading even to come near the man. [...]

Antony eagerly endeavored to make himself fit to appear before God, to be pure in heart and ever ready to submit to his counsel, and to him alone. [...]

Thus tightening his hold upon himself, Antony departed for the tombs, which happened to lie some distance from the village. He asked one of his acquaintances to bring him bread at intervals of many days. He entered one of the tombs, his acquaintance shut the door on him, and Antony remained alone inside. The enemy could not endure it, fearful that—in a short time—Antony would fill the desert with the discipline. The devil thus came one night with a multitude of demons, and he cut Antony with stripes. Antony lay on the ground, speechless from the excessive pain. The torture was so excessive that no blows inflicted by man could ever have caused him such torment. But by the providence of God—for the Lord never ignores those who hope in him—his acquaintance came the next day bearing loaves of bread. Opening the door, he saw Antony lying on the ground as though dead. He lifted him up, carried him to the church in the village, and laid him on the ground. Many of Antony's kinsfolk and villagers sat around him as though around a corpse. But around midnight Antony came to himself and arose. He saw that everyone except his comrade was sleeping, so he motioned with his head for his comrade to approach and asked him to carry him again to the tombs without waking anybody.

Antony's comrade carried him back and again shut him up alone in the tomb. Antony could not stand because of the blows, but he prayed as he lay. And after praying, he said with a shout, "Here am I, Antony. I do not flee from your stripes. Even if you inflict more, nothing will separate me from the love of Christ." And then he sang,

“Though a camp be set against me, my heart will not be afraid.” Such were the thoughts and words of this ascetic. But the enemy, who hates good, marveled that Antony dared to return after the blows. He called together his hounds and burst out, “You see that we did not stop this man, either by the spirit of lust or by blows. Because he defies us, let us attack him in another fashion.” Now changing form for evil purposes is easy for the devil. So that night his demons made such a din that the whole place seemed shaken by an earthquake, and the demons—as if breaking the four walls of the dwelling—seemed to enter through them, coming in the likeness of beasts and creeping things. And the place was suddenly filled with the forms of lions, bears, leopards, bulls, serpents, asps, scorpions, and wolves, each of them moving according to its nature. The lion roared. The bull, wishing to attack, seemed to toss its horns. The serpent writhed but was unable to approach. And the wolf was restrained as it rushed ahead. The noise of the apparitions, with their angry raging, was dreadful. But Antony, stricken and goaded by them, felt severe bodily pains. He lay watching, with unshaken soul, groaning from bodily anguish. But his mind was clear, and in mockery he said, “If any power were in you, it would have been enough for just one of you to come. But since the Lord made you weak, you attempt to terrify me by numbers. Taking the shape of brute beasts is proof of your weakness.” And with boldness he said, “If you are able and have received power against me, do not delay your attack. But if you are unable, why trouble me in vain? For faith in our Lord is a seal and a wall of safety for us.” After many attempts they gnashed their teeth at him, mocking themselves rather than him. [...]

Antony went forth still more eagerly, devoted to the service of God. Having fallen in with an old man he met previously, he asked him to dwell with him in the desert. But the old man declined due to his great age and because no custom for such practice existed. So Antony set off by himself to the mountain. [...]

And for nearly twenty years he continued training himself in solitude, never going out and seldom seen by anyone. Many were eager to imitate his discipline. Acquaintances came and began to knock down and wrench off his door by force. So Antony, as if from a shrine, came forth, initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God. [...] And when they saw him, they marveled at the sight, for he had the same body as before: he was neither fat, like a man without exercise, nor lean from fasting and striving with the demons. He was the same as they knew him before his retirement. And his soul was free from

blemish. It was not contracted by grief, relaxed by pleasure, or possessed by laughter or dejection. He was not troubled when he beheld the crowd, nor overjoyed at being saluted by so many. He was altogether balanced, as if guided by reason and abiding in a natural state. Through him the Lord healed the bodily ailments of many present and cleansed others from evil spirits. And he gave grace to Antony in speaking, so that Antony consoled many who were sorrowful. He set those at variance to one accord, exhorting all to prefer the love of Christ over everything in the world. And while he exhorted and advised them to remember the good things to come, and the loving-kindness of God toward us, “who spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all,” he persuaded many to embrace the solitary life. And thus cells arose in the mountains, and the desert monks colonized the desert, leaving their own people and enrolling themselves for citizenship in the heavens. [...]

One day when the monks assembled before Antony and asked to hear words from him. He spoke to them in the Egyptian tongue as follows.

The scriptures are enough for instruction, but it is good to encourage one another in faith and stir each other up with words. You, as children, should share what you know with your father; and I, as the elder, should share with you my knowledge and what experience has taught me. Let this be the common aim for all: neither to give up having once begun, nor to faint in trouble, nor to say, “We have lived in the discipline a long time.” Rather let us increase our earnestness, as though making a new beginning each day. For the whole life of man is very short as measured by the ages to come. All our time is nothing compared with eternal life. In this world everything has a price, and a man exchanges one equivalent for another. But the promise of eternal life is bought for a trifle. For it is written, “The days of our life are seventy—or, if many, eighty—and whatever remains is labor and sorrow.” Whenever we live a full eighty years or even a hundred in the discipline, we will not reign for only a hundred years, but instead forever and ever. Although we fought on earth, we will not receive our inheritance on earth; instead we have promises in Heaven. Having discarded the body, which is corrupt, we will receive it incorrupt.

Therefore, children, let us not faint or decide that the time is too long. We are doing something great, “for the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us.” And as we look at the world, let us not think that

we have renounced anything of much consequence, for the whole earth is very small compared with all of Heaven. If we were lords of all the earth and gave it all up, it would be nothing compared to the kingdom of Heaven. A man should relinquish a copper drachma⁷ to gain a hundred drachmas of gold. And if a man were lord of all the earth, he would give up little by renouncing it, receiving a hundred-fold what he relinquished. Not even the whole earth is equal in value to the heavens. Thus he who relinquishes a few acres relinquishes nothing. And even if he gives up a house or much gold, he should not boast or be low-spirited. [...] Why not gather those things we can take with us—namely prudence, justice, temperance, courage, understanding, love, kindness to the poor, faith in Christ, freedom from wrath, and hospitality? If we possess these, we will find them preparing a welcome for us in the land of the meek-hearted. [...]

Having set out in the way of virtue, let us strive all the more to attain those things before us. And let no one turn to the things behind, like Lot's wife,⁸ because the Lord has said, "No man who puts his hand to the plow and then turns back is fit for the kingdom of Heaven." Turning back is to feel regret and to be worldly-minded. Do not fear the word "virtue"; do not be astonished at the name. Virtue is not far from us; it is not outside ourselves. It is within us, and it is easy if we are willing. The Greeks live abroad and cross the sea to obtain knowledge, but we have no need to leave home for the kingdom of Heaven or to cross the sea for the sake of virtue. For the Lord has said, "The kingdom of Heaven is within you." Virtue needs only willingness, since it is in us and formed from us. When the soul has its spiritual faculty in a natural state, virtue is formed. [...]

If demons see Christians—and monks especially—laboring cheerfully and advancing, they first attack by temptation and place hindrances through evil thoughts to hamper our way. But we need not fear their suggestions: by prayer, fasting, and faith in the Lord their attack immediately fails. But they do not cease even when their attack fails. Knavishly and with subtlety they come again. When they cannot deceive the heart openly with foul pleasures, they approach in a different guise, attempting to strike fear, changing their shapes, taking the form of women, wild beasts, creeping things, gigantic bodies, and troops of soldiers. But you should not fear their deceitful displays even then: they are nothing and they quickly disappear, espe-

7. *drachma*—a coin.

8. *Lot's wife*—see Genesis 19. When fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah, towns that God destroyed for their wickedness, Lot's wife looked back in defiance of God's command and turned into a pillar of salt.

cially if a man fortifies himself with faith and the sign of the cross. [...]

It is not fitting to boast about casting out demons or to feel haughty about healing diseases. It is not fitting to esteem someone highly who casts out devils, while not considering someone who does not. [...] For the working of signs is not our work but the Savior's. He said to his disciples, "Do not rejoice that demons are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in the heavens." The fact that our names are written in Heaven is proof of our virtuous life. To cast out demons is a favor of the Savior who granted it. To those who boasted in signs but not in virtue, saying, "Lord, in your name did we not cast out demons, and in your name did many mighty works?" our Lord answered, "I say to you, I do not know you, for the Lord does not know the ways of the wicked." [...]

All rejoiced while Antony spoke. In some the love of virtue increased. In others carelessness was thrown aside. Self-conceit ceased in others. All were persuaded to despise the assaults of the evil one, marveling at the grace the Lord gave Antony for the discerning of spirits. The cells in the mountains were filled with holy bands of men who sang psalms, loved reading, fasted, prayed, rejoiced in the hope of things to come, labored in almsgiving, and preserved love and harmony with one another. It was possible to behold a land set by itself, filled with piety and justice. [...]

Antony retired and set a fixed time during which he would not leave his abode or admit anyone to it. But Martinian, a military officer, came and disturbed him. He had a daughter, afflicted with an evil spirit. He knocked at the door for a long time, asking Antony to come out and pray to God for his child. Antony refused to open the door. He looked out from above and said, "Man, why do you call on me? I am a man just like you. If you believe in Christ whom I serve, go, and, according to your faith, pray to God, and it will come to pass." Immediately Martinian departed, believing and calling upon Christ, and his daughter was cleansed from the devil. The Lord did many other things through Antony, promising, "Seek and it will be given to you." Many of the sufferers to whom Antony would not open his door slept outside his cell, and by their faith and sincere prayers they were healed.

Beset by many people, Antony was not able to withdraw himself as he intended and desired. He feared that miracles the Lord accomplished through him would cause him to become puffed up, or that people might think more of him than they ought. He thus set off into

the upper Thebaid⁹ to live among those who did not know him. His brothers gave him loaves of bread, and he sat on the bank of the river, watching for a boat that might take him up the river. While sitting and thinking, a voice came to him from above. “Antony, where are you going and why?” The voice did not disturb him, since he was accustomed to being called in this manner. He answered, “Since the multitude does not permit me to be still, I wish to go to the upper Thebaid. Many hindrances come upon me here, and they demand from me things beyond my power.” But the voice said to him, “If you go into the Thebaid and down to Bucolia¹⁰ you will have to endure more—indeed, double the amount of toil. But if you really wish to find quiet, depart now for the inner desert.” Antony replied, “Who will show me the way, for I do not know it?” Immediately the voice pointed out Saracens¹¹ about to head in that direction. So Antony approached them and asked whether he might accompany them into the desert. And they, as though commanded by Providence, received him willingly. Journeying with them three days and three nights, he came to a lofty mountain, and at the foot of the mountain ran a clear spring, whose waters were sweet and very cold. Outside was a plain and a few uncared-for palm trees. [...]

So he was alone in the inner mountain, spending his time in prayer and discipline. And the brothers who served him asked to come every month and bring him olives, pulses¹² and oil, for by now he was an old man. He passed his life there and endured great battles, “not against flesh and blood,” as it is written, but against opposing demons, as we know from those who visited him. They heard tumults, many voices, and, as it were, the clash of arms. At night they saw the mountain become full of wild beasts, and Antony fighting as though against visible beings while praying against them. He encouraged those who came to him. While kneeling he contended and prayed to the Lord. Surely it was a marvelous thing that a man, alone in such a desert, feared neither the demons who rose up against him, nor the fierceness of the four-footed beasts and creeping things, for they were so many.

9. *Thebaid*—a region populated by monks in the upper part of the Nile River valley in Northern Egypt.

10. *Bucolia*—in northern Egypt.

11. *Saracens*—Arabs.

12. *pulses*—edible legumes.

But in truth, as it is written, “He trusted in the Lord as Mount Zion,”¹³ with a mind unshaken and undisturbed. The demons fled from him, and the wild beasts, as it is written, “kept peace with him.” [...]

The monks asked him to come down and visit them and their abodes, so he journeyed with those who came to him. A camel carried loaves and water for them, for that desert is dry, and there is no water fit to drink except in that mountain where Antony’s cell was. So when the water ran out on their way, and the heat was very great, they found themselves in danger. Going around the neighborhood and finding no water, they could walk no further. They lay on the ground, despairing for themselves, and they let the camel go. But the old man, seeing that they were all in jeopardy and groaning in deep grief, departed a little way from them, and, kneeling down, stretched forth his hands and prayed. Immediately the Lord made water well forth where he stood praying. They all drank and were revived. They filled their bottles, sought the camel, and found her, for her rope had caught on a stone and was held fast. [...]

When two brothers came to see Antony they ran out of water. One died and the other was at the point of death. He had no strength to go on and he lay on the ground expecting to die. But Antony, sitting in the mountain, called two monks who happened to be there. He said, “Take a pitcher of water and run on the road toward Egypt: two men were coming but one is already dead and the other will die unless you hurry. This was revealed to me as I was praying.” The monks left and found one lying dead. They buried him, restored the other with water, and led him to the old man. It was a day’s journey. Now one might ask, “Why did Antony not speak before the other died?” We should not ask such a question. For the punishment of death was not Antony’s but God’s, who judged the one and revealed the condition of the other. The marvel here is the case of Antony: he was sitting in the mountain with a watchful heart, and the Lord showed him things far off. [...]

Antony often predicted days or months ahead who was coming to see him and the cause of their coming. Some came only for the sake of seeing him; others because of sickness; and others because they suffered from evil spirits. All thought the labor of the journey worthwhile, and each returned aware of receiving a benefit. Saying such things and beholding such sights, Antony asked that no one praise him for this;

13. *Mount Zion*—a hill in Jerusalem often associated with the temple mount; a holy place.

instead, they should marvel at the Lord for granting us knowledge of him as far as our powers extend. [...]

He was altogether religious and wonderful in faith, for he never communed with Meletian schismatics,¹⁴ knowing their wickedness and apostasy from the beginning. Nor did he have friendly dealings with the Manichaeans¹⁵ or any other heretics. Or, if he did, he did so only to advise that they change over to piety. He thought and asserted that intercourse with heretics was harmful and destructive to the soul. He also loathed the heresy of the Arians. He exhorted everyone not to approach them or to adopt their erroneous beliefs. Once, when certain Arian madmen came to him, he questioned them and learned of their impiety. So he drove them from the mountain, saying that their words were worse than the poison of serpents.

Once the Arians falsely asserted that Antony's opinions were the same as theirs. He was displeased and grew angry with them. Summoned by the bishops and all the brothers, he descended from the mountain, entered Alexandria, and denounced the Arians, saying their heresy was a forerunner of the Antichrist. He taught the people that the Son of God was not a created being. The Son did not come into being from non-existence. He is the eternal Word, wisdom, and essence of the Father. Thus it is impious to say "there was a time when he was not," for the Word was always co-existent with the Father. You should have no fellowship with the impious Arians. There is no communion between light and darkness. You are good Christians. But they—when they say that the Son of the Father, the Word of God, is a created being—they do not differ from the heathen, since they worship what is created rather than God the creator. Believe that creation itself is angry with them, because they number the creator—the Lord of all, by whom all things came into being—with those things originated. [...]

Others who met him in the outer mountain mocked him because he had not learned his letters. Antony said to them, "What do you say? Which is first, mind or letters? And which is the cause of

14. *Meletian schismatics*—followers of Meletius, bishop of Lycopolis in Egypt, who argued against allowing lapsed Christians to reenter the church, even if they repented and returned to the faith. The church later deemed such a rigid stance to be heresy.

15. *Manicheans*—gnostics who saw the universe in dualistic terms. The church deemed Manichaeism heretical.

which—mind of letters, or letters of mind?” And when they answered that mind is first and the inventor of letters, Antony said, “Whoever, then, has a sound mind has no need of letters.” This answer amazed the bystanders and the philosophers, and they departed marveling that they had seen so much understanding in an ignorant man. For his manners were not rough—as though he had been reared in the mountain and there grown old—but graceful and polite. His speech was seasoned with the divine salt, so no one was envious; all rejoiced over those who visited him. [...]

The fame of Antony even reached emperors. Constantine Augustus¹⁶ and his sons, Constantius and Constans, wrote letters to him as to a father, and begged him to answer. But Antony made nothing much of the letters; he did not rejoice at the messages. He was the same as he had been before the emperors wrote to him. When they brought him the letters, he summoned the monks and said, “Do not be astonished if an emperor writes to us, for he is a man; marvel instead that God wrote the law for men and has spoken to us through his own Son.” Antony was unwilling to receive the letters, saying he did not know how to write an answer to such things. But the monks urged him to respond because the emperors were Christians and might take offense at being spurned. So he consented to have the letters read to him, and he wrote an answer, praising the emperors for worshipping Christ. He counseled them on things pertaining to salvation: “Do not think much about the present; instead remember the judgment that is coming, and know that Christ alone is the true and eternal king.” He begged them to be merciful and to attend to justice and the poor. And the emperors, having received his answer, rejoiced. He was dear to all, and all desired to consider him as a father.

Being known as such a great man, and having given answers to those who visited him, he returned again to the inner mountain and maintained his coveted discipline. Often when people came to him, as he was sitting or walking, he became dumb, as it is written in Daniel,¹⁷ and after a spell he resumed the thread of what he was saying to the brothers around him. His companions perceived that he was seeing a vision. Often when he was on the mountains, he saw what was happening in Egypt, and he told Bishop Serapion,¹⁸ who was indoors

16. *Constantine Augustus*—Constantine the Great.

17. *Daniel*—the book of Daniel in the Hebrew scriptures.

18. *Bishop Serapion*—a bishop in the Nile Delta who opposed Arianism.

with him and saw Antony wrapped in the vision. Once as he was sitting and working, he fell into a trance and groaned much at what he saw. Then, after some time, having turned to the bystanders with groans and trembling, he prayed, fell on his knees, and remained there for a long time. Arising, the old man wept. His companions, trembling and terrified, wanted to know what it was. They pestered him until he was forced to speak. With many groans he said, “O, my children, it would be better to die before what appeared in my vision comes to pass.” And when they asked him again, he burst into tears and said,

Wrath is about to seize the church; it is on the point of being given up to men who are like senseless beasts. For I saw the table of the Lord’s house, and mules standing around it on all sides in a ring, kicking the things inside, just like a herd kicks when it leaps in confusion. And you saw how I groaned, for I heard a voice saying, “My altar will be defiled.”

The old man saw these things, and after two years the Arians made inroads and plundered the churches, violently carrying off vessels and making the heathen carry them. They forced the heathen from the prisons to join in their services, and in their presence they did what as they wished on the table. Then we all understood that the kicks of the mules signified to Antony what the Arians—senselessly like beasts—are now doing. But when he saw this vision, he comforted those around him, saying,

Do not be downcast, my children. For as the Lord has been angry, so again he will heal us, and the church will soon again receive its own order, and it will shine forth as it is accustomed. You will behold the persecuted restored, wickedness again withdrawn to its hiding place, and pious faith speaking boldly in every place and with all freedom. Do not defile yourselves with the Arians, for their teaching is not that of the apostles but of demons; their father the devil. It is barren and senseless, and without light or understanding, like the senselessness of these mules. [...]

A certain general, Balacius by name, persecuted us Christians bitterly on account of his regard for the Arians—that name of ill-omen. His ruthlessness was so great that he beat virgins and stripped and scourged monks. Antony wrote the following letter sent it to him. “I see wrath coming upon you. Therefore cease persecuting Christians, lest wrath catch hold of you. For even now it is on the point of coming upon you.” But Balacius laughed, threw the letter on the ground, and spit on it. He insulted its bearers, instructing them to tell Antony,

“Since you care so much about the monks, I will soon come after you as well.” Not five days passed before wrath came upon him. For Balacius and Nestorius,¹⁹ the prefect of Egypt, went forth to the first stopping point from Alexandria, which is called Chaereu. Both were on horseback. The horses belonged to Balacius, and they were the quietest of all the horses from his stable. They had not gone far when the horses began to frisk with one another, as horses are inclined to do. Suddenly the quieter horse, on which Nestorius sat, bit Balacius, attacking him and tearing his thigh with his teeth. Balcius was borne straight back to the city, and in three days he died. Everyone marveled because what Antony foretold had been fulfilled so speedily. [...]

[Antony falls sick and summons two monks who had lived with and attended to him on the mountain for fifteen years.]

[H]e said to them,

As it is written, I go the way of the fathers, for I perceive that I am called by the Lord. Be watchful and do not destroy your long discipline. Instead, as if making a beginning, zealously preserve your determination. You know the treachery of the demons, how fierce they are but also how little power they have. Do not fear them; instead always breathe Christ and trust Him. Live as though dying daily. Give heed to yourselves, and remember the admonition you have heard from me. Have no fellowship with schismatics or any dealings with heretical Arians. You know the strange doctrines of their heresy and how I shunned them because of their hostility to Christ. Always be earnest to be followers first of God and then the saints, so they may receive you after death, as well-known friends, into the eternal habitations. Ponder these things and think of them. [...] Bury my body and hide it underground. Observe my words and let nobody know the place except for you. At the resurrection of the dead I will receive an incorruptible body from the Savior. Divide my garments. Give Athanasius the bishop one sheepskin and the garment on which I am laid—the garment he gave to me new but which has grown old with me. Give Serapion the bishop the other sheepskin, and keep the hair garment²⁰ for

19. *Nestorius*—opposed using the name “*Theotokos*” or “God-bearer” for the Virgin Mary, believing that such a phrase distracted from Christ’s humanity. Athanasius considered his views heretical.

20. *hair garment*—a shirt with an inner lining of hair, designed to irritate the skin as a form of continual penance.

yourselves. Farewell, my children, for Antony is departing and is with you no more.

After he said this, they kissed him and he lifted up his feet, as though he saw friends coming to him and was glad because of them. As he lay there his countenance appeared to be joyful. He died and was gathered to the fathers. Afterward, according to his commandment, they wrapped him up and buried him, hiding his body underground. No one knows to this day where it was buried except those two. The two who received the sheepskin of the blessed Antony and the garment worn by him guard it as a precious treasure. To look on the garments is, as it were, to behold Antony. He who is clothed in them seems to bear Antony's admonitions with joy. [...]

Read these words to the rest of the brothers, so they may learn what the life of monks should be and believe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ glorifies those who glorify him. He leads those who serve him until the end. [...]

4.2 Basil to Gregory on Solitude (ca. 358–359)

St. Basil, “Letter 2,” in *The Fathers Speak*, ed. George Barrois (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986). Used by permission of St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

As noted earlier, in 357 and 358 St. Basil visited and then lived in the St. Pachomius monastery in upper Egypt; so impressed was he that he resolved to create his own community along with his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend, Gregory of Nazianzus. (We’ve already encountered both Gregories in our examination of the Trinitarian debates.) Before writing his governance manual for monasteries (the “long rules”), Basil drafted some general principles through correspondence with Gregory of Nazianzus. In the excerpt below Basil outlines his conviction that the Christian life should be lived apart from secular cares and that monks should aspire to “quietude.”



Figure 27. Basil the Great, mosaic, St. Sophia Cathedral, Kiev, 1000s

[...] One should aspire at keeping the mind in quietude. The eye that wanders continually around, now sideways, now up and down, is unable to see distinctly what lies under it; it ought rather to apply itself firmly to the visible object if it aims at a clear vision. Likewise, the spirit of man, if it is dragged about by the world's thousand cares, has no way to attain a clear vision of the truth. [...] Each day arrives, each in its own way obscuring the mind; and the nights, taking over the cares of the day, deceive the soul with obnoxious phantasms. There is only one escape:

withdraw from the world altogether. Now this withdrawal does not mean that we should leave the world bodily, but rather break loose from the ties of “sympathy of the soul with the body.” This means to be without a city, without a house, without anything of our own, without property, without possessions, without resources, without affairs, without contracts, without being taught by men, but making ready to receive in our heart the imprint of divine teaching.

The solitude offers a very great advantage for our task. [...] Let therefore the site of the monastery be most like our place here,²¹ free from the commerce of men, so that nothing may come from without and break the continuity of the *askesis*,²² for a pious *askesis* nurtures the soul with divine thoughts. Is there a greater happiness than to imitate on earth the choir of angels? At daybreak, to get up at once for prayer and honor the creator with hymns and canticles? Then, when the sun shines with its pure light, to rush to work, to be accompanied everywhere with prayer and, so to speak, to season our labor with the salt of hymns; to establish the soul in joy and drive out sadness is the gift and the comfort of the hymns. Quietude is therefore the principle of purification of the soul, when the tongue does not speak the words of men, when the eyes do not turn all around to behold the complexion and the proportion of bodies, when the hearing does not loosen the spirit with sweet tunes composed for pleasure, or with jokes or buffoon cries most apt to unnerve the strength of the soul.

21. *place here*—Annisi, a solitary location in Pontus, an area on the southern coast of the Black Sea.

22. *askesis*—the discipline of avoiding lust.

4.3 Long Rules of St. Basil (ca. 356)

Saint Basil, “The Long Rules,” in *Saint Basil: Ascetical Works*, trans. Monica Wagner, vol. 9, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 1962), questions 6, 7, 13, 17, 22, 27, 30, 37, and 47. Public domain.



Figure 28. Mosaic of St. Basil consecrating liturgical elements, 1000s, Church of St. Sofia, Ohrid, Macedonia

Question 6. Concerning the necessity of living in retirement.

Response. A secluded and remote habitation also contributes to the removal of distraction from the soul. Living among those who are unscrupulous and disdainful in their attitude toward an exact observance of the commandments is dangerous, as is shown by the following words of Solomon: “Be not a friend to an angry man and do

not walk with a furious man; lest perhaps you learn his ways and take snares to your soul.” The words of the apostle, “Go out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord,” bear also upon this point. Consequently, that we may not receive incitements to sin through our eyes and ears and become imperceptibly habituated to it, and that the impress and form, so to speak, of what is seen and heard may not remain in the soul to its ruin, and that we may be able to be constant in prayer, we should before all things else seek to dwell in a retired place. In so doing, we should be able to overcome our former habits whereby we lived as strangers to the precepts of Christ (and it is no mean struggle to gain mastery over one’s wonted manner of acting, for custom maintained throughout a long period takes on the force of nature), and we could wipe away the stains of sin by assiduous prayer and persevering meditation on the will of God. It is impossible to gain proficiency in this meditation and prayer, however, while a multitude of distractions is dragging the soul about and introducing into it anxieties about the affairs of this life. Could anyone, immersed in these cares, ever fulfill that command: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself”? For, we must deny ourselves and take up the cross of Christ and thus follow him. Now, self-denial involves the entire forgetfulness of the past and surrender of one’s will—surrender that is very difficult, not to say quite impossible, to achieve while living in the promiscuity customary in the world. And in addition, the social intercourse demanded by such a life is even an obstacle to taking up one’s cross and following Christ. Readiness to die for Christ, the mortification of one’s members on this earth, preparedness for every danger that might befall us on behalf of Christ’s name, detachment from this life—this it is to take up one’s cross; and we regard the obstacles springing from the habits of life in society as major impediments thereto.

And in addition to all the other obstacles, which are many, the soul in looking at the crowd of other offenders does not, in the first place, have time to become aware of its own sins and to afflict itself by penance for its errors; on the contrary, by comparison with those who are worse, it takes on, besides, a certain deceptive appearance of righteousness. Secondly, through the disturbances and occupations that life in society naturally engenders, the soul, being drawn away from the more worthy remembrance of God, pays the penalty of finding neither joy nor gladness in God and of not relishing the delights of the Lord or tasting the sweetness of his words, so as to be able to say: “I re-

membered God and was delighted,” and “How sweet are your words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth.” Worse still, it becomes habituated to a disregard and a complete forgetfulness of his judgments, than which no more fatal misfortune could befall it.

Question 7. On the necessity of living in the company of those who are striving for the same objective—that of pleasing God—and the difficulty and hazards of living as a solitary.

Since your words have convinced us that it is dangerous to live in company with those who hold the commandments of God in light regard, we consider it logical to inquire whether one who retires from society should live in solitude or with brethren who are of the same mind and who have set before themselves the same goal, that is, the devout life.

Response. I consider that life passed in company with a number of persons in the same habitation is more advantageous in many respects. My reasons are, first, that no one of us is self-sufficient as regards corporeal necessities, but we require one another’s aid in supplying our needs. The foot, to cite an analogy, possesses one kind of power and lacks another, and without the cooperation of the other members of the body it finds itself incapable of carrying on its activity independently for any length of time, nor does it have the wherewithal to supply what is lacking. Similarly, in the solitary life, what is at hand becomes useless to us and what is wanting cannot be provided, since God, the creator, decreed that we should require the help of one another, as it is written, so that we might associate with one another. Again, apart from this consideration, the doctrine of the charity of Christ does not permit the individual to be concerned solely with his own private interests. “Charity,” says the apostle, “seeks not its own.” But a life passed in solitude is concerned only with the private service of individual needs. This is openly opposed to the law of love that the apostle fulfilled, who sought not what was profitable to himself but to many that they might be saved. Furthermore, a person living in solitary retirement will not readily discern his own defects, since he has no one to admonish and correct him with mildness and compassion. In fact, admonition even from an enemy often produces in a prudent man the desire for amendment. But the cure of sin is wrought with understanding by him who loves sincerely; for holy scripture says: “for he who loves corrects betimes.” Such a one it is very difficult to find in solitude, if in one’s prior state of life one had not been associated with such a person. The solitary, consequently, experiences the truth of the

saying, "Woe to him who is alone, for when he falls he has none to lift him up." Moreover, the majority of the commandments are easily observed by several persons living together, but not so in the case of one living alone; for, while he is obeying one commandment, the practice of another is being interfered with. For example, when he is visiting the sick, he cannot show hospitality to the stranger and, in the imparting and sharing of necessities (especially when the ministrations are prolonged), he is prevented from giving zealous attention to [other] tasks. As a result, the greatest commandment and the one especially conducive to salvation is not observed, since the hungry are not fed nor the naked clothed. Who, then, would choose this ineffectual and unprofitable life in preference to that which is both fruitful and in accordance with the Lord's command?

Besides, if all we who are united in the one hope of our calling are one body with Christ as our head, we are also members, one of another. If we are not joined together by union in the Holy Spirit in the harmony of one body, but each of us should choose to live in solitude, we would not serve the common good in the ministry according to God's good pleasure, but would be satisfying our own passion for self-gratification. How could we, divided and separated, preserve the status and the mutual service of members or our subordinate relationship to our head, which is Christ? It is impossible, indeed, to rejoice with him who receives an honor or to sympathize with him who suffers when, by reason of their being separated from one another, each person cannot, in all likelihood, be kept informed about the affairs of his neighbor. In addition, since no one has the capacity to receive all spiritual gifts, but the grace of the Spirit is given proportionately to the faith of each, when one is living in association with others, the grace privately bestowed on each individual becomes the common possession of his fellows. "To one, indeed, is given the word of wisdom; and to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith; to another, prophecy, to another, the grace of healing," and so on. He who receives any of these gifts does not possess it for his own sake but rather for the sake of others, so that, in the life passed in community, the operation of the Holy Spirit in the individual is at the same time necessarily transmitted to all. He who lives alone, consequently, and has, perhaps, one gift renders it ineffectual by leaving it in disuse, since it lies buried within him. How much danger there is in this all of you know who have read the Gospel. On the other hand, in the case of several persons living together, each enjoys his own gift and enhances

it by giving others a share, besides reaping benefit from the gifts of others as if they were his own.

Community life offers more blessings than can be fully and easily enumerated. It is more advantageous than the solitary life both for preserving the goods bestowed on us by God and for warding off the external attacks of the enemy. If any should happen to grow heavy with that sleep that leads death and which we have been instructed by David to avert with prayer: "Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death, the awakening induced by those who are already on watch is the more assured." For the sinner, moreover, the withdrawal from his sin is far easier if he fears the shame of incurring censure from many acting together—to him, indeed, might be applied the words: "To him who is such a one, this rebuke is sufficient that is given by many"—and for the righteous man, there is a great and full satisfaction in the esteem of the group and in their approval of his conduct. If in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall stand, he who performs a good action will be far more surely corroborated by the testimony of many. Besides these disadvantages, the solitary life is fraught with other perils. The first and greatest is that of self-satisfaction. Since the solitary has no one to appraise his conduct, he will think he has achieved the perfection of the precept. Second, because he never tests his state of soul by exercise, he will not recognize his own deficiencies nor will he discover the advance he may have made in his manner of acting, since he will have removed all practical occasion for the observance of the commandments.

Wherein will he show his humility, if there is no one with whom he may compare and so confirm his own greater humility? Wherein will he give evidence of his compassion, if he has cut himself off from association with other persons? And how will he exercise himself in long-suffering, if no one contradicts his wishes? If anyone says that the teaching of the holy scripture is sufficient for the amendment of his ways, he resembles a man who learns carpentry without ever actually doing a carpenter's work or a man who is instructed in metal-working but will not reduce theory to practice. To such a one the apostle would say: "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Consider, further, that the Lord by reason of his excessive love for man was not content with merely teaching the word, but, so as to transmit to us clearly and exactly the example of humility in the perfection of charity, girded himself and washed the feet of the disciples. Whom, therefore, will you wash? To whom will

you minister? In comparison with whom will you be the lowest, if you live alone? How, moreover, in a solitude, will that good and pleasant thing be accomplished, the dwelling of brethren together in one habitation that the Holy Spirit likens to ointment emitting its fragrance from the head of the high priest? So it is an arena for the combat, a good path of progress, continual discipline, and a practicing of the Lord's commandments, when brethren dwell together in community. This kind of life has as its aim the glory of God according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." It maintains also the practice characteristic of the saints, of whom it is recorded in the Acts: "And all they that believed were together and had all things common," and again: "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that aught of the things that he possessed was his own, but all things were common to them." [...]

Question 17. That laughter also must be held in check.

Response. Those who live under discipline should avoid very carefully even such intemperate action as is commonly regarded lightly. Indulging in unrestrained and immoderate laughter is a sign of intemperance, of a want of control over one's emotions, and of failure to repress the soul's frivolity by a stern use of reason. It is not unbecoming, however, to give evidence of merriment of soul by a cheerful smile, if only to illustrate that which is written: "A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance"; but raucous laughter and uncontrollable shaking of the body are not indicative of a well-regulated soul, or of personal dignity, or self-mastery. This kind of laughter Ecclesiastes also reprehends as especially subversive of firmness of soul in the words: "Laughter I counted error," and again: "As the crackling of thorns burning under a pot, so is the laughter of fools." Moreover, the Lord appears to have experienced those emotions that are of necessity associated with the body, as well as those that betoken virtue, as, for example, weariness and compassion for the afflicted; but, so far as we know from the story of the Gospel, he never laughed. On the contrary, he even pronounced those unhappy who are given to laughter. [...]

He, therefore, who is master of every passion and feels no excitement from pleasure, or at least, does not give it outward expression, but is steadfastly inclined to restraint as regards every harmful delight, such a one is perfectly continent—but, clearly, he is also at the same time free from all sin. [...]

Continency, then, destroys sin, quells the passions, and mortifies the body even as to its natural affections and desires. It marks the beginning of the spiritual life, leads us to eternal blessings, and extinguishes within itself the desire for pleasure. Pleasure, indeed, is evil's special allurements, through which we men are most likely to commit sin and by which the whole soul is dragged down to ruin as by a hook. Whoever, then, is neither overcome nor weakened by it successfully avoids all sin through the practice of continency. If, however, a man escape almost all incitements to sin, but falls prey even to one, such a man is not continent, just as he is not in health who is suffering from only one bodily affliction and as he is not free who is under the authority of anyone, it matters not whom. Further, the other virtues are practiced in secret and are rarely displayed to men. But continency makes itself known as soon as we meet a person who practices it. As plumpness and a healthy color betoken the athlete, so leanness of body and the pallor produced by the exercise of continency mark the Christian, for he is the true athlete of the commandments of Christ. In weakness of body, he overcomes his opponent and displays his prowess in the contests of piety, according to the words, "when I am weak, then am I powerful." So beneficial is it merely to behold the continent man making a sparing and frugal use of necessities, ministering to nature as if this were a burdensome duty and begrudging the time spent in it, and rising promptly from the table in his eagerness for work, that I think no sermon would so touch the soul of one whose appetites are undisciplined and bring about his conversion as merely his meeting with a continent man. Indeed, the reason we are enjoined to eat and drink to the glory of God is, probably, so that our good works may shine forth even at the table to the glory of our Father who is in Heaven. [...]

Question 22. On the garb befitting a Christian.

Response. Earlier in our discourse it was shown that humility, simplicity, thriftiness, and frugality in all things are necessary, so that we might have rare occasion for distraction on the score of our bodily needs. This end we must keep also before our minds in treating of clothing. If it behooves us to seek to be last of all, clearly the last place is also to be preferred in this connection. If men who are greedy for renown seek glory for themselves even in the garments they wear, striving to attract attention and arouse envy by reason of the splendor of their dress, it is obvious that one who out of humility has chosen to

pass his life in the lowliest condition of all ought to prefer for himself even in this particular the last and the least. [...]

Now, the apostle sets the standard for the proper use of clothing in one sentence when he says: "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content,"—as if mere covering alone were necessary for us. At any rate, let us not fall any more into the forbidden boasting—not to speak of something worse—which accompanies elaborate dress or the vanity that is likewise prompted by it; for these vices creep subsequently into our lives through the pursuit of vain and worthless arts. The use made in the beginning of the clothing that God himself gave to the needy has been revealed to us; for the scripture says: "God made for them garments of skins." Such garb was sufficient to cover their nakedness. Since, however, another purpose enters in—that of keeping warm by means of clothing—it is necessary to have both uses in mind: covering for decency's sake and for protection against mischief from the air. Yet, inasmuch as even from this point of view some garments are more useful than others, we should prefer whatever can be put to greater use, so that the principle of poverty may in no way be violated. We should, furthermore, not keep in reserve some garments to wear in public and others for use at home, nor, again, some to be worn in the daytime, others at night, but we should contrive to have only one garment that can serve for all occasions: for suitable wear during the day and for necessary covering at night. This manner of acting unites us even in our appearance and the Christian is thus identified by the way he dresses as with a kind of special stamp, for all who aim at the same goal are alike in as many ways as possible. This distinctiveness in dress is also useful as giving advance notice of each of us, by proclaiming our profession of the devout life. Actions in conformity with this profession are, in consequence, expected from us by those whom we meet. The standard of indecorous and unseemly conduct is not the same for ordinary folk as for those who make profession of great aspirations. No one would take particular notice of the man in the street who would inflict blows on a passerby or publicly suffer them himself, or who would use obscene language, or loiter in the shops, or commit other unseemly actions of this kind. These things are accepted as in keeping with the general course of life in the world. On the other hand, everyone takes notice of him who is bound by promise to strive for perfection if he neglect the least part of his duty, and they heap reproaches upon him for it, fulfilling the words: "and turning upon you, they tear you." A mode of dress, therefore, which

denotes one's profession serves to fulfill the office of pedagogue, as it were, for the weak, to keep them from wrongdoing even against their will. As one style of dress bespeaks the soldier, another, a senator, a third, some other high position, so that the rank of these dignitaries can generally be inferred, so also it is right and proper that there be some mark of identity for the Christian that would bear out even as to his garments the good order spoken of by the apostle. In one place, indeed, he directs that a bishop be a man of orderly behavior; in another, he prescribes that women be clad in decent apparel, the word "decent" clearly being used in a sense that accords with the specific character of the Christian ideal. This same advice applies also to footwear. On every occasion, a style that is plain, easy to procure, and serviceable should be preferred. [...]

Question 30. The dispositions that ought to animate the superior in caring for the brethren.

Response. His rank should not arouse feelings of pride in the superior, lest he himself lose the blessing promised to humility or "lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the judgment of the devil." On the other hand, let him be assured that added responsibility calls for greater service. He who ministers to many wounded persons, wiping away the matter from their wounds and applying medicaments appropriate to the particular injury involved, does not find a motive for pride in his ministrations, but rather for humility, anxiety, and energetic action. Far more thoughtful and solicitous ought he be who, as the servant of all and as being himself liable to an account on their behalf, performs the office of curing the spiritual weakness of his brethren. In this manner he will fulfill the aim that the Lord had in mind when he said: "If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all and the minister of all." [...]

Question 37. Whether prayer and psalmody ought to afford a pretext for neglecting our work, what hours are suitable for prayer, and, above all, whether labor is necessary.

Response. Our Lord Jesus Christ says: "He is worthy"—not everyone without exception or anyone at all, but "the workman, of his meat," and the apostle bids us labor and work with our own hands the things that are good, that we may have something to give to him who suffers need. It is, therefore, immediately obvious that we must toil with diligence and not think that our goal of piety offers an escape from work or a pretext for idleness, but occasion for struggle, for ever greater endeavor, and for patience in tribulation, so that we may be able to say:

“In labor and painfulness, in much watching, in hunger and thirst.” Not only is such exertion beneficial for bringing the body into subjection, but also for showing charity to our neighbor in order that through us God may grant sufficiency to the weak among our brethren, according to the example given by the apostle in the Acts when he says: “I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak,” and again: “that you may have something to give to him who suffers need.” Thus we may be accounted worthy to hear the words: “Come, you blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.”

But why should we dwell upon the amount of evil there is in idleness, when the apostle clearly prescribes that he who does not work should not eat. [...] The Lord couples sloth with wickedness, saying: “Wicked and slothful servant.” Wise Solomon, also, praises the laborer not only in the words already quoted, but also, in rebuking the sluggard, associating him by contrast with the tiniest of insects: “Go to the ant O sluggard.” We have reason to fear, therefore, lest, perchance on the day of judgment this fault also may be alleged against us, since he who has endowed us with the ability to work demands that our labor be proportioned to our capacity, for he says: “To whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more.” Moreover, because some use prayer and psalmody as an excuse for neglecting their work, it is necessary to bear in mind that for certain other tasks a particular time is allotted, according to the words of Ecclesiastes: “All things have their season.” For prayer and psalmody, however, as also, indeed, for some other duties, every hour is suitable, that, while our hands are busy at their tasks, we may praise God sometimes with the tongue (when this is possible or, rather, when it is conducive to edification); or, if not, with the heart, at least, in psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles, as it is written. Thus, in the midst of our work can we fulfill the duty of prayer, giving thanks to him who has granted strength to our hands for performing our tasks and cleverness to our minds for acquiring knowledge, and for having provided the materials, both that which is in the instruments we use and that which forms the matter of the arts in which we may be engaged, praying that the work of our hands may be directed toward its goal, the good pleasure of God.

Thus we acquire a recollected spirit—when in every action we beg from God the success of our labors and satisfy our debt of gratitude to

him who gave us the power to do the work, and when, as has been said, we keep before our minds the aim of pleasing him. If this is not the case, how can there be consistency in the words of the apostle bidding us to “pray without ceasing,” with those others, “we worked night and day.” Nor, indeed, because thanksgiving at all times has been enjoined even by law and has been proved necessary to our life from both reason and nature, should we therefore be negligent in observing those times for prayer customarily established in communities—times that we have inevitably selected because each period contains a reminder peculiar to itself of blessings received from God. Prayers are recited early in the morning so that the first movements of the soul and the mind may be consecrated to God and that we may take up no other consideration before we have been cheered and heartened by the thought of God, as it is written: “I remembered God and was delighted,” and that the body may not busy itself with tasks before we have fulfilled the words: “To you will I pray, O Lord; in the morning you shall hear my voice. In the morning I will stand before you and will see.” Again at the third hour the brethren must assemble and betake themselves to prayer, even if they may have dispersed to their various employments. Recalling to mind the gift of the Spirit bestowed upon the apostles at this third hour,²³ all should worship together, so that they also may become worthy to receive the gift of sanctity, and they should implore the guidance of the Holy Spirit and his instruction in what is good and useful, according to the words: “Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from your face; and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and strengthen me with a guiding spirit.” Again, it is said elsewhere, “Your good spirit shall lead me into the right land”; and having prayed thus, we should again apply ourselves to our tasks.

But, if some, perhaps, are not in attendance because the nature or place of their work keeps them at too great a distance, they are strictly

23. *third hour*—9:00 a.m. The following scene in Acts 2:1-4 occurs at 9:00 a.m.: “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” (NRSV)

obliged to carry out wherever they are, with promptitude, all that is prescribed for common observance, for “where there are two or three gathered together in my name,” says the Lord, “there am I in the midst of them.” It is also our judgment that prayer is necessary at the sixth hour,²⁴ in imitation of the saints who say: “Evening and morning and at noon I will speak and declare; and he shall hear my voice.” And so that we may be saved from invasion and the noonday devil, at this time, also, the ninetieth psalm will be recited. The ninth hour,²⁵ however, was appointed as a compulsory time for prayer by the apostles themselves in the Acts where it is related that “Peter and John went up to the temple at the ninth hour of prayer.” When the day’s work is ended, thanksgiving should be offered for what has been granted us or for what we have done rightly therein and confession made of our omissions whether voluntary or involuntary, or of a secret fault, if we chance to have committed any in words or deeds, or in the heart itself; for by prayer we propitiate God for all our misdemeanors. The examination of our past actions is a great help toward not falling into like faults again; therefore the psalmist says: “the things you say in your hearts, be sorry for them upon your beds.”

Again, at nightfall, we must ask that our rest be sinless and untroubled by dreams. At this hour, also, the ninetieth psalm should be recited. Paul and Silas, furthermore, have handed down to us the practice of compulsory prayer at midnight, as the history of the Acts declares: “And at midnight Paul and Silas praised God.” The psalmist also says: “I rose at midnight to give praise to you for the judgments of your justifications.” Then, too, we must anticipate the dawn by prayer, so that the day may not find us in slumber and in bed, according to the words: “My eyes have prevented the morning, that I might meditate on your words.” None of these hours for prayer should be unobserved by those who have chosen a life devoted to the glory of God and his Christ. Moreover, I think that variety and diversity in the prayers and psalms recited at appointed hours are desirable for the reason that routine and boredom, somehow, often cause distraction in the soul, while by change and variety in the psalmody and prayers said at the stated hours it is refreshed in devotion and renewed in sobriety. [...]

Question 47. Of those who do not accept these regulations.

24. *sixth hour*—noon.

25. *ninth hour*—3:00 p.m.

Response. Anyone who does not approve of the superior's prescriptions should take up the matter with him either publicly or in private, if his objection is a sound one and consonant with the scriptures; if not, he should hold his peace and do the thing that was enjoined. And if he himself should suffer from embarrassment, he should employ others as his representatives in the matter, so that if the injunction be in opposition to the scriptures, he may save both himself and his brethren from harm. If, however, it be proved to be in accord with right reason he would himself avoid a rash and hazardous dispute—"For he who discerns," says the apostle, "if he eat is condemned, because not of faith"—and he would not lay a snare of disobedience for simpler souls; "for it were better," says the Lord, "that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea than that he should scandalize one of these little ones." And if some persist in their disobedience, finding fault in secret and not openly stating their grievance, thus becoming the cause of quarreling in the community and undermining the authority of the commands given, they should be dismissed from the community as teachers of disobedience and rebellion; for the scripture says: "Cast out the scoffer from the council and contention shall go out with him," and also: "Put away the evil one from among yourselves, for a little leaven corrupts the whole lump."

4.4 Evagrius Ponticus's (345–399) Guide to Monastic Life

Evagrius Ponticus, *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, ed. and trans. John Bamberger (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 12–42. © 1981 by Cistercian Publications. Used by permission of Cistercian Publications, published by the Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321.

Like St. Basil (under whom he studied), Evagrius Ponticus became a dear friend of the two Gregories and worked with Gregory of Nazianzus in the battles against Arianism, particularly at the Second Council of Nicaea in 381.

A successful and worldly man in early adulthood, Evagrius fell in love with a married woman. The infatuation so troubled him (he dreamed that the woman's husband ordered him imprisoned) that he fled the city of Constantinople for the monastic life. He traveled among monasteries throughout Egypt and Palestine, residing in various communities until the end of his life.

The Second Council of Constantinople (553) condemned Evagrius two centuries after his death for his belief in the pre-existence of human souls. But his teachings on monasticism remained influential and guided the development of Russian monasteries many centuries later.

The following excerpt is from his *Praktikos*, an intentionally simple guide to educate new monks about the life they had embraced. Evagrius addressed the *Praktikos* to a friend residing in a monastery on Mount Athos, a peninsula in eastern Greece. (Other sections deal with Mount Athos and its significance in greater detail.)



Figure 29. Mount Athos peninsula

4. Whatever a man loves he will desire with all his might. What he desires he strives to lay hold of. Now desire precedes every pleasure, and it is feeling that gives birth to desire. For that which is not subject to feeling is also free of passion.

5. The demons fight openly against the solitaries, but they arm the more careless of the brethren against the cenobites,²⁶ or those who practice virtue in the company of others. Now this second form of combat is much lighter than the first, for there is not to be found on earth any men more fierce than the demons, none who support at the same time all their evil deeds. [...]

7. The thought of gluttony suggests to the monk that he give up his ascetic efforts in short order. It brings to his mind concern for his stomach, for his liver and spleen, the thought of a long illness, scarcity

26. *cenobites*—monks who live in a monastic community; *not* hermits.

of the commodities of life and finally of his edematous²⁷ body and the lack of care by the physicians. These things are depicted vividly before his eyes. [...]

8. The demon of impurity impels one to lust after bodies. It attacks more strenuously those who practice continence,²⁸ in the hope that they will give up their practice of this virtue, feeling that they gain nothing by it. This demon has a way of bowing the soul down to practices of an impure kind, defiling it, and causing it to speak and hear certain words almost as if the reality were actually present to be seen.

11. The most fierce passion is anger. In fact it is defined as a boiling and stirring up of wrath against one who has given injury—or is thought to have done so. It constantly irritates the soul and above all at the time of prayer it seizes the mind and flashes the picture of the offensive person before one's eyes. Then there comes a time when it persists longer, is transformed into indignation, stirs up alarming experiences by night. This is succeeded by a general debility of the body, malnutrition with its attendant pallor, and the illusion of being attacked by poisonous wild beasts. [...]

13. The spirit of vainglory is most subtle and it readily grows up in the souls of those who practice virtue. It leads them to desire to make their struggles known publicly, to hunt after the praise of men. This in turn leads to their illusory healing of women, or to their hearing fancied sounds as the cries of the demons—crowds of people who touch their clothes. This demon predicts besides that they will attain to the priesthood. It has men knocking at the door, seeking audience with them. If the monk does not willingly yield to their request, he is bound and led away. When in this way he is carried aloft by vain hope, the demon vanishes and the monk is left to be tempted by the demon of pride or of sadness who brings upon him thoughts opposed to his hopes. It also happens at times that a man who a short while before was a holy priest, is led off bound and is handed over to the demon of impurity to be sifted by him.

14. The demon of pride is the cause of the most damaging fall for the soul. For it induces the monk to deny that God is his helper and to consider that he himself is the cause of virtuous actions. Further, he gets a big head in regard to the brethren, considering them stupid because they do not all have this same opinion of him.

27. *edematous*—swollen.

28. *continence*—refraining from sexual activity.

Anger and sadness follow on the heels of this demon, and last of all there comes in its train the greatest of maladies—derangement of mind, associated with wild ravings and hallucinations of whole multitudes of demons in the sky.

15. Reading, vigils and prayer—these are the things that lend stability to the wandering mind. Hunger, toil and solitude are the means of extinguishing the flames of desire. Turbid anger is calmed by the singing of psalms, by patience and almsgiving. But all these practices are to be engaged in according to due measure and at the appropriate times. What is untimely done, or done without measure, endures but a short time. And what is short-lived is more harmful than profitable.

16. When the soul desires to seek after a variety of foods then it is time to afflict it with bread and water that it may learn to be grateful for a mere morsel of bread. For satiety desires a variety of dishes but hunger thinks itself happy to get its fill of nothing more than bread.

17. Limiting one's intake of water helps a great deal to obtain temperance. This was well understood by the three hundred Israelites accompanying Gideon just when they were preparing to attack Midian.²⁹ [...]

19. The man who flees from all worldly pleasures is an impregnable tower before the assaults of the demon of sadness. For sadness is a deprivation of sensible pleasure, whether actually present or only hoped for. And so if we continue to cherish some affection for anything in this world it is impossible to repel this enemy, for he lays his snares and produces sadness precisely where he sees we are particularly inclined. [...]

21. Let not the sun go down upon our anger lest by night the demons come upon us to strike fear in our souls and render our spirits more cowardly for the fight on the morrow. For images of a frightful kind usually arise from anger's disturbing influence. Indeed, there is nothing more disposed to render the spirit inclined to desertion than troubled irascibility. [...]

23. Do not give yourself over to your angry thoughts so as to fight in your mind with the one who has vexed you. Nor again to thoughts of fornication, imagining the pleasure vividly. The one darkens the soul; the other invites to the burning of passion. Both cause your mind to be

29. ... *Midian*—in Judges chapter 7 God instructs Gideon to choose from among his troops only soldiers who lap water from a spring (rather than drinking from cupped hands).

defiled, and while you indulge these fancies at the time of prayer, and thus do not offer pure prayer to God, the demon of *acedia*³⁰ falls upon you without delay. He falls above all upon souls in this state and, dog-like, snatches away the soul as if it were a fawn. [...]

27. When we meet with the demon of *acedia* then is the time with tears to divide our soul in two. One part is to encourage; the other is to be encouraged. Thus we are to sow seeds of a firm hope in ourselves while we sing with the holy David: “Why are you filled with sadness, my soul? Why are you distraught; Trust in God, for I shall give praise to him. He it is who saves me, the light of my eyes and my God.” [...]

32. When a man has once attained to contemplative knowledge and the delight that derives from it he will no longer yield himself up to the demon of vainglory, though the demon offer all the delights of the world to him. For what, may I ask, could surpass spiritual contemplation? Thus it is that we go on eagerly working at the ascetical life so long as we have not tasted this knowledge, proving to God that we do everything for the sole aim of attaining it.

33. Remember your former life and your past sins and how, though you were subject to the passions, you have been brought into *apatheia* by the mercy of Christ. Remember too how you have separated yourself from the world that has so often and in so many matters brought you low. “Put this also to my credit (says Christ) that I preserve you in the desert and put to flight the demons who rage against you.” Such thoughts instill humility in us and afford no entrance to the demon of pride. [...]

35. The passions of the soul are occasioned by men. Those of the body come from the body. Now the passions of the body are cut off by continence and those of the soul by spiritual love. [...]

42. When you are tempted do not fall immediately to prayer. First utter some angry words against the one who afflicts you. The reason for this is found in the fact that your soul cannot pray purely when it is under the influence of various thoughts. By first speaking out in anger against them you confound and bring to nothing the devices of the enemy. To be sure this is the usual effect of anger even upon more worthy thoughts. [...]

44. When the demons achieve nothing in their struggles against a monk they withdraw a bit and observe to see which of the virtues he

30. *acedia*—sloth, listlessness, sadness, discontent.

neglects in the meantime. Then all of a sudden they attack him from this point and ravage the poor fellow. [...]

48. The demons strive against men of the world chiefly through their deeds, but in the case of monks for the most part by means of thoughts, since the desert deprives them of such affairs. Just as it is easier to sin by thought than by deed, so also is the war fought on the field of thought more severe than that which is conducted in the area of things and events. For the mind is easily moved indeed, and hard to control in the presence of sinful fantasies. [...]

49. We have received no command to work and to pass the night in vigils and to fast constantly. However, we do have the obligation to pray without ceasing. Although the body, due to its weakness, does not suffice for such labors as these, which are calculated to restore health to the passionate part of the soul, these practices do require the body for their performance. But prayer makes the spirit strong and pure for combat since by its very nature the spirit is made to pray. Moreover, prayer even fights without the aid of the body on behalf of the other powers of the soul. [...]

52. To separate the body from the soul is the privilege only of the one who has joined them together. But to separate the soul from the body lies as well in the power of the man who pursues virtue. For our fathers gave to the meditation of death and to the flight from the body a special name: *anachoresis*.³¹ [...]

59. The greater the progress the soul makes the more fearful the adversaries who take over the war against her. I do not accept the opinion that the same demons always remain about her. Those who fall into more severe temptations above all know the truth of this view, for they observe that the measure of purity of heart they have achieved is worked over by successive demons.

60. Perfect purity of heart develops in the soul after the victory over all the demons whose function it is to offer opposition to the ascetic life. But there is designated an imperfect purity of heart in consideration of the power of the demon that meantime fights against it.

61. The spirit would not make progress nor go forth on that happy sojourn with the band of the incorporeal beings unless it should correct its interior. This is so because anxiety arising from interior con-

31. *anachoresis*—literally “withdrawal”; often used to designate the monastic life.

flicts is calculated to turn its back upon the things that it has left behind. [...]

63. When the spirit begins to be free from all distractions as it makes its prayer, then there commences an all-out battle day and night against the irascible part.

64. The proof of *apatheia* is had when the spirit begins to see its own light, when it remains in a state of tranquility in the presence of the images it has during sleep and when it maintains its calm as it beholds the affairs of life.

65. The spirit that possesses health is the one that has no images of the things of this world at the time of prayer.

66. The spirit that is actively leading the ascetic life with God's help and that draws near to contemplative knowledge ceases to perceive the irrational part of the soul almost completely, perhaps altogether. For this knowledge bears it aloft and separates it from the senses.

67. The soul that has *apatheia* is not simply the one that is not disturbed by changing events but the one that remains unmoved at the memory of them as well. [...]

69. A great thing indeed—to pray without distraction; a greater thing still—to sing psalms without distraction.

70. A man who has established the virtues in himself and is entirely permeated with them no longer remembers the law or commandments or punishment. Rather, he says and does what excellent habit suggests. [...]

74. Temptation is the lot of the monk, for thoughts that darken his mind will inevitably arise from the part of his soul that is the seat of passion. [...]

78. The ascetic life is the spiritual method for cleansing the affective part of the soul.

79. The effects of keeping the commandments do not suffice to heal the powers of the soul completely. They must be complemented by a contemplative activity appropriate to these faculties and this activity must penetrate the spirit. [...]

87. The man who is progressing in the ascetic life diminishes the force of passion. The man progressing in contemplation diminishes his ignorance. As regards the passions, the time will come when they will be entirely destroyed. In the matter of ignorance, however, one type will have an end, but another type will not.

Let this suffice for now, my very dear Anatolius, for my discussion with you on the ascetic life. These are the gleanings that I have gathered, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, among the growths of our ripening vine. But if the bright “sun of justice” will shine upon us and our cluster becomes ripe then we shall also drink its wine “that rejoices the heart of man,” through the prayers and intercession of the just Gregory who planted me as well as those of the holy fathers of the present time who water me, and also by the power of Jesus Christ our Lord who makes me grow. May praise and power be his for ages without end. Amen.

5. Syrian Stylites

As emperors and patriarchs bickered over the prerogatives of each, some Christians abandoned both the empire and the institutional church almost entirely. The stylites (from the Greek *stylos* or “pillar”) of Syria are an extreme example of ascetics who forsook the life of court, council, community, and family altogether.

But here ironies abound. The two hagiographies that follow assert (hyperbolically, to be sure) that stylites exerted influence on the emperors and bishops from whose realms they fled. These otherworldly men, their biographies suggest, provided council to the worldly. Here we find priests, bishops, and patriarchs seeking the stylites’ advice, and emperors marveling at and assisting the stylites’ endeavors. Daniel the Stylite, according to his biography, even prevented an emperor from backing “Monophysitism.” Stylites thus represent one way in which ascetic, anti-institutional, and popular traditions in Eastern Orthodoxy remained part of the lore surrounding formal Byzantine institutions.

5.1 Life of St. Simeon (n.d.)

Antonius, “The Life & Daily Mode of Living of the Blessed Simeon The Stylite,” in *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, trans. Robert Doran (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 87–100. Used by permission of Cistercian Publications, © 1992, published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321.



Figure 30. St. Simeon atop his pillar, Syrian, 500s

St. Simeon the Stylite was born in the late 300s near Nicopolis, a city on the east-central coast of Greece. He likely died in 459. A number of biographies testify to Simeon’s fame and repute, but their conflicting accounts make it difficult to know much about his life with certainty.

We also know little about the origin of this biography. The author, “Antonius,” is a mystery: he presents himself as a disciple of Simeon, but scholars cannot determine his connection, if

any, to the saint. Antonius' biography survives in several variants, all of which are impossible to date with any authority.

It is difficult for the modern reader to imagine the life embraced by St. Simeon. Robert Doran, the translator of this text, notes that "one cannot help but marvel at the inventiveness of [early Syrian] monks in devising contorted tortures from themselves ..." St. Simeon seems to have been the first desert ascetic to live on a pillar or *stylos*, but other "stylites" soon followed suit. In most cases the ascetic lived on a small platform atop the pillar; a balustrade or trellis surrounded the platform and prevented the saint from falling off. The height of the pillar varied according to the whims of each ascetic—some may have been as tall as eighteen meters. Some stylites refused any covering over their platform, living unprotected from the sun, wind, frost, and rain. A number slept on their feet and refused ever to sit or lie down. Daniel—the subject of the reading after this—stood constantly for thirty years.

Some scholars find remnants of paganism in this practice, citing the example of a giant phallus at a temple dedicated to Aphrodite in Hierapolis, which a man ascended twice a year in order to speak with the gods. Others, however, dismiss such comparisons and argue that stylitism is a practice unique to Syrian Christianity.

A strange and incredibly mysterious event took place in our time. I, Antonius, a sinner and least of all, thought to write it down insofar as I understand it, for the treatise is full of usefulness and contrition. So I beseech you: incline your ear and hear exactly what I understand.

When Simeon, among the saints and most blessed, was young in years, he cared for his father's sheep, just as the prophet David had done. On the Lord's day he would enter the church at the time the oracles of God [were read] and joyfully listen to the holy scriptures, although he did not know what it was he heard. When he had come of age, impelled by the word of God he came one day into the holy church. On hearing the [words of the] apostle read aloud, he asked an old man, "Tell me, father, what is being read?" The old man said to him, "It is about control of the soul." Holy Simeon said to him, "What is control of the soul?" The old man said to him, "Son, why do you ask me? I see that you are young in years, but possess the understanding of

an old man.” Holy Simeon said to him, “I am not testing you, father, but what was read sounds strange to me.” The old man said to him, “Self-control is the soul’s salvation, for it shows the way to enlightenment and leads to the kingdom of Heaven.” Holy Simeon said to him, “Teach me about these things that you mention, honored father, for I am uneducated.”

The old man said to him, “Son, if one fasts unceasingly to God, he will rightfully grant all one’s prayers—that is, one prayer at the third hour, likewise at the sixth, ninth, twelfth, and so on, just as it is done in the monasteries. So, my son, if you know what you have heard, reflect on these things in your heart, for you must hunger and thirst, you must be assaulted and buffeted and reproached, you must groan and weep and be oppressed and suffer ups and downs of fortune; you must renounce bodily health and desires, be humiliated and suffer much from men, for so you will be comforted by angels. Now that you have heard all these things, may the Lord of glory grant you good resolve according to his will.”

When he heard this, holy Simeon went out of the church and came to a deserted area. He lay face down and, taking neither food nor drink, wept for seven days as he prayed to God. After the seven days, he got up and ran full speed to a monastery. Falling at the feet of the abbot, he cried out and said, “Have mercy on me, father, for I am a lowly and wretched man. Save a soul that is perishing and that yet desires to serve God.” The abbot said, “Who are you, and what is your background? What is your name and from where did you come?” Blessed Simeon said, “I am a free man named Simeon, but do not ask me, master, I pray, how I came here or who my parents are! Redeem a soul that perishes.” When he heard this, the abbot lifted him up from the ground and said, “If you come from God, the Lord will protect you from every evil and deceitful deed; you will serve all, so that all may love you.”

Meanwhile, his parents, with tears, ceaselessly sought him. The saint, however, stayed in the monastery, serving all and loved by all and observing the rule of the monastery. One day he went out from the monastery and came across a bucket in front of the well from which the water was drawn. It had a rope attached, and he untied the rope, went to a secluded place and wrapped the rope around his whole body. Over the rope he put a tunic made of hair. Then he re-entered the monastery and said to the brethren, “I went out to draw water and did not find the rope in the bucket.” The brethren said to him, “Be quiet,

lest someone tell this to the abbot.” No one perceived that underneath he was bound with the rope. So he remained a year or more with the rope wrapped around his flesh, and it ate into his flesh so that the rope was covered by the rotted flesh of the righteous man. Because of his stench no one could stand near him, but no one knew his secret. His bed was covered with worms, but no one knew what had taken place.

He would accept his food, but give it to the poor without anyone knowing. One day, however, one of the monks went out and found him giving the poor the bread and pulse¹ he had received. Now everyone would fast till sundown, but holy Simeon only ate on Sunday. One of the monks went in and reported Simeon to the abbot, saying, “I beseech your holiness: this man wants to undo the monastery and certainly the rule that you handed down to us.” The abbot said to him, “How does he want to undo the rule?” The monk said, “We were taught to fast till sundown, but he eats only on Sundays, and the bread and pulse he receives he secretly gives to the poor every day. Not only this, but the stench from his body is so unbearable that no one can stand near him; his bed is full of worms, and we simply cannot bear it. You must choose: either keep him here and we will leave, or send him back where he came from.”

When he heard this, the abbot was astounded. He inspected his bed and found it full of worms, and because of the stench he could not stay there. The abbot said, “Behold, the new Job!”² Taking hold of [Simeon], he said, “Man, why do you do these things? Where does this stench come from? Why do you deceive the brethren? Why do you undo the rule of the monastery? Are you some kind of spirit? Go somewhere else and die away from us. Wretch that I am, am I to be tempted by you? For if you are really a man from real parents, surely you would have told us who your father and mother and kinsfolk are and from whence you came?” When he heard these things, the saint, bowing to the ground, was absolutely silent, but the place where he was standing was filled with his tears. Quite beside himself, the abbot said to his monks, “Strip him so we can see where this stench comes from.”

Then they wanted to strip him, but they could not do it, for his garment was stuck fast because of the putrefied flesh. So for three days

1. *pulse*—legumes (peas, beans, lentils, etc.).

2. *Job*—the protagonist in the biblical book of Job, who endures a series of afflictions but, in the end, retains his faith in and devotion to God.

they kept soaking him in warm water mixed with oil and in this way, after a great deal of trouble, they were able to strip him: but with the garment they also took off his putrefied flesh. They found the rope wrapped around his body so that nothing of him could be seen, only the ends of the rope. There was no guessing how many worms were on him. Then all the monks were astounded when they saw that terrible wound and they asked themselves how and by what means they could take the rope off him. But holy Simeon cried out, saying, "Let me be, my masters and brethren. Let me die as a stinking dog, for so I ought to be judged because of what I have done. For all injustice and covetousness are in me, for I am an ocean of sins."

The monks and the abbot wept when they saw that terrible wound, and the abbot said to him, "You are not yet eighteen years old: what kind of sins do you have?" Holy Simeon said to him, "The prophet David said: 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.' I have been clothed the same as everyone else." The abbot was astonished at his wise answer, that such an uneducated man had been spurred on to the fear of God. However, the abbot called two physicians, and, although the distress and the labor was so great that at one point they gave him up for dead, they finally separated from him the rope with flesh stuck on it. They tended him for fifty days and helped him somewhat, and the abbot said to him, "Look, son, you are now healthy. Go where you wish."

Then holy Simeon left the monastery. Now there was a well near the monastery that contained no water, but many unclean, evil spirits lived in it: not only unclean spirits, but also unimaginable numbers of asps, vipers, serpents, and scorpions so that everybody was afraid to pass by that place. Unknown to anyone, holy Simeon went there and, making the sign of the cross, threw himself into that well and hid himself in the side of the well.

Seven days after Simeon had left the monastery, the abbot saw in a dream an unimaginable number of men clad in white encircling the monastery. They held torches and said, "We will burn you up this very moment, unless you hand over to us the servant of God, Simeon. Why did you persecute him? What did he do that you cast him forth from the monastery? What was his fault? Tell us before we burn you. Do you not know what you had in your monastery? For he will be found greater than you in that fearful, terrible day."³ When the abbot awoke

3. *fearful, terrible day*—the day of judgement, when Christ will judge all hu-

trembling from his sleep, he said to his monks, “Truly I see that that man is a true servant of God! For I have suffered much evil this night in a dream because of him. I beseech you, brethren, spread out and find him for me; otherwise none of you can come back here.”

They went out and looked for him everywhere, and when they could not find him they went back to the abbot and said, “Truly, master, there is no place left where we have not looked except that place where no one would dare to travel because of the hordes of wild beasts.” The abbot said to them, “My sons, praying and bearing torches, go out and look for him there.” After praying above the well for three hours, they, with ropes, let down into the well five monks holding torches. At the sight, the reptiles fled into the corners, but on seeing them holy Simeon called out, saying, “I beseech you, brothers and servants of God, grant me a little time to die. That I cannot fulfill what I set out to do is too much for me.” But the monks overpowered him with much force and pulled him out of the well, dragging him as if he were a criminal. They brought him to the abbot, who, when he saw him, fell at his feet, saying, “Agree to my request, servant of God: become my teacher, and teach me what patient endurance is and what it offers.”

Holy Simeon wept unceasingly and prayed to God; he stayed in the monastery three years and then, without anyone knowing, left and went into a sparsely inhabited area where there were several villages, the nearest being called Talanis. He built for himself there a small place from un-mortared stones and stood in the middle of it for four years through snow, rain, and burning sun, and many came to him. He ate soaked lentils and drank water. After this he made a pillar four cubits high⁴ and stood on it for seven years, and his fame spread everywhere. After this the crowds built for him two enclosures from un-mortared stone and they put up a door to the inner enclosure.⁵ They made for him a pillar thirty cubits high,⁶ and he stood on it for fifteen years, during which time he performed many healings, for many who were possessed went there and were healed.

mankind.

4. *four cubits high*—a cubit is roughly 46 centimeters, so his pillar was approximately 1.8 meters high.

5. *inner enclosure*—Doran notes that Simeon may have had two enclosures: one in which he stood and a second that served as a vestibule.

6. *thirty cubits high*—roughly 14 meters high.

Holy Simeon imitated his teacher, Christ. Calling on him, he made the lame walk, cleansed lepers, made the dumb speak, made paralytics move about with ease, and healed the chronically ill. Each one he warned and exhorted, “If someone asks you who healed you, say, ‘God healed me.’ Do not even think of saying, ‘Simeon healed me,’ otherwise you will find yourself again in the very same difficulties. I say to you: never lie or take an oath by God. If you are forced to take an oath, swear by me, your humble servant, either in truth or in deceit. For swearing by God is a great sin and a fearful thing to do.”

Hear this awesome and extraordinary wonder. After twenty years the mother of holy Simeon learned where he was. She came in haste and wanted, after so many years, to see him. She wept much to see him, but she was not allowed to view him. Since she wanted so much to be blessed by his holy hands, she was obliged to climb the wall. While she was climbing the wall of the enclosure, she was thrown to the ground and could not see him. Holy Simeon sent a message to her: “Leave me alone for now, mother. If we are worthy, we will see one another in the next life.” When she heard this, she only longed more to see him, but holy Simeon sent this message to her, “Rest, my honored mother, since you have come a long way and grown weary on my humble account. Lie down at least a little while; rest and get your strength back. I will see you soon.” When she heard this, she lay down before the entrance and immediately gave up her spirit to God. The doorkeepers came to wake her up, but discovered that she was dead and told the saint what had happened to her. On hearing this, he commanded that she be brought inside and placed before his pillar. When he saw her, he wept and began to say, “Lord, God of powers, guide of the light and charioteer of the cherubim, who guided Joseph, who made your prophet David prevail over Goliath, who raised Lazarus from the dead after four days, lift up your right hand and receive in peace the soul of your handmaid.” While he was praying her holy remains moved and she smiled. Everyone who saw it was astonished and praised God. Having performed her funeral, they buried her in front of his pillar so that he kept her in mind as he prayed.

Hear another strange and extraordinary mystery. Some people were coming from far away to have him pray [for them] when they came across a pregnant hind⁷ grazing. One of them said to the hind, “I adjure you by the power of the devout Simeon, stand still so that I

7. *hind*—a female red deer.

can catch you.” Immediately the hind stood still; he caught it and slaughtered it and they ate its flesh. The skin was left over. Immediately they could not speak to one another, but began to bleat like dumb animals. They ran and fell down in front of [the saint’s] pillar, praying to be healed. The skin of the hind was filled with chaff, and placed on display long enough for many men to know about it. The men spent sufficient time in penance and, when they were healed, returned home.

Hear another strange and wonderful event. A woman became thirsty during the night and wanted to drink some water. She took hold of the pitcher of water but along with the water drank a small serpent. Nourished in her womb it became large, and her face became like green grass in appearance. Many physicians came to heal her but were unable to. Her kinsmen learned about the marvels and the healings that the saint of God Simeon was performing, so they took her to the saint and told him everything about her. He commanded them, saying, “Put in her mouth some of this water and soil.” When they did as he had commanded, the beast stirred in the presence of all; it threw her on the ground, came out, [...] and perished. Everyone glorified God.

They changed his pillar into one forty cubits high,⁸ and fame of it spread throughout the whole world. Thus there came to him many Arabs burning with faith, and he spurred them to the fear of God. Then the devil, that hater of men, who habitually tempts the saints and is trampled underfoot by them, smote him on his thigh with a pain called a tumor, just as happened to the blessed Job. His thigh grew putrid and accordingly he stood on one foot for two years. Such huge numbers of worms fell from his thigh to the earth that those near him had no other job but to collect them and take them back from where they had fallen, while the saint kept saying, “Eat from what the Lord has given to you.”

By God’s will the king of the Arabs came to him to have the saint pray for him. As soon as he came near the pillar to be blessed by holy Simeon, the saint of God, when he saw [the king], began to admonish him. While they were talking together, a worm fell from [Simeon’s] thigh; it caught the king’s attention and, since he did not yet know what it was, he ran and picked it up. He placed it on his eyes and onto his heart and went outside holding it in his hand. The saint sent a message to him, saying, “Come inside and put away what you have taken up, for you are bringing misery upon me, a sinner. It is a stinking

8. *forty cubits high*—roughly 18 meters high.

worm from stinking flesh. Why soil your hand, you, a man held in honor?” When the righteous man had said this, the Arab came inside and said to him, “This will bring blessing and forgiveness of sins to me.” When he opened his hand, a precious pearl was in his hand. When he saw it, he began to glorify God and said to the righteous man, “Look! What you said was a worm is a pearl—in fact, a priceless one—by means of which the Lord has enlightened me.” On hearing this, the saint said to him, “As you have believed, so may it be to you all the days of your life—not only to you, but to your children also.” So blessed, the king of the Arabs returned home safe and sound, rejoicing.

Hear another mystery. Eastward on the mountain on which [Simeon] stood, there dwelt a huge dragon, and for this reason no pasture grew in that spot. Now when that dragon went out to cool himself, a piece of wood lodged in his eye and for a long time no one could bear his hissing in pain. Then one day the dragon came, dragging himself out of his cave, and came in open view and lay down at the entrance to [Simeon’s] enclosure. All of a sudden his eye opened and the piece of wood came out of his eye. He stayed there three days until he returned to health. So, in open view and without having harmed anybody, he returned to his spot. He had lain before the entrance of the righteous man just like a sheep: everyone was going in and out, and nobody was hurt by him.

Hear another extraordinary wonder. There was a robber-chief in Syria named Antiochus, also called Gonatas, whose deeds were recounted throughout the whole world. Soldiers were frequently sent to catch him and lead him to Antioch, but no one could catch him because of his mighty strength. Bears and other beasts were kept ready in Antioch because he would have to fight the beasts, and the whole city of Antioch was in a commotion because of him. Now when they went out to catch him they found him drinking in an inn in some village and the soldiers surrounded the inn. When he learned of this, [the robber] began to stage a scene. There was a river in the village and that robber-chief had a mare he used to order about as if it were human. Rising up, he threw his clothes onto the mare and said to it, “Go to the river and wait for me there.” The mare left the inn biting and kicking, and when it got to the river it waited for him. Then the robber-chief also came out of the inn unsheathing his sword, crying out and saying to the crowd of soldiers, “Flee lest someone be killed,” and none of the soldiers could overpower him. Escaping all those surrounding him, he

crossed the river with his mare and, mounting her, reached the enclosure of holy Simeon. He entered and threw himself down in front of his pillar, and the soldiers then gathered together in the saint's enclosure. The saint said to them, "With our master Jesus Christ were crucified two thieves, one of whom received according to his deeds while the other inherited the kingdom of Heaven. If someone can stand against the one who sent him here, let him come and drag him away himself, since I, for my part, neither led him here nor can I send him away. The one who sent him here claims him for himself. So let no one rail at me, your humble servant, one who has suffered much because of my many sins." When he had said this, he sent them away. After they had gone, the robber-chief said, "My lord, I too am going away." The saint said to him, "Do you return again to your evil ways?" The robber-chief said, "No, master, the Lord calls me," and, stretching out his hands toward Heaven, he said nothing more except, "Son of God, receive my spirit in peace." For two hours he wept so that he made even the righteous [Simeon] and the bystanders shed tears. Then, placing himself in front of the pillar of the righteous one, he immediately gave up his spirit. The crowds wrapped his body and buried him near the enclosure of the righteous one. The next day more than a hundred men came from Antioch with swords to seize [the robber], and they began to cry out to the righteous one, "Release to us the one you have." The holy man said to them, "Brethren, he who sent him here is stronger than you and, since he was useful, he had need of him. He sent to him two terrible soldiers armed to the teeth who could strike your city and its inhabitants with thunderbolts. They took him away and when I, a sinner, saw their terrifying appearance, I was terrified and did not dare stand against them lest they kill me too, your humble servant, as one who resisted God." When the men heard these things from the saint and learned how gloriously the robber-chief had died, they glorified God and, trembling, went back again to Antioch.

Hear another awesome and glorious miracle. There was no water to be found where the saint lived, and the crowd of animals and people coming to the place of the holy Simeon was on the point of perishing. The saint prayed and did not speak to anyone for seven days, but was praying on bended knee so that everyone thought that he had died. About the fifth hour of the seventh day, water suddenly gushed forth from the eastern side of the enclosure. They dug down and found a sort of cave full of water, and they constructed seven outlets for it. All glorified the God of Heaven and earth. [...]

So the blessed one stood on different pillars for forty-seven years, and after all these things [the Lord] sought him. It was Friday, and he was confined in prayer and, as was his custom, he spent the whole Friday [this way]; but on the Sabbath and on the Lord's day he did not lift up his head, as was his custom, to bless those who knelt. When I saw this, I went up to him and I saw his face and it shone like the sun. Although his custom was to speak to me, he said nothing to me. I said to myself, "He is dead," but then I was not sure; I feared to approach him, so, taking courage, I said to him, "My lord, why do you not speak to me and end your prayer? The world has been waiting to be blessed for three whole days." After standing for an hour, I said to him, "You have not answered me, my lord." Stretching out my hand, I touched his beard, and, when I saw that his body was very soft, I knew that he had died. Putting my face in my hands, I wept bitterly. I bent down, kissed his mouth, his eyes, and his beard, lifted up his tunic and kissed his feet; taking hold of his hand, I placed it on my eyes. Throughout his body and his garments was a scented perfume which, from its sweet smell, made one's heart merry. I stood attentively for about half an hour by his venerable corpse, and behold! His body and the pillar shook and I heard a voice saying, "Amen! Amen! Amen!" Fearfully I said, "Bless me, Lord, and remember me in your beautiful place of rest."

I came down and did not tell anyone the secret lest an uproar occur, but, through a trustworthy man, I informed the bishop of Antioch, Martyrius, and the military chief, Ardabur. The next day the bishop of Antioch set out with six other bishops. Ardabur also came with six hundred men so that the assembled villages should not seize the venerable corpse, as they were considering. They formed circles around his pillar, and three bishops went up and kissed his garments, saying three psalms. They brought up a leaden casket; they arranged his holy corpse, and brought it down by means of pulleys. Then everyone knew that the holy Simeon was dead. All the Arabs had gathered armed and on camels, for they too wanted to seize the body. Such a crowd was gathering that the mountain could not be seen because of the numbers [of people] and the smoke from the incense, the wax tapers, and the innumerable burning lamps. The sound of the weeping men, women, and children could be heard at a great distance, and the whole mountain was shaking from the screeching of the birds that gathered and circled round the enclosure of the saint. So when they had brought him down, they placed him upon the marble altar before his pillar, and,

although he was already dead for four days, his holy body looked as if he had died just an hour before. All the bishops gave him the kiss of peace. His face was bright, completely like light, and the hairs of his head and beard were like snow. The bishop of Antioch wished to take a hair from his beard as a relic, but his hand withered [at the attempt]. All the bishops prayed for [Simeon], weeping and saying to the holy corpse, “Nothing is missing from your limbs or clothes, and no one will again take anything from your holy and venerable corpse.” As they spoke thus in tears, the hand of the bishop was restored to health. Then, with psalms and hymns, they placed [Simeon] in the casket.

The coffin of the saint was placed on the carriage, and in this way, with wax tapers and incense and the singing of psalms, he was brought to the city of Antioch. When they were about five miles from the city in a place called Merope, the mules stood still and would not budge. There, an extraordinary mystery happened, for on the right of the road stood a tomb and a certain man stayed in it. Now this is what the man had done: he had loved a married woman twenty years earlier, but could not possess her, and the woman died and was laid in that tomb. Then, so that the hater of good might gain the soul of that man, he went to the tomb, opened up the [tomb], and had intercourse with the dead body. He immediately became deaf and dumb, and was held fast to the tomb and could not leave that place. Travelers would notice him sitting on the steps of the tomb, and each, for God’s sake, would offer something to him—some water or some food. When, by the will of God, the venerable corpse [of Simeon] came by on that day and the carriage and the crowd stood still, the man who neither spoke nor heard came out of the tomb crying out and saying, “Have pity on me, holy one of God, Simeon!” When he reached the carriage, what had restrained him was immediately taken away and his mind was restored. All who saw what happened glorified God, and that place shook from the shouts of the people. The man cried out, “Today I have been saved by you, servant of God, for I had perished in sin.”

Many people offered to give gold and silver to receive a relic from [Simeon’s] holy limbs, but the bishop took no notice of anyone because of the oaths he had taken. In that place where his venerable remains are laid, many healings are performed through the grace given to him by our master, Christ. [...]

5.2 Life of St. Daniel (409–493) the Stylite

“Life of St. Daniel the Stylite,” in *Three Byzantine Saints: Contemporary Biographies of St. Daniel the Stylite, St. Theodore of Sykeon, and St. John the Almsgiver*, ed. Elizabeth Dawes and Norman Baynes (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977). All attempts to contact rightsholder failed.

Most of what we know about another Stylite—St. Daniel—is from the following source. The author writes as a disciple of Daniel and claims to have consulted others who knew the saint. We know nothing about the author’s identity.



Figure 31. St. Daniel the Stylite, Menalogue (service book) of Basil II, 1000s

[...] Now when he was twelve years old [Daniel] heard his mother say, “My child, I have dedicated you to God.” Thereupon one day without saying anything to anybody he went out of the village for a distance of about ten miles where there was a monastery containing fifty brethren. And entering the monastery he fell at the abbot’s feet and begged to be received by him. But the abbot said to him, “Child, you are still very young in years and are not able to endure so hard a discipline; you know nothing of the monks’ life; go home, stay with your parents,

and after some time when you are able both to fast and to sing and to endure discipline, then come back to us.” But the child answered, “Father, I should prefer to die in these hardships than to quit the shelter of your flock!” And when, in spite of all he could do, the archimandrite was unable to persuade the child, he said to the brethren, “In truth, my children, let us receive this boy, for he seems to me to be very much in earnest.” And they all yielded to the abbot’s counsel, and thus Daniel remained in the brotherhood. [...]

While Daniel made progress in asceticism and in the splendor of his way of life he could not bear the scrutiny and the praise of the abbot and, still less, that of the whole brotherhood; so he planned to go to the holy city, Jerusalem, and at the same time to visit the holy and thrice-blessed Simeon, the man on the pillar, in whose footsteps he felt constrained to follow.

Therefore he began to pray the abbot of the monastery to set him free to attain his desire, but he could not persuade him.

Soon after this, since our master God in truth so willed it and the need of the church demanded it, the archbishop of that time commanded all the archimandrites⁹ of the East to assemble in the capital city of Antioch. And so it happened that this abbot together with some others went too, and among them he allowed the holy man also to travel with him as his disciple.

As God granted that the matter for which they had suffered many vexations should be brought to a satisfactory settlement, they departed to their own monasteries; and on their way they lodged in a village called Telanissae where there was a very large monastery and monks pursuing a very noble and virtuous way of life; here, too, the aforementioned holy Simeon had received his training. And when the monks there began talking about the achievements of the holy Simeon, the monks from Mesopotamia¹⁰ withstood them, contending that it was but a vainglorious proceeding. “For,” said they, “it is true that a man even if he were living in your midst might practice a mode of life hitherto unknown and please God, yet never has such a thing happened anywhere that a man should go up and live on a pillar.”

So the monks of that monastery persuaded them to go and see what hardships Simeon was enduring for the sake of the Lord. And

9. *archimandrites*—abbots of particularly important monasteries, or abbots who oversaw other abbots.

10. *monks from Mesopotamia*—the monks with whom Daniel traveled.

they were persuaded and went, and the holy Daniel with them. When they arrived at the place and saw the wildness of the spot and the height of the pillar and the fiery heat of the scorching sun and the saint's endurance and his welcome to strangers and further, too, the love he showed toward them, they were amazed.

For Simeon gave direction that the ladder be placed in position and invited the old men to come up and kiss him. But they were afraid and declined the ascent of the ladder—one said he was too feeble from old age, another pleaded weakness after an illness, and another gout in his feet. For they said to each other, "How can we kiss with our mouth the man whom we have just been slandering with our lips? Woe to us for having mocked at such hardships as these and such endurance." While they were conversing in this manner, Daniel entreated the archimandrite and the other abbots and Saint Simeon as well, begging to be allowed to go up to him. On receiving permission he went up and the blessed man gave him his benediction, and said to him, "What is your name?" and he answered, "Daniel." Then the holy Simeon said to him, "Play the man, Daniel—be strong and endure; for you have many hardships to endure for God. But I trust that the God whom I serve will himself strengthen you and be your fellow-traveler." And placing his hand upon Daniel's head he prayed and blessed him and bade him go down the ladder. Then after the holy and blessed Simeon had prayed for the archimandrites he dismissed them all in peace.

After they had all by the will of God been restored to their own monasteries and some little time had passed, the holy man, Daniel, was deemed worthy to be raised to the post of abbot.

Thereupon he said to himself, "At last you are free, Daniel; start boldly and accomplish your purpose." When he had made trial of him who held the second place and found that he was able to undertake the duties of an archimandrite, [Daniel] left everything and quit the monastery; and when he had reached the enclosure of the holy Simeon he stayed there two weeks.

The blessed Simeon rejoiced exceedingly when he saw him and tried to persuade him to remain still longer, for he found great joy in his company. But Daniel would not consent thereto but pressed toward his goal, saying, "Father, I am ever with you in spirit." So Simeon blessed him and dismissed him with the words, "The Lord of glory will accompany you." Then Daniel went forth, wishing to travel to the holy

places and to worship in the Church of the Holy Resurrection and afterwards to retire to the inner desert. [...]

Once he heard some men conversing in the Syrian dialect and saying that there was a church in that place inhabited by demons who often sank ships and had injured, and still were injuring, many of the passersby, and that it was impossible for anyone to walk along that road in the evening or even at noonday.

As everybody was continually complaining about the destructive power that had occupied the place, the divine Spirit came upon Daniel and he called to mind that great man, Antony, the model of asceticism, [and Paul, his disciple]; he remembered their struggles against demons and the many temptations they suffered from them and how they had overcome them by the strength of Christ and were deemed worthy of great crowns. Then he asked a man who understood the Syrian dialect about this church and begged him to show him the spot.

On reaching the porch of the church, just as a brave soldier strips himself for battle before venturing against a host of barbarians, so [Daniel], too, entered the church reciting the words spoken by the prophet David in the Psalms: "The Lord is my light and my savior; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" and the rest. And holding the invincible weapon of the cross, he went round into each corner of the church making genuflections and prayers.

When night fell, stones, they say, were thrown at him and there was the sound of a multitude knocking and making an uproar; but he persevered in prayer. In this way he spent the first night and the second; but on the third night sleep overpowered him, as it might overtake any man bearing the weakness of the flesh. And straightway many phantoms appeared as of giant shapes, some of whom said, "Who induced you to take possession of this place, poor wretch? Do you wish to perish miserably? Come, let us drag him out and throw him into the water!" Again, others carrying, as it seemed, large stones stood at his head, apparently intending to crush it to pieces. On waking, the athlete of Christ [Daniel] again went round the corners of the church praying and singing and saying to the spirits, "Depart from hence! If you do not, then by the strength of the cross you shall be devoured by flames and thus be forced to flee." But they made a still greater uproar and howled the louder. But he despised them and, taking not the slightest notice of their uproar, he bolted the door of the church and

left a small window through which he would converse with the people who came up to see him.

In the meantime his fame had spread abroad in those regions, and you could see men and women with their children streaming up to see the holy man and marveling that the place formerly so wild and impassable lay in such perfect calm, and that where demons danced lately there by the patience of the just man [Daniel,] Christ was now glorified day and night.

Now the priests of the Church of the Archangel Michael lived nearby and they were simple folk. So when the envious demon who hates the good saw such victories gained through the power of Christ, he was mad with rage and suggested to the minds of the priests an argument that ran like this: "It is no good thing that you are doing in letting the man dwell there; for just look how all the world goes to him, and you in consequence remain with nothing to do. You had better go to the city and say to your bishop, 'Some man, come from we know not where, has shut himself in near us and he is attracting people to him, although he is a heretic. But he is a Syrian by birth and so we are unable to converse with him.'" Having reasoned thus among themselves, the priests went in and reported the matter to the man who was then the bishop, namely the blessed Anatolius, the patriarch of Constantinople. But the archbishop said to them, "If you do not understand his language, how do you know that he is a heretic? Leave him alone, for if he has been sent by God he will be established; but, if it is otherwise, he will go away of his own accord before you chase him out. Do not bring a scandal upon us and yourselves." With these words he dismissed them. And they went home and kept quiet for a time.

But when the demons saw that they were accomplishing nothing, they again rose in rebellion against the servant of God and brought phantoms before him, carrying, it is said, naked swords, and crying, "Whence have you come, man? Give place to us for we have been living here for a long time. Do you wish your limbs to be cut in pieces?" And then, it is said, they came toward him with their swords and spoke again, saying to one another, "Do not let us slay him, but let us drag him along and cast him into the water where we sank the ship." And they made as though they would drag him away, but the servant of God arose, and after uttering a prayer he said to them, "Jesus Christ my savior, in whom I have trusted and do trust, he will himself drown you all in the deepest abyss." A great howling arose and they flew round his face like a swarm of bats and with a whirl of wings went out

of the window, and so he drove them all forth by the power of God through prayer.

The devil, seeing that once more his ministers had been routed, again stirred up the priests to go to the archbishop, and they said to him: "Master, you have authority over us; we cannot bear that man. Bid him come away from that church, for he is an impostor." Then the blessed Anatolius sent the officer of the most holy church with the deacons, and in the night they burst open with crowbars the door that the saint had closed and brought him to the city. When the saint was brought before the holy and blessed Anatolius, in his palace, the archbishop asked him, "Who are you? And whence have you come to these parts, and what is your belief? Tell us." And the servant of God declared his blameless faith by means of an interpreter, and the blessed Anatolius stood up and embraced him and besought him to remain in the palace, but the men who had brought him [Daniel] dismissed, saying, "Go, hold your peace, for I find great edification in this man." So they left [Daniel] there in the bishop's palace and went their ways.

In the meantime the bishop fell into a very severe illness, so he sent for the holy man and begged him to utter prayers on his behalf that he might be freed from the illness. And, since it so pleased the divine power, after the saint had made his prayer, the bishop was cured of his illness by God's good pleasure. Thus the words of the psalm were fulfilled toward the saint: "He will perform the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and will save them."

After the bishop's recovery the servant of God asked to be allowed to depart; but the archbishop would not agree and said, "I wish you to live with me." Then he again begged to be allowed to go, and asked him to grant pardon to the men who had slandered him to the bishop, for the latter was threatening to excommunicate them. And the bishop said, "I must ask pardon of you, servant of God, for your arrest, but God has made your presence here a great blessing to me, for if your holiness had not settled there, I should certainly have departed this life." [The bishop] also implored [Daniel] to let him build a cell for him, saying, "Since I am unable to persuade you to live here with me, if you will let me I will build you a small monastery, for our most holy church has many a suitable spot in the suburbs of the city. Go out and look at them, and whatever pleases you, I will give you." But the holy man replied, "If you really wish to do me a service, I beseech your holiness to send me to the place to which God led me." Finally the bishop bade him be taken back with great respect and settled in the

aforementioned church. Then the people could be seen flocking to the holy man again with joy and delight, and many were granted healing so that all marveled at the merciful grace of our master Christ, which he poured out upon his servant. And even those who had formerly wished to persecute him did not cease serving him and in all ways caring for the holy man. And he did as he had done formerly—he bolted the door and left only a small window open through which he spoke, instructing and blessing the people, as I said before.

After a space of nine years had elapsed, the servant of God fell into an ecstasy, as it were, and saw a huge pillar of cloud standing opposite him and the holy and blessed Simeon standing above the head of the column and two men of goodly appearance, clad in white, standing near him in the heights. And he heard the voice of the holy and blessed Simeon saying to him, “Come here to me, Daniel.” And he said, “Father, father, and how can I get up to that height?” Then the saint said to the young men standing near him, “Go down and bring him up to me.” So the men came down and brought Daniel up to him and he stood there. Then Simeon took him in his arms and kissed him with a holy kiss, and then others called [Simeon] away, and escorted by them he was borne up to Heaven, leaving Daniel on the column with the two men. When holy Daniel saw him being carried up to Heaven he heard the voice of Saint Simeon: “Stand firm and play the man.” But he was confused by fear and by that fearful voice, for it was like thunder in his ears. When he came to himself again he declared the vision to those around him. Then they, too, said to the holy man, “You must mount on to a pillar and take up Saint Simeon’s mode of life and be supported by the angels.” The blessed one said, “Let the will of God, our master, be done upon his servant.” And taking the holy Gospel into his hands and opening it with prayer, he found the place in which was written, “And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the highest, for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.” And he gave thanks and closed the book.

Not many days later a monk came from the East by the name Sergius, a disciple of Saint Simeon, announcing the good end of the saint’s life and carrying in his hands Saint Simeon’s leather tunic in order to give it to the blessed Emperor Leo by way of benediction. But as the emperor was busy with public affairs, the aforesaid Sergius could not get a hearing, or rather it was God who so arranged it in order that

the new Elisha¹¹ might receive the mantle of Elijah.¹² When Sergius grew weary of waiting in the city because he could not obtain a hearing, he decided to go as far as the monastery of the *Akoimetoï*;¹³ now it was not possible for anyone to reach that monastery except by passing the church and the channel by it, as there was generally a north wind blowing. When he had entered into the boat with many others, men and women, they set sail. On reaching the spot where the demons used formerly to hurl stones at the passengers and continually sank their boats, those in the boat gave thanks to God and made mention of the holy man.

Sergius inquired who he was, for said he, "I should like to be blessed by him." They answered "While the sailors tow the boat past, we can all land and go up to him." And this they did. And Sergius came and embraced the saint. And while they were talking and Daniel, the servant of God, was hearing about the end of the holy Simeon, he related his vision to Sergius, who on hearing it said, "It is to you rather than to the emperor that God has sent me; for here am I, the disciple of your father; here, too, is his benediction." And taking out the tunic, he handed it in through the window. The saint took it and kissing it with tears said, "Blessed be you, O God, who does all things after your will and has deemed my humbleness worthy of the benediction that your servant has brought." Then some men from the ship upbraided Sergius for delaying and preventing them from sailing; to them Sergius answered, "Go on your ways and fare well; God has led me from one father to another." [...]

After the guardsman had embraced the holy man and sailed away, Sergius went up to view the spot where the column was to be set; and a short distance away he saw a white dove¹⁴ fluttering and then settling again. Thinking it was caught in a snare he ran toward it, and then it flew up and away out of his sight. Seeing that the place was solitary and considering the incident of the dove that it had not been shown to him casually or by chance, he gave thanks to the Lord and returned to the holy man in the church, bringing him the glad tidings that the Lord

11. *The new Elisha*—Daniel.

12. *Elijah*—St. Simeon.

13. *Akoimetoï*—"the sleepless ones," monks who prayed day and night in shifts in order to "pray without ceasing."

14. *dove*—a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

had prepared for them a suitable place. Then he, too, gave thanks to the Lord who brings all things to pass according to his will.

And indeed after two days men came back from the city carrying the pillar; there were with them two workmen sent by the guardsman to fix the column in whatever place it was desired. So Sergius went up with them by night and they fixed the pillar and came back reporting that the pillar was erected. [...]

And it came to pass after three days, when night had fallen, they opened the church in which Daniel was shut up, and taking [a] brother he went up to the spot—for Sergius had departed to another place toward Thrace¹⁵—and they found a long plank lying there that the inhabitants of the suburb had prepared for knocking down the column. This they bound with a rope and stood it up against the column, and then went up and put the balustrade on the column, for that column was not really high, only about the height of two men. When they had fitted the balustrade and bound it firmly with a rope they knelt and prayed to God. And the blessed Daniel went up and stood on the column inside the balustrade and said, “O Lord Jesus Christ, in your holy name, I am entering upon this contest; approve my purpose and help me to accomplish my course.” And he said to the brother, “Take away the plank and the rest of the rope and get away quickly so that if anybody comes he may not find you.” And the brother did as he was told.

The next morning the husbandmen¹⁶ came, and when they saw Daniel they were amazed; for the sight was a strange one, and they came near him, and when they looked on him they recognized him as the man who had formerly been in the church. After having received the saint’s blessing they left him and went to the city and reported to Gelanius, the owner of the property. On hearing their news he was very angry with them for not having guarded that part of his land; and he was also annoyed with the blessed Daniel for having done this without his consent. And he went and reported the matter to the blessed Emperor Leo and the Archbishop Gennadius, for the blessed Anatolius had already gone to his rest. The emperor for his part said nothing. But the archbishop said to him, “As master of the property, fetch him down; for where he was he had no right to be, but he was not there on my authority.”

15. *Thrace*—an area along the north coast of the Aegean Sea.

16. *husbandmen*—farmers.

Then Gelanius took several men with him and went up to the servant of God, and, although it was a calm day and the air was still, yet it came to pass that suddenly the clouds gathered and a storm arose accompanied with hail so that all the fruit of the vineyards was destroyed and the leaves were stripped from the vines, for it was the time of the vintage. And it was only with difficulty that the men who were with Gelanius got away, and they muttered among themselves, for they were astonished at the strangeness of the sight.

Gelanius then approached the blessed man and said, “Who gave you permission to take up your stand on land belonging to me? Was it not better for you in the church? But since you have shown contempt of me, the owner of the property, and have taken no account of the emperor and the archbishop, let me tell you that I have been empowered by them to fetch you down.”

But when he persisted and repeated his demands it seemed an unjust and illegal proceeding to his companions and they opposed its being done, “because,” said they, “the emperor himself is a pious man, and this man is orthodox, and this spot lies at a distance from your field.” When Gelanius perceived that there would be a disturbance he said to the saint in the Syrian language—for by birth he was a Syro-Persian¹⁷ from Mesopotamia—“Please pretend to come down for the sake of those who ordered you to descend, and then I will not allow you really to touch the ground.” So then a ladder was brought, and Daniel came down about six rungs from the column. There were still several rungs before he actually reached the ground, when Gelanius ran forward and prevented his coming down the last rungs, saying, “Return to your dwelling and your place and pray for me.” For as Daniel was coming down he had noticed that sores and swellings had begun to appear on his feet, and he was distressed. And the blessed man went up the rungs of the ladder down which he had come, and stood inside the balustrade on the column; and after offering prayer, all received his blessing and went down from the hill in peace. So Gelanius, when he had reached the capital, reported everything to the emperor, telling him of the patience and endurance of the man so that he won the emperor’s pity for him.

Not many days later Gelanius went up to the saint, asking him to allow him to change the column and have a very large one placed for him. And lo! While they were conversing a certain Sergius arrived from

17. *Syro-Persian*—a Persian subject who spoke Syriac.

the parts about Thrace, a lawyer by profession, bringing with him a very young boy, his only son, by name John, who was grievously tormented by a demon. This man came and threw himself to the ground in front of the column, weeping and lamenting and crying out, saying, "Have pity upon my son, O servant of God; it is now thirty days since the unclean spirit first called upon the name of your holiness; and after inquiring for you through eight long days, we have come to claim your blessing." When Gelanius heard this and saw the old man afflicting himself thus, out of pity, he, too, was affected and burst into tears. And the holy Daniel said to the old man, "He that asks in faith receives all from God; if therefore you believe that through me, a sinner, God will heal your son, according to your faith it shall be given to you." And he bade the young man approach; and [John] drew near and stood before the column. And the saint bade them to give [John] a drink of the oil of the saints. And it came to pass when they gave him to drink that the demon threw him to the ground and there he rolled in their midst. Then the evil spirit rose up and shouted swearing that he would go out¹⁸ on that very day a week hence. [...]

[T]he blessed emperor Leo of pious memory¹⁹ reflected that he had often put Daniel to the test and had obtained many benefits through his holy prayers; so, through a guardsman, he sent a message to the archbishop [Gennadius], of whom I have already spoken, saying, "Go up to the holy man and honor him with the rank of priest." But the archbishop was unwilling and sent various excuses to the most pious emperor through the messenger. The emperor waxed indignant at the delay and sent again to the blessed Gennadius, saying, "If you intend to go up, do so, for I myself am going, and the will of God is coming to pass." Then the bishop was afraid, so he took some of the clerics with him, and came to the holy man's enclosure. The reason of his coming had been made known to the holy man beforehand. The archbishop said, "Father, bless your children." The holy man replied, "Your holiness must bless both me and them." The blessed Gennadius said, "For a long time I have wished to come up and enjoy your prayers; I pray you order the ladder to be placed so that I may come up and receive a full blessing, for God will convince your holiness that it is through my being busied with the manifold needs of the church that I have not been able to do this long ago." But the servant of God, hav-

18. *go out*—leave the young man's body.

19. *Leo of pious memory*—the Byzantine Emperor Leo I (457–474).

ing heard these words—though the archbishop continued to implore him to allow the ladder to be set against the column—yet refused to make any further answer.

While all those present continued to importune Daniel and the just man still refused to consent, the day was slipping by; and as the crowd was tormented with thirst owing to the heat and the archbishop saw that he was not achieving anything, he bade the archdeacon to offer a prayer; he himself stood and uttered a further prayer and through the prayer ordained the holy man to be a priest and said, “Bless us, sir priest; from henceforth you are a priest by the grace of Christ; for when I had prayed, God laid his hand upon you from above.” And for a long time the crowd shouted, “Worthy is he.” Afterwards all, together with the archbishop, besought the holy man, saying, “Order the ladder to be put in position, seeing that you have now become what you wished to avoid.” On the just man’s giving permission for this to be done, the archbishop mounted the ladder, holding in his hand the chalice of the holy body and the precious blood of our good mediator Jesus Christ our God. After saluting each other with a holy kiss, they received the Communion at each other’s hands. Then the archbishop descended from the hill and entering the palace, reported all that had happened to the emperor.

And the blessed Leo of pious memory rejoiced in these doings; and not long afterwards he visited the place in which the holy man dwelt and asked for the ladder to be set so that he might go up and be blessed. When the ladder was placed, the emperor went up to the servant of God and begged to touch his feet; but on approaching them and seeing their mortified and swollen state he was amazed and marveled at the just man’s endurance. He glorified God and begged the holy man that he might set up a double column and that Daniel would take his stand upon it. [And when this double column had been set up] the bishop and almost the whole city came up and people, too, from the opposite shore. As the emperor Leo importuned him incessantly to cross over on to it there and then, the servant of God bade planks to be laid to form a bridge from one ladder to another. This being done, the holy man walked across to the double column. And on that day so many received healing that all were astonished. [...]

One day a terrific storm arose, and as for some reason the column had not been properly secured, it was torn from its supports on either side by the violence of the winds and was only kept together by the iron bar that held the two columns in the middle. Thus you could see

the double column swaying to and fro with the just man; for when the south wind blew it leant over to the left side, but when the north wind blew it inclined to the right, and streams of water poured down like rivers, and the base was getting shattered, for the violent winds were accompanied by thunderstorms. His disciples sought to underpin it with iron bars, but one swing of the column smashed them, too, and very nearly killed the men who tried to withstand it. Their shouts were mingled with their tears, for they were likely to suffer the loss of their father, and in their distracted state one ordered one thing and another. By this time they had all become pretty well desperate; there they stood trembling and aghast, turning their heads from side to side as the column swayed now this way and now that, following with their eyes to see in what direction the corpse of the just man would be hurled with the column. But the servant of God answered not a word to anyone but persevered in prayer and invocations to God for aid; and through his compassion the merciful God caused the danger to cease by sending a calm. [...]

[After another storm,] by God's mercy a calm followed, and they brought up the ladder. His disciples saw the hair of his head and beard glued to the skin by icicles, and his face was hidden by ice as though it were covered by glass and could not be seen, and he was quite unable either to speak or to move. Then they made haste and brought cans of warm water and large sponges and gradually thawed him and with difficulty restored his power of speech. When they said, "You have been in great danger, father," he answered them as though he were just awaking from sleep and said at once, "Believe me, children, until you woke me, I was completely at rest. When the terrible storm broke and my garment was torn off me by the force of the winds, I was in great distress for about an hour, and then after a violent fainting fit I called upon the merciful God for help. And I was wafted, as it were, into sleep, and I seemed to be resting on a magnificent couch and kept warm by rich coverings and I saw an old man sitting on a seat by my head, and I thought he was the man who met me on the road when I was coming away from the blessed Saint Simeon's enclosure. And he appeared to be talking with great love and sincerity and he pointed out to me a huge hawk coming from the east and entering this great city and finding an eagle's nest on the column in the forum of the most pious emperor Leo. And [the bird] came and settled down in the nest with the eagle's young and then no longer appeared to be a hawk but an eagle. And I inquired of the old man what that might mean. And he

answered. ‘There is no need for you to learn that now, but you shall know hereafter.’ And while he held me in his arms and warmed me, the same old man said very pleasantly, ‘I love you dearly; I wanted to be near you; many fruit-bearing branches are to blossom from your root.’ And as we found pleasure in each other, you did not do well in waking me; for I was delighted at meeting him.” Then the disciples said to the holy man, “We pray your forgiveness, but truly we were in great despair; for we thought your holiness had died. What do you think that vision means, father?” He said to them, “I do not understand it clearly, but God will do what is pleasing to him and expedient for us.” But his disciples tried to interpret the vision and said, “It behooves you with the help of the emperor to bring the corpse of the holy and most blessed Simeon to this city. For it appears from the vision that this is the pleasure of the blessed Saint Simeon.” The servant of God said to them, “Fetch another leather tunic and wrap me in it.” [...]

Sometime later it befell that a report was spread that Genseric, king of the Vandals, intended to attack the city of Alexandria; this caused great searchings of heart to the emperor and to the senate and to the whole city. So the emperor sent his spatharius, Hylasius,²⁰ who was a eunuch, to inform the holy man about Genseric and of the emperor’s intention to dispatch an army to Egypt. Hylasius went up and delivered the emperor’s message to the holy man, and the holy man said to him, “Go and say to the emperor, ‘Do not be troubled about this, for God sends word to you through me, a sinner, that neither Genseric nor any of his [men] will ever see the city of Alexandria’; but if you wish to send an army, that is a matter for you to decide; the God, whom I adore, will both preserve your piety unhurt and will strengthen those who are sent against the enemies of the empire.” Hylasius departed and reported these words to the emperor, and by the grace of God his words came true. [...]

20. *spatharius*, *Hylasius*—a member of the imperial guards.

6. Christianity and the Byzantine State

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

6.1 Laws Governing and Reflecting the Faith (325–534)

The Theodosian Code and Novels, and the Sirmondian Constitutions, ed. and trans. Clyde Pharr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952). © 1952 in the name of the author; 1980 renewed in the name of Roy Pharr, executor. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press. *Roman State & Christian Church: A Collection of Legal Documents to A.D. 535*, ed. and trans. Paul Coleman-Norton (London: SPCK, 1966). Used by permission of SPCK Publishing.

In 429 the emperor Theodosius established a commission to compile a collection of all laws issued between 312 and 438. The result was the *Codex Theodosianus* (*Theodosian Code*). Excerpts below from this code and from other legal documents provide an overview of the legal status of Christians and their faith during the early years of the now-Christian empire.



Figure 32. Bust of Theodosius II, 400s, Louvre, Paris

• Prohibition of gladiators (325) •

[...] Bloody spectacles displease us amid public peace and domestic tranquility. Therefore, since we wholly forbid the existence of gladiators, you shall cause those persons who, perchance on account of some crime, customarily sustained that condition and sentence, to serve rather in the mines, so that they will assume the penalty for their crimes without shedding their blood.

• Pagan temples (346) •

[...] It is our pleasure that the [pagan] temples shall be immediately closed in all places and in all cities, and access to them forbidden, so as to deny to all abandoned men the opportunity to commit sin. It is also our will that all men shall abstain from sacrifices. But if perchance any man should perpetrate any such criminality, he shall be struck down with the avenging sword. We also decree that the property of a man thus executed shall be vindicated to the fisc.¹ The governors of the provinces shall be similarly punished if they should neglect to avenge such crimes.

• Ascetics (370 or 373) •

[...] Certain adherents of inaction, by having deserted their communities' public services, strive to seize solitudes and secret places and under religion's pretext associate with bands of monks.

Therefore we have commanded by a considered precept that these and others of this ilk, when caught within Egypt [...], should be plucked from their hiding-places and should be recalled to undergo their native municipalities' public services; or pursuant to our sanction's tenor should be deprived of the allurements of their familial properties, which we have decided must be claimed by those persons who would be about to undergo the public services and public duties.

• Heretics (372) •

[...] Whenever an assembly of Manicheans² or such a throng is found, their teachers shall be punished with a heavy penalty. Those

1. *fisc*—government treasury.

2. *Manicheans*—members of the Persian, dualistic faith, who believed in a universe defined by a battle between forces of darkness and light. Manichaeism

who assemble shall also be segregated from the company of men as infamous and ignominious, and the houses and habitations in which the profane doctrine is taught shall undoubtedly be appropriated to the resources of the fisc.

• Heretics (380) •

[...] It is our will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of our clemency shall practice that religion that the divine Peter the apostle transmitted to the Romans, as the religion that he introduced makes clear even to this day. [...] We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of catholic Christians. The rest, however, whom we adjudge demented and insane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches, and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of our own initiative, which we shall assume in accordance with the divine judgment.

• Reversions to paganism (381) •

[...] Those Christians who have become pagans shall be deprived of the power and right to make testaments, and every testament of such decedent, if there is a testament, shall be rescinded [...]

• Bishops' immunity (381) •

[...] A bishop is not required for testimony [in court] either because of his honor or by the laws. [...] It is not becoming for a bishop to be admitted to speak his testimony, for both his person is dishonored and a bishop's privileged position is confounded.

• Easter amnesty (381) •

The day of paschal³ joy permits not even those persons who have committed crimes to groan; now at last let the horrid prison be opened to the unwonted light.

But we propose that foreign from indulgence should be a person who haughtily shall have animated his nefarious knowledge of crimes toward treason; who, seized by parricidal frenzy, has stained his hand by his own blood; who, moreover, has been defiled by the murder of

eschewed the Christian, Islamic, and Judaic belief in an omnipotent, good God.

3. *paschal*—adjective for Easter.

any person; who has been an invader of another's bed and couch; who has been a ravisher of virginal modesty; who, morally blind, has violated the venerated bond of cognate blood by profane incest; or who has composed for mind and body poisons that have been sought from noxious herbs and have been murmured over in dread secrecies; or who, as a copyist of the sacred face and a seeker of the divine features, with sacrilegious skill has engraved their images.

• Christian apostates (383) •

To Christian believers who have turned to pagan rites and cults we forbid all power of making a will in favor of any person whatsoever, that they may be without Roman law.

• Suppression of heretics (383) •

Absolutely all persons whom the error of diverse heresies excites [...] should not assemble in any gatherings, should not collect any multitude, should not draw any people to themselves and should not show walls of private houses after the likeness of churches, [and] should practice either publicly or privately nothing that can be detrimental to catholic sanctity.

And if there shall have been anyone who may transgress what so evidently has been prohibited, by all good persons' common agreement, he should be expelled, because such opportunity has been allowed to all whom the veneration and the excellence of correct religious observance delight.

• Heretical clergy (384) •

[...] All persons [...] who claim for themselves either the pontificate or the ministry of these professions, who assert that they are priests of a banned name and who impose on themselves the name of ministers of a criminal religion, who say that they teach what is proper either not to know or to unlearn, should be expelled, without any intervention of favor, from all hiding-places, explored with rather diligent search, of this city;⁴ let them live in other places and let them be separated entirely from good persons' gatherings.

4. *this city*—Constantinople.

• Clerical immunity (384) •

[...] [T]hose who serve the church's needs should not be dragged into the courts of either ordinary or extraordinary judges. They have their own judges and to them is nothing in common with public laws—in so far, however, as pertains to ecclesiastical cases, which, it is proper, are decided by episcopal authority. [...]

• Easter amnesty (384) •

Religious respect for the annual public prayer urges that we should order all persons who have been accused as guilty of minor crime to be freed entirely from the danger of prison and from the dread of punishments.

• Sundays (386) •

[...] On the day of the sun (Sunday), which our ancestors rightly called the Lord's day, the prosecution of all litigation and actions shall entirely cease. No person shall demand payment of either a public or a private debt. There shall be no cognizance of any contention, even before arbitrators, whether these arbitrators be demanded in court or voluntarily chosen. If any person should turn aside from the inspiration and ritual of holy religion, he shall be adjudged not only infamous but also sacrilegious.

• Jewish-Christian marriage (388) •

Let not any Jew take a Christian woman in marriage and let not a Christian man choose wedlock with a Jewess.

For if anyone shall have committed any act of this kind, the crime of this transgression shall acquire the condition of adultery—with the liberty to make an accusation opened also to public voice. [...]

But if any persons shall have involved themselves in such union contrary to the prohibition, they should know that they must be punished by the penalty with which adulterers are condemned and that the accusation of this crime has been permitted not only to relatives but also to all persons for the purpose of prosecution.

• Heretical sects (389) •

Those who retain the leadership of perverse dogma, that is, bishops, priests, deacons, and lectors, and any persons who under the veil of clerical office try to impose a blot upon religion, when established

under the name of any heresy or error whatever, by all means should be expelled from their deadly meeting-places, whether they appear to be within the city or in suburban places.

• Expulsion of heretics (391) •

We order the heretics' polluted contagions to be driven from cities, to be ejected from villages, and the communities not at all to be available for any meetings, lest in any place a sacrilegious company of such persons should be collected. Neither public meeting-places to their perversity nor more hidden retreats to their errors should be granted.

• Episcopal jurisdiction (399) •

As often as there is an action about religion, it is proper for bishops to deliberate on it; but it is necessary for all other cases, which pertain to ordinary judges or to the usage of the public law, to be heard in accordance with the laws.

• Shows on Sunday (399) •

On the Lord's day, to [which] the name has been given from very reverence, neither theatrical plays nor horses' contests nor any spectacle that has been found to enervate souls should be celebrated in any community. But the emperor's birthday, even if it shall have fallen on the Lord's day, should be celebrated.

• Spectacles on holy days (400) •

Because of consideration for religion, we order and decree that on the seven days of Quadragesima,⁵ on the seven paschal days by whose observances and fasts sins are purged, also on the day of the birth and of the epiphany,⁶ spectacles should not be produced.

• Clerical exemptions (401) •

All clergymen of the catholic religion within that limit whereby they engage in the practice (predetermined by law) of buying and of selling victuals should be considered immune from the tax in gold.

5. *Quadragesima*—Sundays during Lent.

6. *Epiphany*—the day celebrating the appearance or manifestation of Christ, twelve days after Christmas when, as tradition holds, wise men from the East arrived to see the infant Jesus.

We also order relief to be given to these whom both the rank of clerical office and—what is not less—a holier life protects from performance of public labor. For we would not permit any of them who shall be proved exempt by laws to be subject to injustice.

• Clemency for penitents (407) •

Though it is usual to expiate crimes by punishment, nevertheless we wish to amend men's depraved desires by admonition to penitence.

Therefore whatever heretics, whether they are Donatists⁷ or Manichaeans or of any other depraved belief and sect, who have assembled for profane rites, shall have accepted by a simple confession the catholic faith and rite, which we wish to be observed by all men, although they shall have nourished by long and long-lasting meditation a deep-seated evil to such an extent that they also appear subject to previously issued laws, yet, as soon as they shall have confessed God by a simple religious ceremony, we ordain that these persons should be absolved from all guilt, so that for every guilty act, whether it has been committed previously or it is committed afterward (a situation that we do not wish to be), although punishment seems especially to press upon the guilty, it should suffice for withdrawal of the accusation that they have condemned their error by their own decision and have embraced the name of Mother of God, which even amid their dangers⁸ has been sought, because nowhere ought to be lacking religion's aid, when invoked in afflictions.

Therefore, as we command the previous laws, which we have established for the destruction of sacrilegious minds, to be applied with every effect of execution, so we ordain that those persons who shall have preferred the faith of simple religion, though by a late confession, should not be bound by laws that have been issued.

• Sundays (425) •

[...] On the following occasions all amusements of the theaters and the circuses shall be denied throughout all cities to the people thereof, and the minds of Christians and of the faithful shall be wholly occupied in the worship of God: namely on the Lord's day, which is the first day

7. *Donatists*—Christian hardliners (eventually declared to be heretics), who argued that no Christian who had renounced the faith when Christianity was still a persecuted religion could now administer the sacraments.

8. *dangers*—tortures, sometimes resulting in death.

of the whole week; on the natal day and epiphany of Christ; and on the day of Easter and of Pentecost;⁹ as long as the vestments of the light of the celestial font attest to the new light of holy baptism;¹⁰ at the time also when the commemoration of the apostolic passion,¹¹ the teacher of all Christianity, is duly celebrated by everyone. If any persons even now are enslaved by the madness of the Jewish impiety or the error and insanity of stupid paganism, they must know that there is a time for prayer and a time for pleasure. [...]

• Imperial images (425) •

If ever our statues or images¹² are erected either on festal days, as is customary, or on ordinary days, the governor should be present without a vainglorious exaltation of adulation, that he may show that his presence has been added as a distinction to the day or to the place and to our memory.

Our likenesses, when exhibited at games, also should demonstrate that our divinity and praises flourish only in the hearts and in the secret places of the minds of the persons assembling; but worship exceeding men's dignity should be reserved for the supernal divinity.

• Seduction from orthodoxy (429) •

[...] [O]ne should know that whoever tries to drag a Christian from the right faith through his perverted teaching both shall suffer confiscation of property and shall undergo punishment through blood.

• Jews, Samaritans, heretics, and pagans (438) •

Among the other anxieties that our¹³ love for the state has imposed upon us for our ever watchful consideration, we perceive that an especial responsibility of our imperial majesty is the pursuit of the true religion. If we shall be able to hold fast to the worship of this true religion, we shall open the way to prosperity in human undertakings. This we have learned by the experience of our long life,¹⁴ and by the deci-

9. *Pentecost*—the celebration of the Holy Spirit's descent upon the apostles.

10. *vestments of the light ... of holy baptism*—a reference to the white robes worn by newly baptized believers.

11. *the apostolic passion*—the death of the Apostle Paul.

12. statues or images—of emperors.

13. *our*—Theodosius II's.

14. *our long life*—Theodosius was 37 years old when he composed this doc-

sion of our pious mind we decree that the ceremonies of sanctity shall be established by a law of perpetual duration, even to posterity.

1. For who is so demented, so damned by the enormity of strange savagery, that, when he sees the heavens with incredible swiftness define the measures of time within their spaces under the sway of the divine guidance, when he sees the movements of the stars that control the benefits of life, the earth richly endowed with the harvests, the waters of the sea, and the vastness of this immense achievement confined within the boundaries of the natural world, he does not seek the author of so great a mystery, of so mighty a handiwork? We learn that the Jews, with blinded senses, the Samaritans,¹⁵ the pagans, and the other breeds of heretical monsters dare to do this. If we should attempt by a remedial law to recall them to the sanity of an excellent mind, they themselves will be blameworthy for our severity, since they leave no place for pardon by the obstinate wickedness of their unyielding arrogance.

2. Therefore, [...] according to the ancient maxim, no cure must be employed for hopeless diseases,¹⁶ in order that these deadly sects, oblivious of our age, may not spread too wantonly into the life of our people like an indistinguishable confusion. We finally sanction by this law destined to live in all ages, that no Jew, no Samaritan, who does not rely on either law¹⁷ shall enter upon any honors or dignities; to none of them shall the administration of a civil duty be available, nor shall they perform even the duties of a defender.¹⁸ Indeed we believe that it is wrong that persons hostile to the supernal majesty and to the Roman laws should be considered the avengers of our laws under the protection of a surreptitious jurisdiction; that they should be protected by the authority of a dignity thus acquired; that they should have the power to judge or to pronounce whatever sentence they may wish against the Christians and very often against the bishops themselves of the holy religion, as if they were insulting our faith.

ument.

15. *Samaritans*—a Jewish community whose members were deemed heretics by other Jews.

16. *ancient maxim ... hopeless diseases*—a maxim from Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician considered the founder of medicine.

17. *rely on either law*—this may refer either to a distinction between Jewish and Christian law or to distinctions between the eastern and western parts of the empire.

18. *defender*—lawyer.

3. With an equally reasonable consideration also, we prohibit any synagogue to arise as a new building, but license is granted to strengthen the ancient synagogues that threaten immediately to fall in ruin.

4. To these regulations we add the provision that if any person should seduce a slave or a freeborn person, against his will or by punishable persuasion, from the worship of the Christian religion to an impious sect or ritual, he shall suffer capital punishment, together with the forfeiture of his fortune.

5. If any person of these sects, therefore, has assumed the insignia of office, he shall not possess the dignities that he has acquired, and if he has erected a synagogue, he shall know that he has labored for the profit of the catholic church. Furthermore, if any of these persons has stolen into a position of honor, he shall be considered, as previously, of the lowest condition, even though he should have obtained an honorary dignity. If any one of them should begin the building of a synagogue, not with the desire merely to repair it, in addition to the loss of fifty pounds of gold, he shall be deprived of his audacious undertaking. Besides, he shall perceive that his goods are proscribed and that he himself shall immediately be destined to the death penalty, if he should overthrow the faith of another by his perverted doctrine.

6. Since it behooves our imperial majesty to embrace all contingencies in such a provision that the public welfare may not be injured in any way, we decree that the decurions¹⁹ of all municipalities and also the gubernatorial apparitors²⁰ shall be bound to their onerous duties, even those of the imperial service, or to the various obligations of their resources and the duties of their personal compulsory services, and they shall adhere to their own orders, of whatsoever sect they may be. Thus we shall not appear, on account of the contumely of corrupt solicitation, to grant the favor of exemption²¹ to men who are execrable, since it is our will that they shall be condemned by the authority of this constitution.

7. The following exception shall be observed, namely, that apparitors who are members of the aforesaid sects shall execute the sentences of judges only in private suits, and they shall not be in charge of

19. *decurions*—members of a city or town council.

20. *gubernatorial apparitors*—attendants who executed orders for Roman governors.

21. *exemption*—from compulsory service.

the custody of prisons, lest Christians, as customarily happens, may at times be thrust into prison by the hatred of their guards and thus suffer a second imprisonment²² when it is not certain that they appear to have been rightfully imprisoned.

8. Hence our clemency perceives that we must exercise watchfulness over the pagans also and their heathen enormities, since with their natural insanity and stubborn insolence they depart from the path of the true religion. They disdain in any way to practice the nefarious rites of their sacrifices and the false doctrines of their deadly superstition in the hidden solitudes, unless their crimes are made public by the nature of their profession, to the outrage of the supernal majesty and to the contempt of our times. A thousand terrors of the laws that have been promulgated, the penalty of exile that has been threatened, do not restrain them, whereby, if they cannot be reformed, at least they might learn to abstain from their mass of crimes and from the corruption of their sacrifices. But straightway they sin with such audacious madness and our patience is so assailed by the attempts of these impious persons that even if we desired to forget them, we could not disregard them. Therefore, although the love of religion can never be secure, although their pagan madness demands the harshness of all kinds of punishments, nevertheless we are mindful of the clemency that is innate in us, and we decree by an unshakable order that if any person of polluted and contaminated mind should be apprehended in making a sacrifice in any place whatsoever, our wrath shall rise up against his fortunes, against his life. [...] Shall we endure longer that the succession of the seasons be changed, and the temper of the heavens be stirred to anger, since the embittered perfidy of the pagans does not know how to preserve these balances of nature? For why has the spring renounced its accustomed charm? Why has the summer, barren of its harvest, deprived the laboring farmer of his hope of a grain harvest? Why has the intemperate ferocity of winter with its piercing cold doomed the fertility of the lands with the disaster of sterility? Why all these things, unless nature has transgressed the decree of its own law to avenge such impiety? In order that we may not hereafter be compelled to sustain such circumstances, by a peaceful vengeance, as we have said, the venerable majesty of the supernal divinity must be appeased. [...]

22. *second imprisonment*—cruelty inflicted by unsympathetic guards.

• Burial of heretics (457) •

Since we have considered it to be humane and holy, we order heretics to be buried with the customary burial rites.

• Lawyers' guilds(468) •

None either in your grandeur's tribunal or in a provincial court or in any judge's court should enter into the lawyers' guild, unless he shall have been imbued with the catholic religion's sacrosanct mysteries. [...]

• Clerical celibacy (530) •

Though the sacred canons allow neither the most God-beloved priests nor the most devout deacons or sub-deacons to marry after such ordination, but concede this to only the most devout cantors and lectors,²³ we see certain ones despising the sacred canons and procreating children from certain women, with whom according to the sacerdotal ordinance they cannot be married.

Therefore, since the penalty for the deed was in only expulsion from the priesthood, but since our laws also wish the divine canons to have no less force than the laws, we ordain that in regard to them should prevail the matters that seem best to the sacred canons, just as if these had been written in the civil laws, and that they all should be stripped of both the priesthood and the divine service and the dignity that they have. For even as such things have been forbidden by the holy canons, so also according to our laws the deed has been prohibited, and in addition to the said penalty of expulsion the ones born or to be born from such an absurd mutual corruption are not legitimate, but partake of the ignominy of such descents. For we determine them to be such as the laws define as born from incestuous or nefarious marriages, so that they should not be considered natural or base-born, but in all ways interdicted and unworthy of succession to parents, neither they nor their mothers nor through intermediate persons being able to accept a donation from them—but all gifts coming to them from their fathers going to the most holy church, of which those who commit this sin are members. For what the sacred canons forbid, this also we prohibit through our laws. [...]

23. *cantors and lectors*—singers and scripture-readers.

• Rapists (533) •

We decree that rapists of virgins or of widows or of deaconesses, who shall have been dedicated to God, should be smitten, since they sinfully perform the worst of crimes, with capital punishment, because a wrong is committed not only to the outrage of human beings, but to the irreverence for the Mother of God himself.

Accordingly those who shall have committed a crime of this kind and who shall have offered aid to them at the time of assault, when they shall have been found in the very rape and, while the crime is still flaming, shall have been caught by parents of religious virgins or widows or deaconesses or by their kindred or guardians or curators, on conviction should be killed. [...]

Moreover, if this shall have been committed against a sanctimonial virgin who lives in a hermitage or a nunnery, whether or not the said virgin has been appointed a deaconess to the said nunnery or hermitage, where she has been consecrated, the goods of these persons shall be adjudged, that from this property both she herself may have sufficient compensation, while she lives, and the sacrosanct hermitage or nunnery may have all the property with full ownership. But if a deaconess should belong to any church at all, but has not been established in any nunnery or hermitage, but lives by herself, her rapist's substance should be assigned to the church of which she is a deaconess. [...]

• Admission to religious life (ca. 534) •

[...] With God furnishing aid to us, we desire to establish by laws and to fulfill by works all things that for the holy catholic church's honor we hasten to do for God's pleasure. And already indeed with his aid we have ordained many things that are suitable to be ordained for ecclesiastical doctrine, but at present we have considered with pious deliberation that this matter, which hitherto occurred contrary to God's fear,²⁴ must be corrected.

For it has been known to us that, if any fiancé or fiancée, after earnest²⁵ had been given or accepted, should have wished to destine himself or herself to God's service and to retire from worldly living and to live a religious life and to persevere in God's fear, the man indeed was compelled to lose that which he had given in the category of

24. *contrary to God's fear*—contrary to God's will.

25. *earnests*—prenuptial presents.

earnests, but the woman was compelled to repay double that which she had accepted. And to our gentleness this has seemed quite contrary to religion.

Therefore by the present law, which shall prevail in perpetuity, we order that if any fiancé or fiancée shall have desired, by despising this world's life, to live in religious living, the fiancé indeed should receive without any diminution all that he had given in the category of earnestes for the sake of future wedlock, but the fiancée should restore to the fiancé not double, as hitherto, but only that which she had accepted in the category of earnestes and should be compelled to repay nothing more, except that which she shall have been proved to have accepted. [...] For by an earlier law already it has been provided by us in respect to husbands and wives who renounce the world that, if either a husband or wife for the sake of religion shall have retired from wedlock and shall have chosen a solitary life, each one of them should receive his or her own properties that he and she had offered either for dowry or by donation before marriage and should acquire in the category of profit from the one who shall have chosen a solitary life only that which one ought to exact legitimately or by agreement in event of death.

We also judge this, which is known to us, to be worthy of our correction: that if any man or any woman, established in parents' power, shall have chosen perhaps to be freed from legal power of this sort and shall have wished to join himself or herself to a monastery or to the clergy and to live religiously the remaining time of his or her life, it should not be permitted to parents either to withdraw the said persons by any means [...] from their inheritance or succession because of only this cause, but it should be necessary for them by all means, when they compose their own last will (whether by writing or by other legitimate method) to bequeath indeed to them a fourth portion according to our laws. [...]

6.2 Agathias (ca. 532–558) on Persian Religions

Agathias, *The Histories*, trans. Joseph Frendo (New York: de Gruyter, 1975), 57–59. Used by permission of de Gruyter.

One of the most effective ways for an empire to rally support against its opponents is to portray its opponents' beliefs and practices as ludicrous or evil. For the Byzantine state—a state based on religious principles—this meant disparaging the religious beliefs of (and inventing beliefs on behalf of) its chief adversary, the Persian Empire, which regularly threatened Byzantine lands from the East.

The following excerpt is from *The Histories* by Agathias, a chronicle of Emperor Justinian's reign (527–565) and the years following.



Figure 33. A “Faravahar,” a common symbol in Persian Zoroastrianism, thought to represent a guardian angel, Persepolis, Iran, n.d.

[...] It is quite obvious, of course, that each of the various nations of mankind considers that any custom whatsoever that is both universally accepted in their society and deeply rooted in their past cannot fail to be perfect and sacrosanct, whereas whatever runs counter to it is deemed deplorable, contemptible and unworthy of serious considera-

tion. Nevertheless people have always managed to find and enlist the support of reasoned arguments from all quarters when their own conventions are involved. Such arguments may indeed be true, but they may also very well be specious fabrications.

So it does not strike me as particularly surprising that the Persians too should try to prove, when accounting for their own customs, that these are superior to anyone else's. What I do find altogether remarkable is that the earliest inhabitants of their land, that is to say the Assyrians, Chaldaeans,²⁶ and Medes,²⁷ had very different views on the subject, as witness the tombs and sepulchers²⁸ of men who died long ago, which are still to be found on the outskirts of Nineveh and Babylon and also in the district of Media. The form of burial is no different from our own, and whether the bodies are enclosed or just the ashes, as is the case with those who were cremated according to the ancient Greek custom, the fact remains that it is quite unlike anything that is practiced at present.

Those early inhabitants then held no such views concerning burial, nor was the sanctity of the marriage-bed violated in the way it now is. Not only do the present-day Persians think nothing of having intercourse with their sisters and nieces, but fathers lie with their own daughters and, horror of horrors, O! the unnaturalness of it, sons with their mothers. That this particular abomination is a recent innovation is well illustrated by the following story. It is said that the famous queen of Assyria, Semiramis, once sank to such depths of debauchery that she actually conceived a desire to have intercourse with her son Ninyas and even went so far as to make advances to the young man. He rejected her angrily, and finally when he saw that she was determined to force herself on him he slew her and chose to commit the unnatural crime of matricide rather than be guilty of incest. Yet if this type of behavior was socially acceptable Ninyas would not, I think, have resorted to such extreme cruelty in order to avoid it.

There is no need, however, to confine our examples to the distant past. Shortly before the Macedonian conquest and the destruction of the Persian Empire,²⁹ Parysatis, the mother of Artaxerxes [II] and the

26. *Chaldea*—southern Mesopotamia.

27. *Medes*—a Persian people who lived in the northwestern portions of modern-day Iran.

28. *sepulchers*—a burial place made of rock or stone.

29. *Macedonian conquest and the destruction of the Persian Empire*—conquests of

wife of Darius, is said to have succumbed to the same passion as Semiramis and to have become enamored of her son. He did not kill her, however, but he angrily rejected her advances and thrust her aside, saying that it was an impious and unnatural act, quite foreign both to their nation's history and to its present way of life.

But the present-day Persians have almost completely abandoned their old ways—an upheaval that has been marked by the wholesale adoption of alien and degenerate manners, ever since they have come under the spell of the doctrines of Zoroaster,³⁰ the son of Horemazdes.

Now, as far as this Zoroaster or Zarades (he is called by both names) is concerned, it is not possible to fix with any precision the dates of his floruit³¹ and the period of his reforming activities. The Persians simply say that he lived in the region of Hystaspes without making it clear whether they mean the father of Darius or some other monarch of the same name. Whatever the time of his floruit, he was the founder and interpreter of the magian religion,³² and he it was who changed the character of the earlier cults and introduced a motley assortment of beliefs.

In ancient times the Persians worshipped Zeus and Kronos and all the other divinities of the Hellenic pantheon, except that they called them by different names. They called Zeus “Bel,” Heracles “Sandes,” Aphrodite “Anahita,” and so on and so forth, according to the testimony of Berosus of Babylon, Athenocles, and Simacus, who recorded the ancient history of the Assyrians and the Medes. But nowadays their views conform for the most part to those of the so-called Manichaeans, to the extent of their holding that there are two first principles, one of which is good and has given rise to all that is fine in reality and the other of which is the complete antithesis in both its properties and its function. They assign barbarous names drawn from their own language to these entities. The good divinity or creator they call Ahuramazda, whereas the name of the evil and malevolent one is Ahriman. Of all the festivals they celebrate, the most important is one called the “festi-

Alexander the Great (336 BCE–323 BCE).

30. *Zoroaster*—the tenth- or eleventh-century BCE Persian prophet whose writings constitute the main texts of Zoroastrianism, a religion that recognizes a universal, creator god.

31. *floruit*—the period in which he flourished.

32. *magian religion*—Zoroastrianism.

val of the slaying of the evil ones” in which they kill huge numbers of reptiles and other wild creatures and denizens of the desert and present them to the magi³³ as a proof of their devotion. They imagine that in this way they are rendering an agreeable service to the good divinity and that they are thwarting and injuring Ahriman. Their veneration of water is so great that they do not even wash their faces in it or handle it in any other way save as a drink and for the purpose of irrigation.

They name many other gods whom they worship, and they perform sacrifices and practice ritual purifications and divination. Fire is considered an object of peculiar sanctity and veneration. Accordingly it is tended in certain remote and sacred chambers by the magi, who never allow it to go out. Gazing into it they perform their secret rites and scrutinize the course of future events. I imagine they took over this practice from the Chaldaeans or some other people, since it is something of an anomaly. Such a procedure would of course be very much in keeping with the composite nature of their religion that is a most varied blend of ideas derived from a multiplicity of different peoples. And this state of affairs too is what I should have expected. Indeed I know of no other society that has been subjected to such a bewildering variety of transformations or that through its submission to an endless succession of foreign dominations has failed so signally to achieve any degree of continuity. Small wonder then that it still bears the stamp of many different forms and conventions.

33. *magi*—members of “magian religions,” namely, followers of Zoroastrianism.

6.3 Procopius on the Immorality of Justinian (ca. 550)

Procopius, *The Secret History*, trans. Richard Atwater, (Chicago: P. Covici, 1927), 57–61, 67–71. All attempts to contact publisher failed.



Figure 34. Justinian and his retinue, 547, mosaic, Basilica di San Vitale, Ravenna

The behavior of Christian emperors often fell short of the ideals articulated by Justinian and his predecessors. Politics, self-interest, and greed all interfered with the principles they professed. The following account of Justinian's reign by the historian Procopius (Justinian's contemporary) brings such problems to the fore. Here Procopius criticizes corrupted relations between church and state and the ruthless tactics the state employed to enforce practice and belief in the Christian empire. This is history as a hatchet job, and modern historians cannot vouch for the veracity of all of Procopius' claims. Still, the account provides an indication of which accusations might be marshaled in an attempt to undermine an emperor. *The Secret*

***History*, composed around 550, was only discovered in 1623 in the Vatican library.**

[W]hile [Justinian] was encouraging civil strife and frontier warfare to confound the Romans, with only one thought in his mind, that the earth should run red with human blood and he might acquire more and more booty, he invented a new means of murdering his subjects. Now among the Christians in the entire Roman Empire, there are many with dissenting doctrines [...]. All of these beliefs he ordered to be abolished, and their place taken by the orthodox dogma: threatening, among the punishments for disobedience, loss of the heretic's right to will property to his children or other relatives.

Now the churches of these so-called heretics, especially those belonging to the Arian dissenters, were almost incredibly wealthy. Neither all the senate put together nor the greatest other unit of the Roman Empire had anything in property comparable to that of these churches. For their gold and silver treasures, and stores of precious stones, were beyond telling or numbering; they owned mansions and whole villages, land all over the world, and everything else that is counted as wealth among men.

As none of the previous emperors had molested these churches, many men, even those of the orthodox faith, got their livelihood by working on their estates. But the Emperor Justinian, in confiscating these properties, at the same time took away what for many people had been their only means of earning a living.

Agents were sent everywhere to force whomever they chanced upon to renounce the faith of their fathers. This, which seemed impious to rustic people, caused them to rebel against those who gave them such an order. Thus many perished at the hands of the persecuting faction, and others did away with themselves, foolishly thinking this the holier course of two evils; but most of them by far quit the land of their fathers and fled the country. The Montanists,³⁴ who dwelt in Phrygia,³⁵ shut themselves up in their churches, set them on

34. *Montanists*—a Christian group founded by the prophet Montanus in the early 100s. Montanus placed strong emphasis on chastity, encouraged ecstatic prophesying, and argued that those who fell from grace could not be redeemed.

35. *Phrygia*—a kingdom in western Anatolia.

fire, and ascended to glory in the flames. And thenceforth the whole Roman Empire was a scene of massacre and flight.

A similar law was then passed against the Samaritans, which threw Palestine into an indescribable turmoil.

Those, indeed, who lived in my own Caesarea and in the other cities, deciding it silly to suffer harsh treatment over a ridiculous trifle of dogma, took the name of Christians in exchange for the one they had borne before, by which precaution they were able to avoid the perils of the new law. The most reputable and better class of these citizens, once they had adopted this religion, decided to remain faithful to it; the majority, however, as if in spite for having not voluntarily, but by the compulsion of law, abandoned the belief of their fathers, soon slipped away into the Manichaeic sect and what is known as polytheism.

The country people, however, banded together and determined to take arms against the emperor, choosing as their candidate for the throne a bandit named Julian, son of Sabarus. And for a time they held their own against the imperial troops; but finally, defeated in battle, were cut down, together with their leader. Ten myriads of men³⁶ are said to have perished in this engagement, and the most fertile country on earth thus became destitute of farmers. To the Christian owners of these lands, the affair brought great hardship: for while their profits from these properties were annihilated, they had to pay heavy annual taxes on them to the emperor for the rest of their lives, and secured no remission of this burden.

Next [Justinian] turned his attention to those called Gentiles, torturing their persons and plundering their lands. Of this group, those who decided to become nominal Christians saved themselves for the time being; but it was not long before these, too, were caught performing libations and sacrifices and other unholy rites. And how he treated the Christians shall be told hereafter. [...]

Justinian, while otherwise of such character as I have shown, did make himself easy of access and affable to his visitors; nobody of all those who sought audience with him was ever denied: even those who confronted him improperly or noisily never made him angry. On the other hand, he never blushed at the murders he committed. Thus he never revealed a sign of wrath or irritation at any offender, but with a gentle countenance and unruffled brow gave the order to destroy myr-

36. *Ten myriads of men*—one hundred thousand men.

iads of innocent men, to sack cities, to confiscate any amount of properties.

One would think from this manner that the man had the mind of a lamb. If, however, anyone tried to propitiate him and in supplication beg him to forgive his victims, he would grin like a wild beast, and woe betide those who saw his teeth thus bared!

The priests he permitted fearlessly to outrage³⁷ their neighbors, and even took sympathetic pleasure in their robberies; fancying he was thus sharing their divine piety when he judged such cases, he thought he was doing the holy thing when he gave the decision to the priest and let him go free with his ill-got booty: justice, in his mind, meant the priests' getting the better of their opponents. When he himself thus illegally got possession of estates of people alive or dead, he would straightway make them over to one of the churches, gilding his violence with the color of piety so that his victims could not possibly get their property back. Furthermore he committed an inconceivable number of murders for the same cause: for in his zeal to gather all men into one Christian doctrine, he recklessly killed all who dissented, and this too he did in the name of piety. For he did not call it homicide when those who perished happened to be of a belief that was different from his own. [...]

The deeds of Justinian were such that all eternity would not be long enough in which to describe them adequately. So a few examples will have to suffice to illuminate his whole character to future generations: what a dissembler he was, how he disregarded God, the priests, the laws, and the people who showed themselves loyal to him. He had no shame at all, either when he brought destruction on the state or at any misdeed; he did not bother to try to excuse his actions, and his only care was how he might get sole possession of all the wealth of the world. To begin:

As bishop of Alexandria he appointed a man by the name of Paul. At this time one Rhodon, a Phoenician,³⁸ was governor of that city. He ordered [Rhodon] to serve Paul with all zeal, and to allow none of his instructions to be unfulfilled. For thus he thought he could associate all the priests in Alexandria under the synod of Chalcedon.

37. *to outrage*—to anger.

38. *Phoenician*—resident of the coastal regions that now comprise Lebanon and parts of Israel and Syria.

Now there was a certain Arsenius, a native of Palestine, who had become one of the most useful intimates of the Empress Theodora,³⁹ and consequently after acquiring great power and wealth, had been raised to senatorial rank, though he was a disgusting fellow. He was a Samaritan,⁴⁰ but so as not to lose his official rank and power, became a nominal Christian; while his father and brother, encouraged by his authority, continued in their ancestral faith in Scythopolis,⁴¹ where, with his consent, they persecuted the Christians intolerably. As a result of this the citizens revolted and put [Arsenius's father and brother] both to a most shameful death. Many later troubles afflicted the people of Palestine because of this. At the time, however, neither Justinian nor the empress did anything to punish Arsenius, though he was principally responsible for the whole trouble. They merely forbade him entrance to the palace, to get rid of the crowds of Christians complaining against him.

This Arsenius, thinking to please the emperor, soon after went to Alexandria with Paul, to assist him generally and in special to help him get the good will of the Alexandrians. For during the time he had been barred from the palace, he affirmed he had become learned in all the Christian doctrines. This displeased Theodora, for she pretended to disagree with the emperor in religious matters, as I have told before.

As soon as they arrived in Alexandria, Paul handed over a deacon by the name of Psoes to Rhodon to be put to death, on the charge that this man alone stood in the way of the accomplishment of the emperor's wishes. And following instructions in letters from the emperor, which came frequently and cogently, Rhodon ordered the man to be scourged;⁴² after which, while he was being racked by the torture, he up and died.

When news of this reached the emperor, at the empress's instigation he expressed horror at what had been done by Paul, Rhodon, and Arsenius, as if he had forgotten his own instructions to these men. He now appointed Liberius, a patrician from Rome, governor of Alexandria, and sent certain priests of good reputation to Alexandria to inves-

39. *Empress Theodora*—Justinian's wife.

40. *Samaritan*—a member of a small community of Jews largely shunned by other Jews.

41. *Scythopolis*—a city in northern Israel.

42. *scourged*—whipped.

tigate the matter; among these were the archdeacon of Rome, Pelagius, who was commissioned by Pope Vigilius to act as his legate.

Paul, convicted of the murder, was removed from the bishopric; Rhodon, who fled to Constantinople, was beheaded by the emperor and his estates confiscated, although the man produced thirteen letters that the emperor had written him, insisting and commanding him to serve Paul in everything and never to oppose him, so that he could fulfill his every wish in religious matters. Liberius, at Theodora's order, crucified Arsenius, and the emperor confiscated his property, though he had no charge to bring against him except that he had been intimate with Paul. Now whether his actions in this matter were just or otherwise, I cannot say; but I shall soon show why I have described the affair.

Sometime later, Paul came to Constantinople and offered the emperor seven gold centenaries if he would reinstate him in the holy office from which, he claimed, he had been illegally removed. Justinian genially took the money, treated the man with great respect, and agreed to make him bishop of Alexandria again very soon, though another now held the office, as if he did not know that he himself had put to death Paul's friends and helpers, and had confiscated their estates.

So the *augustus*⁴³ zealously extended every effort to arrange this matter, and Paul was generally expected to regain his bishopric one way or another. But Vigilius, who was in the capital at the time, decided not to yield to the emperor's command in such a case; and he said he could not annul a decision that Pelagius had given as his legate. And the emperor, whose only idea was to get the money, dismissed the matter.

Here is another similar case. There was a certain Faustin, born in Palestine, and of an old Samaritan family, who accepted a nominal Christianity when the law constrained him. This Faustin became a senator and a governor of his province; and when his term of office expired a little later, he came to Constantinople, where he was denounced by certain priests as having favored the Samaritans and impiously persecuted the Christians in Palestine. Justinian appeared to be very angry and outraged that during his rule over the Romans, anybody could have insulted the name of Christ.

So the senate investigated the affair and, by the will of the emperor, punished Faustin with exile. But the emperor, after getting from

43. *augustus*—emperor.

him the money he wanted, straightway annulled the decree. And Faustin, restored to his former rank, and the emperor's friendship, was made count of the imperial domains in Palestine and Phoenicia, where he fearlessly did as much harm as he wanted. Now in what way Justinian protected the true interests of the Christians may clearly be seen in these instances, few of them as I have had time to give. [...]

6.4 Constantine Porphyrogenitus on Emperors (949)

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetemi Görög Filológiai Intézet, 1949), 47. Fair use.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Byzantine emperor from 945 until 959, authored the *Administrando Imperio* (*Administration of the Empire*) to guide his son and successors. Two excerpts below outline Constantine’s understanding of the emperor’s divine responsibilities. The first, a note to his son, argues that emperors enjoy the sanction and blessing of God and are responsible to him for his work on earth.

The second provides a glimpse of the religious pageantry surrounding the emperor—a visual affirmation of the emperor’s exalted position.



Figure 35. Coin, Constantine Porphyrogenitus with his son, ca. 945-959

Constantine, in Christ the eternal emperor, emperor of the Romans,⁴⁴ to his son Romanus, the emperor crowned of God and born in the purple:⁴⁵

44. *emperor of the Romans*—note that the Byzantine emperor, based in Constantinople and with no influence in Rome, still claims to be “emperor of the Romans.”

[...] [T]he Almighty shall cover you with his shield, and your creator shall endue you with understanding; he shall direct your steps and shall establish you upon a sure foundation. Your throne shall be as the sun before him, and his eyes shall be looking toward you, and no harm shall touch you, for he has chosen you and set you apart from your mother's womb, and has given to you his rule as to one excellent above all men, and has set you as a refuge upon a hill and as a statue of gold upon a high place. And as a city upon a mountain he has raised you up, that the nations may bring to you their gifts and you may be adored by those who dwell upon the earth. But you, O Lord my God, whose rule abides unharmed forever, prosper him in his ways, who through you was begotten of me, and may the visitation of your face be toward him, and your ear be inclined to his supplications. May your hand cover him, and may he rule because of truth, and may your right hand guide him; may his ways be directed before you to keep your statutes. May foes fall before his face and his enemies lick the dust. May the stem of his race be shady with leaves of many offspring, and the shadow of his fruit cover the kingly mountains; for by you do kings rule, glorifying you forever and ever. [...]

45. *born in the purple*—purple was the color of royalty.

6.5 Constantine Porphyrogenitus on Trappings (949)

Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Tudományegyetemi Görög Filológiai Intézet, 1949), 67–69. Reprinted by permission of Gábor Bolonyai.



Figure 36. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, ivory carving, 900s

[...] These robes of state and the diadems,⁴⁶ which you call “kamelaukia,” were not fashioned by men, nor by human arts devised or elaborated, but, as we find it written in secret stories of old history, when God made emperor that famous Constantine the Great, who was the first Christian emperor—he sent him these robes of state by the hand of his angel, and the diadems that you call “kamelaukia,” and charged [the emperor] to lay them in the great and holy church of God, which, after the name of that very wisdom that is the property of God, is called St. Sofia;⁴⁷ and not to clothe himself in them every day, but *only* when it is a great public festival of the Lord. And so by God’s

46. *diadem*—royal headband.

47. *is called St. Sophia*—“Sophia” is Greek for “wisdom.”

command he laid them up, and they hang above the holy table in the sanctuary of this same church, and are for the ornament of the church. And the rest of the imperial vestments and cloaks lie spread out upon this holy table. And when a festival of our Lord and God Jesus Christ comes round, the patriarch takes up such of these robes of state and diadems as are suitable and appropriate to that occasion, and sends them to the emperor, and he wears them in the procession, and only in it, as the servant and minister of God, and after use returns them again to the church, and they are laid up in it. Moreover, there is a curse of the holy and great emperor Constantine engraved upon this holy table of the church of God, according as he was charged by God through the angel, that if an emperor for any use or occasion of unseasonable desire be minded to take of them and either himself misuse or give them to others, he shall be anathematized as the foe and enemy of the commands of God, and shall be excommunicated from the church; moreover, if he himself be minded to make others like them, these too the church of God must take, with the freely expressed approval of all the bishops and of the senate; and it shall not be in the authority of either the emperor, or of the patriarch, or of any other, to take these robes of state or the diadems from the holy church of God. And mighty dread hangs over them who are minded to transgress any of these divine ordinances. One of the emperors, Leo by name, who also married a wife from Chazarea, out of his folly and rashness took up one of these diadems when no festival of the Lord was toward, and without the approval of the patriarch put it about his head. And straightway a carbuncle came forth upon his forehead so that in torment at the pains of it he evilly departed his evil life, and ran upon death untimely. And this rash act being summarily avenged, thereafter a rule was made, that when he is about to be crowned, the emperor must first swear and give surety that he will neither do nor conceive anything against what has been ordained and kept from ancient times, and then may he be crowned by the patriarch and perform and execute the rites appropriate to the established festival. [...]

7. Eastern Trends in Christian Theology

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

7.1 Evagrius Ponticus (345–399) on Prayer

Evagrius Ponticus, *Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*, 52–80. Used by permission of Cistercian Publications, © 1981, published by the Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321.



Figure 37. Evagrius Ponticus, 923

Evagrius Ponticus was a good friend of Basil and the two Gregories. Highly educated and well-versed in classical literature, he turned his attention to the life of prayer when he became a monk. The following excerpt on prayer comes from his *Praktikos*, a guide for fellow monks.

Although Evagrius never uses the term “theosis” in the excerpt below, his advice on purifying the soul through prayer is, at root, a treatise on theosis. Pray ardently and fervently, says Ponticus, and you will achieve the “habitual state of imperturbable calm” that characterizes one becoming like God. Reason and cognition have little place in Evagrius’s theology; prayer is paramount. “If you are a theologian you truly pray. If you truly pray you are a theologian.” “Just as bread is nourishment for the body and virtue nourishment for the soul, so is spiritual prayer nourishment for the intelligence.” Intelligence is not, therefore, the accumulation of knowledge, but rather intercourse with God.

2. The soul that is purified by the plenitude of virtues renders the spirit unshakable in its balance and makes it capable of possessing the state for which it longs.

3. Prayer is a continual intercourse of the spirit with God. What state of soul then is required that the spirit might thus strain after its master without wavering, living constantly with him without intermediary? [...]

5. Pray first for the gift of tears so that by means of sorrow you may soften your native rudeness. Then having confessed your sins to the Lord you will obtain pardon for them.

6. Pray with tears and your request will find a hearing. Nothing so gratifies the Lord as supplication offered in the midst of tears. [...]

9. Stand resolute, fully intent on your prayer. Pay no heed to the concerns and thoughts that might arise the while. They do nothing better than disturb and upset you so as to dissolve the fixity of your purpose.

10. When the devils see that you are really fervent in your prayer they suggest certain matters to your mind, giving you the impression that there are pressing concerns demanding attention. In a little while they stir up your memory of these matters and move your mind to search into them. Then when [one such devil] meets with failure it becomes saddened and loses heart.

11. Strive to render your mind deaf and dumb at the time of prayer and then you will be able to pray. [...]

21. "Leave your gift before the altar and go be reconciled with your brother," our Lord said—and then you shall pray undisturbed. For resentment blinds the reason of the man who prays and casts a cloud over his prayer. [...]

31. Pray not to this end, that your own desires be fulfilled. You can be sure they do not fully accord with the will of God. Once you have learned to accept this point, pray instead that "your will be done" in me. In every matter ask him in this way for what is good and for what confers profit on your soul, for you yourself do not seek this so completely as he does. [...]

33. What else is there who is good besides God alone? Therefore let us cast all our concerns upon him and it will be well with us. Certainly, he who is wholly good is necessarily the kind of person who gives only good gifts.

34. Do not be over-anxious and strain yourself so as to gain an immediate hearing for your request. The Lord wishes to confer greater favors than those you ask for, in reward for your perseverance in praying to him. For what greater thing is there than to converse inti-

mately with God and to be preoccupied with his company? Undistracted prayer is the highest act of the intellect. [...]

35. Prayer is an ascent of the spirit to God. [...]

37. First of all pray to be purified from your passions. Second, pray to be delivered from ignorance. Third, pray to be freed from all temptation and abandonment. [...]

46. The devil so passionately envies the man who prays that he employs every device to frustrate that purpose. Thus he does not cease to stir up thoughts of various affairs by means of the memory. He stirs up all the passions by means of the flesh. In this way he hopes to offer some obstacle to that excellent course pursued in prayer on the journey toward God. [...]

52. The state of prayer can be aptly described as a habitual state of imperturbable calm [*ἀνάρθεια*]. It snatches to the heights of intelligible reality the spirit that loves wisdom and that is truly spiritualized by the most intense love.

53. The man who strives after true prayer must learn to master not only anger and his lust, but must free himself from every thought that is colored by passion. [...]

60. If you are a theologian, you truly pray. If you truly pray, you are a theologian. [...]

62. The Holy Spirit takes compassion on our weakness, and though we are impure he often comes to visit us. If he should find our spirit praying to him out of love for the truth, he then descends upon it and dispels the whole army of thoughts and reasoning that beset it. And too he urges it on to the works of spiritual prayer. [...]

66. When you are praying do not fancy the divinity like some image formed within yourself. Avoid also allowing your spirit to be impressed with the seal of some particular shape, but rather, free from all matter, draw near the immaterial being and you will attain to understanding. [...]

78. When you are of the mind that you do not stand in need of tears for your sins along with your prayer, then give some thought to the distance that separates you from God, whereas you ought to be in him constantly. Then you will shed more abundant tears than ever.

79. Surely when you take your own measure you will know a sweet sorrow and will call yourself, as Isaiah spoke of himself, a miserable wretch. For you yourself are impure, your very lips are defiled, and it is among such people as these rebels that you live, and yet you dare to stand before the Lord of armies. [...]

80. If you pray in all truth you will come upon a deep sense of confidence. Then the angels will walk with you and enlighten you concerning the meaning of created things. [...]

83. The singing of psalms quiets the passions and calms the intemperance of the body. Prayer, on the other hand, prepares the spirit to put its own powers into operation. [...]

90. Though you seem to be in God's presence, yet guard against the demon of un-chastity. There is no more destructive or deceptive fellow than he. He would give the impression of being swifter than thought, and that he penetrates the watchfulness of your spirit. He would have you believe that your spirit is distracted from God when in fact it stands in his presence in fear and with reverence.

91. If you have a real interest in prayer then be prepared to withstand the assaults of the demon and endure with constancy the lashes he lays on. He shall attack you like a wild beast and buffet your entire body. [...]

100. If it is before the omnipotent God, creator and provider of all, that you stand in your prayer, how is it that you foolishly ignore the fear of him who is beyond all measure, and you fear instead mosquitoes and roaches; have you not heard Moses tell you: "The Lord your God shall you fear," or again: "Whom they dread and fear in the presence of his power ..."?

101. Just as bread is nourishment for the body and virtue for the soul, so is spiritual prayer nourishment for the intelligence. [...]

103. Strive to avoid praying against anyone in your prayer, so that you do not destroy what you have been building up by making your prayer a defilement. [...]

113. By true prayer a monk becomes another angel, for he ardently longs to see the face of the Father in Heaven.

114. Do not by any means strive to fashion some image or visualize some form at the time of prayer.

115. Do not cherish the desire to see sensibly angels or powers or even Christ lest you be led completely out of your wits, and taking a wolf for your shepherd, come to adore the demons who are your enemies. [...]

119. Happy is the spirit that becomes free of all matter and is stripped of all at the time of prayer.

120. Happy is the spirit that attains to complete unconsciousness of all sensible experience at the time of prayer.

121. Happy is the man who thinks himself no better than dirt.

122. Happy is the monk who views the welfare and progress of all men with as much joy as if it were his own.

123. Happy is the monk who considers all men as god—after God.
[...]

142. Do you wish to pray? Then banish the things of this world. Have Heaven for your homeland and live there constantly—not in mere word but in actions that imitate the angels and in a more godlike knowledge.

7.2 Maximus Confessor on Knowing God (ca. 630–634)

Maximus Confessor, “Chapters on Knowledge,” in *Selected Writings*, trans. George Berthold (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 129–134. Copyright © 1985 by George Berthold. Paulist Press, Inc., New York/Mahwah, NJ. Reprinted by permission of Paulist Press, Inc. www.paulistpress.com.

The next excerpt offers an excellent example of apophatic theology. “The soul would never be able to reach out toward the knowledge of God if God did not allow himself to be touched by it through condescension and by raising it up to him,” writes Maximus. “Indeed, the human mind as such would not have the strength to raise itself to apprehend any divine illumination did not God himself draw it up, as far as it is possible for the human mind to be drawn, and illumine it with divine brightness.”



Figure 38. Maximus Confessor, Mosaic, Nea Moni (New Monastery), Chios, Greece, later 1000s

• First century¹ •

1. God is one, without beginning, incomprehensible, possessing in his totality the full power of being, fully excluding the notion of time and quality in that he is inaccessible to all and not discernible by any being on the basis of any natural representation.

2. God is in himself (insofar as it is possible for us to know) neither beginning, nor middle, nor end, nor absolutely anything that is thought of as coming after him by nature; for he is unlimited, unmoved, and infinite in that he is infinitely beyond every essence, power, and act. [...]

4. God is not essence, understood as either general or particular, even if he is principle; nor is he potency understood as either general or particular, even if he is means; he is not act, understood as either general or particular, even if he is end of essential movement discerned impotency. But he is a principle of being who is creative of essence and beyond essence, a ground who is creative of power but beyond power, the active and eternal condition of every act, and to speak briefly, the creator of every essence, power, and act, as well as every beginning, middle, and end. [...]

6. God is always properly one and unique by nature. He encloses in himself in every way the whole of what being is in that he is himself even well beyond being itself. If this is the case, absolutely nothing that we call being has being at all of its own. Consequently, absolutely nothing that is different from him by essence is seen together with him from all eternity: neither age, nor time, nor anything dwelling in them. For what is properly being and what is improperly being never come together with each other.

7. Every beginning, middle, and end does not totally exclude every category of relation. God, on the contrary, being infinitely infinite, well above every relationship, is obviously neither beginning nor middle nor end nor absolutely anything of what the category or relation can be seen to possess.

8. It is said that all beings are objects of knowledge because they bear the demonstrable principles of their knowledge. God, however, is called the unknown, and among all knowable things only his existence

1. *First century*—first 100 sayings.

can be perceived. This is why no knowable object can compare in any way with him. [...]

13. The one who has illumined his mind with divine thoughts, who has accustomed his reason to honor ceaselessly the creator with divine hymns, and who has sanctified his sense with uncontaminated images has added to the natural beauty of the image the voluntary good of likeness. [...]

17. As a farmer in examining a suitable place to transplant wild trees falls upon an unhoped-for treasure, so it is with every genuine and humble ascetic whose soul is smooth of the roughness of matter, as the most blessed Jacob, asked by his father on the manner of his knowledge, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" replies, "The Lord God granted me success." For when the Lord will have given us who did not expect it the wise contemplations of his own wisdom without labor, it will be granted us suddenly to find a spiritual treasure. For the proven ascetic is a spiritual farmer who transplants as a wild tree the sense contemplation of visible things into the region of the spiritual and who finds a treasure: the manifestation by grace of the wisdom that is in beings. [...]

19. Those who search for knowledge with toil and do not succeed fail because of a lack of faith or else because being foolishly in rivalry with those who have knowledge they are at the point of rebelling against them, as once the people did against Moses. [...]

22. [...] [H]e who lives not for himself but for God becomes filled with divine graces that had not been manifested till then because of the pressing disturbance of the passions. [...]

31. The soul would never be able to reach out toward the knowledge of God if God did not allow himself to be touched by it through condescension and by raising it up to him. Indeed, the human mind as such would not have the strength to raise itself to apprehend any divine illumination did not God himself draw it up, as far as it is possible for the human mind to be drawn, and illumine it with divine brightness. [...]

• Second century² •

1. There is one God because one Godhead, one, without beginning, simple and supersubstantial,³ without parts and undivided, iden-

2. *Second century*—second 100 sayings.

3. *supersubstantial*—something that transcends or is better than material sub-

tically monad and triad; entirely monad and entirely triad; wholly monad as to substance, and wholly triad as to hypostases. For the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the Godhead, and the Godhead is in Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The whole is in the whole Father and the whole Father is in the whole of it; the whole is in the Son and the whole Son is in the whole of it. And the whole is in the Holy Spirit and the whole Holy Spirit is in the whole of it. The whole is the Father and in the whole Father; and the whole Father is the whole of it. And the whole is the whole Son and the whole is in the whole Son and the whole Son is the whole of it, and the Son is in the whole of it. And the whole is the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is the whole of it and the whole Holy Spirit is in the whole of it. For neither is the Godhead partly in the Father nor is the Father partly God; nor is the Godhead partly in the Son nor the Son partly God; nor is the Godhead partly in the Holy Spirit nor the Holy Spirit partly God. For neither is the Godhead divisible nor are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit imperfectly God. Rather the whole and complete Godhead is entirely in the entire Father and wholly complete it is entirely in the entire Son; and wholly complete it is entirely in the entire Holy Spirit. For the whole Father is entirely in the whole Son and Holy Spirit, and the whole Son is entirely in the whole Father and Holy Spirit; and the whole Holy Spirit is entirely in the whole Father and Son. This is why there is only one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For there is one and the same essence, power, and act of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and no one of them can exist or be conceived without the others.

2. Every concept involves those who think and what is thought, subject and object. But God is neither of those who think nor of what is thought for he is beyond them. Otherwise he would be limited if as a thinker he stood in need of the relationship to what was thought or as an object of thought he would naturally lapse to the level of the subject thinking through a relationship. Thus there remains only the rejoinder that God can neither conceive nor be conceived but is beyond conception and being conceived. To conceive and to be conceived pertain by nature to those things that are secondary to him. [...]

4. Just as straight lines that proceed from the center are seen as entirely undivided in that position, so the one who has been made

stance.

worthy to be in God will recognize in himself with a certain simple and undivided knowledge all the preexisting principles of things. [...]

6. The one who achieves a perfection attainable to men here below bears as fruit for God love, joy, peace, endurance for the future, incorruption and eternity, and things similar to these. And perhaps the first things belong to the one who is perfect in the active life while the second belong to the one who through genuine knowledge has gone beyond created things. [...]

8. The one who rallies from the division caused by disobedience first separates himself from the passions, then from passionate thoughts, then from nature and the things of nature, then from concepts and knowledge derived from them, and finally, getting away from the abundant variety of the reasons concerning providence, he reaches in a way that transcends knowledge the very Word of God himself. In him the mind considers its own stability and “rejoices with unutterable joy,” as a peace comes from God that surpasses all understanding and that continually keeps secure the one who is worthy of it. [...]

13. The one who seeks after knowledge sets the immovable foundations of the soul firmly on the Lord, as God says to Moses, “You stand with me.” Now it should be known that there is a distinction among those who stand before the Lord, if only this scripture be acknowledged by those eager to learn, “There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God coming in power.” For the Lord does not always appear in glory to those who are standing before him; rather, he comes in the form of a servant to beginners, and to those who are strong enough to follow him in climbing the lofty mountain of his transfiguration before the creation of the world. Thus it is possible for the Lord not to appear in the same form to all those who meet him, but to some in one way and to others in another way, that is, by varying the contemplation according to the measure of faith in each one.

14. When the Word of God becomes bright and shining in us, and his face is dazzling as the sun, then also will his clothes be radiant, that is, the clear and distinct words of the holy scripture of the Gospels now no longer veiled. Then Moses and Elijah will stand beside him, that is, the more spiritual meanings of the law and the prophets.

15. Just as the Son of man, as it is written, is coming with his angels in the glory of the Father, so is the Word of God transformed in the worthy with each advance in virtue as he comes with his angels in the glory of the Father. For the more spiritual meanings in the law and

the prophets, of which Moses and Elijah are the personal figures, appear with the Lord in his transfiguration and retain a degree of the glory in them and make manifest the power contained in those who are worthy. [...]

18. The one who prays ought never to halt his movement of sublime ascent toward God. For just as we should understand the ascents “from strength to strength” as the progress in the practice of the virtues, “from glory to glory” as the advance in the spiritual knowledge of contemplation, and the transfer from the letter of Holy Writ to its spirit, so in the same way the one who is settled in the place of prayer should lift his mind from human matters and the attention of the soul to more divine realities. This will enable him to follow the one who has “passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” who is everywhere and who in his incarnation passes through all things on our account. If we follow him, we also pass through all things with him and come beside him if we know him not in the limited condition of his descent in the incarnation but in the majestic splendor of his natural infinitude. [...]

36. In considering the loftiness and divine infinity we should not despair that God’s love for man cannot reach all the way to us from the heights. Neither when we ponder the infinite depth of our fall in sin should we disbelieve that a resurrection of dead virtue can take place in us. For God can accomplish both these things: he can come down and illuminate our mind through knowledge, and likewise he can raise up virtue in us once again and exalt us to himself through the works of justification. [...]

7.3 Maximus Confessor on Passions (ca. 630–633)

Maximus Confessor, “Ad Thalassium 21: On Christ’s Conquest of the Human Passions,” in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul Blowers and Robert Louis Wilkins (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 109–113. Used by permission of St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

Here Maximus reflects on the dual nature of Christ and the implication of this dual nature for our own deification.

Question. What is the meaning of the scripture, “He put off the powers and principalities,” and so on? And how, indeed, had he “put them on” at all when he was begotten without sin?

Response. The divine Logos⁴ assumed our human nature without altering his divinity, and became perfect man in every way like us save without sin. He appeared like the first man Adam in the manner both of his creaturely origin⁵ and his birth.⁶ The first man [Adam] received his existence from God and came into being at the very origin of his existence, and was free from corruption and sin—for God did not create either of these. When, however, he sinned by breaking God’s commandment, he was condemned to birth based on sexual passion and sin. Sin henceforth constrained his true natural origin within the liability to passions that had accompanied the first sin, as though placing it under a law. Accordingly, there is no human being who is sinless, since everyone is naturally subject to the law of sexual procreation that was introduced after man’s true creaturely origin in consequence of his sin.

Since, therefore, sin came about on account of the transgression, and the liability to passions connected with sexual procreation entered human nature on account of sin, and since, through sin, the original transgression continued unabatedly to flourish right along with this passibility⁷ of childbirth, there was no hope of liberation, for human

4. *divine Logos*—Jesus.

5. *γένεσις*—*genesis*—Blowers and Wilkins note that here Maximus refers to man’s original formation by God.

6. *γέννησις*—*gennisis*—Blowers and Wilkins here note that Maximus refers to man’s continuation of the human race through procreation.

7. *passibility*—susceptibility to pain.

nature was deliberately and indissolubly bound by the chain of evil. The more human nature sought to preserve itself through sexual procreation, the more tightly it bound itself to the law of sin, reactivating the transgression connected with the liability to passions. Because of its physical condition, human nature suffered the increase of sin within this very liability to passions, and it retained the energies of all opposing forces, principalities, and powers—energies that, in view of the universal sin operative in human passibility, used the unnatural passions to hide under the guise of natural passions. Therefore every wicked power is at work amid human nature's liability to passions, driving the deliberative will with the natural passions into the corruption of unnatural passions.

Thus, in his love of humanity, the only-begotten Son and Logos of God became perfect man, with a view to redeeming human nature from this helplessness in evil. Taking on the original condition of Adam as he was in the very beginning, he was sinless but not incorruptible, and he assumed, from the procreative process introduced into human nature as a consequence of sin, only the liability to passions, not the sin itself. Since, then, through the liability to passions that resulted from Adam's sin, the evil powers, as I already said, have hidden their activities clandestinely under the law of human nature in its current circumstance, it merely follows that these wicked powers—seeing in God our savior the same natural liability to passions as in Adam, since he was in the flesh, and thinking that he was necessarily and circumstantially a mere man, that the Lord himself had to submit to the law of nature, that he acted by deliberation rather than true volition—assailed him. These evil powers hoped to use natural passibility to induce even the Lord himself to fantasize unnatural passion and to do what suited them. They tried to do this to him who, in his first experience of temptation by pleasure, subjected himself to being deluded by these evil powers' deceits, only to "put off" those powers by eliminating them from human nature, remaining unapproachable and untouchable for them. Clearly he won the victory over them for our sake, not for his own; and it was for us that he became a man and, in his goodness, inaugurated a complete restoration. For he himself did not need the experience, since he is God and sovereign and by nature free from all passion. He submitted to it so that, by experiencing our temptations, he might provoke the evil power and thwart its attack, putting to death the very power that expected to seduce him just as it had Adam in the beginning.

This, then, is how, in his initial experience of temptation, he “put off the principalities and powers,” removing them from human nature and healing the liability to hedonistic passions, and in himself “cancelled the bond” of Adam’s deliberate acquiescence in those hedonistic passions. For it is by this bond that man’s will inclines toward wicked pleasure against his own best interest, and that man declares, in the very silence of his works, his enslavement, being unable, in his fear of death, to free himself from his slavery to pleasure.

Then, after having overcome and frustrated the forces of evil, the “principalities and powers,” through his first experience of being tempted with pleasure, the Lord allowed them to attack him a second time and to provoke him, through pain and toil, with the further experience of temptation so that, by completely depleting them, within himself, of the deadly poison of their wickedness, he might utterly consume it, as though in a [refiner’s] fire. For he “put off the principalities and powers” at the moment of his death on the cross, when he remained impervious to his sufferings and, what is more, manifested the [natural human] fear of death, thereby driving from our nature the passion associated with pain. Man’s will, out of cowardice, tends away from suffering, and man, against his own will, remains utterly dominated by the fear of death, and, in his desire to live, clings to his slavery to pleasure.

So the Lord “put off the principalities and powers” at the time of his first experience of temptation in the desert, thereby healing the whole of human nature of the passion connected with pleasure. Yet he despoiled them again at the time of his death, in that he likewise eliminated from our human nature the passion connected with pain. In his love of humanity, he accomplished this restoration for us as though he were himself liable; and what is more, in his goodness, he reckoned to us the glory of what he had restored. So too, since he assumed our nature’s liability to passions, albeit without sin, thereby inciting every evil power and destructive force to go into action, he despoiled them at the moment of his death, right when they came after him to search him out. He “triumphed” over them and made a spectacle of them in his cross, at the departure of his soul, when the evil powers could find nothing at all [culpable] in the passibility proper to his human nature. For they certainly expected to find something utterly human in him, in view of his natural carnal liability to passions. It seems that in his proper power and, as it were, by a certain “first fruits” of his holy and humanly begotten flesh, he completely freed our human nature from

the evil that had insinuated itself therein through the liability to passions. For he subjugated—to this very same natural passibility—the evil tyranny that had once ruled within it (within that passibility, I mean).

It would be possible to interpret this text differently, in a more mystical and sublime sense. As you know, however, we must not commit the ineffable truths of the divine teachings of scripture to writing. Let us rest content with what has been said, which should assuage our curiosity about this text. With God's help, and as long as it will be found worthy in your eyes, we shall still inquire, with a zeal to learn, into the apostolic thinking on this.

7.4 Maximus Confessor on Divine Love (ca. early 620s)

Maximus Confessor, “The Four Hundred Chapters on Love,” in *Selected Writings*, 36–38. Copyright © 1985 by George Berthold. Paulist Press, Inc., New York/Mahwah, NJ. Reprinted by permission of Paulist Press, Inc., www.paulistpress.com.

In the next reading Maximus emphasizes detachment from things of this world in the pursuit of God. “Love is begotten of detachment, detachment of hope in God, hope of patient endurance and long-suffering”

• First century⁸ •

1. Love⁹ is a good disposition of the soul by which one prefers no being to the knowledge¹⁰ of God. It is impossible to reach the habit of this love if one has any attachment to earthly things.

2. Love is begotten of detachment, detachment of hope in God, hope of patient endurance and long-suffering, these of general self-mastery, self-mastery of fear of God, and fear of faith in the Lord.

3. The one who believes the Lord fears punishment; the one who fears punishment becomes master of his passions; the one who becomes master of his passions patiently endures tribulations; the one who patiently endures tribulations will have hope in God; hope in God separates from every earthly attachment; and when the mind is separated from this it will have love for God.

4. The one who loves God prefers knowledge of him to all things made by him and is constantly devoted to it by desire.

5. If all things have been made by God and for his sake, then God is better than what has been made by him. The one who forsakes the

8. *First century*—first one-hundred sayings.

9. *Love*—Berthold notes that here Maximus uses the Greek word *agape*, the Christian “love” that Paul discusses in First Corinthians 13 and is often translated as “charity.”

10. *Knowledge*—for Maximus knowledge indicates a mystical experience of God: see Berthold.

better and is engrossed in inferior things shows that he prefers the things made by God to God himself.

6. The one who has his mind fixed on the love of God disdains all visible things and even his own body as alien.

7. If the soul is better than the body and God incomparably better than the world that he created, the one who prefers the body to the soul and the world to the God who created it is no different from idolaters.

8. The one who separates his mind from love and devotedness toward God and keeps it tied to any sensible thing is the one who prefers the body to the soul and things that are made to God their creator.

9. If the life of the mind is the illumination of knowledge and this is born of love for God, then it is well said that there is nothing greater than love.

10. When in the full ardor of its love¹¹ for God the mind goes out of itself, then it has no perception at all either of itself or of any creatures. For once illumined by the divine and infinite light, it remains insensible to anything that is made by him, just as the physical eye has no sensation of the stars when the sun has risen.

11. All the virtues assist the mind in the pursuit of divine love, but above all does pure prayer. By it the mind is given wings to go ahead to God and becomes alien to all things.

12. When through love the mind is ravished by divine knowledge and in going outside of creatures has a perception of divine transcendence, then, according to the divine Isaiah, it comes in consternation to a realization of its own lowliness and says with conviction the words of the prophet, "Woe is me for I am stricken at heart; because being a man having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips and I have seen with my eyes the king, the Lord of hosts."

13. The one who loves God cannot help but love also every man as himself even though he is displeased by the passions of those who are not yet purified. Thus when he sees their conversion and amendment, he rejoices with an unbounded and unspeakable joy.

14. The passionate soul is impure, filled with thoughts of lust and hatred.

15. The one who sees a trace of hatred in his own heart through any fault at all toward any man whoever he may be, makes himself

11. *love*—Berthold notes that here Maximus uses *eros* rather than *agape*.

completely foreign to the love for God, because love for God in no way admits of hatred for man.

16. “The one who loves me,” says the Lord, “will keep my commandments,” and “this is my commandment, that you love one another.”

15. Therefore the one who does not love his neighbor is not keeping the commandment, and the one who does not keep the commandment is not able to love the Lord.

17. Blessed is the man who has learned to love all men equally.

18. Blessed is the man who is not attached to any corruptible or transitory thing.

19. Blessed is the mind who has gone beyond all beings and takes unceasing delight in the divine beauty.

20. The one who makes provision for the desires of the flesh and bears a grudge against his neighbor for transitory things—such a man serves the creature rather than the creator. [...]

26. The disposition of love is made manifest not only in the sharing of money but much more in sharing the word of God and physical service.

27. The one who has genuinely renounced worldly matters and serves his neighbor without pretense through love soon frees himself of all passion and is rendered a sharer of divine love and knowledge. [...]

29. When you are insulted by someone or offended in any matter, then beware of angry thoughts, lest by distress they sever you from charity and place you in the region of hatred.

30. Whenever you are suffering intensely from insult or disgrace, realize that this can be of great benefit to you, for disgrace is God’s way of driving vainglory out of you.

31. As the memory of fire does not warm the body, so faith without love does not bring about the illumination of knowledge in the soul.

32. As the light of the sun attracts the healthy eye, so does the knowledge of God draw the pure mind to itself naturally through love.

33. The mind is pure when it is removed from ignorance and illuminated by divine light.

34. The soul is pure when it has been freed from the passions and rejoices unceasingly in divine love. [...]

PART II:

Growth and Schisms

8. Holy Objects

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

8.1 Marcellinus Discovers John the Baptist's Head (518)

Marcellinus, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus*, trans. Brian Croke (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995), 20–21. Used by permission of the Australian Association for Byzantine Studies.

The Byzantines were avid chroniclers. Some of their chronicles are terse, little more than laundry lists of events. Some are expansive, full of stories and commentary. Most offer a view of history that sees the mundane, the extraordinary, and the miraculous as all of a piece: God's work manifest in all events.

Marcellinus, who wrote his chronicle in Constantinople during the reigns of the Emperors Justin (518–527) and Justinian (527–565), showed an interest in most everything: religious ceremonies and processions, imperial anniversaries, natural disasters, civil unrest, the lives of the emperors, and miracles among the common folk. The following entry offers the tale of a miraculous relic, told in the same matter-of-fact style that characterizes all of Marcellinus's work. Here the extraordinary is ordinary; everyday history is infused with the divine.



Figure 39. A much-later, Latin version of the Chronicle Marcellinus, early 1500s

1 Sept. 452–31 Aug. 453

[...] John, the herald of the Lord and his baptizer, revealed his head that, at an unspeakably horrible demand, Herodias had once accepted after it had been cut from his shoulders and placed on a dish, and buried far from his headless body;¹ he revealed his head to two Eastern monks

1. ... *headless body*—see Matthew 14:1–12: “At that time Herod the ruler heard reports about Jesus; and he said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and for this reason these powers are at work in him.’ For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, because John had been telling

entering Jerusalem to celebrate the resurrection of Christ the Lord, so that when they reached the place where the former King Herod lived they were advised to search around and dig the ground up faithfully. So while they were journeying back to their own places, carrying in their rough saddle-bag the head they had discovered by faith, a certain potter from the city of Emesa,² fleeing from the poverty that threatened him daily, showed himself to them as a companion. While, in ignorance, he was carrying the sack entrusted to him with the sacred head, he was admonished in the night by him whose head he was carrying, and fleeing both his companions he made off. He entered the city of Emesa immediately with his holy and light burden, and as long as he lived there he venerated the head of Christ's herald. At his death, he handed it over in a jar to his sister, who was ignorant of the matter. She in fact left it to her heir, put away and sealed just as it was. Next a certain Eustochius, who was secretly a priest of the Arian faith, unworthily obtained this great treasure and dispensed to the rabble, as if it were purely his own, the grace that Christ the Lord bestows on his inconstant people through John the Baptist. When his wickedness was detected he was driven out of the city of Emesa. Afterwards this cave, in which the head of the most blessed John was set in an urn and reburied underground, became the abode of certain monks. Finally, while the priest and head of the monastery, Marcellus, was living a faultless life in that cave, blessed John, the herald of Christ, revealed himself and his head to Marcellus and showed that it was buried here, conspicuous by its many miracles. [...]

him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' Though Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and she pleased Herod so much that he promised on oath to grant her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, 'Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.' The king was grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he commanded it to be given; he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who brought it to her mother. His disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went and told Jesus.'" (NRSV)

2. *Emesa*—city in western Syria (modern-day Homs).

9. Architecture: Hagia Sophia

The Constantinople Church of the Holy Wisdom (*Hagia Sophia*)—“Sophia” being Greek for “wisdom”—was dedicated to the Logos—that is, to Christ—in 360. The church survived only until 404, when marauding crowds, unhappy with Empress Aelia Eudoxia’s decision to exile John Chrysostom (the exceptionally popular patriarch whose work we read earlier), burned it to the ground. Emperor Theodosius II ordered a replacement built, which he dedicated in 415.

This second Hagia Sophia lasted until the “Nika riots” of 532, a melee led by associations of sports fans and political partisans. (For an anachronistic analogy, think soccer hooligans who also supported political parties.) Unhappy because some of their compatriots languished in prison for murdering opponents after a recent chariot race, crowds at the Hippodrome—the long oval stadium in Constantinople—began hurling insults at Emperor Justinian during races on 13 January. The taunts grew louder and the crowds more threatening, until, by the latter part of the day, fans assaulted Justinian’s palace. When the riots ended five days later, Hagia Sophia lay in ruins, and tens of thousands lay dead.

Justinian immediately announced his intent to build a larger and even more impressive edifice. He imported stones of various kinds and colors from all over his empire. More than ten-thousand laborers worked on the cathedral at the height of

construction. Completed in 537, the third Hagia Sophia remained the largest cathedral in the world for almost one-thousand years, and the seat of the patriarch of Constantinople until 1453, when the Turks overran the city and turned the cathedral into a mosque. It is without question the most impressive Byzantine edifice ever erected, meant as a symbol of God's and the state's grandeur and power.

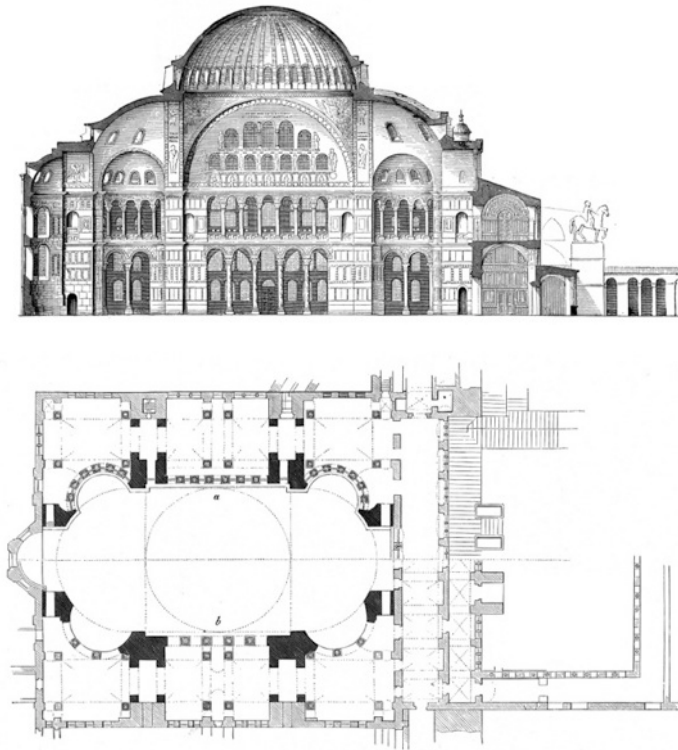


Figure 40. Cut-away and floor plan, Hagia Sophia



Figure 41. Hagia Sophia today, with minarets erected after Turks transformed it into a mosque

9.1 Procopius on Hagia Sophia (554–555)

Dating is disputed. Some estimates suggest the text may have been composed as late as the late 560s. Procopius, *On Buildings*, vol. 7 of *Procopius*, trans. H. B.

Dewing and Glanville Downey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 9–27. Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of the Loeb Classical Library. Loeb Classical Library® is a registered trademark of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. The Loeb Library requires that we note deviations from the original translation. These deviations include the substitution of American spellings for British spellings such as “show,” “honor,” “inquire,” “marvelous,” and “skillful”; “emperor” for “Emperor”; lowercase pronouns referencing God; “immediately” for “forthwith”; and “that” for “which” in restrictive clauses.



Figure 42. Hagia Sophia today

We’ve already read Procopius, who authored the *Secret History*, an indictment of Emperor Justinian and the Empress Theodora. The text below, from Procopius’s *Buildings of Justinian*, could not be more different. Here Procopius portrays Justinian not as a morally dissolute reprobate, but as an ideal Christian emperor, a holy man blessed with God’s favor, who constructed a sanctified building imbued with God’s power: “one might say that its interior is not illuminated from without by the sun, but

that the radiance comes into being within it”; the golden dome appears “suspended from Heaven”; and those who enter the church realize that God “cannot be far away, but must especially love to dwell in this place that he has chosen.” This excerpt begins with an account of the Nika riots.

[...] Some men of the common herd, all the rubbish of the city, once rose up against the Emperor Justinian in Byzantium, when they brought about the rising called the Nika Insurrection, which has been described by me in detail and without any concealment in the Books on the Wars. And by way of showing that it was not against the emperor alone that they had taken up arms, but no less against God himself, unholy wretches that they were, they had the hardihood to burn the church of the Christians, which the people of Byzantium call “Sophia,” an epithet that they have most appropriately invented for God, by which they call his temple; and God permitted [the rioters] to accomplish this impiety, foreseeing into what an object of beauty this shrine was destined to be transformed. So the whole church at that time lay a charred mass of ruins. But the Emperor Justinian built not long afterwards a church so finely shaped, that if anyone had inquired of the Christians before the burning if it would be their wish that the church should be destroyed and one like this should take its place, showing them some sort of model of the building we now see, it seems to me that they would have prayed that they might see their church destroyed immediately, in order that the building might be converted into its present form. At any rate the emperor, disregarding all questions of expense, eagerly pressed on to begin the work of construction and began to gather all the artisans from the whole world. And Anthemius of Tralles,¹ the most learned man in the skilled craft which is known as the art of building, not only of all his contemporaries, but also when compared with those who had lived long before him, ministered to the emperor’s enthusiasm, duly regulating the tasks of the various artisans, and preparing in advance designs of the future construction; and associated with him was another master-builder, Isidorus by name, a Miesian by birth, a man who was intelligent and

1. *Anthemius of Tralles*—a Greek professor of geometry, who, together with the scientist and mathematician Isadora of Miletus, served as the chief architect and engineer for the new Hagia Sophia.

worthy to assist the Emperor Justinian. Indeed this also was an indication of the honor in which God held the emperor, that he [God] had already provided the men who would be most serviceable to him in the tasks that were waiting to be carried out. And one might with good reason marvel at the discernment of the emperor himself, in that out of the whole world he was able to select the men who were most suitable for the most important of his enterprises.

So the church has become a spectacle of marvelous beauty, overwhelming to those who see it, but to those who know it by hearsay altogether incredible. For it soars to a height to match the sky, and as if surging up from among the other buildings it stands on high and looks down upon the remainder of the city, adorning it, because it is a part of it, but glorying in its own beauty, because, though a part of the city and dominating it, it at the same time towers above it to such a height that the whole city is viewed from there as from a watch-tower. Both its breadth and its length have been so carefully proportioned, that it may not improperly be said to be exceedingly long and at the same time unusually broad. And it exults in an indescribable beauty. For it proudly reveals its mass and the harmony of its proportions, having neither any excess nor deficiency, since it is both more pretentious than the buildings to which we are accustomed, and considerably more noble than those that are merely huge, and it abounds exceedingly in sunlight and in the reflection of the sun's rays from the marble. Indeed one might say that its interior is not illuminated from without by the sun, but that the radiance comes into being within it, such an abundance of light bathes this shrine. And the face itself of the church (which would be the part that faces the rising sun, that portion of the building in which they perform the mysteries in worship of God) was constructed in the following manner.

A structure of masonry is built up from the ground, not made in a straight line, but gradually curving inward on its flanks and receding at the middle, so that it forms the shape of half a circle, which those who are skilled in such matters call a half-cylinder; and so it rises precipitously to a height. The upper part of this structure ends in the fourth part of a sphere, and above it another crescent-shaped structure rises, fitted to the adjoining parts of the building, marvelous in its grace, but by reason of the seeming insecurity of its composition altogether terrifying. For it seems somehow to float in the air on no firm basis, but to be poised aloft to the peril of those inside it. Yet actually it is braced with exceptional firmness and security. [...]

[The huge spherical dome] seems not to rest upon solid masonry, but to cover the space with its golden dome suspended from Heaven. All these details, fitted together with incredible skill in mid-air and floating off from each other and resting only on the parts next to them, produce a single and most extraordinary harmony in the work and yet do not permit the spectator to linger much over the study of any one of them, but each detail attracts the eye and draws it on irresistibly to itself. So the vision constantly shifts suddenly, for the beholder is utterly unable to select which particular detail he should admire more than all the others. But even so, though they turn their attention to every side and look with contracted brows upon every detail, observers are still unable to understand the skillful craftsmanship, but they always depart from there overwhelmed by the bewildering sight. [...]

The whole ceiling is overlaid with pure gold, which adds glory to the beauty, yet the light reflected from the stones prevails, shining out in rivalry with the gold. And there are two stoa-like colonnades,² one on each side, not separated in any way from the structure of the church itself, but actually making the effect of its width greater, and reaching along its whole length, to the very end, while in height they are less than the interior of the building. And they too have vaulted ceilings and decorations of gold. One of these two colonnaded stoas has been assigned to male worshippers, while the other is reserved for women engaged in the same exercise. But they have nothing to distinguish them, nor do they differ from one another in any way, but their very equality serves to beautify the church, and their similarity to adorn it. But who could fittingly describe the galleries of the women's side, or enumerate the many colonnades and the colonnaded aisles by means of which the church is surrounded? Or who could recount the beauty of the columns and the stones with which the church is adorned? One might imagine that he had come upon a meadow with its flowers in full bloom. For he would surely marvel at the purple of some, the green tint of others, and at those on which the crimson glows and those from which the white flashes, and again at those that nature, like some painter, varies with the most contrasting colors. And whenever anyone enters this church to pray, he understands at once that it is not by any human power or skill, but by the influence of God that this work has been finely tuned. And so his mind is lifted up toward God and exalted, feeling that [God] cannot be far away, but must especially

2. *stoa-like colonnades*—covered walkways with columns arrayed on each side.

love to dwell in this place that he has chosen. And this does not happen only to one who sees the church for the first time, but the same experience comes to him on each successive occasion, as though the sight were new each time. [...]

9.2 Paul the Silentiary on Hagia Sophia (562)

Paul the Silentiary, “Description of Hagia Sophia,” in *Three Political Voices from the Age of Justinian*, trans. Peter N. Bell (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 197–203. Used by permission of Liverpool University Press. A number of footnotes derive from information provided by Bell.

Paul the Silentiary authored the following “panegyric,” or speech in verse glorifying its subject. (A “silentiary” served as an adviser in the imperial household.) Delivered on Christmas Eve, 562, Paul’s panegyric marked a highpoint in the more than two weeks of festivities celebrating the restoration of Hagia Sophia’s dome, which cracked during an earthquake of 557 and collapsed during a second quake in 558.

Paul’s over-heated prose seeks to accomplish several things: to establish Constantinople firmly as the “new Rome,” to establish Justinian as the unquestioned head of the Byzantine Empire, and to stake a claim for Hagia Sophia as an exceptionally holy spot, not to mention the greatest building in the world.

Much as in Procopius’s text, Hagia Sophia emerges here as an almost miraculous building. With this church, writes Paul, Justinian had “no need at all to step on mountains in order to dart up to Heaven”; the church allowed him “on the streamlined wings of piety” to “ride to the divine firmament.” Those who visited the church “thought that they planted their steps in the undefined heavenly vaults.”

Although a Christian poem for a Christian occasion, this panegyric is chock full of references to Greek mythology and structured according to classical norms. In the words of Peter Bell, the translator of the text below, the poem represents a “fusion of classical genre and (Christian) religious expression.”³ It links the pagan past to a new, Christian future.

3. Ibid., 84.

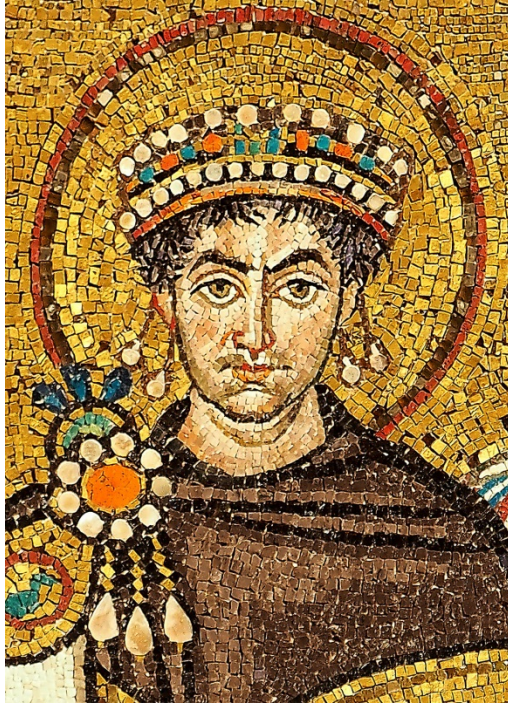


Figure 43. Mosaic of Justinian, pre-547, Basilica of San Vitale

[...] Peace, rich in prosperity, nurse of cities, whom our Lord has embraced more than victory of the lovely helmet, come now; exulting in city-preserving labors, let us sing in holy hymns of the house that surpasses all the most glorious battles,⁴ beneath which alone every divinely inspired, glorious, high-roofed building has cowered low. But come, fruitful Rome,⁵ and garland our life-giving emperor,⁶ clothing him abundantly with pure hymns, not because he has fitted your yoke-band on the nations of the earth, nor because he has extended

4. *house that surpasses all the most glorious battles*—Hagia Sophia.

5. *fruitful Rome*—Constantinople. Paul understands Constantinople as the “New Rome,” that is, Rome’s rightful successor.

6. *life-giving emperor*—Emperor Justinian (527–565).

the immeasurable spaces of your throne beyond the outermost boundaries, over against the shores of Ocean, but because, by raising this infinite temple about your arm,⁷ he has made you more brilliant than your mother on the Tiber⁸ who bore you. Give way, I say, renowned Roman capitol, give way! My emperor has so far overtopped that wonder as great God is superior to an idol. And so I desire that you, Anthusa of the golden tunic,⁹ sing of your scepter-bearer¹⁰ in honey-voiced measures. For indeed, not only did our Lord, equipping his hand with weapons, enslave innumerable barbarians with his shield-piercing spear, to make them bow their untamed necks to your yoke-straps, and cower before the yoke of your justice; but even black envy himself,¹¹ shrieking insolently, sank beneath the bow of the emperor, protector of the city, and, torn by a shower of arrows, crashed broken-down, and by his fall hollowed out the dust. But you too, first-born Latin Rome, come, singing in harmony with fresh-budding Rome; come, rejoicing that you see your child surpassing her mother, for this is the delight of parents.

Men whose task is to honor the holy ordinances,¹² come, I beg you, cast off the garb of somber grief and, rejoicing, clothe your limbs in snowy robes. After wiping the five-year tear¹³ from our eyes, let us sing rhythmic hymns with auspicious lips. The scepter-bearer of the Ausonians¹⁴ has opened on earth the bolts of the heavenly gates; he has spread wide the doors of joy to all our festivities; he has dulled all cares. For from the time when our [two] lords¹⁵ most mighty work

7. *about your arm*—Paul imagines Hagia Sophia as an arm bracelet adorning the personified Constantinople.

8. *your mother on the Tiber*—the original Rome.

9. *Anthusa of the golden tunic*—a flowery name for Constantinople. *Anthousa* means blooming or blossoming.

10. *scepter-bearer*—Justinian.

11. *black Envy himself*—the devil.

12. *Men, whose task is to honor the holy ordinances*—priests.

13. *five-year tear*—the five-year span between the earthquake of 557, which damaged Hagia Sophia's dome, and its re-dedication in 562.

14. *scepter-bearer of the Ausonians*—Justinian, imagined here as king of an ancient, Italian-Sicilian people. Justinian conquered some (and hoped to conquer all) of the Italian peninsula, that is, the central portion of the old Roman Empire. This title thus suggests vast ambitions.

15. *[two] lords*—Justinian and his wife, the Empress Theodora.

crashed down,¹⁶ there was unabating mourning throughout the city. Be gracious to my bold tale, be gracious, Mighty Guardian of the Earth, may you pardon my verses, even if I provoke your ear a little. For delight in your great works has supervened and buried pangs of gloom in the streams of Lethe.¹⁷ The light of the sun is more radiant to the wayfarer after a wintry night, and the longed-for calm is more cheering to sea-roaming men after waves. Be gracious, Mighty One, be gracious to my bold tale.

Now, although mounted on mighty foundations, the wonderful vault of the hemisphere collapsed,¹⁸ and shook all the foundations of the house of holy mysteries; all the depths of the foundations in the city leapt up, the earth groaned long beneath, and murky dust, mingling with the clouds of the air, hid the midday sparkle of the clear sky of Heaven. But, blessed Christ, you stretched a hand over your seat, and did not allow the malicious Telchines¹⁹ to foul your earth with the blood of slain men. For you neither endured to look, with the all-seeing glance of your undefiled eye, upon bloodshed in the precincts of the bloodless sacrifice.²⁰ Nor again did the broad-breasted temple, held fast within the bonds of craftsmanship, excellent in its fruit, sink down as far as its foundations. But the curve of a single arch slipped away; the Eastern one and a portion of the sphere were mingled with the dust. And one part was on the ground, while the rest still (a wonder to behold), just as if without support, was hanging there, companion to the breezes. And every man groaned, stricken with gloom. May no one smite my Siren²¹ with an indignant word for walking along the path of forgotten grief. Laughter is sweeter after weeping; so is health after sickness. The flame streaming forth from the sky²² did not cause men such grief, when it burned up the surface

16. *most mighty work crashed down*—in the earthquake of 558, which occurred one year after the quake in 557 that first damaged the dome.

17. *Lethe*—the river of the underworld in Greek mythology. Those who drink the waters of Lethe forget the past.

18. *wonderful vault of the hemisphere collapsed*—the dome of Hagia Sophia.

19. *malicious Telchines*—minor Greek gods, known to use magic for nefarious purposes.

20. *precincts of the bloodless sacrifice*—areas where the Eucharist was administered.

21. *May no-one smite my Siren*—may nobody libel my muse or criticize my poem.

22. *flame streaming forth from the sky*—metaphorical, not literal.

of the earth, leaving it without vegetation, or when streams of countless torrents hissed as they were dried up; nor yet when fiery Heaven gaped wide over the fruit-bearing earth, and opened the gates of destructive rain, and confounded dry plains with the surges of the sea.

But my scepter-bearer, when he heard about the horrible grief, did not long hide the blaze of his mind. He could not endure resting quiet and downcast in the bonds of idle hesitation; he shook off the pang of short-lived grief, and darted to the labor of rebuilding the house. Shield-brandishing Rome stood beside him and said:²³

All-powerful Lord, of blessed portion, abode of justice, mainstay of cities, jealousy has overpowered me. But it is a sign of grace in Megaira that it is when you are alive that she has assaulted the beauty of Rome.²⁴ A gaping ulcer²⁵ is welling up in my breast. But, Blessed One²⁶ (for you have the power to sprinkle medicines upon the ulcer), stretch out your hand, the nurse of prosperity which flows with riches. By directing it with your guiding bridle, I have made all things subject to your trophy-bearing triumphs. [...] For never, Lord, even though the peoples of the boundless earth cower down before you, bent low before Ausonian ordinances, even though you have built the whole city for me, never will you find another more brilliant symbol of your throne.

So she spoke, and longed to implant her lovely lips on the emperor's feet.²⁷ But he stretched out to his familiar Rome a gracious right hand, and raised her up as she bent her knee. And he smiled softly, so as to banish her measureless grief, and pronounced words full of carefree gladness:

Away with sorrow, Queen of cities, do not trouble your heart. As no dart has conquered your shield, nor has any other barbarian spear

23. *Shield-brandishing-Rome stood beside him and said*—Constantinople, the New Rome, posing here as a soldier fighting for emperor Justinian. Constantinople now begins speaking.

24. *a sign of grace in Megaira that it is when you are alive*—Maigaira is the personification of malice and envy. Hence Constantinople notes that malice and envy have assaulted her beauty. In other words, Constantinople is so beautiful that it cannot but inspire envy.

25. *A gaping ulcer*—the earthquake.

26. *Blessed One*—Justinian.

27. *longed to implant her lovely lips on the emperor's feet*—Emperor Diocletian introduced the Oriental practice in which visitors to the emperor prostrated themselves as a sign of adoration. Christian emperors, including Justinian, continued the practice.

smitten your unwavering spirit, nor yet may you bow down beneath cares that are hard to endure. Endure, Queen of all cities, do not tear your heart. For indeed, by my labors, I shall make you more celebrated, by rebuilding the finely curved summit of the temple.

So he spoke, and hastened to the sanctuary, and his deed was surely swifter than the accompanying word. For in his haste he did not, according to custom, await his attendant shield-bearer, wearing the golden necklet on his unbending neck, nor any golden staff, ever the escort of lords, nor the host of strong-footed youth excelling in deeds of prowess—a street company, well-armed and black-shod. And suddenly, from both sides, men came streaming together from all directions, the emperor before them; shields thudded among the close-packed crowds, and a confused din rang out. But when he set foot in the temple and realized that the foundation of the house was unshaken, he turned his whole eager mind to the vast summit, and praised Anthemius' craftsmanship²⁸ and his intelligence, which excelled in prudent counsel. [Anthemius] laid the first foundations of the temple; he discharged the counsels of the nobly toiling emperors²⁹ [and was] a man skilled both in the choice of the center of a circle and the drawing of a plan. He had implanted in the walls sufficient strength to resist the attacks, scarcely to be endured, of a hostile demon. For [the temple] did not collapse when its strongly supported peak was broken, but rested its foot unshaken on its sound foundations. And, on the preexisting walls, the guide of the great throne among the Ausonians³⁰ rebuilt the beauty of the faultless head.

But who could sing how, with lofty adornment, he restored the temple to life? Who is capable of describing the wise counsel of the wide-ruling emperor, excellent in its offspring? Those things, scepter-bearer, we shall leave aside, as the province of the building craft, but I will come to the culmination of your nobly labored efforts, having seen the newly accomplished miracle, at whose sight divine love thrilled the beams of every eye. Every mortal who has directed his eye to the glorious Heaven has not long endured watching, with back-bent neck, the circling meadow clad with dancing stars; he has brought back his eye to a green hill and longed to watch a gushing stream with flow-

28. *Anthemius' craftsmanship*—Anthemius served as an engineer and architect for the construction.

29. *nobly-toiling emperors*—Emperor Justinian and Empress Theodora.

30. *guide of the great throne among the Ausonians*—Justinian.

ery banks, the ripe corn, the shelter of a wood thick with lovely trees, the frisking flocks, the coiling olive, the vine supported on luxuriant branches and a shining calm upon the blue-green sea, threshed by the sea-washed oars of the sailor. But if anyone plants his step inside the holy precincts, he is unwilling to withdraw his foot again, but, with enchanted eyes, he bends and twists his neck hither and thither. All satiety has been driven from out of the lovely-helmeted house. The ever-guarded emperor has built such a flawless temple, with the succoring counsel of immortal God. For by your labors, lord, you attract the everlasting benevolence of most glorious Christ. For you did not wish to plant massive-shouldered Ossa on the peaks of Olympus, or to drag Pelion above the neck of Ossa to make Heaven scalable by mortal steps.³¹ But having accomplished a work beyond hope through your pious labors, you have no need at all to step on mountains in order to dart up to Heaven, but on the streamlined wings of piety you ride to the divine firmament. But why do I delay in celebrating a feast day that banishes care? Why do I roll out my tale outside the temple? Let us go into the sanctuary; sing praises of God, initiates,³² invoking him in supplication to assist my words.

The sickle's edge, lately blunted after the grape harvest, was awaiting [next] summer's work of sheaves; and the sun, shaking his reins on the wing of the south wind, was driving to the beatless degrees of Capricorn, after leaving Sagittarius newly downcast. The august dawn came, and the divine gate of the newly built temple bellowed as it was opened, summoning inside both people and its guardian. As dark night wanes and the light of day grows greater for all, so in truth when the great temple appeared, the night of sorrows waned and the bright gleam of joy spread over everyone. It was a deed befitting you, mighty scepter-bearer, and befitting Rome, to have opened the door of the temple to your people as harbinger of the feast of God immortal; it was fitting that next after that day of divine wonder came the birthday of life-giving Christ.³³ And now the night was finished, the guide of dawn of the lovely foot, the night that invites us to joy, in

31. *to make heaven scalable by mortal steps*—in Greek myth, two giants uprooted two mountains near Olympus—Ossa and Pelion—and then stood them on top of Olympus in order to reach heaven.

32. *initiates*—priests.

33. *next after that day of divine wonder came the birthday of life-giving Christ*—the initiation ceremony began on Christmas Eve.

which [Plato],³⁴ the immortal herald of God, had welcomed the strains of the unsleeping choir in his wonderful precincts, where with mystic voice the men of life-preserving Christ had rejoiced to utter night-long hymns, singing without pause. But when, after drawing back her shadowy veil, rosy-armed sunlight stole over the heavenly vaults, then all the people and each office-holder responsible for discharging the commands of a mighty king assembled. Bringing gifts of thanksgiving to Christ the king, they sang reverent hymns with suppliant mouths, lighting the silver-white candles with nobly toiling hands. And the priest accompanied and led off the holy choir, the much-hymned priest,³⁵ whom the scepter-bearer of the Ausonians had found worthy of the temple. And all Rome's path of the broad ways was made narrow.³⁶ And when they had come to the divine courts, all the people cried out in thanksgiving, and thought that they planted their steps in the undefined heavenly vaults.

Unbar the door to me, reverent initiates, unbar it, unbar the shrine of divine wonder to my tale, and offer a prayer for my verses. For as we touch the starting-rope,³⁷ we must direct our eyes toward you. [...]

34. *Plato*—church of St. Plato in the center of Constantinople, from where the re-dedication procession began.

35. *much-hymned priest*—the patriarch.

36. *path of the broad ways was made narrow*—the crowds created congestion, thus making the street “narrow.”

37. *starting-rope*—beginning of the service.

10. Missions to the North: Balkans and Rus'

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

10.1 Patriarch Photios on Latin Influence in Bulgaria (866)

Photius, "Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of the East, 866," trans. Catharine P. Roth, in Pelikan and Hotchkiss, *Creeks and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, 1:298–308. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

Just six years after two chieftains from Rus' laid siege to Constantinople, Photios, patriarch of Constantinople, composed the following encyclical calling for missions to pagan Rus' and newly Christianized Bulgaria. Although written more than one hundred years before the conversion of Rus' under Vladimir, Photios's letter suggests that the Rus' were already receptive to the Christian message. The urgency of his call, as noted earlier, stemmed from his worries over the significant presence of Frankish (Germanic/Latin) missions in the region.



Figure 44. Pirin Mountains, Bulgaria



Figure 45. Black Sea coast, Bulgaria

Early stages of a theological dispute over the *filioque* are evident in this letter. Later sections will devote more attention to the *filioque*, but a few, preliminary notes are appropriate here. The Creed of Nicaea as revised at the Council of Constantinople in 381 states that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father.” Beginning sometime in the 500s, an additional phrase, “and from the Son” (*filioque* in Latin), began to appear in the West. While the East continued to insist that the Holy Spirit proceeds *only* from the Father, the West increasingly confessed that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father *and from the Son.*” Although the Latin papacy seems not to have formally accepted the *filioque* until the 1000s, the phrase enjoyed wide use in the West by Photios’s time, and this “corrupt doctrine” (in Photios’s estimation) served as a convenient way to differentiate East from West in the quest for influence in Slavic regions.

1. The Bulgarian nation also, barbaric and Christ-hating as they were turned to such docility and knowledge of God that they departed from their ancestral demonic rites, put off the error of idolatry and superstition, and were grafted unexpectedly into the Christian faith.

2. But what a wicked, evil-eyed, godless counsel and action [followed]! Such a story, with the Gospel as its theme, is converted into dejection; joy and gladness is turned into grief and tears. For that nation had not yet been honoring the true religion of Christians for two years when impious and ill-omened men (for what else could one of the pious call them?) arising from the darkness (for they sprang from the western regions), alas—how shall I narrate the rest? These men fell upon the nation newly established in piety and newly formed, like lightning or an earthquake or a hailstorm, or rather, to speak more appropriately, like a solitary wild beast, and with feet and teeth, that is with the pressure of a shameful way of life and corrupt doctrine, ravaged and violated (as far as depended on their own audacity) the vineyard of the Lord, beloved and newly planted. For they wickedly dared to corrupt them and draw them away from the orthodox and pure doctrines and the blameless faith of Christians.

3. First they shifted them unlawfully into fasting on Saturday; for a little disregard of the things that have been handed down by tradition often leads into a complete disdain for doctrine. Then they cut off the first week of the fast from the rest of Lent and drew them into milk-drinking, consumption of cheese, and other similar pleasant eating.¹ And then, to widen the road of transgression for them and to turn them aside from the straight and royal highway, these very men who were making many brides into husbandless wives and mothers of fatherless children, these same men induced the Bulgarians to loathe and reject the presbyters adorned with lawful marriage (those who were truly priests of God).² They scattered the seeds of Mani's farming³ among them and defiled with a second sowing of tares the souls who were just beginning to sprout the seed of piety. [...]

6. Furthermore, proclaiming themselves bishops, they did not shudder to re-anoint those who were chrismated with myron by presbyters,⁴ and maintained the fantastic claim that the chrismation of presbyters is useless and is celebrated in vain. [...]

1. *milk-drinking, consumption of cheese* ...—the Eastern Orthodox do not eat dairy products during the Lenten fast.

2. *adorned with lawful marriage* ...—priests in the East marry; priests in the West do not.

3. *Mani's farming*—a reference to the Manichean heresy.

4. *chrismated with myron by presbyters*—Western missionaries re-anointed already-anointed presbyters, implicitly declaring their earlier ordinations invalid.

8. Not only in this matter did they come to transgress the law, but also they attained what must be the summit of evils. Besides the aforementioned nonsense, they even attempted to adulterate with bastard ideas and interpolated words⁵ (O scheme of the devil!) the holy and sacred creed, which holds its undisputed force from the decrees of all the ecumenical councils; they make the novel assertion that the Holy Spirit proceeds not from the Father alone but also from the Son. [Here Photios launches a lengthy argument for the Orthodox understanding of the Trinity.] [...]

24. Those bishops of darkness (for they called themselves bishops) sowed this heresy with their other unlawful practices into that simple and newly established nation of the Bulgarians. The report of these matters came to our hearing; we were struck through our bowels a grievous blow, as if one saw the offspring of his womb torn and dismembered before his eyes by serpents and wild beasts. We who expended toils, pains, and sweat for their regeneration and perfection experienced similar unbearable grief and misfortune when our children were perishing.

25. For we mourned as much at the event that occurred and their suffering, as we had been filled with joy when we saw them released from their former error.

26. But we mourned them and are still mourning, and to raise them from their calamity we will not give sleep to our eyes nor closing to our eyelids until we bring them back (as far as we are able) into the tabernacle of the Lord.

27. By a conciliar and divine decree we have condemned these deceivers and enemies of God, the new forerunners of apostasy, the servants of the adversary, those deserving of innumerable deaths, the common corrupters, those who so grievously mangled that tender nation newly established in piety. We are not now defining their apostasy, but from the existing canons of the councils and the apostles we are revealing the previously defined judgment against them and making it clear again to all. [...]

34. We thought it right to bring the knowledge and awareness of these matters to your brotherhood in Christ according to the ancient custom of the church; we advise and beg you to become eager allies in combating these impious and godless assertions. Do not depart from the traditional order, which our forefathers, by their deeds, handed

5. *interpolated words*—the *filioque* clause.

over to us to keep; but with great zeal and eagerness choose and send representatives on your behalf, men bearing your authority, adorned with piety and priestliness in word and life. Thus we may remove from the midst of the church the new gangrene of this heresy, and pull up by the very roots those mad enough to introduce such an admixture of wickedness into the newly founded and established nation. Because of their common apostasy let us commit them to the fire that according to the Lord's words will receive those who are accursed.

35. For thus, when heresy is driven out and piety prevails, we have good hope that we can return the newly catechized and newly enlightened community of the Bulgarians to the faith that was delivered to them. And indeed not only this nation exchanged the faith in Christ for their former impiety, but also that nation called Rus' of whom many people often speak and consider second to none for cruelty and bloodthirstiness, who indeed raised their hands even against the Roman Empire,⁶ when they had enslaved those around them, and from that were filled with presumption. Nevertheless these also have now accepted the pure and unadulterated worship of Christians in exchange for the pagan and godless belief in which they were held before, establishing themselves voluntarily in a position of subjects and allies, instead of their recent audacious brigandage against us. And to such a point the desire and zeal for the faith kindled them (Paul again exclaims, "Blessed is God forever!") that they even accepted a bishop and shepherd, and are embracing the rites of Christians with great honor and zeal and diligence.

36. While these are renouncing their former beliefs and are taking in exchange for them the pure faith of Christians, by the grace of the loving God who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth, if your brotherhood also should cooperate eagerly in cutting out and burning the weeds, we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ our true God that his sheepfold will be increased still more and the saying will be fulfilled that "all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest" and "to all the earth has gone out the voice" of the apostolic teachings "and their words to the ends of the inhabited world."

Therefore those who are sent by you in your place, representing your reverend and holy person, must be entrusted with the authority that has been allotted to you in the Holy Spirit. Thus they may be

6. *Roman Empire*—Byzantine Empire.

ready to speak and free to act with the authority of an apostolic throne concerning these topics and others similar to them. [...]

10.2 Pope Adrian II's (867–872) Epistle to the Slavs

Kliment Okridski, “On the Sixth Day of the Month of April: Memory and Life of Our Blessed Father and Teacher Methodius, Archbishop of Moravia,” trans.

Spass Nikolov, in Ivan Duichev ed., *Kiril and Methodius: Founders of Slavonic Writing, A Collection of Sources and Critical Studies*, (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1985), 86–87. All attempts to contact publisher failed.



Figure 46. Statue of Kirill and Methodius, Vratsa, Bulgaria

Here Kliment Okhridski (840–916) recounts Pope Adrian’s support for the Slavic missions. Adrian cites Acts 2:4 to make clear that he approves of “different tongues” or proselytizing in the vernacular.

And [Prince] Kotsel⁷ sending envoys to the pope,⁸ asked him to let Methodius our blessed teacher go back to him. The pope said. “Not

7. *Kotsel*—nephew of Rastislav, prince of Moravia.

8. *envoys to the pope*—Pope Adrian ordained Methodius as a priest; Methodius

only to you, but to all those Slavic lands do I now send him forth to be the teacher on behalf of God and St. Peter, the first-enthroned and the key-holder of the kingdom of Heaven.” And he sent him forth, writing the following epistle:

Adrian, bishop and servant of the Lord, to Rastislav, Svetopolk,⁹ and Kotsel. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2:14). We heard of your spiritual deeds and now yearn with will and prayer for your salvation. We see that the Lord has elated your hearts to seek him and has shown you that God is to be served not only with faith but with good works; for faith apart from works is dead (James 2:26), and those people would perish who profess to know God but deny him by their deeds (Titus 1:16). Therefore you asked a teacher not only from this holy see, but from the faithful King Michael as well. And he sent to you the blessed philosopher Konstantin [Kirill] along with his brother [Methodius], whereas we failed to do this. And when they learned that your countries belonged to the apostolic see¹⁰ they did not do anything contrary to canon but sped to us, bringing over the relics of St. Clement¹¹ as well. And we received triple joy from this and decided, after studying everything, to send to your countries Methodius, our spiritual son, a man perfect of mind and true of faith, having ordained him along with his disciples, to teach you as you have requested, and to explain to you in your language the books of the whole ecclesiastical order in full, along with the holy Mass—that is, the liturgy—and the baptism, as Konstantin the Philosopher [Kirill] had already begun to do, with the grace of God and the prayers of St. Clement. If anyone else could teach you in a manner worthy and orthodox, then let this be blessed by God, by us, and by the whole ecumenical and apostolic church, so that you become well accustomed to the commandments of God. Abide by this rule. At the liturgy read the Acts and the Gospels first in Latin, then in Slavic, so as to fulfill the words of the scriptures, “Praise the Lord, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!” (Psalms 117:1), and elsewhere, “All will pro-

at this point lived in Rome.

9. *Svetopolk*—a Moravian prince.

10. *apostolic see*—“see” refers to the area or congregation under a bishop’s jurisdiction, while “apostolic see” refers to the see of St. Peter’s successor, in this case, Pope Adrian.

11. *St. Clement*—during his travels, Konstantin/Kirill found what he thought to be the relics of St. Clement of Rome, the second successor to St. Peter. The brothers returned the relics to Rome, receiving profuse thanks from the pope and the city.

claim the glory of God in different tongues, as the Spirit gives them utterance” (Acts 2:4, 11). And if any of the teachers gathered in your parts reach your ears, turn you away from the truth and make you wander into myths (2 Timothy 4: 3–4) and make bold to deceive you in other ways and abuse the books in your tongue, then such a man should be excommunicated not only from the sacraments, but also from the church itself, until he had mended his ways. Such men are wolves, not sheep. We should know them by their fruit and beware of them. And you, beloved children, listen to God’s teaching and do not reject the instruction offered by the church so that you may become true worshippers of our heavenly Father along with all the saints. Amen! [...]

10.3 Tales from *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (ca. 1116)

The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text, Publication #60, trans. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), 53–54, 82–84, 110–113, 116–118. Used by permission of the Medieval Academy of America.



Figure 47. Later edition of the Primary Chronicle, 1400s

The Russian Primary Chronicle or *Tale of Bygone Years* is the single most important literary source for the study of early Rus'. An edited collection of documents composed much earlier,

it may first have been compiled in 1116 by Silvestr, the abbot of the St. Mikhail monastery near Kiev. It is also possible that Silvestr simply copied or edited an already compiled work produced by a different monk living in the Caves Monastery in Kiev. The earliest extant copy of the *Primary Chronicle* dates from 1377.

Below are three stories from the *Chronicle* about Russia's path to Christianity. The first claims that Jesus's apostle Andrew personally prophesied Kiev's glorious future, and that the baptism of Olga (the first Christian ruler in Rus') and the Christianization of all Rus' under her grandson Vladimir fulfilled that prophesy. The suggestion that St. Andrew visited Kiev is pure invention. The second tale is probably correct in asserting that Olga was baptized, but when and where remains a subject of speculation. Vladimir's conversion certainly did occur around the date given in the third tale, but most other details from the story are impossible to verify.

Despite these uncertainties, the *Chronicle* nicely illustrates the connections between Constantinople and Rus'—religious, cultural, and military—as the two powers supported and challenged one another, and as Christianity worked its way north to become the philosophical, cultural, and theological foundation of a new, Christian empire. The tale of Olga in particular suggests Russia's desire both to draw near to Byzantium and to maintain its independence.

• St. Andrew blesses the future site of Kiev •

[...] When Andrew was teaching in Sinope¹² and came to Kher-son¹³ (as has been recounted elsewhere), he observed that the mouth of the Dnieper¹⁴ was nearby. Conceiving a desire to go to Rome, he thus journeyed to the mouth of the Dnieper. Thence he ascended the river, and by chance he halted beneath the hills upon the shore. Upon arising in the morning, he observed to the disciples who were with him,

12. *Sinope*—a Greek colony on the south shore of the Black Sea.

13. *Kher-son*—a Greek colony located in southern Crimea.

14. *Dnieper*—a major river that flows from central Russia through Ukraine and Belarus to the Black Sea.

“See you these hills? So shall the favor of God shine upon them that on this spot a great city shall arise, and God shall erect many churches there.” He drew near the hills, and having blessed them, he set up a cross. After offering his prayer to God, he descended from the hill on which Kiev was subsequently built, and continued his journey up the Dnieper. [...]

• Olga’s baptism •

6456–6463 [948–955].¹⁵ [Empress] Olga went to Greece and arrived at Tsargrad.¹⁶ The reigning emperor was named Constantine, son of Leo. Olga came before him, and when he saw that she was very fair of countenance and wise as well, the emperor wondered at her intellect. He conversed with her and remarked that she was worthy to reign with him in his city. When Olga heard his words, she replied that she was still a pagan, and that if he desired to baptize her, he should perform this function himself; otherwise, she was unwilling to accept baptism. The emperor, with the assistance of the patriarch [of Constantinople], accordingly baptized her.

When Olga was enlightened, she rejoiced in soul and body. The patriarch, who instructed her in the faith, said to her, “Blessed are you among the women of Rus’,¹⁷ for you have loved the light, and quit the darkness. The sons of Rus’ shall bless you to the last generation of your descendants.” He taught her the doctrine of the church, and instructed her in prayer and fasting, in almsgiving, and in the maintenance of chastity. She bowed her head, and like a sponge absorbing water, she eagerly drank in his teachings. The princess bowed before the patriarch, saying, “Through your prayers, holy father, may I be preserved from the crafts and assaults of the devil!” At her baptism she was christened Helena, after the ancient empress, mother of Constantine the Great. The patriarch then blessed her and dismissed her.

After her baptism, the emperor summoned Olga and made known to her that he wished her to become his wife. But she replied, “How

15. 6456–6463 [948–955]—the Byzantines reckoned time from the creation of the world, which they placed at 5508 BCE. Thus any Byzantine date can be converted to a modern date by subtracting 5508.

16. *Tsargrad*—Constantinople.

17. *Blessed are you among the women of Rus’*—identical language (but for the addition of “of Rus’”) to that used by Elizabeth when she recognized Mary as the mother of the Jesus. See Luke 1:39–45.

can you marry me, after yourself baptizing me and calling me your daughter? For among Christians that is unlawful, as you yourself must know.” Then the emperor said, “Olga, you have outwitted me.” He gave her many gifts of gold, silver, silks, and various vases, and dismissed her, still calling her his daughter.

Since Olga was anxious to return home, she went to the patriarch to request his benediction for the homeward journey, and said to him, “My people and my son are heathen. May God protect me from all evil!” The patriarch replied, “Child of the faith, you have been baptized into Christ and have put on Christ. Christ shall therefore save you. Even as he saved Abraham from Abimelech, Lot from the Sodomites, Moses from Pharaoh, David from Saul, the three children from the fiery furnace, and Daniel from the wild beasts, he will preserve you likewise from the devil and his snares.” So the patriarch blessed her, and she returned in peace to her own country, and arrived in Kiev.

Thus it was when the queen of Ethiopia came to Solomon, wishing to hear his words of wisdom, and beheld much wisdom and many wonders. Even so, the sainted Olga sought the blessed wisdom of God. But the queen sought human wisdom, while Olga sought divine wisdom. For those who seek for wisdom shall find it. [...]

Now Olga dwelt with her son Sviatoslav, and she urged him to be baptized, but he would not listen to her suggestion, though when any man wished to be baptized, he was not hindered, but only mocked. For to the infidels, the Christian faith is foolishness. They do not comprehend it, because they walk in darkness and do not see the glory of God. Their hearts are hardened, and they can neither hear with their ears nor see with their eyes. [...]

Olga remarked oftentimes, “My son, I have learned to know God, and am glad for it. If you know him, you too will rejoice.” But he did not heed her exhortation, answering, “How shall I alone accept another faith? My followers will laugh at that.” But his mother replied, “If you are converted, all your subjects will perforce follow your example.” Sviatoslav did not heed his mother, but followed heathen usages, for he did not know that whoever does not obey his mother shall come to distress. For it is written, “Whoever heeds not his father or his mother shall suffer death” [Exodus 21:17]. But he was incensed at his mother for this reason. As Solomon has said, “He who corrects the unrighteous begins to revile himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets himself a blot. Rebuke not the evil, lest he hate you” [Proverbs 9:7–8]. For rebuke addressed to evildoers provokes offense.

But notwithstanding, Olga loved her son Sviatoslav, and said, "So be the will of God. If God wishes to have pity upon my kin and upon the land of Rus', let him lead my son's heart to return to God, even as God has granted me to do." Thus saying, she prayed night and day for her son and for the people, while she brought him up to manhood and adult age. [...]

• Vladimir converts Rus' •

6495 [987]. Vladimir summoned together his boiars¹⁸ and the city elders, and said to them, "Behold, the Bulgars came before me urging me to accept their religion.¹⁹ Then came the Germans²⁰ and praised their own faith;²¹ and after them came the Jews. Finally the Greeks appeared, criticizing all other faiths but commending their own,²² and they spoke at length, telling the history of the whole world from its beginning. Their words were artful, and it was wondrous to listen and pleasant to hear them. They preach the existence of another world. 'Whoever adopts our religion and then dies shall arise and live forever. But whoever embraces another faith shall be consumed with fire in the next world.' What is your opinion on this subject, and what do you answer?" The boiars and the elders replied, "You know, O prince, that no man condemns his own possessions, but praises them instead. If you desire to make certain, you have servants at your disposal. Send them to inquire about the ritual of each and how he worships God."

Their counsel pleased the prince and all the people, so that they chose good and wise men to the number of ten, and directed them to go first among the Bulgars and inspect their faith. The emissaries went their way, and when they arrived at their destination they beheld the disgraceful actions of the Bulgars and their worship in the mosque; then they returned to their country. Vladimir then instructed them to go likewise among the Germans, and examine their faith, and finally to visit the Greeks. They thus went into Germany, and after viewing the German ceremonial,²³ they proceeded to Tsargrad, where they ap-

18. *boiar*—*boiars* made up the aristocracy of early Rus' and often advised the emperor.

19. *their religion*—Islam.

20. *Germans*—Franks.

21. *their own faith*—Roman Catholicism.

22. *their own*—Eastern Orthodoxy.

23. *German ceremonial*—the Roman-Catholic liturgy.

peared before the emperor. He inquired on what mission they had come, and they reported to him all that had occurred. When the emperor heard their words, he rejoiced, and did them great honor on that very day.

On the morrow, the emperor sent a message to the patriarch to inform him that a Russian delegation had arrived to examine the Greek faith, and directed him to prepare the church and the clergy, and to array himself in his sacerdotal robes, so that the Rus' might behold the glory of the God of the Greeks. When the patriarch received these commands, he bade the clergy assemble, and they performed the customary rites. They burned incense, and the choirs sang hymns. The emperor accompanied the Rus' to the church, and placed them in a wide space, calling their attention to the beauty of the edifice, the chanting, and the pontifical services and the ministry of the deacons, while he explained to them the worship of his God. The Rus' were astonished, and in their wonder praised the Greek ceremonial.²⁴ Then the emperors Basil and Constantine invited the envoys to their presence, and said, "Go hence to your native country," and dismissed them with valuable presents and great honor.

Thus they returned to their own country, and the prince called together his boiars and the elders. Vladimir then announced the return of the envoys who had been sent out, and suggested that their report be heard. He thus commanded them to speak out before his retinue. The envoys reported, "When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt.²⁵ The Bulgar bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in Heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we

24. *Greek ceremonial*—the Eastern-Orthodox liturgy.

25. *ungirt*—with girdle or belt loosened or removed.

cannot dwell longer here.” Then the boiars spoke and said, “If the Greek faith were evil, it would not have been adopted by your grandmother Olga who was wiser than all other men.” Vladimir then inquired where they should all accept baptism, and they replied that the decision rested with him.

After a year had passed, in 6496 [988], Vladimir proceeded with an armed force against Kherson, a Greek city, and the people of Kherson barricaded themselves within.²⁶ Vladimir halted at the farther side of the city beside the harbor, a bowshot from the town, and the inhabitants resisted energetically while Vladimir besieged the town. Eventually, however, they became exhausted, and Vladimir warned them that if they did not surrender, he would remain on the spot for three years. When they failed to heed this threat, Vladimir marshaled his troops and ordered the construction of an earthwork²⁷ in the direction of the city. While this work was under construction, the inhabitants dug a tunnel under the city wall, stole the heaped-up earth, and carried it into the city, where they piled it up in the center of the town. But the soldiers kept on building, and Vladimir persisted. Then a man of Kherson, Anastasius by name, shot into the Rus’ camp an arrow on which he had written, “There are springs behind you to the east, from which water flows in pipes. Dig down and cut them off.” When Vladimir received this information, he raised his eyes to Heaven and vowed that if this hope was realized, he would be baptized. He gave orders straightway to dig down above the pipes, and the water supply was thus cut off. The inhabitants were accordingly overcome by thirst, and surrendered.

Vladimir and his retinue entered the city, and he sent messages to the emperors Basil and Constantine, saying, “Behold, I have captured your glorious city. I have also heard that you have an unwed sister. Unless you give her to me to wife, I shall deal with your own city as I have with Kherson.” When the emperors heard this message they were troubled, and replied, “It is not meet for Christians to give in marriage to pagans. If you are baptized, you shall have her to wife, inherit the

26. *proceeded with an armed force against Kherson* ...—reasons for the attack against Kherson—a city at the mouth of the Dnieper River as it enters the Black Sea—are unclear. The historian Andrzej Poppe has suggested that Kherson sided with a rebel group and that Vladimir responded to the Byzantine Emperor Basil’s call for assistance against the rebels.

27. *earthwork*—an embankment used as a fortification.

kingdom of God, and be our companion in the faith. Unless you do so, however, we cannot give you our sister in marriage." When Vladimir learned their response, he directed the envoys of the emperors to report to the latter that he was willing to accept baptism, having already given some study to their religion, and that the Greek faith and ritual, as described by the emissaries sent to examine it, had pleased him well. When the emperors heard this report, they rejoiced, and persuaded their sister Anna to consent to the match. They then requested Vladimir to submit to baptism before they should send their sister to him, but Vladimir desired that the princess should herself bring priests to baptize him. The emperors complied with his request, and sent forth their sister, accompanied by some dignitaries and priests. Anna, however, departed with reluctance. "It is as if I were setting out into captivity," she lamented; "better were it for me to die at home." But her brothers protested, "Through your agency God turns the land of Rus' to repentance, and you will relieve Greece from the danger of grievous war. Do you not see how much harm the Russes have already brought upon the Greeks? If you do not set out, they may bring on us the same misfortunes." It was thus that they overcame her hesitation only with great difficulty. The princess embarked upon a ship, and after tearfully embracing her kinfolk, she set forth across the sea and arrived at Kherson. The natives came forth to greet her, and conducted her into the city, where they settled her in the palace.

By divine agency, Vladimir was suffering at that moment from a disease of the eyes, and could see nothing, being in great distress. The princess declared to him that if he desired to be relieved of this disease, he should be baptized with all speed; otherwise it could not be cured. When Vladimir heard her message, he said, "If this proves true, then of a surety is the God of the Christians great," and gave order that he should be baptized. The bishop of Kherson, together with the princess's priests, after announcing the tidings, baptized Vladimir, and as the bishop laid his hand upon him, he straightway received his sight. Upon experiencing this miraculous cure, Vladimir glorified God, saying, "I have now perceived the one true God." When his followers beheld this miracle, many of them were also baptized.

Vladimir was baptized in the Church of St. Basil, which stands at Kherson upon a square in the center of the city, where the Khersonians trade. The palace of Vladimir stands beside this church to this day, and the palace of the princess is behind the altar. After his baptism, Vladimir took the princess in marriage. [...]

After Vladimir was baptized the priests explained to him the tenets of the Christian faith, urging him to avoid the deceit of heretics by adhering to the following creeds:

[The priests ask Vladimir to accept the Orthodox understanding of the Trinity, to acknowledge the authority of the seven ecumenical councils, and to reject the teachings of the Latins.]

[...] Hereupon Vladimir took the princess and Anastasius and the priests of Kherson, together with the relics of St. Clement and of Phoebus his disciple, and selected also sacred vessels and images for the service. In Kherson he thus founded a church on the mound that had been heaped up in the midst of the city with the earth removed from his embankment; this church is standing at the present day. Vladimir also found and appropriated two bronze statues and four bronze horses, which now stand behind the Church of the Holy Virgin, and which the ignorant think are made of marble. As a wedding present for the princess, he gave Kherson over to the Greeks again, and then departed for Kiev.

When the prince arrived at his capital, he directed that the idols should be overthrown, and that some should be cut to pieces and others burned with fire. He thus ordered that [a statue of] Perun²⁸ should be bound to a horse's tail and dragged down Borichev to the stream. He appointed twelve men to beat the idol with sticks, not because he thought the wood was sensitive, but to affront the demon who had deceived man in this guise, that he might receive chastisement at the hands of men. Great are you, O Lord, and marvelous are your works! Yesterday he was honored of men, but today held in derision. While the idol was being dragged along the stream to the Dnieper, the unbelievers wept over it, for they had not yet received holy baptism. After they had thus dragged the idol along, they cast it into the Dnieper. But Vladimir had given this injunction: "If it halts anywhere, then push it out from the bank, until it goes over the falls. Then let it loose." His command was duly obeyed. When the men let the idol go, and it passed through the rapids, the wind cast it out on the bank, which since that time has been called Perun's Sandbank, a name that it bears to this very day.

Thereafter Vladimir sent heralds throughout the whole city to proclaim that if any inhabitant, rich or poor, did not take himself to

28. *Perun*—the god of thunder, one of the most powerful pagan gods of ancient Rus'.

the river,²⁹ he would risk the prince's displeasure. When the people heard these words, they wept for joy, and exclaimed in their enthusiasm, "If this were not good, the prince and his boiars would not have accepted it." On the morrow, the prince went forth to the Dnieper with the priests of the princess and those from Kherson, and a countless multitude assembled. They all went into the water: some stood up to their necks, others to their breasts, and the younger near the bank, some of them holding children in their arms, while the adults waded farther out. The priests stood by and offered prayers. There was joy in Heaven and upon earth to behold so many souls saved. But the devil groaned, lamenting, "Woe is me! How am I driven out hence! For I thought to have my dwelling place here, since the apostolic teachings do not abide in this land. Nor did this people know God, but I rejoiced in the service they rendered to me. But now I am vanquished by the ignorant, not by apostles and martyrs, and my reign in these regions is at an end."

When the people were baptized, they returned each to his own abode. Vladimir, rejoicing that he and his subjects now knew God himself, looked up to Heaven and said, "O God, who has created Heaven and earth, look down, I beseech you, on this your new people, and grant them, O Lord, to know you as the true God, even as the other Christian nations have known you. Confirm in them the true and inalterable faith, and aid me, O Lord, against the hostile adversary, so that, hoping in you and in your might, I may overcome his malice." Having spoken thus, he ordained that wooden churches should be built and established where pagan idols had previously stood. He thus founded the Church of St. Basil on the hill where the idol of Perun and the other images had been set, and where the prince and the people had offered their sacrifices. He began to found churches and to assign priests throughout the cities, and to invite the people to accept baptism in all the cities and towns.

He took the children of the best families, and sent them for instruction in book-learning. The mothers of these children wept bitterly over them, for they were not yet strong in faith, but mourned as for the dead. When these children were assigned for study, there was fulfilled in the land of Rus' the prophecy that says, "In those days, the deaf shall hear words of scripture, and the voice of the stammerers shall be made plain" [Isaiah 29:18 and 32:4]. For these persons had not

29. *take himself to the river*—was baptized.

heard the words of scripture, and now heard them only by the act of God, for in his mercy the Lord took pity upon them, even as the prophet said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" [Exodus 33:19].

He had mercy upon us in the baptism of life and the renewal of the spirit, following the will of God and not according to our deeds. Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved his new people, the land of Rus', and illumined them with holy baptism. Thus we bend the knee before him, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, what reward shall we return you for all that you have given us, sinners that we are? We cannot requite your gifts, for great are you, and marvelous are your works. Of your majesty there is no end. Generation after generation shall praise your acts" [Psalm 145:4–5]. [...]

We are therefore bound to serve the Lord, rejoicing in him, for David said, "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in him with trembling" [Psalm 2:11]. We call upon the Lord our God, saying "Blessed be the Lord, who gave us not as prey to their teeth. The net was broken, and we were freed from the crafts of the devil. His glory has perished noisily, but the Lord endures forever, glorified by the sons of Rus', and praised in the Trinity."

11. Iconoclastic Controversy

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).



Figure 48. Iconoclasts destroy the face of Christ. An anti-iconoclast image from the Chludov Psalter, 800s. Note the equation of the iconoclasts' work with the crucifixion of Christ.

11.1 Council of Constantinople on Images (754)

“Epitome of the Definition of the Iconoclastic Conciliabulum, Held in Constantinople, A.D. 754,” trans. H. R. Percival, in Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 14:543–546. Public domain.

Emperor Leo III’s successor, Constantine V (743–775), sanctioned new persecutions against the iconoclasts. He summoned a council of Byzantine bishops to his palace, where the bishops equated pictures with idols and argued that representing Christ in a human body suggested a false separation of his human nature from his divine nature. The council declared itself to be an “ecumenical council,” but the Eastern churches today do not recognize the council as valid. Portions of the council’s statement appear below.



Figure 49. Coin, Constantine V, n.d.

The holy and ecumenical synod, which by the grace of God and most pious command of the God-beloved and orthodox emperors, Constantine and Leo, now assembled in the imperial residence city, in

the temple of the holy and inviolate Mother of God and Virgin Mary, surnamed in Blachernae,¹ have decreed as follows.

Satan misguided men, so that they worshipped the creature instead of the creator. The Mosaic law and the prophets cooperated to undo this ruin; but in order to save mankind thoroughly, God sent his own Son, who turned us away from error and the worshipping of idols, and taught us the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth. As messengers of his saving doctrine, he left us his apostles and disciples, and these adorned the church, his bride, with his glorious doctrines. This ornament of the church the holy fathers and the six ecumenical councils have preserved inviolate. But the before-mentioned demiurgos² of wickedness could not endure the sight of this adornment, and gradually brought back idolatry under the appearance of Christianity. As then Christ armed his apostles against the ancient idolatry with the power of the Holy Spirit, and sent them out into all the world, so has he awakened against the new idolatry his servants our faithful emperors, and endowed them with the same wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Impelled by the Holy Spirit they could no longer be witnesses of the church being laid waste by the deception of demons, and summoned the sanctified assembly of the God-beloved bishops, that they might institute at a synod a scriptural examination into the deceitful coloring of the pictures that draws down the spirit of man from the lofty adoration of God to the low and material adoration of the creature, and that they, under divine guidance, might express their view on the subject. Our Holy Synod therefore assembled, and we, its 338 members, follow the older synodal decrees, and accept and proclaim joyfully the dogmas handed down, principally those of the six holy ecumenical synods. [...]

Therefore we thought it right to show forth with all accuracy in our present definition the error of such as make and venerate these, for it is the unanimous doctrine of all the holy fathers and of the six ecumenical synods, that no one may imagine any kind of separation or mingling in opposition to the unsearchable, unspeakable, and incomprehensible union of the two natures in the one hypostasis or person. What avails, then, the folly of the painter, who from sinful love of gain depicts that which should not be depicted—that is, with his polluted hands he tries to fashion that which should only be believed in the heart and confessed with the mouth? He makes an image and calls it

1. *Blachernae*—northwestern suburb of Constantinople.

2. *demiurgos*—creator.

Christ. The name Christ signifies God and man. Consequently it is an image of God and man, and consequently he has in his foolish mind, in his representation of the created flesh, depicted the Godhead that cannot be represented, and thus mingled what should not be mingled. Thus he is guilty of a double blasphemy—the one in making an image of the Godhead, and the other by mingling the Godhead and manhood. Those fall into the same blasphemy who venerate the image, and the same woe rests upon both. [...] When, however, they are blamed for undertaking to depict the divine nature of Christ, which should not be depicted, they take refuge in the excuse: We represent only the flesh of Christ that we have seen and handled. But that is a Nestorian error.³ For it should be considered that that flesh was also the flesh of God the Word, without any separation, perfectly assumed by the divine nature and made wholly divine. How could it now be separated and represented apart? So is it with the human soul of Christ that mediates between the Godhead of the Son and the dullness of the flesh. As the human flesh is at the same time flesh of God the Word, so is the human soul also soul of God the Word, and both at the same time, the soul being deified as well as the body, and the Godhead remained undivided even in the separation of the soul from the body in his voluntary passion. For where the soul of Christ is, there is also his Godhead; and where the body of Christ is, there too is his Godhead. If then in his passion the divinity remained inseparable from these, how do the fools venture to separate the flesh from the Godhead, and represent it by itself as the image of a mere man? They fall into the abyss of impiety, since they separate the flesh from the Godhead, ascribe to it a subsistence of its own, a personality of its own, which they depict, and thus introduce a fourth person into the Trinity. Moreover, they represent as not being made divine, that which has been made divine by being assumed by the Godhead. Whoever, then, makes an image of Christ, either depicts the Godhead that cannot be depicted, and mingles it with the manhood (like the Monophysites), or he represents the body of Christ as not made divine and separate and as a person apart, like the Nestorians.

The only admissible figure of the humanity of Christ, however, is bread and wine in the holy supper. This and no other form, this and no other type, has he chosen to represent his incarnation. Bread he

3. *Nestorian error*—that Christ consisted of two distinct persons: human and divine.

ordered to be brought, but not a representation of the human form, so that idolatry might not arise. And as the body of Christ is made divine, so also this figure of the body of Christ, the bread, is made divine by the descent of the Holy Spirit; it becomes the divine body of Christ by the mediation of the priest who, separating the oblation from that which is common, sanctifies it. [...]

If, however, some say, we might be right in regard to the images of Christ, on account of the mysterious union of the two natures, but it is not right for us to forbid also the images of the altogether spotless and ever-glorious Mother of God, of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, who were mere men and did not consist of two natures, we may reply, first of all: if those fall away, there is no longer need of these. But we will also consider what may be said against these in particular. Christianity has rejected the whole of heathenism, and so not merely heathen sacrifices, but also the heathen worship of images. The saints live on eternally with God, although they have died. If anyone thinks to call them back again to life by a dead art, discovered by the heathen, he makes himself guilty of blasphemy. Who dares attempt with heathenish art to paint the Mother of God, who is exalted above all heavens and the saints? It is not permitted to Christians, who have the hope of the resurrection, to imitate the customs of demon-worshippers, and to insult the saints, who shine in so great glory, by common dead matter.

Moreover, we can prove our view by holy scripture and the fathers. In the former it is said: "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"; and: "You shall not make any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath"; on which account God spoke to the Israelites on the mount, from the midst of the fire, but showed them no image. Further: "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man ... and served the creature more than the creator." [John 4:24, Exodus 20:4, Romans 1:23, 25] [...]

Whoever in future dares to make such a thing, or to venerate it, or set it up in a church, or in a private house, or possesses it in secret, shall, if bishop, presbyter, or deacon, be deposed; if monk or layman, be anathematized, and become liable to be tried by the secular laws as an adversary of God and an enemy of the doctrines handed down by the fathers. [...]

If anyone ventures to represent the divine image of the Word after the incarnation with material colors, let him be anathema!⁴

If anyone ventures to represent in human figures, by means of material colors, by reason of the incarnation, the substance or person [*ousia* or *hypostasis*] of the Word, which cannot be depicted, and does not rather confess that even after the incarnation he⁵ cannot be depicted, let him be anathema! [...]

If anyone does not accept this our holy and ecumenical seventh synod, let him be anathema from the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and from the seven holy ecumenical synods! [...]

4. *let him be anathema*—let him be banished or excommunicated.

5. *he*—the Word.

11.2 Second Council of Nicaea on Icons (787)

“The Decree of the Holy, Great, Ecumenical Synod, the Second of Nice,”
 trans. H. R. Percival, in Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 14:549–
 551. Public domain.

Byzantium boasted few empresses as powerful or ambitious as Empress Irene. Although Irene did not officially assume the throne until 797, she exercised great power as early as 780, when her nine-year-old son was crowned emperor. Irene served as “regent,” a position that allowed her to set her son’s agenda.



Figure 50. Empress Irene, Palo d'Oro (Golden Cloth), Basilica di San Marco, Venice, 900s

Irene had always supported iconography in private; now she found herself in a position to support it officially. She appointed a loyalist as patriarch in 784 and summoned an ecumenical council in 786 to overturn the work of the previous Council of

Constantinople (754). Opposition from the army, however, frustrated her plans.

A second council met successfully in Nicaea in 787. Irene's favorite, Patriarch Tarasius, ran roughshod over the opposition, admitting iconoclastic bishops to the council's deliberations only after they renounced their views. The council insisted that the veneration of icons was not tantamount to idol worship. Although the document below lacks the sophistication of a careful theological treatise, it paved the way for significantly improved relations with the papacy in Rome, which objected to the iconoclasm of Leo III and Constantine V.

[...] Christ our Lord, who has bestowed upon us the light of the knowledge of himself, and has redeemed us from the darkness of idolatrous madness, having espoused to himself the holy catholic church without spot or defect, promised that he would so preserve her and gave his Word to this effect to his holy disciples when he said: "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world," a promise he made, not only to them, but to us also who should believe in his name through their Word. But some, not considering this gift and having become fickle through the temptation of the wily enemy, have fallen from the right faith; for, withdrawing from the traditions of the catholic church, they have erred from the truth, and as the proverb says: "The husbandmen have gone astray in their own husbandry and have gathered in their hands nothingness," because certain priests, priests in name only, not in fact, had dared to speak against the God-approved ornament of the sacred monuments, of whom God cries aloud through the prophet, "Many pastors have corrupted my vineyard; they have polluted my portion."

And truly, following profane men, led astray by their carnal sense, they have calumniated the church of Christ our God, which he has espoused to himself, and have failed to distinguish between holy and profane, styling the images of our Lord and of his saints by the same name as the statues of diabolical idols. Seeing which things, our Lord God (not willing to behold his people corrupted by such manner of plague) has of his good pleasure called us together, the chief of his priests, from every quarter, moved with a divine zeal and brought here

by the will of our princes, Constantine and Irene,⁶ to the end that the traditions of the catholic church may receive stability by our common decree. [...]

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our holy fathers and the traditions of the catholic church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit dwells in her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and savior Jesus Christ; of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God; of the honorable angels; of all saints and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honorable reverence, not indeed that true worship of faith [λατρείαν]⁷ that pertains alone to the divine nature; but to these, as to the figure of the precious and life-giving cross and to the book of the Gospels and to the other holy objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom. For the honor that is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented. For thus the teaching of our holy fathers that is the tradition of the catholic church, which from one end of the earth to the other has received the Gospel, is strengthened. [...]

Those, therefore, who dare to think or teach otherwise, or as wicked heretics spurn the traditions of the church and invent some novelty, or else reject some of those things that the church has received (e.g., the book of the Gospels, or the image of the cross, or the pictorial icons, or the holy relics of a martyr), or evilly and sharply devise anything subversive of the lawful traditions of the catholic church or turn to common uses the sacred vessels or the venerable monasteries, if they be bishops or clerics, we command that they be deposed; if religious or lay, that they be cut off from Communion. [...]

6. *Irene*—Constantine's mother.

7. *λατρείαν*—*latreia*, best translated as "adoration," a form of worship applied only to God--*not* to saints or to icons. The intent, here, is to distinguish reverence or veneration from the type of worship reserved for God alone.

[...] Believing in one God, to be celebrated in Trinity, we salute the honorable images! Those who do not so hold, let them be anathema. [...] Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols. Anathema to those who say that Christians resort to the sacred images as to gods. Anathema to those who say that any other delivered us from idols except Christ our God. Anathema to those who dare to say that at any time the catholic church received idols. [...]

11.3 Theodore the Studite (759–826) Refutes Iconoclasts

Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, trans. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1981), 19–27, 32–37, 44–49. Used by permission of St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.



Figure 51. Theodore the Studite, mosaic, Nea Moni (New Monastery), Chios, Greece, 1000s

Here Theodore releases furious invective against the iconoclasts. He demonizes his opponents, calling them “serpents of heresy” who possess “frightening, unstable minds” and are guilty of “barking at the truth” in their “so-called” arguments.

Within this abusive rant, however, is a carefully reasoned argument, which, like that of John of Damascus, returns again and again to the incarnation as the prime justification for the veneration of images.

“There is a time to speak” and not “to keep silent” if one has any ability in speaking, since a certain heresy is threatening us, barking at the truth, and frightening unstable minds by its empty noise. For a speaker might perhaps accomplish these two things: he might reinforce his own understanding, by sorting out the component arguments concerning the matter at issue and putting them in order; and he might share his findings with others, if anyone were willing to listen. Therefore, inadequate as I am to both tasks, yet relying on the prayers and urgings of my fathers, I will try to show as well as possible how I understand the problem. “It is better,” says the theologian, “to contribute what one can than to leave the whole task undone”; especially since I did not explain it sufficiently in the invective that I wrote. Now, however, I will set forth the argument by opposing our own teaching and that of the other side, so that by the juxtaposition, as in some kind of essay,⁸ the debased and adulterated currency of impiety may be cast out from the trustworthy and genuine coinage of the truth. “The Lord will give words to those who preach in a great host”: if indeed, unworthy as I am, I may quote the psalmist as I begin my treatise.

1. We Christians, you know, O heretics, have one worship, and one veneration—I mean, for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—because that which is venerated is one in the nature of divinity, although those that are intellectually perceived are three in their hypostatic properties, according to our normal teaching.

• Accusations of idolatry •

2. The heretics say, “Surely there is not just one veneration, if our piety is shown to have many objects of veneration by the erection of icons, a practice that by some wile of the devil has been transferred from pagan tradition, bringing the veneration of idols into the catholic church. For every theologian agrees that the Godhead is entirely incomprehensible and uncircumscribable.”⁹

It is obvious to everyone that the Godhead is incomprehensible and uncircumscribable, and I may add boundless, limitless, formless, and whatever adjectives signify the privation of what the Godhead is not. But “What fellowship does light have with darkness?” here also it

8. *essay*—examination or analysis.

9. *uncircumscribable*—unlimited, undefined, unrestricted.

is appropriate to say, or “What agreement does Christ have with Belial?”¹⁰ What do the holy icons have in common with the idols of pagan gods? If we were worshipping idols, we would have to worship and venerate the causes before the effects, namely Astarte¹¹ and Chamos,¹² the abomination of the Sidonians,¹³ as it is written, and Apollo, Zeus, Kronos,¹⁴ and all the other diverse gods of the pagans, who because they were led astray by the devil transferred their worship unwittingly from God the maker to the products of his workmanship, and, as it is said, “worshipped the creation instead of the creator,” slipping into a single abyss of polytheism. We, however, have only one God, whom we venerate as Trinity. And in regard to the doctrine of theology, so far from inventing some kind of circumscription or comprehension (perish the idea! for this was an invention of pagan thought), we do not even know that the Godhead exists at all, or what sort of thing it is, as it alone understands about itself. But because of his great goodness, one of the Trinity has entered human nature and become like us. There is a mixture of the immiscible,¹⁵ a compound of the uncombinable: that is, of the uncircumscribable with the circumscribed, of the boundless with the bounded, of the limitless with the limited, of the formless with the well-formed (which is indeed paradoxical). For this reason Christ is depicted in images, and the invisible is seen. He who in his own divinity is uncircumscribable accepts the circumscription natural to his body. Both natures are revealed by the facts for what they are: otherwise one or the other nature would falsify what it is, as your opinions imply.

• Problems of Christology •

3. “But,” the heretics say, “the Godhead does not remain uncircumscribed when Christ is circumscribed bodily. If the divinity is united to the flesh by a hypostatic union, the uncircumscribable divinity must be co-circumscribed in the circumscription of the flesh. Nei-

10. *Belial*—an evil being in Jewish apocrypha. The term appears in Deuteronomy, Judges, and 1 & 2 Samuel to indicate wickedness.

11. *Astarte*—a goddess of northwestern Semitic religions, similar to Ishtar.

12. *Chamos*—a god of the Moabites.

13. *Sidonians*—a tribe that fought the Israelites. The exact location of their homeland is unclear.

14. *Apollo, Zeus, Kronos*—major Greek gods.

15. *immiscible*—unmixable.

ther can be separated from the other, or else some abominable kind of division would be introduced.”

According to the word-play that you call an argument, neither could the Godhead remain incomprehensible in being comprehended—but it was wrapped in swaddling clothes! Nor could it remain invisible in being seen—but it was seen! Nor could it remain intangible in being touched—but it was touched! Nor could it remain impassible¹⁶ in suffering—but it was crucified! Nor could it remain immortal in dying—but it was put to death! In the same way you should understand that the Godhead has also remained uncircumscribable in being circumscribed. For these are properties just as those others are; but the properties of the uncircumscribable nature are those in which Christ is recognized to be God, while the properties of the circumscribed nature are those in which he is confessed to be man. Neither one makes the other into something new, nor departs from what it was itself; nor is one changed into the other (for such a change would produce the confusion that we have refused to admit); but he is one and the same in his hypostasis, with his two natures un-confused in their proper spheres. Therefore you must either accept the “circumscribed,” or if not, then take away the “visible” and “tangible” and “graspable” and whatever adjectives are in the same category. Then it would become obvious that you utterly deny that the Word became flesh—which is the height of impiety.

4. According to the heretics, to call Christ a mere man is totally absurd. “Circumscription,” they say, “is characteristic of a mere man: therefore Christ is not a mere man, because he is not circumscribed.”

You seem to me to be talking complete nonsense when you keep bringing up your favorite word “uncircumscribable.” You try to evade our argument with non-argument, to refute what is undemonstrated by your demonstration and what is illogical with your logic. But come into the ring and be utterly overthrown. For Christ did not become a mere man, nor is it orthodox to say that he assumed a particular man, but rather that he assumed man in general, or the whole human nature. It must be said, however, that this whole human nature was contemplated in an individual manner (for otherwise how could he be seen?), so that he is seen and described, touched and circumscribed, eats and drinks, matures and grows, works and rests, sleeps and wakes, hungers and thirsts, weeps and sweats, and whatever else one does or suffers

16. *impassible*—incapable of suffering.

who is in all respects a man. Therefore we must admit that Christ is circumscribed, although not a mere man (for he is not one of the many, but God made man); or else we may be attacked by the swift serpents of heresy whom you follow, namely those who say that he came only in appearance and fantasy. At the same time we must also admit that he is uncircumscribable, if indeed he is God made man, so that we may drive off the impious dog who babbles that Christ received his origin from Mary. For this is the novel mystery of the dispensation, that the divine and human natures came together in the one hypostasis of the Word, which maintains the properties of both natures in the indivisible union.

• Mosaic commandment •

5. “The erection of images is completely forbidden,” the heretics say, “in the scripture; for it says, ‘You shall not make an idol for yourself, nor any likeness of whatever is in the Heaven above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. You shall not venerate them, nor shall you worship them, for I am the Lord your God.’”

When and to whom were these words spoken? Before the age of grace, and to those who “were confined under the law,” and were being taught the monarchy of one divine person; when God had not yet been revealed in the flesh, and the men of antiquity were being protected against foreign idols. This law had to be made for those who through their forefather Abraham had formed a chosen people and fled the abyss of polytheism, because there is one God and Lord of all, “whom no man has ever seen or can see,” as it is written. For him there is no designation, no likeness, no circumscription, no definition, nothing at all of what comes within the comprehension of the human mind. The words of the prophet make this very clear: “To whom did you liken the Lord, or with what likeness did you compare him?” I pass over the fact that what was utterly forbidden in the case of God was not forbidden in every other case. For he who had given the prohibition to the hierophant¹⁷ Moses immediately afterward commanded him: “You shall make two cherubim of gold, of hammered work, on the two ends of the mercy seat ... The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another ... and there I will make myself known to you, and

17. *hierophant*—one who leads congregants into the presence of the holy.

I will speak with you.” And in the book of Leviticus,¹⁸ the Lord says to Moses, “‘Make a serpent for yourself, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.” Now you see the whole teaching of scripture; although the angels are not solid like us; and although the serpent differs from us by its reptilian shape, nevertheless it was received figuratively as a symbol of Christ.¹⁹ If God formerly condescended to be symbolized by a serpent in order to heal those who were bitten, how could it not be pleasing to him and appropriate to set up the image of the bodily form that has been his since he became man? And if the symbol in animal form cured those who had been bitten by its sight alone, how could the holy representation of Christ’s very form do otherwise than hallow those who see it?

6. “Well, then, God falls into contradiction and opposes himself,” the heretics say. What madness! The prohibition applies to likening the Godhead to all those creaturely objects such as the sun, the moon, the stars, or whatever else, upon which idols are modeled; but the command aims to lead Israel symbolically by means of certain sculptured and modeled forms as far as possible toward the contemplation and worship of the one God. Is not even the very pattern of the whole tabernacle a distinct prefiguration of worship in the spirit, roughly sketched in symbolic visions for the great Moses by the God of all?

• Matter and spirit •

7. “It is a degradation,” the heretics say, “and a humiliation, to depict Christ in material representations.” It is better that he should remain in mental contemplation, as he is formed in us by the Holy Spirit, who sends into us a kind of divine formation through sanctification and righteousness. For the scripture says, “What profit is an image when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For the workman trusts in his own creation.” And in another place: “A tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an axe by the hands of the craftsman; men deck it with silver and gold.”

You cannot seem to avoid repeating yourself like a blind man going in circles, as you keep maliciously shifting from one thing to an-

18. *Leviticus*—the passage is, in fact, from Numbers 21:8.

19. *it was received figuratively as a symbol of Christ*—most scholars of Hebrew scripture would discount this assertion.

other. The very thing that you call indecent and abject is actually god-like and sublime because of the greatness of the mystery. For is it not glorious for the lofty when they humble themselves, as it is shameful for the lowly when they exalt themselves? Thus for Christ, who remains on his own summit of divinity, glorified in his immaterial indescribability, it is glory to be materially circumscribed in his own body because of his sublime condescension toward us. For he who had created everything became matter (that is, flesh). He did not refuse to become and to be called what he had received, and it is characteristic of matter to be circumscribed materially. As for your argument that he is sufficiently represented for mental contemplation, because he is formed again in us through the Holy Spirit—that belongs to the subject of baptism. Besides, we are not talking about how the “very stamp of the hypostasis” of God the Father is depicted in us, but about how we depict his human image with material pigments. If merely mental contemplation were sufficient, it would have been sufficient for him to come to us in a merely mental way; and consequently we would have been cheated by the appearance both of his deeds, if he did not come in the body, and of his sufferings, which were undeniably like ours. But enough of this! As flesh he suffered in the flesh, he ate and drank likewise, and did all the other things that every man does, except for sin. And so what seems dishonor to your way of thinking is actually true honor to the greatly honored and exceedingly glorious Word. Would you please stop ignorantly dragging out scriptural verses to use against us, taking the words spoken against the pagans in regard to the forms of idols, and misapplying them to the icon of Christ? For what person with any sense does not understand the difference between an idol and an icon? That the one is darkness, and the other light? That the one is deceptive, the other infallible? That the one belongs to polytheism, but the other is the clearest evidence of the divine economy? [...]

• Proper veneration •

13. “How can they say,” the heretics ask, “that the image should not be displayed without veneration? On the contrary, we ought to display the image without venerating it, because equally with hearing the sight enables us to return to the events and remember them; while at the same time we avoid the unspiritual effect of material representation. For ‘God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth,’ as the scripture says.”

If you admit that the acuity of sight is equal to that of hearing, which is true, you must take the equivalence seriously: let the sacred Gospel book also remain only for hearing, and not be venerated (although it is holy). But if this is foolish, why is not your suggestion foolish also? For you yourself have judged them equal. Or why do you not say that each is venerable, but that each conflicts with itself in giving help and harm at once? So whether in an image, or in the Gospel, or in the cross, or in any other consecrated object, God is evidently worshipped “in spirit and in truth,” as the materials are exalted by the raising of the mind toward God. The mind does not remain with the materials, because it does not trust in them: that is the error of the idolaters. Through the materials, rather, the mind ascends toward the prototypes: this is the faith of the orthodox. [...]

• Etymological arguments •

16. “There is no difference,” they say, “between ‘idol’ and ‘icon,’ for both words mean the same. ‘Idol’ comes from Greek, ‘form’ in general (for its proper signification is not ‘that which is seen’); ‘icon’ comes from Greek, in the sense of ‘likeness.’ A likeness is simply that which is not its prototype, and so are both ‘idol’ and ‘icon.’ For both words amount to the same in meaning. But to venerate an idol, when claiming to venerate Christ circumscribed, is impious; for it is utterly forbidden by the word of truth.”

From the same reasoning, that the likenesses are not the Godhead, but that they usurp the truth, there is no difference; because the scripture forbids equally not only the imagery of idols, but also statues and likenesses and anything else of the sort. For it says, “You shall make for yourselves no gods made with hands and erect no graven image or statue, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land, to venerate them; for I am the Lord your God.” And elsewhere: “Has not the workman made an icon, or the goldsmith having melted gold, gilt it over, and made it a likeness?” For the danger of idolatry comes from both icon and idol. Therefore since the name of icon has been forbidden from of old for the likeness of God according to his limitless nature, we must not for that purpose use it or anything of the same order. We use the word “icon” rather in reference to the bodily form of Christ; as in the beginning, in the creation of the world, this was already indicated at the formation of the first man. For God said, “Let us make man in our image (icon) and likeness.” And again the word is used in the divine question, “Whose image (icon) is this?” So from

these passages we obtain the proper use of the word “image” or “icon”; by transference we use the words “form” (Greek) and “likeness” (Greek); but we never use the word “idol” at all, even though it has the same meaning of “similitude.” For it is restricted to the ancient worshippers of the creation and to anyone now who does not venerate the Trinity indivisible in nature, in glory, and in power, or who does not confess the incarnation of the Word. For as it is written, “Let those gods perish who did not make the heavens and the earth” but themselves were made from wood and stone and all kinds of materials, and are divided among themselves and conflicting not only in nature but also in will, glory, and worship. And they will bring out to us like captives the icons of our Lady and of all the other saints. [...]

• Christ as prototype •

1. *Orthodox*: Do you admit that since the Son and Word of the Father has become flesh, he is circumscribed by the flesh, while remaining uncircumscribable in his divine nature?

Heretic: I agree, for how could I not, since the theologian fathers declare this? Gregory says, “Circumscribed in the body, uncircumscribable in the spirit”; and Athanasius says, “Invisibly recognized as God and truly being so, but visibly touched as man and truly existing as such.”

2. *Orthodox*: Do you not also admit that this circumscription, namely the image of Christ, is worthy of veneration?

Heretic: Not at all, because none of the divinely inspired fathers has said this either. But I shall ask you in return, and you must answer: where is it written in the Old or New Testament that we should venerate an image?

3. *Orthodox*: Wherever it is written that we should venerate the prototype of the image.

Heretic: “You shall venerate the Lord your God, and him only shall you worship.” This is what is written. We are commanded to venerate the Lord, not any kind of “prototype,” much less an image, as you say.

4. *Orthodox*: We are not talking about theology, sir, in which there is no question of resemblance or likeness; but about the divine economy, in which we see the prototype and the copy, if indeed you confess that the Word assumed flesh and became like us.

Heretic: When the scripture says, “You shall venerate the Lord your God, and him only shall you worship,” does not the Word command us to offer veneration to the Son together with the Father?

5. *Orthodox*: Obviously, but this law was not given to the men of antiquity as if God had assumed flesh, for “No one has ever seen God,” as the scripture says. When he became flesh and entered into circumscription, the uncircumscribable one was seen, and the intangible and invisible one became subject to bodily sight and touch. He is venerated together with the Father, because he is God equally with the Father; but he is venerated also in his image, of which he is the prototype, because he became man like us in everything but sin.

Heretic: Concerning Christ, all the inspired scriptures say clearly that he is worthy of veneration, for it is written, “Let all God’s angels venerate him”; but concerning the prototype and the image, the scriptures say nothing.

6. *Orthodox*: Concerning Christ, when it is written, “Let all God’s angels venerate him,” what else can we understand but that it is written concerning the prototype? For he became man after being God, and every man is the prototype of his own image. There could not be a man who would not have a copy that is his image. Obviously Christ also, inasmuch as he has been made like us in everything, is the prototype of his image, even if it is not written explicitly. So when you ask, “Where is it written that we should venerate the image of Christ?” then you should hear the answer, “Wherever it is written that we should venerate Christ,” if indeed the copy is inseparable from the prototype.

Heretic: But since it is not written that Christ is the prototype of his image, your statement cannot be accepted, because it is not included in the traditional confession of our faith.

7. *Orthodox*: Many teachings that are not written in so many words, but have equal force with the written teachings, have been proclaimed by the holy fathers. It is not the inspired scripture but the later fathers who made clear that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, that the Holy Spirit is God, that the Lord’s mother is *Theotokos*, and other doctrines that are too many to list. If these doctrines are not confessed, the truth of our worship is denied. But these doctrines were confessed at the time when need summoned them for the suppression of heresies that were rising up against the truth. So after all how is it surprising, although it is not written that Christ is the prototype of his image, if the times now require this to be said in opposition to the growing iconoclast heresy, since the truth is so clearly evident? For if he is not the prototype of his own image, neither is he incarnate, but remains outside circumscription in the boundlessness of his divinity. But if he

is incarnate and visible like us, why do you not attribute to him the same characteristics as to every other man in consequence of this likeness?

Heretic: Because, although Christ is God and man, he is not a mere man as if he were one like us, neither consequently is it right to say that he is the prototype of his image.

8. *Orthodox:* When the fathers said that Christ is not a mere man, they did not say it, I judge, intending to deny his circumscription, but referring to his being both God and man, which is not characteristic of one like us. In this respect we are all called “mere men.” But insofar as he is circumscribed, he is the prototype of his own image, just as if he were one like us; yet he is not therefore a mere man.

Heretic: I admit that Christ is circumscribed, but not that he has the relationship of prototype.

9. *Orthodox:* How could he be circumscribed if he did not have the relationship of prototype? What we call “circumscribed” is simply that which is a prototype. For that which is circumscribed can serve as a model for the image that is drawn as a copy. Therefore when you admit that Christ is circumscribed, you must grant, whether you like it or not, that he is the prototype of his image, as every man is of his own likeness. Accordingly the divine Basil says, “Let Christ, who presides over the contest, also be portrayed in the painting.” By saying this, he has fittingly shown that Christ is the prototype of his image, if indeed everyone who is portrayed in a painting is copied from the form of the prototype.

Heretic: What kind of veneration does the prototype share with its copy?

10. *Orthodox:* The same as the life-giving cross shares with its own representation.

Heretic: Where did you get this idea? I will not accept you as a new lawgiver.

11. *Orthodox:* The doctrine comes from two men who speak God’s words. Dionysius the Areopagite²⁰ says, “Truth in the likeness, the archetype in the image; each in the other except for the difference of

20. *Dionysius the Areopagite*—nobody knows the true identity of “Dionysius the Areopagite,” an anonymous, mystical writer confused, intentionally or not, with the man the Apostle Paul converted to Christianity in Athens (Acts 17:34). Many scholars suspect that this “pseudo-Dionysius,” who lived in the late 400s or early 500s, was a Syrian monk.

essence.” The great Basil says, “He who looks at the emperor’s image in the public square, and calls the one in the picture ‘emperor,’ does not acknowledge two emperors, the image and him whose image it is; nor if he should say, pointing to the one drawn in the picture, ‘This is the emperor,’ does he deprive the prototype of the name of emperor. Rather he confirms the honor of the emperor by recognizing his image. For if the image is the emperor, all the more must he be emperor who has provided the cause for the image.” And elsewhere Basil says, “In general the artificial image, modeled after its prototype, brings the likeness of the prototype into matter and acquires a share in its form by means of the thought of the artist and the impress of his hands. This is true of the painter, the stonecarver, and the one who makes statues from gold and bronze: each takes matter, looks at the prototype, receives the imprint of that that he contemplates, and presses it like a seal onto his material.” [...]

12. Icons: Aesthetics and Forms, 1100s–1600s

In this, our second section on iconography, we turn our attention from the political and theological controversies surrounding icons to the icons themselves.

How does one “read” an icon? What conventions inform these compositions? How should we understand the saints, prophets, and figures portrayed in icons?

Since icon painters follow rigid rules governing the depiction of persons and scenes, we group our discussions of icons below according to common types, e.g., icons of Christ, icons of the Mother of God, etc.

Many of the observations in this section, even when not quoted verbatim, derive directly from the work of the iconographer Leonid Uspensky and the theologian Vladimir Lossky, who together wrote a classic study of the conventions and meanings of disparate iconographic forms through the ages.¹ Other good studies, from which this section also draws, include

1. Léonide Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *Der Sinn der Ikonen* (Bern: U. Graf, 1952); available in English as Vladimir Lossky and Leonid Ouspensky, *The Meaning of Icons*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1999).

the work of Kurt Weitzmann and of Alfredo Tradigo.² We recommend all three works for those interested in learning more.

2. Kurt Weitzmann, *The Icon: Holy Images—Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (New York: George Braziller, 1978). Alfredo Tradigo, *Icone e santi d'Oriente* (Milan: Electa, 2004); available in English as *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006).

12.1 Savior Acheiropoietos

The Eastern church sometimes speaks of Christ as the “last Adam” (First Corinthians 15:45), that is, as the archetype of the “first man.” Eastern Orthodoxy emphasizes Christ’s *kenosis*, that is, his voluntary emptying of himself—his condescension to God’s will—in choosing to become man. Although Christ lived without sinning, he acquired the image of sinful man, uniting the form of God with the form of man. See, for example, Philip-
pians 2:5–7:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross. (NRSV)

So how does an icon painter portray both the divine and the human character of Christ? How does one show both divine majesty and the humility of Christ’s *kenosis*?

One way is through an *acheiropoietos* icon, sometimes called an icon “made without hands” or an icon “of the Lord on the cloth.” Iconographers point to Mark 14:58: “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” John 2:21 insists that here Christ spoke about “the temple of his body.” To

iconographers, Christ thus predicted the preservation of his body (the temple) in a form made without hands.³

How?

A Byzantine legend tells the tale of King Abgar (13 CE–50 CE) of Edessa (modern Sanliurfa in Turkey), who suffered from incurable leprosy. Abgar sent his court painter, Ananias, to find Jesus in Palestine, presumably hoping that Ananias could paint a portrait of Christ endowed with miraculous powers. The crowds surrounding Christ prevented Ananias from painting the portrait, but Jesus spotted Ananias and called him over. Christ then asked for water and a towel and wiped his face with the towel. On the towel remained an impression of Christ's face, which he presented to Ananias. Ananias delivered this image, an "icon not made by hands," to his ailing king, who recovered from his leprosy. (The West has a similar tradition in which a certain "Veronica" wiped Christ's face at his crucifixion, and the image later cured the Roman emperor Tiberius.)

This image of Christ continues to serve as an "accurate prototype" for icon painters, a tangible expression of divinity in human form.⁴

3. Ouspensky and Lossky, 69, 72.

4. Ibid.

12.1.1 Acheiropoietos (1000s)

Moscow School; State Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow

This acheiropoietos icon, like all others of the type, shows only Christ's face—the face imprinted on the towel; head and shoulders are not visible. Here Christ's beard is forked; in other acheiropoietos icons it tapers to a single point. Note the flowing locks of hair, the extra-long and exceptionally straight nose, the arched eyebrows, and the kind mouth. The effect is one of sedate seriousness, profoundly attentive to the viewer.⁵ The circle of the halo represents the Heaven; the square that contains the circle represents earth.⁶

Although the Eastern church holds that Christ never sinned (his visage here lacks any hint of carnality), his expression suggests a kind receptiveness to those—all viewers—who *have* sinned. The large eyes and dilated pupils suggest sympathy for—rather than condemnation of—our failings.⁷

The square shape of the icon represents the earth. The circular “nimbus” or halo represents the heavens, and its golden color indicates Christ's divine light and holiness. The cross within the nimbus, a symbol of Christ's sacrifice for us, is a standard feature in many Eastern depictions of Christ.

5. Ouspensky and Lossky, 72.

6. Tradigo, 238.

7. Ouspensky and Lossky, 72.



Figure 52. Acheiropoietos, 1000s, Moscow school, State Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow

12.2 Christ Enthroned

Icons of Christ Enthroned draw from two visions, one recounted in the book of Isaiah and one in the book of Revelation. From Isaiah 6:1-4:⁸

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
 the whole earth is full of his glory. (NRSV)

And from Revelation 4:2-8:⁹

After this I looked, and there in Heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” At once I was in the spirit, and there in Heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! And the one seated there looks like jasper and cornelian,¹⁰ and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the

8. Tradigo, 230.

9. Ibid.

10. *cornelian*—a brownish-red, semi-precious gemstone.

third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

Holy, holy, holy,

the Lord God the Almighty,

who was and is and is to come. (NRSV)

12.2.1 Christ Enthroned (1400s)

Russian; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Here the powers of Heaven described in Isaiah and Revelation surround the king of glory. His ornate throne emphasizes his majesty. His right hand blesses the viewer, and his left holds a book with a composite text derived from John 7:24 and Matthew 7:2, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. For with what judgment ...”¹¹

The mandorla (the green oval surrounding Christ) and the two, curved red squares (together forming an octagonal star) symbolize the age to come. Cherubim inhabit the mandorla surrounding the supreme judge. The corners of the exterior red square contain the four creatures mentioned in Revelation; here they serve as symbols of the four evangelists, the authors of the Gospels. Upper left: Matthew, a man; lower left: Mark, a lion; upper right: John, an eagle; and lower right: Luke, a bull.¹²

A sense of tranquility pervades the icon, evident both in Christ’s restrained movement and in the repose of the beasts who occupy the corners.¹³

11. *Ibid.*, 73.

12. *Ibid.* Tradigo, 239.

13. Ouspensky and Lossky, 73.



Figure 53. Christ Enthroned, 1400s, Russian; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

12.3 Christ Pantocrator

“Pantocrator” may be translated as “Almighty” or “All-Powerful,” and “Christ Pantocrator” icons depict Christ as a stern judge, a powerful, divine monarch and ruler over all. Christ Pantocrator always holds either a book or a scroll in his left hand, symbols of his law and his readiness to judge those who walk the earth and those entering the afterlife.

The stern expression in Pantocrator icons assumes several forms. In the first icon below, the sternness lacks any harshness; it is tempered by hints of compassion. In the expression of the second icon, however, there is a strong note of anger.

12.3.1 Christ Pantocrator (1500s)

Russian; Temple Gallery, London

In this Pantocrator icon Christ's aura of calm authority is especially pronounced. His right hand administers a benediction. The tilt of his hand toward Matthew's Gospel invites the viewer to accept the invitation therein: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest ... For my yoke is easy ..." (Matthew 11:28, 30, NRSV).¹⁴

Close scrutiny reveals that Christ's inner tunic appears to be woven from gold, a symbol of his divinity. The icon painter created this affect with "assiste" or gold leaf, the application of which constitutes a delicate and time-consuming process. The standard cross in the nimbus around Christ's head has worn away.¹⁵

14. Ibid., 73.

15. Ibid.

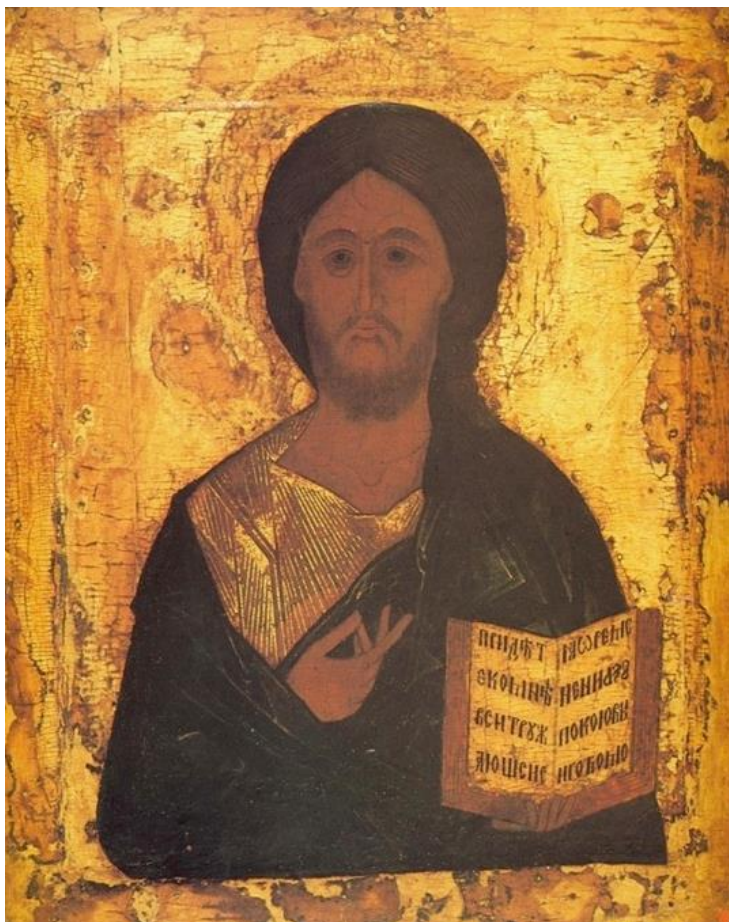


Figure 54. Christ Pantocrator, 1500s, Russian; Temple Gallery, London

12.3.2 Christ Pantocrator Mosaic (ca. 1080–1100)

Greek; Daphni, Greece

This second Pantocrator is a Greek mosaic of tile laid in the late 1000s. Here Christ assumes a grim, even fearsome expression. The heavy eyebrows and dark circles around his eyes suggest a harsh magistrate, more prone to edicts than to kindness. Unlike in the first, Russian icon, Christ here does not bestow a blessing, and he issues no invitation to lay down burdens or to rest. In fact Christ does not even meet the viewer's gaze.

The “IC” and “XC” flanking the nimbus are a “christogram,” a traditional, four-letter abbreviation for the Greek words meaning “Jesus Christ.” The abbreviation derives from the first and last letters of “IHCOYC XPICTOC”: “IC XC.” (IHCOYC XPICTOC is a transliteration of ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, in which each Sigma [Σ] becomes a “C.”)

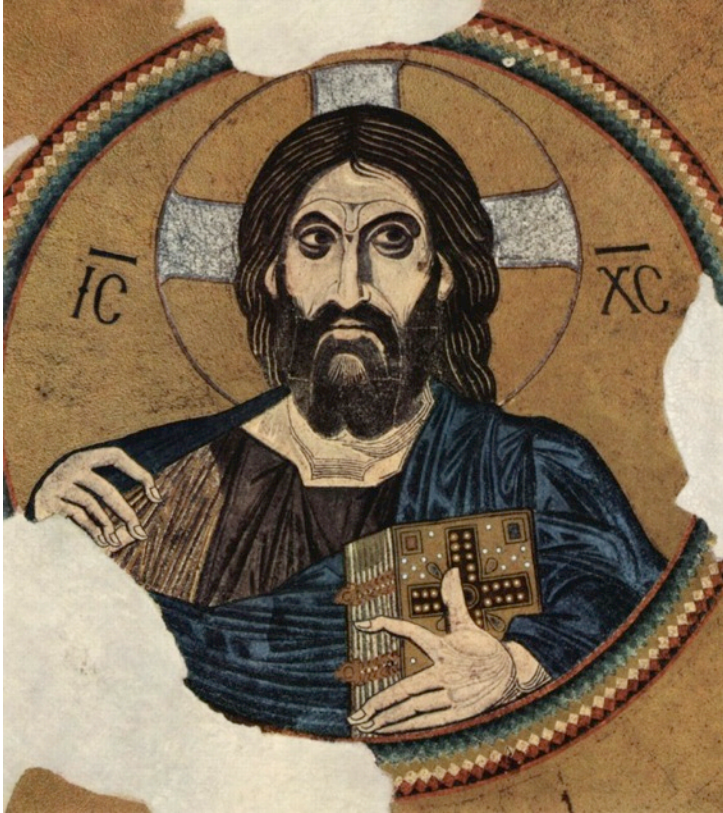


Figure 55. Christ Pantocrator, mosaic, 1080-1100, Greek, Daphni, Greece

12.4 Hodigitria

Tradition holds that St. Luke met the Virgin Mary sometime after Christ's death, and honored her and her son by painting the two of them. So impressed was the Mother of God that she blessed the portrait and promised that "My blessing shall remain always with this icon." St. Luke sent the icon to a certain Theophilus, along with the text of his Gospel. Sometime in the mid-400s the Byzantine Empress Eudoxia delivered the icon to her mother-in-law in Constantinople.¹⁶

Whatever its actual origin, this portrait, known as the "Hodigitria" ("she who shows the way") is one of the most revered in Eastern Christendom. Hodigitria icons, common in Syria by the 500s, contain a number of standard elements. The Hodigitria Mother of God sits up straight while holding the infant Jesus. Despite being dressed in swaddling clothes, Christ looks more like a miniature adult than an infant, a depiction meant to suggest wisdom beyond his years. The Virgin's child, in other words, is no ordinary baby. Christ's right hand blesses the viewer, bestowing a benediction, and his left hand holds a scroll whose contents we cannot see.¹⁷

There is no indication of intimacy between Mother and Child in Hodigitria icons. Here the Virgin is more majestic than motherly. Her role in part is that of presenter, introducing us to the savior of the world. Consider, for example, the way that her right hand beckons us to gaze on him who came through her to sanctify us. The Virgin's magisterial bearing accords with the majesty of Christ.

16. Ouspensky and Lossky, 80.

17. *Ibid.*, 80-81.

12.4.1 Smolensk Hodigitria (1500s)

Russian; Castle De Wijenburgh, Echteld,
 Netherlands

It is possible that Anne of Greece, the wife of St. Vladimir (the prince responsible for converting Rus' to Christianity) first brought the Smolensk Hodigitria icon to Russia. Other legends offer different accounts. Whatever the case, no Hodigitria icon in Russia can be dated before the 1300s.¹⁸

As is typical of Hodigitria icons, the Smolensk Virgin is stately and solemn, drawing attention to her son rather than to herself. She is elegant, with a graceful if unusually long neck. The three stars on her “maphorion” or veil—one over her right shoulder, one on her forehead, and one, covered by the Christ child, on her left shoulder—represent her constant virginity—before, during, and after the birth of Christ.¹⁹

In the upper right is the Archangel Gabriel, who announced to Mary that she would give birth. The Archangel Michael resides in the upper left.

18. *Ibid.*, 81

19. *Ibid.*



Figure 56. Smolensk Hodigitria, 1500s, Russian, Castle De Wijenburgh, Echteld, Netherlands

12.4.2 Mosaic Icon with Virgin and Child (early 1200s)

Sinai

In this mosaic icon from Sinai, mother and child devote more attention to each other than in the Smolensk icon. The Virgin's head inclines toward Christ's, and he gazes up toward her. Still, the effect is not one of special warmth or intimacy: she remains somewhat distant from her child; the emphasis is on her holiness rather than her motherhood.²⁰

The artist designed this icon to be small and portable. As such, he worked with exceptionally tiny tesserae, the pieces of marble, glass, or tile that form mosaics. The workmanship is exquisite, and some tesserae in this mosaic—especially those in the face—are so small that they are difficult to discern without a magnifying glass. Notice especially the artist's arrangement of tesserae in a manner that simulates brush strokes.²¹

20. *Ibid.*, 102.

21. *Ibid.*



Figure 57. Mosaic of Virgin and Child, early 1200s, Sinai

12.5 Loving-Kindness

Hodigitria icons, as we note above, depict a somewhat remote mother and child. At the other end of the spectrum are icons of “loving-kindness”: *glykophilousa* in Greek and *umileniye* in Russian. “Loving-kindness” icons focus on the affection between mother and child rather than the divinity of the Virgin and the Christ. Here mother and son cuddle. Christ slips his arm up into Mary’s veil and around her neck in a tender embrace. To be sure, Christ and the Virgin remain divine, but the human form that Christ assumed (and which he inherited from his mother) is far more pronounced.²²

Mixed with the Virgin’s devotion is grief over her knowledge that her son will die on the cross. In the Gospel of Luke, when a man named Simeon recognizes the infant Jesus as the long-promised messiah, he tells Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” (Luke 2:34–35, NRSV) Here Mary broods on this knowledge.²³

Loving-kindness icons became more popular in Russia than in Byzantium, and it is fair to say that icon painting in Russia was, on the whole, more interested in representing human feelings than was Byzantine iconography. The scholar V.N. Lazarov suggests that *umileniye* icons represent

one of the summits of Russian art. Neither French gothic art nor the Italian renaissance managed to imbue this image with greater warmth. The French and Italians created images that were more human, but not more moving. The Russian icons of “loving-kindness” justify their name: when looking at them the viewer is moved by a feeling of deep loving-kindness, a feeling

22. Ouspensky and Lossky, 92.

23. Ibid.

best described in the poetic words of St. Isaac of Syria. According to St. Isaac the sign of a merciful heart is when “a man’s heart burns for all creation—men, birds, animals, demons and all creatures. At their memory and sight his eyes shed tears. Great and powerful compassion fills a man’s heart, and great suffering wrings it, so that he cannot endure, hear, or see any harm or the least pain suffered by a creature. This is why he prays hourly, with tears, for dumb creation, for the enemies of truth, for those who harm him, that they should be preserved and shown mercy; he prays also for reptiles with a great compassion that wells up in his heart without measure until he becomes likened in this to God.”²⁴

“[E]very human feeling expressed in an icon,” Lazarov continues, “becomes transfigured and acquires its full meaning through its contact with the world of divine grace.”

Icons of loving-kindness are perhaps the most striking example of this fact. In all the great variety of human feelings those connected with motherhood are the most intense, for more than any others they are connected not only with the inner but also with the physical life of man. In the icons of loving-kindness, the motherly caress of the Mother of God is indissolubly connected with her tormented pain for her Son. This compassion she feels for him is transformed into motherly compassion for all the creatures for whom he voluntarily sacrifices himself.²⁵

24. *Ibid.*, 92-93.

25. *Ibid.*

12.5.1 Vladimir *Theotokos* (ca. 1131)

Russian; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

The *Theotokos* of Vladimir, dating from the early 1100s, is one of the oldest loving-kindness icons. Its legend is similar to that of the *Hodigitria*: Mary sat for a portrait painted by St. Luke, and on seeing the result, she voiced the words recorded in Luke 1:48: “Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed” and then added, “with this image are my grace and power.”²⁶

Russian chronicles report that the Greek patriarch sent the *Theotokos* icon to the grand duke of Kiev as a gift in 1131. The grand duke’s son moved it to his favorite city, Vladimir, from whence it acquired its name. (Legends report that the horse transporting the icon stopped near the city, refusing to go any farther, a sign that the Virgin wished her icon to stay in Vladimir.) In 1395 its caretakers moved the icon to Moscow to protect it from Tamerlane’s invasion.

Russian chronicles attribute amazing feats to the icon. Tamerlane’s troops retreated after Prince Vasily of Moscow spent a night crying over the icon. Some credit the icon with saving Moscow from Tartar invaders between 1451 and 1480: “It is better for us to die than to deliver the image of the immaculate Mother of God of Vladimir to desecration.”²⁷ Moscow troops who defeated the Poles in 1612 fought for the *Theotokos* icon. The Moscow patriarchate claims on its web site that in December 1941, as Nazi troops approached Moscow, Russian soldiers loaded the icon on an airplane and flew it above Moscow.²⁸ The Nazis began their retreat several days later.

In this icon mother and child draw toward one another. He caresses her cheek with his. She embraces and supports him with her right hand, calling the viewers’ attention to him with her left. The child here is both playful and loving. His nuzzling suggests a desire to comfort. She is melancholy, aware of the fate that

26. Ouspensky and Lossky, 96.

27. *Ibid.*

28. “V den’ pamiati vmch. Georgia Pobedonostsa v Moskve nachnetsia vozduzhnyi khod po gorodam Zolotogo kol’tsa,” 2007, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’*, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/235326.html>.

awaits her son. Despite the human warmth that imbues the icon, the Virgin's almond-shaped eyes and the dark green shadows on her face remind us as well of the divine.²⁹

Note: Soon after this particular icon arrived in Russia, craftsmen covered it with a silver *oklad*, a decorative frame that obscured all but the figures' faces; it is easy to spot the damage the *oklad* caused. Several restoration attempts are also apparent.

29. Weitzmann, 80.



Figure 58. Vladimir Theotokos, ca. 1131, Russian, State Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow

12.6 St. John the Forerunner

The Eastern church refers to John the Baptist—who prophesied the Lord’s coming and who later baptized Jesus in the Jordan River—as St. John the Forerunner, and it takes his role as forerunner to Christ seriously. In an iconostasis—the frame at the front of the church that holds tiers of icons—John resides next to Christ and the Virgin in the *Deesis* tier. He appears often in the church calendar: each Tuesday of the liturgical week is consecrated to his memory; the church also celebrates the day after the feast of the Baptism of Christ (7 January), the day of John’s death (29 August), discoveries of John’s relics, his conception (24 September), and his birth (24 June).

12.6.1 Encaustic Icon of St John the Forerunner (500s)

Palestine?; City Museum of Eastern and Western
Art, Kiev

The scroll in John's hand emphasizes his role as forerunner, that is, he who prophesied Christ's coming: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, NRSV). His right hand—barely visible due to wear over the years—points to Christ, who resides in the "medallion" in the upper left. The Mother of God appears in her own medallion in the upper right.³⁰

John's years in the wilderness—exposed to the elements while living on locusts and honey—are quite evident, and he looks much the worse for wear: his brown tunic has seen better days; his hair is bedraggled and greasy; and his face is gaunt, as would be expected given his diet. John's pained look pegs him as a "tragic" prophet; although he bears good news about the coming messiah, his own beheading at the hands of King Herod also lies before him. The intensity of his gaze hints at the power of his foresight and his convictions.³¹

This icon is one of the oldest surviving icons of any type, and there is a raw power in its primitive composition. Scholars have no firm indication of where it originated. Palestine is one possibility.³²

30. *Ibid.*, 52.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*



Figure 59. Encaustic icon of St John the Forerunner, 500s, Palestine?; City Museum of Eastern and Western Art, Kiev

12.6.2 St. John the Forerunner (ca. 1600)

Greek

In this icon, created roughly one millennium after the previous icon, John sprouts wings from his back. These angelic appendages reference a prophecy from the book of Malachi, in which God promises to send “my messenger” (whom the author of Malachi probably understood as an angel) “to prepare the way before me.” (Malachi 3:1, NRSV). Matthew’s Gospel later linked this reference to John the Forerunner: “This is the one about whom it is written, ‘see, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’” Wings, then, become a clever way to link an Old Testament prophecy to its fulfillment in the New Testament. Vespers services commemorating St. John’s death (29 August) include a reading from the Canticles of St. Germanus of Constantinople:

How shall we call you O prophet? Angel, apostle, or martyr?
 Angel for you have led an incorporeal life. Apostle, for you have taught nations. Martyr, for you have been beheaded for the Christ.

In this icon Christ reaches down into the terrestrial sphere to bless him who prepares the way. John’s extended left hand indicates prayer. The cross prophesies Christ’s death.³³

Under his tunic John wears a coat of camel hair, as described in Mathew’s Gospel. The rocks behind John evoke the wilderness where he lived and preached. The axe among the bushes reminds us of John’s vigorous preaching:³⁴

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:7–10, NRSV)

33. *Ibid.*, 106.

34. *Ibid.*

12.7 St. George

St. George (ca. 270s–303) serves as the patron-saint of Russia, England (his red cross on a white background constitutes England's flag), Greece, and other nations as well.

Likely born to a Christian family, George served in the Roman army under Diocletian (284–305). Legend tells us that when Diocletian issued an edict in 302 demanding that all Roman soldiers offer sacrifices to the pagan gods, George refused in the most egregious manner possible: in front of his own troops. Hoping he would relent, Diocletian offered George land, money, and slaves, all for naught. Defeated, Diocletian ordered George beheaded. Before the execution, torturers lacerated George on a wheel of swords, reviving him each of the three times he passed out.

The story of St. George and the dragon is the best-known of the Georgian legends, and the earliest surviving icon to depict the tale dates from the 1000s. The story runs thus. There lived in a lake in Libya a fearsome dragon, whom the local pagans worshipped and to whom they sacrificed their children. When it came time for the local king to sacrifice his daughter, St. George, long dead, appeared posthumously on a steed, brandishing a lance. Shouting “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” he impaled the dragon and then ordered the king's daughter to lead the wounded (and now tame) beast into the local town, where he slew it in front of the grateful locals.³⁶

36. Ouspensky and Lossky, 137.

12.7.1 St. George the Martyr and the Dragon (1400s)

Novgorod school; Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

The legend of St. George and the dragon found special favor in the Russian city of Novgorod, a city from which some of Russia's most accomplished icons emerged. The icon above is characteristic of Novgorod work from the 1400s: clear details; simple, clean lines; and an understated elegance. Nothing extraneous muddies the picture.³⁷

Although George here appears rather short (note especially his stubby legs, particularly in relation to the rest of his body) and he lacks a classic, athletic build, the flowing lines of rider and horse suggest power and energy in both. Note too how the line of George's cloak suggests the line of the hills: George here is almost elemental, emerging organically out of nature, directly at the dragon.³⁸

The hand of Christ appears from Heaven in the upper right to bless this triumph. George's victory, of course, comes from God. The bent heads of George and his steed indicate submission to the divine power working through them. The legend speaks of brilliant, divine light radiating through George, represented here in the white color of the horse.³⁹

The dragon can be read symbolically as a representation of sin. God's grace, flowing through the divinized George, overcomes the power of evil. George frees the villagers not only from a fearsome beast, but also, allegorically, from their enslavement to sin.

37. Ouspensky and Lossky, 137.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*



Figure 61. St. George the Martyr and the Dragon, 1400s, Novgorod school, Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

12.8 Nativity of Christ

Only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke describe the birth of Jesus, and only Luke says anything about his immediate surroundings in Bethlehem, noting only that Mary “wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7, NRSV). So why do an ox and a donkey, neither of which appears in Gospel accounts of Christ’s birth, appear in all icons of the nativity?⁴⁰

In part to add warmth and a sense of devotion. Representing, respectively, Jews and pagans, the ox and donkey peer worshipfully at the Christ child. They also indicate that the birth of Jesus has fulfilled a prophecy from Isaiah 1:2-3:

Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth;
for the Lord has spoken:
I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master’s crib;
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand. (NRSV)

In other words, the ox and the donkey link Jesus to the prophets who prophesied his “betrayal” by Israel.⁴¹

40. Ouspensky and Lossky, 159.

41. *Ibid.*

12.8.1 Nativity of Christ (1400s)

Novgorod School; Banco Intesa, exhibited in
Palazzo Leoni Montanari, Vicenza

Although the Gospels remain silent about where in Bethlehem Mary gave birth, the early Christian apologist Justin Martyr (103–165) situated Christ’s birth in a cave. Constantine’s mother, Helena, commissioned a church to be built over the cave in 339. The Byzantine emperor Justinian razed the church in 530 and built a much larger version, which pilgrims still visit today. Most Eastern icons depicting the nativity accept Justin’s account and place Christ’s manger in a cave. Here the cave prefigures Christ’s death: Jesus’s swaddling clothes look more like the burial outfit for a corpse, and his cradle looks more like a sepulcher; the cave of his birth thus suggests the cave in which he will be buried.

This icon from the 1400s emphasizes in two ways Mary’s central role in bringing forth the savior of mankind: she is bigger (read, more important) than all the other figures surrounding her and her son, and she occupies dead center in the scene.⁴²

The other characters serve dual functions. The angels in the upper left and upper right worship the child and announce the good news. They also represent the Trinity. The wise men who approach from the center left indicate that even the most elite members of society owe allegiance to Christ. They also prefigure the women who would visit Christ’s tomb after his death.⁴³

In the lower right a demon in the guise of a shepherd tempts Joseph, who here represents all humankind, which needs (and receives) Mary’s watchful oversight from above.⁴⁴

The black mass above the cave represents God’s unfathomability—his “essence” in Eastern theology, which can never be known—while the star and light emanating from this mass represent God’s power and action—his “energies,” which can be known and which here shine down on creation and his son, and will continue to shine until the end of time.

42. Ouspensky and Lossky, 159.

43. *Ibid.*, 159-160.

44. *Ibid.* Tradigo, 105.



Figure 62. Nativity of Christ, 1400s, Novgorod school; Banco Intesa, exhibited in Palazzo Leoni Montanari, Vicenza

12.9 Annunciation

The Gospel of Luke reports the announcement or “annunciation” of Christ’s birth as follows.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26–38, NRSV)

Icons of the annunciation portray Gabriel’s stunning announcement to Mary. Most suggest the joy this announcement occasioned: note the bright colors, the banners, and the vigor of Gabriel’s movement toward Mary: it looks as if, in his excitement, he is running.

The throne on which Mary sits denotes her superiority over even the archangel: he is merely the messenger; she is to be the Mother of God.⁴⁵

The yarn in Mary's hand references an account of the annunciation from the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James*:

And she took the pitcher and went forth to fill it with water: and lo a voice saying: "Hail, you who are highly favored; the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women." And she looked about her upon the right hand and upon the left, to see where this voice should be: and being filled with trembling she went to her house and set down the pitcher, and took the purple and sat down upon her seat and drew out the thread. And behold an angel of the Lord stood before her saying: "Fear not, Mary, for you have found grace before the Lord of all things, and you shall conceive of his word."⁴⁶

Notice, in the two icons below, the phenomenon of "reverse perspective." In most Western art we are accustomed to objects that recede into the background—that taper or narrow back and away to suggest distance. (Think of a road that narrows as it stretches back into the horizon.)

Icons often reverse this perspective: objects proceed out toward the viewer rather than recede in and away from the viewer. The "vanishing point" exists somewhere out in front of the painting rather than back within it.

Reverse perspective creates a sense that the icon opens up toward the viewer. Because icons represent what is eternal and what is larger than ourselves, it makes sense that they expand rather than recede as we peer into them. And because the icon's perspective narrows toward the viewer, the viewer's own importance recedes. Those who are holy, and that which is ultimately important, expand. We decrease.

For a clear example of reverse perspective, focus on the throne on which Mary sits in both of the following icons. The throne—especially the base—narrows out toward the viewer. If the artist had followed traditional perspective, the front of the

45. Ouspensky and Lossky, 172.

46. Protoevangelium of James 11:1–2. *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924).

throne would be wider than the back. But here the front is narrower than the back.

12.9.1 Annunciation (1400s)

Russian, Moscow School; Icon Museum,
Recklinghausen

In this depiction of the annunciation Mary and the angel look up toward a dark, half circle, which emits rays on the scene below. This sphere represents God in his Heaven; the black symbolizes his unknown essence; the gold symbolizes his knowable energies. The rays represent the power of the Holy Spirit. This, then, is a divine event in which all three hypostases of God work together in unity. Mary's gaze indicates her utter receptivity to God's will. Her entire bearing orients upward, as if she aligns her will with God's plan. The angel's gaze above indicates that this momentous event is God's, not his.⁴⁷

47. Ouspensky and Lossky., 172.



Figure 63. Annunciation, 1400s, Russian, Moscow school, Icon Museum, Recklinghausen

12.9.2 Annunciation (early 1300s)

Okhrid, Macedonia

In this icon the gravity of the annunciation is more pronounced. Here Gabriel strides purposefully toward Mary, looking directly at her. She appears less confident, holding up her hand, almost as if to ward him off.⁴⁸ There is nothing fearful here, but Mary does appear disconcerted, as would anyone to whom an archangel appeared with news that she would bear the Son of God.⁴⁹

48. Tradigo, 101.

49. Weitzmann, 126.



Figure 64. Annunciation, early 1300s, Okhrid, Macedonia

12.10 Cross

The cross is, of course, the most recognizable and ubiquitous of all Christian symbols. We've read in Eusebius's account of Constantine's conversion the importance of this symbol to Constantine and his troops. Gems engraved with the image of Christ on the cross date from the 200s. The Christian poet Prudentius (ca. 348–413) described in the late 300s a crucifixion scene in a church mural.⁵⁰

Western icons of the crucifixion based their imagery largely on the Gospel of John's account of the crucifixion. Byzantine iconography, on the other hand, also incorporated accounts from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And while Western iconography typically showed Christ on the cross while still alive, by the 1000s Byzantine iconographers usually painted him dead—head bowed and body slumping.

50. Ouspensky and Lossky, 180.

12.10.1 Crucifixion (1500s)

Russian; Louvre, Paris

In this Russian icon from the 1500s we find Christ nearly naked, with only a white cloth covering his loins. Although his body is dead, it shows no signs of rigor mortis. His expression is one of dignity and nobility rather than defeat. His death represents triumph, not loss. The skull in the cave at the base of the cross represents just that—victory over death. (The biblical scholar Origen, ca. 185–254, placed Adam’s burial at Golgotha, the site of Christ’s crucifixion.) The message: Christ is the new Adam, no longer subject to death.⁵¹

Eastern Orthodox churches—especially Russian Orthodox churches—portray the cross with eight points: one at each end of the vertical post, and one at each end of the three horizontal posts. The uppermost horizontal post sometimes holds an inscription. The lower beam, to which Christ’s feet are nailed, typically inclines down from left to right. Such an inclination, though barely perceptible in this icon, obliquely references the following passage from the Gospel of Luke (23:39–43), which recounts the disparate reaction of the two criminals crucified on either side of Christ:

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding [Jesus] and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (NRSV)

The lower beam thus points up to the criminal on the left, who has achieved salvation, and down to the criminal on the right, who has not.

The wall in the background suggests the city walls of Jerusalem, the site of Christ’s trial.⁵²

51. Ouspensky and Lossky, 181. Tradigo, 137.

52. Ouspensky and Lossky, 181.

Mary, who stands to Christ's right at the foot of the cross, appears more solemn than grief-stricken. Her son has died, but she recognizes what his death means for humanity.⁵³

St. John stands on the other side of the cross; Mary, her hand raised, admonishes him to compose the account of the crucifixion from which the quote above is drawn. At this point, however, John is struck by shock and even fear; he has not yet grasped what the Mother of God grasps innately.⁵⁴

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.



Figure 65. Crucifixion, 1500s, Russian, Louvre, Paris

12.10.2 Crucifixion (late 1200s)

Sinai

This icon of the crucifixion differs markedly from the previous icon. Clearly influenced by Western forms, it contains several features alien to Eastern conventions. Note, for example, the sculpted body of Christ: the musculature of his abdomen, the well-defined biceps, the muscles in his forearms, and the bulging calves. The emphasis is on Christ's humanity, and the painter portrays him as a marvelous physical specimen. Here the Mother of God is less attuned to the cosmic significance of the event, and more caught up in her human grief; she looks down in sorrow rather than up in anticipation.⁵⁵

Weeping angels do not, generally, appear in Eastern depictions of the crucifixion. The single nail piercing both of Christ's feet is also a Western convention. (In the first crucifixion scene a separate nail pierces each foot.) Other Western features include the dots that delineate the circumference of each nimbus; the gold and brown diamond pattern around the circumference of the scene; and, most glaring, the inscriptions in Latin: *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeonim* (Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews), *Mater Domini* (Mother of God), and *Sanctus Johannes* (St. John). Hence, although this icon was discovered in Sinai, it was likely left there by a crusader: its painter was most certainly Western, probably a Venetian.⁵⁶

55. Weitzmann, 114.

56. *Ibid.*



Figure 66. Crucifixion, late 1200s, Sinai

12.11 Harrowing of Hell

Although scripture never states explicitly that Christ visited Hades (Hell) after his crucifixion, the church points to several verses to support this doctrine. The author of Matthew (12:40) writes,

For just as Jonah was for three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth. (NRSV)

And the author of Luke/Acts (2:29-31) writes,

Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

He was not abandoned to Hades,

nor did his flesh experience corruption. (NRSV)

Two passages from 1 Peter form the basis for the “harrowing of Hell,” that is, the doctrine that Christ released from Hell those deserving captives who died before they could take advantage of the salvation offered by his death. In other words, Christ freed godly men and women whose stories appear in the Hebrew scriptures. See 1 Peter 3:18–20:

For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight people, were saved through water. (NRSV)

See also 1 Peter 4:6:

For this is the reason the Gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does. (NRSV)

Numerous Christian theologians, including Tertullian (ca. 160–220) and Origen (ca. 185–254) wrote about the harrowing of Hell, and tales of Christ’s visit to free Hell’s captives appear in several apocryphal works.

Icons depicting the descent into Hell typically show Hell as a black abyss. Although Christ humbles himself by entering Hell, there is nothing debasing about his actions or posture. Instead, his visit indicates his boundless grace—his commitment to extend his salvation retroactively. A halo makes clear his divinity. His clothes glow with divine light, a contrast to the black background. This light, often depicted in gold leaf, overwhelms the darkness.⁵⁷

57. Ouspensky and Lossky, 188.

12.11.1 Descent into Hell (ca. 1495–1504)

Russian; Temple Gallery, London

In a nod to the coming resurrection, Christ here stoops to raise Adam, in both the physical and the spiritual sense. Eve, in a red cloak on the right, hands folded in prayer, follows her husband's lead. Below Christ's feet are the doors to Hell, which he broke open and now tramples underfoot. Caught between the doors, and sunk hopelessly in the abyss, is Satan. Though it's difficult to see here, Christ holds a scroll in his left hand, a tangible symbol of his salvific message to those confined: "the Gospel was proclaimed even to the dead." (1 Peter 4:6, NRSV)⁵⁸

On the right and left stand other figures from Hebrew scriptures, gratefully accepting Christ's salvation. The crowned kings David (black overlay) and Solomon (red overlay) stand on the left. St. John the Forerunner stands behind them. (Since John's murder predated Christ's resurrection by several years, the church assumes he went to Hell after his death.) Moses, holding a golden tablet with the ten commandments, stands on the right.⁵⁹

58. *Ibid.*, 188.

59. *Ibid.*



Figure 67. Descent into Hell, ca. 1495–1504, Russian, Temple Gallery, London

12.12 Holy Trinity

How does one portray the Trinity, when the Trinity includes God the Father, who cannot, by nature, be portrayed?

The answer is through allegory, that is, by employing symbolic figures as stand-ins for the three hypostases of God. Painters of the Trinity find a convenient allegory in a somewhat cryptic story from the book of Genesis:

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He [Abraham] looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant.” (Genesis 18:1–3, NRSV)

This passage suggests to some that God assumed human form and appeared to Abraham in the company of two angels. Early Christian scholars tended to read this passage as either an appearance of the entire Trinity (in either human or angelic form), or an appearance of God the Son, accompanied by two angels.

Icon painters show all three figures as winged angels, allegorical substitutes for God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Portraying the Trinity as figures from Hebrew scripture posits a connection between what preceded and prefigured the New Testament, and the subsequent fulfillment of God’s promise with the coming of Christ.

12.12.1 Andrei Rublev, Holy Trinity (ca. 1408–1425)

Russian; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

Numerous artists and theologians argue that Andrei Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity is the greatest icon ever created. Rublev (ca. 1360s–1430), about whom we know almost nothing, painted some of the most beautiful icons ever committed to wood. He produced this icon for the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, about seventy kilometers northeast of Moscow.

Abraham's house and the oak mentioned in the passage above stand in the background. Most prominent by far, however, are the three angels, who appear, left to right, in the order they appear in the Creed of Nicaea: "We believe in one God the Father all-powerful ... And in one Lord Jesus Christ ... And in the Holy Spirit." The angel on the left, representing the Father, wears indistinct colors, an indication, perhaps, of the Father's unknowability. His blue robe, partially visible beneath his outer cloak, suggests the small portion of the heavens visible to us. The central angel, representing Christ, wears royal purple, reflecting his role as the messiah. The third angel, representing the Holy Spirit, who gives life and renews all things, wears green, a symbol of life and renewal.⁶⁰

Difficult to see in this reproduction is a faint circle, which passes through the nimbus of the central angel, shows faintly through the figures of the other two, and cuts off the bottom of the pedestals. Even if the viewer cannot quite discern this circle, it is easy to perceive the entire composition as circular: the angels' legs position themselves within the lower half of a circle; the location of their heads follows the curve of the circle's upper circumference. Their wings, their nimbi, and the pale yellow form in the upper right all flow in circular patterns. Even the oak tree bends as if to accommodate itself to the circle.⁶¹

Circles, of course, denote unity, and thus everything about this icon suggests unity and oneness. The angels lean toward each other, emphasizing their harmony. Although the icon is full

60. Ouspensky and Lossky, 201-202.

61. *Ibid.*

of movement, the movement is calm, symmetric, and balanced. The nearly identical faces of the three angels also suggest symphony.⁶²

All three hypostases focus their attention on the chalice in the center of the table, that is, on the Eucharistic cup, the essential instrument of our communion with God. (The Holy Spirit appears to observe his reflection in the cup.) Placing the cup at the center of their attention might suggest that the hypostases commune with each other at least in part to commune with us.

62. *Ibid.*, 202.



Figure 68. Andrei Rublev, ca. 1408-1425, Russian, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

12.13 Heavenly Ladder

While living as a hermit on the Sinai Peninsula, John Climacus (ca. 579–649) received a request from the abbot of a local monastery to commit his wisdom to writing. John agreed and authored *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, an influential guide to obtaining wisdom and salvation. The thirty rungs of John’s “ladder” represent the vices that must be overcome and the virtues that must be acquired by the “faithful and wise monk” who “has kept unquenched the warmth of his vocation, who adds fire each day to fire, fervor to fervor, zeal to zeal, love to love, and this to the end of his life.”⁶³ John’s ladder, scaled by zealots following his advice, became a popular theme in iconography.

63. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 80. The thirty steps include (1) the renunciation of life; (2) detachment; (3) exile; (4) obedience; (5) penitence; (6) remembrance of death; (7) mourning; (8) placidity and meekness; the renunciation of (9) malice and (10) slander; (11) silence; the renunciation of (12) falsehood, (13) despondency, and (14) gluttony; (15) chastity; (16) the renunciation of avarice; (17) poverty; (18) the renunciation of insensitivity; (19) prayer and singing; (20) alertness; the renunciation of (21) unmanly fears, (22) vain-glory, and (23) pride; (24) meekness and simplicity; (25) humility; (26) discernment; (27) stillness; (28) prayer; (29) dispassion; and (30) faith, hope, and love.

12.13.1 Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus (late 1100s)

Sinai

Here we see wily devils working industriously to snare the striving monks and drag them into Hell, the black maw near the base of the ladder into which an unsuccessful, yellow-robed monk disappears head first. The angels in the upper left wear bright, happy colors, a reminder to the monks of the happiness that lies before those who pursue their goal with industry and fortitude. The naked devils, on the other hand, are pure black, the very picture of hopelessness, despondency, and evil. John Climacus, at the head of the line, has followed his own advice and safely reached Heaven, where Christ welcomes him with open arms.⁶⁴

Donors who funded the production of icons sometimes insisted on appearing in those icons. It is possible that “Antonios,” the figure in bishop’s garb directly behind John, earned his place in this picture through such philanthropy.⁶⁵

64. Weitzmann, 88.

65. *Ibid.*

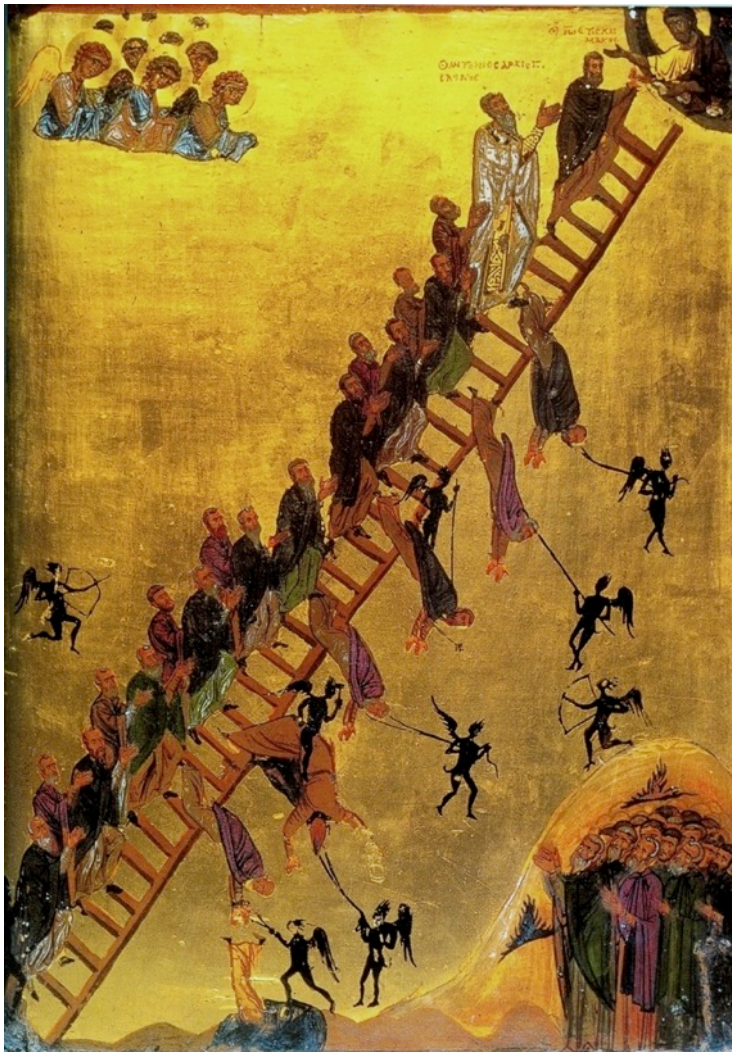


Figure 69. Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus, late 1100s, Sinai

13. Church Music

We know that music played a prominent role in Christian worship from the church's earliest years. Paul's epistles, the epistle of James, and the book of Revelation all refer to Christian chant. And the great churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople all accepted music as a central element in the liturgy.

Although worship in Jewish and Greek temples employed musical instruments, early Christian music dispensed almost entirely with everything except the human voice. The desire to distance Christianity from local festivals and celebrations probably motivated such decisions, as did efforts to distinguish Christianity from the pagan cults of Greece. John Chrysostom explained away instrumental music among the Jews by arguing that God permitted Jews to employ instruments only because of their frailty. Since Christianity, in contrast, constituted the fulfillment of God's plan, Christians had no need for the dances and musical instruments used in Jewish worship.

Early references to Christian music say almost nothing about the musical forms employed during the church's first few centuries. With the exception of a single hymn fragment dating from the late 200s, no document offering any meaningful description of Christian music or the liturgy survives from the church's first six hundred years. The first extant example of mu-

sical notation dates from the 800s. And while church fathers frequently mentioned songs used during initiations, baptisms, and the Eucharist, they wrote almost nothing about melody, rhythm, or lyrics. It is for this reason that any discussion of music has awaited this section on the Middle Ages.



Figure 70. Music manuscript, Pantokatoros Monastery, Mount Athos, 1433

Byzantine Christianity inherited from Judaism and from Christian scripture the notion that sacred chants originated with angels—the “angelic choirs,” which transmitted songs to us on earth. The author of the book of Revelation (4:8-11), for example, describes a vision in which he listens to four angels flanking the heavenly throne:

And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

“Holy, holy, holy,
 the Lord God the Almighty,
 who was and is and is to come.”

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
 to receive glory and honor and power,
 for you created all things,
 and by your will they existed and were created.”
 (NRSV)

This understanding of sacred music as a divinely created thing—originating in the heavens and sung by creatures who abide in God’s presence—argued against changes to primitive forms. Why change what is divine and thus perfect? As a result, Byzantine composers tended to be conservative and reluctant to experiment, and church music in the East evolved at a significantly slower rate than it did in the West.

At first most Byzantine hymns were “syllabic.” Chanted by the entire congregation, syllabic melodies would sound to the modern ear more like rhythmic speech (what today we call “recitative”) than melody. An emphasis on communal, congregational singing derived from an injunction by Ignatius (a bishop from Antioch in the 100s) that every man in church “join in a choir.” Not until the Council of Laodicea (ca. 364–365), were chanters allowed—and, in fact, required—to sing apart from the congregation. The formation of choirs staffed with trained singers and soloists capable of singing more elaborate forms followed the rise of new, impressive cathedrals.

Hymns played an important role in Byzantine services; one modern scholar has cataloged over sixty thousand from the Byzantine era. (The medieval church in the West, by contrast, largely excluded hymns from the Mass.) But the sound of Byzantine hymns remains a matter of some speculation, since musical notation as we know it today took centuries to evolve. Initially singers relied on memory, cues from colleagues, or primitive forms of notation that modern scholars cannot decipher.

“Diastematic” notation—notation indicating the pitch of individual notes by placing symbols higher or lower than others—did not emerge until the late 1000s.

Several features of Byzantine hymns distinguish them from the hymns familiar to the modern Westerner.

- 1) They are always *a cappella*, unaccompanied by musical instruments. The human voice sings alone.
- 2) Although choirs that perform Byzantine hymns today sometimes include female vocalists, women were not allowed to sing in church during the medieval period.
- 3) Byzantine hymns are “monophonic” or non-harmonized: they contain no chords. Choirs sing only one line—the melody; in other words, everybody sings the same part.
- 4) The scales are often “microtonal,” that is, they include notes not in Western scales. One can think of microtones as notes that fall between Western notes—notes that fall between the black and white keys of a piano.
- 5) All later Byzantine hymns limit themselves to eight basic scales, although modest variations are possible within some of these scales. Western music, in contrast, draws on twenty-four basic scales: twelve major and twelve minor.
- 6) Each of the eight Byzantine scales contain only seven notes, usually indicated by Greek letters: Νη, Πα, Βου, Γα, Δτ, Κε, and Ζω. Western scales, in comparison, contain twelve notes: C, C#, D, D#, E, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, and B.
- 7) Byzantine hymns usually do not adhere to a strict meter; they do not keep time with a metronome.

As a result, Byzantine hymns often strike the Western ear as foreign, unmelodic, and simplistic. Foreign they certainly are. Unmelodic they are not—melodies differ from Western forms, but they reveal themselves through close listening. As to simplicity or complexity: differences in rules and palates did indeed place unique strictures on Byzantine composers. But then all Christian music in all parts of the world—and, in fact, all music by definition—abides by rules and limitations. What mattered in the end, according to the church, was the degree to which the hymn promoted communion with God.

13.1 St. Romanos, “*Kontakion* for Theophany” (500s)

Cappella Romana, performance of “*Kontakion* for Theophany,” by St. Romanos the Melodist, on *Byzantium 330–1453*, Royal Academy of Arts, River Productions Ltd., 2008, compact disc; *YouTube*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyUqvo_0Hew.

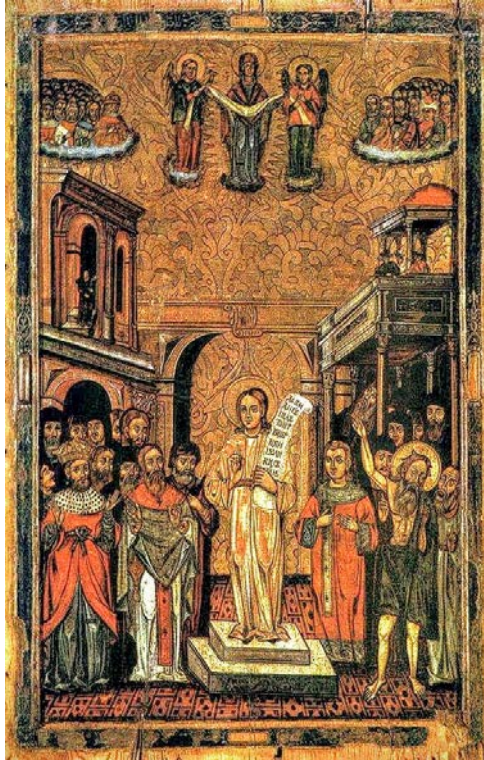


Figure 71. Romanos the Melodist chanting his kontakion, Malyryta, Belarus, 1649

Our first recorded selection is a prologue to a *kontakion*—an extended homily in verse. Written on a continuous sheet of paper, *kontakia* (plural of *kontakion*) were often so lengthy that scribes

rolled them up on poles, from which they could be unspooled while chanted. In fact, *kontakion* is Greek for “from the pole.” Because of their length, choirs sang only the prologue to *kontakia* during the Divine Liturgy.

We know little about St. Romanos the Melodist (ca. 490–556), the composer of this *kontakion*. Perhaps born to a Jewish family in Syria, he moved to Constantinople, where he eventually served as a sacristan or caretaker in the great church of Hagia Sophia. According to one legend, Romanos first attempted a public reading during an all-night vigil in the Church of the Panagia in a northwestern suburb of Constantinople. The clergy mocked his dismal performance. Humiliated, he fell asleep in a choir stall. As he slept, the *Theotokos* appeared to him with a scroll and ordered him to read. He then awoke and, with the blessing of the patriarch, mounted the ambo (pulpit) and chanted the first-ever *kontakion*, composing it on the spot as he sang. Tradition reports that Romanos composed more than one-thousand *kontakia*; only eighty-five survive, and scholars debate how many of these Romanos himself actually authored.

Cappella Romana, the chorus that sings the *kontakion* here, devotes itself to the nearly impossible task of singing Byzantine hymns as Byzantine choirs may have sung them. We say impossible because Byzantine scores lack the sophistication of modern musical notation, and modern scholars debate at length how to accurately interpret them. “Proper” interpretation of Byzantine hymns will always remain a point of contention.

The original text of this *kontakion* no longer survives. Cappella Romana here works from a manuscript from the 1400s, discovered in the Greek monastery of Konstamonitou on Mount Athos.



Audio recording: "Kontakion for Theophany"

Text

Alexander Lingas, liner notes, on Cappella Romana, *Music of Byzantium*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004.

Today you have appeared to the inhabited world; and your light, O Lord, has been marked upon us, who with knowledge sing your praise. You have come, you have appeared, the unapproachable light.

13.2 *Sticheron Apostichon Idiomelon* for St. Basil (700s?)

Cappella Romana, performance of “Sticheron Apostichon Idiomelon for St. Basil,” on *Byzantium 330–1453*, compact disc; *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2Ni6D75tJo>.

Our second selection is an anonymously authored *sticheron*, a type of hymn sung during the liturgy between psalms or other scriptures, most often during vespers services or matins. Composers produced *stichera* on a number of themes, including the beatitudes, the resurrection, and the saints. This Palestinian *sticheron* commemorates St. Basil, one of the Cappadocian fathers who helped establish orthodox Trinitarian theology.

For this performance Cappella Romana follows a text written in the 1300s, but based on a hymn that may have been sung as early as the 700s.



Audio recording: “Sticheron Apostichon Idiomelon for St. Basil”

Text

Lingas, liner notes, on Cappella Romana, *Music of Byzantium*.

O godly and sacred bee of Christ’s church, all-blessed Basil:¹ for you armed yourself with the sting of divine longing and wounded the blasphemies of heresies hated by God; and you treasured up for the souls of the faithful the sweetness of true religion; and now, as you

1. *Basil*—Basil of Caesarea (ca. 329–379)

pass through the divine meadows of inviolate pasture, remember us also as you stand before the consubstantial Trinity.

13.3 Ioannis Koukouzelis, “Grind His Teeth” (ca. 1280–1375)

Greek Byzantine Choir, directed by Lycourgos Angelopoulos, performance of “He Shall Grind His Teeth and Pine Away...,” by Ioannis Koukouzelis, on *Ioannis Koukouzelis: The Byzantine Maestro: Mathimata: Psalms, Sticheron, Kratima*, BMG Music, 1995, compact disc; *YouTube*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkktEf_4irs.



Figure 72. Portrait of Ioannis Koukouzelis, musical codex, Megisti Lavra (Great Monastery), Mount Athos, 1400s

Our third piece dates from the 1300s, a century considered by many to be the golden age of Byzantine culture. Scholars who study Byzantine music consider its composer, Ioannis Koukouzelis, the most skillful musician of medieval Byzantium.

Koukouzelis attended an imperial school in Constantinople as a protégé of the Byzantine emperor, and he soon gained fame at the imperial court for his beautiful singing, which earned him

the nickname “Angel Voice.” For reasons unknown, Koukouzelis left the court at the height of his career to pursue a monastic vocation on Mount Athos. As far as we know, he spent the remainder of his life on the holy mountain.

Koukouzelis’s rather loose rendering of Psalm 112:10² is sung here by the Greek Byzantine Choir of Athens. Founded by the musicologist Lycourgos Angelopoulos, this chorus, like Cappella Romana, devotes itself, in its words, to “preserving the genuine Byzantine tradition.” Like the performance of the *sticheron* above, this performance requires some conjecture: although Koukouzelis’s scores have been preserved in good anthologies from the 1300s, scholars disagree on how to read the scores.

The careful listener will note a degree of complexity in this psalm not apparent in the first two selections. Koukouzelis seems to have been the first to codify a trend, present since the 1100s, toward an increasingly florid style of singing. Edward Williams notes, for example, that the center of gravity tends to “shift” in Koukouzelis’s music: he frequently “extracts” fragments from other verses, “weaving these phrases into the principal line” of the primary psalm. This weaving, combined with more striking melodic leaps, produces, in Williams’s estimation, “more skillfully wrought” melodies than those of his contemporaries and predecessors.³



Audio recording: “He Shall Grind His Teeth...”

2. “The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing.” (NRSV)

3. Edward Williams, “Koukouzelos, Joannes,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Washington D.C.: Macmillan, 1980), 218–19.

Text from Psalm 112:10

He shall grind his teeth
and pine away ...

14. Liturgy

We have postponed discussion of the liturgy (the content of church services) until this point because all our documents on the topic come from the Middle Ages. Yet it is important to note that the development of the liturgy extends back to the earliest days of Christianity, and some early history is thus in order.

Christianity's dissociation from Jewish worship was not an instantaneous occurrence, but rather a slow, difficult, and sometimes painful process. During the church's first few decades Christians continued to worship in Jewish temples and synagogues, while also meeting in private homes to celebrate the "Eucharist" or last supper—the Passover meal that Christ instructed his disciples to observe "in remembrance of me."



Figure 73. Byzantine Eucharist cup, 600s

In early Christian communities celebrations of the Eucharist consisted of large, formal, Jewish meals, at which Christians assembled with friends. Since Christianity remained illegal until Constantine's reign, nearly all such ceremonies occurred by necessity in private homes.

Hugh Wybrew—who has written by far the best study in English of the Eastern Liturgy, and from whom this introduction borrows copiously—notes that the Eucharist likely evolved into a separate ceremony, apart from a meal, a few decades after Christ's death.¹ By the end of the first century Eucharistic ceremonies served only bread and wine, and they soon worked their way into services conducted in synagogues, thus becoming part of ceremonies that also included scripture readings, sermons, and prayers. This melding of the Eucharist with other rituals—coupled with the gradual shift of such services from Saturday evenings (according to the Jewish tradition) to Sundays—eventually produced the grand liturgical services conducted today in Eastern churches around the world.

1. Hugh Wybrew, *The Orthodox Liturgy: The Development of the Eucharistic Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990). This section draws in particular from Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

We know a few specifics about the liturgy in its earliest forms. A bishop—one who held an office that Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 35–110) described as representing God on earth—presided over the Eucharist. Apocalyptic expectations of Christ’s imminent return probably imbued these early ceremonies, given the Apostle Paul’s promise that some of his followers would not see death before Christ’s return (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Thus early Christian assemblies most likely met with great anticipation, viewing the Eucharist as a precursor to a forthcoming meal in Heaven—not only a commemoration of Christ’s death on the cross, but also a hopeful preparation for the life to come. Such immediate expectations declined over time when Christ did not return as expected.²

The Eucharist thus served three functions: a memorial to the past, an anticipation of the future, and a celebration of Christ’s presence *now*. Jesus promised, “where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20, NRSV). The Eucharist called forth Christ, and the celebrants believed that Christ resided with those who partook. The Apostle Paul placed great emphasis on breaking bread and drinking wine as a means of communing with Christ. The ceremony celebrated the community of the church through the body of Christ as consumed by the communicants; the church understood itself as the collective body of Christ.³

The first surviving description of the Eucharist dates from 160; it describes a modified form of the Jewish-synagogue service and it includes readings from scripture, a sermon, and intercessory prayer (prayer for others). The bishop offered a prayer thanking God for his creation and his death on the cross, he broke bread, and he distributed the bread and wine to the congregants. As far as we know, everyone present ate the bread and drank the wine, a practice that would not survive the coming centuries.⁴

From early on the church insisted that the bread and wine were not merely bread and wine. The thanksgiving prayer administered over these elements (the “consecration”) indicated

2. Wybrew, 15.

3. *Ibid.*, 16.

4. *Ibid.*, 18-19.

that they were, in some important sense, the very body and blood of Christ. The church had not yet worked out a theology of consecration; in other words, it had not yet articulated what, precisely, it meant by insisting that bread and wine were the body and blood of Christ. But it *did* insist that the elements were not merely food and drink.

Since the church could not own property until Constantine's reign, Christian services in the 200s occurred in houses. Wealthy Christians built private residences large enough to host large gatherings. We know of one home-owner in Mesopotamia who converted a room in his house into a baptistery. Some home-owners even installed regal thrones for the presiding bishop. Icons first appeared in house churches in the 200s. Frescoes portrayed Christ as the good shepherd and the apostles as fishermen. Popular themes included the Samaritan woman at the well, Christ walking on water, the raising of Lazarus, Jonah and the fish, Daniel in the lions' den, and Noah and the ark. Such decoration would develop on a much grander scale in coming centuries.⁵

Once Christianity became legal and Constantinople became the center of church life in the eastern Mediterranean, Byzantine emperors lavishly funded the construction of new churches and cathedrals in the city, making available carpenters, architects, and artists. Decorations in the new cathedrals reflected the church's close ties to the empire. Martyrs portrayed in mosaics often wore the dress of the imperial court; Christ held court with his apostles just as the emperor presided over his own council. In some pictures of the last judgment Christ could easily be confused with a Byzantine judge. By the 300s it became difficult to distinguish clerical dress from the dress of state officials.

While the liturgy became a crucial vehicle for Christians to commune with Christ and with each other, it also functioned as the primary means for teaching Christian theology. In a society where most were illiterate, the liturgy became *the* means of explaining and transmitting the faith.

But not everybody was permitted attend the liturgy—at least not in its entirety. The church demanded that communicants (those who participated in the Eucharist) first receive formal in-

5. Ibid., 21-23.

struction in the Eucharist's significance and then be baptized. In the middle of the 300s Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem⁶ (or possibly his successor) composed a series of lectures for those preparing for baptism. Attendance was mandatory.

"Catechumens"—those learning the catechism and attending the lectures—could witness only the first portions of the liturgy. At a specific point in services of the 300s, catechumens, penitents (those engaged in penance to atone for sins), and anyone thought to be possessed by evil spirits were dismissed after the entire congregation offered prayers on their behalf. Those who remained participated in the remainder of the liturgy and consumed the Eucharistic elements.

It is clear from Bishop Cyril's lectures that the church now understood the Eucharist as a sacrifice: not a sacrifice of thanksgiving but a sacrifice of "propitiation," that is, a sacrifice that satisfied or appeased God through the death (sacrifice) of his son on the cross.⁷ Cyril explained that in the Eucharist "we call upon the merciful God to send forth his Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before him: that he may make the bread the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ, for whatever the Holy Spirit has touched is sanctified and changed."

Then after the spiritual sacrifice is perfected, the bloodless service upon that sacrifice of propitiation, we entreat God for the common peace of the church, for the tranquility of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for the sick, for the afflicted, and in a word for all who stand in need of succor we all supplicate and offer this sacrifice."⁸

As noted above, the church insisted from the beginning that Christ was in some way present in the Eucharist, but *how* remained unclear. The prayer that called down the Holy Spirit to consecrate the elements (a prayer known as the "epiclesis") asked God to

send down upon this sacrifice your Holy Spirit, the witness of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, that he may make this bread the body of your Christ, and this cup the blood of your Christ,

6. *Cyril of Jerusalem*—ca. 313–386. Cyril became bishop of Jerusalem around 350.

7. Wybrew, 33-34.

8. *Ibid.*, 34.

that they who partake may be strengthened in godliness, may receive remission of their sins, may be filled with the Holy Spirit, may become worthy of your Christ, and may obtain eternal life, you being reconciled to them, O master almighty.⁹

It is significant that Cyril here claims that the bread and wine have *changed*. The epiclesis made the elements holy. When you touch the “holy body,” warned Cyril, pay

heed lest you lose any of it; for what you lose is a loss to you as it were to one of your own members. For tell me, if any one gave you gold dust, would you not with all precaution keep it fast, being on your guard against losing any of it, and suffering loss? How much more cautiously then will you observe that not a crumb falls from you of what is more precious than gold and precious stones?¹⁰

In describing the holiness of the elements Cyril used a term often translated as “awful,” but literally meaning “that which makes the hair stand on end.” Here was a ceremony too serious—too hair-raising—to entrust to just anybody, and it became, over time, the exclusive responsibility of priests. The awfulness of the ceremony may also explain why parishioners received Communion so infrequently.¹¹

The liturgy or the ceremony that now constitutes most Orthodox church services is known formerly as the “Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.” We do not know how much of this liturgy Chrysostom actually composed. We do know, however, that Chrysostom did not start from scratch: he revised and harmonized existing practice and then added prayers of his own. We also know that other clerics added portions of the surviving liturgy after his death.

9. Ibid., 43.

10. Ibid., 36.

11. Ibid., 36-37.

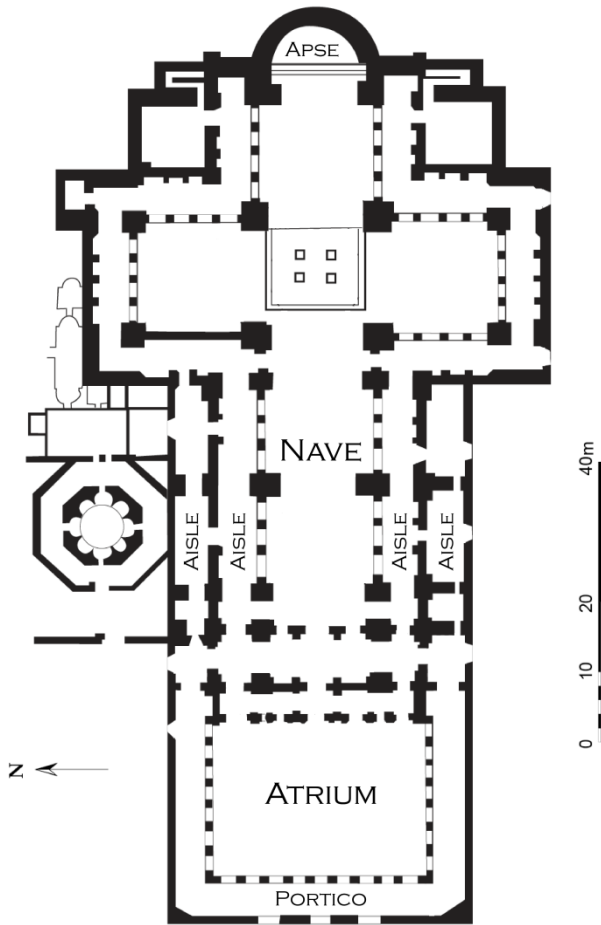


Figure 74. Diagram of a Byzantine cathedral, floorplan derived from Basilica of St. John in Ephesus, Turkey, 500s

In the large churches or basilicas where Chrysostom conducted the liturgy, congregants entered by passing through a

portico into an atrium surrounded by columns on three sides.¹² In the middle of the atrium stood a fountain where they could wash their hands. Paupers seeking alms often congregated in the atrium.

Beyond the atrium was the nave, a large, rectangular hall that constituted the central space of the basilica. Here the congregation assembled for the liturgy. Two to four aisles ran parallel down the two longest sides of the nave. Columns, sometimes made of marble, supported the roof and demarcated the aisles from the central nave. Elaborate mosaics and marble sometimes sheathed the walls. Galleries or lofts ran above these aisles, forming alternate spaces for watching the services. Men and women stood segregated by sex within the nave.

At the far end of the nave was the apse, a large, semi-circular space with a spherical ceiling, open to the nave. The apse contained the “sanctuary,” which only liturgical officiates entered. Although the apse itself was open to the nave (i.e., no permanent wall ran between the apse and nave), a low “chancel barrier” separated the two spaces. An entrance punctuated the center of the barrier, allowing priests to pass into the sanctuary. In larger churches two additional entrances stood on either side of the central entrance. The congregation could probably see through these entrances into the “sanctuary.”

The altar table, which held the Eucharistic elements, stood in the sanctuary, usually ornamented with stones and precious metals. In some churches a small vault for relics—often bones of saints—sat under the altar. Sometimes a “ciborium”—a dome resting on four ornate columns—sheltered the altar, calling attention to the elements on the table.

The bishop’s throne stood behind the altar, along the rear, curved wall of the apse. Benches for clergy flanked the throne. The bishop’s throne stood on an elevated platform, and the bishop usually preached from the throne, although Chrysostom sometimes preached from the middle of the nave.

12. See Wybrew, 47-49, for a description of churches; this and the next four paragraphs draw from this description.

Η ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΟΡΘΟΘΥ - THE SERVICE OF ORTHROS 7

**Η ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΑ
ΤΟΥ ΟΡΘΟΘΥ**

Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν πάντοτε, νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ
καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων.

Ὁ Χορὸς: Ἀμήν.

Ὁ Αναγνώστης: Ἅγιος ὁ Θεός, Ἅγιος
Τοχυρός, Ἅγιος Ἀθάνατος, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. (γ')

Δόξα Πατρὶ, καὶ Υἱῷ, καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι.
Καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων.
Ἀμήν.

Παναγία Τριάς, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς. Κύριε, ἰλάσθητι
ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν, Δέσποτα, συγχώρησον
τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῖν. Ἄγιε, ἐπίσκεψαι καὶ ἰάσαι τὰς
ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν, ἐνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός σου.

Κύριε, ἐλέησον. (γ') Δόξα Πατρὶ, καὶ Υἱῷ,
καὶ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι. Καὶ νῦν καὶ ἀεὶ, καὶ εἰς τοὺς
αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων. Ἀμήν.

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ
ὄνομά σου. Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου. Γένηθήτω τὸ
θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Τὸν
ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον.
Καὶ ἄφεσις ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς
ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν. Καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς
ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ
πονηροῦ.

**THE SERVICE
OF ORTHROS**

Blessed is our God always, now and ever,
and to the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Reader: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Im-
mortal, have mercy on us (x3).

Glory to the Father and the Son and the
Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of
ages. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord,
forgive our sins. Master, pardon our transgres-
sions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities
for the glory of Your name.

Lord, have mercy. (x3) Glory to the Father
and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and for-
ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be
Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be
done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this
day our daily bread; and forgive us our tres-
passes, as we forgive those who trespass against
us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver
us from the evil one.

Figure 75. Modern Greek-English edition of the Divine Liturgy

14.1 Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (n.d.)

John Mason Neale, *The Liturgies of S. Mark, S. James, S. Clement, S. Chrysostom, and the Church of Malabar* (London: J. T. Hayes, 1859), 93–123. Public domain.

While the liturgy itself was solemn, the atmosphere in the basilica could be raucous. During sermons congregants applauded passages they liked. Chrysostom complained about congregants who told jokes while he spoke. Some parishioners, he grouched, even laughed during prayers. It was not unusual for congregants eligible to participate in the Eucharist to leave the church prematurely after the dismissal of catechumens and penitents.¹³

Chrysostom emphasized the importance of corporate prayer during the liturgy. Common prayer, he said, is a powerful force that unites the church. Although the bishop sat elevated above the congregation and the clergy sat behind the chancel barrier, no distinction between clergy and laity existed during the prayer.¹⁴

The congregants themselves probably brought the bread and wine to the service. Deacons carried the elements to the front of the church, and the bishop received them at the altar. When blessing the elements, the celebrant in Constantinople likely stood with his back to the congregants, but in other regions he may have faced the people.

The congregants walked to the front of the church to receive the elements. The celebrant held the bread in his right hand, under which he held his left. When administering the elements he likely said “the body of Christ” and “the blood of Christ,” to which the congregants responded “Amen.”¹⁵

How did congregants understand the ceremony in which they participated (with less and less frequency—by the 300s some had to be urged to receive Communion at least one each year)? The liturgy makes clear that congregants commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that the Eucharist constitutes a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God. They un-

13. Wybrew, 50-51.

14. Ibid., 51-52.

15. Ibid., 59.

derstood themselves united with the saints and the Mother of God, who interceded for the living and the dead. And in his sermons Chrysostom insisted that the saving acts of Christ were transmitted through the sacraments. Worshipers understood the Eucharist as the present incarnation of Christ—Christ with us here and now.¹⁶

Deacon. Sir, give the blessing.

Priest. Blessed be the kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

Choir. Amen.

Deacon. In peace let us make our supplications to the Lord.

Choir. *Kyrie eleison*¹⁷ (and so at the end of every repetition)

Deacon. For the peace that is from above, and for the salvation of our souls, let us make our supplications to the Lord.

For the peace of the whole world, the stability of the holy churches of God, and the union of all, let ...

For this holy house, and those who in faith, piety, and the fear of God enter into it, let ...

For our archbishop [Name]; the venerable presbytery, the diaconate¹⁸ in Christ, all the clergy and the laity, let ...

For our most pious and divinely preserved kings, all their palace and their army, let ...

That he would fight on their side, and subdue every enemy and adversary under their feet, let ...

For this holy abode, the whole city and country, and those who inhabit it, in faith, let ...

For healthfulness of air, plenty of the fruits of the earth, and peaceful times, let ...

For those who voyage, who journey, who are sick, who labor, who are in bonds, and their safety, let ...

16. *Ibid.*, 61-66.

17. *Kyrie eleison*—Lord have mercy.

18. *diaconate*—an order of deacons or spiritual elders. In the Eastern Orthodox Church deacons assist in administering the Eucharist, censing the icons and the congregation, calling the congregation to prayer, and reading portions of the liturgy. Deacons are not themselves allowed to administer any of the seven sacraments.

That we may be preserved from all tribulation, passion, danger, and necessity, let ...

Assist, preserve, pity, and protect us, O God, by your grace.

Commemorating the all-holy, spotless, excellently laudable, and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, with all saints, let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God.

Choir. To you, O Lord.

Priest (aloud). For all glory, worship, and honor befits you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

*The first antiphon*¹⁹ is sung by the choir, and the priest says the prayer of the first antiphon. The deacon, having made a reverence, leaves his place, and goes and stands before the icon of the Mother of God,²⁰ looking toward the icon of Christ, taking hold of the horarion²¹ with three fingers of his right hand.

*First Antiphon Verse.*²² The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament shows his handiwork.

By the intercession of the Mother of God.

Verse. One day tells another: and one night certifies another.

By the intercession of the Mother of God.

Verse. There is neither speech nor language: but their voices are heard among them.

By the intercession of the Mother of God.

Verse. Their sound is gone out to all lands: and their words to the end of the world.

By the intercession of the Mother of God.

Glory. Both now.

By the intercession of the Mother of God.

Prayer of the First Antiphon.

Lord our God, of boundless might, and incomprehensible glory, and measureless compassion, and ineffable love to man, look down, O Lord, according to your tender love, on us, and on this holy house, and

19. *antiphon*—short passage sung or recited before a song or canticle.

20. *stands before the icon of the Mother of God*—this rubric does not appear in older editions. In the Russian church it is worded differently: “The deacon goes and stands before the icon of Christ.”

21. *horarion*—clerical stole.

22. *First Antiphon*—the antiphons in this text are those used during Pentecost.

show to us, and to those who pray with us, the riches of your mercies and compassions.

And after the antiphon has been sung, the deacon comes and stands in the accustomed place, adores²³ and says,

Again and again in peace let us make our supplications to the Lord.

Assist, preserve, pity, and protect us, O God. Commemorating the all-holy, undefiled, excellently laudable, glorious Lady, etc.

Exclamation. For yours is the strength, and yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, Father, etc.

In like manner the choir sings the second antiphon. The deacon does the same as in the former prayer.

Second Antiphon.

Vers. The Lord hear you in the day of trouble: the name of the God of Jacob defend you.

Save us, O good Paraclete,²⁴ who chant to you “Alleluia.”

Vers. Send help from the sanctuary: and strengthen out of Zion.

Save us, O good Paraclete, who chant to you “Alleluia.”

Vers. Remember all your offerings; and accept your burned sacrifice.

Save us, O good Paraclete, who chant to you “Alleluia.”

Glory. Both now. The only-begotten Son and Word of God.

The Prayer of the Second Antiphon.

Lord our God, save your people, and bless your inheritance: guard the fullness of your church: hallow those who love the beauty of your house. Glorify them in recompense with your divine power, and forsake not those who put their trust in you.

Deacon. Again and again, in peace, etc. Assist, preserve, etc. Commemorating the most holy, etc.

Exclamation. For you are the good God, and the lover of men, and to you we ascribe, etc.

The Prayer of the Third Antiphon.

You who has given us grace, at this time, with one accord, to make our common supplications to you, and promises that when two or three are gathered together in your name, you will grant their requests: fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of your servants,

23. *adores*—honors God's presence.

24. *Paraclete*—comforter, the Holy Spirit.

as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and, in the world to come, life everlasting.

And while the Third Antiphon is being sung by the choir, or, if it be Sunday, the beatitudes, when they come to the doxology, the priest and deacon make three reverences before the holy table. Then the priest, taking the holy Gospel, gives it to the deacon: and thus going through the north portion of the sanctuary, preceded by lamps, they make the Little Entrance.

Third Antiphon.

Verse. The king shall rejoice in your strength, O Lord: exceedingly glad shall he be of your salvation.

Blessed are you, Christ our God. You have given him his heart's desire, and have not denied him the request of his lips.

Blessed are you, Christ our God.

Verse. For you shall prevent²⁵ him with the blessings of goodness, and shall set a crown of pure gold on his head.

Blessed are you, Christ our God.

Verse. He asked life of you, and you gave him a long life, even for ever and ever.

Blessed be you, Christ our God.

*Isodicon.*²⁶ Be you exalted, Lord, in your own strength: so will we sing and praise your power. Save us, O good Paraclete, who sing to you "Alleluia."

Deacon (in a low voice). Let us make our supplications to the Lord.

Priest inaudibly says the prayer of the entrance.

Master, Lord, and our God, who has disposed in Heaven troops and armies of angels and archangels, for the ministry of your glory: grant that with our entrance there may be an entrance of holy angels, ministering together with us, and with us glorifying your goodness.

For to you is due all honor, etc.

The prayer being finished, the deacon pointing with his right hand to the east, and holding his horarion with three fingers, says to the priest,

Sir, bless the holy entrance.

Priest. Blessed be the entrance of your saints, always, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

Then the deacon thus goes to the hegumen,²⁷ if any are present, who kisses the Gospel; but if none are present, the priest kisses it.

25. *prevent*—here "prevent" means to proceed or go before.

26. *Isodicon*—the verse accompanying the little entrance.

27. *hegumen*—abbot.

And when the troparia²⁸ are ended, the deacon comes forth into the middle, and standing before the priest, raises his hands a little, and showing the holy Gospel, says with a loud voice,

Wisdom, stand up.²⁹

Then he himself adores, and the priest behind him; and they both go to the holy altar, and the deacon puts down the holy Gospel on the holy table, and the choir sings the accustomed troparia, and when they are singing the last, the deacon says,

Let us make our supplications to the Lord.³⁰

Priest. For holy are you, our God; and we ascribe glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Deacon. And to ages of ages.

Choir. Amen.

The Choir sings the trisagion.³¹ Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us. (Five times.)

In the meantime the priest inaudibly says the prayer of the trisagion.

God, who is holy, and rests in the holies, who is hymned with the voice of the trisagion by the seraphim, and glorified by the cherubim, and adored by all the heavenly powers; you who did from nothing call all things into being; who did make man after your image and likeness, and did adorn him with all your graces; who gives to him who seeks wisdom and understanding, and passes not by the sinner, but gives repentance to salvation; who has vouchsafed that we, your humble and unworthy servants, should stand even at this time before the glory of your holy altar, and should pay to you the worship and praise that is meet; receive, Lord, out of the mouth of us sinners the hymn of the trisagion, and visit us in your goodness. Forgive us every offense, voluntary and involuntary. Sanctify our souls and bodies, and grant that we may serve you in holiness all the days of our life; through the intercessions of the holy Mother of God, and all the saints who have pleased you since the beginning of the world. (*Aloud*) For holy are you, our God, and to you.

28. *troparia*—singular: *troparion*—short hymns.

29. *Wisdom, stand up*—a warning against the folly of sitting.

30. *Let us make our supplications to the Lord*—in older copies, “Sir bless this time of the trisagion.”

31. *trisagion*—a hymn with a threefold invocation of God as holy.

When this prayer is finished, the priest and deacon say the trisagion, making at the same time three reverences before the holy table. Then the deacon says to the priest,

Sir, give the order. *And they go toward the throne.*

And the priest says as he goes, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Deacon. Sir, bless the throne.

Priest. Blessed are you on the throne of your glory, who sits on the cherubims, always, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

And when the choir has finished the trisagion, the deacon, coming before the holy doors, says,

Let us attend.

Reader. Alleluia.

Deacon. Wisdom.

The reader says the prokimenon³² of the apostle, e.g., on the Festival of St. Demetrius.

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord.

Versé. Hear, O God, my voice.

Deacon. Let us attend.

The [epistle of the] apostle is read. And the [epistle of the] apostle being ended, the priest says,

Peace be to you.

Reader. Alleluia.

While the Alleluia is being sung, the deacon goes to the priest, and after asking for a blessing from him, censes the holy table in a circle, and the whole sanctuary, and the priest. And the priest says the prayer before the Gospel.

O Lord and lover of men, cause the pure light of your divine knowledge to shine forth in our hearts, and open the eyes of our understanding, that we may comprehend the precepts of your Gospel. Plant in us also the fear of your blessed commandments, that we, trampling on all carnal lusts, may seek a heavenly citizenship, both saying and doing always such things as shall well please you. For you are the illumination of our souls and bodies, Christ our God; and to you we ascribe, etc.

And the deacon drawing nigh to the priest, and laying aside his censer, and bowing to the priest and holding the horarion with the holy Gospel with the tips of his fingers, in the place of the holy table where it lies, says,

32. *prokimenon*—a short anthem before the Epistle. It consists of a verse and response, often taken from the Psalms.

Sir, bless the preacher of the holy apostle and Evangelist [Name].

And the priest, signing him with the cross, says, God, through the preaching of the holy and glorious apostle and Evangelist [Name], give to you who evangelizes the Word with much power, to the accomplishment of the Gospel of his beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deacon. Amen.

And having adored with reverence the holy Gospel, he takes it up; and going through the holy doors, preceded by tapers³³ he stands in the ambo,³⁴ or in the appointed place. And the priest, standing before the holy table, and looking toward the west, says, with a loud voice,

Wisdom, stand up; let us hear the holy Gospel. Peace to all.

Deacon. The lection from the holy Gospel according to [Name].

Priest. Let us attend.

The Gospel is read.

When it is finished, the priest says to the deacon: Peace be to you who evangelizes.

And the deacon, going to the holy doors, returns the holy Gospel to the priest; and standing in the accustomed place, begins thus:

Let us all say with our whole heart and soul,

Choir. Lord, have mercy. (Thrice)

Lord Almighty, God of our fathers, we pray, hear, and have mercy on us.

Have mercy on us, O God, after your great goodness; we pray, hear, and have mercy on us.

Prayer of the Ectene.³⁵

Lord our God, we pray to receive this intense supplication from your servants, according to the multitude of your mercy, and send down your compassions on us, and on all your people, who are expecting the rich mercy that is from you.

Deacon. Further we pray for pious and orthodox Christians.

People. Lord, have mercy. (And so at the end of every petition)

Further we pray for our Archbishop [Name].

Further we pray for our brethren, priests, monks, and all our brotherhood in Christ.

33. *tapers*—slender candles.

34. *ambo*—pulpit.

35. *Ectene*—a short prayer consisting of petitions to God.

Further we pray for the blessed and ever memorable founders of this holy abode, and for all our fathers and brethren who have fallen asleep³⁶ before us, and lie here, and the orthodox who lie everywhere.

Further we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, safety, protection, forgiveness, and remission of sins of the servants of God, the brethren of this holy habitation.

Further we pray for those who bring forth fruit and do good deeds in this holy and all-venerable temple, who labor, who sing, and for the people who stand around, and are expecting the great and rich mercy that is from you.

Exclamation. For you are the merciful God and the lover of men, and to you we ascribe.

Deacon. Catechumens, pray to the Lord. Let us, the faithful, pray for the catechumens, that the Lord may have mercy on them, and may teach them the word of truth.

People. Lord, have mercy. (*And so at the end of each petition*)

That he may reveal to them the Gospel of righteousness.

That he may unite them to his holy catholic and apostolic church.

Preserve, have mercy, support, and continually guard them, O God.

Catechumens, bow your heads to the Lord.

*Prayer of the catechumens before the holy oblation.*³⁷

Lord our God, who dwells on high, and beholds the humble, who did send forth the salvation of the race of man, your only-begotten Son, our God and Lord Jesus Christ, look down on your servants the catechumens, who have bowed their necks to you; and make them worthy, in due season, of the layer of regeneration, of the forgiveness of sins, of the robe of immortality; unite them to your holy catholic and apostolic church, and number them together with your elect flock, (*aloud*) that they also, together with us, may glorify your honorable and majestic name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

Choir. Amen.

*The priest unfolds the corporal.*³⁸

Expulsion of the catechumens.

36. *fallen asleep*—died.

37. *oblation*—presenting the bread and wine to God in the Eucharist.

38. *corporal*—vestment.

Deacon. Let all the catechumens depart. Catechumens, depart. Let all the catechumens depart, let not any of the catechumens—. Let all the faithful—.

Again and again in peace let us make our supplications to the Lord.

And he says the short ectene,³⁹ while the priest says inaudibly the first prayer of the faithful, after the unfolding of the corporal.

The first prayer of the faithful.

We yield you thanks, Lord God of Sabbath, who has thought us worthy to stand even now at your altar, and to fall down before your mercies, for our sins and the ignorance of your people; receive, O God, our supplications; make us worthy to offer to you supplications and prayers, and unbloody sacrifices for all your people; and strengthen us, whom you have placed in this your ministry, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, that we may without offense, and without scandal, in a pure testimony of our conscience, call on you in every time and place, that hearing us you may be merciful to us in the multitude of your goodness.

Deacon. Assist, preserve, pity. Wisdom.

Priest. Exclamation. For to you belongs all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

Deacon. Again and again in peace let us make our supplications to the Lord. *And he says the short ectene; while the priest says inaudibly the second prayer of the faithful.*

The second prayer of the faithful.

Again and oftentimes we fall down before you, and beseech you, O good God and lover of men, that you would look on our prayers, purify our souls and bodies from all pollution of flesh and spirit, and grant that our standing before your holy altar may be irreprehensible and unblameable. Grant, O Lord, to those who pray together with us, advance in holy life, wisdom, and spiritual understanding; grant them at all times with fear and love to serve you irreprehensibly; and without condemnation to partake of your holy mysteries, and to be thought worthy of your heavenly kingdom.

Deacon. Assist, preserve, etc. Wisdom.

Priest. Exclamation. That, being ever guarded by your might, we may ascribe glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

39. *ectene*—a short prayer consisting of petitions to God.

Choir. Amen.

*The choir sings the cherubic hymn.*⁴⁰ Let us, who mystically represent the cherubim, and sing the holy hymn to the quickening Trinity, lay by at this time all worldly cares; that we may receive the king of glory, invisibly attended by the angelic orders. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Prayer that the priest says inaudibly, while the cherubic hymn is being sung.

None is worthy, among those who are bound with fleshly desires and pleasures, to approach you, nor to draw near, nor to sacrifice to you, king of glory; for to minister to you is great and fearful, even to the heavenly powers themselves. Yet through your ineffable and measureless love, you unchangeably and immutably became man, and took the title of our high priest, and gave to us the liturgy of this liturgic and unbloody sacrifice,⁴¹ as being Lord of all; for you only, O Lord our God, rule over things in Heaven and things on earth, who sits on the cherubic throne, Lord of seraphim, and king of Israel, only holy, and resting in the holies. On you I importunately call, who are only good and ready to hear, look on me, a sinner, and your unworthy servant, and cleanse my soul and heart from an evil conscience; and strengthen, with the might of your Holy Spirit, me who have been endued with the grace of priesthood, that I may stand by this, your holy altar, and sacrifice your holy and spotless body and precious blood. For you I approach, bowing my neck, and pray of you, turn not your face away from me, nor reject me from the number of your sons; but condescend that these gifts may be offered to you by me, a sinner and your unworthy servant. For you are he who offers and is offered, and receives and is distributed, Christ our God; and to you we ascribe, etc.

When this prayer is finished they also say the cherubic hymn. Then the deacon, taking the censer, and putting incense on it, goes to the priest; and after receiving a blessing from him, censers the holy table in a circle, and all the sanctuary, and the priest: and he says the 51st Psalm, and other penitential troparia, such as he will, with the priest. And they go to the prothesis,⁴² the deacon preceding. And the deacon, having censered the holy things and said to himself,

God be merciful to me, a sinner, *says to the priest.* Sir, lift up.

40. *cherubic hymn*—not composed until the time of Justinian (527–565). It is not found in more ancient manuscripts.

41. *unbloody sacrifice*—the Eucharist.

42. *prothesis*—the preparation and preliminary oblation, that is, presenting the elements of bread and wine to God.

And the priest, raising the air,⁴³ puts it on the left shoulder of the deacon, saying,

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.

Then, talking the holy dish, he puts it with all care and reverence on the deacon's head, the deacon also holding the censer with one of his fingers. And the priest himself taking the holy chalice in his hands, they go through the north part, preceded by tapers, and both praying for all, and saying, The Lord God remember us all in his kingdom, always, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

And the deacon, going within the holy doors, stands on the right hand; and when the priest is about to enter in, he says to him,

The Lord God remember your priesthood in his kingdom.

Priest. The Lord God remember your diaconate in his kingdom, always, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

And the priest sets down the chalice on the holy table, and taking the holy disk from the head of the deacon, he places it there also, saying,

Honorable Joseph took your spotless body⁴⁴ from the cross, and wrapped it in clean linen with spices, and with funeral rites placed it in a new tomb.

In the grave bodily, in Hades spiritually, as God, with the thief in Paradise as in a throne, were you, O Christ, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, who are uncircumscribed and fill all things.

How life-giving, how more beautiful than Paradise, and indeed more splendid than any royal chamber, is your tomb, O Christ, the fountain of our resurrection.

Then, taking the coverings from the holy disk and the holy chalice, he places them on one part of the holy table; and taking the air from the deacon's shoulder, and censuring it, he covers with it the holy things, saying,

Honorable Joseph, down to in a new tomb.

And taking the censer from the deacon's hands, he censes the holy things thrice, saying,

Then shall they offer young bullocks on your altar.

And putting down the censer, and letting fall his phelionion,⁴⁵ and bowing his head, he says to the deacon,

Remember me, brother and fellow-minister.

Deacon. The Lord God remember your priesthood in his kingdom.

43. *air*—a cloth laid over the chalice of Eucharistic wine.

44. *spotless body*—Christ's body.

45. *phelionion*—a liturgical vestment that looks something like a poncho.

Then the deacon, also himself slightly bowing his head, and holding his oration with the three fingers of his right hand, says to the priest,

Holy sir, pray for me.

Priest. The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the highest shall overshadow you.

Deacon. The same Spirit shall be fellow-minister with us, all the days of our life.

And again, Holy sir, remember me.

Priest. The Lord God remember you in his kingdom, always, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

Deacon. Amen.

And having kissed the priest's hand, he goes out, and standing in the customary place, says,

Let us accomplish our supplications to the Lord.

Choir. Kyrie eleison. *And so to the end of each suffrage.*⁴⁶

Deacon. For the precious gifts that have been proposed, let us make our supplications to the Lord.

For this holy house, and those who, with faith, reverence, and the fear of God, enter into it, let ...

That we may be delivered from all afflictions, passion, danger, and necessity, let ...

Assist, preserve.

That the whole clay may be perfect, holy, peaceful, without sin, let us ask from the Lord.

Choir. Grant, O Lord. *And so at the end of every suffrage.*

Deacon. The angel of peace, faithful guide, guardian of our souls and bodies, let ...

Pardon and remission of our sins and our transgressions, let ...

Things that are good and profitable for our souls, and peace to the world, let ...

That we may accomplish the remainder of our lives in peace and penitence, let ...

Christian ends of our lives, without torment, without shame, peaceful, and a good defense at the fearful tribunal, let us ask from Christ. Commemorating the all-holy.

As this ectene is being said, the priest says inaudibly the prayer of oblation, after the divine gifts are placed on the holy table.

46. *suffrage*—intercessory prayer.

Lord, God Almighty, only holy, who receives the sacrifice of praise from those who call on you with their whole heart, receive also the supplication of us sinners, and cause it to approach your holy altar, and enable us to present gifts to you, and spiritual sacrifices for our sins, and for the errors of the people; and cause us to find grace in your sight, that this our sacrifice may be acceptable to you, and that the good spirit of your grace may tabernacle on us,⁴⁷ and on these gifts presented to you, and on all your people.

Priest. (Exclamation) Through the mercies of your only-begotten Son, with whom you are to be blessed, and with the all-holy, and good, and quickening spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

Peace to all.

Deacon. Let us love one another, that we may with one mind confess.

Choir. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided Trinity.

And the priest, having thrice adored, kisses the holy gifts, as they lie veiled, saying inaudibly thrice, I will love you, O Lord, my strength; the Lord is my stony rock and my defense.

If there be two or more priests, each kisses the holy things, and then each other on the shoulder, saying,

Christ is among us. He is and will be.

In like manner also the deacon adores thrice where he stands, and kisses his horarion on its cross, and thus exclaims,

The doors! The doors!⁴⁸ Let us attend in wisdom.

People. I believe in one God.

Deacon. Stand we well; stand we with fear; let us attend to offer the holy oblation in peace.

Choir. The mercy of peace, the sacrifice of praise.

And the deacon adores, and comes to the holy bema;⁴⁹ and taking the fan, fans the oblation reverently.

And the priest, taking the air from the holy gifts, lays it on one side, saying,

47. *Your grace may tabernacle on us*—your grace may abide or dwell within us.

48. *The doors! The doors!*—the meaning is unclear. Nicholas Cabasilas, whose commentary on the divine liturgy appears below, explains it mystically, as a command to close the doors of the mind against worldly things. Others take it as a literal command to close the doors of the church so heathens cannot be present during the Eucharist.

49. *bema*—raised platform in front of and behind the iconostasis.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Choir. And with your spirit.

Priest. Lift we up our hearts.

Choir. We lift them up to the Lord.

Priest. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Choir. It is meet and right to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided Trinity.

Priest. It is meet and right to hymn you, to bless you, to praise you, to give thanks to you, to worship you, in every part of your dominion. For you are God, ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, the same from everlasting to everlasting; you and your only-begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit. For you brought us forth to being from nothing, and when we had fallen did raise us up again, and gave not over until you had done everything that you might bring us to Heaven and bestow on us your kingdom to come. For all these things we give thanks to you, and to your only-begotten Son, and your Holy Spirit, for your benefits that we know and that we know not, manifest and concealed, which you have bestowed on us. We give you thanks also for this ministry that you have vouchsafed to receive at our hands; although there stand by you thousands of archangels, and ten thousands of angels, the cherubim, and the seraphim that have six wings, and are full of eyes, and soar aloft on their wings, singing, vociferating, shouting, and saying the triumphal hymn.

Choir. Holy, holy, holy, Lord of the Sabbath; Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Then the deacon, taking the asterisk⁵⁰ from the holy disk, signs it with the sign of the cross, and having saluted it, replaces it.

Priest. We also with these blessed powers, Lord and lover of men, cry and say, holy are you and all-holy, you and your only-begotten Son, and your Holy Spirit. Holy are you and all-holy, and great is the majesty of your glory:

Who so loved your world, as to give your only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him might not perish, but might have everlasting life; who having come, and having fulfilled for us all the dispensation,

50. *asterisk*—a star-shaped instrument, either gold or silver, which the priest places above the chalice and paten (a plate to hold the bread during the Eucharist) to prevent the air (veil) from touching the elements.

in the night when he was betrayed, or rather surrendered himself for the life of the world, took bread in his holy and pure and spotless hands, and gave thanks, and blessed, and hallowed, and broke, and gave to his holy disciples and apostles, saying (*aloud*), Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you for the remission of sins.

Choir. Amen.

Priest (in a low voice). Likewise after supper he took the cup, saying (*aloud*), Drink all of this:

This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.

Choir. Amen.

Priest (in a low voice). We therefore, remembering this salutary precept, and all that happened on our behalf, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into Heaven, the session on the right hand,⁵¹ the second and glorious coming again (*aloud*), on behalf of all, and for all, we offer you your own of your own.⁵²

Choir. You we hymn, you we praise; to you we give thanks, Lord, and pray to you, our God.

Priest (in a low voice). Moreover we offer to you this reasonable and unbloody sacrifice; and beseech you and pray and supplicate; send down your Holy Spirit on us, and on these proposed gifts.

The deacon lays down the veil, and goes nearer to the priest, and they both adore thrice before the holy table, praying inaudibly, and saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Then

Lord, who sent down your Holy Spirit the third hour on the apostles, take him not from us, O good God, but renew him in us who pray to you.

Then

Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence. Glory. Blessed are you, Christ our God, who filled the fishermen with all manner of wisdom, sending

51. *session on the right hand*—a reference to Christian doctrine that Jesus Christ sits in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. See Acts 2:32-33: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.” (NRSV)

52. *your own of your own*—Christ.

down on them the Holy Spirit: and by them brought the whole world into your net. O lover of men: glory be to you.

Both now.

When the highest came down and confounded the tongues, he divided the nations; when he distributed the tongues of fire, he called all to unity, and with one voice we praise the Holy Spirit.

Then the deacon, bowing his head, and pointing with his horarion to the holy bread, says in a low voice,

Sir, bless the holy bread.

The priest stands up, and thrice makes the sign of the cross on the holy gifts, saying,

And make this bread the precious body of your Christ.

Deacon. Amen. Sir, bless the holy cup.

Priest. And that which is in this cup, the precious blood of your Christ.

Deacon. Amen. *And pointing with his horarion to both the holy things, Sir, bless.*

Priest. Changing them by your Holy Spirit.

Deacon. Amen, amen, amen.

Then the deacon bows his head to the priest, and says, Holy sir, remember me, a sinner.

Then he stands in his former place, and taking the fan, fans the oblations as before.

Priest. So that they may be to those who participate, for purification of soul, forgiveness of sins, communion of the Holy Spirit, fulfillment of the kingdom of Heaven, boldness toward you, and not to judgment nor to condemnation.

And further we offer to you this reasonable service on behalf of those who have departed in the faith, our ancestors, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and every just spirit made perfect in the faith.

The deacon censens the holy table in a circle, and commemorates such of the living and dead as he will.

Priest (aloud). Especially the most holy, undefiled, excellently laudable, glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary.

Choir. In you, O full of grace (*as in the Liturgy of St. James*).

*The deacon reads the diptychs of the departed.*⁵³

53. *diptychs of the departed*—lists of those who have died.

Priest. The holy John the prophet, forerunner, and baptist; the holy, glorious, and all celebrated apostles; Saint [Name] (*the Saint of the day*), whose memory we also celebrate; and all your saints, through whose prayers look down on us, O God. And remember all those who are departed in the hope of the resurrection to eternal life, and give them rest where the light of your countenance shines on them. Furthermore we beseech you, remember, O Lord, every orthodox bishopric of those who rightly divide the word of truth, the presbytery, the diaconate in Christ, and for every hierarchical order. Furthermore we offer to you this reasonable service for the whole world: for the holy catholic and apostolic church, and for those who live in chastity and holiness of life. For our most faithful kings, beloved of Christ, all their court and army. Grant to them, Lord, a peaceful reign, that we, in their peace, may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. (*Aloud*) Chiefly, O Lord, remember our Archbishop [Name], to whom preserve your holy churches in peace, in safety, in honor, in health, in length of days, and rightly dividing the word of your truth.

The deacon, by the holy doors, says, [Name], the patriarch, metropolitan, or bishop (*as the case may be*).

Then he commemorates the diptychs of the living.

Priest (inaudibly). Remember, Lord, the city in which we dwell, and every city and region, and the faithful who inhabit it. Remember, Lord, those who voyage, who travel, who are sick, who are laboring, who are in prison, and their safety. Remember, Lord, those who bear fruit, and do good deeds in your holy churches, and who remember the poor. And send forth on us all the riches of your compassion, (*aloud*) and grant us with one mouth and one heart to glorify and celebrate your glorious and majestic name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages. And the mercies of the great God and our savior Jesus Christ shall be with all of us.

The deacon, taking his time from the priest, and standing in the accustomed place, says,

Commemorating all saints, again and again in peace let us make our supplications to the Lord.

Choir. Kyrie eleison. (*And so at the end of each petition*)

Deacon. For the venerable gifts now offered before him and hal-
lowed.

That our merciful God, the lover of mankind, who has received them into his holy and heavenly and spiritual altar, for the savor of a

sweet spiritual scent, may in return send down on us his divine grace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That we may be preserved from all affliction, passion, etc.

The deacon continues the ectene down to Christian ends of life.

The priest, meanwhile, says inaudibly, To you, O Lord and lover of men, we commend in pledge all our life and our hope, and beseech and pray, and supplicate: make us worthy to partake of your heavenly and terrible mysteries of this holy and spiritual table, with a pure conscience, for the remission of sins, forgiveness of transgressions, participation of the Holy Spirit, inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven, boldness of access to you: not to judgment nor to condemnation.

Deacon. Having prayed for the oneness of the faith, and the participation of the Holy Spirit, let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God.

Priest (aloud). And make us worthy, O Lord, with boldness and without condemnation to dare to call on you, our God and Father who are in Heaven, and to say,

People. Our Father.

Priest. For yours is the kingdom.

Priest. Peace to all.

Deacon. Let us bow our heads to the Lord.

Priest. We render thanks to you, O king invisible, who has framed all things by your measureless power, and in the multitude of your mercy has brought all things into being from non-existence. Look down, O Lord, from Heaven, on those who have bowed their heads to you, for they bowed them not to flesh and blood, but to you, the fearful God. Bestow, therefore, O Lord, on all of us an equal benefit from these offerings, according to the need of each; sail with those who sail, journey with those who journey, heal the sick, you who are the physician of our souls and bodies.

(Aloud) Through the grace, and mercy, and love to men, of your only-begotten Son, with whom, together with the most holy, and good, and life-giving Spirit, you are blessed, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

Hear us, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, out of your holy dwelling place, and from the throne of the glory of your kingdom, and come and sanctify us, you who sit above with the Father, and are here invisibly present with us; and by your mighty hand make us worthy to partake of your spotless body and precious blood, and by us all your people.

The priest and the deacons adore in the place where they stand, saying inaudibly thrice, God be merciful to me, a sinner.

And when the deacon sees the priest stretching forth his hands and touching the holy bread to make the holy elevation, he exclaims,

Let us attend.

And the priest, elevating the holy bread, exclaims, Holy things for holy persons.

Choir. One holy, one Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

And the choir sings the koinonicon,⁵⁴ e.g., on the festivals of apostles.

Their sound is gone out into all lands: and their words into the ends of the world.

The deacon then girds his horarion crosswise, and goes into the holy bema, and standing on the right hand ([of] the priest, [who is] grasping the holy bread), says,

Sir, break the holy bread.

And the priest, dividing it into four parts with care and reverence, says,

The lamb of God is broken and distributed; he who is broken and not divided in sunder; ever eaten and never consumed, but sanctifying the communicants.

And the deacon, pointing with his horarion to the holy cup, says,

Sir, fill the holy cup.

And the priest, taking the upper portion, makes with it a cross above the holy cup, saying, the fullness of the cup, of faith, of the Holy Spirit, and thus puts it into the holy cup.

Deacon. Amen.

And taking the warm water, he says to the priest, Sir, bless the warm water.⁵⁵

54. *koinonicon*—a verse deriving its name from *koinonia*: Christian fellowship with God or fellow Christians.

55. *warm water*—pouring warm water into the chalice after consecrating the wine is a practice unique to the Eastern churches. The practice puzzled Latin theologians at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–39). Supposedly an Eastern bishop sent the pope an explanation that satisfied him, but the explanation has been lost. Nicholas Cabasilas, whose commentary on the divine liturgy follows this text, offers two explanations for the warm water: (1) it represents the water that flowed from Christ’s side on the cross after a Roman soldier pierced him with a lance; and (2) “[s]ince this warm water is not only water, but shares the nature of fire, it signifies the Holy Spirit, who is sometimes represented by water, and who came down on the apostles in the form of fire.”

And the priest blesses, saying,

Blessed is the fervor of your saints, always, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

And the deacon pours forth a sufficiency into the holy cup, in the form of a cross, saying,

The fervor of faith, full of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (*Trice*)

*Then, setting down the warm water, he stands a little way off. And the priest, taking a particle of the holy bread, says,*⁵⁶

The blessed and most holy body of our Lord and God and savior Jesus Christ, is communicated to me, [Name], priest, for the remission of my sins, and for everlasting life.

I believe, Lord, and confess.

Of your mystic supper today.

Let not, O Lord, the communion of your mysteries be to my judgment or condemnation, but to the healing of my soul and body.

And thus he partakes of that which is in his hands with fear and all caution.

Then he says, Deacon, approach.

*And the deacon approaches, and reverently makes an obeisance,*⁵⁷ *asking forgiveness. And the priest, taking the holy bread, gives it to the deacon; and the deacon, kissing the hand that gives it, says, Sir, make me partaker of the precious and holy body of our Lord and God and savior Jesus Christ.*

Priest. [Name], the holy deacon is made partaker of the precious and holy and spotless body of our Lord and God and savior Jesus Christ, for the remission of his sins, and for eternal life.

And the deacon, going behind the holy table, bows his head and prays, and so does the priest. Then the priest, standing up, takes the holy chalice with its covering in both hands, and drinks three times, saying, I, [Name], priest, partake of the pure and holy blood of our Lord and God and savior Jesus Christ, for the remission of my sins, and for eternal life.

And then he wipes the holy cup and his own lips with the covering he has in his hands, and says,

Behold, this has touched my lips, and shall take away my transgressions, and purge my sins.

Then he calls the deacon, saying, Deacon, approach.

The deacon comes, and adores once, saying, Behold, I approach the immortal king. I believe, Lord, and confess.

56. *says*—passages in various manuscripts differ significantly here.

57. *makes an obeisance*—bows in reverence.

Priest. [Name], the deacon and servant of God, is made partaker of the precious and holy blood of our Lord and God and savior Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and for eternal life.

*And when the deacon has communicated,*⁵⁸ *the priest says,* Behold, this has touched your lips.

Then the deacon, taking the holy dish, and holding it over the holy chalice, wipes it thoroughly with the holy sponge; and with care and reverence covers it with the veil. In like manner he covers the dish with the asterisk, and that with its veil.

The priest says the prayer of thanksgiving. We yield you thanks, O Lord and lover of men, benefactor of our souls, that you have this day thought us worthy of your heavenly and immortal mysteries. Rightly divide our path, confirm us all in your fear, guard our life, make safe our goings; through the prayers and supplications of the glorious Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary, and all your saints.

And thus they open the doors of the holy bema; and the deacon, having made one adoration, takes the chalice with reverence, and goes to the door, and raising the holy chalice, shows it to the people, saying, Approach with the fear of God, faith and love.

They who are to communicate draw near with all reverence, and hold their arms crossed on their breasts; and the priest, as he distributes the mysteries to each, says,

[Name], the servant of God, is made partaker of the pure and holy body and blood of our Lord and God and savior Jesus Christ, for the remission of his sins, and life everlasting.

Then the priest blesses the people, saying aloud, O God, save your people, and bless your heritage.

The deacon and the priest return to the holy table, and the priest censes thrice, saying inaudibly, Be you exalted, Lord, above the heavens; and your glory above all the earth.

Then, taking the holy dish, he puts it on the head of the deacon, and the deacon, taking it with reverence, and looking out toward the door, goes in silence to the prothesis,⁵⁹ and puts it down; and the priest, having made obeisance, takes the holy chalice, and turns toward the doors, saying inaudibly,

Blessed be our God (*then aloud*) always, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

And the deacon, having come out, and standing in the accustomed place, says,

58. *has communicated*—has received communion.

59. *prothesis*—a reference here to the altar on which the Eucharistic elements are prepared.

Standing upright, and having partaken of the divine, holy, spotless, immortal, heavenly, life-giving, and terrible mysteries of Christ, let us worthily give thanks to the Lord.

Assist, preserve.

That we may pass this whole day.

Exclamation. For you are our sanctification, and to you we ascribe glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages.

Choir. Amen.

Priest. Let us go on in peace.

Deacon. Let us make our supplications to the Lord.

Prayer behind the ambo, said aloud by the priest without the bema.

Lord, who blesses those who bless you, and sanctifies those who put their trust in you, save your people, and bless your inheritance; guard with care the fullness of your church: hallow those who love the beauty of your house. Glorify them in return by your divine might, and forsake not those who put their trust in you; give your peace to your world, to your churches, to our priests and kings; to the army, and to all your people; because every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from you, the Father of lights; and to you we ascribe.

This being ended, the priest goes through the holy doors, and departs into the prothesis, and says this prayer,

You, O Christ our God, who are yourself the fullness of the law and of the prophets, who did accomplish all the dispensation of your Father, fill our hearts with joy and gladness always, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

Deacon. Let us make our supplication to the Lord.

Priest. The blessing of the Lord on you. *Then,* Glory to you, our God; glory to you.

People. Glory. Both now.

Then the deacon, also going through the north part, gathers together the holy things, with fear and all safety, so that not the very smallest particle should fall out or be left; and he washes his hands in the accustomed place. And the priest goes forth and gives the antidoron⁶⁰ to the people. Then he goes into the holy bema, and takes off his priestly vestments, saying Nunc dimittis,⁶¹ the trisagion, and the other things. Then he says the dismissal prayer of St. Chrysostom.

60. *antidoron*—bread offered for the service of the altar, but not consecrated. Some monks during Lent subsisted only on antidoron.

61. *Nunc dimittis*—the song of Simeon from Luke 2:29–32: “Master, now

The grace of your lips, shining forth like a torch, illuminated the world, enriched the universe with the treasures of liberality, and manifested to us the height of humility; but do you, our instructor by your words, Father John Chrysostom, intercede to the Word, Christ our God, that our souls may be saved.

Kyrie eleison (*twelve times*).

Glory. Both now.

You, the more honorable than the cherubim.

And [the priest] makes the dismissal; and having adored and given thanks to God for all things, he departs.

you are dismissing your servant in peace,/ according to your word;/ for my eyes have seen your salvation,/ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.” (NRSV)

14.2 Nicholas Cabasilas on the Divine Liturgy (1300s)

Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J. M. Hussey (London: SPCK, 1966), 25–27, 36–39, 40, 47–48, 69–70, 83–84, 90–91, 96–98, 101, 119. Used by permission of SPCK Publishing.



Figure 76. Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, Peter-Paul Cathedral, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2014.

The Divine Liturgy is laden with symbolism. Some is self-explanatory, but much is not. As noted above, the church required catechumens to receive explicit instruction in the meaning of the ceremony before they could participate in the entire rite and receive the Eucharist. The symbolism of the liturgy naturally invited interpretation, just as scripture and the writings of the fathers invited interpretation. The best-known interpretive study is the following commentary by Nicholas Cabasilas.

We know little about Cabasilas's life. He was likely born sometime between 1300 and 1323, and he died sometime after 1391. There is no evidence that he ever held a high ecclesiastical post or that he was even ordained. If indeed, he remained a lay-

man, the theological acumen in the following document is all the more impressive.

• Introduction and the prothesis⁶² •

1. The general significance of the sacrifice⁶³

The essential act in the celebration of the holy mysteries is the transformation of the elements into the divine body and blood; its aim is the sanctification of the faithful, who through these mysteries receive the remission of their sins and the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven. As a preparation for and contribution to this act and this purpose, we have prayers, psalms, and readings from holy scripture; in short, all the sacred acts and forms that are said and done before and after the consecration of the elements. While it is true that God freely gives us all holy things and that we bring him nothing, but that they are absolute graces, he does nevertheless necessarily require that we should be fit to receive and to preserve them; and he would not permit those who were not so disposed to be thus sanctified. [...] Therefore, since in order to obtain the effects of the divine mysteries we must approach them in a state of grace and properly prepared, it was necessary that these preparations should find a place in the order of the sacred rite: and, in fact, they are found there. There, indeed, we see what the prayers and psalms, as well as the sacred actions and forms that the liturgy contains, can achieve in us. They purify us and make us able fittingly to receive and to preserve holiness, and to remain possessed of it.

They sanctify us in two ways. The first consists in this: that we are helped by these prayers, psalms, and readings. The prayers turn us toward God and obtain for us pardon for our sins; the psalms make God look favorably upon us, and draw to us that outflowing of mercy that is the result of such propitiation.⁶⁴ “Offer to God thanksgiving,” says the psalmist, “and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” As for the lessons from the holy scripture, which proclaim the goodness

62. *prothesis*—the first portion of the service—conducted before the congregation assembles for the main service—in which the bread and wine are prepared to be taken to the altar. The prothesis symbolizes the early, “hidden years” of Christ’s life.

63. *sacrifice*—Eucharist.

64. *propitiation*—Christ’s atonement for our sins.

of God and his love for men, but also the severity of his justice and judgment, they instill in our souls the fear of the Lord, enkindle in us love for him, and thereby arouse in us great eagerness and zeal for the observance of his commandments. All these things, which make the souls of both priest and people better and more divine, make them fit for the reception and preservation of the holy mysteries, which is the aim of the liturgy. Especially, they put the priest in a proper frame of mind for the accomplishment of the sacrifice, which is, as has been said, the essential part of the *mystagogy*.⁶⁵ This intention can be seen in many parts of the prayers: the priest prays that he not be judged unworthy to perform so great an act, but that he may devote himself to the sacrifice with pure hands, a pure heart, and a pure tongue. Thus it is that we are aided in the celebration by the very virtue of the words themselves, said or sung.

There is another way in which these forms, like all the ceremonies of the holy sacrifice, sanctify us. It consists in this: that in them Christ and the deeds he accomplished and the sufferings he endured for our sakes are represented. Indeed, it is the whole scheme of the work of redemption that is signified in the psalms and readings, as in all the actions of the priest throughout the liturgy; the first ceremonies of the service represent the beginnings of this work; the next, the sequel; and the last, its results. Thus, those who are present at these ceremonies have before their eyes all these divine things. The consecration of the elements—the sacrifice itself commemorates the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Savior, since it transforms these precious gifts into the very body of the Lord, that body that was the central figure in all these mysteries, which was crucified, which rose from the dead, which ascended into Heaven. The ceremonies that precede the act of sacrifice symbolize the events that occurred before the death of Christ: his coming on earth, his first appearance and his perfect manifestation. Those who follow the act of sacrifice recall “the promise of the Father,” as the Savior himself called it—that is, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, the conversion of the nations that they brought about, and their divine society. The whole celebration of the mystery is like a unique portrayal of a single body, which is the work of the Savior; it places before us the several members of this body, from beginning to end, in their order and harmony. That is why the psalmody, as well as the opening chants, and before them all that is done at the prepara-

65. *mystagogy*—initiation into the mysteries of the Eucharist.

tion of the offerings, symbolize the first period of the scheme of redemption. That which comes after the psalms—readings from holy scriptures and so on—symbolizes the period that follows. [...]

8. Ceremonies performed with the bread

Because it is fitting that we should commemorate the Lord in this way, the priest, after having said the words, “In memory of our Lord,” performs ceremonies that symbolize the cross and death of Christ. While making an incision in the loaf, he calls to mind what the prophet⁶⁶ of old said of the Savior’s passion: “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” He expresses this and the rest of the passage to the best of his ability, both in word and in action. This cutting of the loaf is done for practical reasons—that the host⁶⁷ may be removed—but it has a symbolic value also; it represents our Lord’s passing from the world by the road that leads to his Father—death, which he overcame; as he himself said, “I leave the world, and go to the Father.”

As the priest thrusts the lance into the loaf several times in making the incisions, so also he divides the words of the prophet into a corresponding number of sections, combining the different parts with the several strokes of the lance, to show that the action is an application of the word. In the same way that this bread has been separated from other and similar loaves in order that it may be consecrated to God and used in the holy sacrifice, so the Lord was set apart from the mass of mankind, whose nature his love had brought him to share. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,” and in this way “he was cut off out of the land of the living.” And the priest adds the remainder of the passage from the prophet.

Then, placing the host on the paten, he pronounces words and performs actions that are a direct recollection of the sacrifice and death of our Savior. “The lamb of God is sacrificed, he who takes away the sins of the world.” Both the words and the rites show forth the circumstances of Christ’s death. The priest carves a cross on the bread, thereby signifying the means by which the sacrifice was accomplished. Then he pierces the right side of the host; this incision in the bread represents the wound in the Savior’s side. That is why the small metal knife is called a lance and is shaped like one. While the priest recalls

66. *the prophet*—Isaiah.

67. *the host*—the bread, the body of Christ.

these events in this way he repeats the words of the Evangelist:⁶⁸ “One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side.” The blood and water that flowed from his holy side are also recalled by the priest, who symbolizes them by pouring wine and water into the chalice—another commemoration of the Lord—and saying the words: “And immediately blood and water came out.” [...]

10. The words of the offering after the commemoration; the offering of the gifts is both in thanksgiving and in supplication

The priest continues to make the offering. He takes a piece of each of the loaves offered and makes the holy gift. [...] The words that he now says are: “To the glory of the all-holy Mother of God, in honor of such and such a saint, and for the remission of the sins of the living and the dead.” [...]

And what does this imply? That the reasons for offering the gifts are these: to give thanks to God, and to make supplication. [...] For by our gifts we are either showing our gratitude to a benefactor for what we have received already, or we pay homage to someone who can bestow favors on us but has not already done so. In our offering of these gifts to God, both motives are combined; we offer them both because of what we have received already and in order that we may receive yet more, in thanksgiving and in supplication; we thank him for the good things received and ask him for those blessings yet to come. So the same gifts are at once thank-offerings and supplicatory.

What are the benefits bestowed upon us, and what do we still seek? They are the same in each case—the forgiveness of our sins and the inheritance of the kingdom. For these are the things that Christ commanded us to seek first of all; it is these benefits that the church has already received and for which she still prays. In what way does she already possess these good things, and in what sense has she not yet received them, so that she must pray for them? She obtained the first of these gifts when she became capable of possessing them. For she has received the power to make us children of God: this is the gift common to all Christians that the death of our Savior bestowed upon us. This power is contained in holy baptism and in the other sacraments, whereby we are made children of God and heirs of the king-

68. *the Evangelist*—the author of the Gospel of John.

dom of Heaven. Second, she has already shared in the heritage of this kingdom in actual fact, through the thousands of her members whom she has sent to their heavenly home, and whom St. Paul calls “the first-born, who are written in Heaven.” It is in this way that the church has already received of these great gifts. But for those of her children who are living in the world and still running the race to gain the crown, for whom the result is uncertain, and for those who have passed away without sure and certain hope the kingdom has yet to be obtained.

This is why she commemorates the Lord’s death and the departed saints for whom she has obtained the fullness of perfection; she is mindful also of those who are not yet perfect. For the former she gives thanks, and for the rest she intercedes.

Thus the first and second parts of the *prothesis*⁶⁹ are spent in thanksgiving, while the remainder is concerned with supplication; in memory of the Lord, for the glory of his blessed mother, and in honor of the saints. “We give thanks to you,” says the church, “that by your death you have opened for us the gates of life, that from us you did choose a mother, that we have as ambassadors our fellow men, and that you have allowed to members of our human family such freedom of access to you.”

For the words “to the glory” and “through the intercession” mean the same as “because of the glory and the intercession,” just as “for the remission of sins” means “because of the remission of sins.” These words have a double meaning, for they apply both to the present and to that for which we hope in the future. Who would deny that the glory of the Blessed Virgin and the intercession of the saints and their freedom of access to God are present benefits? And to offer gifts for benefits already received is clearly an act of thanksgiving. As for the words “in memory of the Lord,” they, as we have already shown, symbolize an attempt at repayment for his death, and are a sign of thanksgiving. [...]

13. The meaning of the prayer for God’s mercy after every petition

There is another question to be asked: why is it that, whereas the priest asks them to pray for so many different things, the faithful in fact ask

69. *prothesis*—act of preparing the bread and wine for the Eucharist.

for one thing only—mercy? Why is this the sole cry they send forth to God?

In the first place, as we have already said, it is because this prayer implies both gratitude and confession. Second, to beg God’s mercy is to ask for his kingdom, that kingdom that Christ promised to give to those who seek for it, assuring them that all things else of which they have need will be added to them. Because of this, this prayer is sufficient for the faithful, since its application is general. [...]

[I]f, among the actions of merciful men, one wishes to contemplate the aim of the divine mercy, he will find that it corresponds exactly to the kingdom itself. For what is the character of the merciful man? “I was hungry, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink.” Therefore those to whom Christ shows mercy he will admit to a share at his own table. And what table is this? “That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” [...]

27. The consecration of the offerings, and the thanksgiving that precedes it

[...] The priest recites the story of that august last supper, telling how, before he suffered, [Jesus] gave to the disciples this sacrament, and took the bread and the chalice, and having given thanks said those words that expressed the mystery;⁷⁰ repeating those words, the celebrant prostrates himself and prays, while applying to the offerings these words of the only-begotten, our Savior, that they may, after having received his most holy and all-powerful Spirit, be transformed—the bread into his holy body, the wine into his precious and sacred blood.

When these words have been said, the whole sacred rite is accomplished, the offerings are consecrated, the sacrifice is complete; the splendid victim, the divine oblation,⁷¹ slain for the salvation of the world, lies upon the altar. For it is no longer the bread, which until

70. *those words that expressed the mystery*—see Luke 22:17-20: “Then [Jesus] took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’” (NRSV)

71. *oblation*—a sacrifice or offering to God.

now has represented the Lord's body, nor is it a simple offering, bearing the likeness of the true offering, carrying as if engraved on it the symbols of the Savior's passion; it is the true victim, the most holy body of the Lord, which really suffered the outrages, insults and blows; which was crucified and slain, which under Pontius Pilate bore such splendid witness; that body that was mocked, scourged, spat upon, and which tasted gall. In like manner the wine has become the blood that flowed from that body. It is that body and blood formed by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, which was buried, which rose again on the third day, which ascended into Heaven and sits on the right hand of the Father. [...]

• The Liturgy of the Faithful •

33. The prayers after the sacrifice; why the priest commemorates the saints and especially the

All-Holy Virgin here

When the sacrifice has been thus completed, the priest, seeing before him the pledge of God's love of mankind, the lamb of God, uses him as his intercessor and, with him as advocate, makes his petitions known to God, and pours forth his prayers in sure and certain hope; he asks that the intentions that he commemorated when the bread was brought, those for which he prayed at the preparation for the celebration of the mysteries, and those for which he pleaded when offering up the gifts and asking that they might be found acceptable may now have their effect, since God has been pleased to accept our offerings.

What are these effects? They are common to the living and the departed: that for the gifts that he has been pleased to accept, God will send grace in return. In particular, that the departed may have rest for their souls, and may, with the saints who have completed their course, inherit the kingdom; and that the living may partake of the holy table, and be made holy, and that none may partake to his own judgment and condemnation; likewise, that they may receive remission of their sins, peace, fruitfulness, and the provision of what is necessary to them; and finally that they may in God's sight appear worthy of the kingdom.

The offering of sacrifice is not only an act of supplication; it is one of thanksgiving as well, in the same way that, at the beginning of the liturgy, in dedicating the offerings to God, the priest gave thanks and made supplication at the same time; he now, having consecrated and

sacrificed these gifts, unites thanksgiving with petition. He states the reasons for his thanksgiving, and names those for whom he prays.

The reasons for thanksgiving, as has already been said, are the saints; for in them the church finds that which she seeks and obtains that for which she has prayed—the kingdom of Heaven. Those for whom she prays are they who have not yet reached perfection and are still in need of prayer.

These are the priest's words concerning the saints: "We offer you also this spiritual sacrifice in honor of those who rest in faith, our fathers and ancestors, patriarchs, apostles, prophets, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, virgins and all souls who have departed in peace, and especially for our all-holy and pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary." Then he commemorates the whole assembly of the saints. They are the cause for which the church gives thanks to God. It is for them that she offers to him a spiritual sacrifice in thanksgiving; above all, it is for the blessed Mother of God, who surpasses all others in holiness. That is why the priest asks for nothing on behalf of the saints; rather, he asks that he may be assisted by them in his prayers; because, as we have said, for them the gifts are offered not in supplication but in thanksgiving.

Next, the priest makes his supplication, and names those things for which he prays, asking for salvation for all, and for each one that of which he stands in need. Thus he says: "We offer to you this spiritual sacrifice also for the whole world, for the holy catholic and apostolic church, for the governors of our august state, and for our most faithful emperors, devoted to Christ." These are his petitions. [...]

37. The meaning of pouring warm water into the wine

When he has summoned the faithful to the sacred banquet, the priest gives the sacrament to himself, and afterward to all those of priestly rank and the altar-servers. But before this he drops into the chalice a little warm water, to symbolize the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church. For the Holy Spirit came down when the whole plan of redemption had been completed. And now the descent of the Spirit comes about when the sacrifice has been offered and the holy offerings have reached their perfection; it will be completed in those who communicate worthily. [...]

Since this warm water is not only water, but shares the nature of fire, it signifies the Holy Spirit, who is sometimes represented by water, and who came down upon the apostles in the form of fire. This point of the liturgy represents that moment in time, for the Holy Spirit came down after all things pertaining to Christ had been accomplished. In the same way, when the holy offerings have attained their ultimate perfection, this water is added.

For the mysteries also represent the church, which is the body of Christ; she received the Holy Spirit after our Lord's ascension; now she receives the gift of the Holy Spirit after the offerings have been accepted at the heavenly altar; God, who has accepted them, sends us the Holy Spirit in return, as we have said; for then and now there is one mediator and one Spirit. [...]

• A Theological parenthesis •

42. Whether the faithful departed are sanctified by
the holy offerings as the living are

There is another question that we must consider. We have seen that this divine and holy sacrifice sanctifies in two ways. First by intercession; the offerings we make, by the very fact of being offered, sanctify those who offer them, as well as those for whom they are offered, and cause God to look favorably upon them. Second, by participation; for the offerings become for us true meat and drink, as the Savior said. Of these two ways, the first is common to the living and the dead, since the sacrifice is offered for both; but the second is possible only to the living, since the dead can no longer eat or drink. What then? Because of this, are the dead not to benefit from the sanctification that comes from Communion? Are they to be in this worse off than the living? By no means; for Christ himself communicates with them, in a mysterious way known only to him.

To make this clear, let us consider the essential causes of this sanctification, and see whether the souls of the dead as well as of the living cannot possess it. Does it come because one has a body, approaches the holy table on one's feet, receives the holy species in one's hands, takes them in one's mouth, and eats and drinks them? Certainly not; for many who communicate in this fashion and come thus to the holy mysteries gain no benefit from it, but return the worse for grave sins.

What then are the causes of sanctification in those who are made holy? What conditions does Christ demand? Purity of heart, love of God, desire for the sacrament, zeal for communion, a glowing ardor, a burning thirst. These are the means by which we draw sanctification to ourselves; these are necessary if we are to partake of Christ; without them true communion is impossible. Yet none of these is the property of the body; all are characteristic of the soul. Therefore there is nothing to prevent the souls of the dead from possessing them as well as those of the living. [...]

Then, you will say, if a living man has the dispositions that you mention in his soul, and yet does not partake of the holy mysteries, will he nevertheless receive the sanctification that the sacrament gives?

Not in all cases; only when it is physically impossible for him to receive the elements, as it is for the dead. Such was the case of the solitaries who lived in the desert, or in caves and grottoes in the mountain-side, and could not avail themselves of priest or altar. Christ gave them this sanctification in an invisible manner. We know this because they had life, which they could not have had without partaking of the sacrament, for Christ himself said: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." Another proof is the fact that God sent angels to several of these men with the sacrament.

If, however, a man could come to the altar but does not, it is impossible for him to receive the sanctification that the sacrament brings; this is not because he does not come, but because he could come and will not; for this shows that his soul is void of the good dispositions required for the sacrament.

What desire, what longing for the holy table does he possess who could easily come to it but will not? What faith in God has he who does not fear the Savior's threats concerning those who despise this banquet? How can one believe in the love of him who, although able to receive the sacrament, does not bother to do so?

It is not then surprising that Christ should grant to those departed souls who are innocent of such faults a share in this sacred banquet. It is amazing and supernatural that a man living in corruption can nourish himself on incorruptible flesh; but what is strange in the idea of an immortal soul nourishing itself on immortal food, as is its nature? And if the first thing, which is marvelous and beyond nature, has been accomplished by God in his ineffable love and hidden wisdom, why

should he not accomplish the other, which is both logical and likely?
[...]

45. That sanctification works more perfectly for the departed

As far as sanctification is concerned, those souls that are free of the body have an advantage over those still living in the flesh. It is true that they receive, through the prayers of the priest and the intercession of the holy offerings, purification and the remission of their sins, just as the living do. But they can no longer sin, and do not add new wrongdoing to the old, as most of the living do; they are either entirely absolved from all blame, or at least freed forever from the possibility of further sin. Because of this, they are better disposed for communion with the Savior, not only than the majority of the living, but also than they would themselves have been if they were still in the flesh. The very fact of being free from the bonds of the flesh makes them far more worthy to receive the holy mysteries than they could possibly have been if they were still housed in their bodies. [...]

• Thanksgiving and closing prayers •

53. Thanksgiving after the Communion, and the closing prayers

The priest now calls upon all who have received Communion to make their thanksgiving to God, and to do it with fervor, not as a matter of tiresome duty. This is the meaning of the cry *Ορθοι* [Stand up], which indicates that they should be standing up, not reclining or sitting at their ease, but intent on God in both body and soul. Then, having urged them to make the other usual requests in prayer to God, he leaves the sanctuary, and, standing before the gates, he says a prayer on behalf of them all. After the sacrifice is completed with its concluding doxology and the holy rites have been duly performed, one should note how the priest brings to an end, as it were, his communing with God, and gradually descends from these heights to converse with mankind. He does this as befits a priest, for it is in prayer, and both the manner and the place of his prayer symbolize his descent. First of all within the sanctuary he addresses himself to God and prays secretly on his own behalf. Then he leaves the sanctuary and standing in the midst of the congregation he says aloud, so that everyone can hear, the prayer of common supplica-

tion for the church and for all the faithful. Then the bread that has been offered up, and from which the sacred host was taken, is broken into small pieces and given to the faithful as something that has been hallowed by being dedicated and offered to God. The faithful receive this with all reverence, kissing the hand that has so recently touched the all-holy body of the savior Christ and which, thus sanctified, can communicate this sanctification to those who touch it. And so they glorify him who is the origin and dispenser of these blessings that they receive. This doxology is taken from the scriptures: "Blessed be the name of the Lord," and so on. This is proclaimed several times, and then they say a psalm that particularly stresses doxology and thanksgiving. Which is this psalm? It is Psalm 34, "I will bless the Lord at all times." After the distribution of the bread and after the psalm, the priest says the last prayer over the people. This is not only said outside the sanctuary and in a manner that can be heard by all, but the words of the prayer are addressed directly to the congregation itself, thus showing the increasing extent to which the priest is now associating himself with the people. What is this prayer? It is that we may be saved through obtaining mercy, for we have of ourselves nothing that merits salvation, but we look only toward him who loves mankind and is able to save us. Therefore at this point he makes mention of many intercessors who can help us, and especially the all-holy Mother of God, who was the vessel whereby mercy was first brought to us. The prelude of the prayer is: "Christ, our true God." There is no longer any question of those false gods, those sham divinities, whom we once worshipped in such numbers, but of him, "our true God," whom we have now found after great struggles. And so it is that we owe all glory, honor, and worship to him alone, as to God, together with his eternal Father and his most holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and always for ever and ever. Amen.

15. Monasticism and Rise of the Great Monastic Houses

Documents earlier in this work provide some insight into the evolution of cenobitic monasticism from a tradition that began primarily as a solitary endeavor.¹ Over time the cenobitic model became the primary model in the Byzantine Empire.

A paucity of sources makes it impossible to determine how many monasteries existed in the Byzantine Empire at any given time, but one scholar has estimated that Constantinople alone once housed as many as 325.² Invasions of Egypt by Persian and Arab troops isolated what had been the center of hermitic monasticism (as well as irksome but stalwart Miaphysite monks) from the rest of the empire, thus relegating hermitic monasticism to the periphery.

The state and the institutional church, of course, much preferred the cenobitic model to the hermitic: the rules and hierarchy of cenobiticism made its adherents easier to monitor and regulate. Hermits, subject to nobody, could be loose cannons: unpredictable, suspicious of authority, and prone to heresy.

1. See section “Early Monasticism” in Part I of *Essential Texts*. See also section “4. Early Monasticism” in this volume.

2. “Monasticism,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 797.



Figure 77. Hosios Loukas Monastery, Near Distomo, Greece

But while monks in institutional houses proved easier to control, they were not always compliant, and they frequently placed themselves at odds with the church's hierarchy. Monks wielded an influence in Byzantium disproportionate to their numbers. It was monks who emphasized the divinity of Christ during the Christological disputes at the councils of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680–681) and Nicaea II (787). Monks showed little reluctance to oppose emperors and patriarchs with whom they disagreed. Nor were they shy about seeking to become emperors and patriarchs themselves: Constantinople's Studios monastery (see below) alone produced three monks who rose to become patriarchs of Constantinople; another three from Studios became emperors.

Upon entering a monastery a monk received a new name, symbolizing his second baptism into a life devoted to God. Monks rarely received holy orders: that is, they remained laymen rather than pursuing ordination. Still, a few monks *had* to be ordained, since monasteries needed priests to conduct the liturgy.

Over time ordination became more frequent, closely tracking the institutionalization of monasticism. As monasteries became more regulated and more closely tied to the church's bureaucracy, more monks became priests, and more priestly monks ("hieromonks") became bishops. Eventually *only* monks could become bishops, a radical change from the movement's origins.

Rules for cenobitic monasteries demanded rigor. St. Simeon the New Theologian (whose work appears later in this section) established the following plan for his monks when he served as abbot of the St. Mamas monastery in Constantinople:

Midnight: Rise to perform private prayers proscribed by spiritual fathers. Recite the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner"), pray the psalms, and read scripture and the church fathers.

Wee hours: Gather to celebrate the "night office," which included nocturnes (night prayers), matins (an early morning service) and first hour (meditations on the creation, the banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise, and the appearance of Christ before the high priest Caiaphas).

Interlude: Return to cells for more private prayer or a brief nap.

Third hour after sunrise: meditation on the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

Sixth hour after sunrise: meditation on Christ's crucifixion and celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Before noon: First meal of the day in the monastic refectory. All eat in silence, except for one monk who reads aloud from patristic writings, commentaries on scripture, or the lives of the saints. Retire to cells for a nap, more prayer, or labor.

Ninth hour after sunrise: meditation on the death of Christ.

Vespers: an evening service of prayer.

After supper: Return to church for compline (prayers at the end of the day). At the end of compline venerate and kiss icons in the church, receive the abbot's blessing, and return to cells to read devotional literature, scripture, and writings of the church fathers. After private prayer

and prostrations, sleep for roughly three hours before rising at midnight to begin the schedule once again.

On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, monks “fasted,” abstaining from dairy products (cheese and eggs), wine, and olive oil. Monks never ate meat.



Figure 78. Peninsula of Mount Athos

Mount Athos, a thin peninsula in eastern Greece jutting roughly two thousand meters above the Mediterranean Sea and stretching fifty kilometers southeast, emerged as an influential center of monasticism and the home to several large monasteries. Legend has it that winds once blew off course a ship carrying the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist on their way to visit Lazarus in Cyprus. They were forced to anchor on the peninsula, and the beauty of the mountain so impressed Mary that she asked her son, Jesus, to give her the mountain as a gift. A voice from Heaven responded, “Let this place be our lot, our garden and your Paradise, as well as a salvation, a haven for those who seek salvation.”



Figure 79. Mount Athos



Figure 80. St. Panteleimon Monastery (Russian), Mount Athos



Figure 81. Major monasteries on Mount Athos today

Early monks on the mountain dedicated the terrain to Mary, declaring it off-limits to all other women. Today monks try to keep even female animals off the island.

Information about the origins of monasticism on Mount Athos is sketchy. We know that some monks fleeing Egypt after the Islamic conquests of the 600s settled on the peninsula. Records from the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 report the presence of monastic delegates from Athos. In 885 Emperor Basil I proclaimed the holy mountain to be a place for monks alone: laymen, farmers, and cattle breeders could not live there. Organized monasticism on Athos began in 936, when St. Athanasius (“the Athonite”) founded the “Great Lavra”—still the largest monastery on the peninsula—with support from Emperor John I (969–976). John demanded, to the great consternation of hermits on the peninsula, that the Athonite monks follow St. Athanasius’s rule.

Several more monasteries arose in the 1000s as monks arrived from all over the East. Russians, Bulgarians, and Serbs all boasted their own monasteries by the 1100s, and by 1400 some forty monasteries occupied the peninsula.

Most of these monasteries were cenobitic, tightly controlled and centrally organized. Cenobitic monks lived together in the same building, owned no personal property, and subjected themselves to discipline meted out by the abbot. Others, however, adopted an “idiorrhhythmic” model, living together and reporting to a superior, while retaining personal property and enjoying a relatively high level of freedom. Another model was the *lavra*, a small community of hermits who lived separately but accepted direction from a common abbot and celebrated the Eucharist together on Sundays. Some hermits declined to join a monastery but remained on the mountain, voluntarily cut off from others for years at a time.

15.1 Theodore the Studite's Charge to Successors (826)

Theodore Studites, "Testament of Theodore the Studite for the Monastery of St. John Stoudios in Constantinople," trans. Timothy Miller in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, ed. John Philip Thomas (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 1: 75–83. Used by permission of Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University.

Founded by the Roman consul Studios in 463, the Studios monastery in Constantinople housed around seven hundred monks by the 700s. Its *typikon* or rule drew inspiration from St. Basil's rule,³ and it served as a model for cenobitic monasteries around the empire and abroad, including those on Mount Athos. Although fiercely communal, the Studios monastery permitted recluses to live around its grounds.



Figure 82. The Studios Monastery today, destroyed by Turks in the 1453 seizure of Constantinople

Studite monks engaged in charitable work, ran a school, curated a scriptorium, taught calligraphy, copied and distributed

3. See document "St. Basil (ca. 330–379) to Gregory of Nazianzus on Monastic Ideals (n.d.," in Part I, section "Early Monasticism" of *Essential Texts*. See also document "4.3. Long Rules of St. Basil (ca. 356)" in this volume.

hundreds of texts, and composed hymns still used in Eastern Orthodox churches today.

After Empress Irene, the great defender of icons, assumed the imperial throne in 797, she summoned Theodore—the same iconophilic Theodore we encountered earlier—to Constantinople to serve as abbot of the Studios monastery. The historian Alexander Kazhdan argues that Theodore intended, on becoming abbot, to create an institution that could withstand imperial coercion, of which he'd already experienced quite enough. He did not succeed. In fact he suffered, as Timothy Miller notes in his introduction to the document below, a disastrous series of relations with emperors after Irene. In 809 Emperor Nikephoros I, Irene's successor, exiled the Studios monastery's entire leadership to an island off the coast when Theodore refused to recognize the marriage of an earlier emperor—a marriage that required the emperor's illegitimate (to Theodore's mind) divorce of his previous wife. Theodore was exiled yet again in 815 when the iconoclastic emperor Leo V took the throne. Just before departing, Theodore divided his monks into small groups and advised them to disperse to avoid persecution.

The *Testament* of our father, the holy, inspired confessor Theodore, the Studite superior, which was read aloud before his final repose.

• Preface •

Since this wretched body of mine has fallen into a constant state of ill health and I am unable to summon all of you—my sons, brothers, and fathers—at the time of my departure because the monasteries are located in diverse places and especially because some of you have journeyed afar on business, I have heeded the words of the sacred David, “I prepared myself and was not terrified”; and again, “My heart is ready.” Since the hour of my passing out of this life has already arrived, I have hastened to draw up this *Testament* beforehand. I thought that this was a fitting and sure method for you to hear my final utterance and discern exactly what I believe and think, and what sort of person I leave as a superior to succeed me so that you might thus enjoy harmony and peace in Christ—that peace that the Lord left to his

holy disciples and apostles as he was about to return to the heavens.
[...]

• Concerning the superior •

[...] This man has been set before both you and me in the Lord and is established as the head even though he has removed himself to perfect his humility in solitude by imitating Christ. Through his directions and prayer I trust that you will be saved, if indeed on your part you show him attentive and ready obedience. Thereafter, elect someone by a common vote in a godly fashion and in the manner which the fathers have established, for my desire is to support whomever the community finds suitable.

But now, my father and brother, whoever you are, before God and his chosen angels I entrust all the community in Christ to you so that you may receive it. But, how should you accept? In what grand manner should you guide them? In what fashion should you guard them? As the lambs of Christ! As your own dear limbs! Cherish and respect them, loving each one of them with an equal measure of charity since each man cherishes the limbs of his body equally. Open your heart in sympathy, welcome them all in mercy. Nurse them, reform them, make them perfect in the Lord. Sharpen your understanding with prudence; rouse your will with courage; make your heart steadfast in faith and hope. Lead them forward in every good work. Defend them against spiritual enemies. Shield them, regulate them. Introduce them to the place of virtue. Distribute shares in the land of tranquility. Therefore, I give you these rules, which of necessity you ought to uphold.

• Rules for the superior •

[...]

2. You shall not possess anything of this world nor store up anything for yourself as your own, not even one piece of silver.

3. You shall not divide your soul and heart by attachments and cares other than for those whom God has entrusted to you and I have handed over, those who have become your spiritual sons and brothers. You shall not use the things of your monastery for those who were at one time yours according to the flesh—either for your relatives or friends or associates. [...] For you are not from those of the world so that you have to share with those of the world. [...]

4. You shall not possess a slave either for your own use or for your monastery or for the fields since man was created in the image of God. This institution has been allowed only to those in worldly life, just as marriage is. [...]

5. For necessary duties you shall not have an animal from among those of the female race, since you have renounced completely the female sex. You shall not have one either in the monastery or in the fields, as no one of our holy fathers did nor does nature herself allow it.

6. You shall not ride on horses or mules when not necessary; rather you shall travel by foot in imitation of Christ. If it should be necessary, however, let your beast of burden be a colt. [...]

7. You shall always be vigilant that all things in the community be held in common and be indivisible and that nothing be owned on the part of any individual, not even a needle. Your body and your soul, nothing else, should be divided up for all your spiritual children and brothers in the impartiality of love. [...]

9. You shall not dine with women other than your mother according to the flesh and your sister, whether these be women in religious life or lay persons. I do not permit this unless some pressure or necessity should require it, as the holy fathers warn.

10. You should not go out frequently or roam about unnecessarily, leaving your own flock. For it is desirable that you have time to spend with the flock and be able to save these sheep, endowed with reason, but most wily and given to straying.

11. You shall always be on your guard to teach catechism three times a week in the evening either by your own agency or through another of your children, since this is the salutary tradition of the fathers. [...]

15. You shall not have a friendship with a woman in religious life nor enter into a women's monastery. Nor shall you speak alone with a nun or a woman of the world unless necessity at some time compels you, and then with two persons from either party present, since one person is easily influenced, as they say.

16. You shall not open the door of the monastery for any woman at all to enter unless it is absolutely necessary. If you are able to meet discreetly,⁴ this opportunity should not be rejected.

4. *discreetly*—prudently; with sound judgement.

17. You shall not make for yourself a lodging or a secular house for your spiritual children in which there are women and go there frequently. Rather you shall choose to attend to your temporary and essential needs at the home of pious men.

18. You shall not have an adolescent disciple in your cell out of affection,⁵ but you shall be served by various brothers and by a person above suspicion.

19. You shall not possess very distinctive and expensive clothing besides the priestly vestments. Rather, you shall put on humble clothes and shoes in imitation of the fathers.

20. You shall not spend lavishly either for your own lifestyle or for the reception of guests. This will distract you, since it belongs to a life devoted to pleasure.

21. You shall not store up gold in your monastery, but you should share your abundance of whatever sort with those in need at the portal of your court as the holy fathers did. [...]

23. You shall not place the person of any other man, eminent and powerful according to the present age, ahead of that which benefits the community. Nor shall you shrink from laying down your life even to the point of bloodshed in guarding these godly laws and commands.

24. You shall not make or do anything according to your own opinion whether regarding a spiritual or a physical matter of any kind. First, you should not act without the advice and prayer of your lord and father;⁶ second, without the advice of those who are foremost in knowledge and prudence regarding the issue in question. For there is need of one adviser or perhaps two, three, or more, as the fathers have instructed us and as we have discussed in detail.

All these commands and whatever else you have received, you shall guard and observe, that you may do well and prosper in the Lord. Far be it from [me] to say or even think of the opposite.

• Rules for the brothers •

25. Now it is time for you, my children and brothers, to hear my most pitiful voice. Accept the lord your superior⁷ as you all selected him. It is not possible for anyone in any way to choose any other life

5. *You shall not have an adolescent disciple in your cell out of affection*—to guard against pedophilia.

6. *lord and father*—hegumen (abbot) of the monastery.

7. *superior*—abbot.

for himself other than that which is laid down. This is a bond of the Lord. Looking upon him with respect and honor, embrace him as my successor. Just as you did with me, so with him too observe the rule of obedience and do not think less of him because he has been recently appointed in the Lord. Nor should you expect anything more than the gifts that were given to him by the Holy Spirit. It is sufficient that he maintain that which was laid down by my humility. Love me, my children, and keep my commandments. Keep peace among yourselves, and marching in a heavenly fashion, preserve your angelic profession inviolate.

26. Hating the world, do not return to the works of the world. Having been loosed from the bonds of physical attachments, do not be bound again to the affections of the flesh. Having denied all pleasures and perishable things of the present life, do not depart from your struggle with obedience through negligence and become the sport of demons.

27. Stick to the race of obedience until the end so that you will “obtain the unfading crown of righteousness.” Led by humility, you should always deny your own will and pattern yourselves only after the judgments of your superior. If you keep in mind these things and if you should guard them to the end, you will be blessed. For the chorus of martyrs will receive you. Wearing crowns in the kingdom of Heaven, you will enjoy the eternal blessings.

• Epilogue •

So farewell now, my children. I set out on a journey with no return, a journey which all those of old have traveled and on which you will set out in a short while after carrying out the duties of life. I do not know, my brothers, where I am going or what judgment awaits me or which place will receive me. For I have not completed a single good work before God. Rather I am responsible for every sin. But still, I rejoice and am glad that I am going from the world to Heaven, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom, from temporary lodging to true abode, from strange and alien lands—for I am a sojourner and a stranger as all my fathers were—to my very own country. Still more boldly I will declare that I return to my master, to my Lord and my God whom my spirit has loved, whom I have acknowledged as Father, even if I have not served him as a Son. I have possessed him before all else, even if I have not served him as a noble slave. Raving, I have spoken these things, but I have said them for you so that you will take

heart and pray for my salvation. If I achieve it, see, I give you my word before the truth that I will not be silent, but shall boldly beseech my Lord and master for you all that you shall flourish, be saved, and multiply. I expect to see, receive, and embrace each and every one of you as you depart from the world. For I have such faith that, since you have observed his commands, his goodness just as he did here will also preserve you in the coming age for the same purpose: to sing the praises of his all-holy power. My children, remember my humble words. Keep the advice I have given in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom is glory and power forever and ever, Amen.

Being sixty-seven years old, our all-holy father and great confessor Theodore went to sleep in the month of November, the eleventh day, a Sunday, at the sixth hour, the fifth indication, the year 6335.⁸

8. 6335—826.

15.2 John Tzimiskes's Rules for Monastic Life (971–972)

John Tzimiskes, “Typikon of Emperor John Tzimiskes,” trans. George Dennis, in Thomas, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, 1: 235–242. Used by permission of Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University.

In the late 960s a bitter rivalry broke out between Athanasius the Athonite, responsible for establishing cenobitic monasticism on Mount Athos and for the construction of the Great Lavra, and monks already on the peninsula. Hermits and monks who lived on Mount Athos before Athanasius's arrival (he did not settle on the peninsula until 958) regarded him as an interloper whose cenobiticism threatened their solitary lives. Forced to leave Mount Athos, Athanasius settled in Cyprus, where he lived until a new emperor, John Tzimiskes, threw his support behind the Great Lavra, granting it a charter in 971. The following document is Emperor John's attempt to sort out the dispute on Mount Athos and alleviate the resultant ill will.

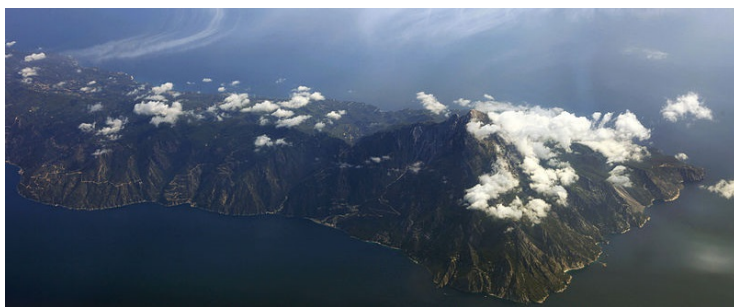


Figure 83. Mount Athos

The *typikon* reveals some intriguing aspects of early Athonite monasticism. Here we see just how confusing was the nascent monastic bureaucracy into which the emperor inserted himself. How should the heads of the various communities on the peninsula interact with each other? Make decisions? How could one keep monks in line while guarding against dictatorial abbots? How could one weed out monks or aspirants not fully

committed to the cause? Could hermitic and cenobitic forms of monasticism coexist? To what extent should one shield monks from worldly temptations? How best to protect privacy? Prevent exploitation? Keep everyone accountable?

The reverend monks of the renowned Mount Athos, Athanasius the reverend monk and *protos*⁹ of the mountain, and the reverend monk Paul, have presented themselves in the God-guarded city before our benevolent emperor. For some time now, they explained, certain problems and disputes had arisen between [monks] and the reverend monk Athanasius, superior of the imperial lavra¹⁰ called *Ta Melana*. The result was that several monks were injured and unjustly treated by him. They reported that they could find no way of solving the problem and no way of guaranteeing peace among them. Our mighty emperor, crowned by God, living by his laws and guarded by righteousness, places great importance on the monks, more than anyone else, being at peace and leading undisturbed and tranquil lives. He is, moreover, reluctant to have them brought before a secular tribunal, or to have their affairs investigated by civil officials and their charges against one another brought before the general public. Laymen, in addition, have no real understanding of monastic life. As the behavior of monks is different, so the charges are different. The charges that might be brought against them differ from the accusations and the judgments likely to be made against laymen. As a result, the emperor ordered our humble selves to betake ourselves to the place, and bring both sides together and listen attentively to the charges brought by them. We were then to concentrate on straightening out matters properly according to the dictates of the holy canons.

We did indeed betake ourselves there, and both parties in the dispute also presented themselves. All the superiors of the mountain sat together with us in council, while the entire assemblage of the brothers was also in attendance. For an entire week the dispute was aired and very thoroughly investigated. Once we succeeded in acquiring a deeply

9. *protos*—a monk elected by the governing body on Mount Athos to head a monastic community.

10. *lavra*—originally a community of hermitic monks who met on weekends in a central church, lavras later came to refer to larger monasteries on Mount Athos.

spiritual understanding of the matter, it was found that both parties were absolutely guiltless, strange as this may sound. The dispute that had arisen between them was recognized as having been caused by the activity of Satan. The result was that, by God's graceful assistance, they merited the reward of a profound and unshakable peace, with all points of controversy resolved.

While engaged in this, we discovered that several other matters stood in need of correction, and we did our best to rectify them carefully in accord with the holy canons. We also found that some other monks were quarreling and making accusations against one another. We arranged to bring them to a settlement and establish peace. Closer study of the situation revealed that it was the assemblies that provided the occasion for some problems, quarrels, and seeds of discord. [...] We, therefore, instruct them to observe these norms that have been approved by the prudent judgment of all the superiors on Mount Athos and which, I am sure, will be acknowledged as pleasing to God and acceptable to our virtuous emperor as befitting the ascetical life.

1. We have [...] determined that in case anything should occur that needs to be corrected, either in the community or individually regarding one of the brothers, no one of the superiors has permission to make direct inquiries about such a failing, or to correct it, or to censure or condemn the offender without the knowledge of the *protos*. On the other hand, without meeting with the superiors of the mountain, and without their consent and advice, the *protos* does not have authority to do anything with which they disagree, even if it should seem particularly beneficial to the common good or to some individual person.

2. Concerning monks who have been tonsured¹¹ in other monasteries, then left them and come to this venerable mountain and been deemed worthy of reception, we order and we desire that they should not have the authority to purchase fields or to take possession of unclaimed places on their own initiative and will. They are not to direct a *kellion*¹² without obtaining the approval and permission of the *protos* and the superiors.

3. All who come to you and promise to receive the monastic tonsure ought to be received by each one of the superiors. By no means

11. *tonsure*—shaving the hair in a cruciform pattern before a full initiation into monastic life. Tonsure symbolizes the loss of self-will.

12. *kellion*—a counselor and confessor to a monastic administrator.

should they be permitted outside the spiritual enclosure. They should not be tonsured right away, but should observe the ecclesiastical canon by devoting one year to being trained in the monastic way of life. They should give evidence that their resolve is firm and unshakable. When they show that such is the case, then the superior may judge that they be clothed in the monastic habit. But if someone comes out of urgency or for some other reason, for whom it is not possible to wait out the year, and he requests to be enrolled immediately, we should leave this to the judgment of the superior. We suggest that the same consideration be granted to someone who is anxious to be tonsured and be garbed with the monastic habit because of some infirmity, fearful that death may intervene, and he may depart this life before he completes the assigned time we have stipulated.

4. A layman who has come to one of the superiors and stays with him for six months or an entire year, but who becomes dissatisfied with the superior's direction for certain causes and has good reason to claim that he has not been helped by him, may give himself to another spiritual director, whomever he might select, provided that other persons testify that this new director is irreproachable and capable of helping souls. He should not be allowed to go off to [the new director] without the consent, knowledge, and blessing of the first director, but he must present himself to whomever he has chosen with the advice and knowledge of the former.

5. If a monk has cause to be dissatisfied by his association with his superior for certain reasons that could be harmful to his soul, even though he may have received the monastic habit from him, he can nonetheless find another superior and, with the knowledge, advice and permission of his previous father, present himself to him. We recommend that it should not be permitted for any superior to receive the disciple of another superior without that person's knowledge. But if anyone is detected making a captive of such a disciple, he should not be entrusted with the disciple. [...]

8. All those who withdraw from their own superiors and who do not choose to settle under the obedience of a father in accord with the *typikon* published by us, but who prefer to wander in a bold and undisciplined way around the whole mountain, and to offer their services for hire, these should be warned once, twice, and more often. If they refuse to obey the men giving them such salutary advice, they should, even though unwilling, be handed over to spiritual fathers.

9. In accord with the ancient decrees of the holy fathers, we insist and we sternly declare that no one is to be allowed to ridicule or publicly expose the thoughts and confessions of anyone. If a person should be caught doing this, no matter who he may be, let him be subject to the canonical punishments.

10. Those subjects who have sufficiently advanced in spirituality and asceticism by the practice of virtue, and whose superiors deem capable of stripping to enter the stadium of solitude, we too permit and agree that they may dwell apart by themselves to practice asceticism according to the pleasure and judgment of their superiors.

11. Regarding unknown priests coming here, we must insist that they do not have authority, either privately or publicly, to presume to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, unless they have an official letter from their bishops or some solid testimony in their favor.

12. We also make this recommendation. During the period of holy Lent, all the solitary ascetics and those living in community should spend the time in silence, and they should not visit one another except for a good reason, an emergency, or to seek treatment for evil and shameful thoughts. None of the superiors, moreover, should busy himself with any work during these holy days, except on Saturday, or anything else unless it is related to spiritual matters. In addition, you may not partake of fish at all on these holy days, except on the revered feast of the annunciation of the very holy Mother of God¹³ and in case of some infirmity. [...]

15. Since you clearly wanted instructions on what you have to do in this matter, by common consent we lay down this regulation concerning wine. We do not permit anyone to dare to sell wine to laymen from the Zygus River in toward the mountain. This allows outsiders to spend too much time with the monks and fill them with worldly corruption. [...]

16. We must strictly enjoin that boys, beardless youths, and eunuchs who journey to the mountain to be tonsured should not be received at all. But in case it cannot be avoided, and the situation becomes urgent, we order that nothing should be done, and nobody should be admitted or tonsured unless the *protos* and all the superiors of the mountain have investigated the case and freely consent. But if one of the superiors or *kelliotai* out of contempt for these stipulations

13. *the annunciation* ...—the angel Gabriel's announcement of the incarnation to Mary.

should introduce into his field or cell a eunuch or a child,¹⁴ and after being denounced for this once and then twice, and should give no evidence of changing his ways, then we consider it best simply to drive him away from the mountain. [...]

19. If a monk comes and agrees to work for one of the superiors for a year, but before the designated time is up neglects his duty and departs, let him be allowed to take the payment for his work with him. But if the superior acts wickedly and, after the monk had served him for a period of four or six months, he should try to harm the brother by chasing him away without pay, we order that he should receive the entire amount of his salary. But if the one who is wickedly depriving him should become obstinate and not pay the salary to the worker, he should be accused before the elders. [...]

24. Regarding firewood that has been cut on the mountain by the monks, we desire that it not be transported and sold outside, but that it be sold on the mountain. In an emergency, though, let it be sold to laymen.

25. Concerning construction workers who come here, it is our view that they should not bring boys¹⁵ along to work with them as assistants or apprentices. [...]

We are convinced that it is to the advantage of all the superiors and monks of the mountain to adhere to all the regulations laid down here and that nobody should dare attempt to overturn any of the chapters in this *typikon*. But, if anyone should be detected holding these matters in contempt that were regulated and decreed not merely by our own initiative and authority, but by the common intent of all, let him be subject to the penalties of the holy canons, inasmuch as he has trampled on his own conscience and become a source of scandal and very great harm to everyone. [...]

14. *introduce into his field or cell a eunuch or a child*—the goal here is to prevent homosexual or pedophilic relations.

15. *should not bring boys*—to avoid sexual temptation.

16. Grants to Religions Institutions

Large monasteries required large sums of money. Grants of land (and, in some cases, grants of entire villages) by pious laymen constituted an important source of income. Following are three such grants to Russian monasteries. These donations were not entirely altruistic: in the first two cases the respective donors expect the beneficiaries to pray for their souls in the afterlife.

16.1 Grant to the Monastery of the Holy Savior (1399)

“Grants to Religious Institutions, ca. 1399–ca. 1473” in *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1:121.



Figure 84. Monastery of the Holy Savior, Nizhny-Novgorod

[...] I, Sava Dmitrievich Siuzev, have given to the Monastery of the Holy Savior and the Holy Annunciation,¹ to Archimandrite² Malafei and his brethren, the abandoned land of my patrimony [...] with all the land wherever the plow and scythe have gone and with the wild beehives that are found on that wasteland between the Urga and Uronga and Mukhina rivers. And when God has called for my soul, let Archimandrite Malafei and his brethren pray for my soul and the souls of my parents, and hold a commemorative feast on Saint Sava’s Day, on 5 December. To this grant-deed I, Sava, have affixed my seal. [...]

1. *Monastery of the Holy Savior and the Holy Annunciation*—near Nizhny-Novgorod.

2. *Archimandrite*—a monastic priest.

16.2 Grant to the Trinity Monastery (ca. 1392–1427)

“Grants to Religious Institutions, ca. 1399–ca. 1473” in *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1:121.

I, Ivan Svatko, being in debt for the sum of ten rubles to my lord Abbot Nikon, give [to the monastery] for these ten rubles my abandoned land [...] with their forests and whatever else belongs to them. And when I die, may [the monks] remember my soul [in their prayers].

16.3 Grant to the Cathedral of the Mother of God (1448)

“Grants to Religious Institutions, ca. 1399–ca. 1473” in *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1:122.

By the grace of God and his most pure mother, and through the intercession of the holy miracle worker Peter, metropolitan of all Russia, I, Ignaty Vasilevich, have given to the Cathedral of the Holy Mother of God in Moscow and to the holy miracle worker Peter, metropolitan of all Russia, and to my lord Bishop Jonah, nominated to the most holy Russian metropolitan see, or whoever shall be metropolitan after him, my patrimonial estate, the village of Aksininskoe [...] with the Church of Saint Nikolai, and with the hamlets that formerly belonged to that village, wherever my plow has gone, wherever the scythe has gone, and wherever the axe has gone, and with the meadows and plowland, and forest, and everything that as of old belonged to it. And let my lord keep this village in possession of the Cathedral of the Most Pure Mother of God, and not sell it, or give it to anyone, or exchange it with anyone. And I have given this village to commemorate my parents and myself and all my family. [...]

16.4 An Immunity Charter to a Monastery (ca. 1432–1445)

“Grants to Religious Institutions, ca. 1399–ca. 1473” in *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, ed. George Vernadsky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 1:122-123.

Another financial windfall for a monastery was an “immunity charter,” a promise by a prince to exempt a monastery in his realm from taxes.

For the sake of the life-giving Trinity, I, Grand Prince Vasily Vasilevich, have bestowed my favor upon Abbot Zinovy and his brethren,³ or whoever shall be abbot after him: that in their village of Pritsetskoe there are three churches—Saint Savior, Saint Ilia, and Saint Nikola; and whoever shall sing [i.e., perform a service of worship] in those churches, [be he] abbot or priest or deacon, he need pay no tribute or taxes to me. And my tithe collectors [...] and their deputies shall take no subsistence payments from them, nor send out their bailiffs after them in any matter, nor take taxes from them; they need likewise pay no Christmas, Easter, or Saint Peter’s Day taxes, nor make payments to the tithe collectors when they are on tour, nor pay any other fees whatever. And if any person has litigation with the abbot or with a priest or deacon of those churches, then I, the grand prince, or my deputy boiar, shall try them. And if anyone disobey this, my charter, he shall be punished by me. [...]

3. *Abbot Zinovy and his brethren*—members of the Trinity Monastery of Saint Sergei, 145 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

17. Hesychasm

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

17.1 Simeon the New Theologian (949–1022) on God's Light

“Mystical Prayer of Our Father Saint Symeon” and “Hymn I,” in *Hymns of Divine Love*, trans. George A. Maloney, S.J. (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1976), 9–16. All attempts to reach the publisher failed.

Simeon the New Theologian (949–1022), who may have served as a Byzantine senator before taking monastic vows, would eventually claim that true Christianity was impossible without the Jesus Prayer.

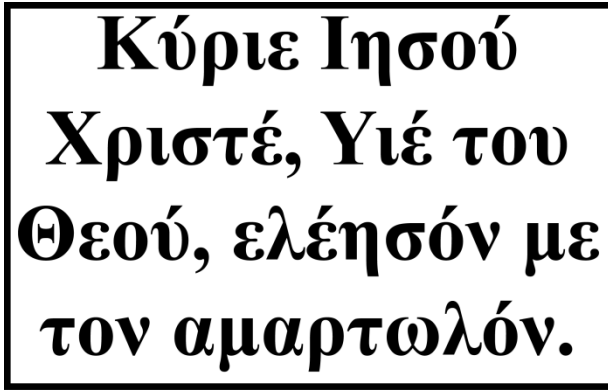


Figure 85. The Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Though he added little to the theology of hesychasm,¹ he wrote eloquently and passionately (like Evagrius) about Christians' need to repent, purge themselves through tears, and pursue the eternal light of God through prayer. Simeon found the Studite tradition to be overly focused on external discipline, and his writings initiated something of a mystical revival, particularly on Mount Athos, which became a center of hesychast practice and theory. Simeon served as abbot of the monastery of St. Mamas on Mount Athos.

1. *hesychasm*—inwardly focused prayer in the quest for intimate communion with God. See section “Hesychasm” in Part II of *Essential Texts*.

Note below Simeon’s admonition that Christians pursue “the light,” a pursuit that consumed all subsequent hesychasts and prompted them to eschew the pedestrian concerns of daily life. In seeking the light of God, Simeon believed he sought God’s energy itself—the same light the apostles witnessed during Christ’s transfiguration.²

An invocation introduces the first of Simeon’s many “hymns,” a series of metrical poems about the pursuit of God’s light. George Maloney, the translator of these texts, suggests that Simeon needed “the discipline of metrics to harness his ram-paging spirit, but in the process his rapturous love for God is intimately communicated and shared with the reader.”³



Figure 86. Mount Athos

2. *Christ’s transfiguration*—see Matthew 17:1–8: “Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!’ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Get up and do not be afraid.’ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.” (NRSV)

3. Maloney, *Hymns of Divine Love*, 8.

Invocation to the Holy Spirit, by the one who
already sees him

Come, true light. Come, eternal life. Come, hidden mystery. Come, nameless treasure. Come, ineffable reality. Come, inconceivable person. Come, endless bliss. Come, non-setting sun. Come, infallible expectation of all those who must be saved. Come, awakening of those who are asleep. Come, resurrection of the dead. Come, O powerful one, who always creates and recreates and transforms by your will alone. Come, O invisible and totally intangible and impalpable. Come, you who always remain motionless and at each moment move completely and come to us, asleep in Hell, O, you, above all the heavens. Come, O beloved name and repeated everywhere, but of whom it is absolutely forbidden for us to express the existence or to know the nature. Come, eternal joy. Come, non-tarnishing crown. Come, purple of the great king our God. Come, crystalline cincture,⁴ studded with precious stones. Come, inaccessible sandal. Come, royal purple. Come, truly sovereign right hand. Come, you whom my miserable soul has desired and desires. Come, you the lonely, to the lonely, since you see I am lonely. Come, you who have separated me from everything and made me solitary in this world. Come, you who have become yourself desire in me, who have made me desire you, you, the absolutely inaccessible one. Come, my breath and my life. Come, consolation of my poor soul. Come, my joy, my glory, my endless delight.

I give you thanks that you have become one spirit with me, without confusion, without mutation, without transformation, you the God above everything, and that you have become all for me, inexpressible and perfectly gratuitous nourishment, which without end inexhaustibly flows to the lips of my soul and gushes out into the fountain of my heart, dazzling garment that destroys the devils, purification that bathes me with these imperishable and holy tears, that your presence brings to those whom you visit. I give you thanks that for me you have become non-setting light, non-declining sun; for you who fill the universe with your glory have nowhere to hide yourself!

No, you have never hidden yourself from anyone but we are the ones who always hide from you, by refusing to go to you; but then

4. *cincture*—a decorative ring at the top or bottom of a column; may also refer to a halo.

where would you hide, you who nowhere find the place of your repose? Why would you hide, you who do not turn away from a single creature, who do not reject a single one? Today then, O master, come pitch your tent within me; until the end, make your home and live continually, inseparably, within me, your slave, O most kind one, that I also may find myself again in you, at my departure from this world, and after my departure may I reign with you, God who is above everything.

O master, stay and do not leave me alone, so that my enemies, arriving unexpectedly, they, who are always seeking to destroy my soul, may find you living within me, and that they may take flight, in defeat, powerless against me, seeing you, you more powerful than everything, installed interiorly in the home of my poor soul. Yes, master, just as you remembered me, when I was in the world and that in the midst of my ignorance, it is you who chose me and separated me from this world and set me before your glorious face, so, now, keep me interiorly by your dwelling within me, forever upright, resolute; that, by perpetually seeing you, I, the corpse, may live; that, by possessing you, I, the beggar, may always be rich, richer than kings; that, by eating you and by drinking you, by putting you on at each moment, I go from delight to delight in inexpressible blessings; for it is you who are all good and all glory and all delight, and it is to you, holy, consubstantial and vivifying Trinity, that the glory belongs, you whom all the faithful venerate, confess, adore and serve in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

• Hymn I •

On divine illumination and the light of the Holy Spirit; that God is the only place in which after death all the saints find repose; that he who falls away from God will not find repose in any other place in the life to come.

What is this tremendous mystery that is being fulfilled in me?

Neither the spoken word nor my poor written word
can praise and glorify the one

who transcends all praise, who transcends all speech.

If, in effect, that which is being fulfilled in me, the prodigal child,
is unutterable, inexpressible, how would the one who is the giver and
author of it,

how, tell me, would he need to receive praise or glory from us?

No, he who possesses glory cannot receive glory,

no more than this sun that we contemplate in the heavens

can be illumined or could reflect light.
 It gives light, it is not lit;
 it shines, it does not receive light for it possesses the light it received
 from the creator since the beginning of the world.
 If, then, by making the sun, God, the creator of everything,
 made it without any need, to lavish his light
 without expecting anything more from any other being,
 how would he receive glory from me, the weakest of creatures?
 For he, the creator of the sun, has no need, he who possesses all
 strength,
 who fills all creatures with all kinds of blessings,
 with a sign, with goodwill.
 Here, I am speechless, and my intellect knows
 what is being fulfilled but cannot explain it;
 it contemplates, it desires to express it
 but does not find any words;
 what it sees is invisible, completely destitute of form,
 without any composition, simple, infinite in greatness.
 In fact, it knows no beginning, never discovers any end
 and knows not any kind of center;
 how then will it express what it knows?
 In my opinion, it is the whole recapitulated that one sees
 not indeed by essence, but by participation.
 In reality, you light a fire with fire;
 it is the whole fire that you take,
 and yet the fire remains undivided without having lost anything
 even though the transmitted fire be separated from the first
 and distributed to many lamps, for it is a material fire.
 But this one is spiritual, indivisible,
 absolutely impossible to separate and to divide.
 Not a fire that is distributed and that produces many others,
 but it remains indivisible and is in me at the same time.
 It rises in me, within my poor heart;
 like the sun or like the solar disk,
 it shows itself spherical, luminous, yes, like a flame.
 I repeat, I do not know what I can say about it,
 and I would wish to be silent
 —if only I had been able to—
 but the tremendous marvel causes my heart to beat faster
 and opens my mouth, my tainted mouth,

and makes me speak and write in spite of myself.
You, who rose in a moment in my darkened heart,
you who descended even to me as to the last of all,
you who made me a disciple and son of an apostle,
whom the dreadful, man-killing dragon⁵ formerly held
as his worker and instrument of evil,
—you, the sun who, before all ages, shone in the depths of Hell
and who then enlightened my soul enveloped in darkness
and who has blessed me with the gift of endless light
—ah! how difficult this is for cowards and lazy people like me to be-
lieve!—
you, who lavished all blessings on my former misery,
give me a voice, provide me with words to tell to all your amazing
works
and what you still are doing in us, your servants, today,
so that those who slumber in the darkness of negligence
and who say: “Impossible for sinners to save themselves
and to find mercy, like Peter and the other holy, blessed and just apos-
tles,”
may they know and learn that that was easy, is still easy
and will always be so because of kindness such as yours.
And those who believe that they possess you, you, the light of the
whole world,
and who say that they do not see you, that they are not in the light,
that they are not enlightened, that they do not
contemplate you ceaselessly, O, Savior,
may they learn that you have not enlightened their minds
nor dwelt in their tarnished heart
and that they are wrong to rejoice over vain hopes,
imagining that they will see the light after death. [...]
Alas, what is not their blindness, what is not their ignorance,
what is not their misfortune and their vain hopes!
This is not written down anywhere, and neither will it be;
but those who will have lived according to your will
will be in the light of all that is good,
while the doers of evil will suffer in the chastening
darkness, and in the center there will be, as you yourself taught us,
you who have prepared all this,

5. *man-killing dragon*—Satan.

a frightful abyss separating one from the other.
 Yes, for the man who falls into the center, it will be worse
 than the most horrid torments, than the worst punishments;
 in an abyss of torments, in a pit of perdition
 the unhappy man will roll, will be dragged
 there where it is difficult to walk,
 for those who in torments would want to go to the land of the living
 but who would prefer to be reduced to ashes in the dreadful fire
 rather than throw themselves into this frightful pit. [...]
 You, O Christ, are the kingdom of Heaven;
 you, the land promised to the gentle;
 you the grazing lands of Paradise;
 you, the hall of the celestial banquet;
 you, the ineffable marriage chamber; you, the table set for all;
 you, the bread of life; you, the unheard-of drink;
 you, both the urn for the water and the life-giving water;
 you, moreover, the inextinguishable lamp for each one of the saints;
 you, the garment and the crown and the one who distributes the
 crowns;
 you, the joy and rest; you, the delight and glory;
 you, the gaiety; you, the mirth;
 and your grace, grace of the spirit of all sanctity, will shine like
 the sun in all the saints; and you, inaccessible sun, will shine in
 their midst, and all will shine brightly, to the degree of their faith,
 their asceticism, their hope and their love, their purification and
 their illumination by your spirit.
 O God, sole, long-enduring one and judge of all men.
 They will receive different dwellings and different places:
 their degree of radiance, their extent of love and the vision
 that they will have of you, the gauge of the greatness
 of their glory, of their happiness, of their reputation
 will distinguish their abodes, their marvelous dwellings. [...]
 For them, also, it is in the uprightness of the heart that you
 form your likeness, and that it is with your likeness
 that they dwell in you, O, my Christ,
 O, marvel, unbelievable gift of your goodness!
 that human beings can be in the “form of God,”
 and that in them is formed the one that nothing can contain,
 the God who is immovable, unchangeable by nature,
 who desires to live in all those who are worthy of this,

in such a way that each one entirely possesses in oneself the great king and also the kingdom and all the blessings of the kingdom, and he will shine more than the rays of the visible sun, just as my Lord shone in his resurrection, and, behold, the men, standing near the one who glorified them, will remain dumbfounded, by excess of the glory and the incessant increase of divine splendor; the progress in fact will be endless, in the course of the centuries, because the cessation of the growth toward this infinite end would be nothing else but the seizure of the unseizable and that the one who can satisfy no one would become the object of satiety; on the contrary, to be filled by him and to be glorified in his light will dig a bottomless progress and an unlimited beginning; in the same way as, while possessing Christ who was formed within them, they abide near the one who shines with an inaccessible light, so even in them the end becomes the beginning of glory, and—to explain my thought more clearly to you—they will have the beginning in the end, and the end in the beginning. I beg of you, consider that the one who is filled has need of nothing more, while the end of the infinite, no runner will ever attain. Indeed let this sky that we see with the earth and all it contains pass away, then reflect on what I have said; one will attain the place where one will find his fulfillment. I am not speaking of a material world, but spiritually you will be able to attain the fullness of the incorporeal world; it is not the world, but the air as it was before—not even the air, but this inexpressible receptacle that we call the All and who, on all sides, is an infinite abyss, equally all entire in every sense, on all sides; it is this All who is filled with the divinity of God. [...]

17.2 Thomas Aquinas on God’s Essence (ca. 1265–1274)

“The Summa Theologica,” in *An Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Modern Library, 1948), 70–72, 93–94. Reprinted by permission of Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. All rights reserved.



Figure 87. Carlo Crivelli, “Saint Thomas Aquinas,” 1400s, National Gallery

The next reading is from Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the Italian priest widely recognized as the most influential Roman Catholic theologian of all time. Aquinas’s work marks the zenith

of academic or “scholastic” theology, and it appears here to illustrate how fundamentally different were the principles of hesychasm from theological trends in the West.

These passages from Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*—his grand attempt to unite the logic of the Greek philosopher Aristotle with Christian theology—illustrate an approach to knowing God that favors the mind rather than the heart. Note in these passages not only the substance of Aquinas’s arguments (Aquinas has more faith than do Simeon and Palamas in the human intellect’s ability to reach conclusions about God’s nature) but also Aquinas’s style of argumentation: highly scholastic, rationalistic, and logical.

• Question XII: How God is known by us •

First article: Whether any created intellect can see the essence of god. [Aquinas argues “yes,” but begins by listing possible objections to his affirmative answer.]

Objection 1. It seems that no created intellect can see the essence of God. For Chrysostom, commenting on John 1:18 (“No man has seen God at any time”), says: “Not prophets only, but neither angels nor archangels have seen God. For how can a creature see what is uncreatable?” Dionysius also, speaking of God, says: “Neither is there sense, nor image, nor opinion, nor reason, nor knowledge of him.”

Objection 2. Further, everything infinite, as such, is unknown. But God is infinite, as was shown above. Therefore in himself he is unknown.

Objection 3. Further, the created intellect knows only existing things. For what falls first under the apprehension of the intellect is being. Now God is not something existing; but he is rather super-existence, as Dionysius says. Therefore God is not intelligible, but above all intellect.

Objection 4. Further, there must be some proportion between the knower and the known, since the known is the perfection of the knower. But no proportion exists between the created intellect and God, for there is an infinite distance between them. Therefore a created intellect cannot see the essence of God.

[Aquinas now answers these objections and makes his argument.] *On the contrary*, it is written: “We shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

I answer that, since everything is knowable according as it is actual, God, who is pure act without any admixture of potentiality, is in himself supremely knowable. But what is supremely knowable in itself may not be knowable to a particular intellect, because of the excess of the intelligible object above the intellect; as, for example, the sun, which is supremely visible, cannot be seen by the bat by reason of its excess of light.

Therefore, some who considered this held that no created intellect can see the essence of God. This opinion, however, is not tenable. For the ultimate beatitude of man consists in the use of his highest function, which is the operation of the intellect. Hence, if we suppose that a created intellect could never see God, it would either never attain to beatitude, or its beatitude would consist in something else besides God; which is opposed to faith. For the ultimate perfection of the rational creature is to be found in that which is the source of its being; since a thing is perfect so far as it attains to its source. Further, the same opinion is also against reason. For there resides in every man a natural desire to know the cause of any effect which he sees. Thence arises wonder in men. But if the intellect of the rational creature could not attain to the first cause of things, the natural desire would remain vain.

Hence it must be granted absolutely that the blessed see the essence of God.

Reply to objection 1. Both of these authorities speak of the vision of comprehension. Hence Dionysius premises immediately before the words cited, "He is universally to all incomprehensible," etc. Chrysostom, likewise, after the words quoted, says: "He says this of the most certain vision of the Father, which is such a perfect consideration and comprehension as the Father has of the Son."

Reply to objection 2. The infinity of matter not made perfect by form is unknown in itself, because all knowledge is through form; whereas the infinity of the form not limited by matter is in itself supremely known. God is infinite in this way, and not in the first way: as appears from what was said above.

Reply to objection 3. God is not said to be not existing as if he did not exist at all, but because he exists above all that exists, inasmuch as he is his own being. Hence it does not follow that he cannot be known at all, but that he transcends all knowledge; which means that he is not comprehended.

Reply to objection 4. Proportion is twofold. In one sense it means a certain relation of one quantity to another, according to which double,

treble and equal are species of proportion. In another sense, every relation of one thing to another is called proportion. And in this sense there can be a proportion of the creature to God, inasmuch as it is related to him as the effect to its cause, and as potentiality to act; and in this way a created intellect can be proportioned to know God. [...]

Twelfth Article: Whether God Can be Known in This Life by Natural Reason. [Aquinas answers “yes,” but first lists possible objections to his affirmative answer.]

Objection 1. It seems that by natural reason we cannot know God in this life. For Boethius⁶ says “Reason does not grasp a simple form.” But God is a supremely simple form, as was shown above. Therefore natural reason cannot attain to know him.

Objection 2. Further, the soul understands nothing by natural reason without an image. But we cannot have an image of God, who is incorporeal. Therefore we cannot know God by natural knowledge.

Objection 3. Further, the knowledge of natural reason belongs to both good and evil, inasmuch as they have a common nature. But the knowledge of God belongs only to the good; for Augustine says: “The eye of the human mind is not fixed on that excellent light unless purified by the justice of faith.” Therefore God cannot be known by natural reason.

[Aquinas now answers these objections and makes his argument.] *On the contrary*, it is written (Romans 1:19), “That which is known of God,” namely, what can be known of God by natural reason, “is manifest in them.”

I answer that our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our intellect cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because sensible creatures are effects of God which do not equal the power of God, their cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can his essence be seen. But because they are his effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God whether he exists, and to know of him what must necessarily belong to him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by him.

Hence, we know his relationship with creatures, that is, that he is the cause of all things; also that creatures differ from him, inasmuch as

6. *Boethius*—Anicius Manlius Severinus Boëthius (ca. 480-524/525), a Roman philosopher read widely during the Middle Ages.

he is not in any way part of what is caused by him; and that his effects are removed from him, not by reason of any defect on his part, but because he supersedes them all.

Reply to objection 1. Reason cannot reach a simple form, so as to know what it is; but it can know whether it is.

Reply to objection 2. God is known by natural knowledge through the images of his effects.

Reply to objection 3. Since the knowledge of God's essence is by grace, it belongs only to the good, but the knowledge of him by natural reason can belong to both good and bad; and hence Augustine says, retracting what he had said before: "I do not approve what I said in prayer, 'God who wills that only the pure should know truth.' For it can be answered that many who are not pure know many truths," that is, by natural reason.

18. Great Schism

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume: Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

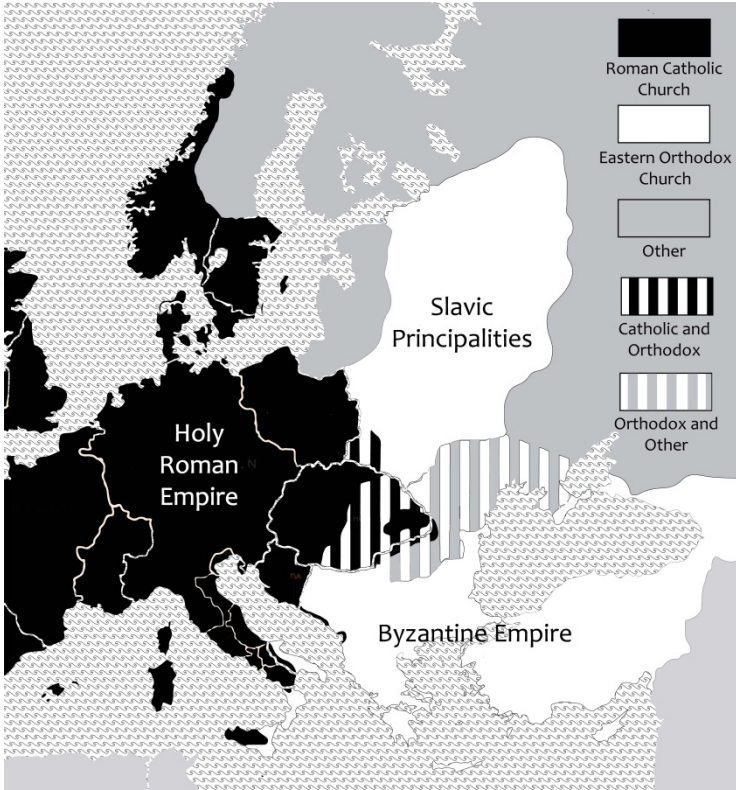


Figure 88. Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic lands, 1054

18.1 Filioque

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).



Figure 89. Doctrine of the filioque, altar of the St. Marcellin Chapel, Boulbon, France, ca. 1450. Note the Holy Spirit (dove) “proceeding” from the Father and the Son.

18.1.1 Maximus Confessor (ca. 580–662) Defends the *Filioque*

Maximus the Confessor, “Letter to Marinus—On the Filioque,” <http://www.monachos.net/content/patristics/patristictexts/185-maximus-to-marinus>. Fair use. Translation from J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 91:136.

It is important to emphasize again that opposition to the *filioque* mobilized slowly in the East. In fact Maximus Confessor, one of the most eastern of Eastern theologians, saw nothing wrong with the addition.

Below is a letter from Maximus referencing hubbub in Byzantium over a synodal letter from the Roman pope citing the *filioque*. Maximus sees no reason for such fuss. The *filioque* need not, he argues, suggest that the Son is the “cause” of the Holy Spirit, nor need it suggest that the Father is the “only cause.”

Still, he does concede that the addition has created some “obscurities,” and he hopes for additional clarity from Rome on what, exactly, the *filioque* implies.

[...] Those of the queen of cities¹ have attacked the synodal letter of the present very holy pope, not in the case of all the chapters that he has written in it, but only in the case of two of them. One relates to the theology [of the Trinity] and according to this, says “the Holy Spirit also has his *ekporeusis*”² “from the Son.”

The other deals with the divine incarnation. With regard to the first matter, [the Romans] have produced the unanimous evidence of the Latin fathers, and also of Cyril of Alexandria, from the study he made of the Gospel of St John. On the basis of these texts, they have shown that they have not made the Son the cause of the Spirit—they know in fact that the Father is the only cause of the Son and the Spirit, the one by begetting and the other by procession—but that they have

1. *queen of cities*—Constantinople.

2. *ekporeusis*—procession.

manifested the procession through him and have thus shown the unity and identity of the essence.

[The Romans] have therefore been accused of precisely those things of which it would be wrong to accuse them, whereas the [Byzantines] have been accused of those things it has been quite correct to accuse them [e.g., Monothelitism or the assertion that God has two natures but only one will].

In accordance with your request I have asked the Romans to translate what is peculiar to them (the “also from the Son”) in such a way that any obscurities that may result from it will be avoided. But since the practice of writing and sending [the synodal letters] has been observed, I wonder whether they will possibly agree to doing this. It is true, of course, that they cannot reproduce their idea in a language and in words that are foreign to them as they can in their mother tongue, just as we too cannot do.

18.2 Claims of the Roman See

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

18.2.2 Chrysostom (349–ca. 407) on the Bishop of Rome

“Chrysostom, *Homily on 2 Timothy 3.1*,” in *Documents Illustrating Papal Authority, A.D. 96–454*, ed. Edward Giles (London: SPCK, 1952), 162–163. Used by permission of SPCK Publishing.

John Chrysostom, a powerful and enormously popular bishop of Constantinople (whom we’ve already encountered), acknowledged the importance of Peter’s legacy.

[...] The apostles do not see their own affairs, but those of others, all together and each separately. *Peter, the leader of the choir, the mouth of all the apostles, the head of that tribe, the ruler of the whole world, the foundation of the church*, the ardent lover of Christ; for he says “Peter, loved you me more than these?” I speak his praises that you may learn that he loves Christ, for the care of the slaves³ is the greatest proof of love to the Lord. [...]

3. *the slaves*—followers of Christ.

18.2.3 Pope Gregory III (731–741) on Peter’s Successors

“The Emperor and the Church of Constantinople,” in *The Medieval Record: Sources of Medieval History*, ed. and trans. Alfred J. Andrea (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 114–116. Used by permission of the translator, A. J. Andrea.

Below, Pope Gregory III writes to the Byzantine Emperor Maurice to complain that the patriarch of Constantinople dares to call himself the “ecumenical” (universal) patriarch. Such a title, argues Gregory, can be applied only to the pope.



Figure 90. Coin, Pope Gregory III, 700s

Our most pious and God-appointed lord, who in addition to all the burdensome cares of empire provides with true spiritual zeal for the preservation of Christian peace among the clergy. He righteously and correctly knows that no person can exercise proper rule on earth unless he knows how to deal with divine matters, and he also knows that the peace of the state depends on the peace of the universal church. Indeed, most serene lord, what human power, what strength of muscular arm, would dare raise a sacrilegious hand against the eminence of your most Christian empire, if all its priests strove with one

mind, as they ought, to win the redeemer's favor for you by prayer and the merit of their lives? [...]

To all who know the Gospel, it is clear that the Lord verbally committed to the holy apostle, Peter, the prince of all the apostles, care of the entire church. [...] For to Peter it was said: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound also in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed also in Heaven." Behold, Peter received the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; the power to bind and loose is given him; the care of the entire church is committed to him, and yet he is not called the "universal apostle." Meanwhile, the most holy man, my fellow-priest John, attempts to be called universal bishop.⁴ I am compelled to cry out: "*O tempora, O mores!*"⁵

Behold. All the regions of Europe are in the hands of barbarians, cities are overthrown, fortresses uprooted, provinces depopulated, no tiller of the soil inhabits the land, idol worshippers rage and daily dominate—all to the slaughter of the faithful—and still priests, who ought to lie weeping on the ground and in ashes, seek for themselves names of vanity, and they take pride in new and profane titles.

Do I, most pious lord, defend my own cause? Am I resentful because of a wrong done me? No! It is the cause of Mother of God. It is the cause of the universal church. [...] In honor of Peter, prince of the apostles, [the title "ecumenical"] was offered by the venerable synod of Chalcedon to the bishop of Rome.⁶ But not one bishop of Rome has ever consented to use this unique title, lest, by giving something special to one priest, priests in general would be deprived of the honor due them. How is it, then, that we do not seek the glory of this title, even

4. *John ... universal bishop*—John IV, bishop of Constantinople (582–595). Gregory is upset that John employs the title "ecumenical patriarch." Gregory appears to assume, mistakenly, that "ecumenical" suggests jurisdiction over the entire church.

5. "*O tempora, O mores!*"—"O, this age and its customs!"

6. [*the title "ecumenical"*] was offered by the venerable synod of Chalcedon to the bishop of Rome—Gregory is not entirely correct. Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon acknowledged five major patriarchates—Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople—and stressed that the patriarchate of Constantinople enjoyed powers equal to those of the Roman patriarchate. Pope Leo I (440–461) objected to this canon and succeeded in removing it from the council's official records.

when it is offered, but another presumes to seize it for himself, even though it has not been offered? [...]

Behold. We all suffer offense in this matter. Let the author of the offense be brought back to the proper way of life, and all priestly quarrels will end. For my part, I am the servant of all priests, as long as they live in a manner that befits priests. But whoever, through the swelling of vainglory, lifts up his neck against God Almighty and against the laws of the church fathers, I trust such a man will not bend my neck to himself, not even with a sword.

18.2.4 Donation of Constantine (ca. 750–850)

Ernest Flagg Henderson, ed., *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*, (London: George Bell, 1910), 319–329. Public domain.

The *Donation of Constantine* is possibly the most famous forgery in history. For centuries—until the Italian scholar Lorenzo Valla debunked it in 1440—the *Donation* underlay territorial and jurisdictional claims by the papacy in the Italian peninsula. It allowed the papacy to insist that Constantine himself endorsed many of the papacy’s claims, including the papacy’s “supremacy” over the other Christian bishoprics.

The earliest version of the *Donation* appeared shortly after the mid-700s to assist Pope Stephen II in his negotiations with the future king of the Franks, Pepin the Short. Pope Stephen crossed the Alps to anoint Pepin king in 754, thereby enabling the Carolingian family (Pepin’s family) to supplant the old Merovingian royal line. In return, Pepin seems to have promised the pope lands in Italy (which the Lombards had taken from Byzantium), a promise he fulfilled in 756. “Constantine’s gift,” as described in the following forgery, made it possible to interpret Pepin’s grant not as a gift but as a restoration.

In the fictitious account below, we join the story as Constantine recounts his conversion to Christianity and the ministrations bestowed upon him by Silvester, bishop of Rome (314–335).



Figure 91. Lorenza Valla’s debunking of the Donation of Constantine, 1440

[...] Hereupon that same most blessed Silvester our father, bishop of the city of Rome, imposed upon us⁷ a time of penance—within our Lateran palace,⁸ in the chapel, in a hair garment—so that I might obtain pardon from our Lord God Jesus Christ, our Savior, by vigils, fasts, tears and prayers, for all things that had been impiously done and unjustly ordered by me. Then through the imposition of the hands of the clergy, I came to the bishop himself; and there, renouncing the pomp⁹ of Satan and his works, and all idols made by hands, of my own will before all the people I confessed that I believed in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary. And the font¹⁰ having been blessed, the wave of salvation purified me there with a triple immer-

7. *us*—Constantine.

8. *Lateran palace*—an ancient Roman palace that later became the pope’s residence.

9. *pomp*—ostentations displays.

10. *font*—baptismal font.

sion. For there I, being placed at the bottom of the font, saw with my own eyes a band from Heaven touching me; whence rising, clean, know that I was cleansed from all the squalor of leprosy.¹¹ [...]

And so, on the first day after receiving the mystery of the holy baptism, and after the cure of my body from the squalor of the leprosy, I recognized that there was no other God save the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; whom the most blessed Silvester the pope preaches; a Trinity in one, a unity in three. For all the gods of the nations, whom I have worshipped up to this time, are proved to be demons, works made by the hand of men; inasmuch as that same venerable father told to us most clearly how much power in Heaven and on earth he, our Savior, conferred on his apostle St. Peter, when finding him faithful after questioning him he said: “You are Peter, and upon this rock shall I build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” Give heed, you powerful, and incline the ear of your hearts to that which the good Lord and master added to his disciple, saying: “and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in Heaven.” This is very wonderful and glorious, to bind and loose on earth and to have it bound and loosed in Heaven.

And when, the blessed Silvester preaching them, I perceived these things, and learned that by the kindness of St. Peter himself I had been entirely restored to health: I together with all our satraps¹² and the whole senate and the nobles and all the Roman people, who are subject to the glory of our rule, considered it advisable that, as on earth he¹³ is seen to have been constituted vicar of the Son of God, so the pontiffs, who are the representatives of that same chief of the apostles, should obtain from us and our empire the power of a supremacy greater than the earthly clemency of our imperial serenity is seen to have had conceded to it, we choosing that same prince of the apostles, or his vicars, to be our constant intercessors with God. And, to the extent of our earthly imperial power, we decree that his holy Roman

11. *cleansed from all the squalor of leprosy*—there is no evidence that Constantine suffered from leprosy. The legend of Silvester’s cure probably dates from the late 400s.

12. *satraps*—governors in ancient Media and Persia. No such Roman officials existed.

13. *he*—Peter.

Church shall be honored with veneration; and that, more than our empire and earthly throne, the most sacred seat of St. Peter shall be gloriously exalted; we giving to it the imperial power, and dignity of glory, and vigor and honor.

And we ordain and decree that he shall have the supremacy as well over the four chief seats—Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople,¹⁴ and Jerusalem—as also over all the churches of God in the whole world. And he who for the time being shall be pontiff of that holy Roman Church shall be more exalted than, and chief over, all the priests of the whole world; and, according to his judgment, everything that is to be provided for the service of God or the stability of the faith of the Christians is to be administered. [...]

[...] [We] concede and, by this present, do confer, our imperial Lateran palace, which is preferred to, and ranks above, all the palaces in the whole world; then a diadem, that is, the crown of our head, and at the same time the tiara; and, also, the shoulder band, that is the collar that usually surrounds our imperial neck; and also the purple mantle and crimson tunic, and all the imperial raiment; and the same rank as those presiding over the imperial cavalry; conferring also the imperial scepters, and, at the same time, the spears and standards; also the banners and different imperial ornaments, and all the advantage of our high imperial position, and the glory of our power.

[...] And, in order that the pontifical glory may shine forth more fully, we decree this also: that the clergy of this same holy Roman Church may use saddle cloths of linen of the whitest color; namely that their horses may be adorned and so be ridden, and that, as our senate uses shoes with goats' hair, so they may be distinguished by gleaming linen; in order that, as the celestial beings, so the terrestrial may be adorned to the glory of God. [...]

Therefore we have perceived it to be fitting that our empire and the power of our kingdom should be transferred and changed to the regions of the East; and that, in the province of Byzantium, in a most fitting place, a city should be built in our name; and that our empire should there be established. For, where the supremacy of priests and the head of the Christian religion has been established by a heavenly ruler, it is not just that there an earthly ruler should have jurisdiction. [...]

14. *Constantinople*—Constantinople had not been founded by the date when Constantine purportedly composed his donation.

18.3 Charlemagne and the Pope Assert Themselves

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

18.3.1 Charlemagne on Iconoclasm (ca. 790)

“From the *Libri Carolini* on the Claim of the ‘Council’ of Nicaea to be Ecumenical,” “From the *Libri Carolini*: Formulation of the Frankish Doctrine of Image Worship,” and “From the Capitulary Issued by King Charles at Frankfurt on the Iconoclastic Question,” in Steward Easton and Helene Wieruszowski, *The Era of Charlemagne* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1961). All attempts to contact rightsholder failed.



Figure 92. Coin, Charlemagne, ca. 812-814

In 794 Charlemagne convened a church council of Frankish clergy plus two delegates dispatched by Pope Adrian I. The council insisted on Charlemagne’s right to insert himself into church affairs. It also represented an implicit challenge to the church in Constantinople, which Charlemagne did not invite to send delegates. Charlemagne used the occasion to take several swipes at the Byzantine church.

The three excerpts below come from the *Libri Carolini* (*The Carolingian Code*), four books that Charlemagne commissioned to refute decisions by the Second Council of Nicaea (787), particularly decisions endorsing the veneration of images. Charlemagne’s iconoclasm here is particularly bold, since papal legates to the Council of Nicaea had *approved* measures endorsing the veneration of images. It says much about relations between emperor and patriarch that Adrian, upon receiving the *Libri Carolini*

from Charlemagne, responded with profuse thanks, despite his legates' incompatible stance at Nicaea thirteen years earlier.

[...] To the claim [to be universal], the actions of the church [of Constantinople] form a marked contrast. For it attempted in a presumptuous and imprudent manner to excommunicate all the churches of the world before it had consulted them by letters and in accordance with ecclesiastical customs had asked for their opinion. It should have made an inquiry by delegates in all the churches of the adjacent provinces as to whether or not they wished to adore images. In this way [...] the church of Constantinople itself would have been bound to accept the decision of the majority of the churches according to apostolic regulations, and to condemn to abomination the church that would have attempted to oppose the institutions of old against the consent of the majority and to break away from the universal body of the church. [...]

[...] God alone we should worship, adore and glorify. Of him alone the prophet said that his name was exalted. We also owe veneration to his saints who defeated the devil and who are now reigning with him. Bravely they fought, to transmit to us unharmed the state of the church or, as we know, assisted the church constantly with their contributions and interventions. The worshipping and adoration of images, however, should be entirely abolished. The question whether or not the images were installed in memory of deeds or for decoration [of churches] does not affect in any way the catholic faith itself since images have hardly any function in the performance of the mystery that involves our salvation.

[...] The question [of image worship] that had been decided at the new Greek synod—that is, the one that dealt with the adoration of images and was later transferred to Constantinople—was also discussed at the synod [of Frankfurt].¹⁵ In [the decree of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787] the point had been made that those who did not worship or adore the images of the saints in the way they adored and worshipped the divine Trinity would be excommunicated. But our holy fathers altogether refused contemptuously the adoration of and the obsequy to images and condemned those who consented to it.

15. *synod [of Frankfurt]*—a synod convoked by Charlemagne in 794.

18.3.2 Notker on Charlemagne and Chant (883–884)

A.J. Grant, ed. and trans., *Early Lives of Charlemagne by Earnhardt and the Monk of St. Gall* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926), 72–75, 89–90, 112–115. Public domain.

Notker the Stammerer, a monk at the Abbey of St. Gall in what is now Switzerland, composed a collection of anecdotes about Charlemagne for Charlemagne's great-grandson. While the veracity of many anecdotes is in doubt, the general themes and emphases here accord well with Charlemagne's ideals and priorities.

The excerpt below concerns Charlemagne's efforts to standardize the competing modes of chant in the Western church. Such efforts reflect both his desire to bring order to the church and his insistence on his right to do so. The East, of course, found such unilateral action repugnant. This excerpt also includes an account of Charlemagne's coronation and the subsequent reaction by the "Greeks" (Byzantines)—portrayed here as greedy and ignorant yokels.



Figure 93. Charlemagne's throne, 790s, Aachen, Germany

[...] Well then, Charles, that never-wearied lover of the service of God, when he could congratulate himself that all possible progress had been made in the knowledge of letters, was grieved to observe how widely the different provinces—nay, not the provinces only but districts and cities—differed in the praise of God, that is to say in their method of chanting. He therefore asked of Pope Stephen of blessed memory—the same who [...] had anointed Charles to be ruler of the kingdom after the ancestral custom of the people—[...] that he should provide him with twelve clerks deeply learned in divine song. The pope yielded assent to his virtuous wish and his divinely inspired design and sent to him [...] from the apostolic see clerks skilled in divine song, and twelve in number, according to the number of the twelve apostles. [...]

Now when the aforementioned clerks were departing from Rome [to the land of the Franks], being, like all Greeks and Romans, torn with envy of the glory of the Franks, they took counsel among themselves, and determined so to vary their method of singing that [Charles's] kingdom and dominion should never have cause to rejoice in unity and agreement. So when they came to Charles they were received most honorably and dispatched to the chief places. And thereupon each in his allotted place began to chant as differently as possible, and to teach others to sing in like fashion, and in as false a manner as they could invent. But as the most cunning Charles celebrated one year the feast of the birth and coming of Christ at Trèves¹⁶ or Metz¹⁷ and most carefully and cleverly grasped and understood the style of the singing; and then the next year passed the same solemn season at Paris or Tours,¹⁸ but found that the singing was wholly different from what he had heard in the preceding year; as moreover he found that those whom he had sent into different places were also at variance with one another; he reported the whole matter to Pope Leo, of holy memory, who had succeeded Stephen. The pope summoned the clerks back to Rome and condemned them to exile or perpetual imprisonment, and then said to Charles: "If I send you others they will be blinded with the same malice as their predecessors and will not fail to cheat you. But I think I can satisfy your wishes in this way: Send me two of the clever-

16. *Trèves*—Trier in west-central Germany.

17. *Metz*—city in northeastern France.

18. *Tours*—city in west-central France.

est clerks that you have by you, in such a way that those who are with me may not know that they belong to you, and, with God's help, they shall attain to as perfect a knowledge of those things as you desire." So said, so done. Soon the pope sent them back excellently trained to Charles. One of them he kept at his own court: the other [...] he sent to [Charles's] cathedral. And not only did his energy show itself powerful in that city, but it soon spread so widely throughout all the land of the Franks, that now all in these regions who use the Latin tongue called the ecclesiastical chant *Metensian* [...] Charles established the chanting as it is today, with an authentic song-book, and gave most careful instructions [...]

As Charles stayed in Rome for a few days, the bishop of the apostolic see called together all who would come from the neighboring districts and then, in their presence and in the presence of all the knights of the unconquered Charles, he declared him to be emperor and defender of the Roman Church.¹⁹ Now Charles had no guess of what was coming;²⁰ and, though he could not refuse what seemed to have been divinely preordained for him, nevertheless he received his new title with no show of thankfulness. For first he thought that the Greeks would be fired by greater envy than ever and would plan some harm against the kingdom of the Franks; or at least would take greater precautions against a possible sudden attack of Charles to subdue their kingdom and add it to his own empire. And further the magnanimous Charles recalled how ambassadors from the king²¹ of Constantinople had come to him and had told him that their master wished to be his loyal friend; and that, if they became nearer neighbors, he had determined to treat him as his son and relieve the poverty of Charles from his resources: and how, upon hearing this, Charles was unable to contain any longer the fiery ardor of his heart and had exclaimed: "O, would that pool²² were not between us; for then we would either divide between us the wealth of the East, or we would hold it in common." [...]

19. *declared him* ...—the coronation occurred on Christmas Day of the year 800.

20. *Charles had no guess of what was coming*—patently false.

21. *king*—it is significant that Notker uses the illustrious term "emperor" for Charlemagne but the lesser "king" for the Byzantine emperor.

22. *pool*—probably a reference to the Aegean or Adriatic Sea.

[...] When it was announced that the envoys [from Constantinople] were coming they advised the most wise Charles to have them led round through mountains and deserts, so that they should only come into the emperor's presence when their clothes had been worn and wasted and their money was entirely spent.

This was done; and when at last they arrived, the bishop and his comrade bade the count of the stables to take his seat on a high throne in the midst of his underlings, so that it was impossible to believe him [to be] anyone lower than the emperor. When the envoys saw him they fell upon the ground and wanted to worship him. But they were prevented by the ministers and forced to go farther. Then they saw the count of the palace presiding over a gathering of the nobles and again they thought it was the emperor and flung themselves to earth. But those who were present drove them forward with blows and said: "That is not the emperor." Next they saw the master of the royal table surrounded by his noble band of servants; and again they fell to the ground thinking that it was the emperor. Driven thence they found the chamberlains of the emperor and their chief in council together; and then they did not doubt but that they were in the presence of the first of living men. But this man too denied that he was what they took him for; and yet he promised that he would use his influence with the nobles of the palace, so that if possible the envoys might come into the presence of the most august emperor. Then there came servants from the imperial presence to introduce them with full honors. [...] The emperor was clad in gems and gold and glittered like the sun at its rising; and round about him stood, as it were the chivalry of Heaven, three young men, his sons, who have since been made partners in the kingdom; his daughters and their mother decorated with wisdom and beauty as well as with pearls; leaders of the church, unsurpassed in dignity and virtue; abbots distinguished for their high birth and their sanctity; nobles, like Joshua when he appeared in the camp of Gilgal; and an army like that which drove back the Syrians and Assyrians out of Samaria. So that if David had been there he might well have sung: "Kings of the earth and all people; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord." Then the envoys of the Greeks were astonished; their spirit left them and their courage failed; speechless and lifeless they fell upon the ground. But the most kindly emperor raised them, and tried to cheer them with encouraging words. At last life returned to them. [...]

18.3.3 Pope Adrian I to Charlemagne on St. Peter (774)

“Caroline Code,” in *Charlemagne: Translated Sources*, ed. and trans. P. D. King (Lambrigg: P. D. King, 1987), 276–277. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

With just a few sentences, the letter below from Pope Adrian to Charlemagne reminds Charlemagne of the papacy’s importance to his past and future success.

To the most excellent lord son Charles, king of the Franks and the Lombards and patrician of the Romans, Adrian, pope. [...]

[I pray that] the great reward of your soul and stability of your God-protected kingdom would be presented to St. Peter, prince of the apostles, holder of the keys of the heavenly kingdom, that the said prince of the apostles may stand as your protector and helper before the power of the divine majesty for much longer yet.

For you have been most amply satisfied, most eminent of kings, as to how exceedingly powerful and efficacious a helper St. Peter, that doorkeeper of the heavenly kingdom, has been to your excellence and as to how, by his sacred intercessions, our Lord God Almighty has granted you victory and vouchsafed to deliver the kingdom of the Lombards to the dominion of your power. And be fully assured as regards the future that the Lord Almighty, compassed about by his intercessions, will prostrate other barbarian races beneath your royal feet. For we are totally convinced, having great confidence in the constancy of your heart, that you will swiftly fulfill everything you have promised to that same apostle and prince of the apostles. [...]

18.3.4 Pope Adrian I on Submission (774)

“Caroline Code,” in *Charlemagne: Translated Sources*, ed. and trans. P. D. King (Lambrigg: P. D. King, 1987), 277–278. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

Under siege by the Visigoths in the early 400s and unsure of Rome’s ability to withstand the assaults, Emperor Honorius moved the Roman capital from Rome to Ravenna, a city on the northeastern coast of the Italian peninsula. It was a shrewd move: Ravenna held while Rome was sacked. But after the Western Empire fell later that century, Ravenna became the seat of the Visigoth kingdom of Italy.



Figure 94. Ravenna

The Byzantine emperor Justinian (reign 527–565) dreamed of liberating the Italian peninsula from the Visigoths and reuniting the Eastern and Western Empires. To this end he invaded Italy in 535 and seized Ravenna five years later. Now controlled by the Byzantines, Ravenna became the seat of the Byzantine government in Italy—essentially the western outpost of the

Eastern Empire. Its bishops answered to the patriarch of Constantinople, and its governmental officials answered to the Byzantine emperor. Ravenna became an important center of art and culture: spectacular mosaics reflecting both Eastern and Western trends in religious art still exist in the city's churches.

In the early 700s the Lombards—a Germanic people who competed with the Franks for control of the Italian peninsula—seized Ravenna from the Byzantines. Charlemagne's father then seized Ravenna in 756 for the Franks, and granted control of the city to the papacy, a major addition to the papal states, which would survive until 1870.



Figure 95. Papal states, ca. 1700

The popes (as well as Charlemagne) viewed Ravenna as *their* territory, while the Easterners considered it a historic city of the Byzantine Empire.

The following letter from Pope Adrian to Charlemagne indicates the passion surrounding control of this pivotal city.

Word has reached us that the insolent and exceedingly arrogant Leo, [the Eastern] archbishop of the city of the Ravennans, has sent his *missi*²³ to your most excellent graciousness to oppose us by telling lies.

The truth is, great and most eminent king, [... that] Leo has stood forth as a rebel against St. Peter and our self, displaying a tyrannical and most shameless attitude. He sees fit to hold various cities in his power [...], declaring these cities to have been granted to him by your excellence. [...] [The citizens of these cities] have shown not the least inclination to humble themselves to [Leo], however, and have preferred not to abandon the service of St. Peter and our self; rather, indeed, they are known to remain firmly loyal in all respects to our apostolic commands, just as they were loyal under our predecessor, the Lord Pope Stephen,²⁴ to whom your father, of holy memory, and your own illustrious excellence together handed over that exarchate,²⁵ to remain permanently under the jurisdiction of St. Peter. And that execrable archbishop, holding the aforementioned cities [...] in his power, as has been said, has established functionaries of his own choice in those places and seen fit to expel our men, whom we appointed in them; moreover, he has also been controlling all the public offices within the city of the Ravennans.

Behold, great humiliation is known to have befallen your holy spiritual mother, the Roman Church, and we too are seen to stand in extreme disparagement and contempt since what, in the time of the Lombards, we held under our authority and were seen to order and govern, now, in yours, irreligious and perverse men, your foes and ours, seek to remove from our authority. Never did we expect this! And behold, we are taunted by numerous enemies of ours, who upbraid us, saying: “What profit has the crushing of the people of the Lombards and its subjection to the kingdom of the Franks brought you? Behold, not one of the promises that were made has so far been fulfilled [...]”

[It] is our desire, most excellent son, to have it under our authority, and to govern and order it, in just the same manner in our day as in that of the Lord Pope Stephen. [...]

May it not be your will, noble and most excellent son, that such contempt and humiliating degradation should befall God’s holy Ro-

23. *missi*—court officials.

24. *Lord Pope Stephen*—Pope Stephen IV (767–772).

25. *exarchate*—administrative district.

man Church, your spiritual mother, the head of all God's churches! I beg you rather, before Almighty God, that you see fit so to arrange matters, and deign so to deliver the archbishop under our authority, that we may govern the whole exarchate. [...]

18.4. Photian Schism

In 858 Emperor Michael III deposed the patriarch of Constantinople, Ignatios. The causes of Ignatios's downfall are complex and need not detain us here—it is sufficient to note that Ignatios landed on the wrong side of a dispute over how to deal with clergy who had cooperated in the past with iconoclasts. Michael chose a brilliant layman, Photios, to replace Ignatios.

Unfortunately for Emperor Michael, Ignatios did not go quietly. He appealed his demotion to Pope Nicholas I. Nicholas at first wanted no part in the squabble, but he was finally convinced in 863 to declare Photios's appointment illegitimate. (Nicholas's anger over Byzantine missions to the Bulgarians, who occupied territory he considered within Rome's sphere, helps explain his eventual decision to intervene.)

Once immersed in the spat, Nicholas did not confine himself to arguing with the Byzantines. In fact he escalated the controversy by writing to the Bulgarians to complain that Byzantine religious practices were heretical. Photios, who bore no love for a papacy that had declared his appointment illegitimate, responded by condemning Western practices, especially the *filioque*. He also declared that Nicholas had no right to be pope.

Unfortunately for Photios, Emperor Michael, who appointed him patriarch, died in 867. Michael's successor, Emperor Basil I, cared less about theological disputes than he did about Roman support for his battles against the Arabs. Basil thus decided to placate Pope Nicholas's successor, Adrian II, by deposing and exiling Photios and re-appointing Ignatios in 867.

When Ignatios died in 877, Photios returned from exile to the patriarchal throne and reconciled himself with the papacy. The reconciliation, however, came with several conditions: the Byzantines agreed to apologize, withdraw missions from Bul-

garia, and acknowledge Rome as bearing a primacy above that of Constantinople.

Although the fiasco ended with reconciliation, it also brought to the surface questions about theology and power that would simmer over the next centuries. The most contentious question was whether Rome possessed jurisdiction over churches in the East. Nicholas's condemnation of Photios as illegitimate suggested that it did. And although Photios made significant concessions to Rome, he and his predecessors found the concessions humiliating; the resolution of this controversy did not resolve the deep suspicions that prompted the controversy in the first place.

18.4.1 Pope Nicholas I on Papal Jurisdiction (865 or 866)

Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 204. Used by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

The following text is from the letter of Pope Nicholas I to the Byzantine Emperor Michael III. This epistle stresses the most fundamental question dividing the two churches: papal primacy and jurisdiction.

But if you seek to learn from us, as from ministers of Christ and dispensers of his mysteries, we shall show you quite clearly. But if you truly consider it unimportant to learn and you lift up your steps against the privileges of the Roman Church, beware lest they be turned against you. Indeed, it is hard for you to struggle against the flow of a river and hard to kick against the bricks. Then if you do not hear us, let it be so [...], especially since the privileges of the Roman Church of Christ, made firm in the mouth of the blessed Peter, deposited in the church itself, observed from antiquity and celebrated by the holy ecumenical synods, perpetually venerated by all churches, in no way may be diminished, in no way infringed upon, in no way altered, since the basis that God established no human should dare to move, and that which God has established remains firm and valid. [...]

These privileges of this holy church—given by Christ, not by synods, privileges both celebrated and venerated, which have brought us not so much honor as burden, although we have obtained this honor not through our merits but by command of the grace of God through the blessed Peter and in the blessed Peter—oblige and compel us to have solicitude for all the churches of God. For the company of the blessed Apostle Paul was added to that of the blessed Peter. These, like two great lights of Heaven, having been divinely placed in the Roman Church, have illuminated magnificently the whole world by the splendor of their brightness. Like the reddening sun, they give luster from themselves as well as through their disciples, as if they were shining rays of light. Through their presence, the West has been made [the equal] of the East. [...] These things, then, I say compel [me] to aid

Ignatios, the patriarch,²⁶ as a brother who has been deposed by no rule or ecclesiastical order. For among other things, he [Peter] through whom all these privileges are given to us, heard from God: “Whenever you are able ... help your brother.”

These divinely inspired privileges have mandated that—because Photios, with Ignatios still alive, not through the [proper] entry but from another place ascended to the Lord’s flocks, overthrew the shepherd, and dispersed our sheep—he must move away from the position that he has usurped and from the communion of Christians. And since we consider nothing about the person of Ignatios or of Photios more discreet, mild, or useful than that each should come to an investigation to be renewed in Rome, we desire this greatly and we admonish for your own good that you assent.

26. *Ignatios, the patriarch*—Patriarch Ignatios of Constantinople (847-858), whom Emperor Michael III deposed in favor of Photios; see section 18.4, “Photian Schism.” Here Pope Nicholas I attacks Michael’s decision and demands a review by Rome.

18.5 Anathemas of 1054

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

18.5.1 Michael Cerularius on Unleavened Bread (1054)

Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 207. Used by permission of The University of Chicago Press.



Figure 96. “Prosphore,” bread baked with yeast according to the Eastern rite

Following is the letter that Patriarch Michael Cerularius ordered sent to Western bishops.

God’s great love and the depth of his compassion has persuaded me to write to your sanctity, and through you to all the archbishops of the Franks and to the most venerable pope himself, in order to mention the question of the *azyma*²⁷ and of the Sabbath, in which [practices] you improperly commune with the Jews in the manner of the Mosaic law. For those the Jews were instructed by Moses to observe the

27. *azyma*—unleavened bread.

Sabbath and [the practice of] the *azyma*. But Christ is our paschal [Lamb], who, so as not to be considered pagan, was circumcised and at first celebrated the lawful Passover, and after ceasing [to observe] that, inaugurated a new practice for us. [...]

But since this [Jewish] law has ceased, the *azyma*, of necessity [...] also ceased. And the same thing occurred in connection with the paralytic whom [Jesus] made whole on the Sabbath, and because of this [i.e., Jesus's non-observance of the Jewish Sabbath], the ones who keep the Sabbath and also the *azyma*, saying that they are Christians, are neither good Jews nor good Christians. Rather, they are similar to the skin of a leopard, as Basil the Great tells us, of which the hair was neither black nor wholly white. [...]

These things, O man of God, you, knowing many times over and having taught them thus to your own people, and having written them, now order these things to be changed among those who follow the same practice, so you may gain the salvation of your own soul. Also send to the archbishops and bishops of the [episcopal] thrones of Italy, and have them take an oath that they will change these things in order that you may have the greatest reward both in these matters as in other good things of yours. And if you do this I will write to you, in a second letter, of greater and more extensive matters as further evidence of the true and divine faith and glory of God and the salvation of those choosing to believe correctly in the orthodox manner, for whom Christ gave his own soul.

18.6 Fourth Crusade

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).



Figure 97. Miniature, conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders, 1400s

18.6.1 Crusade through Western Eyes (1203–1204)

“Registers of Innocent III,” in *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, ed. and trans. Alfred J. Andrea (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 63, 80–84, 100–109. Used by permission of Brill.



Figure 98. Geoffreoy de Villenhardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ca. 1330

The following letters offer gripping accounts of the crusaders’ attacks on Constantinople. The source is a biography of Pope Innocent III, written by an unknown member of the papal curia.²⁸ The biography includes several letters from those who participated in the battle. This excerpt reprints correspondence between the crusaders and the pope, in which the pope warns the crusaders against military escapades outside the Holy Land and the crusaders try to justify their actions in Constantinople.

Pope Innocent sent the following dispatch to crusaders ca. 21 April 1203.

[...] [W]e²⁹ warn, and exhort more attentively, and enjoin your nobility, instructing you through this apostolic letter, that you not deceive yourselves or allow yourselves to be deceived by others so that under the guise of piety you do those things (may it not be so!) that redound to the destruction of your souls, but rather putting aside

28. *papal curia*—the pope’s chief administrative body.

29. *We*—Innocent refers to himself with plural pronouns.

worthless opportunities and pretended crises, you sail across in aid of the Holy Land and avenge the injury done to the cross [...] Moreover, we want you to keep in mind the terms of our prohibition: Under threat of excommunication we have forbidden you to attempt to invade or violate the lands of Christians unless either they wickedly impede your journey or another just and necessary cause should, perhaps, arise that would empower you to act otherwise according to our legate's proffered advice. And we warn you not to contravene this prohibition lightly. [...]

Nevertheless, the crusaders sailed from Zara for Constantinople, from where they sent a number of communiqués to Pope Innocent, including the letter immediately below (ca. 25 August 1203).

How much the Lord has done for us—on the contrary, not for us but for his name—how much glory he has bestowed in these days, we will briefly narrate as much as we can. We first note in this introduction that, following the time of our departure from that city of transgression (for so we call Zara, whose ruin we viewed with sorrow, but we were driven by necessity), we cannot remember anything in our company that commonly related to the army's advantage being in proper order. Yet Divine Providence changed the situation for the better and, taking everything upon itself, it turned our wisdom to foolishness. [...] The Treaty of Zara was established with Alexius [IV], son of Isaac the former illustrious emperor of Constantinople ... [P]ersuaded by believable rumors and arguments that the stronger city faction (and the bulk of the empire) longed for the arrival at the royal court of the aforementioned Alexius [IV], whom it had elevated to the imperial crown with due solemnity following a harmonious election, we fortunately (above and beyond all our hopes) arrived at the royal city³⁰ in a brief span of time, for contrary to the usual temper of the season, with a favorable breeze blowing, the winds and sea obeyed the Lord. But we had not arrived unexpectedly. We discovered in the city up to 60,000 knights, in addition to infantry. Rushing across the most secure points, bridges, towers, and rivers without loss to our men, we besieged by land and sea both the city and the tyrant [the current emperor Alexius III] who, by committing parricide against a brother, had

30. *royal city*—Constantinople.

polluted the imperial high office, which he illegitimately held for so long.

Therefore, contrary to the opinion of all, we discovered the minds of all the citizens firmly set against us and, likewise, the city closed off to its lord by walls and war machines, as though an infidel people, who proposed to despoil the sacred places and inexorably eradicate the Christian religion, had drawn near. So, indeed, the exceedingly cruel usurper of his lord's throne and the bereaver and betrayer of an imperial brother,³¹ who had condemned the same man to perpetual incarceration, despite the absence of a crime, this very man who would have done likewise to Alexius [IV], the son of this illustrious man (if fortunate exile had not snatched him from his hands), having beforehand called an abominable meeting with the people, infected both the aristocrats and the plebs with venomous harangues to the point that he asserted the Latins had come to destroy their ancient liberty, and they were hastening to return the place and its people to the Roman pontiff and to subjugate the empire to the laws of the Latins. [...]

[T]ime and again we requested through our messengers, indeed, through this man, our exile, and through our barons to be heard out by the citizens, but we did not have the opportunity to explain the reason for our coming or the nature of our quest. Rather, as often as we, from land and sea, offered speeches to those stationed on the wall, just as often we received missiles in the place of words. We realized, therefore, that everything had turned out contrary to our hope. Thrust into this state of necessity to the point that we faced the immediate necessity of either perishing or conquering because, constrained by an incredible scarcity of all foodstuffs, we could not reasonably extend this siege for fifteen days, we began, not out of desperation but out of a certain inspired sense of security from Heaven, to long most readily for battle, to boldly expose ourselves to dangers, and incredibly to prevail in everything. Furthermore, often when we were drawn up for battle on the field, we confined an inestimable multitude in the city, who ignominiously turned tail.

Meanwhile, with war machines set in place on land and sea, the city was forcibly entered on the eighth day of the siege. A fire broke out. The emperor³² stationed his forces against us on the plain, and

31. ... *betrayer of an imperial brother*—all these defamatory terms refer to Alexius III.

32. *The emperor*—Alexius III.

we were prepared to intercept those who were advancing. Astounded at our steadfastness (given our small number), he ignominiously turns his reins and retreats into the burning city. That very night he takes flight with a few followers and abandons his wife and infant daughter. Unknown to us, upon discovering this fact, the Greek nobles assemble in the palace and the solemn election of our exile is celebrated (or rather his restoration is announced), and large numbers of torches in the palace give witness to unexpected joy. With the coming of morning, a large number of Greek nobles come to the camp and joyously seek out the one whom they had elected.³³ They claim that liberty has been restored to the city. With unmeasurable joy, they tell the son,³⁴ who is returning to the high imperial office, that the person of his father Isaac, the former emperor, has been released from jail. And so, after having arranged ahead of time those things that were perceived to be necessary, the new emperor³⁵ is led in solemn procession to the Church of Sancta Sophia, and the imperial crown, with its fullness of power, is restored to our exile, without any dissent. Once these matters are completed, the emperor hastens to fulfill his promises, and he augments promises with deeds. He offers all of us a year's supply of food for use in the Lord's service. He proceeds to pay us 200,000 marks and, at his own expense, he extends for a year the [contract for] the fleet with the Venetians, and he binds himself by oath to raise the royal standard with us and to embark with us in March on a voyage in the Lord's service with as many thousands of troops as he can muster. He also includes under the same vow to exhibit the same reference toward the Roman pontiff that his predecessors, the [Roman] Catholic emperors, are known to have accorded his pontifical predecessors in former times, and to move the Eastern church to this same position, with all his might. And for his entire life he will honorably provide fifty knights with their expenses for service to the Redeemer³⁶ in the Holy Land.

Alexius IV ruled from August 1203 until January 1204, squabbling with the crusaders and Greek citizens alike for much of his short reign. Greek opponents in Constantinople overthrew

33. *the one whom they had elected*—Alexius IV.

34. *the son*—Alexius IV.

35. *new emperor*—Alexius IV.

36. *the Redeemer*—Christ.

Alexius the night of January 27th. The new emperor, styling himself Alexius V, imprisoned Alexius IV, ordered that Alexius IV be strangled, and then refused to honor the contracts the now-dead Alexius IV had struck with the crusaders.

Furious, the crusaders attacked the city on 8 April and were repulsed. They attacked again on 12 April, overran the city, and spent three days sacking it. They sent the following letter to Pope Innocent sometime after 16 May 1204. As Alfred Andrea notes, the crusaders fail to mention in this letter the “rape, murder, the sacrilegious looting of churches, and other similar crimes” that Eastern sources chronicle.³⁷

[...] And now we briefly pick up the story of those events that later took place around us, after first noting that, just as these were not the deeds of humans but of God that we meted out to the Greeks, so they were the deeds not of humans but of demons that Greece, with a new Greek emperor [Alexius V] and with its usual perfidy in all matters, rendered unto us. Indeed, lest a foreign setting different from our way of life provide fuel to the discord between us and the Greeks, we left the city at the request of the emperor and set up camp across the harbor from the city. But, with an unexpected turn of mind, either out of innate malice or else seduced by the treachery of the Greeks, he abandons us—he upon whom we had conferred so many benefits. The emperor, a perjurer and liar in regard to all of the promises that he made to us (along with his father, the patriarch, and the majority of the nobility), incurs perjury for each and every oath he swore to us. Whereupon now forsaking our aid, he vainly contemplates doing battle against us and seeks to burn the fleet that had led and raised him to the throne, but with God defending us, he is denied his very cruel desire. His situation deteriorates in every respect, and slaughter, conflagration, and rapine are visited upon his people. With conflicts looming outside, [Alexius IV] is inwardly seized with fears that, with the Greeks seizing this opportunity to prepare a rival emperor against him,³⁸ he will have no recourse to our aid.

37. Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, 99.

38. *rival emperor against him*—on 25 January a large crowd in Constantinople seized the church of Hagia Sophia and demanded the election of a new emperor.

And so, with his sole hope of escape resting on us, he sends to our army a certain man named Marchufus, who is sworn to him and related by blood, whom he trusted above all others because of the favors bestowed upon him. By his own oath and that of the emperor, this man promises us the Blachernae Palace³⁹ as security until everything promised us is delivered. The noble marquis⁴⁰ goes to take possession of the palace; Alexius [IV] mocks the marquis, and scorning those things he had already given us in surety, he does not shrink from his usual perjuries.

On the following night, Marchufus, perjurious to his lord and us, discloses to the Greeks the secret plan for handing over the palace to us, and he declares that from this time forth their liberty will be snatched away from them forever, and this will happen in every respect, unless Alexius [IV] is overthrown. By virtue of this betrayal, a third emperor is elevated in the city. He applies sacrilegious hands on a sleeping lord, who is ignorant of the turn of events, and shuts him up in a foul prison. He incarcerates also a certain Nicholas, the third “emperor,” who had recently usurped the imperial tokens of office at Sancta Sophia and who was handed over to him by the treachery of the Greeks, who had created him [emperor]. Shortly thereafter [Alexius IV’s father] Isaac died. According to rumor, it was he who had turned his son’s sentiments away from us prior to all of this. With the Greek clergy and people crying out that we be wiped off the face of the earth in short order and with the Greeks thirsting for so much of our blood, the aforementioned traitor renews the war against us. He fortifies the city with machines and ramparts, whose like no one has ever seen.

The wall in general is incredibly thick and constructed with small stones and mortar of long-lasting strength and durability. Rising to a great height, it has massive towers about fifty feet apart, more or less. Between each pair in the direction of the sea, where our attack was feared, a wooden tower was erected in three or four places above the wall, each containing a multitude of armed men. Notwithstanding all of this, either a *petrary*⁴¹ or *mangonel*⁴² was set up between each pair of towers. Moreover, wooden towers to the height of six stories were

39. *Blachernae Palace*—the imperial residence.

40. *noble marquis*—marquis of Montferrat, the leader of the crusaders.

41. *petrary*—a siege engine used to hurl rocks over and against the walls of fortified cities.

42. *mangonel*—a catapult with a relatively low trajectory.

raised above the existing towers, and atop the highest story platforms were extended out against us, containing on each side ramparts and bulwarks, with the tops of the platforms at a height slightly less than a bow could shoot an arrow from the ground. A lower wall also enclosed this wall, as well as a double ditch, to prevent any siege machines, under which sappers⁴³ could take cover, from being drawn up to the walls. Meanwhile, the perfidious emperor tests us on land and sea, with the Lord always protecting us and frustrating his attempts. With our men roaming far afield to forage food, the emperor attacked up to one-thousand warriors with a substantial host, and in the initial clash his force was totally routed, and not just a few were killed or captured without loss to us. Thinking it wise to take ignoble flight, he threw away his shield, dropped his arms, and abandoned the imperial standard to us, as well as a noble icon, which he had borne before him. This our victorious men donated to the Cistercian Order.⁴⁴

For a second time he attacks our fleet with fire, and in the silent dead of night, with the south wind blowing strongly, he launches against our vessels sixteen of his fire ships, with sails unfurled aloft and bound together below at the prow. But through the Lord's intervention, along with the great work of our men, we kept them unharmed. The burning ships are grappled with hooks, fastened with chains, and dragged out to sea by our oarsmen, and we are freed by the Lord from the imminent threat of death. We, therefore, challenge him to fight on land. Having crossed a bridge and stream that separated our army from the Greeks, we drew up ranks and stood for a long while before the gate of the royal city and the imperial palace that is called "Blachernae." [...]

So, with winter completely over for us and after our ships have been outfitted with flying bridges and our war machines have been readied, we and our weapons return to the ships on the fourth day before the Ides of April,⁴⁵ that is the Friday before Passion Sunday. With one mind, we attack the city in a naval assault for the honor of the Holy Roman Church and for the relief of the Holy Land, and on that day we suffered much, although without much bloodshed on our part, so that we retreated in shame from our enemies, a portion of whom on that day proved superior in all matters. We were even forced

43. *sappers*—troops who dug under siege walls to demolish them.

44. *Cistercian Order*—a Roman Catholic order of monks.

45. *Ides of April*—9 April 2014.

by the Greeks to abandon our war machines that we had hauled onto the beach, and we were forced to retire to the opposite shore with the affair in ruins. On that day, so it seemed, we were fatigued to the point of impotence. We were greatly disturbed and terrified, therefore, but in the end, strengthened in the Lord and having resolved matters in council, we are refreshed for a return to combat. On the fourth day, the day before the Ides of April, that is the Monday after Passion Sunday, with the north wind blowing, we are transported back to the walls.

Through the great effort of our men, the flying bridges of the ships are brought to bear on the tower platforms in the face of tremendous Greek resistance. But because they felt our swords in close combat, the fortunes of war were uncertain for but a short while. Indeed, two ships called Paradise and Lady Pilgrim, which were lashed together and bore our bishops, namely those of Soissons and Troyes, were the first to reach the tower platforms with their own flying bridges, and, with an auspicious omen, they carried pilgrims fighting for Paradise to the enemy. The banners of the bishops are the first to gain the walls, and the first victory is granted by Heaven to ministers of the heavenly mysteries. Therefore, with our men pouring out, at the Lord's bidding a vast multitude gives way to very few, and with the Greeks abandoning their ramparts, our men bravely open the gates to the soldiers. Upon seeing their entry, the emperor, who stood at arms in his tent encampment not far from the walls, immediately abandons his tents and flees. Our men are occupied with killing; a populous city is captured; those fleeing our swords find refuge in the imperial palaces, and having killed many Greeks, our men reassemble, with twilight now approaching. Exhausted, they lay down their arms and discuss assaulting the palaces the following day. The emperor gathers together his forces and encourages them to do battle the next day, claiming that he now has our men in his power, encircled within a walled enclosure. But in the night he secretly turns tail, defeated. When this was discovered, the bewildered Greek populace sets about replacing the emperor. While they proceed in the morning to nominate a certain Constantine, our foot soldiers, not expecting a deliberation among the masses, rush to arms, and the fleeing Greeks abandon the strongest and best fortified palaces, and the entire city is taken in an instant.

An innumerable amount of horses, gold, silver, costly silk tapes-tries, gems, and all those things that people judge to be riches is plundered. Such an inestimable abundance is discovered that the entire Latin world does not seem to possess as much. So those who totally

denied us small things have relinquished everything to us by divine judgment. Thus, we might safely say that no history could ever relate marvels greater than these so far as the fortunes of wars are concerned. [...] This was done by the Lord, and it is a miracle above all miracles in our eyes. Once we had scrupulously taken care of those matters that the turn of events demanded be set in order, we unanimously and faithfully proceeded to the election of an emperor and, with all partisanship put aside, we set in place as electors of our emperor (under the Lord's direction) the reverend men, our bishops of Soissons, Halberstadt, and Troyes, and the lord bishop of Bethlehem, who had been dispatched to us by apostolic authority from the lands across the sea, the bishop elect of Acre, and the abbot of Lucedio, along with six Venetian barons. [...]

This is the city that, out of hatred for the apostolic dignity,⁴⁶ could scarcely bear to hear the name of the prince of the apostles⁴⁷ and which conceded not one Greek church to him who received from the Lord himself dominion over all churches. This is the city that had forgotten to honor Christ in paintings of and by themselves⁴⁸ and, among the execrable rites that it had devised for itself in contempt for the authority of scripture, it even quite often presumed to diminish salvific baptism by repeating it.⁴⁹ This is the city that deemed all Latins worthy of being called not humans but dogs, the shedding of whose blood they almost reckoned among the works of merit, and lay monks,⁵⁰ who in contempt of priests possessed all authority to bind and loose, did not punish it with any penance that involved making amends. Once their sins had been made complete—sins that provoked the Lord himself *ad nauseam*, divine justice, through our ministry and with fitting vengeance, punished such absurdities as cannot be explained within the limitations of a letter, and with the expulsion of

46. *hatred for the Apostolic dignity*—hatred for the claims of the Roman papacy.

47. *prince of the apostles*—the pope.

48. *forgotten to honor Christ in paintings of and by themselves*—a swipe at iconoclastic, Byzantine emperors.

49. *diminish salvific baptism by repeating it*—Eastern Orthodox clerics sometimes required rebaptism for Christians who converted to Eastern Orthodoxy from other confessions.

50. *lay monks*—the West criticized the East for granting certain responsibilities to non-ordained monks, responsibilities it felt should be reserved for priests only.

people who hated God and loved themselves, it gave us land overflowing with an abundance of every sort of good thing. [...]

18.6.2 *The Chronicle of Novgorod* (1016–1471) on the Sack

The Chronicle of Novgorod, trans. Robert Michell and Neill Forbes (Hattiesburg, MS: Academic International, 1970), 46–47. Fair use.

The Russians, of course, closely followed the fate of Constantinople, the imperial city from which missions to the Slavs originated. In fact Constantinople's defeat by the crusaders would, in the centuries ahead, nurture ruminations that Russia, rather than the struggling and battered Constantinople, might position itself as the successor seat of Eastern Christianity. But in the account below—from *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, a history of one of Russia's major princedoms—the reaction is merely one of contempt, evidencing the same level of disgust as reported in Byzantine chronicles.

[...] [T]he wind drew the ships up to the town wall; the ladders were high, overlooking the town, and the lower ladders were level with the ramparts; the Greeks fought from the high ladders over the town [...].

[...] Then the tsar⁵¹ fled out of the town [...] and all the Franks⁵² entered the town on 12 April [1204], Monday, Day of St. Vasily the Confessor [...] And in the morning at sunrise they entered St. Sofia, and tore down and cut in pieces the doors and the ambo⁵³ all worked with silver; they cut in pieces the twelve silver pillars and the four [pillars] of the icon case, and the icon bracket, and the twelve crosses that were over the altar, like trees bigger than a man, and the bosses between them, and the altar rail between the pillars, and these were all of silver; they stripped the beautiful altar of its precious stones and large pearl, and it is not known where they put it itself; and they took the forty large cups that were before the altar and the censers and silver lamps, so many that we cannot tell their number, with priceless vessels

51. *tsar*—emperor.

52. *Franks*—crusaders.

53. *ambo*—a podium at the front of the church, jutting out from the iconostasis.

used on feast days; they stripped the service copy of the Gospels and the honorable crosses, and priceless icons, and under the altar cloth they found hidden forty barrels of pure gold; and in the chambers, walls, and repositories of vessels not knowing how much gold and silver, beyond number, and priceless vessels. [...] They robbed the monks and nuns and priests and some of them they beat to death; and the Greeks and the Varangians,⁵⁴ who had remained they drove out of the town. [...]

54. *Varangians*—personal bodyguards of the Byzantine emperor.

18.7 Council of Lyons

Many Byzantine officials scattered into exile after the sack of Constantinople in 1204, and for the next forty-seven years Constantinople functioned as the seat of what some termed the “Latin Empire.” This Latin Empire was, essentially, a state run by remnants of the crusaders, and thus a state hated by the Byzantines. A Westerner loyal to Rome served as the city’s emperor.

In 1261 the Byzantines, under the leadership of Michael VIII Paleologus, retook the city and drove out the Latin emperor.

And then politics and religion began to mix in a most interesting manner. In 1274 Pope Gregory X convened a church council in Lyons, France, with the goal (among others) of reuniting the Eastern and Western church. Michael VIII, the newly installed emperor, proved eager to participate. Whatever his personal beliefs about Roman Christianity, Michael hoped that better relations with Rome would alleviate some of his political troubles and strengthen his still-tenuous hold on the Eastern throne. Michael worried especially about the designs of Charles I of Anjou, the king of Sicily and a friend of the papacy: Charles had conquered Byzantine territories on the Adriatic Sea and had plans to march on Constantinople to reestablish the Latin Empire that Michael had overthrown.

Michael hoped that repairing relations with Rome might earn him some of the goodwill that Charles enjoyed with the papacy, and thus temper Charles’ expansionist aims in the East. Michael also hoped to receive money from Rome for his own conquests.

So, determined to forge a concord with the papacy, Michael pledged even before the Council of Lyons opened on 31 March 1272 to reunite the Eastern church with Rome.



Figure 99. Lyons and Sicily

The council, at least on the surface, appeared to be a success. The two sides reached agreement on two long-standing points of contention: the Eastern delegates recognized papal primacy, and the Easterners agreed to the Nicene Creed *with the filioque*.

Clergy back in Constantinople, however, blanched when they learned the terms of agreement. They pointed out that none of the four patriarchs (of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, or Alexandria) had been present. So furious was the Byzantine church that it declined to administer final rights to Michael after his death. Michael's son and successor repudiated the union. To this day the Eastern church refuses to recognize the Council of Lyons.

18.7.1 Byzantine Tract against the Council of Lyons (1274)

Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 219–220. Used by permission of The University of Chicago Press.

Following is a dialogue that supposedly took place between a Greek priest and a Latin bishop after Lyons, circulated in a pamphlet by anti-unionists—probably monks. It reveals anger over the agreement (which much of the Byzantine populace viewed as a betrayal), as well as the prejudices (many of them wrong) held by much of the Byzantine population toward the Roman Church.

I ask you [said the Greek priest to the Latin bishop] about the heresy you Franks⁵⁵ have. Why do you not call the super-holy *Theotokos* the Mother of God but [only] Santa Maria, that is, you make her simply a saint? But we call her more than holy, *Theotokos*, because she bore the king of Heaven and earth. Why do you not use three fingers to cross yourself from your face down to your breast and your navel [...] but cross yourselves from the other side with your two fingers? [...] Why do you not worship and kiss the holy icons with love and faith but you fall on your knees and whisper and with your two fingers you make the sign of the cross on the ground and then kiss it and trample upon it and go away appearing as if you have trampled upon the cross? Why do you eat strangled meat? Why do you open your veins in your glass and then wash it and drink from it? Why do you feed dogs from your plates, then you wash the dishes and eat from the same platter? [...] Why do you eat meat and cheese on Monday, the first day of Lent, when demons shudder and angels exult and we Christians abstain even from water, whereas you do not last in the whole of Lent? [...]

Another thing—you do not chant the *Alleluia* until Holy Friday, but you walk barefooted and you carry the cross from one corner [of the church] to another [...]. Why do your priests not marry? As Basil the Great says: “No one attached to bodily pleasures is worthy to serve

55. *Franks*—Latins.

the king of glory.” Christ, however, as a concession to the weakness of the body, ordered a virgin boy to take⁵⁶ a virgin girl, and they are called virgins because the first wedding is called a virginal wedding. The church considers a virginal wedding something precious. For this reason the church says: “Those whom God has joined together let no man put asunder,” for the church is Heaven on earth. For that reason⁵⁷ the church does not forbid the priest to take a wife, but you⁵⁸ do not marry.

Instead you have concubines and your priest sends his servant to bring him his concubine and he puts out the candle and he keeps her for the whole night. Then he comes out of his cell and asks forgiveness before the other priests who have done the same, saying: “Forgive me, my brethren, that I have had bad thoughts,” and he receives pardon and he enters the church to celebrate the liturgy.

56. *to take*—to marry.

57. *For that reason*—the weakness of the flesh when struggling against lust.

58. *you*—Latin priests.

18.7.2 Barlaam on the Council of Lyons (1339)

Deno Geanakoplos, "Byzantium and the Crusades, 1261–1354," in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. Kenneth M. Setton (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 55–56. © 1975 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Reprinted by permission of the University of Wisconsin Press.

Here Barlaam, the Byzantines' ambassador to the pope, attempts to explain the failure of the Eastern populace to accept the Lyons agreements.

You have two means to realize the union peacefully. You can either convince the scholars, who in their turn will convince the people, or persuade both people and learned men at the same time. To convince the learned men is easy, since both they and you seek only the truth. But when the scholars return home they will be able to do absolutely nothing with the people. Some men will arise who, either from jealousy or from vainglory, and perhaps believing they act rightly, will teach all exactly the opposite of what you will have defined. They will say to the Greeks, "Do not let yourselves be seduced by these men who have sold themselves for gold and are swelled up with pride; let them say what they wish—do not change anything of your faith." And [the Greeks] will listen to them. [...] To persuade therefore both the people and the learned men together there is only one way: a general council to be held in the East. For the Greeks admit that all that has been determined in a general council conforms to the faith. You will object, saying that already at Lyons a council to treaty of union was held. But no one of the Greeks will accept that the Council of Lyons was ecumenical unless another council declares it so. The Greeks present at Lyons had been delegated neither by the four patriarchs who govern the Eastern church nor by the people, but by the emperor alone, who, without seeking to gain their consent, wanted to achieve union by force. Therefore send legates to the four patriarchs; under their presidency a general council will be held that will make union. And all of us who will have been present at this council will say to the people, "Here is what the holy general council has decreed. It is your duty to observe its decisions." And all will submit.

18.8 Rise of Islam and Turkish Expansion

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

18.8.1 Emperor Debates Muslim Caliph (early 700s)

Lewond, *History of Lewond, the Eminent Vardapet of the Armenians*, trans. Zaven Arzoumanian (Philadelphia: St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church, 1982), 70–106. All attempts to reach the publisher failed.

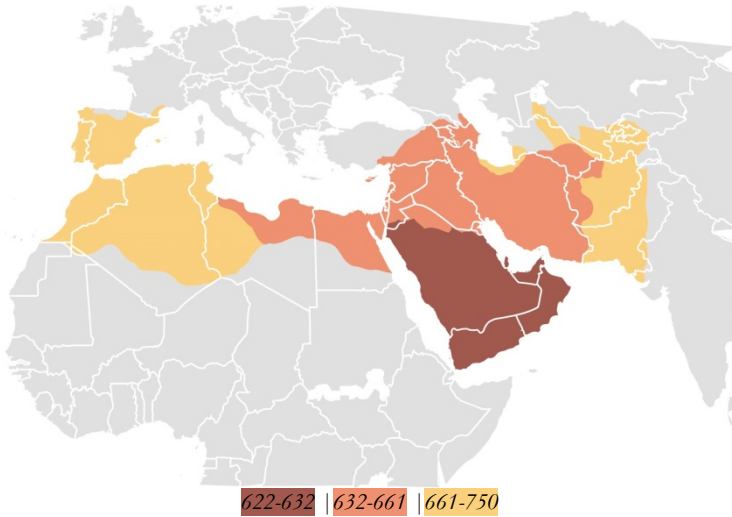


Figure 100. Expansion of the Muslim caliphate

The Byzantine emperor Leo III assumed power in 717 by overthrowing Emperor Theodosius III. In August of that same year Leo faced an attack by Arabic tribes led by the Muslim caliph (head of state), Suleiman. Some eighty thousand Arab troops crossed the Bosphorus and laid siege to Constantinople. Leo mounted a heroic defense of the city and repulsed the siege. Arabs again invaded in 726 and 739, and Leo's forces again defeated them decisively. Given these events, Leo's contempt for the Arab race and the Muslim faith may come as no surprise.

The correspondence below—between Leo and the Islamic caliph, Umar—comes from a chronicle authored by the Armenian historian Lewond in the late 700s. Modern historians place a

fair amount of faith in Lewond's work, but the authenticity of this particular correspondence is subject to debate. (No version has survived in the original Arabic or Greek.) Zaven Arzoumanian, the translator of this version, finds the document "historically feasible" albeit of "obscure origin." Other, much shorter versions of the correspondence also exist, but their origins are also obscure.

Whether real or invented, the correspondence offers a glimpse into contemporary views of Islam by Eastern Christians. Here a Christian author (whether Leo or somebody purporting to speak for Leo) attempts to justify his faith to Muslims who threaten much of his empire. The author well understands Islamic objections to Christian theology, particularly charges that Christians have perverted the essentials of the Jewish tradition. He spends a good deal of time trying to demonstrate that Christian practices have a solid basis in Judaism, the tradition that Islam claims as its own precursor.



Figure 101. Iconic calligraphy of Umar. This calligraphy hangs prominently in the Hagia Sofia, now a mosque in Istanbul.

Introduction

We are told that Umar⁵⁹ was the noblest among the men of his race. [...] [When] Umar was entrusted with the rule [of the caliphate], he

59. *Umar*—Caliph Umar II Abdu al-Aziz (717–720).

released all [Armenian] captives and let them return to their respective places. He thus restored peace throughout his domain. This same Umar has written a letter to Leo, the emperor of the Greeks,⁶⁰ with the purpose of learning about the power of our faith. [The letter] contained various questions that I shall summarize here:

Umar, in the name of God, caliph of the Muslims, to Leo, emperor of the Greeks.

I have often had the desire to know the teachings of the religion you profess and make a profound study of your beliefs, but hitherto I have not been able to realize my intentions. [...] [W]hy is it that you have not been willing to accept what Jesus himself has said as to his person, but have preferred to carry on research in books of the prophets and the psalms, in order to find testimonies of the incarnation of Jesus? You, then, had real doubts and were hesitant, since you regarded as insufficient the testimony that Jesus bears to himself and, instead, gave credence to what the prophets have said. In fact, Jesus himself is more worthy of credence, being God. He knew his person better than those writings that have been falsified by people unknown to you. How, indeed, are you able to justify these scriptures and follow them in what suits your intentions?

[...] [You admit] that the law was handed down from generations, from people to people, by fleshly creatures, who, inasmuch as they were sons of Adam, were forgetful, subject to error, and perhaps acting under the inspiration of Satan and those who, by their hostile acts, resemble him. Why is it that in the law of Moses one finds no indication of either Heaven or Hell, or of the resurrection or judgment? The evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have spoken of these matters according to their talents. Is it not true that [the evangelists], speaking in the Gospel⁶¹ about the Paraclete⁶² to be sent by Christ, pointed to the mission of our Muhammad? Why have the Christian nations, since the death of Jesus's disciples, split up into seventy-two races? Why have you made [Jesus] the associate and equal of the unique and all-powerful God? Why do you profess three gods and arbitrarily change all the laws, such as that of circumcision⁶³ into baptism, sacrifice into Eucharist, and Saturday into Sunday? Is it possible that God could have dwelt in flesh and blood, and in the unclean entrails of a woman? Why do you adore the bones of apostles and prophets, as well as pictures and the sign of the cross, the latter

60. *Leo, the emperor of the Greeks*—Byzantine Emperor Leo III (717–741).

61. *Gospel*—Gospels.

62. *Paraclete*—comforter; the Holy Spirit.

63. *circumcision*—Jews as well as by Muslims practice circumcision.

having served, according to the law, as an instrument of torture? The prophet Isaiah gives testimony to our lawgiver [Muhammad] as being the equal and the like of Jesus, when he speaks in his vision of two mounted riders, one on an ass and the other on a camel; so why do you not believe in this? Send me explanations on all these matters, so that I may know your opinions pertaining to your religion.

Such were the questions that, along with many others, Umar, the Caliph of Ishmael, addressed to Emperor Leo, who, in turn, felt obliged to reply in the following manner:

Emperor Flavian Leo, servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, our true God and sovereign of those who know him, to Umar, chief of the Saracens.

What exact reply can I make [to all the arguments] you advance against us? It is God himself who commands us to instruct our adversaries with kindness, to see whether he will not grant them time to repent. Moreover, by no means do our imperial laws impose on us the duty of smiting with hard words, as with stones, those who manifest a desire to learn the marvelous mystery of the truth. But as your letter, in its opening, did not reveal even the least appearance of truthfulness, it is incumbent [on us] to call not just that which is not.

You have said in your letter that “we have discussed with you more than once the divine mysteries of our Christian religion, but that you have not succeeded in being able to study its doctrines, which you refer to as imaginary.” Neither of these in fact is accurate, because nothing would induce us to discuss our doctrines with you, since our Lord and master himself has bidden us to refrain from exposing our unique and divine doctrine to heretics, for fear of it being turned into ridicule, and least of all before those to whom the predictions of the prophets and the testimony of the apostles are something strange. This is the rule we observe toward others.

[...] We possess historical documents composed by our blessed prelates who were living during the same epoch as your legislator Muhammad, and these writings make it unnecessary for us to involve you [in the subject of your religion]. However, so that you may not think we are ashamed to profess a religion so marvelous [as ours], hearken, if it please you, and in hearkening to me, you will, as Isaiah says, eat of the good produce of the earth.

It is truly difficult, let me tell you, to refute even the most plain lie when the adversary thinks only of obstinately persisting in it. Let me explain it to you this way: Suppose two men are standing near a fire: one of them recognizes that this element really is fire, but the

other, driven by a spirit of contradiction, says that it is a spring of water; then the bad faith of the latter is evident. [...]

Haughty as you are in your despotism, nevertheless listen to my replies. You say that we have found in the psalms of David and in the books of the prophets testimonies regarding our Lord, but today is not the first time we have searched for and found such words of the Holy Spirit, who spoke through the mouths of the prophets. Furthermore, it is by the grace and the will of God that Christianity has been preached, after it was founded, propagated and believed. [It is by these words] that it will still prosper by the power of God the creator.

First of all you write that we have contended ourselves with these words and had faith in them, without paying due attention to what Jesus has said about his own person, regarding that as something doubtful and uncertain. It would be expedient for you, following your own words, to have had faith in the infallible and positive statements of the Gospel, rather than in any other. The truth is that there exists no contradiction between the Old and the New Testaments, seeing that God, the unique source of mercy, cannot at the same time produce both good and bad, truth and lies. Yet, to make the acceptance of the incarnate Word easier to the lawless Jewish people, God placed declarations, parables, and clear predictions in the mouths of the prophets, so that his people should be instructed in advance and prepared to receive Jesus Christ, and not oppose him, as they have done. In the same way, the Lord, in the Gospels, has borne testimony to his person, and having become incarnate, cited in the most express fashion all the testimonies which the prophets had given of him before his incarnation. [...]

Second, you have written that “Jesus indeed merits our confidence because, being near to God, he knew himself better than all those who have written about him, and whose writings have been falsified by people whom we do not know.” Jesus is indeed worthy of confidence—not, however, as mere man and deprived of the Word of God, but as perfect man and perfect God. His commands, set forth by the prophets, merit our entire confidence not because they were pronounced by men, but because it was the Word of God that spoke to them before his incarnation. The fact that the Word itself inspired both the Old and the New [Testaments] is in fact the reason that no contradiction is found in them.

As to what you affirm about the falsification of these writings, if it is the head of your religion who has taught you this, he has forgotten himself, and if it is some other, he has only lied the worse. Listen, then, and think more clearly. [...] We know that it was Abraham who

earlier received the promise of the mission of Christ, and it was to him whom God said, "By your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves." Isaac, nourished by the same hope, blessed Jacob, and then he, with the same purpose, blessed Judah, his son [...].

We know, too, that Moses, to the same end, ordained and designated Joshua, David, Solomon, the twelve prophets, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Job the just [and] John the Baptist, son of Zechariah. Add to these the twelve and the seventy disciples of our Lord, one hundred and eleven persons in all in the Old and New [Testaments]. You despise then so many holy persons, cherished by God, who have predicted the coming of Christ, people to whom Muhammad himself bore the testimony that they were the holy servants of God. You declare Muhammad more worthy of faith than God, who has spoken through them all, and the Word of God manifest in the flesh. Now I ask you in brief, tell me please: Is the testimony borne by one hundred and eleven servants of God, speaking unanimously of the same [savior], more worthy of faith than that of a dissident or heterodox who, while he lies, thinks he is telling the truth? This is how one tells the truth by lies. Muhammad, in speaking of the above-mentioned holy men, represents them as the favored servants of God, and compels you to regard them as such, whereas he himself rejects what God has said through them and prevents others from admitting same. [...]

[...] The Jews, on the other hand, while admitting the future coming of the Christ, have rejected [Jesus] being the Christ, have set themselves against the testimonies of the prophets, and have been unwilling to recognize the Son of God in the person of Christ. [...]

[...] God, who is eternal, whose power is great, and whose wisdom is without limitation, spoke to men through prophets, his ministers. He who is exempt from forgetfulness and conjectures, it is he who speaks through the prophets, without having need of human wisdom. But do you not regard your Muhammad as a man? Yet, relying on the simple word of [Muhammad] you disdain the testimonies of so many saints of God. [...]

In saying that "there cannot be found any reference to Paradise or Hell, to judgment and resurrection in the law of Moses," you show your unwillingness to comprehend the fact that men could only understand the knowledge of God in the measure whereby God would instruct them. God did not speak with man a single time only, nor through a single prophet, as you assume in supposing that God would institute all that was necessary through the ministry of Moses. That is not so. What he commanded Noah he did not demand of those who preceded him. Not all that he commanded Abraham did

he command Noah, nor all that he commanded Moses did he command Abraham. [...]

[...] Although [the revelation made by God] to Moses was only a preparation for the instruction of men, not a complete instruction, but nevertheless, God does mention in [the law] the resurrection, judgment, and Hell. As regards to the resurrection, God says: “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.” As regards to judgment, he says: “If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and will requite those who hate me.” As regards Hell [he says:] “For in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn to the lowest hells.” (Jeremiah 17:4). [...]

As to your statement that “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have written the Gospel,” I know that this truth, recognized by us Christians, disturbs you, such that you seek to find accomplices for your lie. You would rather have us declare that it was written by God and brought down from the heavens, as you do for your *Furqan*,⁶⁴ although we know that it was Umar, Abu Turab,⁶⁵ and Salman the Persian⁶⁶ who composed that, even though you have deceitfully publicized that God sent it down from the heavens. Recognize then the truth that abides with us Christians. If this was so, how dare you accuse us of pretending that, since that time, falsifications have been introduced into the Gospel, whether by us or by others? What could have hindered us from removing from it the names of the evangelists, or from adding that it was God who sent it down from the heavens? Further, know this also, that God has not willed to instruct the human race either by his own incorporeal appearance or by sending down angels to meet people. He has chosen the way of sending them prophets. [...]

You have further stated that, after the death of the disciples of the Lord, we became divided into seventy-two sects. This is not true, so do not think of consoling yourself by this lie that you pretend is based on our error. In fact, the blame is applicable in your very case, whereby [your divisions] are not like those who serve God. This is what I mean: According to your own people, it has been a hundred years, more or less, since your religion appeared in the midst of a single nation speaking a single language. Yet this religion, so young, and professed by a single nation, already presents numerous schisms [...].

64. *Furqan*—Qu’ran.

65. *Abu Turab*—the first Shia iman and fourth Sunni caliph.

66. *Salman the Persian*—one of Muhammad’s companions.

As for yourself, have you not thought that by exterminating those who differ a little from your opinions, you are committing a crime against God? If such acts take place among you, who form one single people speaking a single language, and having at your head a single person, who is at the same time chief, sovereign, pontiff and executioner, would it be astonishing that the Christian faith, were it the invention of some human wisdom, should become worse than yours? Yet it is now eight hundred years, more or less, since Christ appeared, and his Gospel has been spread from one end of the earth to the other, among all peoples and all languages, from the civilized countries of Greece and Rome to the most remote countries of the barbarians; and if there some minor divergence among Christians is found, it is because of the differences of language. I have said minor, because there has never been that bitter hostility among us such as one sees among you. It would appear that, among the seventy-two, you have included all the voluptuous, impure, unclean, and impious people who conduct themselves like pagans, and among whose number you count us. [...]

There is only one single faith, you say. There is indeed but one faith, one baptism; there is no other faith nor commandment that has been given men by God. Then you reproach us for not turning, when we pray, to the region indicated by the law,⁶⁷ and for not communicating as the legislation ordains. This objection is completely nonsense and false, because the region to which the prophets turned when they made their prayers is not known. It is you who wants to venerate the pagan altar of sacrifice that you call the house of Abraham.⁶⁸ Holy scriptures tell us nothing about Abraham having gone to the place that afterwards, according to the order of Muhammad, became the center of adoration of your nation. As to the sacrament of the Communion, you will have my response in its proper place. [...]

The truth of the Gospel and the faithful are manifested by conserving intact the traits in [Jesus] that are the most eminent and the most humiliating. Had those who preceded us been able, or if we ourselves had thought of introducing some changes in the Gospels, would not these humiliating traits have been suppressed? [Jesus] said: "The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but the Father who dwells in me does his work." If you believe in the words "I can do

67. *region indicated by law*—to Mecca, the city that all Muslims face when they pray.

68. *house of Abraham*—the *Ka'ba*, or black cube in Mecca, which Muslim pilgrims visit on pilgrimage.

nothing on my own,” you must also believe in the words that “the Father who dwells in me does his works.” [...]

[...] “He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.” The meaning of this is that it is not in [Jesus’s] human and visible nature [that one believes], but in his divine nature, inasmuch as he is the Word of God. Then he adds as follows: “He who rejects me, rejects him who sent me,” and “He who sees me, sees him who sent me.” He was sent as a man, and he sent [his disciples] as God, saying to them: “The Father is greater than I”; that is to say, greater than [my] human nature, for otherwise he would have not said a little later on, “I and my Father are one.” [...]

As for his life-giving death, of which you have heard, you insist on saying that no one could put him to death. But [I ask you], if [Jesus] were a mere man, according to your supposition, is it an incredible thing that a man should be able to die? Pay close attention and think about this. You easily accept all the humiliating traits [in the life] of our Lord, but you despise and reject all the glorious ones. Listen now to the Gospels in regard to this matter. Indeed, to whom does John the evangelist refer in saying: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.” John the son of Zechariah also says: “Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” Then John the Evangelist begins his Gospel with these words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” [...]

With regard to circumcision and the sacrifice, you pretend that we have changed them at will, altering the former into baptism and the latter into the Communion of bread and cup. We have not modified anything; it was the Lord himself who, in accordance with the prediction of Jeremiah, changed the type as laid down in the Old Testament and established the true law. This is the prophecy: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” What covenant did he make with their fathers in the land of Egypt, if not that of which one is reminded by the blood of the lambs on the day of Easter, the Passover, and which he had given to be kept in the midst of their people?

So if the sons of Israel were saved from destruction by the blood of an unreasonable lamb, could not we be saved from eternal death by the blood of the immaculate lamb? [...]

Regarding circumcision, you pretend that we have replaced it by baptism. The mystery of circumcision, whereby God desired to treat his covenant in this secret member and not in others more visible and glorious, remains unknown to you. [...]

As for the divine institution of baptism, it was announced to us by God long beforehand, through the prophet Ezekiel, in these words: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you." The Lord commanded this same baptism in his Gospel, saying: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This became the fulfillment of the prophet's prediction that "I have given you as a light to the nations" and "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light."

Nor have we substituted Sunday for the Sabbath, as you always pretend unwisely. Among [Muslims], Friday has been set as the day for assembly, without any reason being given to justify the choice. As for us, we assemble on the day of the bodily resurrection of the Lord, who thereby has promised us resurrection, to say our prayers and render thanks to the creator for so great a mystery. This is the day on which God at the beginning said: "Let there be light, and there was light." It was on the same day that the light of the good news of the resurrection shone forth to mankind by the resurrection of the Word and the only-begotten Son of God in his human body. [...]

Nor have I forgotten the objection raised by you in these terms: "How is it possible for God to dwell in the womb of a woman, in the midst of blood and flesh and different impurities?" I suppose that you know there is a multitude of creatures God has brought into being by his simple command of word, as Psalm 148[:5-6] assures us, saying: "He commanded and they were created; he established them forever and ever." All these beings, the sky with the sun, the moon and the stars, celestial bodies and vegetation of the earth, and the animals, it appears, occupy a superior place in your mind, and seem purer and more precious than man. Man, however, considered by you as an impure being, was nevertheless created not by a simple command, but by the all-powerful and all-holy hand of God, who also animated him by his breath.

Consequently, human nature, created by the creative hands [of God], and honored by him with resemblance to him, cannot be an impure thing in his sight. Do not, then, offer insults to the good cre-

ator, in whose eyes nothing of all that has been created by him is unclean, save only sin, which not only was not created by him in man, but was not even ordained. In fact there is nothing more precious than man, for whom all things were created. God, then, who has so honored man by creating him in his image, would not think it shameful to take man's image in order to save him, since, as I have said, there is nothing unclean in human nature except sin. [...]

Above all these, now listen to this: If the bush that God inflamed with divine fire at the time of Moses was not consumed, man must be considered of greater value than a bush and all other created things, for it is of holy men that God said: "I will live in them and move among them." And again, "But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." It is clearly to be seen here that God calls just men his habitation, and that he is not offended by their natural and human infirmities, which you call filthiness, since it befits the ever-living to have been a living temple. I submit to you the following proposition as I perceive you to be envious of the glory of the saints of God and their relics, that God declared to be his dwelling. If God cares for all the bones of the human race in view of the general resurrection, how should he not take special care for those of his saints, of whom he has spoken many times in such glorious and majestic terms, above all, of those who have suffered death in his cause? [...] The divine power that dwells in his saints affirms that their bones will not be broken, yet we know that a great number of saints' bones have been ground to powder or reduced to ashes by fire. As for you, child that you are, occupied with things that are visible, you do not think of that at all. [The Holy Spirit] further declares: "God is marvelous to his saints," and Solomon speaks in these terms: "But the righteous live forever, and their reward is with the Lord. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, but they are at peace." I presume that you are not aware of the story of the uncircumcised stranger whose corpse, as soon as it was cast into the tomb of the prophet Elisha and had touched his bones, came back to life at once. Now, if divine power did not reside in the bones of the holy prophet, how could those of a simple dead man be able to resuscitate the [other] dead man? Thus we see that the living God does not consider that he is defiled by dwelling in the tomb of a dead person, for that which seems to me and to you unclean is just the opposite in the eyes of God. [...]

In your letter there are some words pertaining to the cross and pictures. We honor the cross because of the sufferings of the incarnate Word of God borne thereon, as we learned from a commandment given by God to Moses, and from the messages of the prophets.

The metal plate that by the order [of God] Moses placed on the forehead of the high priest (Aaron) was clean and holy, having the form of a living being. It is [in imitation of this sign] that we Christians sign our foreheads with the cross, as [a sign] of the Word of God who suffered for us in his human nature. The prophet Isaiah even indicates the wood out of which that cross should be made, the sublime crown in which the church is forever glorified. He says: “The cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.” Solomon says: “Blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes.” [...]

As for pictures, we do not pay them like respect, not having received any commandment to that effect in the holy scriptures. We have, however, in the Old Testament the divine command that authorized Moses to have the figures of the cherubim in the tabernacle as witnesses. Likewise we, animated by a sincere love for the disciples of the Lord, and burned with love for the incarnate Lord himself, have always felt a desire to conserve their images, which have come down to us from their times as their living representation. Having them in front of us, we joyfully glorify God who has saved us by the intercession of his only-begotten Son, who appeared in the world in a similar figure, and who has glorified his saints. But as for the wood and the colors on it, we do not give them any reverence.

But you do not feel ashamed to have venerated that house of yours that is called the Ka’aba, the dwelling of Abraham as you say. As a matter of fact Abraham never saw any such arid desert even in his dream. This house was existing long before Muhammad, and was the object of a cult among your people, while Muhammad not only did not abolish it, but also called it the dwelling of Abraham. [...]

[...] You call “the way of God” these devastating raids that bring death and captivity to all peoples. Behold your religion and your conduct. Behold your glory, you who pretend to live an angelic life. As for us, instructed in and convinced of the marvelous mystery of our redemption, we hope after our resurrection to enjoy the celestial kingdom, since we have obeyed the doctrines of the Gospel, and wait humbly for the happiness such that “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, what God has prepared for those who love him.” We do not hope to find there fountains of wine, honey or milk. There we do not expect to enjoy contact with women who remain forever virgin and to have children by them, for we put no faith in such silly tales caused by extreme ignorance and paganism. Far from us such idle stories and fabulous tales. “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink,” as says the Holy Spirit, “but righteousness and peace,” because “in the resurrection men neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like

angels in Heaven.” For you who are given over to carnal vices, and who have never put limit to your lustful pleasures, you who prefer your pleasures to any good, it is precisely for that reason that you consider the kingdom of Heaven of no account if it is not peopled with [women].

Behold the short reply that I addressed to you. For the sake of our unshakable and imperishable faith, we have endured at your hands and will still endure much suffering. We are even prepared to die, if only to bring to ourselves the name of “saints,” a name precious and incomparable [...].

Because such is our hope, we are tormented by you, under the threat of death; but we can only respond with patience, for we count on neither our bow nor our sword to save us, but on the right arm of the Lord, and on the light of his countenance. Should he will it, [we are prepared to suffer still more] in this world, so as to be recompensed in the world to come as an exchange of the tortures inflicted by your hands. This he will do at the opportune time and according to his will.

As for you, persisting in your tyranny and your usurpation, you attribute to your religion the enjoyment of the favorable [protection] of God. You forget that the Persians also prolonged their tyranny for 400 years. What was the reason for such a reign? God alone knows; but surely it was not because their religion was just.

As for us, we accept with eagerness all the sufferings and all the tortures that befall us for the sake of the glorious name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and savior, so that we may arrive at the happiness of the future world with all those who have loved to see the coming of the great day of judgment of God, for the praise and glory of those who loved his name, with whom we may be worthy to glorify the unified divinity of the Father, the Word, his only-begotten [Son], and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

This is the transcript of the answer that Emperor Leo wrote and sent to Caliph Umar of Ishmael by one of his trusted servants. As [Umar] read the letter, he felt deeply ashamed. By the means of this letter, he now exercised more temperance and indulgence toward the Christian people, presenting himself everywhere as an obliging person, since, as we said earlier, [he] was the one who allowed the captives to return after pardoning them all for their faults. [...]

18.8.2 John of Damascus on Islam (ca. 700s)

John of Damascus, “On Heresies,” in *Writings*, trans. Frederic Chase (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958), 153–160. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

The next Christian analysis of Islam is from *On Heresies*, a work probably compiled in the 700s. Although traditionally attributed to the Syrian monk John of Damascus (ca. 675-749), much of the work likely comes from other hands. The first portion is lifted from St. Epiphanius;⁶⁹ other portions were authored anonymously.

Whoever wrote these other passages had a thorough knowledge of the Qur’an, which he quotes at length. The tone of this polemic is one of contempt, in which ridicule and sarcasm seek to undermine Islamic belief and practice.

[...]

There is [...] the superstition of the “Ishmaelites,”⁷⁰ which to this day prevails and keeps people in error, being a forerunner of the Antichrist. They are descended from Ishmael, who was born to Abraham of Hagar,⁷¹ and for this reason they are called both “Hagarenes” and

69. *St. Epiphanius*—a Judean (early 300s–403) who served as a monk in Egypt and later as the bishop of Salamis and metropolitan of Cyprus.

70. *Ishmaelites*—Muslims.

71. *Ishmael, who was born to Abraham of Hagar*—see Genesis 16:1–12: “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram, ‘You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived for ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!’ But Abram said to Sarai, ‘Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.’ Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her. The angel of the Lord found her

“Ishmaelites.” They are also called Saracens, which is derived from *Σάρρακι κενοί*, or “destitute of Sarai,” because of what Hagar said to the angel: “Sarai has sent me away destitute.” These used to be idolaters and worshipped the morning star and Aphrodite, whom in their own language they called Khabár, which means “great.” And so down to the time of Heraclius⁷² they were very great idolaters. From that time to the present a false prophet named Muhammad has appeared in their midst. This man, after having chanced upon the Old and New Testaments and likewise, it seems, having conversed with an Arian monk,⁷³ devised his own heresy. Then, having insinuated himself into the good graces of the people by a show of seeming piety, he gave out that a certain book had been sent down to him from Heaven. He had set down some ridiculous compositions in this book of his and he gave it to them as an object of veneration.

He says that there is one God, creator of all things, who has neither been begotten nor has begotten. He says that the Christ is the Word of God and his Spirit, but a creature and a servant, and that he was begotten, without seed, of Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron.⁷⁴ For, he says, the Word and God and the Spirit entered into Mary and she brought forth Jesus, who was a prophet and servant of God. And he says that the Jews wanted to crucify him in violation of the law, and that they seized his shadow and crucified this. But the Christ himself was not crucified, he says, nor did he die, for God out of his love for him took him to himself into Heaven. And he says this, that when the

by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. And he said, ‘Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?’ She said, ‘I am running away from my mistress Sarai.’ The angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit to her.’ The angel of the Lord also said to her, ‘I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.’ [Many Christians understood this “multitude” to be Muslim Arabs.] And the angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.’” (Genesis 16:1–12, NRSV)

72. *Heraclius*—Roman emperor (610–641).

73. *Arian monk*—possibly the Nestorian monk Bahira, who met Muhammad as a boy in Syria and claimed to recognize him as a prophet.

74. *He was begotten . . . Mary the sister of Moses and Aaron*—here and throughout the work the author references the Qur’an.

Christ had ascended into Heaven, God asked him: “O Jesus, did you say: ‘I am the Son of God and God?’” And Jesus, he says, answered: “Be merciful to me, Lord. You know that I did not say this and that I did not scorn to be your servant. But sinful men have written that I made this statement, and they have lied about me and have fallen into error.” And God answered and said to him: “I know that you did not say this word.” There are many other extraordinary and quite ridiculous things in this book that he boasts was sent down to him from God. But when we ask: “And who is there to testify that God gave him the book? And which of the prophets foretold that such a prophet would rise up?”—they are at a loss. And we remark that Moses received the law on Mount Sinai, with God appearing in the sight of all the people in cloud, and fire, and darkness, and storm. And we say that all the prophets from Moses on down foretold the coming of Christ and how Christ God (and incarnate Son of God) was to come and to be crucified and die and rise again, and how he was to be the judge of the living and dead. Then, when we say: “How is it that this prophet of yours did not come in the same way, with others bearing witness to him? And how is it that God did not in your presence present this man with the book to which you refer, even as he gave the law to Moses, with the people looking on and the mountain smoking, so that you, too, might have certainty?”—they answer that God does as he pleases. “This,” we say, “we know, but we are asking how the book came down to your prophet.” Then they reply that the book came down to him while he was asleep. Then we jokingly say to them that, as long as *he* received the book in his sleep and did not actually sense the operation, then the popular adage applies to him (which runs: *You’re spinning me dreams*).

[...] Moreover, they call us “Hetaeriasts,” or “Associators,” because, they say, we introduce an associate with God by declaring Christ to be the Son of God and God. We say to them in rejoinder: “The prophets and the scriptures have delivered this to us, and you, as you persistently maintain, accept the prophets. So, if we wrongly declare Christ to be the Son of God, it is they who taught this and handed it on to us.” But some of them say that it is by misinterpretation that we have represented the prophets as saying such things, while others say that the Hebrews hated us and deceived us by writing in the name of the prophets so that we might be lost. And again we say to them: “As long as you say that Christ is the Word of God and Spirit, why do you accuse us of being ‘Hetaeriasts’? For the Word, and the Spirit, is inseparable

from that in which it naturally has existence. Therefore, if the Word of God is in God, then it is obvious that he is God. If, however, he is outside of God, then, according to you, God is without Word and without Spirit. Consequently, by avoiding the introduction of an associate with God you have mutilated him. It would be far better for you to say that he has an associate than to mutilate him, as if you were dealing with a stone or a piece of wood or some other inanimate object. Thus, you speak untruly when you call us ‘Hetaerists’; we retort by calling you mutilators of God.”

They furthermore accuse us of being idolaters, because we venerate the cross, which they abominate. And we answer them: “How is it, then, that you rub yourselves against a stone in your *Ka’ba*⁷⁵ and kiss and embrace it?” Then some of them say that Abraham had relations with Hagar upon it, but others say that he tied the camel to it when he was going to sacrifice Isaac. And we answer them: “Since scripture says that the mountain was wooded and had trees from which Abraham cut wood for the holocaust and laid it upon Isaac, and then he left the asses behind with the two young men, why talk nonsense? For in that place neither is it thick with trees nor is there passage for asses.” And they are embarrassed, but they still assert that the stone is Abraham’s. Then we say: “Let it be Abraham’s, as you so foolishly say. Then, just because Abraham had relations with a woman on it or tied a camel to it, you are not ashamed to kiss it, yet you blame us for venerating the cross of Christ by which the power of the demons and the deceit of the devil was destroyed.” This stone that they talk about is a head of that Aphrodite whom they used to worship and whom they called Khabár. Even to the present day, traces of the carving are visible on it to careful observers.

As has been related, this Muhammad wrote many ridiculous books, to each one of which he set a title. For example, there is the book *On Woman*,⁷⁶ in which he plainly makes legal provision for taking four wives and, if it be possible, a thousand concubines—as many

75. *Ka’ba*—a large, black, granite cube outside the main mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Tradition holds that Abraham built the *ka’ba* with Ishmael’s help. The structure is the prime destination for Islamic pilgrims to Mecca. All Muslims, regardless of their location, face the *ka’ba* when praying. The *ka’ba* contains the “black stone”—a relic of pre-Islamic idolatry—which Muslims believe dates from the time of Adam and Eve.

76. *On Woman*—a section of the Qur’an.

as one can maintain besides the four wives. He also made it legal to put away whichever wife one might wish, and, should one so wish, to take to oneself another in the same way. Muhammad had a friend named Zeid. This man had a beautiful wife with whom Muhammad fell in love. Once, when they were sitting together, Muhammad said: "O, by the way, God has commanded me to take your wife." The other answered: "You are an apostle. Do as God has told you and take my wife." Rather—to tell the story over from the beginning—he said to him: "God has given me the command that you put away your wife." And he put her away. Then several days later: "Now," he said, "God has commanded me to take her." Then, after he had taken her and committed adultery with her, he made this law: "Let him who will put away his wife. And if, after having put her away, he should return to her, let another marry her. For it is not lawful to take her unless she has been married by another. Furthermore, if a brother puts away his wife, let his brother marry her, should he so wish." In the same book he gives such precepts as this: "Work the land that God has given you and beautify it. And do this, and do it in such a manner"—not to repeat all the obscene things that he did. [...]

18.9 Council of Ferrara Florence

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

18.9.1 Greek Prelates at Florence (1438 or 1439)

Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 222–223. Used by permission of The University of Chicago Press.



Figure 102. Byzantine delegates to the Council of Florence, Antonio di Puccio Pisano, 1440s

The following is from the *Acta graeca*, a record of the council produced by a Byzantine delegate who favored union with Rome. The author reports on private conversations among the Byzantine bishops at the council.

[Isidor, metropolitan of Russia:] It behooves us to unite spiritually and bodily with Rome or leave with nothing done. To leave is easy, then; how to go later, or where, or when I do not see. [...]

[Dositheos of Monembasia:] And how do you propose that we return home? With expenses paid by the pope? Do you wish us to betray our dogma? I would rather die than ever to Latinize!

[Isidor:] Nor do *we* want to Latinize, but we say that the procession of the Holy Spirit is attributed also to the Son not only by the

Western fathers but also the Eastern. Therefore it is right to agree with our own fathers and unite with the Roman Church.

[Bishop Antony of Heraclea:] And who are greater—the Eastern fathers and synods, all our saints—or the Western? Thus we should follow the majority, [that is,] those who say the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and not from the Son.

[Mark Eugenicus, bishop of Ephesus:] The Latins are not only schismatics, but heretics, and about this our church is silent, because they [Latins] are many in number. But we have not left them except insofar as they are heretics. So we should not unite with them unless they delete the addition [*filioque*] from the creed as we do.

[Archbishop Bessarion:] So those who say the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son are heretics?

[Mark:] Yes.

[Bessarion:] Spare me, God. And the saints who say this are heretics? “May their lips be mute who speak against the saints.” Now listen carefully: the Eastern and Western fathers do not differ, but the Holy Spirit is spoken of by all, and if you wish to, compare the writings of both and [you will] see that the saints agree.

[Mark:] And who knows which of their books have been corrupted?

[Bessarion:] And who dares to say this?

18.9.2 Greek Delegates Return from the Council (1439)

Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 225.

The agreements struck in Florence failed because the Byzantine populace by and large rejected them. As Deno Geanakoplos notes, a “certain proportion of the population apparently even preferred what seemed an inevitable Turkish conquest to what they believed would be a second Latin occupation of their capital in the wake of religious union. The horrors of the Latin seizure of Constantinople from 1204 and 1261 could not be forgotten.”

Here the Byzantine pro-unionist historian, Ducas, describes the manner in which the Byzantine populace received the delegates upon their return from Florence.

After the emperor had received them graciously and accorded them the honor befitting their station, they began to discuss the question of union. The emperor and some members of the clergy declared themselves in favor of it. But the greatest number of those in the priestly and monastic orders—abbots, archimandrites, and nuns; but why do I say the greatest number? (for it was the nuns who prevailed upon me to speak and to write)—not a single one of these agreed to the union. Even the emperor himself feigned his acceptance of it. Then those who appeared to be in favor of the union—priests and deacons of the clergy, the emperor, and the senate—came to the great church, seeking to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in harmony and to recite the prayers with untroubled minds.

At this time the schismatic party went to the Monastery of the Pantocrator, to the cell of Gennadios, the former George Scholarios, and asked him “What are we to do?” He was in seclusion in his cell, and taking a piece of paper he expressed his thoughts and counsel in writing. His words were: “Wretched Romans, how you have gone astray! You have rejected the hope of God and trusted in the strength of the Franks; you have lost your piety along with your city that is about to be destroyed. Lord have mercy on me. I testify before you

that I am innocent of such transgression. Know, wretched citizens, what you are doing. Along with your impending captivity you have forsaken the faith handed down from your fathers and assented to impiety. Woe to you when you are judged!” This and many other things he had written he placed on the door of his cell; he secluded himself inside and what he wrote was read.

Then all the nuns, who believed themselves to be pure and dedicated servants of God in orthodoxy, in accordance with their own sentiment and that of their leader, Gennadios, cried out the anathema, and along with them the abbots and confessors and the remaining priests and laymen. They condemned the doctrinal definition of the Council [of Florence] and all those who had acquiesced to it, all those who were now acquiescing, and all who would do so in the future. The common and low-born people, leaving the courtyard of the monastery, entered into the taverns and, holding bottles of unwatered wine in their hands, anathematized the unionists and drank to the intercession of the icon of the Mother of God. And they beseeched her to guard and aid the city now against Mehmed, as she had formerly done against Chosroës, Kaghan, and the Arabs. “We need neither the aid of the Latins nor union. Keep the worship of the azymites⁷⁷ far from us.”

⁷⁷. *azymites*—those who celebrate the Eucharist with azymus or unleavened bread: Latins and Roman Catholics.

18.9.3 Isidor on Ferrara Florence (1441)

The Nikonian Chronicle, trans. Betty Jean Zenkovsky and Serge A. Zenkovsky (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1989), 5:58–59. © 1989 by Serge A. Zenkovsky and Betty Jean Zenkovsky. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

As one of the staunchest supporters of the union concluded at the Council of Florence, Isidor, the metropolitan of Kiev and Moscow, faced angry opposition in Muscovy when he returned (as is evident in document 18.9.4). However, before arriving in Moscow in 1441, Isidor composed this encyclical to prepare the Russians for the new accord. Despite the letter's optimistic tone, Isidor fully understood the precariousness of his position, and he avoided any mention of concessions on the *filioque* or claims of papal supremacy.

I, Isidor, by the grace of God most venerable metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia, legate from the rib of the apostle for Poland, Lithuania and the Germans, [proclaim:]

Peace and blessing to all and to every faithful and true Christian who believes in eternal salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice and be of good cheer, all of you, concerning God because the Eastern church and the Roman Church, which long were divided and were hostile one toward the other, now have become united in true unity according to their original union and peace, and there is quietude and love and the ancient single authority without any division. You all, people of Christ, whether you be Latin or Italian, or whether you be under the holy conciliar Greek church of Constantinople to which the Russians, Serbs, Walachs⁷⁸ and all other Christians belong who truly believe in Christ Jesus, Son of God, and God, who created all—Heaven and earth—and in whom is all our life and all our hopes, now and ever, accept this holy and most sacred union and single authority with great spiritual joy and honor.

I beseech you all for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, who provided us with his grace, that there should not be any division between the Latins and you because everyone is the servant of God and our savior Jesus Christ, and is baptized in his name. There is one God, one

78. *Walachs*—Romanians.

Father, one baptism and there should be among you common agreement and tranquility and peace and love because of Jesus Christ. And you, people of the Latin faith, you should accept without any hesitation all those who are of the Greek faith. They all are baptized and their baptism is holy and recognized by the Roman Church because it is true and it is the same as the one of the Roman Church and one of the Eastern church. Beginning with now, there is not among us any mean mind or dissension in these matters. Both the Latins and the aforementioned Greeks should go to the same unified church with a pure and humble heart, and they should bring their prayer and their supplication to be united in one unity to the Lord God. And when the Greeks are in the Latin land and in case there are [only] Latin and Roman churches in some parts of these lands, they should go thither to the divine service with daring but humble heart and accept the body of Christ with humble heart, and render honor there as they do in their own churches in their lands in which they live; and [in such cases] they have to come for confession to the Latin priests and accept from them the body of Lord Jesus Christ, Our God. The Latins, likewise, have to go to the Greek churches and participate in their divine services with a warm faith and with humble heart, and venerate the same body of Christ, because the one consecrated by the Greek priest in leavened bread is truly and wholly the body of Christ, as is that one that is consecrated by the Latin priest in unleavened bread. And therefore we have to venerate both the leavened and the unleavened. And the Latins have to come for confession to the Greek priests and accept from them the holy and divine Communion because both are the same and true. And so it was decided by the great ecumenical council in their final meeting after many consultations and investigations of holy, divine writings in the honorable and great church in which was celebrated the church service and which is in the city of Florence. And it was on the sixth day of the month of June in the year 1439 after the incarnation of our Lord.

18.9.4 *The Nikonian Chronicle* on the Arrest of Isidor (n.d.)

Nikonian Chronicle, 5: 63–64. © 1989 by Serge A. Zenkovsky and Betty Jean Zenkovsky. All rights reserved. Used by permission of The Darwin Press.

Our final document in this section comes from the same chronicle that reported Isidor’s attempt to “seduce” the Russian people. It opens by reprinting Pope Eugenius’s letter to Grand Prince Vasily, and it concludes by editorializing about Isidor’s fate.

I, Eugenius, bishop, the servant of the servants of God, send my apostolic blessing and grace to your highness, Grand Prince Vasily Vasilevich of Moscow and grand tsar of all Russia. We⁷⁹ thank Almighty Lord God that after many labors with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Eastern church is united with us, which will lead to the salvation of the souls of many people and which is written for your glory and your praise. And to our most honorable brother, Isidor, your metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia, I send this from the apostolic see in order to help and support this union and agreement because he labored very much for a strong union. Therefore everyone should help him in all his deeds and, especially, in the deeds of union that is deemed to his honor and to his ecclesiastic rank that he received. For the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ask you, supreme highness, to accept piously this aforementioned Metropolitan Isidor, who did so much for the good of the church. And we command you to be his active helper in all the deeds that he will do for the good of the church, and to do so with all your power, and then you will receive praise and glory from men; and from us, our blessing; and from god, the eternal gift. Given in Florence in the ninth year of our priesthood.

When Grand Prince Vasily Vasilevich heard that the pope of Rome, and not the patriarch of Constantinople, was mentioned first during the Divine Liturgy, and saw and heard many other things not in accord with the custom of the Russian land, he was astonished, and Grand Prince Vasily Vasilevich said, “Neither in the time of our forefathers and fathers nor of our brothers, the grand princes of the Russian land, have such things happened, and I do not wish them.”

79. *Wē*—the “royal we”: “I.”

And he commanded [Metropolitan Isidor] to live in the Monastery of the Miracles and he arrested him on Wednesday during great, holy Lent, when the holy cross is venerated; and he was imprisoned in this monastery the entire year. It is worthy to wonder at the wisdom and great mind of Grand Prince Vasily Vasilevich because everyone else—princes, boiars, and many others, and especially the bishops of the Russian land—remained silent and became sleepy⁸⁰ and slept concerning this Isidor. Only this Christ-loving sovereign, Grand Prince Vasily Vasilevich, wise in God, recognized Isidor's pernicious temptation and very rapidly exposed him, shamed him, and called him an evil, destructive wolf instead of shepherd and teacher. Then all the Russian bishops who were then in Moscow became aroused, as well as the princes, boiars, lords, and a great many [other] Christians. They remembered and confirmed the law of the Greeks as it used to be heretofore, and began to preach from Holy Writ, and called Isidor a heretic. And so Grand Prince Vasily Vasilevich rejoiced concerning the agreement of his bishops, princes, boiars, and all orthodox Christians, and commanded him [Isidor] to remain in the monastery while an investigation of him be made according to the sacred rules of the holy apostles and seven holy councils of the holy fathers. Then he was to be brought to the just court of truth before archbishops and bishops, and before the entire sacred council, and his heresy to be exposed so that his shame should be brought about and he put away union with the Latins and agreement with heresy, and accept his guilt, repent, and then be pardoned.

Isidor, however, being filled with the evil Latin heresy, did not want to break away from the union and agreement with the Latins, and did not want to obey either the grand prince or the entire sacred council. And the grand prince placed him under his bailiff's supervision and ordered him to be guarded so long as he not break away from the union and from agreement with the Latins and not return [to orthodoxy] or repent, when he would then receive mercy. And so he lived in the Miracle Monastery under arrest. [...]

80. *sleepy*—passive.

19. Post-Conciliar Doctrine

Jaroslav Pelikan once observed that although the Byzantines “displayed a boldness to the point of rashness” as sailors and warriors, they displayed “an attitude of caution to the point of timidity about crossing the boundary lines of ancient tradition, whether liturgical or dogmatic ...” In their theology the Byzantines tended to dismiss originality and creativity as “novelty mongering” (*kainotomia*) or “lust for innovation” (*neoteropoiia*). Remaining true to the ancient, apostolic tradition proved an overriding aim. The faith never needed reinventing, redefining, or sprucing up.¹ It was fine as it was.

Such an attitude helps explain why—unlike in the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions—there are so few statements of faith in the Eastern tradition. New statements, reasoned the Easterners, were not necessary. What *was* necessary was remaining true to tradition—the consensual theological work already undertaken by the ecumenical councils and the church fathers. Additional confessions were unnecessary. In fact many Orthodox theologians today, when asked to point to an official confession, point to the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. There, in word, song, sight, smell, and prayer, are the salient points of Eastern Christian belief.

1. “Eastern Orthodox Affirmations of Faith,” in Pelikan and Hotchkiss, *Creeks and Confessions*, 1:245–246.

Eastern Orthodoxy lacked and still lacks some of the features that encouraged the flood of doctrinal statements produced by Roman Catholicism and Western Protestantism. Eastern Orthodoxy has no single head of the church (e.g., no pope) who can issue statements on behalf of the entire church. And unlike Protestant confessions, it lacks a formal council, synod, or executive body empowered to define doctrine. The various national Orthodox churches are autocephalous—separate and independent—making any coordination of statements extremely difficult.

Since Eastern Orthodoxy understands itself as *the* church, it is reluctant to issue statements outside an ecumenical council, that is, a council of the *entire* church. Any novel statement emanating from a single person or from a single region is inherently suspect, and cannot, by definition, bear the authority of the entire church. Thus, as Pelikan notes, those confessional statements that did emerge from sections of the Eastern church tended to become less rather than more official over time. To this day the Eastern churches often have trouble pointing to statements unequivocally recognized as “official” by Eastern Christendom as a whole.

Yet confessional statements could never be avoided entirely. From time to time Easterners needed to explain themselves to others, particularly to the Latin West and the Muslim East.

19.1 Gregory Palamas's (1296–1359) Confession of Faith

Gregory Palamas, "Confession of the Orthodox Faith," in Pelikan and Hotchkiss, *Creeks and Confessions*, 1:375–378. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

One statement that *is* widely respected is the following confession by Gregory Palamas. Here is a standard endorsement of the ecumenical councils, which also attempts to distinguish Eastern theology from that of the West. Gregory obliquely attacks the *filioque* and distinguishes the roles of Father and Son: the Father is "greater than the Son and Spirit insofar as he is their cause"; the Son is not a "cause" and "origin" in the Godhead; unlike the Father the Son "is not unoriginate in that he has the Father as his origin and root and source." Palamas's statement contains elements of apophatic theology: "no one has ever seen or spoke the nature of God." It rejects the Roman Catholic understanding of original sin: "We know nothing that is evil in its essence." And it contains a vigorous defense of hesychasm.

1. There is one God before all things and over all things and in all things and above all things, whom we worship and in whom we believe, in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, unity in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, united without confusion, and inseparably distinguished. The same is omnipotent unity and Trinity. The Father is unoriginate, not only insofar as he is timeless, but also in that he is entirely uncaused. He is the sole cause and root and source of the Godhead appearing in the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is the sole initial cause of the things that have come into being. He is not the sole creator, but he is the sole Father of the one Son and producer of the one Holy Spirit. He always exists, and always is Father, and always is sole Father and producer. He is greater than the Son and the Spirit only insofar as he is their cause, but in all other respects he is the same as they and equal in honor.

2. There is one Son of the Father, unoriginate insofar as he is timeless, but not unoriginate in that he has the Father as his origin and root and source. From the Father alone he came forth before all the

ages incorporeally, without change, without suffering, by means of generation. He was not separated from the Father, being God from God. He is not different as God from what he is as Son. He always exists, and always is Son and only Son, and always is with God without confusion. He is not a cause and origin of the Godhead perceived in the Trinity, since he is from the Father as his cause and source; but he is cause and source of all things that have come into being, since all things have come into being through him. Being in the form of God, he did not think it robbery to be equal to God, but in the fullness of the ages he emptied himself, taking a form like ours. From the ever-Virgin Mary by the good will of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit he was conceived in accordance with the law of nature and brought forth, God and man at the same time. Truly made man, he became like us in all respects except sin, remaining what he was, true God, uniting without confusion or change the two natures and wills and energies, and remaining one Son in one hypostasis even after becoming man. He performed all his divine actions as God and all his human actions as man. He was subject to those human passions that are innocent. Although he was passionless and immortal, and continued to be God, nevertheless he suffered voluntarily in the flesh as man. He was crucified and dead and buried, and on the third day he rose again. He appeared to his disciples after the resurrection and promised them the power from on high. He bade them to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and to observe and teach whatever he had commanded. Then he himself was lifted up into the Heaven and took his seat at the right hand of the Father, making our material substance equal in honor and enthroned as equal to God. With the same substance he will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and to reward each according to his works.

3. When he had returned to the Father, he sent upon his holy disciples and apostles the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father. The Spirit is unoriginate along with the Father and the Son, insofar as he is timeless, but not unoriginate in that he also has the Father as root and source and cause, not however as begotten, but as proceeding. From the Father he also came forth before all the ages without change or suffering, not by generation but by procession. He is inseparable from the Father and the Son, since he comes forth from the Father and rests on the Son. He has union without confusion, and distinction without separation. He also is God from God. He is not different as God from

what he is as comforter. The Spirit has his own hypostasis, proceeding from the Father and sent by the Son; that is, he is revealed to be also a cause of all things that have come into being, since in him they are brought to perfection. The same is also equal in honor to the Father and the Son, except that he is not unbegotten or begotten. He was sent from the Son to his disciples—that is, he was revealed, for how otherwise would he be sent from him without being separated from him? How otherwise would he come to me, since he is everywhere? Therefore he is sent not only from the Son but also from the Father and from the Son, and when he comes he is revealed by himself. For the sending is a common work, namely, the revealing of the Spirit. He is revealed not according to his essence, for no one has ever seen or spoken the nature of God, but according to the grace and power and energy that is common to the Father and the Son and the Spirit. For the hypostasis of each is proper to each of these, and whatever belongs to it. Not only the superessential essence is common, which is nameless to all and unrevealed and unparticipated, since it is above every name and appearance and participation; but also the grace and power and energy and radiance and royalty and incorruptibility, and simply everything by which God has fellowship and is united by grace with the holy angels and men. God does not lose his simplicity either because of the division and distinction of the hypostases, or because of the division and diversity of the powers and energies. Thus for us there is one omnipotent God in one Godhead. For neither would God be composite from perfect hypostases, nor would that which is able, inasmuch as it has power or powers, ever truly be called composite just because of its ability.

4. In addition to these, we venerate, on the basis of their relationship, the holy image of the Son of God who has been depicted as made man for our sake, referring the veneration relatively to the prototype; and the honorable wood of the cross, and all the symbols of his sufferings, as being glorious trophies of victory over the common enemy of our race;² and in addition we venerate the salutary form of the honorable cross, the glorious temples and places and the sacred vessels and the God-given scriptures because of the God who dwells in them. In the same manner we venerate also the images of all the saints because of our love for them and the God whom these truly loved and served, in the veneration of the images carrying our thoughts to the

2. *common enemy of our race*—Satan.

forms of the images. We venerate also the very tombs of the saints, because the sanctifying grace did not depart from the same most sacred bones, just as death did not separate divinity from the Lord's body during the three days.

5. We know nothing that is evil in its essence. We do not know any other origin of evil than the deviation of rational beings, who misused the free will given by God. We embrace all the traditions of the church, written and unwritten, and above all the most mystical and all-sacred sacrament and Communion and assembly, from which comes the perfection of the other sacraments. In this sacrament for remembrance of him who emptied himself without emptying and who took flesh and suffered on our behalf, as he taught and as he himself performed it, the most divine mysteries are celebrated and consecrated, the bread and the cup are sanctified as that very life-giving body and blood; and he grants the ineffable partaking and Communion of them to those who approach in purity. We reject and subject to anathema all those who do not confess and believe as the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets, as the Lord uttered when he appeared to us in flesh, as the apostles preached when they were sent by him, as our fathers and their successors taught us, but who instead have either begun their own heresies or have followed to the end those who made a bad beginning.

6. We accept and embrace the holy ecumenical councils: that in Nicaea of the 318 God-fearing fathers against Arius³ the enemy of God, who reduced the Son of God impiously to a creature and who split into created and uncreated the Godhead worshipped in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; the next in Constantinople of the 150 holy fathers against Macedonius of Constantinople,⁴ who impiously reduced the Holy Spirit to a creature and who was no less guilty of splitting the one Godhead into created and uncreated; the third in Ephesus of the 200 fathers against Nestorius the patriarch of Constantinople, who rejected the unity of divinity and humanity in the hypostasis of Christ, and who refused to call *Theotokos* the Virgin who truly

3. *Arius*—a theologian (256-336) whose theology was deemed heretical for emphasizing the divinity of God the Father over that of the Son. See section “Incarnational Theology and Arian Controversies” in Part I of *Essential Texts*.

4. *Macedonius of Constantinople*—bishop of Constantinople from 342 to 346. Macedonius maintained that the Son was “like” (*homoiousios*) the Father but not of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father.

bore God; and the fourth in Chalcedon of the 630 fathers against Eutyches and Dioscurus⁵ who heretically taught one nature in Christ; and the fifth in Constantinople of the 165 fathers against Theodore and Diodore⁶ who believed the same as Nestorius and who upheld his heresies through their writings, and against Origen and Didymus and a certain Evagrius,⁷ who belonged to an earlier time but tried to introduce some mythological ideas in the church of God; and the sixth in the same city [Constantinople] of the 170 fathers against Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paulus, patriarchs of Constantinople,⁸ who rejected in Christ the two energies and two wills corresponding to the two natures; and the seventh again in Nicaea of the 367 fathers against the iconoclasts.

7. We embrace also all the holy synods assembled by the grace of God in various times and places to strengthen the orthodox and evangelical community: in particular those gathered in this great city in the renowned temple of the Holy Wisdom of God against Barlaam the Calabrian⁹ and Akindynos, who follows [Barlaam's] teaching and strives by deceit to avenge him. They count as created things the common grace of the Father, Son, and Spirit, as well as the light of the age to come, by which the just will shine like the sun (as also Christ showed in advance when he shone on the mountain, and indeed every power and energy of the trihypostatic Godhead and every property of the divine nature). They also impiously split the one Godhead into created

5. *Eutyches and Dioscurus*—Eutyches (an archimandrite in Constantinople, ca. 378–452) and Dioscurus (patriarch of Alexandria, 444–454) insisted that Christ's humanity was fully absorbed by his divinity. Accepting two natures in Christ, said Eutyches and Dioscurus, was tantamount to Nestorianism.

6. *Theodore and Diodore*—Theodore (ca. 350–428) was bishop of Mopsuestia in modern Turkey; Diodore (d. ca. 390) was a monk and theologian born in Antioch.

7. *Origen and Didymus and a certain Evagrius*—Origen (128–254) was a prominent, early theologian, although a number of his views, such as universal salvation and the pre-existence of souls, were later deemed heretical. Didymus the Blind (313–398) was a devotee of Origen; the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 condemned Didymus's works. Evagrius Ponticus (345–399) was also accused of Origenist sympathies.

8. *Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paulus, patriarchs of Constantinople*—Sergius I (610–638); Pyrrhus I (638–641); Paul II (641–653).

9. *Barlaam the Calabrian*—see document “Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) on Hesychasm, Prayer, and Deification” in Part II, section “Hesychasm” of *Essential Texts*.

and uncreated. As for us who teach piously that that most divine light and every divine power and energy are uncreated (since nothing that belongs to God by nature can be recent), they call us ditheists and polytheists, as also the Jews, Sabellians,¹⁰ and Arians name us. But we reject both the later and the earlier heretics, since they are truly atheists and polytheists. From the community of the orthodox, as the holy catholic and apostolic church of Christ decreed by the synodical and hagioritical tome, we cut them off completely, because we believe in one trihypostatic and omnipotent Godhead, which by no means departs from unity and simplicity because of the powers or the hypostases. In addition to all these we expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the unending age to come. Amen.

10. *Sabellians*—followers of the theologian Sabellius (late 100s to early 200s), who claimed that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were not separate entities. Instead, they were simply manifestations of the same God, much like water, steam, and ice are all manifestations of H₂O.

20. Russian Hermeticism

We devoted some attention to the Christianization of Russia in an earlier section,¹ but any discussion of Orthodox monasticism or Russian Orthodoxy would be incomplete without some attention to the Russian monastic tradition.

1. See section “Missions to the North: Balkans and Rus” in Part II of *Essential Texts*. See also section “10. Missions to the North: Balkans and Rus” in this volume.



Figure 103. Mikhail Nesterov, “The Hermit,” 1889, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

As noted earlier, monks served as the first Byzantine missionaries to the Slavs. According to the *Primary Chronicle*—a history of early Russia compiled over several centuries by Byzantine and Russian monks—the famous Caves Monastery (*Pecherskaia Lavra*) in Kiev—the center of Kievan Rus’—was established in 1051. The *Chronicle* reports that Antony, a Greek monk from the Esphigmenon monastery on Mount Athos, settled in Kiev after entering Rus’ as a missionary. He chose a cave

on Mount Berestov (really a good-sized hill) overlooking the Dnieper River, and he soon attracted a cadre of disciples. The monks excavated a series of additional caves and underground passages (hard labor not fit for claustrophobes) in which they lived and worshipped. Prince Iziaslav of Kiev, delighted to see the beginnings of a major monastic center in his realm, granted all of Mount Berestov to monks from Mount Athos. Later Kievan princes and nobleman donated money and building materials, funded fortifications around the monastery, and paid for architects from Constantinople.



Figure 104. Kievan Rus, 1000s

One of Antony's disciples was Theodosius, a man from a wealthy family who had been rejected by other monasteries in the area. Theodosius succeeded Antony to become abbot (1062–

1074). During his tenure the number of monks in the community reached nearly 100, spilling out of the caves into newly-constructed abodes above ground. As the community continued to grow, Theodosius dispatched a monk to Constantinople to obtain a copy of the Studios monastery's rule, which he adopted for his community in Kiev. The Caves Monastery thus continued the Athonite tradition that itself continued the cenobitic tradition begun by St. Basil.

Although a stickler for the rules, Theodosius was known for his self-sacrifice and insistence on leading by example. Humility and self-abnegation—while certainly admired and celebrated in Byzantine monasticism—would become hallmarks of the Russian monastic ideal. Monasteries modeled on the Caves Monastery sprang up throughout Kievan Rus', and their residents exerted enormous influence on the church: by the 1300s some fifty monks from the monastery had been appointed bishops.

The Mongol invasion of Rus' in 1237 impeded founding new monasteries; Mongols captured Kiev in 1240 and then ruled much of Rus' until 1480. Many monasteries, especially in urban centers, were destroyed during the initial conquest. Once the Mongols had a firm grip on power, they taxed ecclesiastical institutions heavily but otherwise left surviving monasteries to govern themselves.

Early monasteries in Rus' almost always stood in or near towns. In a sense, then, the development of monasticism in Rus' proved the obverse of its development in Byzantium, where early hermits fled from urban centers. Cenobiticism, having been imported into Rus' in a mature form from Byzantium, established itself more quickly and thoroughly in Rus' than in the early Byzantine Empire.

This is not to say that hermitic monasticism was unknown in early Rus': Antony, the founder of the Caves Monastery in Kiev, established himself as a hermit when he first crawled into his cave. But hermitic monasticism emerged as a major force in Russia only later. Sketes—small communities of hermits following a common rule—proliferated in northern Rus' in the early 1300s.



Figure 105. Russian monasticism, 1200-1600 C.E.

20.1 Life of St. Sergei (n.d.)

Epiphanius, “The Life, Acts, and Miracles of Our Reverend and Holy Father Abbot Sergius,” trans. Nicolas Zernov, in *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, ed. G. P. Fedotov (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1948), 54–81. Used by permission of Rowman & Littlefield.



Figure 106. Mikhail Nesterov, “Vision of Young Bartholomew,” 1890, a depiction of St. Sergei as a youth

Russia’s most famous monk is St. Sergei of Radonezh (1314–1392). A version of his life appears below, in which we find much that is reminiscent of the Egyptian hermits whom Sergei worked to emulate. Sergei could not, of course, become a “desert father,” since northern Russia has no deserts. Instead, the vast *taiga*, or coniferous forests, north of the great Russian steppe served as Sergei’s desert.



Figure 107. Russian taiga

Like St. Antony, Sergei sought solitude, but also, like Antony, he could not escape the holy strivers who sought him out. As monks gathered around him, Sergei and his nascent community established the Holy Trinity Monastery, about seventy kilometers northeast of Moscow, which would become the most influential monastery in the country. A popular saying asserted that the three most powerful men in Russia were the tsar, the patriarch, and the abbot of the Trinity Monastery.



Figure 108. Nikolai Rerikh, "St. Sergius the Builder," 1924

While a gentle and selfless man, Sergei was no pacifist. The Mongol invaders—the “Golden Horde,” which ruled Rus’ in the 1300s—permitted the populace to practice Christianity freely, but they taxed the church and local princes heavily. When the Russian prince, Dmitry Donskoi, audaciously refused to pay the regular tribute, the Mongol ruler attacked. Prince Dmitry visited Sergei at the Trinity Monastery to receive the abbot’s blessing for battle. Sergei blessed the prince, prophesied victory, and sent two monks to the battlefield to pray for Dmitry’s troops. The famous victory at Kulikovo Field on the Don River (1380) marked the beginning of the end of Mongol rule.

One day [Sergei’s] father sent him to seek for a lost foal. On his way he met a monk, a venerable elder, a stranger, a priest, with the appearance of an angel. This stranger was standing beneath an oak tree, praying devoutly and with much shedding of tears. The boy, seeing him, humbly made a low obeisance,² and awaited the end of his prayers.

The venerable monk, when he had ended his oraisons,³ glanced at the boy and, conscious that he beheld the chosen of the Holy Spirit, he called him to his side, blessed him, bestowed on him a kiss in the name of Christ, and asked: “What are you seeking, or what do you want, child?”

The boy answered, “My soul desires above all things to understand the holy scriptures. I have to study reading and writing and I am sorely vexed that I cannot learn these things. Will you, holy father, pray to God for me, that he will give me understanding of book-learning?”

The monk raised his hands and his eyes toward Heaven, sighed, prayed to God, then said, “Amen.”

Taking out from his satchel, as it were some treasure, with three fingers, he handed to the boy what appeared to be a little bit of white wheaten bread of the holy sacrament, saying to him, “Take this in your mouth, child, and eat; this is given to you as a sign of God’s grace and for the understanding of holy scriptures. Though the gift appears but small its taste is very sweet.”

2. *made a low obeisance*—bowed low.

3. *oraisons*—prayers.

The boy opened his mouth and ate, tasting a sweetness as of honey, and he said, "Is it not written, 'How sweet are your words to my palate, more than honey to my lips, and my soul cherishes them exceedingly?'"

The monk answered and said, "If you believe, child, more than this will be revealed to you; and do not vex yourself about reading and writing; you will find that from this day forth the Lord will give you learning above that of your brothers and others of your own age."

Having thus informed him of divine favor, the monk prepared to proceed on his way. But the boy flung himself, with his face to the ground, at the feet of the monk, and besought him to come and visit his parents, saying, "My parents dearly love persons such as you are, father."

The monk, astonished at his faith, accompanied him to his parents' house. At the sight of the stranger, Kirill and Maria came out to meet him and bowed low before him. The monk blessed them, and they offered him food, but, before accepting any food, the monk went into the chapel, taking with him the boy whose consecration had been signified even before birth, and began a recitation of the canonical hours,⁴ telling the boy to read the Psalms.

The boy said, "I do not know them, father." The monk replied, "I told you that from today the Lord would give you knowledge in reading and writing; read the word of God nothing doubting."

Whereupon, to the astonishment of all present, the boy, receiving the monk's blessing, began to recite in excellent rhythm; and from that hour he could read. His parents and brothers praised God, and after accompanying the monk to the house placed food before him. Having eaten, and bestowed a blessing on the parents, the monk was anxious to proceed on his way. But the parents pleaded, "Reverend father, hurry not away, but stay and comfort us and calm our fears. Our humble son, whom you bless and praise, is to us an object of marvel. While he was yet in his mother's womb, three times he uttered a cry in church during holy Mass. Therefore we fear and doubt of what is to be, and what he is to do."

The holy monk, after considering and becoming aware of that which was to be, exclaimed, "O blessed pair, O worthy couple, giving birth to such a child! Why do you fear where there is no place for fear?"

4. *canonical hours*—a series of prayers throughout the day.

Rather rejoice and be glad, for the boy will be great before God and man, thanks to his life of godliness.”

Having thus spoken, the monk left, pronouncing a dark saying that their son would serve the Holy Trinity and would lead many to an understanding of the divine precepts. They accompanied him to the doorway of their house, when he suddenly became invisible. Perplexed, they wondered if he had been an angel, sent to give the boy knowledge of reading. After the departure of the monk, it became evident that the boy could read any book, and was altogether changed; he was submissive in all things to his parents, striving to fulfill their wishes, and never disobedient. Applying himself solely to glorifying God, and rejoicing therein, he attended assiduously in God’s church, being present daily at matins, at the Mass, at vespers. He studied holy scripts, and at all times, in every way, he disciplined his body and preserved himself in purity of body and soul. [...]

Our saint, Sergei, had not taken monastic vows at this time or, as yet, he had not enough experience of monasteries, and of all that is required of a monk. After a while, however, he invited a spiritual elder, who held the dignity of priest and abbot, named Metrofan,⁵ to come and visit him in his solitude. In great humility he entreated him, “Father, may the love of God be with us, and give me the tonsure of a monk. From childhood have I loved God and set my heart on him these many years, but my parents’ needs withheld me. Now, my lord and father, I am free from all bonds, and I thirst, as the hart⁶ thirsts for the springs of living water.”

The abbot forthwith went into the chapel with him, and gave him the tonsure on the 7th day of October on the feast day of the blessed martyrs Sergei and Bacchus.⁷ And Sergei was the name he received as monk. In those days it was the custom to give to the newly-tonsured monk the name of the saint whose feast day it happened to be. Our saint was twenty-three years old when he joined the order of monks. Blessed Sergei, the newly-tonsured monk, partook of the holy sacra-

5. *Metrofan*—likely a monk who was not attached to a monastery and instead performed the duties of a parish priest.

6. *hart*—a grown, male deer.

7. *Sergei and Bacchus*—Roman soldiers recognized as martyrs by both the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches. According to legend, the Roman emperor Maximian (285-305) sent them to Syria, where, after refusing to worship Roman gods, they were tortured and killed.

ment and received grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit. From one whose witness is true and sure, we are told that when Sergei partook of the holy sacrament the chapel was filled with a sweet odor; and not only in the chapel, but all around was the same fragrant smell. The saint remained in the chapel seven days, touching no food other than one consecrated loaf given him by the abbot, refusing all else and giving himself up to fasting and prayer, having on his lips the psalms of David.

When Metrofan bade farewell St. Sergei in all humility, [Sergei] said to him, "Give me your blessing and pray regarding my solitude; and instruct one living alone in the wilderness how to pray to the Lord God; how to remain unharmed; how to wrestle with the enemy and with his own temptations to pride, for I am but a novice and a newly-tonsured monk."

The abbot was astonished and almost afraid. He replied, "You ask of me concerning that which you know no less well than we do, O noble father." After discoursing with him for a while on spiritual matters, and commending him to God, Metrofan went away, leaving St. Sergei alone to silence and the wilderness.

Who can recount his labors? Who can number the trials he endured living alone in the wilderness?

Under different forms and from time to time the devil wrestled with the saint, but the demons beset St. Sergei in vain; no matter what visions they evoked, they failed to overcome the firm and fearless spirit of the ascetic. At one moment, Satan, who laid his snares; at another, incursions of wild beasts took place, for many were the wild animals inhabiting this wilderness. Some of these remained at a distance, others came near the saint, surrounded him and even sniffed him. In particular a bear used to come to the holy man. Seeing the animal did not come to harm him, but in order to get some food, the saint brought a small slice of bread from his hut, and placed it on a log or stump, so the bear learned to come for the meal thus prepared for him, and having eaten it went away again. If there was no bread, and the bear did not find his usual slice, he would wait about for a long while and look around on all sides, rather like some money-lender waiting to receive payment of his debt. At this time Sergei had no variety of foods in the wilderness, only bread and water from the spring, and a great scarcity of these. Often bread was not to be found; then both he and the bear went hungry. Sometimes, although there was but one single slice of

bread, the saint gave it to the bear, being unwilling to disappoint him of his food.

He diligently read the holy scriptures to obtain a knowledge of all virtue; in his secret meditations training his mind in a longing for eternal bliss. Most wonderful of all, none knew the measure of his ascetic and godly life spent in solitude. God, the beholder of all hidden things, alone saw it.

Whether he lived two years or more in the wilderness alone, we do not know; God knows only. The Lord, seeing his very great faith and patience, took compassion on him and, desirous of relieving his solitary labors, put into the hearts of certain God-fearing monks to visit him.

The saint inquired of them, "Are you able to endure the hardships of this place, hunger and thirst, and every kind of want?" They replied, "Yes, revered father, we are willing with God's help and with your prayers."

Holy Sergei, seeing their faith and zeal, marveled, and said, "My brethren, I desired to dwell alone in the wilderness and, furthermore, to die in this place. If it be God's will that there shall be a monastery in this place, and that many brethren will be gathered here, then may God's holy will be done. I welcome you with joy, but let each one of you build himself a cell. Furthermore, let it be known to you, if you come to dwell in the wilderness, the beginning of righteousness is the fear of the Lord." [...]

Within the space of a year the abbot who had given the tonsure to St. Sergei fell ill and, after a short while, he passed out of this life. Then God put it into the hearts of the brethren to go to blessed Sergei, and to say to him, "Father, we cannot continue without an abbot. We desire you to be our abbot, and the guide of our souls and bodies."

The saint sighed from the bottom of his heart, and replied, "I have had no thought of becoming abbot, for my soul longs to finish its course here as an ordinary monk." The brethren urged him again and again to be their abbot; finally, overcome by his compassionate love, but groaning inwardly, he said, "Fathers and brethren, I will say no more against it, and will submit to the will of God; he sees into our hearts and souls. We will go into the town, to the bishop." [...]

He never sent away anyone who came to him for the tonsure, neither old nor young, nor rich nor poor; he received them all with fervent joy; but he did not give them the tonsure at once. He who would be a monk was ordered, first, to put on a long, black cloth gar-

ment and to live with the brethren until he got accustomed to all the monastic rules; then, later, he was given full monk's attire of cloak and hood. Finally, when he was deemed worthy, he was allowed the "schema,"⁸ the mark of the ascetic.

After vespers, and late at night, especially on long dark nights, the saint used to leave his cell and go the round of the monks' cells. If he heard anyone saying his prayers, or making genuflections, or busy with his own handiwork, he was gratified and gave thanks to God. If, on the other hand, he heard two or three monks chatting together, or laughing, he was displeased, rapped on the door or window, and passed on. In the morning he would send for them and, indirectly, quietly and gently, by means of some parable, reprove them. If he was a humble and submissive brother he would quickly admit his fault and, bowing low before St. Sergeï, would beg his forgiveness. If, instead, he was not a humble brother, and stood erect thinking he was not the person referred to, then the saint, with patience, would make it clear to him, and order him to do a public penance.⁹ In this way they all learned to pray to God assiduously; not to chat with one another after vespers; and to do their own handiwork with all their might; and to have the psalms of David all day on their lips.

In the beginning, when the monastery was first built, many were the hardships and privations. A main road lay a long way off, and wilderness surrounded the monastery. Here the monks lived, it is believed, for fifteen years. Then, in the time of the Grand Duke Ivan Ivanovich,¹⁰ Christians¹¹ began to arrive from all parts and to settle in the vicinity. The forest was cut down, there was no one to prevent it; the trees were hewn down, none were spared, and the forest was converted into an open plain as we now see it. A village was built, and houses; and visitors came to the monastery bringing their countless offerings. But in the beginning, when they settled in this place, they all suffered great privations. At times there was no bread or flour, and all means of subsistence were lacking; at times there was no wine for the Eucharist, nor incense, nor wax candles. The monks sang matins at dawn with no lights, save that of a single birch or pine torch. [...]

8. *schema*—a habit or cloak worn by monks.

9. *public penance*—a custom attributed to St. Theodosius and derived from the Greek Studite rule.

10. *Grand Duke Ivan Ivanovich*—1353–1359.

11. *Christians*—the word here refers to peasants.

So shabby were [St. Sergei's] clothes, worse than [those] of any of the monks, that several people were misled and did not recognize him. One day a Christian from a nearby village, who had never seen the saint, came to visit him. The abbot was digging in the garden. The visitor looked about and asked, "Where is Sergei? Where is the wonderful and famous man?"

A brother replied, "In the garden, digging; wait a while, until he comes in."

The visitor, growing impatient, peeped through an aperture, and perceived the saint wearing shabby attire, patched, in holes, and face covered with sweat; and he could not believe that this was he of whom he had heard. When the saint came from the garden, the monks informed him, "This is he whom you wish to see."

The visitor turned from the saint and mocked him: "I came to see a prophet and you point out to me a needy-looking beggar. I see no glory, no majesty and honor about him. He wears no fine and rich apparel; he has no attendants, no trained servants; he is but a needy, indigent beggar."

The brethren, reporting to the abbot, said, "We hardly dare tell you, revered father, and we would send away your guest as a good-for-nothing, rude fellow; he has been discourteous and disrespectful about you, reproaches us, and will not listen to us."

The holy man, fixing his eyes on the brethren and seeing their confusion, said to them, "Do not do so, brethren, for he did not come to see you. He came to visit me." And, since he expected no obeisance from his visitor, he went toward him, humbly bowing low to the ground before him, and blessed and praised him for his right judgment. Then, taking him by the hand, the saint sat him down at his right hand, and bade him partake of food and drink. The visitor expressed his regret at not seeing Sergei, whom he had taken the trouble to come and visit; and his wish had not been fulfilled. The saint remarked, "Be not sad about it, for such is God's grace that no one ever leaves this place with a heavy heart." [...]

We will now turn to the miracles God performs through his elect. Owing to lack of water near the monastery, the brotherhood suffered great discomfort, which increased with their numbers and having to carry water from a distance. Some of the monks even complained to the abbot, "When you set out to build a monastery on this spot, why did you not observe that it was not near water?" They repeated this query with vexation, often.

The saint told them, “I intended to worship and pray in this place alone. But God willed that a monastery such as this, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, should arise.”

Going out of the monastery, accompanied by one of the brethren, he made his way through a ravine below the monastery, and finding a small pool of rain water, he knelt down and prayed. No sooner had he made the sign of the cross over the spot, than a bubbling spring arose, which is still to be seen to this day, and from whence water is drawn to supply every need of the monastery.

Many cures have been granted to the faithful from the waters; and people have come from long distances to fetch the water and carry it away and to give it to their sick to drink. From the time it appeared, and for a number of years, the spring was called after Sergei. The wise man, not seeking renown, was displeased, and remarked, “Never let me hear that a well is called by my name. I did not give this water; God gave it to us unworthy men.” [...]

Living on the banks of the Volga, a long distance away from the lavra,¹² was a man who owned great possessions, but who was afflicted incessantly, day and night, by a cruel and evil spirit. Not only did he break iron chains, but ten or more strong men could not hold him. His relatives, hearing tell of the saint, journeyed with him to the monastery, where dwelt the servant of the Lord. When they came to the monastery the madman broke loose from his bonds, and flung himself about, crying, “I will not go, I will not. I will go back from whence I came.” They informed the saint, who gave the order to sound the “bilo,”¹³ and when the brethren were assembled they sang the *Te Deum* for the sick. The madman grew calmer little by little, and when he was led into the monastery, the saint came out of church, carrying a cross, whereupon the sufferer, with a loud cry, fled from the spot, and flung himself into a pool of rainwater standing nearby, exclaiming, “O horrible, O terrible flame.” By the grace of God and the saint’s prayers he recovered, and was restored to his right mind. When they inquired what he meant by his exclamation, he told them, “When the saint wanted to bless me with the cross, I saw a great flame proceeding from him, and

12. *lavra*—an honorary name bestowed on the four great monasteries in Russia, including that of St. Sergei.

13. *bilo*—a percussion instrument, consisting of a long piece of planed timber, used in monasteries to summon monks to prayer.

it seized hold of me. So I threw myself into the water, fearing that I should be consumed in the flame.” [...]

One day some Greeks arrived from Constantinople, sent by the patriarch to visit the saint. Making a deep obeisance they said to him, “The all-powerful patriarch of Constantinople, Philotheus, sends you his blessing,” and they presented him with gifts from the patriarch, a cross and a paramand,¹⁴ and also handed him a letter from him.

The saint asked, “Are you sure you have not been sent to someone else? How can I, a sinner, be worthy of such gifts from the most illustrious patriarch?”

They replied, “We have indeed been sent to you, holy Sergei.” The elder went then to see the metropolitan, Aleksei, and took with him the missive brought from the patriarch. The metropolitan ordered the epistle to be read to him. It ran, “By the grace of God, the archbishop of Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarch Philotheus, by the Holy Spirit, to our son and fellow-servant Sergei. Divine grace and peace, and our blessing be with you. We have heard tell of your godly life dedicated to God, for which we greatly praise and glorify God. One thing, however, has not been established; you have not formed a community. Take note, blessed one, that even the great prophet and our father in God, David, embracing all things with his mind, could not bestow higher praise than when he said, ‘But now, however good and however perfect, yet, above all, is abiding together in brotherly love.’ Therefore I counsel you to establish a community. That God’s blessing and his grace be always upon you.” The elder inquired of the metropolitan, “Revered teacher, what would you have us do?” The metropolitan replied, “With all our heart we approve, and return thanks.”

From henceforth life on the basis of community was established in the monastery. The saint, wise pastor, appointed to each brother his duties, one to be cellarer,¹⁵ others to be cooks and bakers, another to care for the sick, and for church duties, an ecclesiarch,¹⁶ and a sub-ecclesiarch,¹⁷ and sacristans,¹⁸ and so forth. He further an-

14. *paramand*—a square cloth, embroidered with the instruments of the passion, worn to symbolize the yoke of Christ.

15. *cellarer*—the monk responsible for the monastery’s provisions.

16. *ecclesiarch*—a monk responsible for caring for eucharistic elements, the baptismal font, relics, church decorations, etc.

17. *sub-ecclesiarch*—the ecclesiarch’s assistant.

nounced that the ordinances of the holy fathers were to be strictly observed; all things were to be possessed in common, no monk was to hold property of his own.

His community having been established with much wisdom, the numbers of his followers soon increased. Also, the larger the supply of offerings to the monastery, the more hospitality was extended. No person in need ever left the monastery empty-handed; and the saint gave orders that the poor and all strangers were to be allowed to rest in the monastery, and no suppliant to be refused, adding, "If you will follow my precepts and continue in them faithfully, God will reward you, and when I leave this life our monastery will prosper and continue to stand with the Lord's blessing for many years." And to the present day it has remained standing. [...]

After a while, a Greek bishop came from Constantinople to Moscow, but, although he had heard a great deal about the saint, his doubts about him prevailed, for, he reasoned, "How can such a light have appeared in this savage land, more especially in these latter days?" He, therefore, resolved to go to the monastery and see the saint. When he drew near to the monastery, fear entered his soul and, as soon as he entered the monastery and beheld the saint, blindness fell upon him. The venerable Sergei took him by the hand and led him to his cell. The bishop, with tears, confessed his doubts to the saint, and prayed for the recovery of his sight. The gentle lover of humility touched his blinded pupils and, as it were, scales fell from his eyes, and instantly he recovered his sight. The bishop proclaimed to all that the saint was indeed a man of God and that, in God's mercy, he himself had been deemed worthy to behold a celestial man and an earthly angel. [...]

18. *sacristans*—monks responsible for vestments.

21. Rise of the Moscow Patriarchate

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

21.1 Legendary Origin of Muscovy (ca. 1523–1533)

“A Legend about the Origin of the Muscovite Dynasty,” in *Source Book for Russian History, Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, 1:159. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

As the Muscovite state grew stronger, particularly after driving out the last of its Mongol conquerors in 1480, it crafted a history for itself commensurate with its aspirations. Contemporary church scholars, using sources mostly unknown to us, wrote several histories in the early 1500s. In later years other Muscovite chroniclers incorporated these histories into their own works.



Figure 109. Muscovy, ca. 1500

The history below is from a manuscript found in the Joseph Volokolamsk Monastery, about eighty miles west of Moscow. Although riddled with falsehoods, it tells us much about how the Muscovite church and state wished to be viewed, namely as important institutions with roots in antiquity and revered by the Byzantine emperor himself.

[...] Augustus, the Roman caesar [...] began to impose tribute upon the whole world. [...] And he established [...] Prus, his kinsman, on the banks of the river Vistula [...] up to the river called Nieman, which flows into the sea. Prus lived for many years, until the fourth generation; and thenceforth and to this day it is called the Prussian land.

At that time a certain voevoda¹ of Novgorod, Gostomysl by name, was nearing the end of his life; and he called to him all the rulers of Novgorod and said to them: “O men of Novgorod, this is my counsel to you: that you send wise men to the Prussian land and invite a ruler for yourselves from among the lines that are there.” And they went to the Prussian land and found there a certain prince, Riurik by name, who was of the lineage of the Roman caesar Augustus. And the envoys from all the people of Novgorod besought Prince Riurik to come and rule over them. And Prince Riurik came to Novgorod, bringing with him his two brothers, one Truvor by name and the other Sineus, and a third person, his nephew Oleg. And thenceforth it was called Novgorod the Great; and the grand prince Riurik was the first to rule there.

The fourth generation from Prince Riurik was the grand prince Vladimir, he who illumined the Russian land through holy baptism in the year 6496.² And the fourth generation from Prince Vladimir was the grand prince Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh, his great-grandson. When he reigned in Kiev as grand prince [...] he gathered a host of many thousands, and he sent them to Thrace, a province of Tsargrad, and they took many captives and returned with great wealth.

And the pious tsar³ Constantine Monomachus then reigned in Tsargrad;⁴ at that time he was waging war against the Persians and the Latins. And he reached a wise and regal decision, and dispatched envoys to the grand prince Vladimir Vsevolodovich: Neophytus, metropolitan of Ephesus, and with him two bishops [...] and some of his nobles. And from his neck [Constantine Monomachus] took the life-giving cross made of the very life-giving wood upon which the Lord

1. *voevoda*—military governor.

2. *the year 6496*—988.

3. *tsar*—emperor.

4. *Tsargrad*—Constantinople.

Jesus had been crucified. Likewise he took the tsar's crown from his head and placed it upon a golden tray; and he ordered brought to him [...] the necklet he wore on his shoulders, and a chain wrought from Arabian gold, and many other princely gifts. And he gave them to the metropolitan Neophytus and the bishops and his noble envoys, and he sent them to the grand prince Vladimir Vsevolodovich, entreating him and speaking thus: "Accept from us, O God-loving faithful prince, these worthy gifts, which since the immemorial beginnings of your lineage and descent have been the tsar's lot, for glory and for honor, and for your crowning as a free and autocratic tsar. And our envoys shall entreat you that we ask your grace for peace and friendship, so that God's churches may be undisturbed, and all Orthodoxy may live in peace under the present power of our empire and under your free autocratic rule over great Russia. And may you be known henceforth as the God-crowned tsar, crowned with this tsar's crown by the hand of the most holy metropolitan Lord Neophytus and the bishops."

And from that time on, the grand prince Vladimir Vsevolodovich was called Monomakh, tsar of great Russia. And afterward in the years that followed he lived in peace and friendship with Tsar Konstantin. Thenceforth and to this day the grand princes of Vladimir have been crowned with that crown of the tsars.

21.2 Stoglav Council (1551)

Jack Kollman, *The Moscow Stoglav ("Hundred Chapters") Church Council of 1551* (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1978), 264, 252, 270, 281–282, 286, 295, 298, 339, 349, 357–360, 396–397, 416, 476–477, 529–530, 533–534, 536, 538–541, 550, 556–557, 559. Used by permission of Jack Kollman. “The Stoglav, 1551,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:165–166. Used by permission of Yale University Press.



Figure 110. Sergei Ivanov (1864-1910), “Zemsky Sobor,” an imagined depiction of the tsar meeting with boiars and clerics

Now that the Russian church was independent of Constantinople, the question of relations between the Muscovite church and state became more complex. A council of the Russian church assembled in 1551 to sort through multiple issues. Tsar Ivan IV (“Ivan the Terrible”) attended, as did representatives from the “Boiar Duma,” an advisory council to the tsar, which included the highest-ranking members of the Russian aristocracy.

Tsar Ivan hoped the council would endorse his desire to secularize church lands and make clerics subject to secular courts. It did not: the majority of delegates decisively rejected

these proposals. In fact the council ruled that ecclesiastical properties were inviolable and that only church courts enjoyed jurisdiction over clerics. As a concession, however, the council agreed that monasteries would not found any new settlements.

The council spent much of its time standardizing the Russian liturgy and the way in which churches were administered. It passed resolutions to provide clergy with better education and to hold them to a higher level of moral conduct. The council also condemned heretical movements and pagan practices, an indication that Russia in the mid-1500s was by no means a uniformly Orthodox country.

The council's pronouncements numbered one hundred, hence the name *Stoglav* or "Hundred Chapters." The following resolutions offer insights into issues on churchmen's minds: regulating icon painters, fixing corruptions in service books, educating and selecting priests, keeping priests sober, preventing laziness in monasteries, defining what falls under the church's jurisdiction, guarding against foreign influence, preventing the faithful from joining sects and cults, and saving clergy and laity from sexual immorality.

• Paganism •

Chapter 41: [...] On Trinity Saturday⁵ throughout villages and parish districts men and women are gathering on graves, and they are wailing among the tombs with great screaming. And then the minstrels and male and female fiddlers begin to play. After their wailing ceases, they begin to leap, dance, clap their hands and sing satanic songs. [The people gathering] on these same graves include deceivers and swindlers. [...]

Chapter 41: [...] At the pagan festivities around [Saint] John's Day,⁶ on Christmas Eve and on the eve of Epiphany,⁷ men, women, and maidens are gathering for nocturnal licentiousness, indecent conversation, diabolic songs, dancing, leaping and sacrilegious acts. Boys are being corrupted and girls depraved. And as night is departing they

5. *Trinity Saturday*—seven weeks after Easter.

6. *[Saint] John's Day*—24 June.

7. *eve of the Epiphany*—6 January.

go to the river with great screaming, as if from devils, and bathe in the water. And when the bells begin to ring for matins, they depart to their homes and collapse, as if dead from the great turmoil. [...]

Chapter 41: [...] And before sunrise on Great Thursday,⁸ straw is being burned and the dead summoned; some ignorant priests are even placing salt under the altar on Great Thursday, and they keep it there until the seventh Thursday after the Great Day,⁹ and they distribute this salt as a cure for people and cattle. [...]

[...] [A]t each new moon or on Great Thursday, people put tinder on a piece of wood (this piece of wood has tinder at both ends), and they place the ends against a second piece of wood and rub them together until fire issues forth. And they burn this fire at the gates or in front of the doors of their homes or in front of their shops, one place or the other, and they pass through the fire with their wives and children, practicing sorcery according to an ancient custom.

Chapter 92: [...] There are still many ignorant, simple children, Orthodox Christians in cities and villages, who are indulging in Hellenistic demonic madness, various games and handclapping, at night on the eve of the holiday of the nativity¹⁰ of the great John the Precursor,¹¹ and on the holiday itself, all day until night. Men, women, and children are going about along streets and to bodies of water, indulging in diversions, all sorts of games, all sorts of amusements, satanic songs, dances, playing on psalteries, committing many other types of shameless spectacles, and even getting drunk.

Similar things are being done on the eve and the day of the Nativity of Christ, on the eve of [the holiday of] Basil the Great¹² and on the eve of Epiphany.¹³ Moreover, other types of such improper acts are being committed on Trinity Saturday,¹⁴ and on the first Monday of the Fast of [Saint] Peter,¹⁵ after the beginning of that fast, people are going about among villages and parish districts, indulging in amuse-

8. *Great Thursday*—Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter.

9. *Great Day*—Easter.

10. *holiday of the nativity*—24 June.

11. *John the Precursor*—John the Baptist.

12. *[the holiday of] Basil the Great*—30 January.

13. *Epiphany*—6 January.

14. *Trinity Saturday*—seven weeks after Easter.

15. *Fast of [Saint] Peter*—eight weeks after Easter.

ments like [this] same improper Hellenistic demonic madness, and are thereby angering God.

These simple children are openly sinning, yet no one restrains them by means of excommunication or interdiction, no priests chastise them, no judges intimidate them for committing such improper acts that are forbidden by the holy fathers. [...]

Chapter 93: [...] Instead of this demonic madness, Orthodox Christians from now and henceforth should occupy themselves with prayer in God's churches on such holy and venerable holidays and fast days, rejoicing with divine songs, listening attentively to the holy divine instruction, and standing with fear during divine liturgies. Afterward, they may entertain guests with food and drink in their houses, exalting God together with members of the sacerdotal order and with their friends, feeding the infirm, and celebrating the glory of God, but not getting drunk. [...]

• Icon painting •

Chapter 43: [...] [A]rchbishops and bishops shall investigate icon masters throughout all cities, hamlets and monasteries of their districts, and shall themselves examine their paintings. And after selecting those in their district who are distinguished master painters, they shall appoint them to watch over all icon painters, so that among them there shall be no bad or disobedient ones. And the archbishops and bishops shall themselves watch over these appointed painters and hold them in greater honor than ordinary men [...], for this iconography is an honorable art. [...]

Chapter 93: [...] Whoever is gifted by God to take up painting according to the model and likeness [of the subject], let that person paint. But whoever is not gifted, let him cease forever from such work; let not God's name be discredited by such painting. And if any persons do not cease from such work, they shall suffer the tsar's wrath and shall be tried. And if they make answer: "By this [work] do we live and support ourselves," such speech from them will not be heeded, for they do not know what they are saying and do not realize that they have sinned in this matter. Not all men are meant to be painters: for God has granted many and various crafts by which men are to support themselves and live besides icon painting, and God's image must not be subjected to reproach and shame. [...]

• Copying and correcting service books •

Chapter 9: [...] At matins it is said, in accordance with the true translation: “O Lord, it is good to confess to you and to sing in your name, O most high, to declare your grace in the morning and your truth each night.” Some persons arbitrarily say, contrary to the true [text]: “to declare your grace in the morning and your truth each day,” and others arbitrarily say “each time.” But the true wording according to the prophet David is, “to declare your grace in the morning and your truth each night.” [...]

Chapter 28: [...] [Scribes shall] copy from good translations. And after they have been written, [the copies] should be corrected, and only then shall they be sold; and uncorrected books should not be sold. And if any scribe, after having copied a book, sells the uncorrected copy, you should interdict him with great severity. And if anyone buys an uncorrected book from him, you should interdict that person in the same way, with great severity, so that henceforth they not do such a thing. And henceforth, if a seller and buyer be discovered doing this, you should take these books from them without recompense, and this action will in no way bring dishonor upon you. And after having been corrected, [the books] shall be donated to churches which are poor in books. [...]

• Educating and selecting priests •

Chapter 26: [...] Above all [teachers] should guard and preserve their pupils in total purity and protect them from any sort of corruption, especially from the filthy sins of sodomy and masturbation, and from all kinds of impurities, so that through [the teachers] protection and instruction they will reach maturity fit to hold the office of priest. And you should instruct your pupils about God’s holy churches and teach them the fear of God, teach them all kinds of decent behavior, the chanting of psalms, reading, singing, and the chanting of canons according to the ecclesiastical rubrics. [...]

Chapter 41: [...] In all holy churches in the metropolitanate, in archepiscopates and in episcopates, parishioners shall select priests, deacons and lectors who are talented and thoroughly literate, and whose lives are irreproachable. And [the parishioners] shall not take any money from them as recompense for the church or for themselves, and they shall accompany them to the prelate. After having taught and instructed [the candidates], the prelate shall give them his blessing. [...]

• Liturgical practice •

Chapter 5: [...] And people, in their sinfulness, have become audacious: they are standing without fear in God's cathedrals and parish churches in Tatar¹⁶ skullcaps and in [other] caps, and with walking sticks, as if they were in a marketplace, or at a disgraceful spectacle, or at a banquet, or in a tavern. And there is conversation, grumbling, all kinds of arguments and discussions, and disgraceful things are said. The divine singing is not heard amid the diversion. God's church was built to be entered for prayer, for praying with fear to God for the remission of sins. Instead, we are arousing God to anger. [...]

Chapter 5: [...] And priests themselves are chanting improperly in their churches, two or three at a time.¹⁷ And lay persons at the same time are creating diversions among themselves and indulging in all sorts of idle talk. Both of these practices are pernicious. Both shepherds and sheep have together gone astray and been ruined. And priests and unordained church servitors always stand in church drunk and without fear; they quarrel, and all sorts of improper speech always issues from their mouths. Lay persons, seeing their disorderliness, do likewise and are ruined. Priests struggle and fight among themselves in churches, and in monasteries such disorder is also committed. [...]

Chapter 16: [...] And at matins and vespers the psalms and the psalter shall be spoken softly and unhurriedly, with utmost attention. Likewise, the *tropar*¹⁸ and *sedalen*¹⁹ hymns should be announced in their proper order and unhurriedly, and then shall be read. And the psalms and psalter shall not be spoken simultaneously. Likewise, the canons shall not be recited simultaneously, two at a time, because this great impropriety in our Orthodoxy is a sin which the holy fathers have denounced. [...]

Chapter 29: [...] [Cathedral priests must ensure that clergy] attend God's churches and that they stand during the divine service in an orderly manner, with complete spiritual attentiveness, and so that they not fight, nor insult one another, nor talk obscenely, nor enter the church and holy sanctuary while drunk, nor fight to bloodshed. [...]

16. *Tatars*—Turkish peoples native to the Volga region in Russia.

17. *chanting ... two or three at a time*—an attempt to shorten the service by reciting different readings simultaneously.

18. *tropar*—a hymn of one stanza.

19. *sedalen*—a hymn sung as an introduction to “sitting,” a period of rest in the service.

Chapter 31: [...] [Those crossing themselves] should arrange the right arm, that is to say the right hand, for the representation of the cross by joining together the thumb and last two fingers, and by joining the index and middle fingers, extended and slightly bent. Thus shall prelates and priests bestow a blessing and make the sign of the cross on themselves with two fingers, just as the holy fathers have taught how to represent the sign of the cross [...]. In the same manner should all Orthodox Christians arrange the hand and represent the sign of the cross on themselves with two fingers and make reverences, just as we said previously. If anyone does not bestow a blessing with two fingers the way Christ did, or does not make the sign of the cross [on himself] with two fingers, the holy fathers have said that he will be anathematized.²⁰ [...]

Chapter 38: [...] [Clergymen shall teach their parishioners] and their wives and children to come to God's holy churches with faith and love, so that they stand during each divine service [...] with fear, in trembling, with great attentiveness, and with tears and heartfelt sighing, each person in repentance of his transgressions and with a pure conscience and contrite heart, directing his attention at absolutely no earthly thought, imagining that he is standing in Heaven. [...]

Chapter 41: [...] Buffoons, organ players, jesters and psaltery players are playing in lay weddings and singing devilish songs. And as [the wedding party] goes to the church for the marriage ceremony, with the priest carrying the cross, [the entertainers] are strolling in front of them with all these games. And priests do not prohibit their doing this. [...]

Chapter 42: [...] [I]n Pskov,²¹ and in many monasteries and churches in the land of Pskov, and in many places in the land of Novgorod, triple alleluias are said to this day. [...] Henceforth Orthodox Christians must say "Alleluia" twice,²² and the third time say "Glory to

20. ... *he will be anathematized*—this statement caused all sorts of trouble for the Russian church. Reforms in the 1600s, designed to bring the Russian liturgy into line with Greek practice, stipulated that the cross should be made with *three* fingers. A terrible schism broke out when "Old Believers," citing the Stoglav resolutions, insisted that the sign of the cross could be made only with two fingers. See section "25. Patriarch Nikon and the Old Belief" in this volume.

21. *Pskov*—a city just east of modern Estonia.

22. *Henceforth Orthodox Christians must say "Alleluia" twice*—this stipulation was also reversed in the 1600s, angering Old Believers.

you, O Lord,” as is held and taught by the holy catholic apostolic church, rather than say “Alleluia” three times and the fourth time say “Glory to you, O Lord,” as was formerly said in Pskov and in many places. This is not an Orthodox tradition, but a Latin heresy, that they glorify the Trinity not three but four times. [...]

• Monasteries •

Chapter 5: [...] And in monasteries, monks and priests are being tonsured for the salvation of their souls, but some of them take the tonsure in order to enjoy physical comfort and to carouse and wander about villages, indulging themselves.

O archimandrites²³ and hegumens,²⁴ some archimandrites and hegumens are also purchasing their positions and are even avoiding the Divine Liturgy, the refectory²⁵ and the brotherhood. They are entertaining guests in their cells, they are accommodating their relatives in the monastery, and they are living off [the resources] of the monastery and likewise of the [monastery’s] villages. And monasteries are becoming deserted because of this, and old lay servants and donors are being driven out.

And elsewhere, women and maidens are casually entering cells, and young children are living in all the cells unhindered.

In villages and throughout the world monks are wandering shamelessly.

Archimandrites and hegumens are being sent among monasteries, and collections are made in a monastery by them alone, without [the approval of] the conciliar elders; and stewards are also negligent about this, and monasteries and [monasterial] villages are being desolated by them and their relatives.

And priests and poor brothers are greedy and covetous, and in every way troubled, obsessed by all sorts of needs. Everything that ensures the tranquility of a monastery—its wealth and all its abundance—is being depleted by those in authority and by their families, relatives, boiars, guests and close friends. Is this befitting the rule that the brotherhood abide together in common? [...]

23. *archimandrite*—this may refer to a superior abbot who supervises several abbots, or it may function simply as a title of respect and honor.

24. *hegumens*—heads of monasteries (abbots).

25. *refectory*—monastic dining room.

Chapter 5: [...] In all monasteries, hegumens, monks and priests [are drinking] intoxicating beverages, and secular priests²⁶ are drinking beyond all measure. How can the laity be saved and instructed against all evil, when [churchmen] themselves are practicing the very impropriety that is forbidden the monk in his vows and the priest in his ordination and laying on of hands? In the name of God, investigate this matter sufficiently, so that pastors shall not suffer perdition because of their drunkenness, and so that [lay persons], seeing their [example], shall likewise [not suffer perdition]. [...]

Chapter 52: [...] [T]he canons of the holy fathers and the rules of the great monasteries command monks to drink wine at the proper time, when it is appropriate, but not always—sometimes three cups, sometimes two, sometimes one. For wine was kept in all monasteries both in ancient times and currently, but there was no drinking to intoxication. For such is witnessed by many well-born men and monks who have been in the city of Constantinople and at holy Mount Athos, and in other places there. For not only monks, but also all Orthodox Christians there detest and despise intoxication. Therefore everyone has wine, but they flee from intoxication as if from pestilence. For such is the custom of that land. [...]

• Judicial claims •

Chapter 63: [...] And these are matters under ecclesiastical jurisdiction: divorces; adultery; marital infidelity by husbands; rape; abduction of women; [a dispute] between husband and wife over property; marriages between persons related by either blood or marriage; sorcery, enchantment, magic, witchcraft and herb magic; offense by any of the following three means: adultery, magic herbs or heretical activity; biting; or a son beating his father, a mother beating her daughter or a daughter-in-law [beating] her mother-in-law; or anyone who reviles his father or mother with foul language; or sisters, children and families who contest their inheritance; theft in a church; body snatching; chopping up a cross or taking chips from crosses on walls; bringing a beast, bird or dog into a church without great necessity, or committing any other impropriety in church; or if two friends are having a fight, and the wife of one of them grabs the other by the testicles and crushes him; or anyone who has sexual relations with a four-legged animal; or anyone

26. *secular priests*—married priests and deacons (as opposed to unmarried, monastic clergy).

who says prayers in a barn, in a rye field, in a grove or next to a body of water; or an [unmarried] maiden who gives birth to a child. [...]

• National and religious identity •

Chapter 39: [...] For it has been said that the laws and patrimony of one country do not transfer to another, for each country adheres to its own customary law. Having accepted the true Orthodox law from God, we have been defiled by the lawlessness of other countries, we have adopted evil customs from them, and we have become oppressed by these things from those countries. [...]

Chapter 5: [...] And—because of our sins—feebleness, negligence and carelessness have entered the world in recent times. People calling themselves Christians, people thirty years old and old people are shaving their heads, beards and mustaches, and they are wearing garments and clothes of lands of other faiths. How can such persons be recognized as Christians? [...]

Chapter 40: [...] Likewise, the sacred canons prohibit all Orthodox Christians from shaving one's beard and cutting one's mustache.²⁷ Such acts are not Orthodox, but Latin, and a part of the heretical tradition of the Greek emperor Constantine Copronymous.²⁸ A canon of the holy apostles says as follows: "If someone shaves his beard and appears thus, no service should be performed over him [at death], nor should the forty days' memorial service be celebrated for him, nor should liturgical loaves or candles be brought to church in his memory. He shall be accounted among the unfaithful, for this [shaving] is the custom of a heretic."

• Sects and cults •

Chapter 41: [...] And among parish districts, villages and rural cantons, false prophets are wandering; peasant men and women, maidens and old women, naked and barefoot, their hair grown long and hanging loose, and they quake and smite themselves. And they are saying that Saint Paraskeva²⁹ and Saint Anastasia³⁰ appear to them

27. *sacred canons prohibit ... mustache*—no such canons existed.

28. *Constantine Copronymous*—Byzantine emperor from 745 to 775. In fact Constantine said nothing about shaving.

29. *Saint Paraskeva*—a third-century martyr from south-central Turkey; the patron saint of traders.

30. *Saint Anastasia*—a Roman martyr who died during the persecutions of

and order them to command and discipline Christians in accordance with the canons. And they are commanding that peasants not do manual labor on Wednesday or Friday and that women not spin, nor wash clothes, nor fire up the stoves [for the bathhouse]. And others are commanding that sacrilegious acts be committed, contrary to divine scripture. [...]

Orthodox Christians should not heed such seducers; they should throw them out of their homes and shun them. For the holy apostles and holy fathers have transmitted, commanded and decreed to all Orthodox Christians to labor for five days, and on Saturday and Sunday to occupy themselves in prayer and to observe the holidays. Likewise, it has been commanded to all Orthodox Christians throughout the entire year not only to fast on Wednesday and Friday, but also to be-labor themselves in all kinds of deeds and to do manual labor. [...]

• Sexual immorality •

Chapter 5: [...] Let us recall why the Lord previously flooded the entire world, protecting only Noah: was it not because of lechery? And why did he devour Sodom and Gomorrah with fire, leading away only the righteous Lot: was it not because of adolescent lechery? And for what sin did the city of Nineveh perish?³¹ And why, under the New Testament, did the Lord deliver up Constantinople (Tsargrad) to people of another race, the godless Turk? [...]

[...] Recently we have suffered every type of misfortune at the hands of our enemies and because of God's great punishment. What sins have we not committed? Concerning this, we must suffer greatly and have great sorrow and correct our sinful wrongdoings. [...]

Chapter 33: [...] In regard to this evil, certain persons, having forgotten the fear of God, are committing a filthy iniquity that ought not be committed by Orthodox persons: namely, the perdition of sodomy, [which has driven] many people into confusion, temptation and ruin. And our Orthodox Christian faith is being ridiculed and reproached by many people and by those of other faiths. Concerning all these denounced, filthy, disgraceful and shabby acts, the spiritual fathers—consecrated archpriests and priests—shall severely interrogate

Diocletian (285–305).

31. *Nineveh perish*—see the book of Jonah, in which God tells Jonah, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me” (Jonah 1:2, NRSV).

and control their spiritual children, making great spiritual demands upon them, so that they not commit such filthy and impure acts. Whoever is not repentant, yet vows henceforth [not to commit sodomy], you should correct them in accordance with the canons of the holy apostles and holy fathers, but without penance you should not absolve them. And whatever persons do not reform themselves and do not repent, you should excommunicate them from all holy things and not grant them entrance to the church. [...]

Chapter 41: [...] And in the city of Pskov, men and women, and also monks and nuns, are bathing together in the same bathhouse without shame. This should be prohibited, so that they cease from this impropriety, for, in accordance with the canons of the holy fathers, it is not fitting for a man and woman to bathe together in the same bathhouse. [...]

21.3 Iov's Installation as Patriarch (1600s)

“An Anonymous Account of the Installation of the Moscow Patriarch, January 26–28, 1589,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:176–177. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

This account of Iov's installation as patriarch in 1589 comes from a collection of manuscripts from the 1600s.



Figure 111. Patriarch Iov, 1672

And as the patriarch [of Constantinople] Jeremiah came into the vestibule, the patriarch Iov came out of the chamber and met him on the porch before the doors, and [...] Patriarch Jeremiah asked the blessing of Iov, the newly elevated patriarch of Moscow.

And the patriarch Iov spoke to him thus: “You are for me the great lord and elder of elders and father: from you I have received the patriarchal blessing and elevation to the great throne in the cathedral of the honored and glorious Dormition of the most pure Mother of

God³² and the holy Moscow miracle workers Peter and Aleksei and Iona, and it is now fitting for you to give us your blessing.”

And in answer to this the patriarch Jeremiah spoke: “In all the world there is but one pious tsar, while the future shall be as God may grant; it is here that the ecumenical patriarch should be, while in old Tsargrad the Christian faith is being driven out by the infidel Turks for our sins.”

And after saying these things, the ecumenical patriarch Jeremiah gave his blessing to the patriarch Iov, and after receiving the blessing of the patriarch Jeremiah, the patriarch Iov likewise gave his blessing, and they kissed each other in the name of Christ.

[...] And when [the choir] began to sing “Long life to the lord”³³ the patriarch Jeremiah seated the patriarch Iov in the place that had been prepared, paying him great honor and saluting him. [...] And the patriarchs seated themselves for a short time; and after the chanters had finished singing, the ecumenical patriarch Jeremiah arose, joyfully summoned in a loud voice the holy council³⁴ and all the Christian people to gather around him, and spoke to them thus: “Almighty God has shed his grace upon the Russian realm for its pure way of life, and for its supplications, and for its great charity, and for the prayers of the pious sovereign, tsar, and grand prince Feodor Ivanovich, autocrat of all Russia, to elevate a patriarch in the apostolic cathedral of the honored and glorious Dormition of the most pure Mother of God and of the holy Russian miracle workers Peter and Aleksei and Iona, since in all the world there is but one pious tsar.”

32. *Dormition* ...—the death and bodily resurrection of the *Theotokos*.

33. *Long life to the lord*—long life to the newly consecrated prelate, Iov.

34. *the holy council*—the council consisting of the higher clergy.

22. Literature of Appanage and Muscovite Orthodoxy

22.1 Martyrdom of Boris and Gleb (1000s)

“The Narrative and Passion and Encomium of the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb,” trans. Marvin Kantor, in *An Anthology of Russian Literature from Earliest Writings to Modern Fiction: Introduction to a Culture*, ed. Nicholas Rzhevsky (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 21–32. All attempts to contact rightholder failed.

The first, great work of literature to emerge from medieval Russia appeared in *The Russian Primary Chronicle*. Impossible to date and extant in several variants, it recounts a murder in 1015 during a fight for succession between the sons of Vladimir (980–1015 and referenced as “Volodimir” in this tale), the prince responsible for the conversion of Rus’ to Christianity.

The story is significant for its celebration of pacifism. Unlike the *Life of Constantine*, which celebrates all things military, “The Narrative and Passion and Encomium of the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb” tells of two brothers who refuse to take arms against a third brother, choosing to die rather than fight. As Sergei Zenkovsky notes, this is the first instance in either Eastern or Western ecclesiastical literature in which a humble martyr, imitating Christ, chooses to die (at least symbolically) for the sins of man. Here the Christ to imitate is the humble, sacrificial Christ—far different from the conquering Christ prominent in other religious tales. “The Martyrdom of Boris and Gleb” constitutes a Russian paean to pacifism unlike anything found in Byzantium.



Figure 112. Icon of Boris and Gleb, 1300s

Bless us Lord, our Father.

The generation of the righteous shall be blessed, said the prophet, and their seed shall be blessed. Thus these things came to pass before the time when the autocrat of the entire land of Rus' was Volodimir,¹ son of Sviatoslav and grandson of Igor, he who enlightened this entire land of Rus' with holy baptism.² Of his other virtues we shall speak

1. *Volodimir*—Prince Vladimir, responsible for the Christianization of Rus'.
2. *enlightened this entire land of Rus' with holy Baptism*—988.

elsewhere; there is not time now, but of such things we shall speak in due course.

Now this Volodimir had twelve sons, not by one wife, but by their several mothers.³ Among these sons Vyseslav was the eldest, and after him came Iziaslav. The third was Sviatopolk, who conceived this evil murder. His mother, a Greek, was formerly a nun, and Iaropolk, Volodimir's brother, took her, and because of the beauty of her face he unfrocked her and begot of her this accursed Sviatopolk. But Volodimir, who was still a pagan, killed Iaropolk and took his wife who was pregnant; and of her was born this accursed Sviatopolk. And [Sviatopolk] was of two fathers who were brothers, and for this reason Volodimir loved him not, for he was not of him. And by Rogneda he had four sons: Iziaslav, Mstislav, Iaroslav, and Vsevolod; and by another he had Sviatoslav and Mstislav;⁴ and by a Bulgarian woman, Boris and Gleb. And he placed them all in different lands as rulers: [...] the accursed Sviatopolk as ruler in Pinsk, and Iaroslav in Novgorod, Boris in Rostov, and Gleb in Murom. But I will cease speaking of this at length, lest we lose ourselves through prolixity in forgetfulness. But let us speak about what I began.

Now after many days had passed and Volodimir's days were drawing to a close—for twenty-eight years had passed since the holy baptism—he fell gravely ill. At that same time Boris was coming from Rostov. The Pechenegs⁵ from that region were waging war against Rus'. And Volodimir was in great sorrow because he could not march against them, and he sorrowed much. And summoning the blessed Boris—who was named Roman in holy baptism and was quick in obedience—and turning over many troops to him, he sent him against the godless Pechenegs. And rising with joy [Boris] went, saying, "I am prepared to do before your eyes as much as the will of your heart commands." For of such did the author of the Proverbs say: "I was my father's son, obedient and beloved in the sight of my mother."

But after setting out and not finding his adversaries, he turned back. And a messenger came to him, informing him of his father's

3. *several mothers*—Volodimir/Vladimir was a polygamist before his conversion.

4. *Mstislav*—he had two sons named Mstislav.

5. *Pechenegs*—nomadic Turks who controlled the land south of Rus', including trade routes between Rus' and Byzantium. They functioned at times as allies but more frequently as enemies.

death: how his father Vasily⁶—for such was the name given him in holy baptism—had passed away,⁷ and how Sviatopolk had concealed the death of his father, and at night in Berestovo,⁸ after taking up the floor and wrapping him in a rug, they lowered him to the ground with ropes, took him by sledge,⁹ and placed him in the Church of the Holy Mother of God.

And when the saintly Boris heard this he grew weak in body and his entire face was covered with tears. And being choked with tears, he could not speak, but in his heart he began to speak thusly: “Woe to me, light of my eyes, radiance and dawn of my face, bridle of my youth, admonition of my foolishness! Woe to me, my father and lord! To whom shall I turn, to whom shall I look, where shall I sate myself with the good instruction and admonitions of your understanding? Woe to me, woe to me! How could you vanish, my light, while I was not there? If only I myself had prepared your venerable body for burial with my own hands and committed it to the grave. But I neither carried the manly beauty of your body, nor was I worthy of kissing your resplendent gray hair. But, O blessed one, remember me in your peace! My heart burns, my soul confuses my mind, and I know not to whom to turn and to whom to extend this bitter sorrow. To the brother whom I would have in place of a father? But he, methinks, has learned worldly vanities and contemplates my murder. If he sheds my blood and attempts to slay me, then a martyr shall I be to my Lord. For I shall not resist, because it is written: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ And the apostle says: ‘He who says, I love God, and hates his brother, is a liar.’ And again: ‘There is no fear in love; perfect love casts out fear.’ Therefore what shall I say or what shall I do? Lo, shall I go to my brother and say, ‘Be a father to me. You are my brother and elder. What is your command, my lord?’”

And musing thus in his mind, he set off to his brother, and he said in his heart: “Were I at least to see the face of my younger brother Gleb, as Joseph did Benjamin.”¹⁰ And considering all this in his heart, he said: “Your will be done, my Lord.” And in his mind he thought:

6. *Vasily*—Volodimir/Vladimir.

7. *passed away*—1015.

8. *Berestovo*—one of Vladimir’s estates near Kiev.

9. *took him by sledge*—part of standard burial practice in ancient Rus’.

10. *as Joseph did Benjamin*—an allusion to Genesis 43:29, in which Joseph, having prospered in the Pharaoh’s court, asks to see his youngest brother.

“If I go to my father’s house, many tongues there will incline my heart toward banishment of my brother, just as my father acted before holy baptism for the sake of glory and princely power in this world, all of which passes away being less than a cobweb. So whither must I go upon departure from this place? And how shall I return then? What will an answer be for me?”

“Where shall I conceal the multitude of my sins? For what did my father’s brothers or my father heretofore acquire? Where are their lives and their worldly glory, the purple robes and silks, the silver and gold, the wines and meads, the fine food and swift steeds, the great and beautiful homes, the many possessions, the tribute and countless honors, and the pride in their boiars? All this already is for them as though it had never been. Everything has vanished with them, and there is no help from any one of them or from their possessions, from a multitude of slaves or from the glory of this world. For Solomon, having passed through all things, having seen all things, having acquired and accumulated all things, did say after casting his eyes about: ‘Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!’ Help comes only from good deeds, from true belief, and from unfeigned love.”

Continuing on his way, he considered the beauty and goodness of his body and was completely choked with tears. And wanting to restrain himself, he could not. And all who saw him thus wept for his virtuous body and the venerable understanding of his age. And each in his soul groaned with heartfelt grief, and all were troubled in their sorrow. For who would not bemoan that grievous death upon drawing it before the eyes of his heart! For his countenance and gaze were downcast, and his holy heart was broken. For this blessed one was just and compassionate, serene, gentle, humble, merciful to all, and solicitous of all. And the divinely blessed Boris meditated in his heart and said: “I know my brother is incited by men of evil intent to slay me, and he will destroy me. If he sheds my blood, then a martyr shall I be to my Lord, and the Lord will receive my spirit.” Then, forgetting his deathly sorrow, he comforted his heart with the divine words: “Whoever shall lose his soul for my sake and for the sake of my words, shall find it and keep it in life eternal.” And he went on with a joyful heart, saying: “O most merciful Lord, despise not me, who trusts in you, but save my soul.”

Now after his father’s death, Sviatopolk had settled in Kiev. Upon summoning the people of Kiev and giving them many gifts, he dismissed them. Then he sent to Boris, saying: “Brother, I wish there to

be love between us and shall add to your share of father's possessions." But he spoke deceitfully and not the truth. He came secretly at night to Vyshegorod,¹¹ summoned Putsa and the men of Vyshegorod, and said to them: "Tell me in truth, are you loyal to me?" And Putsa said: "We all are ready to lay down our lives for you."

But the devil, that hater of man's goodness from the beginning of time, upon seeing the saintly Boris had placed all his hope in the Lord, began to be even more active. And as once before he found Cain ablaze with fratricide, so now he found in truth a second Cain in Sviatopolk and snared his thought, that he should kill all his father's heirs and seize all power for himself alone. Then the thrice-accursed Sviatopolk summoned to himself the counselors of all evil and the chiefs of all untruth, and upon opening his lips most foul he emitted an evil voice, saying to Putsa's people: "Since you promise to lay down your lives for me, go in secret, my friends, and where you find my brother Boris, watch for an opportunity and slay him." And they promised to do so. For of such the prophet said: "They make haste to shed blood unjustly: for they pledge blood and gather evil to themselves. Their ways are those of gathering iniquity; and they embrace their souls with impurity."

Now, upon returning, the blessed Boris pitched his tents on the Lto.¹² And his retinue said to him: "Go, settle in Kiev on your father's throne, for all the troops are in your hands." But he answered them: "It is not for me to raise my hand against my own brother, and especially against an elder one whom I would have as a father." And when they heard this, the troops departed from him, and he remained with only his retainers.

On the Sabbath day he was in distress and grief, and his heart was oppressed. And he entered his tent and wept with a broken heart but a joyful soul, sorrowfully lifting his voice: "Despise not my tears, O Lord. For as I have my hope in you, so shall I, together with your servants, accept my portion and lot with all your holy ones, for you are a merciful God, and to you shall we render praise forever. Amen." He thought of the martyrdom and passion of the holy martyr Nikita and of Saint Viacheslav,¹³ whose murders were similar to this, and how

11. *Vyshegorod*—a town just north of Kiev.

12. *Lto*—the Alta River, which flows into the Trubezh River southeast of Kiev.

13. *martyrdom and passion of the holy martyr Nikita and of Saint Viacheslav*—the

the murderer of Saint Barbara was her own father.¹⁴ And he thought of the word of the wise Solomon: “The righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, the care of them is with the most high.” And only with this word was he comforted, and he rejoiced.

Then evening came. And he commanded that vespers be chanted, and he himself entered his tent and began to say the evening prayer with bitter tears, frequent sighs, and much groaning. Afterward he lay down to sleep. And his sleep was troubled by many thoughts and a great, heavy, and terrible grief: How to give himself up to the martyr’s passion; how to suffer and end the course and keep the faith so as to receive the predestined crown from the hands of the Almighty.

Upon awakening early, he saw it was the time of morning: it was holy Sunday. He said to his presbyter: “Arise, begin matins.” And having put shoes on his feet and having washed his face, he himself began to pray to the Lord God.

But those sent by Sviatopolk had arrived on the Lto during the night, and drawing near they heard the voice of the blessed martyr chanting the morning psalter. And since he had knowledge of his murder, he began to chant: “Lord, how are they increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me,” and other psalms in their entirety. And he began to chant the psalter: “Many dogs have compassed me and fat bulls have beset me round”; and also, “O Lord my God, in you do I put my trust: save me.” After this he chanted the canon in the same way. And when he finished matins, he began to pray, gazing upon the icon of the Lord and saying: “O Lord Jesus Christ, who in this image did appear upon earth, having by your will chosen to be nailed to the cross, accepting your passion for the sake of our sins, make me worthy of accepting my passion.”

And when he heard evil whispers near the tent, he was atremble and began to shed tears from his eyes, and he said: “Glory be to you, O Lord, for all things; for you have made me worthy of accepting this bitter death, prompted by envy, and to suffer all things for the love of

martyr Nikita was tortured and burned at the stake in 372 for preaching Christianity among the Visigoths. Viacheslav, a Czech prince, was, like Boris, killed by his politically ambitious brother in 929.

14. *the murderer of Saint Barbara was her own father*—St. Barbara’s father, angry over her conversion to Christianity, turned her over to Roman authorities in Bithynia in 306. Legend has it that her father was struck by lightning as soon as she was beheaded.

your word. I desired not to seek for myself alone and have chosen naught for myself, according to the apostle: 'Charity bears all things, believes all things, and seeks not her own,' and also: 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.' Therefore, O Lord, my soul is ever in your hands, for the law I have not forgotten. As it pleases the Lord, so be it." And when the priest and the retainer who served him looked and saw their lord downcast and overwhelmed by grief, they began to mourn greatly and said: "O dear and precious lord of ours, how filled with goodness you are that for the sake of the love of Christ you desired not to resist, though many were the troops you held in your hands." And having said this, they were saddened.

And at that moment he saw those running toward the tent, the flash of weapons and the unsheathing of swords. And the venerable body of the most merciful Boris, Christ's holy and blessed martyr, was pierced without mercy. Those who stabbed him with lances were the accursed Putsa, Talts, Elovich, and Liashko. Upon seeing this, his retainer threw himself upon the body of the blessed one, saying: "I shall not leave you, my precious lord; where the beauty of your body withers, there too will it be granted me to end my life." He was a Hungarian by birth named Georgy, and upon him was placed a golden necklace, and he was loved by Boris beyond measure. And they ran him through on that spot.

And as he was wounded, Boris ran out of the tent in haste. And those standing around him began to say: "Why do you stand gazing? Let us end what was begun and do as we were commanded."

Hearing this, the blessed one began to pray and ingratiate himself to them, saying: "My dear and beloved brethren, grant me a little time that I may at least pray to my God." And upon glancing tearfully up at the heavens and sighing bitterly, he began to pray with these words: "God of many mercies, my merciful and most merciful Lord! Glory be to you, that you have made me worthy to flee from the deception of this deceitful life. Glory be to you, most compassionate giver of life, that you have made me worthy of the suffering of the holy martyrs. Glory be to you, O Lord, lover of man, that you have made me worthy to fulfill the desire of my heart. Glory be to you, my Christ, to your great compassion, that you have directed my worldly feet onto the right way, running to you without fault. Look down from your holy heights and see the sickness of my heart, which I caught from my kinsman, that for your sake I am killed this day. I am counted as a sheep for the slaughter. For you know, my Lord, that I shall neither

resist nor speak contrarily. Though I had all my father's troops in my hands and all whom my father loved, yet I plotted naught against my brother. But he has found it possible to rise up against me so greatly. If an enemy reproached me, I could have borne it; if he that hated me did magnify himself against me, I would have hid myself. But, you, O Lord, behold and judge between me and between my brother; and, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, but receive my spirit in peace. Amen."

Then, looking at them with tender eyes and a downcast face, and bathed in tears, he said: "Brethren, end the service you have begun; and peace be to my brother, and to you, my brethren."

And all those hearing his words were unable to utter a single word, because of tears and fear, and bitter grief, and much weeping, but with bitter sighs they wept, and each groaned in his soul and said mournfully: "Woe to us, our dear and precious prince, guide for the blind, clothier of the naked, staff for the aged, teacher for the untaught! Who will do all these things now? For surely he did not desire the glory of this world; he did not desire revels with venerable nobles; he did not desire the grandeur found in this life! Who does not marvel at his great humility; who is not humbled, seeing and hearing of this humility?" And at that moment he passed away and delivered his soul into the hands of the living God, in the month of July, on the twenty-fourth day, the ninth day before the calends¹⁵ of August.

And they also slew many retainers. But since they could not remove the necklace from Georgy, they cut off his head and tossed him aside, and for that reason his body could not be recognized later. Upon wrapping the blessed Boris in a tent flap and laying him in a wagon, they drove off. And when they were in a pine forest he began to raise his holy head. Learning of this, Sviatopolk sent two Varangians, and they pierced him through the heart with a sword. Thus he expired and received a crown everlasting. After having brought him to Vyshegorod, they laid his body in the earth and buried it near the Church of Saint Vasily.

And the accursed Sviatopolk stopped not with this murder but rabidly began to crave even greater ones. And as it was evident his heart's desire had been gained, he immediately forgot his evil murder and great offense and did not, therefore, give himself over in the least to repentance. But it was at this moment that Satan entered his heart and began to spur him to commit greater, cruder, and more numerous

15. *calends*—first day of the month.

murders. For he said in his accursed soul, “What shall I do? If I abandon the matter of this murder of mine now, I must expect two things. If my brothers find me out, then they, anticipating me, will deal with me even more bitterly. And if not this, they will drive me out, and I will be a stranger to my father’s throne, and the sorrows of my land will devour me, and the scorn of the scorners will fall upon me; another will receive my principality, and none will dwell in my courts, for I have persecuted the one the Lord did love and added a wound to grief. Thus I shall add iniquity to iniquity. Let not the sin of my mother be expiated, and let me not be recorded with the righteous, but let my name be expunged from the book of the living.”

And so it came to pass, as we shall relate later; there is no time for this now. But let us return to the foregoing.

Having put this in his mind, that evil counselor the devil summoned the blessed Gleb, saying: “Come quickly; your father summons you and is very sick.” [Gleb] quickly mounted his horse and set off with a small retinue. And when he came to the Volga, the horse beneath him stumbled over a rut in the field and slightly injured its leg. And he came to Smolensk and went on from Smolensk, and within viewing distance from there he boarded a small vessel on the Smiadin.¹⁶

At that time news of his father’s death reached Iaroslav from Predslava. And Iaroslav sent a message to Gleb, saying: “Do not go, brother; your father has died. And your brother has been murdered by Sviatopolk.”

Upon hearing this, the blessed one cried out with bitter weeping and heartfelt grief, saying: “O woe to me, my Lord! With twofold weeping I weep and moan, with twofold grief I grieve and groan. Woe to me, woe to me! I weep greatly for my father, but I weep even more and have despaired for you, my brother and lord Boris. How is it that you have been run through? How is it that you have been delivered to death without mercy? How is it that you have received your ruin not from an enemy but from your own brother? Woe to me! Better it would have been for me to die with you than to live on in this life, alone and orphaned without you. I thought soon to see your angelic face, and behold, such distress has overtaken me.

“In hopeless grief I would have died with you, my lord! And now what shall I do, wretched and separated from your goodness and from

16. *Smiadin*’—a river near Smolensk.

the great wisdom of my father? O, my dear brother and lord! If you received courage from the Lord, pray for me in my grievous hopelessness, that I may be made worthy to receive the same passion and to abide with you rather than in this deceitful world.”

And so, as he was groaning and weeping and wetting the earth with his tears, and calling upon God with frequent sighs, those sent by Sviatopolk suddenly arrived—those evil servants of his, merciless bloodsuckers, the fiercest of fratricides, having the souls of savage beasts. The saintly one had set off in a small vessel, and they met him at the mouth of the Smiadin. And when he saw them, he rejoiced in his soul; but they, upon seeing him, were covered with gloom and rowed toward him. And he expected to receive greetings from them. But when they drew alongside, the evil ones began to leap into his boat with bared swords, which glittered like water in their hands. And immediately the oars fell from all hands, and all were numb with fear.

When the blessed one saw this, he understood they wished to kill him. He gazed at them with tender eyes, his face bathed in tears, broken in heart, humbled in mind, frequently sighing, choked with tears, and weakened in body, and he lifted his voice in sorrow: “Let me be, my dear and precious brethren, let me be, for I have done you no evil! Leave me alone, brethren and lords, leave me alone! What wrong have I done my brother [Sviatopolk] and you, my brethren and lords? If there be some wrong, take me to your prince, to my brother and lord. Have mercy on my youth, have mercy, my lords! You are my lords, I your slave. Reap me not from a life unripened; reap not the ear of grain still unripe but bearing the milk of innocence! Cut not the shoot still less than fully grown but bearing fruit. I implore you and humble myself before you, fear that spoken from the mouths of the apostles: ‘Be not children in understanding: however in malice be children, but in understanding be men!’ I, brethren, both in malice and maturity am still a child. This is not murder but butchery! What evil have I done? Witness to it, and I shall not complain if you wish to sate yourselves with my blood. I am in your hands already brethren, and my brother’s, your prince.”

But not a single word of this shamed them in any way, and like savage beasts they seized him. Seeing they did not heed his words, he began to speak thus: “Save yourself, my dear father and lord Vasily! Save yourself, my mother and lady! Save yourself also, brother Boris, elder of my youth! Save yourself also, brother and helpmate Iaroslav! Save yourself also, brother and enemy Sviatopolk! Save yourselves also,

brethren and retinue! All save yourselves! I shall no longer see you in this life, for I am parted from you by force.”

And weeping he said: “Vasily, Vasily, my father and lord! Incline your ear and hear my voice; look and see what is happening to your child, how I am being slaughtered without guilt. Woe to me, woe to me! Hearken, O Heaven, and attend, O earth! And you, brother Boris, hear my voice! My father, Vasily, have I summoned, and he obeyed me not. Do you not wish to obey me as well? See the sorrow of my heart and the wound of my soul! See my tears flowing like a river! And no one heeds me. But you remember me and pray for me to our Lord as one possessing courage and standing by his throne.”

And bending his knees, he began to pray thus: “Most compassionate and most merciful Lord! Turn not from my tears but have pity on my grievous hopelessness; see the crushing of my heart. For lo, I am being slaughtered and know not why, nor understand for which wrong. You know, O Lord, my Lord! I know you, who to your apostles said: ‘For my name, for my sake, they shall lay their hands on you, and you shall be betrayed by kinfolk and by friends; and brothers shall betray brother to death and they shall cause you to be put to death for my name’s sake.’ And also: ‘In your patience you possess your souls.’ See, O Lord, and judge! For behold, my soul is prepared before you, Lord, and we lift up our praise to you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and always and forever more. Amen.”

Then, looking at them, he said with a dejected voice and choking throat: “You have already done this in your thoughts; now that you have come, do what you were sent for.” Then the accursed Goriasser ordered them to slay him quickly. Gleb’s cook, Torchin by name, drew a knife and, seizing the blessed one, slaughtered him like a meek and innocent lamb. It was in the month of September, on the fifth day, on Monday. And a pure and fragrant sacrifice was brought to the Lord; and [Gleb] entered into the dwelling places of Heaven, and came to the Lord, and saw the brother whom he desired, and both received the heavenly crown they had desired, and they rejoiced in the great ineffable joy they had attained.

But they, the accursed murderers, returned to the one who had sent them, just as David said: “Sinners shall be turned to Hell, and all those that forget God.” And again: “The sinners have drawn out the sword and have bent their bow, to slay the upright of heart. And their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken, for the sinners shall perish.” And they told Sviatopolk, “We have done

what you have commanded.” And hearing this he exalted in his heart. And that which was said by the psalmist David came to pass: “Why boast you in mischief, O mighty man? Your tongue devises lies and iniquity all the day long. You love evil more than good, lying rather than to speak righteousness. You love all devouring words, and a deceitful tongue. For this reason God shall destroy you forever. He shall take you away and pluck you out of your dwelling place, and root you out of the land of the living.”

After Gleb had been slain, he was cast in a deserted place between two hollowed-out tree trunks.¹⁷ But the Lord does not forsake his servants, as David said: “The Lord keeps all their bones: and not one of them is broken.” And though the saintly one lay there a long time, he remained entirely unharmed, for [God] left him not in oblivion and neglect but gave signs: now a pillar of fire was seen, now burning candles. Moreover, merchants passing by on the way would hear the singing of angels; and others, hunters and shepherds, also saw and heard these things. It did not occur to anyone to search for the body of the saintly one until Iaroslav, unable to bear this evil murder, moved against that fratricide, the accursed Sviatopolk, and fought many battles with him and was always victorious, with the aid of God and the help of the saintly ones. And as many battles as he waged, the accursed one always returned shamed and defeated.

Finally this thrice-accursed one attacked with a horde of Pechenegs. And having gathered troops, Iaroslav went forth against him, to the Lto River, and he halted at the place where the saintly Boris was slain. Lifting up his hands to Heaven, he said: “Behold, the blood of my brother cries out to you O Lord, just as the blood of Abel did in times past. Avenge him too; afflict him with sorrow and fear, just as you did the fratricide Cain. I beseech you, O Lord, may they receive accordingly. And though you are departed in body, yet in grace you live and stand before the Lord: Help me with your prayer.”

After this was spoken, they advanced against one another, and the field of the Lto was covered with a multitude of troops. As the sun rose, they met in battle, and the fighting was extremely fierce. They clashed three times and fought throughout the entire day. Toward evening Iaroslav triumphed, and the accursed Sviatopolk fled. A demon fell upon him, and his bones became weak so that he was unable

17. *hollowed-out tree trunks*—Slavs often buried corpses in hollowed-out tree trunks.

even to sit on his horse; so they carried him on a litter. They fled to Brest with him, but he said: “Flee! O behold, they are pursuing us!” They sent out troops to meet [the supposed pursuers], but there was no one pursuing or chasing after him. And lying in a faint, he would start and say, “Let us flee, they are still pursuing, O me!” And he could not endure being in one place and fled through the land of the Liakhs,¹⁸ pursued by the wrath of God. He fled into the wilderness between the lands of the Czechs and Liakhs and there forfeited his life in an evil manner. And he received his reward from the Lord. And just as the fatal wound was visited upon him, so after death eternal torment. Thus was he deprived of both lives. Here he lost not only his principedom but also his life, and there he was not only bereft of the kingdom of Heaven and life with the angels but was given over to torment and fire. And his grave exists even to this day, and from it issues an evil stench for the edification of men.

Whoever acquits himself so after hearing of such things will receive the same, and even more than this. Just as Cain, who knew not the retribution he would receive, received one wound, but Lamech,¹⁹ because he knew of the punishment visited upon Cain, was punished seventyfold. Such are the retributions for evildoers. For just as the Emperor Julian,²⁰ who spilled much blood from the holy martyrs, received a bitter and inhuman death, stabbed in the heart with a lance, not knowing by whom he was run through, so too did this one, fleeing not knowing from whom, receive a vile death. And from then on, discord ceased in the land of Rus’, and Iaroslav assumed all power over it. [...]

18. *Liakhs*—Poles.

19. *Lamech*—see Genesis 4:23–24, in which Lamech admits to killing a young man who wounded him. “If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” (NRSV)

20. *Emperor Julian*—Julian the Apostate (361–363).

22.2 Descent of the Virgin into Hell (1100s)

“The Descent of the Virgin into Hell,” trans. Leo Wiener, in *Anthology of Russian Literature from the Earliest Period to the Present*, ed. Leo Wiener (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), 1:96-100. Public domain.

Scripture, patristic writings, the lives of saints, and liturgical texts made their way into Rus' from Byzantium after the conversion of Prince Vladimir. So did a large number of apocryphal or non-canonical texts. Some of these apocryphal works, modeled on canonical scripture, became quite popular. An especially beloved example, *The Descent of the Virgin into Hell*, appears below.

Mary, the Mother of God, has always held an exalted place in the Eastern churches (recall the debates over the term *Theotokos*), particularly in Russia. In this story God himself acknowledges, “There is not a human being who does not praise your name.” Here we see the Virgin Mary as a compassionate intercessor, pleading on behalf of humanity before her Son. God does not honor all her pleas (the Jews, according to this text, deserve no compassion—an example of an abiding strain of anti-semitism in Russian Orthodoxy), but he does show compassion for those who ask the Mother of God to intercede on their behalf.

The Holy Virgin wished to see the torments of the souls, and she said to Mikhail, the archangel, “Tell me all things that are on the earth!” And Mikhail said to her, “As you say, Blessed One, I will tell you all things.” And the Holy Virgin said to him, “How many torments are there, which the Christian race is suffering?” And the archangel said to her, “Uncountable are the torments!” And the Blessed One said to him, “Show me, in Heaven and on earth!”

Then the archangel ordered the angels to come from the south, and Hell was opened. And she saw the people who were suffering in Hell, and there were a great number of men and women, and there was much weeping. And the Blessed One asked the archangel, “Who are these people?” And the archangel said, “These are the people who did not believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but forgot God and believed in things that God has created for our sakes; they

called everything God: the sun and the moon, the earth and water, beasts and reptiles. They changed Troian, Khors, Veles, and Perun²¹ to gods, and believed in evil spirits. They are even now held in evil darkness, therefore they suffer such torments.”

And she saw in another place a great darkness. The Holy Lady asked, “What is this darkness, and who are these people who dwell in it?” The archangel replied, “Many souls dwell in this place.” The Holy Virgin said, “Let the darkness be dispersed so I may see the torment.” And the angels who watched over the torment answered, “We have been forbidden to let them see light until the coming of your blessed Son, who is brighter than seven suns.” And the Holy Virgin was saddened, and she raised her eyes to the angels and looked at the invisible throne of her Father²² and said, “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit! Let the darkness be taken away so I may see this torment.”

And the darkness was lifted, and seven heavens were seen, and a great multitude of men and women dwelt there, and there was loud weeping and a mighty noise. When the Holy Virgin saw them, she spoke to them, weeping tears. “What have you done, wretched and unworthy people, and what has brought you here?” There was no voice, nor an answer from them. And the watching angels asked, “Why do you not speak?” And the tormented said, “Blessed One! We have not seen light for a long time, and we cannot look up.” The Holy Virgin, looking at them, wept bitterly. And the tormented, seeing her, asked, “How is it, Holy Virgin, that you have visited us? Your blessed Son came to the earth and did not ask for us, nor Abraham the patriarch, nor Moses the prophet, nor John the Baptist, nor Paul the apostle, the Lord’s favorite. But you, Holy Virgin and intercessor, you are a protection for the Christian people.” Then the Holy Virgin said to Mikhail the archangel, “What is their sin?” And Mikhail said, “These are the people who did not believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, nor in you, Holy Virgin! They did not want to proclaim your name, nor the name of him who was born to you—our Lord Jesus Christ—who, having come in the flesh, has sanctified the earth through baptism. It is for this that they are tormented here.” Weeping again, the Holy Virgin asked them, “Why do you live in error? Do you

21. *Troian, Khors, Veles, and Perun*—pagan gods of Rus’.

22. *her Father*—God the Father.

not know that all creation honors my name?” When the Holy Virgin said this, darkness fell again on them.

The archangel asked her, “Where, Blessed One, do you want to go now? To the south or to the north?” The Blessed One said, “Let us go out to the south!” And there came the cherubim and the seraphim²³ and four hundred angels, who took the Holy Virgin to the south where there was a river of fire. A multitude of men and women stood in the river, some up to their waists, some to their shoulders, some to their necks, and some above their heads. Seeing this, the Holy Virgin wept aloud and asked the archangel, “Who are these people who are immersed up to their waists in the fire?” And the archangel said to her, “They are the people who have been cursed by their fathers and mothers; for this the cursed ones suffer torment here.” And the Holy Virgin asked, “And those who are in the fiery flame up to their necks; who are they?” The angel said to her, “They are those who have eaten human flesh; for this they are tormented here.” And the holy one said, “Those who are immersed in the fiery flame above their heads, who are they?” And the archangel spoke, “Those are people, Lady, who—while holding the cross—have sworn falsely.”²⁴ The holy one said to the archangel, “I beg you this one thing: let me also enter so I may suffer together with the Christians, for they have called themselves the children of my Son.” And the archangel said, “Rest yourself in Paradise!” And the holy one said, “I beg you, move the hosts of the seven heavens and all the hosts of the angels so we may pray for the sinners, and God may accept our prayer and have mercy on them. I beg you, order the angelic host to carry me to the heavenly height and take me before the invisible Father!”

The archangel so ordered, and the cherubim and seraphim appeared and carried the Blessed One to the heavenly height and put her down at the throne of the invisible Father. She raised her hands to her blessed Son and said, “Have mercy, O master, on the sinners, for I have seen them, and I could not endure. Let me be tormented together with the Christians!” And a voice came to her and said, “How can I have mercy on them? I see the nails in my Son’s hands.” And she said, “Master! I do not pray for the infidel Jews, but for the Christians I ask your forgiveness!” And a voice came to her: “I see how they have had no mercy on my children, so I can have no mercy on them.”

23. *cherubim and seraphim*—orders of angels.

24. ... *have sworn falsely*—taken false oaths; lied.

The holy one said again, “Have mercy, O master, on the sinners, the creation of your own hands, who proclaim your name over the whole earth and even in their torments, and who in all places say, “Most Holy Lady, Mother of God, aid us!” Then the Lord said to her, “Hear, Holy Mother of God! There is not a man who does not praise your name. I will not abandon them, neither in Heaven, nor on earth.” And the Holy Virgin said, “Where is Moses, the prophet? Where are all the prophets? And you, fathers, who have never committed a sin? Where is Paul, God’s favorite? Where is the Sunday, the pride of the Christian? And where is the power of the worshipful cross through which Adam and Eve were delivered from their curse?”

Then Mikhail the archangel and all the angels said, “Have mercy, O master, on the sinners!” And Moses wept loud and said, “Have mercy on them, O Lord! For I have given them your law!” And John wept and said, “Have mercy, O master! I preached your Gospel to them.” And Paul wept and said, “Have mercy, O master! For I carried your epistles to the churches.”

And those who were in the darkness heard of this, and they all wept with one voice and said, “Have mercy on us, Son of God! Have mercy on us, king of all eternity!” And the master said, “Hear all! I have planted Paradise and created man according to my image and made him lord over Paradise and gave him eternal life. But they have disobeyed me and sinned in their selfishness and delivered themselves to death. . . . You became Christians only in words, and did not keep my commands; for this you find yourselves now in the everlasting fire, and I should not have mercy on you! But today, through the goodness of my Father who sent me to you, and through the intercession of my Mother who wept much for you, and through Mikhail, the archangel of the Gospel, and through the multitude of my martyrs who have labored much on your behalf, I give you from Good Thursday²⁵ to Holy Pentecost,²⁶ day and night, for a rest,²⁷ and you praise the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!” And they all answered, “Glory be to your goodness! Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever!”

25. *Good Thursday*—or Maundy Thursday: the Thursday before Easter and the day before Christ was crucified.

26. *Holy Pentecost*—celebrated fifty days after Easter.

27. *for a rest*—those in Hell have received a reprieve of fifty-four days each year.

22.3 Father Isaac and the Devils (ca. 1051–1074)

The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text, Publication #60, trans. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1953), 161–164. Used by permission of The Medieval Academy of America.

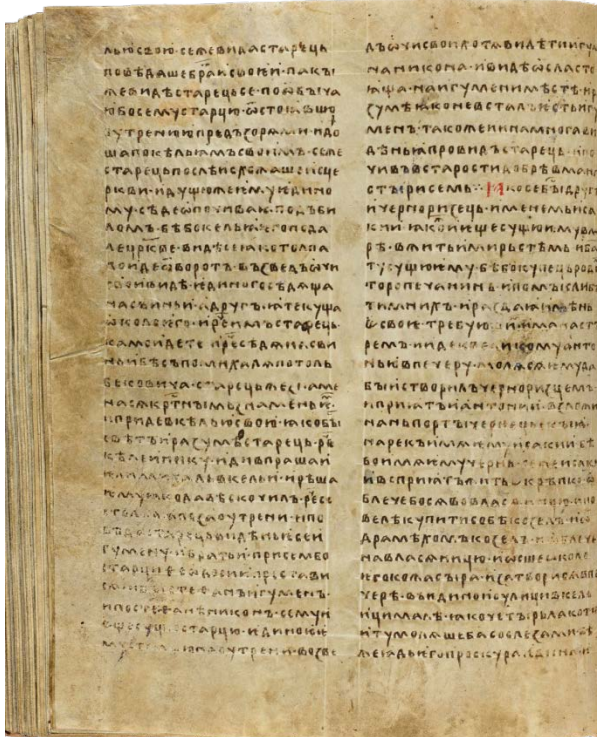


Figure 113. Father Isaac and The Devils, Laurentian Codex, 1377 edition of the Primary Chronicle

The Russian Primary Chronicle includes several stories from the Caves Monastery near Kiev. Although the author of the following tale about the monk “Isaac” does not specifically refer to

Isaac as a “fool for Christ,” Isaac is the first character in the *Chronicle* to display symptoms of holy foolishness.

There was also another monk, named Isaac. While still in the world [outside the monastery], he was very rich, since in the secular life he was by birth a merchant of Toropets.²⁸ But he resolved to become a monk, and distributed his fortune to the needy and to the monasteries. He then approached the great Antonius²⁹ in the crypt, and besought him to receive him into the order. Antonius accepted him, and put upon him the monastic habit, calling him Isaac, for his secular name was Chern. Isaac adopted an ascetic mode of life. He wrapped himself in a hair shirt, then caused a goat to be bought, flayed it, and put on the skin over his hair shirt, so that the fresh hide dried upon him. He shut himself up in a lonely gallery of the crypt in a narrow cell only four ells³⁰ across, and there lamented and prayed to God. His sustenance was one wafer, and that only once a day, and he drank but moderately of water. The great Antonius carried it to him, and passed it in to him by a little window through which he inserted his arm. Thus Isaac received his food. He subsisted thus for seven years without seeing the light of day or even lying down upon his side, for he snatched what sleep he could in a sitting posture. Once, when evening had fallen, he had knelt till midnight singing psalms, as was his wont, and when he was wearied, he sat down upon his stool. As he sat there, and had as usual extinguished his candle, a light suddenly blazed forth in the crypt as if it shone from the sun, and strong enough to take away man’s vision. Two fair youths then approached him. Their faces were radiant like the sun, and they said to him: “Isaac, we are angels; Christ is drawing near to you. Fall down and worship him.”

He did not understand their devilish artifice nor remember to cross himself, but knelt before the work of the demons as if to Christ himself. The demons then cried out and said: “Now, Isaac, you belong to us.”

They led him back into his cell and set him down. They then seated themselves around him, and both the cell and the aisle of the

28. *Toropets*—a town in northwestern Russia.

29. *Antonius*—founder of the Caves Monastery in Kiev.

30. *ell*—the distance from the shoulder to the wrist—roughly 115 centimeters. Isaac’s cell was thus only about 4.6 meters wide.

crypt were filled with them. One of the devils, who called himself Christ, bade them take flutes and lyres and lutes and play, so that Isaac could dance before them. So they struck up with flutes, lutes, and lyres, and began to make sport of him. After they had tormented him, they left him half alive, and went away when they had beaten him.

The next day at dawn, when it was time to break bread, Antonius came to the window according to his custom and said: "May the Lord bless you, Father Isaac." But there was no answer. Then Antonius said: "He has already passed away," so he sent into the monastery in search of Theodosius and the brethren. After digging out the entrance where it had been walled up, they entered and lifted him up, thinking him dead, and carried him out in front of the crypt. They then perceived that he was still alive, and Theodosius the prior said: "This comes from the devil's artifice." They laid him upon a bier, and Antonius cared for him.

[...] For Isaac was so weakened in body that he could not turn from one side to the other, nor rise up, nor sit down, but he lay always upon one side, and relieved himself as he lay, so that numerous worms were caused under his back by his excrement. Theodosius washed and dressed him with his own hands, and for two years cared for him thus. It is wondrous and strange that he lay thus for two years, tasting neither bread nor water nor any other food nor fruit, nor did he speak with his tongue, but lay deaf and dumb for the whole two years.

Theodosius prayed to God in his behalf, and offered supplications over him by day and by night, until in the third year he spoke and heard, rose upon his feet like a babe, and began to walk. He would not go faithfully to church, but the brethren carried him thither by force; they also taught him to go to the refectory, but seated him apart from the rest of the brethren. They set bread before him, but he would not take it unless they placed it in his hand.

Theodosius then said: "Leave the bread before him, but do not put it in his hand, so that he can eat of his own volition."

For a week he ate nothing, but gradually he became aware of the bread, and tasted it. Thus he began to eat, and by this means Theodosius freed him from the craft of the devil.

Isaac then assumed severe abstinence. When Theodosius was dead and Stephen was abbot in his stead, Isaac said: "Demon, you deceived me once when I sat in a lonely spot. I must not confine myself in the crypt, but must vanquish you while I frequent the monastery." He then clad himself in a hair shirt, and put on over this a sack-

cloth coat, and began to act strangely. He undertook to help the cooks in the preparation of food for the brotherhood. He went to matins earlier than the others, and stood firm and immovable. When winter came with its heavy frosts, he stood in shoes so worn that his feet froze to the pavement, but he would not move his feet till matins were over. After matins, he went to the kitchen, and made ready the fire, the water, and the wood before the other cooks came from the brotherhood.

There was one cook who was also named Isaac, who mocked Isaac and said: "There sits a black crow; go and catch it." Isaac bowed to the ground before him, then went and caught the crow, and brought it back to him in the presence of all the cooks. They were frightened, and reported it to the abbot and the brotherhood, who began to respect him. But not being desirous of human glory, he began to act strangely, and to play tricks, now on the abbot, now on the brethren, and now on laymen, so that others dealt him blows. Then he began to wander through the country, acting like an idiot. He settled in the crypt where he had formerly lived, for Antonius was already dead. He gathered young men about him and laid upon them the monastic habit, so that he suffered blows from the Abbot Nikon as well as from the parents of these youths. But he suffered these hardships, and willingly endured blows and nakedness and cold by day and by night.

One night he lit the stove in a cabin by the crypt. When the stove was heated, fire began to issue forth from the crevices, for it was old and cracked. Since he had nothing to put over the stove, he braced his bare feet against the flame till the stove burned out, and then left it. Many other stories were told about him, and I myself witnessed some such occurrences.

Thus he won his victory over the demons, holding their terrors and apparitions of as little account as flies. For he said to them: "You did indeed deceive me the first time in the crypt, since I did not perceive your craft and cunning. But now that I have on my side the Lord Jesus Christ and my God and the prayers of my father Theodosius, I hope to vanquish you." Many times the demons harassed him, and said: "You belong to us, for you have worshipped us and our leader." But he replied: "Your chief is Antichrist and you are demons," and signed his countenance with the cross. At this they disappeared. Sometimes, however, they came upon him again by night, and frightened him in

his dreams, appearing like a great company with mattocks³¹ and spades, and saying: “We will undermine the crypt, and bury this man within it,” while others exclaimed, “Fly, Isaac; they intend to bury you alive.” But [Isaac] answered: “If you were men, you would have come by day; but you are darkness and come in darkness, and the darkness shall swallow you up.” Then he made the sign of the cross against them, and they vanished.

On other occasions, they endeavored to terrify him in the form of a bear, sometimes as a wild beast, and sometimes as a bull. Now snakes beset him, and now toads, mice, and every other reptile. But they could not harm him, and said to him: “Isaac, you have vanquished us!” He replied: “You conquered me in the image of Jesus Christ and his angels, of whose sight you are unworthy. But now you rightly appear in the guise of beasts and cattle or as the snakes and reptiles that you are, repulsive and evil to behold.” Then the demons left him, and he suffered no more evil at their hands. As he himself related, his struggle against them lasted for three years. Then he began to live still more strictly, and to practice abstinence, fasting, and vigil.

After thus living out his life, he finally came to his end. He fell sick in his crypt, and was carried in his illness to the monastery, where he died in the Lord upon the eighth day. The Abbot John and the brethren clothed his body and buried him.

Such were the monks of the monastery of Theodosius, who shine forth like radiant beacons since their decease, and intercede with God in behalf of the brethren here below, as well as for the lay brotherhood and for those who contribute to the monastery in which to this day the brotherhood abides together in virtuous life amid hymns, prayers, and obedience, to the glory of Almighty God, and protected by the intercession of Theodosius, to whom be glory, Amen.

31. *mattock*—an agricultural tool shaped like a pickaxe.

23. Working among Pagans

Although the Russian church dates the Christianization of Rus' to the 980s, when Prince Vladimir was baptized, Russian lands remained largely pagan for centuries thereafter. Priests, especially in the hinterlands, served more as missionaries than as leaders of thriving congregations.

23.1 Questions of Kirik (ca. 1130–1156)

“Voprosy Kirika, Savvy i Ilii, s otvietami Nifonta, episkopa novgorodskago, i drugikh ierarkhicheskikh lits,” in *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, izdavaemaia arkhiegraficheskoiu kommissieiu* (St. Petersburg, 1880), 6: 21–62. Public domain.
 Translation by Kevin Kain.

Two such priests, Savvy and Iliia, and an ordained monk (hieromonk), Kirik, drafted the following queries for their bishop, Nifont, sometime in the mid-1100s. Working in the backwoods provinces of Nizhny-Novgorod (four hundred kilometers east of Moscow) and Tver (150 kilometers northwest of Moscow), the three clerics encountered among local priests and parishioners a number of questions and practices for which they had no ready answers. These questions provide some sense of the uncertainties facing Christians in regions where pagan practices remained strong. The questions, along with the bishop’s answers, were published in a 1853 issue of the *Ethnographic Collection*, a monumental attempt by scholars in the 1800s to gather documents from Russia’s past.

The passages below suggest intense concern about bodily morality, including eating, drinking, regurgitation, and sexual practices. Many of the answers, which evidence a certain amount of thinking on the fly, would surprise today’s clerics and hierarchs.



Figure 114. Isaak Levitan, "Ferns in Forest," 1895, painted near Nizhny Novgorod

[Kirik] asked the bishop what to do if a person vomits after Communion. [The bishop] replied: for vomiting from overeating or drunkenness—forty days penance; twenty days if from feigned sickness. If the person is a priest—also forty days, plus a ban [on] serving and other abstinence. However, if there is a great need [for the priest's service] and no one else can serve in place of the offender, he should be banned from serving for a week. And after resuming service he must do penance by abstaining from honey, meat and milk. If he is still vomiting the day after Communion, then he need not do penance; neither must he do penance on the second day after Communion. If someone did not fast on Saturday or Sunday but did so on the other days, he must fast for forty days; the same is true if he did something else.

If someone vomits the Communion gifts because of sickness, he must fast for three days. However, if he was nauseous but did not actually vomit, he must sing 100 psalms. If someone is bitten by a dog, he must fast for forty days. [...]

And what if someone has seizures? [Kirik] asked. Should he be given Communion? Yes, if he is near death. [The bishop] said that

some are cured by God; but if not, you should give it to them as well. [...]

If one is a believer and possessed, may he or may he not partake in holy Communion? [The bishop replied that] if he did not confess, but yet did not blaspheme in any other way, then he can partake, but not on all days. He can partake once a week. [...]

Regarding the priest who had sexual relations with his wife before the afternoon church service and who served only after bathing the upper part of his body, but not bowing down or bathing completely: if a priest desires to officiate on Sunday and Tuesday, he may copulate in between those days, on Monday morning. After being with his wife he should not enter the altar on those days [of copulation]. [...]

What if, after giving birth, a mother is given bread and cheese and honey mead? [The bishop] strongly forbade this. Never, he said. For it says “woe to the drinking mothers!” [...]

If a priest officiates on Sunday and his next service is on Tuesday, should he copulate in between those days with his concubine? After considering the request, [the bishop] said, if he is young and promiscuous he should not resist. It is better to abstain yourself than to ban it by force, lest it lead to greater sin. [...]

And [Kirik] asked [the bishop] what would happen, your highness, if some take concubines who bear [them] children (as if they were their wives) and others possess many slaves? Which is better? [The bishop] replied that neither one is good. [...]

If the devil tempts you at night and you ejaculate, should you officiate at the afternoon service after washing off and saying a prayer? If, [the bishop] answered, you were dreaming about a certain woman, then you should not [officiate]. If [a priest] is preparing to officiate a service and Satan tempts him—wishing him to leave the church without conducting the service—then he should serve after washing. If, [the bishop] said, [the priest] blames himself, then he is better off not serving. If he happens to be tempted on Sunday, but does not ejaculate, there is nothing to it. However, if you see semen on his pants, but the person did not dream about a woman, then, after washing and changing pants, he should serve. [...]

And this question concerns women. [What] if they do not love their husbands and so bathe their bodies with water and give that water to their husbands [to drink]? [The bishop] ordered me to give them penance for six weeks or to withhold Communion for one year. [...]

What if a man assailed his [pregnant] wife while drunk and harmed the fetus? He deserves half the penance [for murder].

What if they brought the children to a Varangian priest?¹ The answer, [the bishop] said, is that they deserve six weeks of penance, since they practice two different religions. [...]

What if the children of women do what they please, and when the children get sick the women bring them to a sorcerer and not to a priest who could say a prayer? Then [they deserve] six weeks [of penance] or three weeks if they are young.

He asked the following: [What] if a maiden mounts another maiden and secretes semen² and they lay together and there is no husband present? [The bishop] ordered penance for this if [the maiden] secretes but her virginity is preserved.

1. *Varangian priest*—likely a pagan priest.
2. *secretes semen*—here Kirik apparently confuses female sexual fluids with semen.

PART III:

Modernity and Upheavals

24. Icon Painting: Practical Instructions

24.1 Dionysius of Fournà, *Painter's Manual* (1730–1734)

Dionysius of Fournà, *The "Painter's Manual" of Dionysius of Fournà*, trans. Paul Hetherington (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1989). All attempts to contact publisher failed.

Dionysius of Fournà (ca. 1670–1746) was only a teenager when he moved to Mount Athos and established himself as an icon painter. There he wrote a practical book of instructions for his colleagues, titled the *Hermeneia*, or *Painter's Manual*, which has instructed icon painters ever since. The handbook includes information on all manner of practical considerations: how to make charcoal and gesso (a primer); how to depict specific saints and biblical scenes; how to scale human proportions; where to situate icons within churches, and how to prepare oneself spiritually for the process of painting. Here we find the mundane and the technical closely allied with the devotional and the spiritual.



Figure 115. Drawing charcoal



Figure 116. Badger-hair paintbrush



Figure 117. Rabbit-skin gesso, in pellet form and dissolved in water

To the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary
O Mary, Mother of God, on whom the sun's rays fall and who is adorned with grace, Luke,¹ the eloquent orator, most learned professor and teacher of every form of knowledge and science and most holy and stentorian herald and writer of the Gospel message, showed clearly to all the divine love that he bore to your divinely adorned eminence,

1. *Luke*—the author of the Gospel of Luke.

and did not bring, as first fruits, any of his abundant spiritual graces without first drawing and depicting on a panel in varied colors and golden mosaics with his painter's art your wonderful and graceful face, which he had himself seen. I wished to become his unworthy imitator, and started [to practice] the art of painting icons, thinking that the desire to fulfill my duty to your most high and laudable magnificence was the same as the ability [to do so]. However, in my arrogance I failed greatly, as nature did not assist me sufficiently, or accompany my intention and wishes. Therefore, so that I should not ultimately fail in that worthy aim and lose the fruits of my laborious efforts on her behalf, I presume to offer to you the explanation and instructions of this art that I have gathered together and composed with the greatest care and skill of which I am capable, so that it is inferior to none as far as method is concerned, for I know well that to you and to the master and maker of all [to do] one's utmost is dear and most acceptable, providing for the painters who are adorned with natural talents sources of the most beautiful art with the right order and use of colors and ways of finding subjects; how and in what parts of the sacred churches they must be painted with scenes in order to decorate and paint with scenes properly and fittingly the imagined Heaven of the church, and above all your graceful appearance that is like the sun, continually transfigured in the mind's eye of the pious congregation that will continue to come until the end of time; by which means, turning away from earthly things of low estate, and reaching forward in relative measure to the prototype, they may take hope by calling to mind the pleasures of eternity, of which I also may become a spectator through your holy intercessions. [...]

Preliminary training and instructions to him who wishes to learn the art of painting

He who wishes to learn the science of painting, let him first be brought to it by carrying out preliminary training for a set period only, just drawing without proportions, so that he may show his worth; then let there be a prayer on his behalf to the Lord Jesus Christ and supplication before the icon of the Mother of God Hodigetria.² [...]

2. *Hodigetria*—literally “pointing the way.” Refers to a type of icon depicting the Virgin pointing at the infant Christ in her lap. See subsection “12.4 Hodigetria” in this volume.

Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ our God, uncircumscribed in your divine nature, having become inexpressibly incarnate for the salvation of man from the last things by the Virgin Mother of God, Mary, has become worthy of circumscription. [...] O God and master of all things, enlighten and bring wisdom to the soul and heart and mind of your servant [*name*] and direct these hands for the irreproachable and excellent depiction of the form of your person and of your immaculate mother and all your saints, to your glory and to the splendor and beautification of your holy church, and the remission of the sins of those paying homage in regard to her and devoutly kissing and so bringing honor to the prototype; redeem him from all harm inflicted by the devil, as he diligently follows all the commands of the ministers of your immaculate mother, of the holy and illustrious apostle and evangelist, Luke, and of all the saints. Amen.”

Long prayer and dismissal

After the prayer he should lay in³ the proportions and characteristics of the figures exactly, and draw them in such a manner, copying them often with any calculations that are necessary; with the help of God, if he wishes to, he will learn very well, as I have indeed seen in my own pupils. [...]

Know therefore, diligent student, that when you wish to undertake this science, you must look for and find a learned master, whom you will soon wish to surpass in some respects if he teaches you clearly as we shall direct. If you only find one who is unlearned and unskillful, do as we did and see if you can find some original works by Manuel Panselinos,⁴ and copy them at any opportunity, drawing them in the way that we shall instruct you further on, until you master the proportions and forms of the original. Then go into the churches that he has painted and make copies, as we shall instruct you clearly; only do not just carry out this work haphazardly, but with the fear of God and with the veneration due to a sacred task. [...]

[...] Work well, my friend, without sparing your efforts, but with the utmost diligence and care, so that you may be taught this art and master it completely; for this is a heavenly task given of God. This fact is clear to everyone for many reasons, but principally on account of the

3. *lay in*—draw.

4. *Manuel Panselinos*—a legendary icon painter from Athens of the late 1200s and early 1300s.

venerable icon “made without hands,” on which Jesus Christ, God made man, impressed his sacred face and sent it to Abgar the governor of Edessa,⁵ imprinted upon the holy veil. That it appeared a most beautiful and admirable work to his most chaste mother is known to all; she prayed for the apostle and evangelist Saint Luke, and blessed him on account of this profession, saying, “May the grace of him who is born of me through me [be imparted] to them.” Not only in this way, but it is also shown by the infinite miracles achieved and accomplished by the holy icons of the main feasts and those of the Virgin and the other saints, that the art of painting is acceptable and pleasing to God. Furthermore, those who do this work with devotion and diligence receive grace and blessing from God; but whoever from rapaciousness and love of money undertakes this work without respect and diligence, may they reflect well and repent before their end, fearing the punishment of Judas, whom they resemble in their love of money, in the fire of Hell. From which we shall all in due order be delivered by the intercessions of the Mother of God, of the holy apostle Luke and of all the saints. Amen. [...]

How to make charcoal for drawing

Take a stout piece of sound, dry timber, of either a hazel-tree or a myrtle-tree, and cut it into pieces with a saw; then split them with an adze⁶ into thin lengths, and with a knife cut them again into thin lengths until they are like lead pencils. Fill a pot with them, and put a cloth over them, covering the whole with clay; then heat up an oven and when it is burned half through, put the pot in the middle, and the pieces of wood will be set alight in the pot and even give off flames. When the flames die down, take the pot out at once and cover it with ashes and dry earth. Take care not to take the wood out of the pot before it has cooled off, for if you uncover it before it is cold the pieces will burn in the pot and you will have wasted your work. If you want to make charcoal more quickly, do thus: wrap up a few pieces of the wood in paper or cloth and bury them in the middle of burning coals; they will then burn up and give off smoke. As soon as they have stopped smoking, at once take out all the pieces with a shovel, bury

5. *impressed his sacred face and sent it to Abgar the governor of Edessa*—see subsection “12.1 Savior Acheiropoietos” in this volume.

6. *adze*—a tool for smoothing rough-cut wood.

them in some cold ashes or earth until they are extinguished, and they will be [alright]. This is how artists prepare charcoal for their drawing.

On the making of brushes

When you want to make brushes for painting you will have to find some badgers' tails and pluck out all the hairs, only taking those from the sides.⁷ Now take the hairs that are straight, even, and undamaged so that the brushes will be good for painting highlights and flesh parts. Then cut them with a small pair of scissors and lay them on a board separately, one by one; then gather them carefully and wet them in some water, squeezing the tips with the fingernails of the left hand and holding the other end with the right hand. Do this with a few at a time, straightening them carefully, and bind them nimbly with a piece of waxed silk thread, seeing that you do not make the brush too long. [...]

On the making of glue

When you wish to make some glue, do thus: take some limed skins⁸ and put them into lukewarm water to soak right through; wash and clean all the flesh, tissue, and dirt off them, and put them into clean water in a copper vessel to boil. Watch for when they come to the boil and begin to thicken, and strain them off either with a woven strainer or a cloth—otherwise they will burn—and then put in more water; repeat this two or three times, straining off until they are completely dissolved. [...] If you want to dry the glue, put the last of the glue alone on a low fire and let it boil until it coagulates, only watch it well as it may froth up a lot, and you must then let it sink down; you must therefore be present when it is boiling so that when it froths up you can take it off the fire and put it in a vessel of cold water so that it touches the bottom, in order to stop it rising. Put it back several times onto the fire until it coagulates, and then take it off and leave it to cool. Stretch a piece of string in a bow saw,⁹ cut [the coagulated glue] into small pieces and leave them on a board for two or three days until they begin to harden; then pass string through them and hang them up in the air to dry completely, and keep them for when you want to lay gesso.¹⁰ See

7. *taking those from the sides*—hairs from the tip of the tail often have broken ends.

8. *limed skins*—lime helps the skins decompose.

9. *bow saw*—similar to a frame saw.

10. *gesso*—powdered calcium carbonate. Mixed with glue, it serves as a pri-

that you always prepare glue in cold weather, since it smells if the weather is hot, and you do not make such good progress.

How to put halos on icons

When you draw a figure on an icon, put in the halo with a pair of compasses, and apply gesso to the area when you first prepare the panel; take a cotton thread dipped in gesso so that it is full of it, and put it round the halo on the mark made by the compasses. Next scribe another circle with the compasses inside the string in order to make it more even and so it is not distorted anywhere. Be sure to use thin thread for small halos and thicker for large ones. When the threads are dry, apply more gesso if you want the halo in relief; then draw in the ornament you want, and using the gesso on a brush, add two or three layers to the decoration and to the threads to raise them up; carefully scrape away all round the decorative patterns with a piece of sharp bone and apply gilding. Take care that the gesso that you use for the raised ornament is different from that which you used before; to ensure this, put some ochre in it to make it yellow.

How to gild icons

Mark the image with a fine point; then wipe it well to remove the charcoal, and if it is at all dirty, rub it clean. Put two or three coats of bole¹¹ on it, letting the first coat dry before applying the second. When the bole is dried properly, lay the panel on its back in front of you, and taking the gold leaf, lay it on the panel, pinning each piece down with a sharp bone tool for it to be stuck where they overlap so that they cannot be removed either by the wind or by the *raki*¹² when you pour it on. Put the *raki* in a glass jug and pour it onto the edges of the icon, and then, holding it by one side, tilt it until it is impregnated all over; be careful that you do this quickly, however, in case the gesso is affected. Stand the icon upright, repair any faults and leave it to dry; then burnish and work on it.

mer coat.

11. *bole*—fine clay.

12. *raki*—grain alcohol.

Explanation of the proportions of the human figure

Learn, O pupil, that in the whole figure of a man there are nine faces, that is to say nine measures, from the forehead to the soles of the feet. First make the first face, which you divide into three, making the first division the forehead, the second the nose and the third the beard. Draw the hair above the face to the height of one nose-length; again measure into thirds the distance between the beard and the nose; the chin takes up two of the divisions and the mouth one, while the throat is one nose-length. Next divide from the chin to the middle of the body into three measures, and from there to the knees two more; for each knee you take one nose-length. [...] From the pit of the throat to the shoulder is one measure, and likewise to the other shoulder. For the thickness of the upper arm take one nose-length and measure to the elbow from above one measure, and again one more to the base of the hand; from there to the fingertips is one more measure. Both the eyes are equal, and the distance separating them is equal to one eye. [...]

Rules for depicting biblical scenes

The fall of Lucifer

Heaven, with Christ sitting on his throne like a king, holding the Gospels open, which read: “I beheld Satan as lightning fell from Heaven.” Around him the choirs of angels stand in fear [...] Below them are mountains and in the middle of them a great chasm, with “Tartarus”¹³ written above it, and the army of Lucifer is hurled down out of Heaven. The angels that are higher among those that are hurled down are shining, while other angels lower down are darker and they become darker still further down; below they are half devils and half angels, and further down still they are completely black and benighted devils, while beneath them all, inside Tartarus, the demon Lucifer, blacker and more accursed than all, lies prone and looks upward.

The expulsion of Adam and Eve

Paradise [...] with Adam and Eve naked; fig-leaves are entwined round their waists, and they look backward as they flee. A fiery angel, with six wings and a flaming sword in his hands, pursues them.

13. *Tartarus*—literally “deep place.” In Greek mythology, a region in Hades.

Noah, made drunk on the wine, becomes naked

[...] Noah is seated holding a jug and drinking from a beaker. He appears again sleeping, with his belly naked; his two sons Shem and Japheth hold a garment on their backs and walk toward him backward, while Ham behind them looks at Noah and points him out to them.

Moses, having led the Israelites through the Red Sea, inundates the Egyptians

The sea, with women dancing on the shore; there is a crowd of Hebrews, men and women, with children in their arms and on their shoulders. Moses strikes the sea with his rod, and soldiers appear in the midst, some immersed up to their necks, with horses here and chariots there.

Moses receiving the law

A high mountain, and Moses kneeling on the summit, holding the tablets; above are many clouds with much fire and angels sounding trumpets. Lower down the mountain Moses appears again, breaking the tablets to pieces. At the bottom of the mountain are the Hebrews, eating and drinking and dancing, and in the midst of them a tall column on top of which is a golden calf. Aaron is standing apart by himself, grieving.

The annunciation to the Mother of God

Houses and the Holy Virgin standing before a chair, with her head slightly bowed; in one hand she holds a spindle with a roll of silk thread upon it, while she stretches out her right hand toward the Archangel Gabriel, who stands before her, blessing her with his right hand and holding a lance in his left. Above the house is Heaven and out of it comes the Holy Spirit with a ray of light onto the Virgin's head.

The adoration of the Magi

A house, and the Virgin sitting on a stool, holding the infant Christ, who makes the act of blessing. The three magi are before her, holding their gifts in golden caskets; one of them is an old man with a long beard, and kneeling bareheaded he looks at Christ and holds his gift in one hand and his crown in the other. Another has an incipient beard, and the other is beardless, and they look at each other, pointing

out Christ. Behind the Virgin Joseph stands in wonder. Outside the dwelling a young man holds three horses by the bridle. The three magi appear again above in the mountains, sitting on their horses and returning to their country, while an angel shows them the way.

The transfiguration

A mountain with three peaks; on the middle peak Christ stands with white robes, blessing; a light radiates round him. On the right-hand peak is the prophet Moses holding the tablets [of the law], and on the left-hand one the prophet Elijah; both stand and look with supplication at Christ. Below Christ, Peter and James and John lie prostrate, looking up as if in ecstasy. Behind, on one side of the mountain, Christ appears again, climbing up with the three apostles, and showing them the summit of the mountain; on the other side of the mountain the apostles appear again, going down and looking behind them with fear; Christ appears again behind them, blessing them.

25. Patriarch Nikon and the Old Belief

Whatever merit can be found in charges of “caesaropapism”¹ in relations between the Byzantine church and state, “caesaropapism” cannot accurately describe relations between tsar and patriarch in Russia during the 1500s and 1600s. As we’ve seen in the contest of wills between Tsar Ivan and church leaders at the Stoglav Council in 1551, the medieval Russian church by no means lived under the thumb of the state. It regularly resisted attempts by tsars to impose their will. In fact patriarchs sometimes claimed that their office was superior to that of the tsar.

One such patriarch was Patriarch Nikon (1652–1666), an energetic, intelligent, and obstinately ambitious man, who quickly rose from a position as a monk in the northern hinterlands to become the metropolitan of Novgorod and then patriarch of Moscow in 1652.²

As a young adult Nikon emerged as a key figure in the “Zealots of Piety,” an informal conglomeration of pious Christians who argued that the church needed more autonomy and

1. See document “Justinian on Imperial Authority over the Church (ca. 535)” in Part I, section “Christianity and the Byzantine State” of *Essential Texts*.

2. For a good overview of Nikon, see G. Edward Orchard’s article, to which this summary is heavily indebted, in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1981).

authority to govern its own affairs. The Zealots believed that clergy had a duty to improve the morals of the Russian populace (especially the clergy), minister to the needy, spread the Gospel, and improve the content and delivery of sermons. Russia's many troubles, they argued, stemmed from an angry God intent on punishing the land for its lack of piety and ardor.

Tsar Aleksei (1645–1676) supported Nikon's appointment as patriarch of Moscow, believing that Nikon would advance the goals of the Zealots, goals Aleksei himself endorsed. Nikon, then, came to power as a reformer resolved to implement change.

And he did. He launched campaigns against minstrels and jesters, on whose ribaldry the church had always frowned. He cracked down on icons that did not adhere to established aesthetic norms. While not everyone approved of such measures, stringent opposition to Nikon did not emerge until he entered the realm of liturgical practice.

But first, some background.

Over the centuries the Russian liturgy had diverged slightly but perceptibly from liturgical practices in Constantinople. Nikon, who believed adamantly in the church as a universal church, was a great advocate of standardization, and he resolved to bring Russian practice back into line with Greek practice. The church is one; ergo practice and liturgy should be one. Standardization also made sense given the political climate in Russia. Tsar Aleksei was about to incorporate Ukrainian lands into the Muscovite empire. Since the metropolitan of Kiev worked under the authority of the Constantinople patriarchate, great awkwardness could result if Russian practices (which did not always conform to practices in Constantinople) and Kievan practices (which usually did) were not reconciled.

Nikon thus hired a Greek scholar by the name of Arsenios to revise the Russian service books. The appointment of a Greek made this work immediately suspect in some corners of the Russian church. What right had the Greeks—whose apostasy assuredly led to Constantinople's downfall—to tinker with the service books of the great Russian church?

The chief editor of the church's printing office opposed the changes. Nikon, in a typically heavy-handed response, fired the editor and appointed one of his own loyalists. Nikon then issued

a letter to the entire church, insisting that changes to the service books be implemented throughout Muscovy.



Figure 118. Aleksei Kivshenko (1851-1895), “Patriarch Nikon Revising Service Books”

These changes were relatively minor. The sign of the cross should be made with three fingers according to Greek practice, rather than with two fingers as stipulated by the Stoglav Council of 1551. Jesus would be spelled *Исусъ* (*Isus*) rather than *Иисусъ* (*Iisus*). Other changes concerned the direction of processions during the service, the number of times one repeated “alleluia” in the liturgy, the number of loaves of bread on the table during the Eucharist, and other matters.



Figure 119. The sign of the cross.

Left: made with two fingers prior to the reforms (and by Old Believers)

Right: made with three fingers after the reforms

Nikon's old friends in the Zealots of Piety met to discuss the changes and concluded that they must oppose these new-fangled (actually old-fangled Greek) ways. Nikon responded by arresting and imprisoning two Zealots; a third was arrested and a fourth defrocked for protesting the first two arrests.

Nikon then summoned a church council in 1654 to garner support for the revisions. Although he managed to win support from a majority in the council, dissenters proved vocal and determined.

Events turned ugly. The patriarch of Antioch endorsed the changes, again raising suspicions about meddling foreigners. In fact he anathematized anyone who continued to make the sign of the cross with two fingers. (Who was the patriarch of Antioch, asked the revision's opponents, to anathematize good Russian Christians?) Another Russian church council met in 1656 to confirm the anathema. Here was more proof for those who sought it that the Russian church was becoming the puppet of foreigners. Other decisions such as Nikon's order to build three new monasteries modeled on Greek designs only confirmed the paranoia.

The resultant outcry prompted Tsar Aleksei to question the judgment and reliability of his rash patriarch. When Aleksei and

his council of nobles sought to appoint a pro-Muscovite candidate as metropolitan of Kiev, Nikon, instead of supporting his tsar, argued that Aleksei had no such right, since Kiev was subject to the patriarch of Constantinople. Universal church organization and authority, in other words, trumped the tsar's predilections. Aleksei was less than pleased.

Nor was Aleksei pleased with Nikon's abiding insistence that church affairs should be free from secular interference. Some of Nikon's critics suggested that Nikon's desire to protect the church from secular intrusion was hypocritical: Nikon, his critics argued, sought to free clergy from government influence only to subordinate them to his own authority. That Nikon made important decisions without convening a council of the Russian church, they suggested, reflected the very authoritarianism from which he claimed to protect the church.

Disappointed by his lack of support from his tsar and from his own church, Nikon abruptly resigned in 1658, while declaring, in typical fashion, that he alone had the right to choose his successor.

Tsar Aleksei found himself in a pickle.

With Aleksei's blessing, the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch traveled to a church council in Moscow in 1666 to decide how to respond to Nikon's dramatic gesture. The council declared Nikon guilty of abandoning the church, slandering the tsar and the Russian people (since he declared that anyone who refused to accept the reforms was a heretic), and exiling bishops unilaterally, without the agreement of a church council. The verdict: exile for Nikon to a monastery in the far north.

It is significant, however, that the council did not overturn the reforms themselves. The patriarch departed, but his reforms remained. The story of Nikon's exile is thus only a prelude to the tragedy that followed. While thousands of parishioners simply ignored the reforms and quietly followed the old rubrics, others proved vocal in their resistance and willingly suffered imprisonment and excommunication. Such resistance—both passive and active—undermined Nikon's primary goals, namely uniting the universal Orthodox Church and strengthening the patriarch's control of his own regional church.

For a number of reasons too complex to enumerate here, apocalyptic expectations were high in Russia at this time. The

more fearful of the reforms' opponents became convinced that Nikon was the Antichrist. Some "Old Believers"—those who remained true to the "old" Russian faith uncorrupted by these "new" reforms—began preparing for the last judgment, abandoning their fields and livestock and moving to remote regions of the empire. Dynamic leaders of the Old Belief such as the priest Avvakum (whose autobiography appears below) warned about the pernicious evil afoot and inspired many thousands to abandon the official church.

Although Aleksei ultimately failed to support Nikon, Aleksei and his successors could not abide those who resisted official church policy. Aleksei's enforcement of the reforms was lax, but he made clear that opposition was not acceptable. His successor, the regent Sofia, took a much harder line. During Sofia's reign some Old Believers paid for their opposition by literally losing their tongues. Some died at the stake. A number of Old Believers chose to burn themselves alive rather than be captured by government authorities. Vivid reports exist of Old Believers gathering in churches and setting the churches on fire. Some estimates place the number of suicides at twenty thousand.

The Old Belief raised a difficult question for its adherents: How could they celebrate the sacraments outside the church they abandoned and condemned? Were sacraments even valid outside the church? Some Old Believers accepted ministrations from regular priests (who, according to the Old Believers, had degraded themselves by accepting the new rites) simply because Old Believers needed valid sacraments and valid sacraments come only from clergy residing within the church. Others—the "priestless" Old Believers—refused to accept sacraments from clergy loyal to the tainted church. True sacraments, these Old Believers suggested, had been taken up to Heaven and would return only in the last days. In the priestless Old Believers we thus witness a strange phenomenon: Orthodox Christians who abandoned the sacramental life that so defines Orthodox Christianity.

The story of Nikon and the Old Belief is important for the ways it illustrates a number of features characteristic of Russian Orthodoxy in the early modern age.

First is the distrust of a patriarch who failed to consult and collaborate with the church as a whole. As is evident in Eastern

criticisms of the papacy, Eastern Orthodoxy distrusts leaders who claim the right to make unanimous decisions. Such distrust ultimately sank Nikon.

Second, Nikon's downfall underlines the always-present tension between emperor/tsar and archbishop/patriarch. The question of authority in church affairs dates back to Constantine and reappears constantly throughout the church's history. Just as Byzantine emperors distrusted powerful patriarchs and sought to impose their will on church affairs, so did Tsar Aleksei come to distrust Nikon, who believed church affairs fell under his purview, not the tsar's.

Third, the schism reflects the deep conservatism of Russian Orthodoxy. Change in principle is usually suspect. The fact that changes to the service books were an attempt to return to past practices made little difference—change was still change, and thus dubious.

Forth, we see indications of Russian chauvinism and even xenophobia in the opposition to Nikon's reforms, which represented a return to Greek (i.e., non-Russian) practices. Those who opposed the reforms believed that Russia was the rightful center and leader of the Orthodox world, as a consequence of Constantinople's earlier apostasy and downfall.

Finally, the schism suggests just how important is the liturgy in Orthodox theology. (Cabasilas's commentary on the Divine Liturgy makes this quite clear.) In important ways the Eastern liturgy is theology: to tamper with the liturgy is to tamper with theology and thus with truth.

25.1 Letter from Tsar Aleksei to Patriarch Nikon (1652)

“Tsar Alexis’s Letter to Nikon, May 1652,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:255–256. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

When Patriarch Iosif died in April 1652 Tsar Aleksei chose Nikon, then metropolitan of Novgorod and Velikie Luki (near Russia’s current border with Belarus), as Iosif’s successor. In the following letter from Aleksei to Nikon (Aleksei’s personal confessor), we find none of Aleksei’s later distrust of his brash patriarch; instead the tsar’s professed attitude here is one of dramatic obsequiousness. Aleksei’s later treatment of Nikon, of course, would be far less subservient than the rhetoric here would predict.



Figure 120. Tsar Aleksei I, 1600s

To the excellent and steadfast shepherd and preceptor of our souls and bodies, the merciful, gentle, kindhearted, meek lover and confidant of Christ, and zealous leader of the spiritual flock. O stout fighter and toiler of the heavenly king! O holy prelate, my beloved companion and friend! Pray for me, sinner that I am, and may your holy prayers keep me from sinking into the mire of my sins. I put my faith in your blameless, meek, and saintly life, and I write to you, who shine brightly as a prelate—for, as the sun shines upon the entire universe, so do you shine upon our entire realm, because of your worthy life and good works—to our great lord who prays for us, the most holy and most illustrious Metropolitan Nikon of Novgorod and Velikie Luki, our own friend both spiritual and worldly. We want to know of your episcopal welfare and how God protects you, light of our soul; and if you wish to know of us, we, through the grace of God and your episcopal blessing, are indeed called the true Christian tsar; although because of my evil [and] hateful deeds, I am unworthy to be a dog, let alone a tsar; and though a sinner, I call myself the servant of the light that created me. Through your holy prayers, to this day [...] God has granted good health to all of us, to ourselves, and our tsaritsa,³ and our sisters, and our daughter, and our entire state. [...] And now, great lord, hear my entreaty. For the sake of the Lord, hasten to return to us so that there may be elected to the patriarchate a man known to God, for without you we shall not undertake anything at all. I ask your blessing and your forgiveness and for the entire state, and I send you my warmest greetings. [...]

I have signed this with my own hand, God's servant Tsar Aleksei of all Russia.

3. *tsaritsa*—the wife of the tsar.

25.2 Nikon on Spiritual versus Secular Power (ca. 1663)

“Nikon Concerning the Powers of the Church, ca. 1663,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:256–257. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

In the centuries-old debate about whether spiritual power is higher than secular power, Nikon came down squarely on the side of spiritual power, particularly as that power resided in his own position. Note in the excerpt below that Nikon employs a passage from scripture often cited by popes to justify his own claims. This stance did not endear Nikon to Tsar Aleksei.



Figure 121. Patriarch Nikon (ca. 1660-1665), New Jerusalem Museum, Russia

[...] As opinions are divided, we shall first take the view of those learned in the canon law, who assert that the tsar's authority must be subordinate to episcopal authority, to which Almighty God has entrusted the keys of the kingdom of Heaven and given, on earth, the power to bind and to loose; moreover, episcopal authority is spiritual, while that given to the tsar is of this world; and matters of heavenly, that is, spiritual, authority stand far above those of this world or of temporal [authority]. Hence, it is very clear that the tsar must be lower than the prelate and obedient to him, for I also say that the clergy are chosen people and are anointed by the Holy Spirit. And if all Christians owe obedience to the prelates, such obedience is owed still more by him who with his sword forces the insubordinate to obey the prelates. [...] When the Lord God Almighty created Heaven and earth, he ordered the two luminaries, the sun and the moon, which move across [Heaven], to shine upon the earth. The sun represents episcopal authority, while the moon represents the authority of the tsar; for the sun illuminates the day, as the prelate enlightens the soul, while the lesser luminary illuminates the night, which is the body. As the moon receives its light from the sun [...] so it is with the tsar. He is consecrated, anointed, and crowned by a prelate, from whom he must thereupon receive his perfect light, to wit, his most rightful power and authority. Throughout Christendom the difference between these two persons is like that between the sun and the moon; for the authority of the prelate is over the day, that is, over souls, while the authority of the tsar is over the things of this world; and that authority lies in this: the tsar's sword must be ready against the enemies of the Orthodox faith; if the prelates and all the clergy demand that he defend them from all unrighteousness and violence, then the civil [authority] must obey the spiritual [authority]. [...] In spiritual matters, which are of concern to all, the supreme bishop⁴ is higher than the tsar, and all the Orthodox owe obedience to the bishop because he is our father in the Orthodox faith, and the Orthodox Church is entrusted to him. [...]

The clergy is a more honored and higher authority than the state itself. [...] The throne of the clergy has been erected in Heaven. Who says this? The heavenly king himself: "Whatsoever you shall bind on

4. *supreme bishop*—patriarch.

earth shall be bound in Heaven. [...]” Thus it is the tsars who are anointed by the priests and not the priests by the tsars. [...]

In ancient as in modern times, the priesthood does not come from men, nor is it created by men, but [it comes] from God himself, and not from tsars; for the tsar’s authority was and still is derived from the priesthood, as the rites of the tsar’s coronation testify. The priesthood is everywhere honored above the tsardom. [...] Priestly authority excels civil power as Heaven excels earth, and much more so. For our [priestly] abode is in Heaven, and our life is hid there in spirit with God. [...] Therefore, those who have this authority are honored above princes, local [rulers], and even those who have been invested with regal insignia. [...] As a drop of rain is to a big cloud, such is the dimension of earth as compared with the heavens, and even so does the tsardom diminish when compared with the priesthood.

25.3 Church Council Condemns Avvakum (1666)

“The Russian Church Council on Avvakum, May 13, 1666,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:157. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

In the spring of 1666 a Russian church council dealt with the fallout caused by Nikon’s reforms and the defiance marshaled by Archpriest Avvakum, Nikon’s most famous opponent. (See documents “25.6 *Autobiography of Archpriest Avvakum*” and “25.7 Account of Avvakum’s Punishment” later in this section.) The council condemned both Nikon and Avvakum, taking to task the man who initiated and implemented the reforms, as well as the man who fought them. The reforms were valid, said the council, but not the manner or spirit in which they were enacted.

There appeared [before the council] the mendacious Avvakum, former archpriest of Iurievets on the Volga, who in past years had been sentenced to imprisonment in Siberia for schism, sedition, and false teachings, and was released from there by the mercy of the scepter-bearer,⁵ but persisted in propagating his evil designs and false doctrines orally and in writing, thus leading simple folk astray and tearing them away from the one holy Eastern Orthodox catholic church. He condemned in writing the correction of the holy creed, the joining of the first three fingers for making the sign of the cross, the correction as well as the correctors of [ecclesiastical] books, [and] the coordination of church singing;⁶ he also calumniated the Moscow priests, saying that they do not believe in the incarnation and resurrection of Christ [...], and without fearing God, he wrote many similar falsehoods and calumnies, to which we may finally add his seditious words in forbidding Orthodox Christians to take Communion from priests who officiate according to the newly corrected books. On all the foregoing [matters] he was admonished by the holy council and did not submit; on the contrary, calumniator and slanderer that he is, he added hatred to hatred by rebuking the entire holy council to its face, for not being Orthodox; thus the council judged rightfully in depriving him of his sacerdotal dignity and pronouncing anathema upon him. [...] Later he

5. *scepter bearer*—the tsar.

6. *coordination of church singing*—between the choir and the priest.

was again urged to repent, but all efforts and hopes proved futile, and he was sentenced by a secular court to confinement in the fortress of Pustozersk.

25.4 Church Council Condemns Nikon (1666)

“The Church Council’s Condemnation of the Schism, May 13, 1667,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:258–259. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

Following is the condemnation of Patriarch Nikon by the same council.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Whereas Nikon, the former patriarch of Moscow, did offend our long-time tsar, sovereign, and grand prince, Aleksei Mikhailovich, autocrat of all great, little, and white Russia,⁷ did plunge his entire Orthodox realm into turmoil, and did involve himself in matters unbecoming the patriarchal authority and dignity, our God-crowned tsar communicated these matters and informed us, the four ecumenical patriarchs, [asking] whether we consider it proper and warranted for a patriarch to act thus. [...] [Nikon] finally left the [patriarchal] throne, and yet he did not leave it, for he slyly would not allow another patriarch [to be chosen]. Though cognizant of such deceitfulness and such wrongdoing and of Nikon’s slyness, guile, impudence, sacrilege, and insatiability, yet our most clement monarch, the most holy prelates, and the entire illustrious council⁸ did not dare raise another patriarch to the illustrious Muscovite see, lest people say that there are two patriarchs at the same time, one outside and the other within [the city], and a double authority. Therefore, our sovereign tsar desired that the ecumenical patriarchs should come in person to the ruling city of Moscow,⁹ with so that they might see and convince themselves with their own eyes as to what had happened, that the most clement ruling power of the tsar’s realm be free from any blame, that any future censure by the common people be avoided,¹⁰ and that Nikon not be deposed

7. *great, little, and white Russia*—respectively Russia, portions of Ukraine, and Belarus.

8. *illustrious council*—Boiar Duma, an advisory council to the tsar.

9. *ecumenical patriarchs ... Moscow*—the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch came to Russia to participate in the council, as did a number of Greek metropolitans.

10. *that any future censure by the common people be avoided*—the tsar is worried

from the patriarchal see through human passion. [...] Whereas we have now learned that Nikon lived tyrannically, and not meekly as befits a prelate, and that he was given to iniquity, rapacity, and tyranny, we debar him, in accordance with the divine and sacred canons of the evangelizing apostles and of the ecumenical and local Orthodox councils, from every sacerdotal function, so that henceforth he shall have no power to perform any episcopal act; and we truly entirely depose him, [stripping him] of the omophorion and epitrachelion,¹¹ and we decree with the entire local church council that henceforth he be known as a common monk called Nikon, and not as patriarch of Moscow; he will be assigned a place to dwell to the very end of his days, and may it be some old and suitable monastery, where he can lament his sins in great silence.

about popular reaction.

11. *omophorion* and *epitrachelion*—episcopal and priestly insignia.

25.5 Church Council Condemns the Schism (1667)

“The Church Council’s Condemnation of the Schism, May 13, 1667,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:258–259. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

The council also issued a condemnation of the *raskolniki*—schismatics who refused to recognize the reforms.

For our sins, with God’s sufferance and with the help of the devil, that enemy and hater of Orthodox Christendom, many ignorant men, not only common people but priests and monks as well—some through great ignorance of holy scripture and corruption of mind; some under guise of reverence and virtuous life, appearing abstinent and virtuous, yet full of all kinds of stupidity and presumptuous sophistry, who deeming themselves wise have instead turned into fools; some thinking themselves zealous and indeed having such zeal, but unwisely—have stirred many weak souls, in word and in writing, speaking and writing under Satan’s inspiration. They have called heretical and corrupt the printed books newly corrected and translated under Nikon, the former patriarch; they have calumniated the clergy who did the correcting in conformity with the Greek and old Russian texts, falsely calling them by abusive names and disparaging their episcopal rank and dignity; they have disturbed the people with their violent acts, saying that the church is not the church, the prelates are not prelates, the priests are not priests, and other similar lies. And because of their diabolically inspired false discourse, the priests have lost their zeal for keeping the church in good order and care. [...] And because of the clergy’s great ignorance and neglect of Christ’s fold entrusted to them, their lack of zeal and concern for keeping the church in good order, and their indecorous life, many Christians have abandoned church attendance and prayer and have deprived themselves of confessing and doing penance for their sins and of receiving the precious body and blood of Christ. Those who could began to keep widowed priests in their homes, without episcopal benediction and certification. Many of these priests, though under interdiction and unfrocked by their own prelates, officiated in homes for the satisfaction of those insubordinate to the holy

Eastern church who did not want to hear the singing in churches, where it is performed according to the corrected printed books, in conformity with the customs of the holy Eastern church. Consequently, many people formed the opinion that the churches and the church offices, sacraments, and rituals are defiled by many heresies and by the filth of the Antichrist. They also questioned the correction of the holy creed, the triple *alleluia*, the sign of the precious and life-giving cross, the joining of the first three fingers, the form of addressing Jesus in prayer,¹² and so forth. In view of these faults, we, all the prelates, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, and notables from other church ranks, archimandrites, abbots, and archpriests of the great Russian state, have assembled in the patriarch's Hall of the Cross,¹³ and have examined at length and in great detail the newly corrected and newly translated printed books and the old Slavonic-Russian parchment manuscripts in connection with the above-mentioned and other matters, and have found nothing perverse, corrupt, or contrary to our Orthodox faith in the newly corrected and newly translated printed books, but [found] everything to be in accordance with the old Slavonic-Russian parchment books. [...] For this reason Nikon, the former patriarch, ordered the books to be corrected and translated from the Greek and old Slavonic-Russian parchment books, not on his own account but by order of our most pious sovereign tsar and grand prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, autocrat of all great, little, and white Russia, with the benediction, advice, and consent of the most holy ecumenical patriarchs, and the agreement of the prelates of the entire Russian realm and of the entire holy council. [...]

The archimandrites¹⁴ and the abbots are to instruct their brethren in the monasteries; while the archpriests, priests' elders, and priests [...] and all members of the clergy are to instruct all their spiritual children, men and women and youths, and instruct them often, in all the churches as well as in private, so that everyone may, without misgiving, conform in everything to the holy Eastern church; and the books, the *sluzhebnyki*¹⁵

12. *form of addressing Jesus in prayer*—the reforms stipulated that Jesus should be spelled *Исусъ* (*Isus*) rather than *Иисусъ* (*Iisus*).

13. *Hall of the Cross*—the Krestovaia Palata in the Moscow Kremlin.

14. *archimandrite*—a superior abbot to whom other abbots report.

15. *sluzhebnyki*—books for regular church services, including Mass, matins, and vespers.

and *trebniki*¹⁶ and others, which by order of the Orthodox great sovereign tsar and grand prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, autocrat of all great, little, and white Russia, and with the benediction and counsel of our brethren, the most holy ecumenical patriarchs, were corrected, translated, and printed under Nikon, the former patriarch, and after his retirement, with the benediction of the holy council, are to be accepted, since they have been rightfully corrected; and you are to command that all church services be performed in conformity with [these books], decorously, without disturbance, and harmoniously. [...]

[...] If anyone disobeys our commands and does not submit to the holy Eastern church and to this holy council, or begins to contradict or oppose us, we shall, by the power given to us from the all-holy and life-giving Spirit, deal with such a recalcitrant: if he be a member of the clergy, we shall excommunicate him, and deprive him of all priestly functions and grace, and place a curse upon him; if he be a member of the laity, we shall excommunicate him, and alienate him from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and curse and anathematize him as a heretic and rebel, and cut him off from the Orthodox community and fold, and from the church of God, as a rotten and useless limb, until he gains understanding and returns to the truth through penance. [...]

Regarding the council¹⁷ that was held in the reign of the pious great sovereign tsar and grand prince Ivan [IV] Vasilevich,¹⁸ autocrat of all Russia, under Makary, metropolitan of Moscow, and what was written about the sign of the precious cross, that is, about joining two fingers, and about the double *alleluia*, and about other matters, which through simplicity and ignorance were inadvisably written into the Stoglav book, and regarding the anathema¹⁹ that was unrighteously and unadvisedly pronounced: we, the Orthodox patriarchs, Paisius, pope and patriarch of Alexandria and ecumenical judge, and Makary, patriarch of Antioch and of all the Orient, and Iosif, patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, and the entire holy council do annul and abrogate this unrighteous and inadvised anathema pronounced by Makary

16. *trebniki*—books for special services such as weddings and baptisms.

17. *the council*—the Stoglav Council of 1551, which endorsed some of the practices Nikon overturned.

18. *Ivan [IV] Vasilevich*—Ivan the Terrible (1547–1584); see document “12.2. Stoglav Council” in this volume.

19. *anathema*—the anathema pronounced on those who failed to follow the decisions of the council.

and that council, and regard that council and that anathema as not having taken place, since Makary and those with him, in their ignorance, reasoned unadvisedly, willfully, without either referring to the Greek and old Slavonic parchment books or consulting the most holy ecumenical patriarchs and discussing these matters with them.

25.6 *Autobiography of Archpriest Avvakum* (1672–1673)

Avvakum, *The Life of the Archpriest Avvakum by Himself*, trans. Jane Harrison and Hope Mirrlees (London: Hogarth Press, 1924). Public domain. Factual information in the footnotes derives in part from Serge Zenkovsky's work in "Life of Archpriest Avvakum," in *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* (New York: Meridian, 1974), 399-448.

Named after the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk ("strong fighter"), Avvakum became one of the most inspiring and eloquent leaders of the Old Believers, as well as one of the first great figures in early Russian literature.



Figure 122. Sergei Miloradovich, "Avvakum's Journey through Siberia," 1898

As a young man Avvakum joined—together with the future Patriarch Nikon (whom he never trusted)—the Zealots of Piety. And he became one of the first and most vocal to oppose Nikon's reforms. In response, Nikon ordered him defrocked. Tsar Aleksei's intervention prevented worse punishment: instead of exe-

cution Avvakum was exiled to Siberia, where he preached against what he considered a new and heretical faith.

Hoping to end the schism after Nikon's fall and to reconcile Avvakum with his opponents, Tsar Aleksei ordered that Avvakum return to Moscow in 1660. The summons did not reach Avvakum until 1662, and he did not make it back to the capital until 1664. The tsar welcomed him affectionately, but Avvakum refused to end his criticisms and began campaigning in earnest for the Old Belief.

The same church council that condemned Nikon put Avvakum on trial and anathematized him on multiple counts, including "schism, sedition, and false teachings."

In prison Avvakum consistently rebuffed efforts to win him back to the church. He was again exiled and eventually executed. Tsar Aleksei's admiration for Avvakum probably prevented a death by mutilation.

Avvakum's autobiography, written as an account of his life to his elder, Epifany, is a remarkable work. Vivid, passionate, brutally honest, and full of salty language, it abandons the high literary forms of the time, employing Russian as spoken by the masses instead of formal Church Slavonic. It is the record of a zealous man, fully committed to his cause and to the common people whom he regards as victims of villainous leaders.



Figure 123. Major points on Avvakum's journeys

• 1. Early years •

I was born in the Nizhny country, beyond the Kudma River,²⁰ in the village of Grigorovo.²¹ My father was a priest named Peter. My mother was Mary—Martha was her religious name. My father was given to strong drink; but my mother was given to fasting and prayer, and she constantly instructed me in the fear of God. Now one day at a neighbor's I saw a dead ox. And that night, rising from my bed, I wept abundantly for my soul before the holy icons, pondering mortality and how I, too, must surely die. And from that day on it became my custom to pray every night.

Then my mother was left a widow, and I, still young, an orphan. We were driven out by our kinsmen. My mother resolved that I should marry. So I prayed to the Mother of God that she would give me a wife who would help me win salvation. There was a maiden in that village. She, too, was an orphan, who was inclined to go to church

20. *Kudma River*—a tributary of the Volga River, the main artery of European Russia.

21. *village of Grigorovo*—in the Nizhny Novgorod region east of Moscow.

continually. Her name was Anastasia. Her father was the blacksmith Markov and exceedingly rich. But when he died all his substance was wasted. So she lived in poverty and she would pray to God to contrive that she would be joined to me in matrimony. He willed that it should be so. At that same time my mother went to God,²² having first taken the veil,²³ and died in the odor of sanctity.

Because of persecution, I moved to another place, and at the age of twenty I was ordained a deacon and, after two years, a priest. When I had been a priest eight years, I was raised to the rank of archpriest²⁴ by orthodox bishops. This was twenty years ago. It is thirty years in all that I have been in holy orders.

• 2. Early priesthood •

When I was still a parish priest I had many spiritual dren²⁵—five or six hundred souls in all. I, miserable sinner—never resting in churches and houses, at crossways, by towns and hamlets, even in the city of the tsar²⁶ and in the country of Siberia—was diligent during a period of some thirteen and a half years in teaching and preaching the word of God.

In those days of my ministry a young woman came to confess to me, burdened with many sins, guilty of fornication and all the sins of the flesh. Weeping, she began to acquaint me with them all, leaving nothing out, standing before the Gospels. I, thrice-accursed, though a lech, fell sick. Inwardly I burned with a lecherous fire, and that hour was bitter to me. I lit three candles and fixed them to the lectern. I placed my right hand in the flame and held it there till the evil passion burned out. When I had dismissed the young woman and laid away my vestments, I prayed and went to my house, grievously humbled in spirit.

The time must have been midnight when I reached my house; I wept before the icons so that my eyes swelled. I prayed diligently that God might remove my spiritual children from me, because that burden was too heavy for me. I threw myself on the ground face downwards,

22. *went to God*—died.

23. *having first taken the veil*—having first become a nun.

24. *archpriest*—a priest who supervises a number of parishes.

25. *spiritual children*—parishioners or spiritual advisees, namely, those who regarded Avvakum as a spiritual mentor.

26. *city of the tsar*—Moscow.

sobbing bitterly. And as I lay, I swooned and knew not how I was weeping. In my imagination I was transported to the banks of the Volga [River] and I gazed at it with the eyes of my heart.

This is what I saw: on it were sailing two stately ships of gold; their oars were of gold, and their masts were of gold and all was of gold. At the helm of each sat a man. I asked, “Whose ships are these?” They answered, “Luke’s and Laurence’s.” These had been two of my spiritual children, and they had set me and my house on the path of salvation. Their end had been pleasing to God. After that I saw a third ship, not adorned with gold but painted with many and varied hues: red, white, blue, black and ash. The mind of man would be hard put to grasp all its loveliness and excellence at the same time. A young man all shining sat at the helm to the right. I called out to him, “Whose ship?” He answered, “Yours. Sail away on her with your wife and children, if you will persist.” I was troubled not a little. Sitting there, I pondered the meaning of the vision and the sailing.

Only a little time after this—as it has been written—”the sorrows of death encompassed me, and the pains of Hell took hold of me. I found trouble and sorrow.” A headman²⁷ abducted a widow’s daughter, and I begged him to return the orphan to her mother. He scorned our prayers and raised up storms against me. He came to the church with a band of followers, and they crushed me to death. Having laid dead for half an hour and more, I was brought to life by a wave of God’s hand. [The headman] was sorely afraid and he renounced the girl for my sake. Then the devil prompted him: he came to the church, beat me and dragged me—clad in my vestments—along the ground by the legs. I was praying while he did this.

Another time another headman became like a wild beast against me. Breaking into my house, he beat me and, like a dog, gnawed the fingers of my hand with his teeth. When his throat was full of blood, he loosened his teeth from my hand and, throwing me aside, went to his house. Blessing God, I wrapped my hand in a cloth and started off for vespers. On the way he leapt out at me again with two small pistols. Standing close to me, he fired one of them. By God’s will, the powder exploded in the pan and the pistol misfired. So he flung himself on the ground and in the same manner fired the other. But God willed that the same thing happen, for that pistol also misfired. I, praying diligently, signed the cross over him with one hand and bowed low before him.

27. *headman*—minor, local official.

Then he began to snarl imprecations. I said to him: “Let blessings proceed out of your mouth, Ivan Rodionovich.” Next he took my homestead from me and he drove me out with violence, seizing all my goods, leaving me not even a morsel of bread to eat on the road.

During that time my son Prokopy was born, the same son who today lies as a prisoner with his mother in a pit dug into the earth. I took my staff and his mother took the unbaptized infant, and we set off on our wanderings, wherever God would lead us. On the way we baptized our son, just as Filip of old baptized the eunuch.²⁸ In my wanderings I reached Moscow and I made straight for the tsar’s chaplain, Archpriest Stepan, for Neronov, and for Archpriest Ioann. They told the tsar about me, and from that time I began my acquaintance with the emperor.²⁹

The reverend fathers gave me royal mandates and sent me back from where I had come. Warily I dragged myself home. The walls of my house had been pulled down and I began to rebuild them. Once again the devil raised up a storm against me. There came to my village dancing bears with drums and lutes, and I, though a miserable sinner, was zealous in Christ’s service, and I drove them out and I broke the buffoons’ masks and the drums on a common outside the village—one against many. I took away two great bears. I clubbed one senseless, but he revived; the other I released into the open country.³⁰

After that Basil Petrovich Shermetiev,³¹ who was sailing up the Volga to Kazan to take over the governorship, took me on board. He sternly reprimanded me and ordered me to bless his son who had a shaven face.³² When I saw that image of shame I would not bless him.

28. *Filip of old baptized the eunuch*—see Acts 8:27–38. Orthodox canons forbid a father from baptizing his own son. Avvakum’s actions thus indicate the isolation and extreme circumstances in which he finds himself.

29. *began my acquaintance with the emperor*—with the tsar. Archpriest Stepan Vonifatiev served as confessor to the tsar. He and Archpriest Ivan Neronov were leaders of the Zealots of Piety.

30. *let go into the open country*—Avvakum breaks up a troop of *skomorokhi*, or wandering minstrels. The church frowned upon *skomorokhi* and often described them as agents of the devil.

31. *Vasily Sheremetiev*—a wealthy and influential aristocrat and government official.

32. *shaven face*—a beardless face was considered shameful and probably sinful in Russia prior to the reign of Peter the Great. (In 1698 Peter scandalized the church and much of Russia by imposing a tax on those with beards.)

Instead, I condemned him from the scriptures. So my lord waxed terribly wroth and ordered that I be flung into the Volga. After inflicting many hurts on me, they cast me aside. In later years their rough handling turned to friendliness, and we were reconciled to one another in the antechamber of the tsar. My youngest brother was his lady's confessor. Thus does God fashion the lives of his people.

Let us return to earlier days. Again another headman became like a wild beast against me; he arrived at my homestead with his folk and attacked me, shooting bows and muskets. I prayed to the Lord, calling to him in a loud voice: "Lord God! Make his heart gentle, and reconcile him to me by whatever means you choose." He fled from my yard, driven out by the Holy Spirit. That very night his folk came running, and they called out to me with many tears, "Little father! Eufemy Stepanovich is near his end, and he is most inconveniently screaming. He strikes himself and groans, and he says, 'I want Parson Avvakum. God will punish me because of him.'"

I believed it to be a trap. Terror seized on the spirit within me and I prayed to God.

O Lord, who brought me out of my mother's womb, and created me out of nothing: If they are about to strangle me, then count me with Filip, the metropolitan of Moscow.³³ If they are about to stab me, count me with the Prophet Zachariah.³⁴ And if they are about to drown me, then deliver me from their hands, as you did Stepan of Perm.³⁵

While praying I went to the house of Eufemy. When they led me into the yard, his wife Neonila rushed out and seized me by the hand. She said, "Come in, dearie, my lord, my father! Come in, light of our eyes!" I answered, "Strange! Before, it was 'son of a whore!' Now it's my father! Christ wields a crueller scourge than he. Your good man has not taken long to acknowledge his fault." She led me to the bedroom. Eufemy leapt out of the feather bed, fell down at my feet, and howled and blubbered confused words. "Forgive me, my lord! I have sinned

33. *Filip, the metropolitan of Moscow*—Ivan IV ("Ivan the Terrible," 1547–1584) imprisoned Filip and ordered him slain.

34. *Zachariah*—a Hebrew prophet, ca. 500s BCE. Both Matthew and Luke report that a figure named Zechariah was killed in the Jewish temple.

35. *Stepan of Perm*—a fourteenth-century missionary credited with converting the tribe of Komi-Permyaks of north central and northwestern Russia to Christianity.

before God and before you.” He was all of a tremble. I said in reply, “Do you wish to be healed?” And he, lying on the ground, answered, “Yes, good father!” I said, “Stand up, God pardons you.” But he, sorely stricken, could not rise by himself. So I lifted him and laid him on his bed. I heard his confession and anointed him with sacred oil, and his sickness departed. So Christ willed it. The next morning they sent me back with honor to my home. He and his wife became my spiritual children, excellent servants of Christ. Thus does the Lord harden his heart against the proud; but he showers blessings on the meek.

Only a little time after this I was driven once again out of this place. So I went to Moscow. By God’s will the emperor³⁶ was pleased to appoint me archpriest of Yurievets-on-the-Volga.³⁷ But I did not stay there long—only eight weeks. The devil prompted the priests and the peasants and the good wives.³⁸ They came to the patriarch’s chancellery where I was occupied in business of the church and dragged me out of the chancellery. (There were nearly two thousand of them.) In the middle of the street they beat me with cudgels and stamped on me. The good wives beat me with shovels. For my sins, they flung me into a corner of a house. The captain of the troops came rushing up with his soldiers. Seizing me, they galloped on their horses to my little home, and the captain placed the soldiers around the house.

But the folk came and raised an outcry throughout the town, especially the Jack priests and their Jills, whom I had rebuked for their whoring ways. They howled, “Death to the thief, to the son of a whore; we’ll fling his body into the ditch for the dogs.” On the third day, not having closed an eye, I left my wife and children by night, and, with two others, made for Moscow by way of the Volga.³⁹ I would have taken refuge in Kostroma,⁴⁰ but there too they had driven away their archpriest, Danil. Ah, lackaday! The devil leaves no man in peace! I reached Moscow and went to Stepan, the tsar’s chaplain, and he grumbled at me. “Why,” he asked, “have you abandoned your minister church?”

36. *emperor*—tsar.

37. *Yurievets-on-the-Volga*—a city in the province of Nizhny Novgorod.

38. *good wife*—mistress of a household.

39. *the Volga*—the Volga River.

40. *Kostroma*—a city on the Volga River.

More trouble was awaiting me. In the middle of the night the tsar came to his chaplain for his blessing, and he saw me there. More vexation. “Why have you abandoned your town?” This while my wife and children and household (some twenty souls in all) were left behind in Yurievets, and I not knowing whether they were alive or dead. Yet another burden on my heart!

• 3. Battles with Nikon •

After that, Nikon, our friend, brought the relics of Metropolitan Filip down from the Solovetsky Monastery.⁴¹ Before his arrival, I, Stepan the chaplain, and the brotherhood⁴² spent a week in prayer and fasting for the patriarchate, so God might give us a shepherd appropriate for saving our souls. The Metropolitan of Kazan and I signed our names to a petition and gave it to the tsar and the tsaritsa, urging that Stepan the chaplain be made patriarch. But [Stepan] did not wish [the patriarchate] for himself. He suggested Metropolitan Nikon. The tsar listened to him and wrote to Nikon to greet him on his arrival. “To Nikon, the right reverend metropolitan of Novgorod and Velikie Luki⁴³ and of all Russia, greetings,” and so forth.

[Nikon] arrived and he played the fox with us⁴⁴—it was all bowings and scrapings and “Good morrow to you!” For he knew that he was to be patriarch and he wished to remove all obstacles. But I’ll not waste my time telling all these cunning machinations. When he became patriarch he would not even allow his friends into the room of the crosses,⁴⁵ and now at last he belched forth his venom.

During Lent he sent a pastoral letter to St. Basil’s minister, Ioann Neronov. Now [Ioann] was my spiritual father⁴⁶ and I lodged in his presbytery. When he was absent I conducted the services. At the time there was some talk of making me the successor to Silas—God rest his soul—at St. Savior’s. But God did not will it to be. And I myself was not overly eager for it; I was quite content to continue at St. Basil’s. I

41. *Solovky Monastery*—situated on the Solovky Islands in the northern White Sea.

42. *the brotherhood*—Zealots of Piety.

43. *Metropolitan of Novgorod and Velikie Luki*—before becoming patriarch, Nikon served as metropolitan of Novgorod and Velikie Luki.

44. *played the fox with us*—was sneaky, underhanded.

45. *room of the crosses*—the room for receiving visitors in the patriarch’s palace.

46. *spiritual father*—spiritual adviser or mentor.

used to read godly books to the flock and they would come in great numbers.

Nikon inscribed his letter with the year and the date. “According to the tradition of the holy apostles and the fathers, it is not seemly to make obeisance⁴⁷ in church to the knee; it should be no lower than the girdle. And you should sign yourselves with three fingers.”⁴⁸ We met together and took counsel. It was as if winter was determined to come. Our hearts froze. Our limbs shook. Neronov entrusted his church to me and shut himself up in the Chudov Monastery. He spent a week praying in a cell, and one day a voice came from the icons: “The hour of tribulation has come. It is necessary to suffer and be strong.” Weeping, he recounted these words to me and to Paul, the bishop of Kostroma (whom Nikon was to burn⁴⁹ later in the Novgorod country) and then to Danil the archpriest of Kostroma,⁵⁰ and also to all the brothers. Together with Danil I wrote out excerpts from the fathers about the manner to be used when crossing oneself and making obeisances, and we gave them to the emperor. We made many excerpts. But he hid them, we know not where; I believe he gave them to Nikon.

A little later Nikon seized Danil in the monastery outside the Tver Gates. He sheared him monk in the presence of the tsar, and he insulted him while tearing off his cassock. He ordered him taken to the Chudov Monastery and put in the bakehouse. He suffered grievously there. He then sent him to Astrakhan,⁵¹ where they placed a crown of thorns on his head and cast him in a dungeon. There he died.

After shearing Danil they seized another Danil—also an archpriest of Temnikov⁵²—and they confined him in the New St. Savior’s Monastery. They did the same with Archpriest Neronov: Nikon took off his biretta⁵³ in church and ordered him confined in the Simon Monastery. He later banished him to Vologda, to the walled monastery

47. *make obeisance*—to bow.

48. *sign yourself with three fingers*—make the sign of the cross with three fingers rather than two (as was the previous practice in Russia). This proved to be one of the most controversial of Nikon’s reforms.

49. *to burn*—it was rumored that Nikon ordered Bishop Paul burned.

50. *Danil the archpriest of Kostroma*—a leader in the Zealots of Piety, who brazenly denounced the moral failings of the townspeople.

51. *Astrakhan*—city in southwestern Russian on the Volga River.

52. *Temnikov*—in the south-central portion of European Russia.

53. *biretta*—liturgical headwear.

of St. Savior's and then to the fortress of Kola.⁵⁴ In the end, after suffering exceedingly, he recanted, poor soul. He signed himself with three fingers and so died a heretic.

Woe is me! Let every man stand firm and always be on watch lest his foot stumble. In the words of scripture, these are surely evil days when even the elect yield to the blandishments of the Antichrist. We must be exceedingly strong in prayer to God, and he will save us and help us. For he is merciful and he loves mankind.

While celebrating vespers, I, too, was arrested by Boris Neledinsky and his musketeers. They arrested nearly sixty souls with me and took them off to prison. They fastened me for the night with a chain in the patriarch's court. When the Sabbath dawned, they placed me in a cart and stretched out my arms and drove me from the patriarch's court to the Monastery of Andronicus.⁵⁵ There they put chains on me and flung me in a black dungeon dug into the earth. There I lay for three days. I had nothing to eat or drink in the darkness. I sat there, bowing myself to the earth against my chains, making my obeisances even though I did not know which way was east and which was west.

No one came to me except mice and black beetles. The crickets chirped, and there were fleas in abundance. By the third day I was famished—that is to say, I wanted to eat. After vespers someone stood before me—I knew not whether he was a man or an angel, and to this day I still do not know. I know only this: that he said a prayer in the darkness and, taking me by the shoulder, led me by my chain to a bench. He seated me on it and put a spoon in my hands and gave me a little bread and some cabbage soup to eat. O, but it was tasty! Then he said to me, "Enough. Let that serve as restorative." And, lo, he was gone! The door had not opened, and yet he was gone! If he was a man, it was a miracle. But what if he was an angel? Then there is no cause for wonder, because for one such as he there can be no barriers.

In the morning the archimandrite⁵⁶ came with the brothers, and they led me away. They spoke to me coaxingly, saying that I should yield to the patriarch. But I thundered against them from the scriptures

54. *fortress of Kola*—located in the extreme north, near the Arctic Ocean.

55. *Monastery of Andronicus*—in Moscow, established in 1360.

56. *archimandrite*—may refer to an abbot (the head of a monastery) or to a high-ranking bishop who supervises other abbots. It may also be used merely as an honorific—a title bestowed on non-monastic clerics for exceptional service.

and snarled at them. They took off the big chain and put a small one on me in its place, and they set a monk as a jailer over me. They ordered that I be dragged to church. In church they pulled my hair and poked my ribs and pulled at my chain and spat in my eyes. May God forgive them in this life and the next! It was not they who did it, but Satan in his malice. I remained there four weeks.

After me they seized Login, the archpriest of Murom. At Mass in the monastery church, they sheared him monk in the presence of the tsar. During the carrying of the host,⁵⁷ the patriarch seized the paten⁵⁸ from the head of the archdeacon and placed it on the altar, together with Christ's body⁵⁹ and the chalice.⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Therapont, the archimandrite of the Chudov Monastery, stood outside the choir before the King's Gates. Woe is me that Christ's body should be surrendered more impiously than ever by the Jews!⁶¹

When they had shorn [Login] they tore his kaftan and his outer garment from him. But Login was consumed with the zeal of God's fire, and he defied Nikon and spat across the threshold to the altar—straight into his eyes. Loosening his girdle, he tore off his shift and flung it into the altar, into Nikon's face. And—O wondrous to tell—the shift spread itself out and fell on the altar in such way that it covered the paten as though it had been the corporal.⁶² The tsarina was in church at the time.

They put a chain on Login and, dragging him from the church, beat him with brooms and whips to the Monastery of the Epiphany. There they thrust him into a dungeon for the night, and they appointed musketeers to guard him strictly. But, lo!, in the night God gave him a new fur cloak and a biretta. In the morning they told Nikon, and, laughing, [Nikon] said, "I know that breed of sham saint!" He took the [biretta] from [Login], but he left him the fur coat.

At that time they led me again on foot from the monastery to the court of the patriarch's palace. And then, spreading out my arms and wrangling with me, they took me away from there. There was a procession with crosses on St. Nikita's day, and we met the crosses as they

57. *host*—eucharistic bread.

58. *paten*—plate for holding the bread during the Eucharist.

59. *Christ's body*—the eucharistic bread.

60. *chalice*—cup for holding the wine.

61. *by the Jews*—Аввакум, like most Russians at this time, was antisemitic.

62. *corporal*—a white, line cloth used during the Eucharist.

drove me in a cart. They drove me to the monastery church so they could shear me. During Mass they kept me for a long time on the threshold. The [tsar] rose from his place, and, going up to the patriarch, entreated [the patriarch] not to shear me. So they took me away to the Siberia Office and handed me over to the scribe, Tretiak Bashmakov (the elder [now named] Savvati, for he took the cowl)—the same person who today is suffering for Christ. He lies in the monastery of the New St. Savior's [Monastery] in a dungeon dug into the earth. May God have mercy on his soul! Even in those days he treated me kindly.

• 4. Exile to Siberia: Tobolsk •

Then they sent me to Siberia with my wife and children. Had I time there would be much to tell about the many and great privations on the way. Dame Avvakum⁶³ bore a sickly child in the cart, and we brought the child as far as Tobolsk.⁶⁴ It was a journey of 3000 versts.⁶⁵ For some thirteen weeks we dragged along in carts and by water and—half the way—in sledges.

The archbishop got me a church in Tobolsk. Many great afflictions found me in that church. In half a year the tsar's words called out against me⁶⁶ five times, and a certain member of the archbishop's household, the scribe Ivan Struna, outraged me.

The archbishop was away in Moscow, and in his absence [Ivan Struna], taught by the devil, fell on me. He was inclined to torment Antony, the clerk of my church, without cause. Antony gave him the slip and fled to me in the church. But this Ivan Struna, having gathered some others, came to me that same day in church while I was singing vespers. He came leaping into the church and seized Antony in the choir by the beard. I, in the meantime, had shut the church doors and I would let no one in. So Struna was alone and he kept twirling round like an imp of Hell. When I had finished vespers, I—with Antony

63. *Dame Avvakum*—Avvakum's wife.

64. *Tobolsk*—city in western Siberia.

65. *versts*—a verst is roughly one kilometer.

66. *tsar's words called out against me*—I was accused of a conspiracy. Harrison and Mirtlees note the Russian custom of pronouncing the "tsar's words" against an opponent: a citizen might point to another in public and pronounce, "The tsar's words against that man!" Such an action constituted an accusation that the man was guilty of treason or some other serious crime, thus necessitating arrest.

lending a hand—sat him down in the middle of the church on the floor, and I thrashed him soundly with a leather strap for having made a riot in church.

The other rogues, some twelve in number, fled—every one of them—driven away by the Holy Spirit. Struna declared that he had repented, and I let him go in peace. But Struna’s kinsmen among the priests and monks raised the whole town against me so they could plan my death. In the middle of the night they drove to my homestead in sledges and broke into my house, intending to abduct me and drown me. But a terror from God fell upon them and drove them away—they fled.

For a month was I tormented by their tricks. They would attack me in secret, and sometimes I would take refuge by night in the church, and sometimes with the governor. I would beg to be put in prison for my safety—but they would not do this. Matthew Lomkov (monastic name “Mitrofan”), who served as an apparitor⁶⁷ to Metropolitan Paul, kept close by my side. It was he who later sheared me in the monastic church, together with the deacon Athanasius. But at that time he was a just man, though the devil has now swallowed him.

Then the archbishop returned from Moscow, and, as was proper considering his offense, thrust Struna into prison with chains. For a certain man had lain with⁶⁸ [Struna’s] daughter, and he, Struna, had accepted fifty kopeks from the fellow and let him go without punishment.⁶⁹ The lord bishop ordered him to be fettered, and he remembered him from that affair with me. (For he, Struna, went to the governor and his men in their office, and said the tsar’s words against me.)

The captain allowed a petty squire, Peter Beketov, to post bail for [Struna]. Woe is me! Misfortune entered the gates of Peter’s dwelling place, and it grieves my soul. The archbishop discussed the situation with me, and—in accordance with the rubric⁷⁰—he started cursing Struna on the first Sunday of Lent for the sin of incest in the great church. Peter Beketov came to church and berated the archbishop and myself. Within an hour, on his way home from church, he went mad,

67. *apparitor*—an officer in an ecclesiastical court.

68. *lain with*—had sex with.

69. *let him go without punishment*—wrongly accepted payment in return for condoning (or at least not punishing) adultery.

70. *rubric*—ecclesiastical instructions.

and he died a bitter and an evil death. His grace⁷¹ and I ordered [Becketov's] body to be flung into the street to the dogs, and the townsfolk mourned him and his sin. For three days they importuned God diligently to pardon him on the day of judgment. Through a pity for Struna, he had brought this dire calamity upon himself. On the third day his grace and I read the office over his body. But enough of this woeful business!

• 5. Further east to Dauria •

At this time an edict arrived, ordering that I be taken from Tobolsk to the Lena,⁷² because I had condemned Nikon from the scriptures and pronounced him a heretic. A letter came from Moscow telling how two brothers, who lodged in the tsarina's apartments at the top of the palace, had both died of the plague, together with their wives and children and many of their friends and kinsfolk. God was pouring forth the vials of his wrath on the kingdom. But they, wretched men, did not know this and they continued making disturbances in the church. Then Neronov spoke to the tsar, saying: "The visitation for schism is threefold: plague, the sword, and division." And thus it came to pass in our days.

But the Lord is merciful. When he has punished us to bring us to repentance, he then has mercy on us, driving away the ills of our souls and bodies. He gives peace. I preach Christ and my hope is in him. I confidently await his mercy and I believe in the resurrection of the dead.

So once more I got into the boat assigned to me—as I have said before—and sailed toward the Lena. When I reached Yeniseisk⁷³ another edict met me, ordering me to Dauria⁷⁴—it would be more than twenty-thousand versts from Moscow—to give myself over to Athanasius Pashkov and to serve as chaplain to his troops, numbering 600 men. For my sins, he was a fierce and hard man. It was his custom to burn folks, torture them, and beat them. Many times I tried to persuade him to desist, and now I was in his hands. An order came from Nikon in Moscow that I should be tormented.

71. *His grace*—the archbishop.

72. *the Lena*—the Lena River in far eastern Siberia.

73. *Yeniseisk*—city in central Siberia.

74. *Dauria*—a region in eastern Siberia near Lake Baikal. Exiles were often sent to this area to bolster Russia's presence and influence in the region.

On our journey from Yeniseisk on the great Tunguska River, a storm sunk my raft. The raft foundered completely in midstream; it was full of water and its sail was in tatters; only the deck remained above water—all the rest was under water. My wife, bareheaded⁷⁵ as she was, managed, I know not how, to drag the children out of the water onto the deck. Looking up at the sky, I cried out, “O Lord! Save us! O Lord! Help us!” And by God’s will we were driven to the shore. But why multiply words?

From another raft two men were wrenched away and drowned in the water. After that, when we came to ourselves, we set out once more on our way.

When we came to the Shaman rapids, diverse folk came sailing out to meet us. Two widows were with them—one was aged about sixty and the other was older. They were traveling by boat to a nunnery where they were to take the veil.⁷⁶ Pashkov was inclined to send them back and force them into marriage. I said to him, “It is against the canons of the church to give such women into marriage.” Instead of heeding my words and letting the widows go, he waxed angry and devised how he might torment me.

In other rapids called the long rapids, he set about driving me from the raft. He said, “You bring bad luck to the raft. You are a heretic. Off with you to the mountains! It is not for one such as you to keep company with Cossacks.”⁷⁷ Alackaday! The mountains were high, the ravines impassable. There was a stone crag that stood there like a wall—you’d crick your neck before you saw its top. Great serpents could be found in these mountains. Geese, ducks with red feathers, black crows, and gray jackdaws dwelt in them, as well as eagles, hawks, gyrfalcons,⁷⁸ guinea-fowl, pelicans, swans, and plenty of other wild things. Every variety of bird. Many wild beasts wandered at liberty in these mountains: wild goats, deer, bison, elk, boars, wolves, and wild sheep—clearly to be seen but not to be caught.

Pashkov was of a mind to turn me out into these mountains, to live with the beasts and birds. I wrote him a little letter that began, “O

75. *bareheaded*—a married, bareheaded woman was an unusual and moderately shocking sight.

76. *take the veil*—become nuns.

77. *Cossacks*—members of military communities that lived on the outskirts of Russia, often composed of runaway serfs and their descendants.

78. *gyrfalcons*—large arctic falcons.

man! Fear God who sits on the cherubim and gazes into the abyss. The celestial powers and every creature including man tremble before him. You alone despise him and do things that are not seemly,” and so forth. It was a long letter, and I sent it to him. Some fifty men rushed me. They seized my raft and hastened toward him, some three versts away. I stood there, boiling some porridge for the Cossacks, and I fed them with it. They, poor souls, ate it and trembled. Some of them, looking at me, began to weep for me. They dragged up the raft; the executioners seized me and led me before him.

[Pashkov] was standing with sword drawn, shaking with rage. He began to speak to me, saying, “What are you? A parson, or an unfrocked one?” And I answered, “I am Avvakum, the archpriest. Speak! What is your business with me?” Then he roared like a wild beast and struck me a great blow first on one cheek and then the other, and then again on the head. He knocked me off my feet and, seizing his leather sword-strap, struck me where I lay—thrice on the back, and then, tearing off my shift, gave me seventy-two strokes on my naked back with the knout.⁷⁹

I kept saying, “O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God! Help me!” I kept repeating this without pause. It was bitter for him that I did not say, “Have mercy.” At each stroke I said a prayer, but in the middle of the flogging I screamed to him, “You’ve beaten me enough, I say.” So he ordered it to stop.

I asked him, “Why do you beat me? Do you know?” So he ordered them to beat me again on the ribs. Then they stopped. I was trembling all over and I fell. He ordered them to drag me off to the raft that carried the money bags. They put fetters on my hands and feet and flung me onto the deck.

It was autumn. The rain fell on me all night and there was a pool where I lay. When they beat me it did not hurt because of the prayers I said. But now, as I lay, I thought, “Son of God, why did you permit them to beat me so painfully? Look, Lord, I was championing the widow, consecrated to you. Who shall judge between you and me? When I was living as an evil man, you did not chastise me in this way. But now I do not know how I have sinned.”

79. *knout*—a whip with multiple leather thongs, sometimes attached to metal rings and sometimes interwoven with wire.

Ay! There was a righteous man for you, another dung-faced Pharisee⁸⁰ wishing, indeed, to judge the Almighty! If Job⁸¹ spoke in that fashion it was because he was a perfect and upright man. Moreover, he did not know the scriptures, for he dwelt outside the law in a barbarian land. It was through creation, not through revelation, that he learned to know God. But I, in the first place, was a sinful man. And in the second place, I was learned in the law and the prophets, and I was fortified by the scriptures in all my doings. “We must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.” And yet had I reached such a pitch of folly. Woe is me! How was it that the raft did not founder with me in the water?

My bones began to ache, my veins to grow rigid, and my heart to palpitate. Certainly I was dying. The water began to splash into my mouth and I heaved a sigh. I repented before the Almighty, for truly the sweet Lord of compassion does not remember our former transgressions against us after we repent of them. And once more I ceased to feel pain. In the morning they flung me onto a small craft and carried me away.

Then we came to the great rapids of the Padun where the river is a verst in breadth. Three exceedingly steep reefs stretched across the entire river. If you do not find the passages between them, your boat will be battered into splinters. They brought me into the rapids. Above was rain and snow, but they flung only a mangy little kaftan over my shoulders. The water flowed over my belly and my spine—my poor body was in a sorry plight.

They took me off the raft and, skirting the rapids, dragged me over the stones in fetters. Truly I was in a sad plight. But it was well with my soul. I was no longer peevish with God. Once again words spoken by the prophets and the apostles came into my head: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when he rebukes you. For the Lord chastens those he loves, and he scourges every son he receives.” “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. For what kind of son is he whose father does not chasten him?” I comforted myself with these words.

80. *Pharisee*—a member of a Jewish sect much criticized by Jesus in the Gospels.

81. *Job*—the subject of the book of Job; a righteous man upon whom God nevertheless sends a series of terrible torments.

After that they brought me to the fortress of Bratsky and flung me into a dungeon and gave me straw to lie on. There I lay in a freezing tower until Advent. These are the seasons when winter reigns, but God kept me warm, even without garments.

Like a poor dog I lay on the straw, and sometimes they fed me, and sometimes they did not. There were many mice. I would strike at them with my biretta—the fools had not given me a stick. I lay all the time on my belly, for my back was covered with sores. There were fleas and lice in abundance. I would gladly have cried on Pashkov to pardon me, but it would have been contrary to God's will. It was ordained that I should endure.

Then they moved me to a warm hut, and there I lived the entire winter in fetters with hostages and dogs. My wife and children had been sent some twenty versts away. All winter her serving-wench, Ksenia, tormented her with tantrums and complaints. After Christmas, my son Ivan, who was still just a little lad, stole away from home to live with me. Pashkov ordered him to be flung into the freezing dungeon where I lay. Dear little lad—he spent the night there and nearly froze to death. In the morning Pashkov ordered him back to his mother and I saw him no more. It was all he could do to drag himself home to his mother due to the frostbite on his hands and feet.

In spring we set out once more. Only scant provisions remained, since the first store had all been robbed. Books and garments and other sundries had all been taken. But the second store remained. I nearly drowned on Lake Baikal.⁸² I was forced to pull a towing-rope on the Khilok River, up stream. It was mighty hard going. There was no time for eating or sleeping. For a whole year I suffered the hardships of water travel. The folk kept dying, and my feet and belly were blue.

For two summers we journeyed by water. In the winter we were towed by haulage. As I said, I nearly drowned for the third time on the Khilok River. My boat was sucked by the current from the shore. The boats of the other folk stayed where they were, but mine was caught up and carried away. My wife and children remained on shore, and the boat bolted with the steersman and me. [The boat] was pitched and tossed on the swirling water, but I climbed onto her and cried out, "Help, Blessed Virgin! You our hope and defense. Let me not be drowned." Sometimes my feet would be in the water and sometimes I

82. *Lake Baikal*—the deepest lake in the world, and the largest freshwater lake by volume, located in south-central Siberia.

would scramble to the top. [My boat] was carried on for a verst and more, and then the folk stopped her and she was shattered to fragments.

Ay, what could one do if Christ and the immaculate Mother of God so willed it? I climbed out of the water laughing. But the folk were weeping. They spread out my garments on the bushes—cloaks of satin and taffetas and sundry trifles—for I still had a store of such things in chests and coffers. But they rotted after that day. Pashkov was inclined to give me another flogging. “You’re making yourself a laughing-stock,” he said. And once again I importuned the sweet Mother of God. “Our Lady! Soothe your fool!” And she, our hope, soothed him. He began to concern himself about me.

Our next stage was Lake Irgen.⁸³ There is a haulage there and that winter we began hauling. [Pashkov] took my workmen from me and would not permit me to hire others. We had small children—many mouths and nothing to fill them. This poor hapless wretch of an arch-priest set to fashion a dog-sleigh for himself and started hauling. That spring we began to sail down the Ingoda River—it was the fourth summer of my journey from Tobolsk.

They were floating logs to build houses and towns. There began to be nothing to eat. The folk began to die of hunger and from ceaseless working in the water. Shallow was the river and heavy were the rafts. Merciless were the taskmasters and stout were the sticks. Gnarled were the cudgels, cutting were the knouts, and cruel were the sufferings—fire and wreckage. The folk were so spent with hunger that if [Pashkov] began tormenting one of them, lo, he was dead on [Pashkov’s] hands. Ah, me! What a time! It would almost seem that he was out of his mind.

Only one Moscow gown that had not rotted from the damp remained for Dame Avvakum. It would have fetched twenty-five rubles and more in Moscow. But in these parts they gave us four sacks of rye for it.

We dragged on for another year, living on the Nercha River⁸⁴ and keeping ourselves alive with the roots and herbs that grew on the banks. One after another the folk died of hunger. [Pashkov] saw to it that none of them ran away. They were confined within a small space, and they would wander over the steppes and fields, digging up grasses

83. *Lake Irgen*—roughly 320 kilometers east of Lake Baikal.

84. *Nercha River*—freezes in the winter months.

and roots, and we with them. In winter we would live on fir cones. Sometimes God would send mare's flesh, and sometimes we found the bones of stinking carcasses from wild beasts left by the wolves. We ate what had not been eaten by the wolves. Some would eat frozen wolves and foxes—in truth, any filth that they could lay their hands on. A mare foaled and the starving folk devoured the foal and the caul⁸⁵ in secret. Pashkov got wind of it and he flogged them with his knout to the point of death. Another mare died and desperation seized them all: they pulled the foal out of her, stealing a march on nature. When only the head had emerged from the womb, they tore it out and began to eat the blood that came with it. Ah, me! What a time!

Two of my little sons died from these sore straits. What did I not endure, roaming the hills and sharp rocks with my children who did survive, naked and barefoot, living on grass and roots? I, sinful man, partook willy-nilly of mare's flesh and foul carrion and the flesh of birds.

Woe for my sinful soul! Who will pour water on my head and unseal for me the fountain of tears, so I may weep for the poor soul that is in me, which I have been destroying with my daily appetites?

In Christ's name a great lady helped us—the captain's daughter-in-law, Evdokia Kirilovna—and also Tekla Semenovna, Athanasius's wife. In secret they would give us some comfort against starving to death. Without his knowledge they would sometimes send us a piece of meat, sometimes a circular loaf, sometimes flour and oats—as much as they could. Sometimes one of them would save up ten pounds of flour and some coins, and sometimes twenty pounds and hand it over to us. Sometimes she would rake out the chicken's food from the trough. My daughter, the hapless lass Agrafena, would go in secret under her window. It was both pitiful and laughable! Sometimes, without the lady's knowledge, they would chase the child from the window, and sometimes she would come home burdened with a nice little store. She was only a child at that time; now she is twenty-seven. My poor little maid! She dwells unwed⁸⁶ with her younger sisters by the Mezen,⁸⁷ living from hand to mouth and weeping. And their

85. *caul*—the amniotic membrane that encloses a fetus.

86. *unwed*—an unusual and somewhat shameful status for a twenty-seven year-old Russian woman in the 1600s.

87. *Mezen*—the Mezen River, which empties into the White Sea, near Finland.

mother and brothers lie buried in a dungeon in the earth. But what would you? Let every man endure great tribulation for Christ's sake! With God's help, what has been ordained will come to pass. Let us suffer tribulation for the sake of the Christian faith.

The archpriest⁸⁸ used to love keeping company with the great. But love in place of that, poor wretch, to endure even to the end. For it is written: "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning." Enough of this; let us return to the previous matter.

• 6. In Dauria •

We continued in the land of Dauria in dire straits some six or seven years. During some of these years there would, at times, be some little balm. Athanasius, slandering me, ceaselessly sought my death. During these lean years he sent me of his own accord two widows. They were servants in his house and dear to him—Mary and Sophia—clothed with an unclean spirit. Many times he had tried spells and incantations on them, but these accomplished nothing, and tongues begun to wag about the matter. In consequence, the imp of Hell would start tormenting them most cruelly, and they would twist themselves and shriek.

He summoned me and, bowing to me, said, "I beg you to take them home with you and treat them with prayer to God. God will listen to you." I answered him, "My Lord! What you ask of me is beyond my powers. But by the prayers of the holy fathers of our church, all things are possible for God." So I took the poor souls home. If it was presumptuous of me, may I be forgiven.

I had had some experience in such matters in Russia. Three or four persons possessed by an unclean spirit had, in former times, been brought to my house. With the prayers of the holy fathers I had cast out the imps of Hell by the action and will of the living God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and light of the world. I had sprinkled them with tears and with water, and I anointed them with oil, chanting prayers all the while in the name of Christ. The holy magic of these things drove the imps out of those persons. They had been healed not by any virtue in me—by no means—but by their own faith.

In olden times an ass became the instrument by which a blessing came to Balaam.⁸⁹ A blessing came to Julian the martyr by a lynx. And

88. *The archpriest*—Avvakum here refers to himself.

89. *blessing came to Balaam*—see Numbers 22.

by a stag to Sisinius. They spoke with a human voice. God triumphs over nature's laws whenever he chooses. Read the life of Theodore of Edessa: you will find that a harlot raised a man from the dead. In the *Christian's Pilot*⁹⁰ it is written, "The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for all men, but he can leaven all men except heretics."

So they brought me the two women who were possessed. According to custom, I fasted myself and I would not let them eat. I prayed and anointed them with oil and tried every remedy I knew. The good wives returned to health and to their right minds. I confessed them⁹¹ and administered the sacrament to them. They stayed in my house, praying to God, for they loved me and they would not go home.

[Pashkov] learned that they had become my spiritual daughters, and he became angry with me, more fiercely than before. He was inclined to burn me alive. "You have wormed private matters concerning me out of them in the confessional," he said. But how, indeed, can one administer the sacrament to a man if one has not first confessed him? And if you do not administer the sacrament to the possessed, you'll not succeed in casting the imps of Hell out of them. A devil is not a *muzhik*:⁹² he will not fear the stick. What he fears is the cross of Christ and holy water and holy oil. Before the body of Christ he flies. Without the blessed sacrament I cannot heal. In our Orthodox faith there is no Communion without confession. In the Roman faith they pay no heed to confession.⁹³ But to us, the Orthodox observers, this is not seemly. For us, the sacrament of penance must always be sought first. If you cannot find a priest in your need, then confess your sins to some discreet brother. God, seeing your contrition, will pardon you. Then, having read through the canon of the Mass before communicating,⁹⁴ keep some of the reserved sacrament.⁹⁵

Whenever you are away on a journey or engaged in traffic or whatever takes you far from a church—if you give signs of contrition to the Lord and confess to your brother (as indicated above)—you

90. *Christian's Pilot*—a collection of canonical laws.

91. *confessed them*—heard their confessions.

92. *muzhik*—peasant.

93. *In the Roman faith they pay no heed to confession*—not true.

94. *communicating*—receiving communion; celebrating the Eucharist.

95. *reserved sacrament*—bread and wine consecrated but not consumed during the Eucharist and saved for later use.

may partake of the blessed sacrament with a clear conscience. All will be well if you first fasted and read through the canon of the Mass.

Take a little casket and spread a napkin in it, and light a candle and pour a little water in a cup and ladle some onto a spoon. With prayer, place a portion of Christ's body in the water in the spoon, and cense it all with a censer.⁹⁶ Then, weeping, say out loud the entire prayer that begins, "O Lord! I believe and confess that you are Christ, the son of the living God." (It is written in the canon of the Mass.) Then, throwing yourself before the icon, ask forgiveness, and, standing up, kiss the holy image.⁹⁷ Now, having signed yourself,⁹⁸ communicate with prayer, and drink a little of the water. Pray again to God, saying, "Now glory to Christ!" Even if you die the minute after, it will be well with you.

Enough of that matter. You yourselves know that it is good counsel. Now I will continue with the story of the women.

Pashkov took the poor widows away from me. Instead of gratitude he gave me harsh words. He hoped that Christ had settled the matter once and for all, but they began to rave worse than before. He shut them up in an empty outhouse and allowed no one access to them. Then he summoned a monk to them, but they flung logs at him, and he scuttled away.

I sat at home weeping. I did not know what to do. I did not dare to go up to the big house, for he was mighty angry with me. So in secret I sent them holy water and told them to wash themselves and drink a little of it. Poor souls, their sufferings eased a little. In secret they stole off to me, and I anointed them with oil in the name of Christ, and once again God granted that they should be healed. They returned home. By night they would escape to me in secret to pray to God. They became exceedingly good church women. They put aside vanities and began to follow all the observances of the church. Later in Moscow they went with their lady to dwell in the Nunnery of the Ascension. Glory to God for them!

• 7. Journey back west •

From the Nercha River we began to journey back to Russia. For five weeks we traveled on the naked ice in sledges. I was given two sorry

96. *censer*—container for burning incense.

97. *holy image*—the icon.

98. *having signed yourself*—having made the sign of the cross with your fingers.

nags⁹⁹ for my children and my baggage. Dame Avvakum and I made our way on foot, stumbling over the ice. The country was barbarous and the natives were hostile, so we feared getting separated from the others. Yet we could not keep up with the horses, for we were a hungry weary pair. My poor old woman tramped along, tramped along, and at last she fell. Another weary soul stumbled over her, and he fell too. They both screamed, and they were not able to get up. The man cried out, “O, good wife! O, my lady! Your pardon!” And my old woman answered, “Fie, gossip! Would you crush me to death?” I came up to her, and she, poor soul, began to complain to me, saying, “How long, archpriest, are these sufferings to last?” And I said, “Markovna!¹⁰⁰ Till our death.” And she, with a sigh, answered, “So be it, Petrovich;¹⁰¹ let us get on our way.”

• 8. The hen •

We had a pet, a black hen, and by God’s will she laid two eggs a day to feed the children, helping us in our need. It was God’s doing. But when they were carrying out the baggage to the dog sledge, she was crushed to death for our sins. To this day, whenever I think of that hen, my heart aches for her. I do not know whether she was a hen or a miracle. All year round she laid two eggs a day, and we would not have accepted a hundred rubles for her—nay, we would have spat on them! Mere dross! That hen, God’s living creature, fed us, and she would take her meals with us, pecking at the porridge of fir cones in the cauldron, and pecking at the fish. In exchange she gave us two eggs a day. Glory to God, who fashions all things well!

We obtained her in no ordinary way. My lady’s hens turned blind, one after another, and they began to die. She gathered them into a basket and sent them to me. “May it please you, father,” she said, “to pray over the hens.” So I considered. She was a lady bountiful to us. She had children, and she needed the hens. So I chanted a prayer and blessed some water and sprinkled the hens and censed them. Then I went to the forest and fashioned them a trough from which to eat, and I sprinkled it with holy water and sent the whole baggage back to her. By a wave of God’s hand, the hens were healed because of her faith.

99. *nag*—an old horse or one in poor health.

100. *Markovna*—Anastasia’s (Dame Avvakum’s) middle or patronymic name.

101. *Petrovich*—Avvakum’s middle or patronymic name.

Our hen came from that same brood of hens. But enough of this matter—it was not the first miracle that Christ brought to pass. Already Kosma and Damian¹⁰² had blessed and healed both men and cattle in the name of Christ. God has a use for everything: cattle and fowls—they were created for the glory of his pure majesty, and also for the sake of mankind.

• 9. Medicine man and Evdokia Kirilovna •

We made our way back to Lake Irgen. My lady had pity on us and sent us a little basket of wheat, so we had our fill of frumenty.¹⁰³ Evdokia Kirilovna was a lady generous to me, but the devil set her quarreling with me in the following manner. She had a son named Simeon, who had been born in that place. I churched the mother and baptized the child, and every day they would send him to me for my blessing. Having signed him with the cross, I sprinkled him with holy water, kissed him, and send him home. He was a fine, healthy child and I loved him like my own.

But the little lad began to ail when I was away from home. In a moment of pettiness of spirit, she became vexed with me and sent the child to a medicine man.¹⁰⁴ When I learned of it, I was angry with her, and a wide breach came between us. The little boy began to ail still more, and his right hand and foot dried up so they looked like little sticks. She grew ashamed, but she did not know what to do. Then God oppressed her even further. The little one became sick to the point of death, and the nurses came to me weeping. I said to them, “If the good wife is a baggage, then let her keep herself to herself.” I was waiting so she would repent. I saw that the devil had hardened her heart, and I bowed down before the Lord God, praying that he might bring her to her right mind.

And the Lord, the God of mercy, softened the rich soil of her heart. Early the next morning she sent me her second son, Ivan. With tears he begged forgiveness for his mother, walking round the stove and bowing before me. I was lying on the stove,¹⁰⁵ naked, under a covering made from birch-bark. Dame Avvakum was lying within the stove, and the

102. *Kosma and Demian*—saints who protect men and cattle.

103. *frumenty*—a thick stew made with cracked wheat.

104. *medicine man*—a native shaman.

105. *lying on the stove*—the traditional Russian stove is an enormous brick structure, used both for baking and for heating the home. Most Russian stoves have surfaces intended for sleeping.

children were anywhere. It was raining, we had no covering, and our winter quarters were dripping, so we were in sorry straits. I said to him, bringing him low, “Tell your mother that she must ask forgiveness of Aretha, the medicine man.”

Then she brought the sick child to me and I ordered her to lay him before me. They were all weeping and bowing. I arose and got my stole¹⁰⁶ out from the mess and dirt. I found some holy oil, and, praying to God, I censed the boy and signed him with the sign of the cross. God granted that the child was healed, both in his hand and foot. I sprinkled him with holy water and sent him to his mother.

Consider, those who listen to my story, what great things were achieved by a mother’s penitence. It both healed her own soul and healed her child. What then? God abides with penitents not only today.

The next day she sent us fish and pies. They were apt for our needs, for we were starving. That day she and I made our peace. When we had journeyed back from Dauria, she, sweet lady, died in Moscow, and I buried her in the Nunnery of the Ascension.

• 10. Pashkov and the shaman •

Pashkov learned of the affair with the boy because she told him. I went to him. Bowing low before me, Pashkov said, “God bless you! You have acted like a true priest; do not remember our sins against us.” He sent us no small store of food.

But in a very short time he decided to torture me. Listen to how it came about. He was sending his son, Yeremy, off to fight in the kingdom of the Mongols, together with some Cossacks and some twenty natives. He made a native “to shamanit”¹⁰⁷—that is, to tell their fortunes, i.e., to say whether they would prosper and return home victorious. In the evening near my winter quarters, that wizard brought a live sheep and began to work magic over it. He rolled it to and fro for a long time and then he twisted its head and flung it away.

Then he began to jump and dance and invoke devils. Giving great screams all the while, he flung himself on the earth and foamed at the mouth. The devils were pressing him, and he asked them, “Will the expedition prosper?” The devils replied, “It will return with much booty,

106. *stole*—liturgical vestment; a band of cloth draped about the neck and hanging down the front of the torso.

107. *shamanit*—shamans were pagan priests of Siberia. Here Avvakum uses the noun as a verb to indicate the conduct of pagan ceremonies.

having gained a great victory.” The captains were glad, and all the folk, rejoicing, cried, “We will come home rich!”

O, alackaday! It was bitter then, and even now it is not sweet to think about. I, a bad shepherd, made my sheep perish. From vexation of the spirit I forgot the words of the Gospel, when the sons of Zebedee counseled our Lord concerning the stubborn villagers, saying, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, just as Elias did?” But he turned and rebuked them. He said, “you do not know what kind of spirit you are. For the Son of man¹⁰⁸ has not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” And they went to another village.

But I, accursed, did not do so. In my poor room I cried with a great cry to the Lord,

Listen to me, my God! Listen to me, king of Heaven! Sweet Lord!
 Listen to me! Don’t let even one of them return home. Dig a grave
 for every one of them yonder! Lay an evil fate on them, O Lord!
 Bring them to destruction so the devil’s prophecy may not be fulfilled.

I said many similar words I prayed to God about it in secret. They told [Pashkov] that I was praying in this manner. But he only snarled abuses at me. Then he sent off his son with the captain. They rode off at night, directing their course by the stars.

Then I was seized with pity for them, for my soul foresaw that they would perish. Nevertheless, I continued praying for their destruction. Some of them, as they passed, called out goodbye to me. I called back, “You will die yonder.” As they rode off, the horses under them began to whinny; the cows nearby began to low, and the sheep and goats to bleat, and the dogs to howl, and the natives to howl like the dogs. Terror seized them all. With tears, Yeremy sent me word “that it may please my lord and spiritual father to pray for me.” I was seized with pity for him, for he had been my secret friend and he had suffered for my sake. When his father was flogging me with the knout, he had tried to dissuade him, and his father chased him with a drawn sword.

When they arrived after me at some rapids on the Pandun River, forty rafts all got through the straits in safety. But they were not able to get Athanasius’s own raft through, even though its rigging was excellent and six hundred Cossacks had built her. The waters overcame them—or, rather, God was punishing him. All the crew were sucked into the water,

108. *Son of man*—Jesus.

and the raft was hurled against a rock. The waters splashed up against it but did not flow into it.

It is marvelous to watch God's lessons to the foolish! [Pashkov] himself was on the shore and his lady was on the raft, and Yeremy began to speak, saying, "Father! God will punish you for your sins; you flogged the archpriest with the knout unjustly. It is time to repent, my lord!" But he roared at him, like a wild beast, and Yeremy, dodging behind a fir, clasped his hands and asked the Lord have mercy upon us.

But Pashkov, seizing a ringed musket—one that never missed—from an attendant. He took aim at his son and pulled the trigger. By God's will the weapon misfired. Then, having adjusted the powder, he fired again, and again it misfired. And he did the same a third time. And the third time, again, it misfired. So he flung it on the ground and the attendant picked it up and threw it out of the way, and it fired of its own accord.

Pashkov sat down on a chair. Leaning on his sword, he came to his right mind. Beginning to weep, he said, "I have sinned, accursed that I am. I have spilled innocent blood. I flogged the archpriest unjustly. God will punish me."

It was strange—strange in accord with the words, "God is slow to anger and swift to listen." Because of his repentance, the raft floated away from the reef. Its prow faced the water. They pulled it from shore and it leapt out into a lower level of water. Then Pashkov called his son and entreated him, saying, "Forgive me, Yeremy, you spoke truly!" And [Yeremy], running up and bowing before his father, said, "It is God, my lord, who will forgive you. For I myself am guilty before God and before you." And he took his father's hand and led him away.

Yeremy was a righteous-minded man and a virtuous one. His beard was already gray and yet he honored his father exceedingly and feared him. According to the scriptures it is fitting to do so, for God loves children who honor their fathers. Come then, listener to my story! Is it not true that Yeremy suffered for my sake and for the sake of Christ and his law?

The helmsman of Athanasius's raft, Gregory Tielnoy, recounted all this to me. Let us return to the previous matter.

They went away from me, then, and rode off to the wars. Pity for Yeremy seized me, and I began to beg God Almighty to protect him. Time passed and they were expected home from the wars. When the date of their expected return arrived, they did not come. For three days Pashkov refused to admit me to his house. At last he prepared a torture

chamber and had a fire kindled. He wished to torture me. I was repeating prayers for my latter end, for I knew what kind of cook he was and that few came out of his roasting alive. I sat waiting in my house. I said to my wife, who was weeping, and to my children, "God's will be done! For if we live, we live unto the Lord; and if we die, we die unto the Lord." And lo! At that moment I saw two executioners come hurrying to seize me.

Marvelous are the acts of the Lord, and unspeakable the counsels of Almighty God! Suddenly Yerey, wounded, comes riding along by the little path that goes past my house and garden, and he calls out to the executioners and makes them turn back with him. Pashkov left the torture chamber and came toward his son, staggering from grief like a drunken man. Yerey, bowing low to his father, told him all that had happened: how all his troops had been slaughtered, with not a single man surviving; how a native had led him through wild and lonely places away from the Mongolian people; how they had wandered without food over stony mountains and through the forest for seven days, with nothing to eat but one squirrel; how a man in my image had appeared to him in a dream and shown him the path and where he must journey; and how he had leapt up and gone on his way rejoicing.

When he had recounted all this to his father, I came to greet him. But Pashkov rolled his eyes at me—the very image of a white polar bear—and he would have gobbled me up alive had the Lord granted it. Drawing in his breath, he said, "What do you think of your handiwork? How many men have you caused to perish?" But Yerey said to me, "Father Avvakum! For Christ's sake, get away from here and do not bandy words with him." I went. For ten years he had tormented me, or I him—I know not which. God will decide on the day of judgment.

• 11. Back to Russia •

A change of post came for him, and a letter came for me: we were ordered back to Russia. He went away and did not take me with him, for in his heart he was saying, "If he travels back alone, surely the natives will slay him." He and his guns and his folk sailed away on rafts. On my own journey back I learned from the natives that they were a timid, trembling crew. A month afterwards, having assembled the aged and the sick and the wounded—whatever there was there of useless folk (there would be ten of them, and I with my wife and children would bring the number to seventeen)—got into a boat. Putting our trust in Christ and

fixing the cross to our prow, we started on our way, wherever God would lead us, fearing nothing.

I gave the book, *The Christian's Pilot*, to the clerk, and he gave me a fellow to serve as steersman in exchange. He freed my friend Basil, the same fellow who was in the habit of denouncing folk to Pashkov and who caused much shed blood. (He also sought my life). One time, having flogged me, he fastened me to the stake. But once again God kept me safe.

When Pashkov was gone the Cossacks wished to flog him to death, but I pleaded on his behalf for Christ's sake. I gave the clerk money for his release and carried him back to Russia, from death to life. Poor soul, may he repent of his sins!

Ay, I also took back with me another lousy spy of the same kidney.¹⁰⁹ They did not want to release him to me, and he fled from death to the forest. Meeting me on the path, he flung himself into my boat, for he was pursued and had nowhere to turn. I, forgive me, acted cunningly. As Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, hid Joshua the son of Nun,¹¹⁰ so I hid him, making him lie down at the bottom of a chest. I flung a cover over him and ordered my wife and daughter to lie on top of him.

They sought him high and low, but they would not disturb my wife from her place, and all they said was, "Rest in peace, Mother Avvakum! You have had enough to endure, as it is, my lady." And I—for God's sake, forgive me—I lied that day, and I said, "He is not here." I was loath to give him up to be slain. After they searched they went away empty-handed, and I carried him back to Russia.

Elder and servant of Christ!¹¹¹ Forgive me for lying that day. Do you think it may not have been a very grievous sin? It would seem that Rahab the harlot did likewise and the scriptures praise her for it. Judge, then, for God's sake. If I acted sinfully, then pardon me. But if I acted in accord with the traditions of the church, then it is well. See, I have left a space for you. With your own hand, write in either forgiveness or penance for me and my wife and my daughter. For we all three shared in the deception—we saved a man from death so he might repent before

109. *of the same kidney*—of the same sort.

110. *Joshua the son of Nun*—see Joshua 2:1–7, in which the prostitute Rahab provides shelter for two Israeli spies.

111. *Elder and servant of Christ!*—here and in the following sentences Avvakum addresses his spiritual father, Epifany.

the Lord. Judge us so we will not be judged by Christ on the day of judgment. Write in a few words, I pray.

[In the handwriting of Epifany:] God pardons you and blesses you in this life and the life to come, together with your helpmate, Anastasia, and your daughter, and all your house. You have acted rightly and justly. Amen.

So be it then, my elder. God bless you for your graciousness. But enough of this.

The clerk gave us sacks of corn valued at thirty silver pieces, and a cow, and five or six sheep, and dried meat. We fed on this for the summer as we sailed on our way. The clerk was a good soul. He had been a sponsor to my daughter Ksenia, who had been born in the days of Pashkov. But Pashkov would not give me myrrh and oil, so she had to stay unchristened for a long time.¹¹² When he was gone I christened her. (I myself churched my wife and baptized my children).¹¹³ The clerk and my eldest daughter were the gossips,¹¹⁴ and I was the parson. In this manner I also christened my son Athanasius. I both confessed my own children and administered the sacrament to them during the Mass I said at Mezen. I myself communicated, but I did not administer it to my wife: there are instructions concerning this in the rubric ordering us to do so. But my excommunication came from heretics. In Christ's name I trample it under foot.

The curse written against me—why mince my words—I wipe my arse with it. If the heretics curse me, then the saints of Moscow—Peter, Alexis, Jonah, and Filip—all bless me. In accordance with their books and with a clear conscience, I believe in and serve my God. I loathe and curse the apostates. They are God's enemies. Living in Christ, I do not fear them. Were they to heap stones on me, I would lie in peace beneath those stones, secure in the tradition of the fathers. How much more so [would I lie] beneath the thorny, knavish curses of Nikon?

Tush! Why multiply words? All we need to do is to spit on their doings and their ritual and on their new-fangled books. Then all will be well. Our following discourse will be pleasing to Christ and the immaculate Mother of God, so enough of their knavery.

112. *she had to stay unchristened for a long time*—myrrh and oil are required for christening ceremonies.

113. *I myself churched my wife and baptized my children*—Orthodox canons forbid fathers from baptizing their own children.

114. *gossips*—baptismal sponsors.

Pardon me, good Nikonites, for having abused you. Live as you will. As for me, I am now about to resume my tale of woe, so go your ways in peace. For twenty years God has willed that I be tormented by you. And should it be for twenty more, I will endure it in the name of the Lord our God and of our Savior Jesus Christ. Enough of this. I have wandered, as it is, far enough from my story—let us return to it.

So I left Dauria. The food began to grow scarce. I prayed together with my company, and Christ gave us a roebuck, a huge beast, and we lived on him until we reached Lake Baikal. There, by the lake, we came on Russian folk—a settlement of sable-hunters and fishermen. They were right glad to see us, dear souls, and we them. They dragged us and our boat to shore and led us far inland to the hills.

There was a dear lad called Terenty, and he and his comrades gazed on us and we on them—dear souls—with tears of joy. They snowed meat and drink on us—as much as we needed. They brought me some forty freshwater sturgeons, saying, “There, father! God sent them to our fishery for you. Take them all.” I, bowing to them, blessed the fish and asked them to take them back, saying, “What need have I of so many?” They entertained me there, and from dire need I accepted provisions from some of them. Then, having repaired our boat, we let out our sails and prepared to cross the lake.

But the lake grew rough, so we took to our oars. The lake is very broad in that spot—it must be a hundred or at least eighty versts. When we stood to the shore a tempest sprang up and we were forced to find shelter from the waves on the shore.

The place was surrounded by high mountains. I have wandered over the face of the earth 20,000 versts and more, but never have I seen their like. On their summit are tents and earthen huts, portals and towers, stone walls and courts, all neatly fashioned. Onions grow on them and garlic—bigger than the Romanov onion and exceeding sweet to the taste. There also grows wild hemp, and, in the gardens, fine grass and exceeding fragrant flowers. There is a great quantity of birds—geese and swans that fly over the lake like snow.

There are fish: sturgeon and trout, sterlet, salmon trout, whiting, and many other kinds. It is fresh water. In that mighty ocean lake there are sea-calves¹¹⁵ and great sea hares.¹¹⁶ (I saw none while I was living on the Mezen River.) The fish in it weigh a great deal. The sturgeon and

115. sea calves—seals.

116. *sea hares*—gastropod mollusks.

salmon trout are exceeding fleshy; they are not for frying, for frying would yield nothing but fat.

Christ fashioned all this for man, so that—with a mind at last at rest—man might give praise to God. But man is given to vanity, and his days go by like a shadow. He leaps, like a goat; he blows himself out, like a bubble; he rages, like a lynx; he seeks to devour, like a serpent; when he looks on the beauty of his neighbor he neighs like a foal. He is crafty, like a fiend. When he has eaten his fill, then, like a heathen, he falls asleep, without saying his prayers. He puts off repenting until his old age and then he vanishes—we know not where, whether to light or to darkness; it will be shown on the day of judgment. Forgive me. I myself have sinned more than other men.

• 12. Returning to Russian settlements •

So we reached Russian settlements, and I was informed about the church. Like Pilate, I saw that I “could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made.” My mind was troubled. Sitting down, I began to ponder what I should do. Should I continue preaching God’s word, or should I hide myself? For I was tied by my wife and children. Seeing that I was troubled, my wife came up to me—timidly, delicately—and said, “Why are you troubled?” I told her all my thoughts. “Wife! What must I do? The winter of heresy is at the door. Am I to speak or to hold my peace? I am tied by you!” And she said to me,

Lord have mercy! What are you saying, Petrovich?¹¹⁷ Have I not heard and have you not read the words of the apostle? “Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.” I and the children, we give you our blessing. Continue preaching the word of God as before, and take no thought for us until a time that seems good to God. And when that time comes, remember us in your prayers. Christ is strong and he will not abandon us. Get on—get to church, Petrovich! Unmask the whore of heresy!

I bowed myself to the earth before her. I shook myself free from the blindness of a troubled mind and I began once more to preach and teach God’s word in the towns and in all places until I could boldly tear the mask from the heresy of Nikon.

I wintered in Yeniseisk.¹¹⁸ Having sailed through the summer again, I wintered in Tobolsk.¹¹⁹ On my way as far as Moscow I cried

117. *Petrovich*—Avvakum’s patronymic or middle name.

118. *Yeniseisk*—city in central Siberia on the Yenisei River.

aloud in every town and in every village, in churches and in market-places, preaching the word of God and teaching and laying bare the snares of the ungodly.

I came to Moscow. Three years I had traveled from Dauria, and it took me five years traveling upstream. We journeyed ever eastward amid native tribes and habitations. Much might be said about that. Sometimes we fell into the hands of the natives. At the mighty Ob River¹²⁰ they put to death in my presence twenty men who were Christians. They were inclined to do the same to me, but they let me go altogether. On the Irtysh River¹²¹ a standing company of them lay in ambush for our men of Berezov to slay us. But I did not know this and I went toward them. When I reached them I put in to the bank.¹²² In a moment they surrounded me with their bows, and—I tell you—I went forth to embrace them as though they were monks. I said, “Christ be with me and with you too.”

They treated me kindly and they brought their wives to my wife. My wife hid her true feelings from them, for in the world they are accustomed to employ flattery. The women were kind and we felt it. When women are good, then all is well under Christ. The men hid their bows and arrows. I bought some bear’s flesh from them and they let me go free.

As I was saying, I came to Tobolsk. This astonished the folk, for Bashkirs¹²³ and the Tartars¹²⁴ were scouring all Siberia. But trusting in Christ, I went through their midst. When I reached Verkhoturie¹²⁵ my friend Ivan Bogdanovich was astonished. “How did you ever get through, archpriest?” I answered, “Christ brought me through, and the all-pure Mother of God brought me through. I fear no man, only Christ.

119. *Tobolsk*—an important center for the colonization of Siberia.

120. *Ob River*—a major river near the Ural Mountains, which divide the European and Asian portions of Russia.

121. *Irtysh River*—the main tributary of the Ob River.

122. *put in to the bank*—pulled the boat onto the bank of the river.

123. *Bashkirs*—a Turkic people concentrated around the southern Ural Mountains.

124. *Tatars*—another Turkic group scattered throughout Russia, Ukraine, Poland, China, Central Asia, Romania, and Lithuania. Tatars ruled much of Russia from the 1200s through the 1400s.

125. *Verkhoturie*—a city in western Siberia near the Ural Mountains.

• 13. Back in Moscow and court of the Tsar •

Thus I came to Moscow. The tsar and all his boiars received me gladly, as though I were an angel of God. I went to see Feodor Rtishchev.¹²⁶ He came from his tent, received my blessing, and began to speak about many things. For three days and three nights he did not allow me to go home. Then he informed the tsar about me. His majesty commanded that I be placed at his side. He spoke kindly to me. He asked, “Are you in good health, archpriest? God bade me to see you again.” In answer I kissed his hand and pressed it, and I said, “God lives and my spirit lives, your majesty! But God will ordain what is before us.” He sighed softly and went wherever he needed to go.

Other things happened, but what need have we to speak of them? That too passed by. He ordered them to place me in the guesthouse of a monastery in the Kremlin.¹²⁷ When he passed my door going out on expeditions, he often greeted me. Bowing low, he would say, “Bless me” and “Pray for me.” One time he took his fur cap from his head and let it fall as he was riding on horseback. He used to slip out of his carriage to come to me. All his boiars¹²⁸ kept bowing and scraping, crying, “Archpriest, bless us and pray for us.” How shall I not grieve for such a tsar and such boiars? It grieves me to think how good they were. They gave me a place wherever I wished. They named me their confessor so I could be one with them in the faith. But I considered all these things to be nothing but vanity. I gained Christ and I was mindful of death—how all these things pass away.

The following was revealed to me in Tobolsk when I was half asleep. “I bid you to watch so you not be not a branch cut off.” I leapt up and fell before the icon in great terror, and I spoke and said, “Lord, I will not go when they chant in the new-fangled fashion, my God.” I was at early Mass in the cathedral on the name day of the tsarina.¹²⁹ I was jesting with them in that church in the presence of the officials, and from the moment of arrival I took note of whether they mixed the elements in a triple or in a twofold way. Standing at the altar by the

126. *Fedor Rtishchev*—a friend of Tsar Aleksei and one of the Zealots of Piety who stayed loyal to Nikon.

127. *Kremlin*—the area in central Moscow fortified by walls and turrets.

128. *boiars*—nobles.

129. *name day of the tsarina*—a name day is the day of the year that all people bearing the name of a certain saint celebrate; it is a religious birthday of sorts. The tsarina is the wife of the tsar.

sacrificial table, I abused them. Over time I got used to them, so I ceased abusing them. Such was the bitter spirit of the Antichrist that stung me.

Then our sweet Christ made me afraid. He said to me, “After such great suffering will you perish? Watch out, lest I hew you off like a dry branch.” I did not go to Mass, but I went to dine with the prince, and I told him everything—every word. A kind boiar prince, Ivan Andrei Chelkov, began to weep. Woe is me, accursed one, that I forget such great mercy from God!”

When I was at Dauria and I labored as a fisherman. In the winter I went to my children and I went along the lake on snowshoes. There was no snow but there were great frosts, and the ice froze nearly to the thickness of a man. I wanted to drink and I suffered much from thirst. I could not go on. I was midway across the lake and I couldn’t get to water. (The lake was eight versts.) I looked up to Heaven and said, “O Lord, you caused water to flow in the desert for the thirsty people of Israel. You were then and you are now. Give me drink by whatever means seem good to you. O Lord, my God! Woe is me. I do not know how to pray. Forgive me, for the Lord’s sake. Who am I, a dead dog?”

The ice gave a crack beneath me and split up to either side across the whole lake and then came together again. A great mountain of ice rose up, and while this was happening I stood in my accustomed place. Looking toward the east, I bowed twice or thrice and pronounced the name of the Lord in a loud voice from the depths of my heart. God left me a small hole in the ice. I fell down and slaked my thirst. I wept and I was glad, praising God. After that the hole in the ice joined up and I, rising, bowed down to the Lord and then again ran along the ice to my children.

It often happened to me like this in my other wanderings. I was either walking along, dragging my sledge or catching fish or cutting wood in the forest, or whatsoever I might be doing. I always recited my office¹³⁰ at the regular time—whether it was morning Mass or evening—at the hours that were the custom. If I was among other people, none could hinder me. I would stand upright without any of my companions, for they did not love my office, and when they were there it was impossible for me to carry it out. So I would leave the men behind and go through it in a shortened form, either under a hill or in a wood,

130. *office*—a series of daily prayers observed by the devout.

beating with my head against the earth. Sometimes I would weep and feel wounded.

If there were people with me I would place the icon on the sledge-rail, and I would recite the office right through. Some would pray with me, but others would cook their porridge. When I am traveling in my sledge on Sundays I sing the whole church service in the guest houses. I will sing when I am traveling in a sledge on festival days. I would sing often on Sundays as I went along. When I did it persistently I would sometimes grumble—though only a little—for my body was hungry and wanted to eat. I was thirsty and I wanted to drink. In the same way, my spirit, O Father Epifany,¹³¹ desires spiritual food. It is not a hunger for bread that destroys a man, nor a thirst for water, but the great hunger of a man when he lives without praying to God.

If you are not tired of listening to your servant of Christ,¹³² I, a sinner, will tell you how often in the land of Dauria, due to loss of strength and from hunger, I could not keep my rule.¹³³ I could keep only a little of it—only the evening psalms and the midnight office at the first hour. But I could not do more than that. I dragged myself about like a poor beast. I was grieved about the office of mine, but I could not keep it up. You see, I had become so weak.

Sometimes I went to the forest for wood, and while I was away my wife and children would sit on the ground by the fire, my daughter with her mother, and they would both cry. Agrafena, my poor unhappy one, was not yet grown. I came back from the woods and the child was sobbing hard. She could not speak because her tongue was bound fast, but she sat there and whimpered to her mother, and the mother looked at her and cried. I breathed heavily and approached the child with a prayer. “In the name of the Lord I bid you to speak to me and tell me why you weep.” She jumped up and bowed before me and began to speak clearly.

I do not know who it is, my lord father, but there is a shining one within me and he held me by my tongue and he would not let me speak to mother. I cried because of it. He said to me, “Tell your father that he should recite his office as he used to do, and then you

131. *O Father Epifany*—here Avvakum speaks to his confessor and companion in the prison of Pustozersk.

132. *If you are not tired of listening to your servant of Christ*—Avvakum continues to address Epifany.

133. *rule*—spiritual disciplines and regulations.

should all go forth again to Russia. But if he does not keep his rule (something that now troubles him), then in this place you all will die, and he will die with you.”

At that time another similar thing was said to her, namely how many of our friends had perished in Russia and that there would be an edict to fetch us. All this came to pass. I was to tell Pashkov that if he sang the morning and evening office, then God would give us fair weather and then the corn would grow and there would be constant rain. Indeed, they sowed wheat on a small plot a day or two before Peter’s Day, and immediately it sprouted and was all but rotted by the rains. I spoke to him about the evening and morning office and he set to do this, too. God sent fair weather, and the corn ripened immediately. What a miracle! It was sown late but it ripened early.

But again, poor man, he began to practice cunning arts about God’s doings. The following year he sowed much, but an unwonted rain poured down, and the water overflowed from the river and drowned the plowed fields and washed everything away. It washed away our hut. Until that time there had never been water there, so the natives wondered. Mind you, as he went his way, so God moved in his mysterious way. At first he laughed at the news, but afterwards, when the child wanted to eat, he began to cry. I sought not to slacken about my office.

I have spoken enough about this. Let us return to our first subject. We must remember all these things and not forget them so we do not lay aside any of God’s doings through negligence or waste; we should not alter them for the pleasure of this age of vanity.

• 14. Troubles in Moscow •

Now I will tell of what happened in Moscow. They said I was not at one with them. His majesty¹³⁴ bade Rodion Streshnev¹³⁵ to persuade me to hold my peace. I did his bidding. The tsar is set over us by God, and at this moment he was kindly disposed toward me. So I hoped that—little by little—he would come to a better mind.

They promised me on Simeon’s day to place me at the printing office to correct books. I was exceedingly glad; it pleased me more than being the tsar’s confessor. I wanted something better than the confessional. I waited on him. He sent me ten rubles and the tsarina sent me ten. Luke, the confessor, sent me ten, and Rodion Streshnev also ten,

134. *His majesty*—the tsar.

135. *Rodion Streshnev*—a counselor to the tsar and the tsaritsa’s relative.

and our old friend Feodor Rtishchev then ordered them to slip sixty rubles from his official salary into my hat. I was to say nothing about that! Each man put his hand in his pocket and brought out every manner of thing. I lived in the house of my dear one, Feodosia Prokofievna Morozova,¹³⁶ and I didn't go out as much since she was my spiritual daughter. Her sister, Princess Evdokia Prokofievna, was also my daughter.

My dear ones, martyrs for Christ! I was always in the house of Anna Petrovna Miloslavskaia,¹³⁷ God rest her soul! And I went to Feodor Rtishchev's house to dispute with the apostles. So I lived for about half a year. But I saw that I prevailed in nothing and that only tumult arose. I began to grumble again, and I wrote many things to the tsar, namely that he should earnestly seek the ancient piety and defend our common holy mother church from heresy. He should place a shepherd of the orthodox faith on the patriarchal throne in place of that wolf and apostate, Nikon, who was an evil-doer and a heretic.

When I got the letter ready I had no more strength left in me. I sent it to the tsar by my spiritual son Feodor, the fool in Christ, whom they strangled at Mezen, hanging him upon the gallows tree. Now [Feodor] in all boldness approached the tsar's carriage, and the tsar bade him to sit down with the letter near the great entrance. He did not know that the letter was from me. Having the letter from [Feodor], [the tsar] bade let him go. [Feodor]—God rest his soul—stayed a while with me again. Then he went into the church in the presence of the tsar, where he began to play the fool as though he was half-witted. The tsar became angry and bade them to send [Feodor] away to the Chudov Monastery. There Paul the archimandrite ordered them to put fetters on [Feodor], and, by the will of God and before the people, the fetters broke to pieces on his legs. [Feodor]—God rest my friend's soul—crept into the burning stove in the bakehouse after the loaves and sat on the grating with his naked rump. He picked up the crumbs in the stove to eat them. The monks were frightened and told the archimandrite that Paul was now metropolitan. He told the tsar this, and the tsar came to the monastery and ordered them to let [Feodor] go with honor. He came to me again, and from that day on the tsar began to look askance at me. He

136. *Feodosia Prokofievna Morozova*—see document “25.8 Tale of Boiarynia Morozova.”

137. *Anna Petrovna Miloslavskaia*—the tsaritsa's relative and a supporter of Avvakum.

was not pleased that I began to speak again. He would have liked me to hold my peace, but that was not my way.

Then the bishops, like goats, began to leap up against me, and they plotted to banish me from Moscow, because many of the Christians had come to me and—learning the truth—refused to walk in the service of a lie. The following accusation came from the tsar: “They tell me that the bishops bring complaints against you. They say that the churches are empty because of you. Go again into banishment.” Thus spoke the boiar Peter Mikhailovich Saltykov.

• 15. Exile to Mezen; imprisonment in Moscow •

So they brought me to Mezen, and many good people gave me this and that in the name of Christ. Everything remained, except they took me, my wife, my children, and my household. From town to town I taugh the people of God and denounced the spotted beasts.¹³⁸

They brought us to Mezen. Having endured for half a year, they took me again, without my wife, to Moscow. My two sons, Ivan and Procopius, journeyed with me. But my wife and the rest were all left at Mezen.

Having brought us to Moscow they took us first to the Pafnutiev Monastery.¹³⁹ There they sent us a letter saying thus and thus: “Will you vex us so long? Be reconciled to us, dear old Avvakum!” But I refused as though they were devils. They flew in my face. Then I wrote an answer with much violence of words, and I sent it by Kosma, a deacon of Yaroslavl,¹⁴⁰ through the sub-deacon of the patriarchal court.

Kosma tried in public to persuade me, but in private he supported me, telling me, “Archpriest, do not desert the ancient rites. You will be a mighty man with Christ if you endure to the end. Do not look to us, for we are ruined.” I answered that he should again stand for Christ. He replied, “I cannot. Nikon has led me astray.” To speak bluntly, he had denied Christ before Nikon, because he had no strength to stand firm. My poor Kosma. I fell to crying. I blessed him, unhappy one. After that I had no more dealings with him. Let God deal with him as seems good to him.

138. *spotted beasts*—the reformers.

139. *Pafnutiev Monastery*—roughly 100 kilometers southwest of Moscow. Used at times as a prison for clergy.

140. *Iaroslavl*—a city roughly 320 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

Having remained in Pafnutiev in chains for ten weeks, they took me again to Moscow. And in the room of the crosses the bishops held a disputation with me. They led me to the cathedral church, and after the elevation of the host¹⁴¹ they sheared me and the deacon Feodor. Then they cursed us and I cursed them back. I was heavy at heart for the Mass.

After I stayed for a time at the patriarchal court, they took us by night to Ugresha,¹⁴² to the monastery of St. Nikolai. And the enemies of God shaved off my beard. What would you do? It is like wolves not to pity the sheep. They tore at my hair like dogs; they left only one forelock, such as the Poles wear on their foreheads. They did this not while carrying me along the road to the monastery, but by the marshes and the quagmires so people would not see me. They knew they were behaving like fools, but they did not wish to end their folly. The devil had darkened their minds. Why should one reproach them? It was not they, or they would have behaved otherwise.

The time had come mentioned in the Gospel. “Offenses must come.” Another evangelist says, “Offenses must come, but woe to him by whom offense comes.” Look, those of you who read! Our misery was necessary. We could not escape it! God lets loose offenses for this cause so the elect may be enflamed and made white,¹⁴³ even as temptations are made manifest in us. Satan has asked for and obtained from God our bright shining Russia, so he can purple it with martyr’s blood. Well . . . have you imagined this, O devil—that it is sweet for us to suffer for our sweet Lord?

They kept me at Nikolai’s in a cold room for seventeen weeks. There I had a visitation from God; read of it in the letter to the tsar. The tsar came to the monastery and paid a visit to my prison cell. He gave a groan and then left the monastery; it seems that he was sorry for me—the will of God lay in that. When they had shorn me there was a very great disturbance among them with the tsarina, God rest her soul! She, sweet lady, detected me and asked to have me released from prison, about which there is much to be said. God forgive them! As to my sufferings, I do not hold them answerable, either now or later. It is sufficient for me to pray for them, be they alive or be they dead. The

141. *elevation of the host*—the point in the liturgy when the priest dramatically draws attention to the consecrated elements.

142. *Ugresha*—a village near Moscow.

143. *made white*—made pure.

devil set discord between us, but they were always good toward me. Enough of this.

Poor Prince Ivan Vorotynsky¹⁴⁴ came without the tsar to pray, and he asked to be admitted to my prison cell. But they would not let the hapless man in. Looking through the window, I could only weep over him. My sweet friend feared God. He was Christ's orphan. Christ will not cast him away. Christ was always on our side, and all the boiars were good to us.

Only the devil was malicious. What could we have done if Christ had left us? They beat my dear Prince Ivan Khovansky¹⁴⁵ with rods and they burned Isai. They brought the lady Feodosia Morozova to ruin; they killed her son and tortured her and her sister Evdokia, beating them with rods. They separated her from her children and divorced her from her husband, Prince Peter Urusov,¹⁴⁶ whom they married to another wife.

But what was there to do? Let them torture those dear ones. They will go to their heavenly bridegroom.¹⁴⁷ In every way God will cause this troublesome time to pass and he will call the bridegroom—he the true sun, our light and our hope—to himself to his heavenly palace.

Let us turn again to the one first matter. After this they took me again to the Pafnutiev Monastery, and there they shut me up in a dark room and put fetters on me and kept me for well-nigh a year. There the cellarer¹⁴⁸ Nikodemus was good to me at first, but he, poor fellow, smoked more than sixty poods¹⁴⁹ of tobacco, which they seized when they searched the house of the metropolitan of Gaza.¹⁵⁰ They seized a lute too and other hidden things of the monastery, on which they played and made merry. It is a sin to speak of it; forgive me. It was not my

144. *Prince Ivan Vorotynsky*—a wealthy aristocrat and supporter of Avvakum.

145. *Prince Ivan Khovansky*—another of Avvakum's supporters.

146. *Prince Peter Urusov*—Princess Evdokia Urusova's husband and Theodosia Morozova's brother-in-law.

147. *heavenly bridegroom*—Christ.

148. *cellarer*—a monk responsible for his monastery's provisions.

149. *pood*—slightly more than sixteen kilograms. Sixty poods equals approximately 980 kilograms.

150. *metropolitan of Gaza*—Metropolitan Paisy of Gaza. A Greek bishop who wielded significant influence at court. Opposed Avvakum and the Old Believers. Zernov notes that "he was well known for his lack of scrupulousness and his participation in suspicious mercantile operations."

business. Let him attend to it. He must stand or fall before his own Lord. This is just incidental.

There were well-beloved teachers of Holy Writ with them. On Easter Day I asked Nikodemus the cellarer whether I might rest because of the holiday—whether he would bid them to open the door so I might sit on the threshold. He abused me and refused me savagely.

After that he came into my cell and he suddenly fell ill. They anointed him with oil and gave him the last sacraments. Then and there he died. That was on Easter Monday. Before, on Tuesday night, a man resembling myself and in shining vestments came to him with a censer, and, having censured him and taken him by the hand, he moved himself and was healed. He came into the dungeon to me with the servitor by night, and he said, “Blessed is this dwelling. What a dungeon it contains! How blessed is this dungeon! What sufferings it holds! Blessed are those bonds....” He fell before me and clasped my chain and said, “Forgive me, for God’s sake! Forgive, for I have sinned before God and before you. I have insulted you, and for this God has punished me.”

I asked, “How has he punished you? Tell me!” He replied, “You yourself came to me and censured me. You had pity on me and raised me up. Why do you deny it?” The servitor standing there said, “Yes, my lord and father, he took you by the hand and led you from the cell; he bowed down before you and you went away hence.” I charged him not to say anything to any man about this secret thing. He questioned me about how he might now live for Christ. “Do you charge me to go into the desert?” But I forbade him and would not allow him to give up his stewardship, if only in secret he would preserve the ancient tradition of his fathers.

He bowed low and went away to his own place. The next day while eating he told all the brotherhood about this. The people ceaselessly and with boldness pressed in to see me, asking for a blessing and for my prayers. I taught them from Holy Writ and I healed them by the word of God. I had some enemies at that time but they were reconciled to me.

Alas, when shall I quit this life of vanity? It is written, “Woe to him when all men speak well of him.” In very truth I know now how I may endure to the end. There are no good deeds now, but I glorified God. He knows that and it rests with him.

• 16. Feodor the fool •

Feodor—he who was strangled—came to me in secret with his children. God rest his soul! He questioned me as follows.

How would you have me walk? Shall I wear my shift in the old fashion or shall I wear clothes? The heretics are seeking me; they would gladly bring me to ruin. I was under guard at Riazan—at the court of the archbishop’s palace—and Ilarion¹⁵¹ grievously tormented me. Scarcely a day passed when he did not beat me with cords. He kept me bound in iron fetters, compelling me to partake of the new communion of Antichrist. I said I could not. I prayed in the night and wept and said, “O Lord, if you do not save me, they will cause me to commit an abomination and I will perish. What can I do?”

Weeping much, he said suddenly,

My father, all my chains fell rattling from me, and the door opened of its own accord. I bowed down to God, and I went forth. I came to the outer gates and the gates opened. I went straight forward along the road to Moscow. It was scarcely daylight when they gave chase on horseback. Three men passed by me quickly. They did not see me. So I, trusting in Christ, went forward on my way. But very soon they came upon me and they snarled at me. They said, “The son of a whore has escaped. Where may one take him?” And again they passed by me and did not see me. And I came to you and asked whether I should go again to be tortured or whether I should put on clothes and live in Moscow.

I, a sinner, bade him to put on clothes and not hide himself from the hands of the heretics. They strangled him in Mezen, hanging him from the gallows tree. Eternal be his memory, together with Luke Lavrentievich.

My well-beloved children! They suffered for Christ. Glory to God for them. Feodor accomplished an exceeding mighty deed—a deed beyond measure. By day he played the fool of Christ, and all night long he wept and prayed. I know many good men, but I had never before known such an ascetic. He lived with me in Moscow about half a year, but I was still ill. Two of us lived in the same chamber with him. He would lie down for an hour or two at most and then get up. He would perform a thousand genuflections and seat himself on the ground. Or, standing up, he would weep for some three hours. In the meantime I would continue lying down and sometimes sleep. Sometimes I was restless, and when he had his fill of violent weeping, he would come up to me and ask, “How long will you continue lying? Come around. You are a priest. How are you not ashamed?” And I could not rise, even

151. *Ilarion*—the bishop of Riazan, a holy fool and former friend of Avvakum who became one of Nikon’s supporters.

though he lifted me up, saying, “Stand up, my sweet father!” He pulled at me somehow or another. He bade me to say prayers as I sat, and he, rather than I, kept bowing down. He was my friend in truth!

He was sorely vexed by his sufferings. One time his intestine issued forth from him three yards in length—and another time five yards: his guts were measureless. It was both pitiful and laughable. For five years at Ustiug¹⁵² he froze barefoot in the frost wearing only his shift. I saw him myself. Then he became my spiritual son. When I came from Siberia, he ran up to my stall in the church to pray. He said, “My father, when I first began to thaw and get warm after the frost, it was very hard to bear. One stamps one’s feet on the brick floor as though one’s legs were wooden. But they did not hurt the next day.” He had a newly printed psalter with him in his cell. He knew then little about those new-fangled things. But I told him everything—word by word—about the new books. He snatched the book and hurled it into the stove, and he cursed all these new-fangled ways. He was exceeding zealous for the faith of Christ. But why speak many words? As he began, so he ended. His great virtue lay not in idle words, as it does with me—miserable man for whom he died, pleading to God.

Athanasius (Abram was his spiritual name), my spiritual son, was also a good man. In Moscow the apostates baked him to death on the fire. Like sweet-savored bread he was offered to the Holy Trinity. Before he took the cowl,¹⁵³ he went around barefoot in only his shift, in both winter and summer. He was milder than Feodor and fell short of Feodor’s asceticism. He dearly loved weeping. He would go about weeping, his words were sweet and soft with whomsoever he spoke, though he wept.

Feodor was very zealous and he suffered much for the work of God. He would weary himself in every way to bring sin to light and to destroy it. But enough of them! As they lived, so they died, with Christ Jesus our Lord.

• 17. Questioning at Chudov Monastery •

I will tell you more about my wanderings when they brought me out of the Pafnutiev Monastery in Moscow and placed me in the guesthouse. After many wanderings they set me down in the Chudov Monastery, before the patriarchs of all Christendom. The Russian Ni-

152. *Ustiug*—a town roughly 900 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

153. *Before he took the cowl*—before he became a monk.

konites sat there like so many foxes. I spoke about many things in the Holy Writ with the patriarch. God opened my sinful mouth and Christ put them to shame. The last word they spoke to me was this: “Why are you stubborn? The folk of Palestine, Serbia, Albania, the Wallachians,¹⁵⁴ those of Rome and Poland—all these cross themselves with three fingers. Only you stand out in your obstinacy and cross yourself with two fingers. It is not seemly.” I answered them thusly for Christ:

O you teachers of Christendom. Rome fell away long ago and lies prostrate. The Poles fell in similar ruin with her, being enemies of the Christian to the end. Among you orthodoxy is a mongrel breed. It is no wonder if—by the violence of the Turkish Mahound¹⁵⁵—you have become impotent. It is you who should come to us to learn. Autocracy¹⁵⁶ exists among us by the gift of God. Under our pious princes and tsars—until the time of Nikon the apostate—our Russia and our orthodox faith remained pure and undefiled. There was no sedition in the church. Nikon the wolf—together with the devil—ordained that men should cross themselves with three fingers. Our first shepherds made the sign of the cross and blessed men as of old with two fingers, according to the tradition of our holy fathers: Meletina of Antioch; Theodoret, the blessed bishop of Cyrene; Peter of Damascus; and Maksim the Greek.¹⁵⁷ So too did our own synod of Moscow¹⁵⁸ in the time of Tsar Ivan¹⁵⁹—who bid them to put their fingers together in that way, and to make the sign of the cross and give the blessing as taught by Melety and the holy fathers of old. In the time of Tsar Ivan there were among the Russian saints the standard-bearers Gury and Varsanofy,¹⁶⁰ wonder-workers of Kazan; and Filip the abbot of Solovki.¹⁶¹

The patriarchs fell to thinking, and our people began to howl like wolf-cubs and to belch out words against their fathers, saying, “Our

154. *Wallachians*—Wallachia is a region in modern Romania, north of the Danube River and south of the southern Carpathian Mountains.

155. *by the violence of the Turkish Mahound*—here Avvakum notes that Constantinople has fallen to the Turks.

156. *Autocracy*—government by an absolute ruler.

157. *Maxim the Greek*—a Greek scholar, living in Russia from 1518 until ca. 1556, whose writings the Old Believers often quoted.

158. *our own synod of Moscow*—see document “21.2 Stoglav Council” earlier in this supplement.

159. *time of Tsar Ivan*—Ivan IV (ruled 1547-1584).

160. *Gury and Varsanofy*—Orthodox missionaries to the Tatars.

161. *Filip the Abbot of Solovki*—later became metropolitan of Moscow.

Russian holy men were ignorant, and they understood nothing. They are unlearned folk. How can one trust them? They have no letters.”

O Holy God! How have you suffered such a great reviling of your holy ones? I, miserable one, was bitter in my heart. But I could do nothing. I abused them as hard as I could: “I am pure, and the dust that cleaves to my feet I shake off before you. It is written, ‘A better one is he who does the will of God than a thousand of the godless.’” Then louder than before, they began to cry out against me: “Away with him; away with him; he has outraged us all.” They began to thrust at me and beat me. The patriarchs themselves threw themselves on me; there must have been about forty of them, I think. Great was the army of the Antichrist that gathered itself together.

Ivan Uvarov seized me and dragged me. I cried aloud, “Stop! Do not beat me!” Then they all sprang back and I began to speak to the interpreter, the archimandrite: “Tell the patriarch that the Apostle Paul writes, ‘For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, and so forth.’ But you, having sorely mishandled a man: How then can you perform your office?”

Then they sat down. I went to the door and lay down on my side. “You sit down,” I said to them, “but I lie down.” They laughed at that. “The archpriest is a silly fellow,” they said, “and does not show honor to the patriarchs.” I replied, “We are fools for Christ’s sake. You are great and we are without honor; you are strong and we are weak.”

After that the authorities again came to me and began to talk with me on the question of the Alleluias. Christ put it in my heart. And I—through Dionysius the Areopagite¹⁶² (whom I mentioned before)—put them to shame for their Roman heresy. And Eufemy, the cellarer of the Chudov Monastery, spoke: “You are right; there is no more to be said.” And they took me along to chain me. Then the tsar sent an officer with musketeers, and they took me to the Vorobiev hills, where the priest Lazar and the elder monk Epifany¹⁶³ were. They had

162. *Dionysius the Areopagite*—nobody knows the true identity of “Dionysius the Areopagite,” an anonymous, mystical writer confused, intentionally or not, with the man the Apostle Paul converted to Christianity in Athens (Acts 17:34). Many scholars suspect that this “pseudo-Dionysius,” who lived in the late 400s or early 500s, was a Syrian monk. See document “Dionysius the Areopagite (400s–500s) on Knowledge of the Godhead” in Part I, section “Eastern Trends in Christian Theology” of *Essential Texts*.

163. *priest Lazar and the monk Epifany*—both Lazar and Epifany were condemned (together with Avvakum) by the Council of 1667.

been shorn and were ill-treated, my dear ones, as though they were village peasants. A wise man who saw them must fall weeping when he looked at them. Well, let them suffer! Why grieve for them! Christ was better than them. Evil was wrought against him by the forbearers of the Nikonites—Annas and Caiaphas.¹⁶⁴ No wonder, for they followed an exemplar. We must grieve for them, poor things! Woe to the hapless followers of Nikon! They have perished from their own wickedness and stubbornness of soul!

• 18. Confinement and meeting with tsar’s staff •

Then they brought us from the Vorobiev Hills¹⁶⁵ to the guesthouse of the Andreevsky Monastery¹⁶⁶ in the Savin suburb. As though we were robbers they followed us—never left us, even when we relieved nature.¹⁶⁷ It was both pitiable and laughable, as though the devil had blinded them.

Then again we were taken to the St. Nikolai Monastery at Ugresha.¹⁶⁸ There the Tsar sent the officer Yury Lutokhin to me so I could bless him. We conversed much about this and that.

Then again they brought me to Moscow, to the guesthouse of the Nikolsky Monastery, and they demanded yet again that we give a statement of the true faith. After that the gentlemen Artemon and Dementy¹⁶⁹ of the bedchamber were sent to me. They spoke to me in the name of the tsar: “Archpriest! I see that your life is pure and undefiled and pleasing to God. I and the tsarina and our children—be entreated of us.” The envoy wept as he spoke, and I weep always for him. I was exceeding sorry for him. Again he spoke: “I beg you to listen to me. Be reconciled with the patriarchs.” I replied, “Even if God wills that I should die, I will not be joined together with apostates. You are my tsar, but they—what have they to do with you? They have lost their

164. *Annas and Caiaphas*—in Matthew 26 the Jewish high priest Caiaphas interrogates Jesus, accuses him of blasphemy, and orders him beaten. According to John 18, Jesus was brought to the high priest Annas for questioning before being sent to Caiaphas.

165. *Vorobiev Hills*—hills on the southwest bank of the Moscow River, overlooking the city of Moscow.

166. *Andreevsky Monastery*—just outside Moscow.

167. *even when we relieved nature*—even when we urinated or defecated.

168. *Nikolaevsky-Ugreshsky Monastery*—on the Oka River west of Kazan.

169. *Artemon and Dementy*—councilors to Tsar Aleksei.

tsar¹⁷⁰ and they have come here to gobble you up. I will not cease to lift my hands to Heaven until God gives you over to me.” The last word I got from the tsar was, “Wherever you will be, do not forget us in your prayers.” And I, sinful one, as far as I now may, pray to God for him.

• 19. Exile to Pustozersk •

After scourging my friends but not me, they banished me to Pustozersk. I sent the tsar two letters from Pustozersk: the first not long, but the other longer. What I said to him I also wrote in the letters, including certain signs of God, who had appeared to me in my prison. Whoever reads will understand.

I and the brotherhood also sent to Moscow a letter written by the deacon as a gift to the true believers. The book was an answer of the Orthodox—a conviction of the heresy of the apostates. It contained the truth about the dogmas of the church. Two additional letters had been sent by the priest Lazar to the tsar and the patriarch. Of all this we got a present.

In Mezen they hanged two men from my household, my spiritual children, the aforementioned servants of Christ: Feodor, Christ’s fool, and Luke Lavrentievich. Luke was a dweller in Moscow, the only son of his mother, who was a widow. At fifteen he was a member of the guild of banners. He came with my children to Mezen, to his death.

When there was a general slaughter in my house, Pilate asked [Luke], “How do you cross yourself, my man?” He answered with all temperance. “I believe and cross myself by placing my fingers like my spiritual father, the archpriest Avvakum.” So Pilate ordered them to put him in the dungeon and to place a noose round his neck. He hanged him on a railing. And so he passed from earth to Heaven. What could they do for him greater than that? Though just a youth, he acted like an old man. He went his way to the Lord. Even for an old man it was good to win like that.

At this time the order was given to hang my two sons Ivan and Procopius. But they, miserable ones, were weaklings, and they never thought to lay hold of the crowns of victory. Being afraid of death, they submitted, and so they buried them alive in the earth with their mother. There was a death without death for you.

170. *lost their tsar*—lost their Byzantine emperor due to the Ottoman conquests.

Repent as you sit there, while the devil concocts something else! That death be terrible is not wonderful! There was a time when even Peter,¹⁷¹ dear friend of Christ, denied [Christ] and then wept bitterly. Because of his tears he was forgiven. And for my children it is not wonderful that—because of my sins—weakness was permitted them. Well and good! So be it! Christ is mighty to save us all and to have mercy on us.

The deputy Ivan Elagin was with us at this time in Pustozersk, having come from Mezen. He received a statement from us, and it was this: “Year and month, we keep the tradition of the holy fathers unaltered, and we proclaim Patriarch Paisius of Palestine to be accursed and his fellows to be an assembly of heretics.” They also said a few words about Nikon, the fabricator of this heresy. For this they brought us to the scaffold, and when they read the sentence, they took me away to the dungeon without scourging me. They read me an edict: “Let Avvakum be put into an underground prison within the palisade and let him be given bread and water.” But I spat on this and I desired to die, refraining from food. I ate nothing for about eight days or more. But then my brethren bade me eat.

At the same time they took the priest Lazar and cut out his whole tongue from his throat. But little blood flowed and it soon stopped. He spoke again without his tongue. Placing his right hand on the scaffold, they cut it off at the wrist, and the hand that had been cut off, while lying upon the ground, placed its fingers of its own accord according to the ancient use. It lay there for a long time before the people. The poor thing made a confession; even in death it did not betray the sign of salvation. Even I am amazed at this; the lifeless thing convicts the living.

On the third day I felt into [Lazar’s] mouth with my hand. It was all smooth, and there was no tongue, but it did not hurt. God had granted with good fortune that it heal. In Moscow they had cut out his tongue but some of it remained; now it was all cut away. But he spoke clearly for two years as though he had a tongue. After two years there was another wonder: in the space of three days his tongue grew again to its full size, although it was a little stumpy. He spoke again, instantly praising God and railing at the apostates.

At this time they seized a hermit priest—Epifany, an elder and anchorite who followed a strict rule—and they cut out his entire tongue.

171. *Peter*—the Apostle Peter, who, after the arrest of Jesus, denied knowing Jesus.

And they cut four fingers off his hand. At first he spoke thickly, but he prayed to the Virgin, the Mother of God, and two tongues appeared to him in the air—one of Moscow and the present one. He took one, put it in his mouth, and from that moment began to speak purely and clearly. The whole tongue fit itself into his mouth. Great are the works and unspeakable are the judgments of the Lord! He sends forth his judgments and again he heals and has mercy. But what use are many words? God is an old hand at miracles. He brings life out of nothing. Will he not on the Last Day raise up all flesh in the twinkling of an eye? Who may understand this thing? He creates what is new and he renews what is old. In all things glory be to him!

At this time they seized the deacon Feodor. They cut out his entire tongue but left a little bit in his mouth, having cut it slantways across his throat. It healed just as it was. But later it grew again as it was before. It stuck out a little way from the lips, but stump-like. They cut off his hand across the palm. But, as a gift from God, it all healed, and he spoke clearly and cleanly as before.

Then they covered us up with earth. There was a framework in the earth, and above the earth a second framework. A fence with four locks surrounded the whole of it, and they established a watch to guard all the doors. Now we, both here and everywhere in dungeons, sing songs before the Lord Christ, the Son of God, just as Solomon sang when he beheld his mother Bathsheba:

You are good, my fair one, you are good, my beloved. Your eyes burn like a flame of fire; your teeth are as white as milk; the shining of your face is brighter than the sun's rays, and altogether you shine like the day in its strength.

Then Pilate left us, and—having settled his business at Mezen—he returned to Moscow. Others of us were burned and baked. They burned Isai to death and afterwards burned Abram and other defenders of the church—he undid most of them. God will count the number of them. It is a wonder they would not come to their right mind.

They intend to establish the faith by fire or the knout and the gallows tree! Which of the apostles taught them that? I do not know. My Christ did not teach his apostles that fire and the knout and the gallows tree should lead to the faith. The Lord said to the apostle, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptized shall he saved." See now, my reader: Christ calls us to come if we will, but he does not bid the apostles to burn those who are dis-

bedient with fire or to hang them on the gallows tree. The Tatar god Mahmud¹⁷² wrote in his books: “We bid you to lay low with the sword the heads of those who do not obey our law and tradition.” But Christ never gave such a command to his disciples. It is plain that these teachers are themselves antichrists. They lead men to the faith, destroy them, and give them over to death. They bring forth works like their faith.

It is written in the Gospels, “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and neither can a bad tree bring good fruit. Every tree is known by its fruit.” But why speak many words? “No cross, no crown.” He who wants to be crowned need not go to Persia. We have our Babylon here at home.¹⁷³ Come, true believer! Name the name of Christ. Stand in the midst of Moscow, cross yourself with the sign of the Savior, our Christ, using two fingers as we learned from the holy fathers. Lo! Your kingdom of Heaven is here at home. Glory to God! Suffer tortures for the way you place your fingers. Do not reason much. I am ready to die with you for this and for Christ. If I am a foolish man without learning, yet I know this: that all the traditions of the church, handed down to us by the holy fathers, are holy and incorrupt. I keep them as I received them even unto death. I will not falsify the eternal boundaries—those that were laid down before our days. Let it remain so to all eternity.

O you heretic, do not tamper with things; do not touch the sacrifice of Christ; do not lay your hand on the cross; do not even stir the corporals!¹⁷⁴ They have conspired with the devil to misprint books and to falsify everything—to alter the sign of the cross in the church and on the wafers. They have banished the priestly prayers within the altar. They have altered the “Lord have mercy on us,” and in baptism they invoke the evil one. I would happily spit in his eyes and in theirs!

The evil one leads them around the font, against the course of the sun, and in this fashion they consecrate the church. When they solemnize marriage they lead the couple counterclockwise; plainly they do this out of hostility. In baptism they do not abjure the evil one. Why should they? They are his children and they do not dare to abjure their father.

172. *Tatar god Mahmud*—Muhammad, the founder of Islam, whom Muslims regard as a prophet but not, of course, as a god.

173. *We have our Babylon at home*—Russia has become wicked like Babylon.

174. *corporal*—the linen cloth on which the priest places the elements during the Eucharist.

But why multiply words? Woe is me for the true believer! Every spirit that is exalted is brought low. As Nikon, the hound of Hell, spoke, so did he do. Print the books, Arsen,¹⁷⁵ but not according the ancient fashion. And so he did. One cannot alter things more than that. Every man should endure for this, even unto death. May these miserable ones be accursed, with all their devilish imagination. And those they made suffer in their souls—may eternal remembrance be theirs threefold.

• 20. The book, the mare, and the devil •

I ask forgiveness from every true believer for the following. Some things I have said were, perhaps, best left unsaid. But I read through the Acts of the Apostle and the epistles of Paul, and the apostles proclaimed that God was working through them: “Not to us but to our God be the praise.” I am of no account. I said so again and again. I am a man who is a sinner. I am wanton and I am a ravisher, a thief, a robber, the friend of publicans and sinners. To every man I am a hypocrite accursed. Forgive me and pray for me.

I am bound more to those who read and listen to me than to any. I do not know how to live nor what I tell men I am doing. What does it matter that they talk vanity about me? In the day of judgment they will know whether my deeds were good or evil. Although I am unlearned in speech, I am not in thought. I am not taught in rhetoric and dialectic and philosophy. But the mind of Christ is our guide within us. As the apostle said, “Although I be rude in speech, I am not in knowledge.”

Forgive me if I speak to you about my ignorance. In truth I was a fool. I disobeyed the testament of my father, and for that my house was punished. All was for God’s sake. When I was still a priest, the tsar’s confessor, Stefan Vonifatievich, gave me a precious gift: the image of Metropolitan Filip, together with the book of the holy Efraim of Syria, so I could profit by reading it to the people. But I, accursed one, despised the fatherly gift, and I handed the book to my cousin, and, because of his importunity, bartered it for a mare.

175. *Arsen*—a Greek who arrived in Moscow in 1649 to become a professor. Zernov notes that “it was soon discovered that he had managed to become a Catholic three times, once a [Muslim], and then, finally, Orthodox. For these successful conversions he was deported to Solovki Monastery. In 1652 Nikon invited him to revise the Russian missal, and this participation by Arsen in the re-editing of the holy books was largely responsible for the disrepute into which Nikon’s reforms fell.”

My own brother Eufemy was in my house at that time. He was exceedingly skilled in letters and he showed great thought toward the church. He was promoted to be the Psalm reader to the elder princess. But he and his wife died of the plague. This Eufemy fed and watered the mare and tended her with great diligence, neglecting the rule in many ways. God saw our unrighteousness—my and my brother’s—namely, that we did not walk uprightly. I had bartered the book and transgressed my father’s will. My brother had despised the rule and attended to the beast.

So the Lord was pleased to punish us in the following way. devils began to torment the mare. She was always in a sweat and a fever; she was scarcely alive. But I did not fully understand why the devil was tormenting us so.

On Sunday after supper, my brother Eufemy was repeating the Psalms for the day for me, and he cried with a loud voice, “Look down on me and have mercy.” Letting the book fall from his hand, he dashed himself against the ground. He was smitten by the devil, and he began to cry aloud and to wail unseemly words, for the devils began to torment him grievously. There were two other brothers in my house—Kosma and Gerasim, who was older than [Eufemy]—and they could not hold him. All the household—some thirty souls in all—tried to hold him. They wept and sobbed and wailed to the master, “We have sinned before you. We have angered your clemency. Forgive us sinners! Have mercy on this youth because of the prayers of the holy fathers!”

But Eufemy became more and more enraged. He cried aloud and shook and convulsed. I, by God’s help, was not confused by this devilish racket. Having finished the psalms for the day, I began to pray to Christ and the Mother of God with tears, saying, “O our Lady, all-holy Mother of God! Show us the sin for which this is so great a punishment. Having come to my right mind and repenting before you and before your son, I will not dare act in that way.”

Weeping, I sent my spiritual son Semyon to the church for the prayer book and for holy water. (Semyon and Eufemy had both encouraged and heartened each other with books and with the rule—both of them lived a very strict life in fasting and in prayer.) This same Semyon wept over his friend and went off to the church and brought back the book and the holy water.

I began to operate on the storm-tossed one, using the prayer of Basil and the help of Semyon. [Semyon] set the censer in order for me and brought me the candle and the holy water. The others held the

possessed one. I came to the prayer: "I command you in the name of the Lord, you deaf and dumb spirit: Come forth from this creature and never enter him again. Go forth to a place in the desert where no man lives and only God beholds."

But the devil did not listen nor did he come out of my brother. Again I repeated the same words, but the devil still did not listen and he tormented my brother even more grievously.

Ah, woe to me! How shall I say it? I am ashamed. I dare not. I did not dare. I spoke in accord with the bidding of the elder Epifany. I took the censer and I censured the possessed one and the images. Then I fell down on the bench and I sobbed for many hours. Then I rose up and cried aloud the words of Basil to the devil: "Come forth from this creature!"

The imp of Hell bent my brother up into a ring and screwed himself together and came out and sat on the window. My brother looked like one who was dead. I sprinkled him with holy water. Coming to himself, he pointed with his finger at the imp sitting on the window. But he did not speak, for his tongue was bound.

So I sprinkled the window with water and the devil moved to the millstone corner. My brother pointed at [the devil] there. So I sprinkled [the devil] with water there as well. The devil left [the millstone corner] and moved onto the stove. My brother pointed at [the devil] there too, and I sprinkled it there with the same water. My brother pointed at [the devil] under the stove and crossed himself. This time I did not go after the devil, but I sprinkled my brother with holy water in the name of the Lord. And he, gasping from the depths of his heart, uttered these words to me:

God save you, my brother, for you have brought me forth from the prince of darkness and his two liege lords. I, my brother Avvakum, will do obeisance to you for your kindness. May God save this boy who went to the church for the book and the water, for he helped you to fight with him. He looks like my friend Semyon. They brought me to the river Sundovnik and beat me. They said, "You are delivered up because your brother Avvakum bartered the book for the mare and he loved her. Thus you must tell your brother that he must take back the book and pay your cousin for it."

I said to him, "I, my dear one, am your brother Avvakum." He answered me, "What kind of brother are you? You are my beloved father. You have taken me from the prince of darkness and his liege lords. My

brother lives at Lopatishta and he will come and return his thanks to you.”

I then gave him the holy water and he took the vessel from me; he wanted to drink it up. The water was sweet to him! But the water was spent. I rinsed the vessel and I was about to give it to him to drink, but he did not drink. I tended to him through the long winter night. I lay down awhile with him and then went to church to sing matins.

While I was away the devils again fell on him, but less violently than before. Coming back from church, I anointed him with oil. The devils left him again and he was in his right mind. But he was spent and broken by the devils. He kept looking at the stove. He was afraid that if I went away, the devils would come after him again. The devils began to revile him. Because of my sins I fought with the devils as though they were dogs for three weeks.

Then I took back the book and paid for it. I went to see my friend, Ilarion the abbot. He reserved a sacramental loaf for my brother. At that time he lived a good life. But now, having become archbishop of Riazan, he has begun to be a persecutor of Christians. I made obeisance to another spiritual brother on behalf of my brother. We prayed to God for our sins, and my brother was freed from the devil. If disobedience to my father’s will is so great a wrong, what will be my punishment for disobedience to my father’s will? Alas! Only fire and torment.

I do not know how the days run on. I am covered with weakness and hypocrisy and lying. I am clothed with envy toward others and with self-love. I, who condemn all men, perish. I account myself as something, but I, accursed one, am dung and corruption—nothing but dung. I stink from all my soul and body. I should live with dogs and with pigs in their sties. My spirit stinks with an evil stench just like they stink. Pigs and dogs stink because of their nature, but I stink from my sins—like a dead dog cast out into the street of the city. Thanks be to God for those powers who buried me in the earth! Although I now stink to myself, doing evil works, at least I am not a scandal to others. This is good.

• 21. The madman Kirill •

The madman Kirill—my friend and the Moscow musketeer who was my guard—came to my dungeon. I shaved him and washed him and changed his clothes. He had many lice. He and I were locked up together, which made for the two of us plus Christ and the Immaculate

Virgin. He, my dear one, was in the habit of easing¹⁷⁶ himself and I would cleanse him. He would ask to eat and drink, but he dared not partake without a blessing.

He would not stand up when I was saying prayers. The devil would make him drowsy, but I would beat him with my rosary and he would begin to say a prayer and bow himself, standing behind me. When I would finish the rule, he would become possessed by a devil. In my presence he would always play the devil and the fool. But when I went to see the elder in his dungeon, I would lay him down on the bench and instruct him not to rise up. I would bless him, and as long as I was away with the elder he would lie there and not rise up, for he was bound by God. He would rave as he lay there.

Images and books and bread and kvass and other things were at the head of his bed, but he would touch nothing while I was away. When I came back, he would stand up and the devil made him behave in unseemly ways in order to vex me. I would cry out and he would sit down. While I was cooking he would ask to eat. He would try to steal a bite before dinnertime, and when I would say the “Our Father” and bless the food before dinner, he would not eat that food, asking instead for unblest food.

So I would thrust some food down his mouth by violence, and he would weep and swallow it. When I fed him fish, the devil would ramp up within him and he would say, “You have made me weak.” I would weep before the Lord, and I would curb him with fasting. I would quiet him down with the name of Christ.

Finally, I anointed him with holy oil, and he was assuaged of the devil. He lived with me for a month or more. Before his death he was brought to his right mmd. I received his confession and administered the sacraments to him. He died quickly, dear man. I bought a coffin and a shroud, and I ordered that he be buried by the church and that the priest say prayers for him for forty days. The dead body lay in my house for a day and a night. Rising at night, I prayed to God, blessing the dead man and kissing him. Afterwards I lay down to sleep. He was my dear comrade. Glory to God for that. Now he is dead and tomorrow I too shall die.

176. *easing himself*—urinating and/or defecating.

• 22. The demoniac Filip •

In Moscow there was another man with me possessed by a devil. His name was Filip. When I came from Siberia he was in a corner of the house, chained against the wall, because the devil was upon him very fierce and wild. He fought and struggled. None of the servants of the house could do anything with him. When I, a sinner, came to him with the cross and the [holy] water, he became submissive, and he fell down as he were dead, before the cross of Christ; he dared try nothing against me. Prayers of the holy fathers and the might of God drove the devil out of him, but his mind was not quite made whole.

Feodor, the fool in Christ—the same Feodor who, for the sake of truth, was strangled by the Christian apostates at Mezen—was charged with watching him. [Feodor] recited the psalter over Filip and taught him the Jesus Prayer. I removed myself from the house in the daytime and attended to Filip only at night.

After some time I returned from Feodor Rtishshev exceeding vexed, for in his house there had been much ado with the heretics about the faith and the law. Disorder had arisen in my house in the meantime: Dame Avvakum and my servant, the widow Fotinia, had created strife between themselves, and the devil had set them quarreling about nothing. I came home and beat them both and abused them because I was already exceedingly vexed. I sinned against God and against them.

Moreover, the devil was ramping in Filip. [Filip] began to tear up his chain in his madness and to shriek unseemly words. Fear fell upon all the household. There was an exceeding great uproar. I went straight to him without praying. I wished to tame him, but he was not as he had been. He gripped hold of me and began to beat me and fight me. He tore me to bits, as if I were a spider's web. He said, "You have fallen into my hand!" I only spoke a prayer, but even a prayer avails nothing without deeds. The servants could not get me away from him, and I gave myself up to him for I saw that I had sinned. Let him beat me!

But wondrous is the Lord. He beat me and it did not hurt! After that he hurled me away and said, "I am not afraid of you!" At that moment I began to be sad at heart. "The devil," I said, "works his will on me." I lay awhile and came back to myself. I rose and sought my wife. I found her, and I stood and prayed with tears for forgiveness. I bowed myself to the earth before her and said, "Nastasia Markovna, I have sinned—forgive me, a sinner." She, in like manner, bowed herself

before me. After that, in the same fashion, I asked forgiveness of Foftinia.

Then I lay in the midft of the parlor and I bade every man to beat me with a scourge—five blows on my accursed back. There were twenty people. My wife and my children and all of them, weeping, beat me. I fpoke and faid, “If any man does not beat me, let him have no part with me in the kingdom Heaven.” They beat me againft their will, weeping. I faid a prayer at every blow. When they had all beat me, I ftood up and pronounced forgiveness before them all. And the devil—feeing that he might not efcape defeat—came out of Filip. I blefled [Filip] with the cross, and he became well as before; he was wholly healed by the blefled gift of God, for the fake of Chrift Jefus, our Lord. To him be glory, forever and ever, Amen.

• 23. The demoniac Feodor •

When I was in Siberia (living in Tobolsk on my way out), they brought me a man poffeffed by a devil. They called him Feodor. There was a cruel devil in him. He had finned with his wife on Eafter Day,¹⁷⁷ defiling a holy day. (His wife told me about it.) So he became poffeffed by a devil. I kept him in my own houfe about two months. I lamented about him to the Godhead. I led him to church and anointed him with holy oil and prayed to God. He became well and in his right mind.

He ftood with me in the choir to chant the fervice. But during the elevation of the hoft he vexed me. I beat him in the choir then and there, and I ordered the sexton to chain him faft to the wall in the entrance. Now more violently poffeffed of the devil than before, he forced his way out during Maſs and went to the palace of the governor. He broke the [governor’s] cheſts to bits and put on the princeſs’s clothes and chased the princeſs away. In a rage, the prince dragged him and many people off to the priſon. But [Feodor] maltreated the wretched priſoners and broke the ſtove to bits. The prince ordered [Feodor] to be banifhed to live with his wife and children in the country.

Wandering from village to village, he did all manner of vileneſs. Every man ran away from him. The governors turned him over to me, for they were enraged. On his behalf I went weeping before the Lord. Then a letter came from Moſcow; it was an order banifhing me from Tobolsk to the great Lena River. I prepared myſelf on Peter’s Day.

177. *ſinned with his wife on Eafter Day*—had ſex on a holy day.

Feodor, now in his right mind, came in a boat to see me. On the boat, in the presence of the people, he bowed himself down before me and said,

God save you, my father, for the loving-kindness you have shown me!
I fled into the wilderness three days ago and you appeared to me and blessed me with the cross. The devils fled away from me, and I came here to bow myself before you. Again, I crave your blessing.

Looking at him, I began to weep. I was exceeding glad for the greatness of God. The Lord watches over and cares for us all. He healed him and he made me glad.

I instructed [Feodor] and blessed him and sent him away to his wife and children and his home. Myself—I sailed away into banishment, praying for him to God, to the dear Son of God, asking that [God] keep him henceforth from evil. When I came back I asked for news about him, and they told me he had died. They said, “After you saw him, he lived about three years as a Christian with his wife and children.” That is good. Praise God for him.

• 24. The demoniac Afemia •

Forgive me and the other servants of Christ, my elder. It is you who have compelled me to speak thusly. But since my tongue is once set wagging, I will tell yet another tale. When I was still a priest, there was a young window in my house where the devils vexed my brother. It is long ago and I have forgotten her name. Yes, I remember, she was called Afemia. She worked in the house and she did all her work well.

When in the evening we were about to begin reciting the rule, the devil smote her to the ground. She was all but dead, like a stone, and she seemed not to breathe. She lay in the parlor like someone dead, with her arms and legs outstretched.

I repeated aloud a prayer to the Virgin, and I waved the censer. Then I made the sign of the cross over her head and said the prayers of Basil at the same time. Then her head below the cross became free and the woman spoke. But her hands and legs and her body were still stone dead. I just touched her hand with the cross and then her hand became loosed; I touched the other hand and it too became loosed in the same manner. I touched her belly and the woman sat down. Her legs were still like stones, but I dared not touch them with the cross. I thought and thought—and I touched her legs and the woman became loosed altogether. She rose up and prayed to God and bowed to the ground before me. The devil—I know not how—was gone from her.

I dealt with her thus a long time. I anointed her with holy oil and thus drove away the evil one altogether. God provided healing. Another time two Basils bound by the devil were with me. It is strange to speak about them for they ate their own dung.

• 25. The demoniac Agafia •

Shall I tell you yet another tale, my elder? It sounds like a foolish tale, and so it was.

An unmarried maid named Anna lived with me in Tobolsk. She was my spiritual daughter. She was diligent for the rule,¹⁷⁸ both of the church and the monastery, and she despised all the beauty of the world.¹⁷⁹ Envyng her good deeds, the devil brought her trouble—trouble related to her first master, Elizar, in whose house she grew up, having been brought there by her grandparents as a Kalmyk¹⁸⁰ captive. She kept her virginity untouched, and when it was in full blossom the devil stole it away. She desired to leave and to go be married to her first master. She began to cry constantly.

God sent a devil upon her, subduing her. She would not listen to anything I said, and she would not attend to prostrations. When we began to repeat the rule, she would instantly stand up, press her hands together, and continue standing. It seemed that God was against her. He had sent a devil upon her. While she was standing during the rule, she broke out, possessed of the devil. I, wretched one, was sad at heart. I signed her with the cross and I blessed her, and I sprinkled her with water, but the devil would not come out from her. So it was often. But she still lived in her madness and in her forwardness.

God in his good cunning punished her in another way. She got drowsy during the rule and fell asleep on a bench. There she slept for three days and three nights without waking. I would just wave the censer over her from time to time as she slept, and she would heave a sigh as though she were dying.

On the fourth day she came to herself and sat up and wept. They gave her something to eat but she would not eat. When I finished the monastic rule and had blessed the household servants and told them to

178. *diligent for the rule*—followed proscribed prayers and observances.

179. *despised all the beauty of the world*—did not let earthly things distract her from spiritual things.

180. *Kalmyk*—native of the Kalmyk region centered around the western shore of the Caspian Sea.

go, I began to make obeisance in the darkness without light. She secretly approached me with a prayer and fell at my feet. I left her and sat down at a table. But again she approached the table, and, weeping, said, "Listen to me, master, for I am bidden to speak to you." I listened. She said,

When I dozed during the rule and fell asleep, two angels came to me and took me. They led me by a narrow path. On the left there was weeping and sobbing and piteous voices. Then they led me to a bright place, exceedingly fair, and showed me many fair mansions and chambers. The fairest mansion of all shone with unspeakable beauty—beyond all the rest. It was exceedingly great. They led me in and there were tables set and spread; dishes stood there with food. At the end stood a tree covered with leaves: it was waving and it was colored with many sorts of colors. In the tree I heard voices of birds, and at first I could not speak of them—they were so heartfelt and tuneful. Keeping hold of me, they brought me back out of the mansion chamber and they said, "Go." I began to make obeisance in the darkness "Do you know whose chamber this is?" I answered, "I do not. Let me go into it." "That is the chamber of your father, Avvakum," they answered. "Listen to him and live as he instructs you in ordering your fingers and crossing yourself and making obeisance. If you pray to God and do nothing contrary to him, then you will live with [God] here. But if you do not listen then you will be in that place of torment where you heard weeping. Tell your father that we are not devils. Look at our shinning wings; devils do not have these." My father, I looked and saw white about their ears.

She bowed before me, asking forgiveness. After that everything was made straight with her again. Then they sent me away from Tobolsk and I left her with my spiritual son.

Then she wished to become a nun, but the devil again worked according to his ways. She married Elizar and became great with child. After eight years she heard I was coming back, and she persuaded her husband and became a nun. While she was married to her husband, God punished her; from time to time the devil tormented her.

When I arrived at Tobolsk she had been a nun for a month. She brought two little children to me, and she laid the little things down before me and wept and sobbed, repenting and blaming herself with unstinted blame. I comforted her when others were there, but I also railed at her many times. She was forgiven for her misdeeds, repenting of them all. After I vexed her sorely I forgave her for everything.

She followed me into the church for Mass and the devil fell upon her at the time of the elevation of the host. She began to call out—to wail aloud, bark like a dog, bleat like a goat, and cuckoo like a cuckoo. I had pity on her, and I stopped midway in the song of the cherubim. Taking the cross from the altar, I went into the choir and called aloud, “I command you, in the name of the Lord, you devil: quit tormenting her! God pardons her now and forever and ever.” The devil came out of her. She crept up to me and fell down before me, because this was her fault. I blessed her with the cross and from that moment I forgave her. She became whole in spirit and body and went forth with me to Russia.

When they had shorn me that same year, she suffered with my children at the hands of Metropolitan Paul before the patriarchal court. For the sake of the faith and for the strictness of the law they dragged her about and tormented her much. Her religious name was Agafia.

• 26. Other spiritual deeds •

My father, they brought the mother of little children to my house. They were suffering from a hernia. My children, too, were afflicted with a childish hernia. I anointed all of their five senses with holy oil. I spoke a priestly prayer over them and, placing oil on my hand, rubbed my boy’s back and his genitals. By the blessing of God, the rupture passed away from the young boy. But yet again he¹⁸¹ belched forth the plague and I worked in the same manner. And God, in his loving-kindness to man, healed him.

In the early days of my priesthood, when I was new to my spiritual exercises, this is how the devil would scare me. My wife was exceedingly ill and her father confessor visited her. I left the house for a book in the church in the middle of the night, so she could confess and be administered the sacrament of reconciliation. When I got to the porch, a table was standing near it. When I came to the table, it leapt up in devilish fashion from the spot where it stood. Not at all frightened, I prayed before the icon. I made the sign of the cross over the table with my hand. I went up to it and I made it stand there. It stopped its goings-on.

When I went to the refectory, another devilry began. A dead man was lying in his coffin on a bench in the refectory. By some devilry the upper plank of the coffin opened wide, and the shroud began to stir. It frightened me out of my senses. I prayed to God and I made the sign of the cross over the dead man, and all returned to as it was before. But the

181. *he*—most likely Satan.

vestments and the surplices flew about from place to place, frightening me out of my senses. I prayed and kissed the altar and blessed the vestments with my hand and handled them. Then they hung as they were supposed to. Then I picked up the book and left the church. Such was the craft that the devil wrought against us.

But enough of this. What exists that the power of the cross and the power of the holy oil—by the blessing of God—cannot accomplish for the sick and those who are possessed? We must call this to mind. God delivers glory not for our sake, but for his own name.

I am mire. What can I do if Christ does not do it? I must weep within myself. Judas¹⁸² was a wonder-worker, but due to the lust for silver he fell to the devil. The devil himself dwelt in Heaven, but he was hurled out for pride. Adam was in Paradise, but he—for his love of sweet things—was driven out and was condemned to dwell for 5,500 years in Hell. Let every man take heed of this, so he is mindful to stand firm and to beware lest he also fall. Kneel down as a Christian man and pray to God and to all the saints. And then shall it be well with you.

• 27. Closing remarks to Elder Epifany •

So now, my elder, you have heard too much of my babbling. I ask you, in the name of the Lord, to write for your servant in Christ about how the Mother of God kneaded this devil in her hands and gave him over to you; how the ants ate you in your secret parts; and how something devilish set fire to the Word¹⁸³ and how the cell burned to ashes, yet all within it were safe and sound. [Write to me also about] how you cried aloud to Heaven, and about other things you remember for the glory of Christ and the Mother of God.

Listen to what I say. If you do not write to me I shall be sorely angered! You love to hear about me. Tell about what you are ashamed, even if only a little. The Apostles Paul and Barnabas were apt to describe in the assembly at Jerusalem—before everyone—what sights and wonders God had accomplished through them among the Gentiles,¹⁸⁴ and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Many who believed came to them, making confessions and telling about their deeds. Much of this is written by the apostles and in the Acts. Do not fear to tell me—only keep your conscience rigorously. Do not seek your own glory,

182. *Judas*—the disciple who betrayed Christ.

183. *Word*—scripture.

184. *accomplished through them among the Gentiles*—see Acts 15:12.

but speak for Christ and the Mother of God. Let your servant in Christ read and rejoice.

When we die, this will be read and we will be remembered before God. We will pray to God for those who read and those who listen. They will be our people. They will be there with Christ, and we will be theirs forever and ever.

Amen.

25.7 Account of Avvakum's Punishment (1670)

“An Account of the Punishment of Avvakum, April 4, 1670,” in *Source Book for Russian History*, 1:260. Used by permission of Yale University Press.

At the end of 1667, Avvakum was exiled to Pustozersk, a remote settlement beyond the Arctic Circle where the Pechora River flows into the Arctic Ocean. On 4 April 1670 he and other Old Believers were led to a mock execution. An eyewitness produced the following account. After this horrific exercise Avvakum spent the remainder of his life in Pustozersk. His real execution followed eleven years later, in 1681. We do not know the method of execution, but tradition holds that Avvakum died at the stake, railing against the reforms as the flames rose around him.



Figure 124. Grigorii Miasoedov, “Burning Avvakum,” 1897

[...] [I]n the fortress of Pustozersk, in accordance with the tsar's decree, the lieutenant colonel Ivan Elagin led the archpriest Avvakum, the priest Lazar, the deacon Feodor, and the monk Epifany from the prison, and they went to the designated place for punishment, where the

block stands; all the instruments of torture were ready, and the executioner was preparing to carry out the sentence. They¹⁸⁵ were not the least downcast, but jointly blessed the people and said their farewells with bright and cheerful countenances; they stood unshaken in their piety and accepted death for the sake of their ancestral traditions, saying to the people: "Do not be seduced by Nikon's teaching! We suffer and die for the truth." First Avvakum blessed the block: "Here stands our throne." Then they blessed each other and kissed each other for the last time, expecting to be beheaded. And then they were brought forth, and a message from the tsar was read to them: instead of being put to death, Avvakum was ordered to be cast into an earthen prison covered with earth, with a small window above, and to be fed bread and water or kvass¹⁸⁶ in small amounts. Upon hearing this the archpriest was greatly offended, and he spat and said: "I spit upon his bread, and I will die without eating it rather than betray piety." Ivan¹⁸⁷ returned him to the prison. He¹⁸⁸ began to weep and to cry at being separated from his brothers.

And it was ordered to cut out the tongues of the priest Lazar and the deacon Feodor and the monk Epifany for their words, and to cut off their hands for the way they made the sign of the cross.

185. *They*—the condemned men.

186. *kvass*—a fermented drink made from rye bread.

187. *Ivan*—Ivan Elagin, the lieutenant colonel.

188. *He*—Avvakum.

25.8 *Tale of Boiarynia Morozova* (late 1600s)

Tale of Boiarynia Morozova: A Seventeenth-Century Religious Life, ed. Margaret Ziolkowski (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 50–54, 55–59, 60–61, 64–65, 75–76. Used by permission of Margaret Ziolkowski and Lexington Books.

Many explanatory notes derive from Ziolkowski's "Commentary" (pp. 95-113).

Feodosia Morozova was born a "boiar," a member of the aristocratic elite who constituted the court of Tsar Aleksei. She married another boiar, Gleb Morozov, one of the richest men in Russia. Unlike most boiars—who, intent on protecting their property and privileges, assiduously avoided religious controversy—Morozova dove into the disputes of the mid-1600s with gusto. A committed opponent of Nikon's reforms, she corresponded regularly with Avvakum while sheltering schismatic nuns and other Old Believers in her house.

Morozova and two good friends were arrested and tortured in 1672, and later imprisoned in a pit dug into the grounds of a monastery, which served as a holding pen for heretics. There they died of starvation in 1675. Old Believers declared Morozova a saint soon after her death, and her martyrdom inspired countless other resisters.

The anonymously authored biography below appeared shortly after Morozova's death, evolving as various authors reworked it. Russian censors forbade its publication and it circulated only in handwritten form for centuries.

The reader will note a significant difference in style and tone between this work and Avvakum's autobiography. The *Tale of Boiarynia Morozova* is far more formal; it lacks the earthy reality of Avvakum's prose, adhering carefully to the formal conventions of hagiography. While Morozova experiences much grief in this account, she never desponds and never waivers. She is, in short, an idealized saint almost without fault, willing even to sacrifice her son for her righteous cause.



Figure 125. Vasily Surikov, “Boiarynia Morozova,” 1887

The artist Vasily Surikov (1848–1916) here portrays Morozova as she is carted away to her imprisonment at the Cave Monastery in Pskov, defiant to the end. Note the seated man in the lower right of the canvas, who, like Morozova on the sledge, makes the sign of the cross with two fingers, in defiance of Nikon’s reforms.

[...] Feodosia strove to carry out God’s will in every work and coerced her flesh into feats of fasting. She nourished herself with fasting and flourished through prayer. She shuddered at the memory of death and was filled with gladsome weeping. Burned and kindled by the fire of God’s love, she was inflamed, but did not burn up, for the Holy Spirit watered her.

And I do not know any virtue about which Feodosia was not zealous. Above everything, like a firm foundation, she placed the Orthodox faith, knowing for certain that without faith it is impossible to please God. And I say boldly: it is fitting and just for this blessed woman to say with the Tishbite prophet,¹⁸⁹ the sword-bearing, fiery charioteer, the glorious Elijah, to cry out with a loud voice: “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For they have abandoned the ecumenical faith and become enamored of Roman Catholic dogma, and they have massacred God’s servants and are trying to undermine God’s church entirely.”

189. *Tishbite prophet*—the Hebrew prophet Elijah.

And whoever (if they were among her relations) adhered to Nikonianism, Feodosia would expose them without hesitation. Many times Mikhail Alekseevich Rtishchev¹⁹⁰ and his daughter Anna, beloved vessels of Nikon, sat in Feodosia's home. They would begin to praise Nikon and to extol his teachings, trying to tempt Feodosia and hoping that they could make her waver and bring her over to their way of thinking. They said: "Great and most wise is the teacher Patriarch Nikon, and the faith transmitted by him is very logical. It is well and good to serve according to the new books."

Feodosia was silent for a moment and then opened her lips: "In truth, uncle, you have been tempted. You praise such an enemy of God and apostate and extol his books, which are sown with Roman and all sorts of other heresies. It befits us Orthodox to be repelled by his books and to abhor all his newly introduced impious teachings and to curse Nikon himself, the enemy of Christ's church, in every way possible."

The gray-haired old man still attempted to persuade her, saying: "O, Feodosia, my child! Why are you doing this? Why have you separated yourself from us? Don't you see these grapes?"—he said this about the children sitting there—"If only we, looking at them, as at young olive shoots, could be gladdened and rejoice, eating and drinking together with you with a common love. But all there is between us is division! I beseech you: abandon this quarrel, make the sign of the cross with three fingers and never again contradict the great sovereign and all the high clergy in anything! I know that the archpriest,¹⁹¹ a most evil enemy, has ruined and enticed you. I disdain even to recall his name because of my great hatred. You yourself know it; you wish to die for his teachings. Nevertheless I say it—Avvakum, who has been cursed by our high clergy."

Taking command, because she saw that the old man was behaving like a madman, Feodosia smiled and said in a quiet voice: "It isn't so, uncle, it isn't so. Your response is not right. You call what is sweet bitter, and what is bitter sweet. Father Avvakum is a true disciple of Christ because he suffers for the law of his Lord. For this reason it is becoming for those wishing to please God to listen to his teachings." And Feodosia said much else and was always indefatigable in battle with them. With Christ's help she put them to shame.

190. *Rtishchev*—Morozova's cousin.

191. *the archpriest*—Avvakum.

Once Anna Mikhailovna¹⁹² began to say to her: “O, my dear little sister, my dove! The nuns of Belev¹⁹³ have consumed you; they have swallowed your soul like a fledgling, they have separated you from us! Not only do you scorn us, but you do not take care for your only-begotten son. You have only one child, and you do not even look at him. And what a child he is! Who will not marvel at his beauty? It would befit you, when Ivan is sleeping, to watch over him and to place candles of the purest wax and to burn a lamp of some kind over the beauty of his countenance and to look at the beauty of his face and rejoice that God has presented you with such a precious child. Many times has the sovereign himself, with the tsarina, greatly wondered at Ivan’s beauty, but you think nothing of him. You do not obey our great sovereign. And if it should happen through your contrariness that the tsar’s fiery rage falls upon you and your house and that he orders your house plundered—then you yourself will endure many sorrows and you will make your son a beggar by your mercilessness.”

Feodosia opened her holy lips and said: “You do not speak the truth! I have not been enticed, as you say, by the nuns of Belev, but through the grace of my Savior I honor God the Father with an unviolated mind. I love Ivan and constantly pray to God for him, and I care about what is spiritually and physically useful to him. But if you think that for the love of Ivan I would harm my soul or, pitying my son, would renounce piety,”—and saying this, Feodosia made the sign of the cross: “Preserve me, Son of God, from this unseemly charity! I do not wish, do not, in sparing my son, to destroy myself. Even if he is my only-begotten son, I love Christ more than my son! Let this be known to you: if you think to make my son an obstacle in my path to Christ, then you will never succeed. I tell you this boldly: if you wish, take my son, Ivan, to Red Square¹⁹⁴ and give him over to be torn to pieces by dogs and try to frighten me. Even then I will not do it. If I see Ivan’s beauty being torn to pieces by dogs, I will not even begin to think of renouncing piety! Know for certain that if I remain in the faith of Christ to the end and am fit to taste death for the sake of this, then no one can steal him from my hands.”

192. *Anna Mikhailovna*—Rtishchev’s daughter.

193. *nuns of Belev*—schismatic nuns from a convent in the town of Belev, southwest of Moscow.

194. *Red Square*—in the center of Moscow.

When she heard these things, Anna was terrified, as if by thunder, by Feodosia's frightful words and she wondered exceedingly at her firm courage and stalwart mind. But Feodosia was greatly inflamed with the love of God and greatly desired, with an unsated love, a nun's habit and life. Seeing in this once again Feodosia's great faith, strong zeal, and steadfast mind, her spiritual mother allowed this to come about. She entreated Father Dosifei¹⁹⁵ to favor Feodosia with angelic garb.¹⁹⁶ He performed the ceremony, and she was named Feodora, and Dosifei gave her in the Gospel to Mother Melania.

Then the blessed Feodora, since she had been worthy of such a great gift from God and now saw herself in the nun's angelic garb that she had desired, began to give herself over to great feats: to fasting, prayer, and silence. She began to avoid all domestic tasks, saying that she was ailing, and she commended all legal matters to trusted helpers.

When the tsar's second wedding, to the Tsarina Natalia, took place, Feodora did not want to go to the tsar's wedding with the other boiars. And Tsar Alexis was offended because Feodora was expected to stand among the first rank of dignitaries and pronounce the tsar's title. As a consequence he summoned her more importunately, but Feodora absolutely refused and said: "My legs hurt terribly and I can neither walk nor stand."

And the tsar said: "I know that she has become petrified with pride."

The holy woman did not want to come for this reason: there she would have to call the tsar pious when she gave his titles and to kiss his hand, and there would be no way to avoid the blessing of their high clergy. Feodora chose to suffer rather than to associate with them. She knew that the tsar would not simply drop this affair. And so it was: all that year he was very angry at her, and he began to seek reasons that could justify driving her out. When it was already close to autumn the tsar sent the boiar Troekurov to Feodora and then, waiting about a month, Prince Peter Urusov,¹⁹⁷ with a warning that she should submit and accept all the newly published laws, and that if she did not obey, then there would be great misfortunes.

195. *Father Dosifei*—an Old Believer and abbot of the Beseny Monastery in northwestern Russia.

196. *to favor Feodosia with angelic garb*—to allow her to become a nun.

197. *Prince Peter Urusov*—the husband of Morozova's sister, Evdokia. Urusov later renounced Evdokia and remarried.

Feodora was resolute in the name of the Lord and refused the boiars: “I am not aware that I have done any evil to the tsar and I wonder—why has the tsar’s anger fallen on my humble condition? If he wants to deter me from the true faith, then the tsar has no right to be upset at me, but let it be known to him: to this day the Son of God has shielded me with his right hand, and in my thoughts I have never once considered putting aside the faith of my fathers and acknowledging the Nikonian rule. But this is what I most desire—that I should die in the Christian faith in which I was born and christened according to the apostolic traditions. Furthermore it does not befit the sovereign to harass me, poor servant that I am, because it is impossible for me ever to renounce our Orthodox faith that has been confirmed by seven ecumenical councils. I have often told him about this before.” The emissaries came and informed the tsar of Feodora’s courageous words. Alexis was again inflamed with much anger. He thought to destroy her and said to those standing before him: “Fighting with me will have dire consequences for her. Only one of us can win and at the full expense of the other!”

The tsar began to take counsel with his boiars about what to do to Feodora. And there were many sessions about her at court where they planned her destruction. All the boiars, when they saw unjust anger and the evil intention to shed innocent blood, did not join in the council. But they were incapable of objecting to evil and were silent because of fear. Most of all the high clergy, the Jewish elders, and the Roman fathers helped the tsar in this matter. For they intensely hated the blessed woman and, like eaters of raw meat, wished their utmost to devour her alive because wherever this zealot was, in her home in the presence of guests or in conversation somewhere else, she exposed their vanity without hesitation and reviled their wayward whoredom before many listeners. All this came to their ears. For this reason they hated her [...]

Feodora reclined on her feather bed, near the icon of the most holy Mother of God of Theodore.¹⁹⁸ Princess Evdokia went into the closet that Feodora had set up in the same bedroom for her mentor Melania. There the princess likewise reclined.

198. *icon of the most holy Mother of God of Theodore*—a copy of a wonderworking icon. Tradition holds that Luke the Evangelist painted the original, which Theodore Stratelates, a Roman general and martyr, brought to Russia.

And behold, Ioakim, the archimandrite of the Miracle Monastery, came with great pride and brazenly entered the bedroom. When he saw Feodora lying down, he told her that he had been sent by the tsar. He tried to compel her to rise, so that either standing or at least sitting she could make a response to the words of the tsar that he had been ordered to say in her presence. But Feodora would not submit to doing this.

Then the archimandrite interrogated Feodora: “How,” he said, “do you make the sign of the cross, and how do you pray?”

And Feodora, conforming her fingers according to the ancient tradition of the holy fathers, opened her most holy lips and intoned: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us! Thus I make the sign of the cross, and thus I pray.”

The archimandrite made a second demand: “The nun Melania—in your home you called her Aleksandra—where is she now? Tell me quickly, for we have need of her.”

And the blessed Feodora again answered: “By the mercy of God and the prayers of our fathers, by our power, our poor home had open gates to receive wandering servants of Christ. There was a time when there were Sidors, Karps, Melanias, and Aleksandras here; now there is no one.”

The state secretary Larion Ivanov stepped into the closet. There was no light in the closet. He saw someone lying on a couch, and asked: “Who are you?”

The princess replied: “I am the wife of Prince Peter Urusov.”

He was frightened and jumped back as if burned by fire.

When the archimandrite saw the state secretary do this, he said: “Who is there?” And the state secretary said: “Princess Evdokia Prokopievna, the wife of Prince Peter Urusov.”

The archimandrite said: “Ask her how she makes the sign of the cross.”

The state secretary did not want to do this and said: “We were not sent to see her, but only the *boiarynia*¹⁹⁹ Feodosia Prokopievna.”

Ioakim replied: “Listen to me, I command you: interrogate her.”

Then the state secretary approached and questioned Evdokia about how she confessed the faith. The princess did not turn away. Still lying on the couch and supporting herself on her left elbow, she put the fingers of her right hand together—the thumb touching the

199. *boiarynia*—feminine form of “*boiar*”—noble.

two little fingers,²⁰⁰ and the index and middle fingers extended. She showed this to the state secretary, while glorifying the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, with her lips, and said: “Thus I believe.” The state secretary went out and told the archimandrite.

The archimandrite was unable to endure this for long because of his great fury. When he saw his heresy trampled by the pious woman, he said to the state secretary: “Stay here while I go and tell the tsar about this.” With these words the archimandrite quickly set off and went to see the tsar.

The tsar was sitting among the boiars at the Palace of Facets.²⁰¹ The archimandrite came up to him and whispered in his ear that not only did the boiarynia stand courageously but also her sister, Princess Evdokia, who was at her house, and she, no less than her sister, “strongly opposes your command.”

The tsar said: “That cannot be, for I have heard that the princess has a submissive manner and does not disdain our service. It is the other who is fierce and has lost her senses.”

Then the archimandrite, hating all mankind, began to slander Evdokia, saying: “Not only has she become just like her elder sister in every respect, but she abuses us most wickedly.”

Then the tsar said: “If that is so, then take her, too.” Prince Peter was standing there and heard these words. He grieved but was unable to help matters.

The archimandrite returned to the home of the martyr. And as many of the women servants as were there before her, he began to interrogate to find out if there were any zealous in the faith of their mistress. The monastic deacon Iosaf was standing outside, at the doors, and he said to the archimandrite: “Question Ksenia Ivanova! Interrogate Anna Soboleva.”

The archimandrite did so. They both gathered their strength and professed. They showed how they made the sign of the cross and prayed, relying upon the Son of God. They were put separately to the side. The others were all afraid and bowed. They were put to the left side.

200. *the thumb touching the two little fingers*—the thumb touching the fourth and fifth fingers, as per pre-reform practice.

201. *Palace of Facets*—one of the buildings in the Moscow Kremlin, used for ceremonies and receptions. The boiar high council and the national assembly met in the palace.

Then the archimandrite said to the boiarynia: “Because you did not know how to live in obedience, but became hardened in your contrariness, because of this you have brought on yourself the tsar’s command that you be driven from your house. Enough of your living on high—step down! Stand up, get out!”

The blessed woman did not want to do this. Then the archimandrite ordered his men to take her and carry her. And they brought an armchair and at Ioakim’s command they seated her and carried it downstairs. Feodora’s exemplary son, Ivan Glebovich, accompanied her to the middle porch and bowed to her from behind (she did not see him), and went back.

They put horses’ irons on Feodora’s and Evdokia’s legs, and imprisoned them in the servants’ quarters in the cellar. They commanded the men to guard them and left.

Two days later the council member Larion returned. He removed the irons from the legs of the sisters and ordered them to walk to where they were being taken. Blessed Feodora did not want to walk and ordered the servants to carry her. They brought coarse cloths and seated her on them. At the command of the state secretary they transported her to the Miracle Monastery. Princess Evdokia was taken with Feodora.

They brought Feodora to the monastery. When she entered one of the chambers of the [church] council, she bowed according to custom to the icon of God, but only made a slight and poor bow to the authorities. Pavel, the metropolitan of the Krutitsky Monastery,²⁰² was there, and again Ioakim, the archimandrite of the Miracle Monastery, and the state secretary, and others. Blessed Feodora did not want to stand to speak with them, but answered them from a seated position. They tried hard to coerce her to stand, but she did not wish to.

Then Metropolitan Pavel began to speak to Feodora softly, recalling her nobility and lineage. “This,” he said, “is what the monks and the nuns have done to you. They enticed you, and you consorted with them lovingly and heeded their teachings. They drove you to this dishonor, that your integrity has been brought to trial.” Then they tried with many words to subdue Feodora, and they urged her to submit to the tsar. They recalled the beauty of her son, so that she

202. *Pavel, the metropolitan of the Krutitsky Monastery*—an advocate for Nikon’s reforms.

might have mercy on him and not cause his home to be destroyed because of her contrariness.

Feodora gave very wise answers to all their words. “I was not,” she said, “enticed, as you say, by monks and nuns. I learned the true path of Christ and piety from true servants of God. Stop talking so much about my son to me. I have made a promise to Christ, my light, and I do not want to break my promise even to my last breath, because I live for Christ, not for my son.”

The authorities saw her inflexible courage. Since they could not prevail over her, they wished at least to frighten her. So they got to the heart of the matter: “Because you strongly oppose our words, we will come to the point: Do you receive Communion according to the same service books by which the sovereign tsar, the pious tsarina, the tsareviches, and the tsarevnas²⁰³ receive Communion?”

Feodora said with a manly heart: “I do not! I know,” she said, “that the tsar receives Communion according to the corrupt service books of Nikonian publication. For this reason I do not wish to.”

The metropolitan also asked: “What do you think about us all? Are we really all heretics?”

Feodora replied: “Because he, God’s enemy Nikon, has vomited his heresies like filth and you now lick up his foulness—for this reason, clearly you are like him.”

Then Pavel of Krutitsky Monastery cried out loudly and said: “What shall we do? Behold, she calls us all heretics!”

Ioakim cried out: “Why, Metropolitan Pavel, do you call her ‘mother’ and why ‘righteous’? Behold, she is not this, she is not! Nor is she Prokopy’s²⁰⁴ daughter, but should be called the devil’s daughter!”

The blessed woman repudiated Ioakim: “I curse the devil! By the blessing of my Lord Jesus Christ, even though I am unworthy, I am nonetheless his daughter.” And she disputed with them from the second hour of the night until the tenth.

Then the authorities brought in the pious princess and interrogated her. Evdokia showed similar courage in every respect. They again handed Feodora over to the servants, who carried her on a coarse cloth to her home. There they confined Feodora, and the princess as well, in the same cellar where the sisters had already sat for two days. And they put irons on their legs.

203. *tsareviches and the tsarevnas*—princes and princesses.

204. *Prokopy*—Morozova’s natural father.

Then blessed Feodora said to the princess: “If they separate and incarcerate us, I beseech you, remember poor me, Feodora, in your prayers.” Holy Evdokia marveled, since they had always been together, and she had not foreseen this.

The morning after their interrogation by the authorities the state secretary came and chains attached to chairs²⁰⁵ were brought. After they removed the irons from the women’s legs, the authorities began to put the chains on their necks. Making the sign of the cross before her face and kissing the halter of chains, blessed Feodora said: “Glory to you, Lord, for you have honored me by placing the chains of Saint Paul²⁰⁶ on me.”

The state secretary gave a command to the servants, and they seated Feodora on a sledge, and the groom was ordered to transport her. Feodora sat and put the chair close to her. When she was taken past the Miracle Monastery below the tsar’s passageway, the great Feodora extended her right hand and clearly showed the conformation of her fingers. Raising her hand high, she often defended herself with the sign of the cross and also often jangled her chains. The saint thought that the tsar might be watching her defeat from the passageway, and for this reason she showed herself not only unshamed by their profanation, but greatly delighting in the love of Christ and rejoicing in her chains.

Princess Evdokia was likewise covered with heavy chains. She was taken to the Alekseevsky Convent,²⁰⁷ and there it was ordered that she be held under strict surveillance and be taken to church regularly. The holy woman showed such courage that all the reigning city marveled at her bravery, at how valiantly she opposed the will of her tormentors. Not only did she never wish to go to listen to their singing on her own feet, even if she was greatly coerced, but even if they dragged her on a stretcher—for thus was it commanded to be done—she did not deign to lie down on the stretcher herself. Although she was healthy, at such times she would act weak and unable to move either her hands or her feet. The nuns who came and lifted her were sometimes vexed at her and were even so shameless as to impertinently strike her holy and angelic face about the ears, saying:

205. *chains attached to chairs*—a collar of chains attached to heavy wooden blocks.

206. *the chains of Saint Paul*—a reference to the Apostle Paul’s imprisonment.

207. *Alekseevsky Convent*—in Moscow.

“Woe is us! What can we do with you? We ourselves saw that just now you were healthy and talking cheerfully with your companions. But when we arrived, calling you to prayer, then suddenly you grew numb; you made great work for us, for you were transformed, as if you were dead and immovable.”

The sinless lamb would answer them: “O, poor nuns! Why do you labor in vain? Do I force you to do this work? But you yourselves behave like madwomen and roam about in vain. I weep seeing you perishing. How could I ever think of going to your church? There they sing, not praising God, but abusing him, the Savior, and trampling on his laws.” And so they would place the saintly woman on a stretcher like a dead body and drag her to the liturgy.

Whenever the blessed woman saw some of the faithful of her acquaintance standing at the monastery observing her struggles, she would say, moaning: “Alas, I am exhausted; stop a bit!”

The nuns would put the stretcher on the ground. The great woman would say: “Sisters! Why are you doing this, dragging me? Do I want to pray with you? Not at all. It is not right for us Christians to pray together with apostates from the law of Christ. But I tell you something: it is fitting, there where your liturgy is proclaimed, to engage in a necessary function and to vacate the bowel—that’s what I think of your ritual.”

Feodora was transported to the guest house of the Cave Monastery,²⁰⁸ and a strict guard was attached to her: two musketeer commanders took turns standing guard with ten soldiers. [...]

After Feodora had been seized, the tsar sat with his boiars for many days and thought about what should be done to the boiarynia because of her courageous denunciation. The tsar summoned Feodora’s brother Feodor before him and interrogated him at length about many things. He asked him: “Tell me—where is Melania? You know all your sister’s secrets.” The tsar unleashed great anger on Feodor.

The tsar ordered the servants to look after Ivan Glebovich, but the youth fell ill from great sorrow.²⁰⁹ The tsar sent his doctors to him, and they treated him in such a way that within a few days he was delivered to the grave.

208. *the guest house of the Cave Monastery*—a hostel in central Moscow for guests of the Cave Monastery in Pskov.

209. *the youth fell ill from great sorrow*—we do not know the exact cause of Ivan Morozov’s death.

After Ivan died, a Nikonian priest was sent to tell Feodora of the death of her son. Being malicious, the priest vexed Feodora by citing the words spoken about Judas from Psalm 108.²¹⁰ Not wearing the traditional skullcap,²¹¹ the impious ecclesiastic attributed Ivan's death to the blessed woman, as though it were God's punishment for renouncing their faith, that her house be made empty, with none left living. The most wise woman did not heed this fatuity of theirs.

But when Feodora learned of the death of her beloved son, she was much grieved. She fell to the ground before the icon of God and wept with a piteous voice. Sobbing, she declared: "Woe is me, my child, the apostates have destroyed you!" And she remained for many hours on the ground without rising, chanting funeral laments for her son, so that those who heard her wept from pity.

The tsar rejoiced about Ivan's death, thinking that without the son he could torment the mother more freely. Not only this, but he sent Feodora's two brothers, Feodor and Aleksei, away, one to Chuguev,²¹² the other to Rybnoe,²¹³ supposedly to be military governors, but actually into a kind of captivity. In his position Feodor got so wealthy that he ran through a thousand of his own rubles. The tsar did this out of great malice toward the blessed woman. He thought that no one's hand would come from anywhere and in any way to help the women in their great tribulations. God was with them, however.

After Ivan's death the entire Morozov estate was dissipated: all the lands, the herds, the horses were given to the boiars, and all the goods—golden, silver, pearl, and those with precious

210. *the words spoken about Judas from Psalm 108*—the reference is to Psalm 109:8–13: "May his days be few; may another seize his position. May his children be orphans, and his wife a widow. May his children wander about and beg; may they be driven out of the ruins they inhabit. May the creditor seize all that he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil. May there be no one to do him a kindness, nor anyone to pity his orphaned children. May his posterity be cut off; may his name be blotted out in the second generation." (NRSV) Many ecclesiarchs of the era believed this passage referred to the fate of Judas: see Acts 1:20.

211. *Not wearing the traditional skullcap*—before Nikon, Russian monks wore cowls in the shape of skullcaps. Nikon pushed the adoption of a cylinder-shaped cowl worn by the Greeks.

212. *Chuguev*—in modern Ukraine.

213. *Rybnoe*—near Voronezh, southeast of Moscow. The point here is that the two brothers were sent to remote locations, far away from each other.

stones—everything was ordered sold. When the authorities destroyed the Morozov palace, they found a great deal of gold bricked up in the wall. At his mistress’s command, one of Feodora’s servants, Ivan, left some valuables with someone he thought to be loyal. But he was betrayed by his wife and much tormented, burned by fire and more [...]. He endured everything valiantly and, like a good and faithful servant, he was openly zealous in imitation of his mistress. He was finally burned at Borovsk with the other martyrs.²¹⁴ [...]

Then the patriarch said: “How long will you remain in a state of insanity? Enough of this stupidity! How long will you not have mercy on yourself, how long will you trouble the tsar’s soul with your opposition? Abandon all these unseemly undertakings and listen to my counsel, which I offer you because I have mercy on you and pity you. Join in the ecumenical church and the Russian congregation, make your confession and receive Communion.”

The blessed woman answered: “There is no one to whom to confess and no one from whom to receive Communion.”

The patriarch replied: “There are many priests in Moscow!”

The saint said: “There are many priests, but not a single true one.”

The patriarch said: “Because I care about you very much, I myself in my old age feel compelled to hear your confession and to put myself out. Although I have finished serving the liturgy, I myself will give you Communion.”

The most wise woman replied: “Why do you say to me, you yourself? I don’t know what you mean! Is there a difference between you and them? Don’t you do their will? When you were the metropolitan of the Krutitsky Monastery and adhered to the Christian custom handed down by the fathers of our Russian land, and you wore the traditional monk’s cowl, then you were somewhat beloved of us. But now, since you wish to do the will of the earthly tsar, and scorn the heavenly tsar and your creator, and have placed the horned cowl of the Roman pope on your head, for this reason we are disgusted. So don’t try to comfort me with the words, ‘I myself,’ nor do I require your service.”

Then the patriarch said to his archbishops: “Dress me now in holy vestments, so that I may anoint her forehead with holy oil. Perhaps

214. *burned at Borovsk with the other martyrs*—a number of Old Believers (we do not know how many) were burned at Borovsk, about one hundred kilometers southwest of Moscow, in 1675.

she will come to her senses. For behold, as we see, her mind has been destroyed.”

They laid his robes on the patriarch and brought oil. The patriarch took the stick that was in the oil and began to approach the saint. Up to that time Feodora had not been standing up by herself at all. The musketeer commander and the others had been holding her up, and she spoke with the patriarch while reclining on their arms. But when she saw the patriarch coming toward her, she stood on her own feet and prepared herself like a fighter. The metropolitan of Krutitsky Monastery reached out his hand. He supported the patriarch with one hand, and with the other he wished to raise the three-flapped cap that was on the head of the blessed woman so that it would be convenient for the patriarch to anoint her. The great woman shoved aside his hand and said: “Get away from here.” She pushed away the hand with the stick: “How dare you wish to touch our face without regard? You could at least have consideration for our rank!”

The patriarch, who had moistened the stick in the oil and reached out his hand, wanted to make a sign on her brow. Like a brave warrior, the most blessed woman armed herself greatly against her opponent. She reached out her hand against him and pushed away the hand with the stick, while wailing and saying: “Do not destroy me, a sinner, with your apostate’s oil!” Clanging her chains, she said: “Why have I, a sinner, been wearing these chains for an entire year? I have been clothed in these chains because I do not wish to obey or take part with you in anything. You wish to destroy all my unworthy labor in a single hour! Stand back, get away! I will never require your sacred things.”

When the patriarch heard this, he could not bear the great shame. He became infuriated and in great distress cried out: “O, offspring of vipers! Daughter of Satan, scum!” He stepped away from her, roaring like a bear, shouting and calling: “Throw her down; drag her unmercifully! Drag her like a dog on a chain by the neck; drag her away from here! She is the daughter of Satan, scum; she should live no longer! Take the scum to the stake!”

The blessed woman answered in a quiet voice: “I am a sinner, but I am not the daughter of Satan; don’t abuse me thus, patriarch. By the grace of God my savior I am the daughter of Christ, not Satan. Don’t abuse me thus, patriarch!”

At the patriarch’s command they threw Feodora down, as if they intended for her head to split apart. They dragged her through the chamber so roughly, as if they hoped to cut her neck in two with the

iron collar and to tear her head from her shoulders. They dragged her down the stairs so that her head counted all the steps. They took her on the same sledge to the Cave Monastery guest house at the ninth hour of the night. [...]

Then the great and blessed Feodora passed away peacefully in the deep dungeon on the night of the first to the second of the month of November, at the first hour of the night, on the feast day of the holy martyrs Acyndinus and Pegasus.²¹⁵

At that time Feodora's spiritual mother Melania was in the wilderness. That night she saw the great Feodora in a dream. Feodora was clothed in a nun's garments and a most marvelous cowl. She herself was very bright of face and joyous, and she was beautiful in the cowl in her happiness. Feodora looked all around and ran her hands over her clothing and wondered at the beauty of her raiment. She kissed unceasingly the icon of the Savior that was near her, and she kissed the crosses that were on her nun's garments. The spiritual mother watched this happening for a long time, until she came to herself after the vision. When she awoke, she was amazed. When we arrived, Melania told us about it. Later we learned that on the same night that the saintly Feodora departed from the Borovsk dungeon to see the Lord, Mother Melania had this vision in the wilderness. And we glorified God.

After Feodora's saintly passing, they buried her holy and much-suffering body, wrapped round with a mat, as the blessed woman herself had requested, in the jail near her blood sister, the pious princess, the martyr Evdokia. When Tsar Alexis found out about this, he commanded that none of the boiars or anyone else should find out. And for three weeks this was concealed at court, but then it became general knowledge.

Maria remained alive for just a little while after Feodora, only one month: on the second day of December she gave up her life to the Lord. The third one ascended to the other two, to rejoice eternally in Jesus Christ, our Lord. All glory, honor, worship, and splendor is fitting to him and to his Father without beginning and to the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen. [...]

215. *holy martyrs Acyndinus and Pegasus*—Christian martyrs who died in the 300s under the Persian king Shapur II.

25.9 Old Believer Converts to Official Orthodoxy (1893)

“Old Believers: Iguminskheva,” trans. Karen Rosneck, in *Russian Women, 1698–1917: Experience and Expression, an Anthology of Sources*, ed. Robin Bisha, Jehanne M Gheith, Christine Holden, and William Wagner (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 265–269. Used by permission of Indiana University Press. Some explanatory notes draw from notes in this edition.

The fortunes of Old Believers waxed and waned after the severe persecutions of the 1600s. Tsar Aleksei’s son Peter the Great (1682–1725) taxed Old Believers at twice the normal rate. Tsar Nicholas I (1825–1855) imprisoned many who refused to accept the new rites. Other tsars and tsarinas, both before and after Nicholas I, showed more tolerance. In 1905 Tsar Nicholas II signed an act prohibiting the persecution of all religious minorities in Russia.



Figure 126. Old Believer convention near Nizhny-Novgorod, 1890

The official church, however, never accepted Old Believers as legitimate Christians. This final document nicely illustrates the church’s persistent efforts to convert the schismatics. Here is a public confession from an Old Believer who returned to the

fold. This confession doubles as a savvy piece of propaganda directed against those who might consider apostatizing to a set of beliefs portrayed here as immoral and degenerate.

My parents lived in Ufa province²¹⁶ and then moved here to the village of Urlia-dinsk;²¹⁷ I was born here. At age twenty I was married to a Cossack named Artemy Iguminshchev. After living with him for nine years, I was widowed. My life after this was unenviable since I had to learn to take complete charge of the household myself, as well as raise two small children. My parents were of the Orthodox faith; I also eagerly went to church; I even used to go on foot to the Karagaisk church when there weren't any other churches nearby—eleven versts²¹⁸ from our village. That's how I lived for fifty years and more.

Across from us lived two rich brothers, Nazar and Efim Polovnikov, Old Believers of the Fedoseev concord;²¹⁹ neither was married; their three sisters, Marta, Anisia, and Uliana, also unmarried, lived with them. The Polovnikovs had excellent means; they farmed and sold livestock (they had herds of cattle and sheep); two or three kitchen servants managed this business. Among the kitchen servants was a peasant from Tirliansky Foundry²²⁰—Agafia Vasileva Dudushkina—she's still alive even now. Fifteen years ago, about 1875, because she happened to be in the neighborhood, this Dudushkina started to visit me, probably having noticed that I often went to church. She began trying to tempt me into converting to their faith. “Why do you go to church?” she asked. “The followers of Nikon are heretics! And what heretics too! We believe all of that belongs to Antichrist, and the An-

216. *Ufa province*—roughly 1,300 kilometers east of Moscow, nestled between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains. This was a remote region to which many Old Believers fled in the 1700s to escape persecution.

217. *Urlia-dinsk*—south of Ufa toward Kazakhstan.

218. *verst*—just over one kilometer.

219. *Fedoseev concord*—a splinter group of priestless Old Believers. Members of the Fedoseev concord condemned serfdom, refused to recognize the institution of marriage, and condemned other Old Believers who prayed for the tsar. The concord grew more moderate over time: by the mid-1800s its members resumed praying for the tsar; a splinter group acknowledged the legitimacy of marriage in the later part of the 1800s.

220. *Tirliansky Foundry*—a settlement named after the local metallurgical factory.

tichrist himself sits behind the altar at the front of that very church! Think, is salvation possible for you? Just death!” Then she began to gasp and lament “O, you’re lost! You’re lost! The Antichrist has caught you in his trap! Convert to our faith: only we can save you! We’ll never abandon you; we’ll always help you; you’ll never have any needs.”

Being completely illiterate, I was really terrified by her words. I thought, “What if all this is really true?” I kept thinking about this and felt so unhappy; I didn’t know what to do; should I go with them or not? But my temptress kept badgering me with her terrible slander of the Orthodox Church; finally she convinced me to convert to the Fedoseevtsy.²²¹ Dudushkina was very happy.

The Fedoseevtsy’s preceptor was a Cossack in our village by the name of Andrei Emelianov Ovchinnikov. He put me on a six-week fast with a thousand daily obeisances.²²² I did everything exactly and wanted to be baptized; but their chief preceptor, a Cossack living near the city of Troitsk in the village of Samarsky²²³—I don’t recall his name—found something insufficient and again made me perform a six-week fast with the same number of obeisances. I did everything again. On the fifth or sixth week of the great fast²²⁴—it was still winter—they cut a hole in the ice over the Urliad stream, near the village; all of them, as many Fedoseevtsy as were in the village, met that evening with the aforementioned preceptor, Ovchinnikov, in the house of the Polovnikov brothers. They waited; when everyone had quieted down, they performed the usual seven obeisances before beginning the service, and we started off to the baptismal place. I was wrapped in a fur coat up to my ears, leaving only my eyes, out of caution, so I wouldn’t be recognized if we happened to come across someone on the street. When we arrived at the spot, they took the coat off, undressed me, then lowered me through the hole in the ice. Dudushkina, who was to be my godmother, supported me with the help of the others; then, placing his right hand on my head, Ovchinnikov immersed me three times, pronouncing the words, “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” When I was lifted out of the hole in

221. *Fedoseevtsy*—membership of the Fedoseev concord.

222. *obeisance*—prostration.

223. *city of Troitsk in the village of Samarsky*—near the northern border of modern Kazakhstan.

224. *great fast*—the Lenten fast, the most rigorous of the four fasts observed by the Orthodox.

the ice, he, Ovchinnikov, dressed me in a shift, cross, and belt. I was again wrapped in the fur coat and led back to the Polovnikovs' house, where the fellow Fedoseevtsy were waiting for us. Ovchinnikov arrived at the house; he also performed the required obeisances and read something, too, that I couldn't understand at all. After that, there were congratulations on my acceptance of Christianity.²²⁵ On Ovchinnikov's order I was told to come back the next day. I came. Ovchinnikov was waiting for me. I joined the Fedoseevtsy in performing the usual obeisances; the preceptor ordered me to fast for a week with 1,000 obeisances a day. After this, I was allowed to go with them to pray.

Sometime after that, Khionia, the wife of a Cossack, Matvei Ivanov Demin, was baptized in my presence; I was the godmother. Khionia was on her deathbed when our unified concord decided to baptize her. Forgive me, God, for taking part in such profanity! Scarcely alive, she begged and pleaded with us not to baptize her; but no one heeded the voice of the dying woman. A tub of water was prepared, and the same Ovchinnikov baptized her. They immersed her in the water, holding her arms; after two or three hours she died.

When his wife died, Demin, a Fedoseev, married for a second time; the ceremony was held in the Orthodox Church. This second wife was Orthodox too; Demin drove her to the settlement at Beloretsk Foundry to be rebaptized, already pregnant. After Demin's wife gave birth to a daughter, it was necessary to christen her, but there was no one to do it since our preceptor, Ovchinnikov, had died. The Polovnikovs' kitchen servant, the aforementioned Dudushkina, assumed this responsibility then, since she was somewhat literate. The christening had to be performed at Demin's house; everything had already been prepared; the candles on the little tub had even been lit; the door had been locked and bolted; the shutters closed out of caution. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Probably the priest had noticed the preparations for the christening and wanted to catch the Old Believers in the midst of the crime, but we immediately put everything away; the intruders found nothing. When everything was quiet, with some assurance that there was nothing to fear, Dudushkina proceeded with the christening.

Converting to the Fedoseev concord, I began to visit the Polovnikovs, but also the settlement at Beloretsk Foundry, and soon per-

^{225.} *my acceptance of Christianity*—the Fedoseevtsy did not consider Orthodox believers to be true Christians.

ceived the really bad deeds of our Fedoseevtsy; I found out that there wasn't a Christian among them; they were allowed to live with anyone they wanted, and didn't think there was any sin in it. [...] There was a peasant of our concord at Beloretsk Foundry named Ivan Kuzmin Neudachin. He had three adult daughters; they openly lived in a really bad manner and even gave birth to children. But something else really astonished and troubled me. It was never known what became of the newborns; I became suspicious that they might have been killed. At this time Neudachin himself left for the woods and built a hut near the foundry nearby, as if to escape. I saw that even my temptress herself, Agafia Dudushkina, had depraved relationships with the Polovnikovs. She also gave birth to a daughter, in just the same way, which she took to Beloretsk Foundry and gave to someone. I saw, as a matter of fact, that all the kitchen servants living at the Polovnikovs—I know there were no less than ten—were involved in criminal liaisons with them; each one, after becoming pregnant, left to visit the settlement near the foundry, which was some sixty versts from us. After a little while each one would return, but the child never came back. You may ask, "Where did they go?" No one knows. And the Polovnikovs' sisters lived exactly the same way. Seeing all this, I unwillingly came to this conclusion: What kind of faith is this, what kind of Christianity is this when such acts too terrible even to consider are permitted? "Did people really live this way before Nikon's time?" I thought. But they're so sure they've found the only true faith, preserved since the time of Patriarch Iosif, unspoiled by Nikon! "No," I thought, "they chose a new faith so they could do whatever occurred to them." How does God stand such blasphemy and impiety? Something else struck me as well: all of our Fedoseevtsy somehow die through some misfortune—either suddenly or hurting themselves in some accident—then, ailing for a short time, they die. Nazar Polovnikov was out walking and suddenly fell down right in the middle of the yard; he was taken inside and died. But Matvei Demin's grandfather fell from the attic and died on the spot.

Seeing such impiety among the Fedoseevtsy, I stopped going to their place of worship; I started to pray at home. They noticed this and began to scold me. I responded, "I'm not going to your place anymore, because you have nothing good to offer!" They opposed me, and my heart wouldn't return to you.

After this, I intended on going to church a number of times; but I was always afraid of something, as if something forbade me to go there. This lasted for more than ten years. All this time, when the bell was

rung for matins on holidays or for church service, my heart would ache and ache so much that I couldn't rest. I thought, "Well now, I'll go to church!" But no, something held me back, or one thing or another would come up. Finally in 1889, during Shrove week,²²⁶ I promised myself that I'd go to church without fail during the first week of the [Easter] fast. The first week came; for three whole days I thought about it; I didn't sleep most of the night; I kept thinking about how I would go to church; the thought that "everyone will laugh" was always on my mind. You see how difficult it is, once you've been torn away from the church, to return. Finally, I decided and went! I fasted, attended church, confessed, and on Saturday was honored to take part in the holy mysteries of Christ.²²⁷ Now I go to church without fail; I thank God for taking pity on me and not allowing me to die separated from the church.

Having related what I have seen as an Old Believer, but also how difficult it was for me to return to the church, I ask everyone who is an Orthodox to resist the temptations offered by the Old Believers, who on the outside appear to be devout people—fasters—but inside are full of impiety so I, an illiterate woman, when I saw their strange way of life, fled from them. Believe me, a sixty-year-old woman who has finished her time on this earth. Prize the holy church and be faithful to its children so you will receive salvation.

226. *Shrove week*—the week before Lent.

227. *take part in the holy mysteries of Christ*—receive the Eucharist.

26. Later Russian Monasticism

Peter the Great (1682–1725) never trusted monks. An intensely practical and pragmatic man, he could neither understand nor support a contemplative life devoted to intangible pursuits. Monks, to his mind, were lazy good-for-nothings at best, and useless parasites at worst.

Peter practically abolished hermeticism as part of his religious reforms. Rules for parish clergy and monks—included in a supplement to Peter’s Spiritual Regulation—stipulated that

Monks shall not be allowed to build hermitages in the wilderness. Many do this for the sake of a free life, so as to live removed from all authority and supervision, according to one’s own will, and so that the newly founded hermitage may collect money and profit thereby. Yet such a monk deprives himself of great spiritual benefit: he does not have anyone to ask for spiritual counsel or for an answer to doubtful notions and perplexing moral questions; he does not see the example of other monks’ strivings. What, then, when the hour of death overtakes him in such isolation? Who will minister to him in sickness? Who will comfort, instruct, and strengthen him against desperate fear? And not as an example to us is the heremital life of the early fathers, such as Paul of Thebes, Anthony the Great, Macarius of Egypt, etc., for then men were well-versed in Christian theology and possessed great discernment and proficiency. For an ignorant person, such a life is dangerous and subject to soul-shattering calamity. Furthermore, because of

the cold climate, it is impossible for a true hermitage to exist in Russia. In Palestine and other warm countries, there are adequate fruits by which to subsist, and thus it is possible, in great measure, to remove oneself from the world. Here it is impossible to live without plowing, fishing, or kitchen gardens, which cannot exist secretly and in isolation.¹

Catherine the Great (1762–1796), Russia’s other outstanding autocrat of the 1700s, demonstrated no affection for monastic life either. One biographer delicately notes that “religion sat lightly upon her.” A likely agnostic, she “was most punctilious in the discharge of her frequently onerous Orthodox religious duties, but was untouched by the deeper springs of spiritual experience; mysticism was merely obscurantist mumbo-jumbo to her.”² Catherine confiscated church land owned by monasteries (thereby depriving monasteries of their income) and closed others outright. Of the 881 Russian monasteries existing in 1762 (678 men’s and 203 women’s), more than half closed during Catherine’s reign, leaving only 385 (318 men’s and sixty-seven women’s).³

But while Russia in the 1700s was inhospitable to monasticism, monasticism did not fade away as Peter and Catherine would have preferred. The historian Robert Nichols notes that during Russian monasticism’s nadir of the 1700s, Russians inclined to the contemplative life looked south to the hesychasts on Mount Athos, who served as models of solitude and personal perfection for those who again joined Russian monasteries by the thousands in the 1800s. By 1917, the 385 monasteries remaining at the end of Catherine the Great’s reign had increased to 1,105.⁴

1. *The Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great*, ed. and trans. Alexander V. Muller (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 80.

2. Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 503.

3. Robert L. Nichols, “Orthodox Spirituality in Imperial Russia: Saint Serafim of Sarov and the Awakening of Orthodoxy,” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 16/17 (2000–2001): 26.

4. Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 125.

26.1 Instructions of St. Serafim of Sarov (1759–1833)

Nikolai Motovilov, *Concerning the Aim of the Christian Life*, trans. A. F. Dobbie-Bateman (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936). All attempts to reach rightsholder failed.

It was hesychasm that inspired the man who become known as St. Serafim of Sarov, one of Russia’s best-known monks and spiritual teachers.

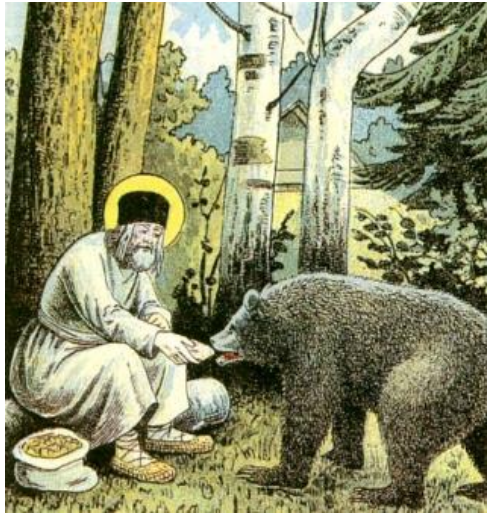


Figure 127. Lithograph, St. Serafim of Sarov, 1903

Serafim was no sophisticate. He never traveled farther than Kiev. He played no part in the academic side of church life. He was, in Robert Nichols’s words, a

simple monk who lived all of his adult life in great poverty and holy rags in the remote obscurity of the Tambov forests. In place of sophisticated theological concepts, the student of Serafim spends more time learning about chopping trees, digging holes, planting gardens, feeding bears, enduring cold, standing in church, and praying on rocks. Yet, in his lifetime on the periphery of Russian society, Serafim grew in that spiritual au-

thority often found lacking among the powerful churchmen in the empire's capitals or among the intellectual elite of the literary salons. Thus, his life provides that contrast one so frequently encounters in the great works of Russian cultural and religious life: power in one place, authority in another.⁵

Legend has it that Serafim was healed as a small boy by a wonder-working icon of the Virgin Mary, enabling him thereafter to see angels. He entered the monastery of Sarov (roughly two hundred miles east of Moscow) at age nineteen. There he spent his next fifteen years, first as a novitiate and then as a monk. At age thirty-five he left the monastery, moved into a cabin in the surrounding forest, and lived for thirty-one years in virtual seclusion. He turned down an offer to become the abbot of a nearby monastery, preferring solitude to acclaim. He once prayed for one-thousand days and nights, kneeling on a rock and splayed upon the floor of his cabin. He was attacked by a gang of thugs in 1808; the beating left him stooped for the remainder of his life. After recuperating in the Sarov monastery, he returned again to his cabin in the forest. A new abbot of the monastery disapproved of Serafim living without the ministrations of the Eucharist and ordered him back to the monastery. Serafim obeyed but lived alone in his cell as a recluse.

This lonely, ascetic life changed dramatically in 1815. At age sixty or sixty-one Serafim opened his cell to visitors and began receiving, according to some reports, ten-thousand supplicants a year. The crowds who flocked to this “mediator between classes”⁶ included high dignitaries and simple peasants. Nichols notes the paradox here: Serafim’s devotion to the hesychast life—a life that demands solitude and silence—was the very thing that drew others seeking spiritual direction. (It is much the same paradox central to the life of St. Antony.) The paradox, however, is less vexing if, as Nichols also notes,

we observe that the chief aim of hesychasm is to acquire the Holy Spirit and one sign of the Spirit is the gift of discernment, i.e., the ability to know the mysteries of God and understand the heart’s secrets; such discernment allows one to guide the

5. Nichols, “Orthodox Spirituality,” 20.

6. *Ibid.*, 29.

spiritual direction of others. A monk with the gift of discernment can “see through flesh, time, and space.



Figure 128. Statue of Serafim praying on a rock, Korennaya Monastery

Tradition holds that Serafim often discerned a supplicant’s question before the supplicant could pose it.⁷ He dispensed marital advice, gave encouragement to those struggling to care for children or parents, offered thoughts on how to endure suffering, and comforted thousands who flocked to him for healing.

The following document—the first known biography of Serafim—was authored by Nikolai Motovilov, a Russian landowner, justice of the peace, businessman, and eccentric. He once claimed that the Virgin Mary saved him when he tried to commit suicide by throwing himself into a lake. Later in life he increas-

7. *Ibid.*

ingly behaved as a fool for Christ and his neighbors considered him mentally ill. Few of Motovilov's manuscripts were published during his lifetime. His widow gave his writings (stored in baskets filled with feathers and chicken droppings) to Sergei Nilus, a mystic and religious writer, who edited them for publication. The end result is one of most widely read Orthodox texts of modern times.

In this text—a conversation between Serafim and Motovilov—Serafim advises Motovilov on the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. The influence of hesychasm in Serafim's counsel is readily apparent.



Figure 129. Nikolai Motovilov, n.d.

• Serafim's Advice to Nikolai Motovilov •

[...] “God is the fire,” [Serafim] said, “that warms and ignites the heart and the inward parts; when we feel in our hearts the chill that is of the devil (for the devil is cold), let us call on the Lord and he will come to warm our heart with perfect love, not only to him but to our neighbor.

“True hope seeks only the kingdom of God and is convinced that all earthly things necessary for this life in time will without doubt be given. ... The heart cannot have peace until it acquires this hope.

“Many words with those whose ways are opposed to ours are enough to disorganize the inwardness of an attentive man.

“Those who have truly decided to serve the Lord God must have practice in the remembrance of God and in ceaseless prayer to Jesus Christ. ... When the mind and heart are united in prayer and the thoughts of the soul are not scattered, then the heart is warmed with a spiritual warmth, wherein shines the light of Christ, filling with peace and joy the whole inner man.

“The heart of him in whom flow tears of tenderness is lit by rays from the sun of righteousness.

“He who has overcome passion has overcome melancholy also.

“Boredom is cured by prayer, by abstention from vain speech, by working with the hands according to our strength, by reading the word of God and by patience; for it is born of a faint soul, of idleness and vain speech.

“It is a mercy of God when the body is worn out by illness, since thereby the passions weaken and man comes into himself.

“We must always bear something for God’s sake with gratitude. ... Bear in silence when the enemy disparages, and open your heart to the Lord.

“Behave kindly with a neighbor, giving not even the appearance of scorn.

“God has enjoined on us enmity against the serpent alone, against him who in the beginning deceived man and drove him from Paradise, against the killer-devil. We are also commanded to war with the Midianites,⁸ the impious spirits of impurity and lust, who sow in the heart filthy and unclean thoughts.

“Strive only for the soul and strengthen the body inasmuch as it may strengthen the soul. If we willfully mortify the body until the spirit also is mortified, such mortification is unreasonable, even though done in pursuit of virtue.

“We must so train ourselves that the mind, as it were, swims in the law of God, under the guidance of which our life must be governed. It is very useful to be occupied with reading the word of God in solitude and to read the whole Bible through with understanding. ...

8. *Midianites*—the Hebrew scriptures report that the Midianite tribe descended from the son of Abraham and his concubine. The Midianites oppressed the Israelites for several years until their defeat by Gideon.

When a man so equips his soul with the word of God, then is he filled with understanding of what is good and what is evil.

“It is the sign of a reasoning soul when a man sinks his mind within himself and his workings in his heart.

“Try in every way to preserve the peace of the soul and not to be disturbed by the insults of others. Likewise avoid judging others. By not judging and by silence the peace of the soul is preserved. When a man is in such a frame of mind, he receives divine revelations.

“But though the devil be transformed into an angel of light and suggest thoughts of a good appearance, the heart will still feel an ambiguity, some agitation in the thoughts and disturbance of feelings.

“In order to receive and observe in the heart the light of Christ, we must abstract ourselves as much as possible from visible objects. Having first purified the soul by repentance and good works, and with faith in the crucified having closed the bodily eyes, immerse the mind within the heart and there call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, by the measure of his zeal and warmth of spirit toward the beloved, man finds in the summoned name a sweetness which prompts in him a will to seek the highest enlightenment.

“When a man contemplates inwardly the eternal light, the mind is pure and has in it no sensuous images, but, being wholly immersed in the contemplation of uncreated beauty, forgets everything sensuous and does not wish to see even itself, but would rather hide in the heart of the earth than be deprived of this true good—of God.

“The mind of an attentive man is the sentry, the sleepless guardian, placed over the inner Jerusalem.

“Man must be lenient with his soul in its weaknesses and imperfections and suffer its failings as he suffers those of others, but he must not become idle, and must encourage himself to better things.

“Most of all must he adorn himself with silence. As Ambrose of Milan⁹ says, By silence have I seen many saved, by many words not one. Again one of the fathers says: Silence is the sacrament of the world to come; words are the weapons of this world.

“At your handiwork or being somewhere on your set task, make unceasingly the prayer: ‘O Lord Jesus Christ, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ In prayer be attentive to yourself, that is, gather the mind together and unite it to the heart. At first for a day or two or more make this

9. *Ambrose of Milan*—(ca. 340-397), an influential theologian and a strong opponent of Arianism.

prayer with the mind alone, separately, noting specially each word. Then, as the Lord warms your heart with the warmth of his grace and unites it in you into one spirit, this prayer will flow in you unceasingly and will be ever with you, regaling and nourishing you. This is that of which the prophet Isaiah said: The dew that is of you, is to them a healing.” [...]

• Second Conversation of Serafim and Motovilov •

It was Thursday. The day was gloomy. Snow lay deep on the ground and snowflakes were falling thickly from the sky when Father Serafim began his conversation with me¹⁰ in the plot near his hermitage over against the river Sarovka, on the hill that slopes down to the river-bank. He sat me on the stump of a tree that he had just felled, and himself squatted before me.

“The Lord has revealed to me,” began the great elder, “that in your childhood you longed to know the aim of our Christian life and continually asked questions about it of many and great ecclesiastical dignitaries.”

Let me here interpose that from the age of twelve this thought had ceaselessly vexed me, and I had, in fact, approached many clergy about it; but their answers had not satisfied me. This was not known to the elder.

“But no one,” continued Father Serafim, “has given you a precise answer. They have said: Go to church, pray to God, fulfill the commandments of God, do good; such is the aim of the Christian life. Some were even irritated against you as being occupied with irreverent curiosity and told you not to seek things higher than yourself. But they did not answer as they should have. And now poor Serafim will explain to you in what really this aim consists. Prayer, fasting, watching,¹¹ and all other Christian acts, however good they may be, do not alone constitute the aim of our Christian life, although they serve as the indispensable means of reaching this aim. The true aim of our Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit of God. [...]

“So it is, my little lordling of God! In acquiring this spirit of God consists the true aim of our Christian life, while prayer, watching, fasting, almsgiving and other good works done for Christ’s sake are only the means for acquiring the spirit of God.”

10. *me*—Nikolai Motovilov.

11. *watching*—monitoring one's actions and thoughts.

“How do you mean ‘acquire?’” I asked Father Serafim. “I do not somehow understand.”

“To acquire is the same as to gain,” he answered. “You understand what acquiring money means. Acquiring God’s spirit, it’s all the same. You know well enough what it means in the worldly sense, my son, to acquire. The aim in life of ordinary people is to acquire or make money, and for the nobility it is in addition to receive honors, distinctions and other rewards for their services to the government. The acquisition of God’s spirit is also capital, but grace-giving and eternal, and it is gained in very similar ways, almost the same ways as monetary, social and temporal capital.

“God the Word, the God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ, likens our life to a market, and the work of our life on earth he calls buying, and says to us all: Buy till I come, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. That is to say, economize the time for receiving heavenly blessings through earthly goods. Earthly goods are virtuous acts performed for Christ’s sake and conferring on us the grace of the Holy Spirit, without whom there is not and cannot be any salvation; for it is written: ‘By the Holy Spirit is every soul quickened and by purity exalted, indeed, is made bright by the three in one¹² in holy mystery.’ The Holy Spirit itself enters our souls, and this entrance into our souls of him the Almighty and this presence with our spirit of the triune majesty is only granted to us through our own assiduous acquisition of the Holy Spirit, which prepares in our soul and body a throne for the all-creative presence of God with our spirit according to his irrevocable word: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they will be my people.

“Of course, every virtuous act done for Christ’s sake gives us the grace of the Holy Spirit, but most of all is this given through prayer; for prayer is somehow always in our hands as an instrument for acquiring the grace of the Spirit. You wish, for instance, to go to church and there is no church near or the service is over; or you wish to give to the poor and there is none by or you have nothing to give; you want to preserve your purity and there is not the strength in you to succeed because of your own constitution or because of the insistent snares of the enemy, which on account of your human weakness you cannot withstand; you wish to perform some other virtuous act for Christ’s sake and the strength or the opportunity is lacking. This in no way

12. *three in one*—the Trinity.

affects prayer; prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and simple, strong and weak, healthy and suffering, righteous and sinful. Great is the power of prayer; most of all does it bring the Spirit of God and easiest of all is it to exercise. Truly, in prayer it is vouchsafed to us to converse with our good and life-giving God and savior, but even here we must pray only until God the Holy Spirit descends on us in measures of his heavenly grace known to him. When he comes to visit us, we must cease to pray. How can we pray to him, ‘Come and abide in us, cleanse us from all evil, and save our souls, O gracious Lord,’ when he has already come to us to save us, who trust in him and call on his holy name in truth, that humbly and with love we may receive him, the comforter, in the chamber of our souls, hungering and thirsting for his coming?”

“Yes, father, but what about other virtuous acts done for Christ’s sake in order to acquire the grace of the Holy Spirit? You speak of prayer alone.”

“Acquire, my son, the grace of the Holy Spirit by all the other virtues in Christ; trade in those that are most profitable to you. Accumulate the capital of the grace-giving abundance of God’s mercy. Deposit it in God’s eternal bank, which brings you unearthly interest, not four or six per cent, but one hundred per cent, for one spiritual shilling and even more, infinitely more. Thus, if prayer and watching give you more of God’s grace, pray and watch; if fasting gives much of God’s spirit, fast; if almsgiving gives more, give alms. In such manner decide about every virtue in Christ.

“Trade thus spiritually in virtue. Distribute the gifts of the grace of the Holy Spirit to those who ask, as a candle, burning with earthly fire, lights other candles for the illumining of all in other places, but diminishes not its own light. If it be so with earthly fire, what will we say about the fire of the grace of God’s Holy Spirit? [...]

“Still more will I tell you, that you may the more clearly know what to understand by the grace of God, how to recognize it and how in particular its actions are revealed in those enlightened. The grace of the Holy Spirit is the light that lightens man. The Lord has more than once revealed for many witnesses the working of the graces of the Holy Spirit in those whom he has sanctified and illumined by his great outpourings. Think of Moses after his talk with God on Mount Sinai.¹³

13. *talk with God on Mount Sinai*—a reference to Moses’ conversation with God while receiving the Ten Commandments.

People were unable to look on him, with such unwonted radiance did he shine; he was even forced to appear before the people under a veil. Think of the Lord's transfiguration on Mount Tabor:¹⁴ when Moses and Elias [Elijah] appeared to him, then, in order to hide the effulgence of the light of God's grace from blinding the eyes of the disciples, a cloud, it is written, overshadowed them. Thus the grace of God's Holy Spirit appears in light inexpressible to all to whom God reveals its power."

"How then," I asked Father Serafim, "am I to know that I am in the grace of the Holy Spirit?"

"It is very simple, my Son," he replied; "for the Lord says, 'All things are simple to those who receive understanding.' Being in that understanding, the apostles always perceive whether the Spirit of God abides in them or not; and, being filled with understanding and seeing the presence of God's spirit with them, they affirmed that their work was holy and pleasing to God. By this is explained why they wrote in their epistles: It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us. Only on these grounds did they offer their epistles as immutable truth for the good of all the faithful. Thus the holy apostles were consciously aware of the presence in themselves of God's spirit. And so you see, my son, how simple it is!"

I replied, "Nevertheless I do not understand how I can be firmly assured that I am in the Spirit of God. How can I myself recognize his true manifestation?"

Father Serafim replied, "I have already told you, my son, that it is very simple and have in detail narrated to you how men dwell in the Spirit of God and how one must apprehend his appearance in us. What then do you need?"

14. *Lord's transfiguration on Mount Tabor*—from Matthew 17:1–8: "Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!' When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.' And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone."(NRSV)

“My need,” said I, “is to understand this well!”

Then Father Serafim took me very firmly by the shoulders and said, “We are both together, son, in the Spirit of God! Why do you not look on me?”

I replied, “I cannot look, father, because lightning flashes from your eyes. Your face is brighter than the sun and my eyes ache in pain!”

Father Serafim said, “Fear not, my son; you too have become as bright as I. You too are now in the fullness of God’s spirit; otherwise you would not be able to look on me as I am.”

Then, bending his head toward me, he whispered softly in my ear, “Give thanks to the Lord God for his ineffable mercy! You have seen that I did not even cross myself; and only in my heart I prayed mentally to the Lord God and said within myself, Lord, vouchsafe to him to see clearly with bodily eyes that descent of your Spirit that you vouchsafe to your servants, when you are pleased to appear in the light of your marvelous glory. And see, my son, the Lord has fulfilled in a trice the humble prayer of poor Serafim. Surely we must give thanks to him for this ineffable gift to us both! Not always, my son, even to the great hermits, does the Lord God show his mercy. See, the grace of God has come to comfort your contrite heart, as a loving mother, at the intercession of the Mother of God herself. Come, son, why do you not look me in the eyes? Just look and fear not! The Lord is with us!”

After these words I looked in his face and there came over me an even greater reverential awe. Imagine in the center of the sun, in the dazzling brilliance of his midday rays, the face of the man who talks with you. You see the movement of his lips and the changing expression of his eyes, you hear his voice, you feel someone grasp your shoulders; yet you do not see the hands, you do not even see yourself or his figure, but only a blinding light spreading several yards around and throwing a sparkling radiance across the snow blanket on the glade and into the snowflakes that sprinkled the great elder and me. Can one imagine the state in which I then found myself?

“How do you feel now?” Father Serafim asked.

“Unwontedly well!” I said.

“But well in what way? How in particular?”

I answered, “I feel a calmness and peace in my soul that I cannot express in words!”

“This, my son,” said Father Serafim, “is that peace of which the Lord said to his disciples: My peace I give to you; not as the world

gives, give I to you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. So to those who are hated of the world but chosen of the Lord, the Lord gives that peace that you now feel, the peace which, in the words of the apostle, passes all understanding. What else do you feel?" asked Father Serafim.

"An unwonted sweetness!" I replied.

He continued, "This is that sweetness of which it is said in holy scripture: 'They will be satisfied with the plenteousness of your house, and you will give them drink of your sweetness as out of the river.' See, this sweetness now overflows and pours through our veins with unspeakable delight. From this sweetness our hearts melt and we are filled with such blessedness as tongue cannot tell. What else do you feel?"

"An unwonted joy in all my heart!"

Father Serafim continued, "When the Spirit of God descends to man and overshadows him with the fullness of his outpouring, then the human soul overflows with unspeakable joy, because the Spirit of God turns to joy all that he may touch. This is that joy of which the Lord speaks in his Gospel: A woman when she is in travail [of childbirth] has sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she is delivered of the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for the joy that a man is born into the world. In the world you will be sorrowful; but when I see you, your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one takes away from you. Yet however comforting this joy may be that you now feel in your heart, it is nothing in comparison with what the Lord himself said by the mouth of his apostle: that this joy neither eye has seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man the good things that God has prepared for those who love him. The earnest of that joy¹⁵ is given to us now, and, if from this there is sweetness, well-being and merriment in our souls, what will we say of that joy that has been prepared in Heaven for those who weep here on earth? You too, my son, have had tears enough in your life; see now with what joy the Lord consoles you while yet here!" [...]

15. *earnest of that joy*—promise or assurance of joy.

26.2 Life in a Woman's Monastery (1821)

“Serafima,” trans. William Wegner, in *Russian Women, 1698–1917: Experience and Expression, an Anthology of Sources*, ed. Robin Bisha, Jehanne M Gheith, Christine Holden, and William Wagner (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 274–279. Used by permission of Indiana University Press.

From the mid-1750s until 1917 some 220 new female monastic communities formed in Russia.¹⁶ The number of nuns increased from fewer than two thousand at the end of the 1700s to 73,299 by 1914. (As a point of comparison, male monks and novices numbered only 21,330 by 1914.)¹⁷ These burgeoning women's communities included adherents from all classes and backgrounds: privileged, poor, urban, rural, widows and those who never married.

Varvara Mikhailovna Sokovnina (1779–18??) came from a noble family: her father served as a high-ranking official in Catherine the Great's government. Extremely well-educated, she spoke French, German, English, and Italian. Sokovnina's relations with her mother grew strained following the death of her father, prompting her to leave her family in 1799. Later that year she entered the Trinity Convent in the nearby town of Sevsk,¹⁸ seeking in monasticism the love she could not find at home.

We find glimpses in Sokovnina's account below of the political intrigue that could beset convents. Sokovnina loved her abbess, Mother Ksanfia, portraying her as both an affectionate woman and a shrewd and a talented bureaucrat. Yet Sokovnina notes unspecified “disloyalties” among Ksanfia's “spiritual associates,” which so disheartened the abbess that she abandoned her administrative duties.

Sokovnina produced this autobiography at the request of the bishop of Orel in 1821, the same year he appointed her head of the Vvedensky Monastery, about three hundred kilometers northwest of Moscow. The autobiography was not published until 1891, long after Sokovnina's death.

16. Brenda Meehan, *Holy Women of Russia: The Lives of Five Orthodox Women Offer Spiritual Guidance for Today* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 2.

17. Bisha et al., *Russian Women*, 273.

18. *Sevsk*—about five hundred kilometers southwest of Moscow.



Figure 130. Convent of the Intercession, Suzdal, Russia

An account of the insignificant history of my life must, it seems, commence with the initiator of my existence.¹⁹ Without any spiritual partiality I can say of him that he was a person of rare merits: he could be called not only an exemplary father of the family but also a complete friend of humanity. My mother was an intelligent woman and had many natural gifts, but she could not compare with him in spiritual qualities. I had four brothers and two sisters. Our father tried to raise us in the best manner possible. He spared nothing either for our instruction or for our education, or even for our comfort. Our house was one of joy and peaceful amusements. But our earthly joy did not last long.

Our father died at age fifty, after an illness of only three days, and his death put an end to all our earthly pleasures. Our house became a place of weeping and perpetual lament. Being young, loving my father immeasurably, and finding in him the sole source of my comfort, I nearly descended with him into the grave.

After the death of our worthy father, our mother no longer wished to take any teachers or supervisors into the household, saying that she could not occupy herself with such matters on account of her grief. I was compelled to take on the upbringing of my two younger sisters and my younger brother, despite the fact that at the time I myself was only seventeen years old. I taught them everything that I had been taught. My morning hours were devoted almost entirely to this occupation. Moreover, I had to take on myself the management of the household and all domestic matters, which took so much of my time that I was left with hardly any free hours. My health began to be ruined, and my strengths perceptibly diminished.

19. *initiator of my existence*—my father.

My mother at first showed me some sympathy, but then, as with time and due to various diversionary occupations, her grief for her never-to-be-forgotten spouse began to pass, she became cool and tried to show me her maternal tenderness only when others were present. But in the absence of other people she paid almost no attention not only to me but also to her family. My social life ended together with the life of our worthy father, and from age sixteen I no longer lived for society. I no longer occupied myself with any sort of amusements or worldly distractions, I went out with my mother only when necessary to visit our closest relatives, and I found my sole consolation in the fulfillment of my responsibilities and in the reading of edifying compositions. I prayed for death, but it did not come. My sufferings multiplied, and I often sank into the abyss of despair. To add to all this, our mother suddenly took it into her head to divide the paternal estate prematurely among my brothers and to distribute it to them entirely according to her instructions, which caused them to become extremely irritated with her. I was completely consumed by an exceedingly difficult attempt to mediate between them. I thought at that moment that it would be better to cast everything aside and flee to the edge of the earth than to be a witness to the sad picture of our unhappy family.

While in this unbearable state an intelligent and learned person suggested that I read Fénelon.²⁰ I delved deeply into his essays with all possible concentration, and his sermon on leaving the world and on the advantages of monastic life inflamed my imagination so strongly that I was prepared hourly to follow Fénelon's instructions and escape into the solitude of the most remote hermitage.

At that time one of our good acquaintances (Princess Kasatkina) took it into her head to travel to Kiev, and on the way, to visit the Sevsky convent. Here are the words with which she described the convent to me: "The Sevsky convent is a heavenly dwelling place, inhabited by peaceful and meek souls and administered by three angels, who in their unanimity resemble the Holy Trinity." Her words sent me into rapture. How lovely, I thought, to live with peaceful souls, to be administered to by angels, and to enjoy a heavenly dwelling place!

The explanation of my desire regarding monastic life caused my mother to become extremely irritated with me. However much I tried

20. *Fénelon*—Archbishop François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (1651–1715), a Roman Catholic mystic. Wegner notes his "innovative, though still conservative and moralistic, ideas on the education of women."

to reassure her with my entreaties and persuasions, it was all in vain. She affirmed wide-eyed that Fénelon had turned my head and that I wanted to embark on an irrational undertaking. “What a chimera,”²¹ she stated, “to leave one’s mother and family at such a young age and confine oneself in a convent, which is intended only for the blind, the lame, and the crippled!”

I then conceived the firm intention to leave my parental home, letting no one know of it, and to hide myself from this world, where I had suffered so many griefs.

[Sokovnina fled her mother’s house in Moscow late one night and, after various difficulties, found her way to the hut of a peasant whom she had met earlier and who she hoped would help her prepare for a monastic life. Recognizing the danger in this plan for himself and his family, the peasant refused to allow Sokovnina to stay with him, but he did offer to take a letter from her to her mother. He returned to the village the next day, bringing letters for Sokovnina from her mother and her sisters. While Sokovnina’s mother entreated her to return home, her sisters warned her of their mother’s anger toward her. Two of Sokovnina’s brothers also soon appeared in the village and eventually persuaded her to live alone on a family estate near Moscow. Within a year, however, Sokovnina decided to enter the Sevsky convent. Since neither her mother nor any of her brothers would help her do so, Sokovnina turned to an uncle, who, with the assistance of Princess Kasatkina, managed the affair. Sokovnina arrived at the convent accompanied by her niece and nephew.]

On our arrival here, we went first of all to the abbess’s cell, where mistress Margarita met us. Mistress mother Ksanfia (who at that time was the chief administrator of the Sevsky convent, so that even the mistress abbess did nothing without her advice) appeared only after my relatives had gone to their apartment, while at the invitation of the mistress abbess I had remained with her in her cells. The splendid appearance of the wise mother Ksanfia, her gentle conversation, and her common sense all from the first moment compelled me to turn all my attention to her. I sat with her until midnight and could not get my fill of her delightful conversation. My heart, always prepared for true love for others, became so attached to her during this first communication with her that from that moment I could perceive from her eyes what she wished, and since my heart is very gentle, in her hands I was no

21. *chimera*—an unobtainable dream.

more than melted wax, from which she produced whatever she wished. The Sevsky convent blossomed, like a lily, under her administration. The church, which due to its beautiful appearance attracted the gaze even of outside visitors, had no other architect than the wise Ksanfia, whom God had endowed with such a fine understanding of everything that she could do absolutely anything. She had a knowledge of style in architecture, painting, and carving, and the workers who at that time had been hired to do all the construction and decorations feared her much more than their boss, who almost never turned up here and came only for the financial reckoning when the work was finished. They responded to her slightest wish, and if anything was not done just so, she immediately compelled them to put it right or do it over. They carried out everything unquestioningly because she had the astonishing gift of combining exacting strictness with tender persuasion. The embroidered cloth on the altar and on the credence table, as well as the shroud and all the embroidered icons found in our upper church, were finished by her own hands. Her labors were tireless, and there was not the slightest thing to which she would not turn her attention. The order, cleanliness, and external good order [of the convent], which even to this day has not lost its appearance, were instituted by her alone. Everyone was satisfied under her guidance, because she showed herself to be in everything an example of true perfection. She had the special gift of recognizing the morals and abilities of her subordinates and accordingly assigned to each an obedience within her power, which each tried to fulfill with exceptional zeal.

On my entry into the cloister here, mother Ksanfia imposed three obediences on me: first, to light the icon-lamps, of which more than twenty burned daily here during her administration; second, to read the lesson during matins;²² and third, to keep necessary accounts and to write letters to whomever was necessary for the needs of the cloister. During her administration everything seemed pleasant to me. And although the second obedience somewhat intimidated me, given my natural bashfulness, to please her I did not refuse even it. On weekdays (when almost no one was in the convent church) I read the appropriate lessons freely, but on feast days, when there was a whole crowd of people in the church during matins, it seemed to me so wild that I scarcely had the strength to fulfill the obligation imposed on me. The only comfort was the fact that my kind mother was as indulgent as she

22. *matins*—early morning service of prayer.

was strong. Seeing my insurmountable bashfulness, she helped me by never leaving the lectern while I was reading, and looking at her, I forgot my surroundings and thought only about executing her will.

She herself proposed to me my refectioⁿ,²³ and I only asked her whether such food was necessary for the salvation of the soul. She told me that any mortification of the flesh was useful to the soul, and so I unquestioningly agreed to everything. At first I ate in my cell, but I soon grew bored taking such plain fare alone. I proposed to mistress mother that we take our refectio together. She admitted me among her associates with great pleasure, and I went daily to eat in her cell. While her strength was sufficient, she herself prepared the refectio for me. But when she began to grow weak, she entrusted this to my cell attendants, whom she herself taught to cook the food for the fasts.

Soon after I had taken the veil, my spiritual mother declared to me that she wished to leave the administration of the convent and live in even greater seclusion, and therefore she was preparing to take the holy schema.²⁴ This troubled me a great deal, due to my faintheartedness. Knowing all the disloyalties that her spiritual associates had shown her, however, and all the reasons that had led her to this intention, I did not dare contradict her. She had managed the cloister for somewhat more than a year during my stay here, and now she rejected completely any monastic administration; she stepped down from the choir, even though her voice was as precise as a spiritual reed with which she led others to tenderness; and she dedicated herself to the deepest seclusion. She assigned herself a crypt for standing in the church but left me in my previous place and with my previous obediences. But this continued only for several days. Without her everything became dull for me. I transferred all the responsibilities imposed on me to others and myself withdrew into the crypt with my spiritual mother. At first the darkness was intolerable for me, and from tedium I slept until the Mass itself. But then I became acclimatized, ceased to sleep, and began to feel peaceful in the crypt.

I consider it superfluous to describe to you all the sorrows and bitterness that my kind mother suffered, having set aside the administration of the convent here, perhaps because this served to redouble her humility as well as my own. But I cannot conceal from you that this always made me extremely despondent, and I was never able to

23. *refectio*—a communal meal eaten in a monastery.

24. *schema*—habit.

conquer the excessive sensitivity of my heart. The cloister here, renowned for its astonishing order and the strict rules of its administration, began to fall into complete decay. Disorder established itself in all areas, and obediences became for all a yoke, because for one nun they were imposed incommensurably, for another not in accordance with her abilities, and for a third none were imposed at all, all of which led to such chaos that only grumbling was heard—which continues to this day. All the directions of the wise mistress Ksanfia were consigned to oblivion. People for whom she had at one time sacrificed even her own life became her clear enemies, and irrational malice against her arose to such a degree that it is impossible to describe it. Five years later she took for herself the great angelic model.²⁵ Since this matter had to be arranged by the convent's leaders, for some reason it somewhat calmed them with respect to her. They asked her permission to come again to her cell to seek her directions. Although she did not desire this, being always moved by true love for others, she agreed to their requests and admitted them to her cell for spiritual discussions until the very time of her death. It was a pity only that her instructions always produced so little of use for them, and these gray-haired infants were occupied solely with the fact that they argued with one another almost daily and came to her only for a judgment. She generally would reconcile them before dinner, and until evening they would be peaceful and appear before the others in complete harmony among themselves. But by nightfall they again had quarreled and had come to our spiritual mentor for a judgment. Her patience was unlimited, and she bore all of this with astonishing firmness. [...]

25. *great angelic model*—the schema or habit.

26.3 Pious Woman’s Path to the Convent (1908)

“Isidora (Daria),” trans. William G. Wagner, in *Russian Women, 1698–1917: Experience and Expression, an Anthology of Sources*, ed. Robin Bisha, Jehanne M Gheith, Christine Holden, and William Wagner (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 253–259. Used by permission of Indiana University Press. Some explanatory notes draw from notes in this edition.



Figure 131. Novodevichy Convent, Moscow

The next text differs from that by Sokovnina in at least three important ways. First, unlike Sokovnina, the protagonist in this story, Daria, sought a monastic life not to escape an unloving family; in fact her pious family—particularly her grandfather—served as a moral exemplar who promoted and supported her own piety. Still, it was the ultimate loss of family (in this case the death of her grandfather and the departure of her siblings into marriage) that prompted Daria’s wanderings, which consumed most of her life. Second, this work follows the conventions of hagiography more closely than does Sokovnina’s. Daria’s story appeared in a collection of the lives of spiritual ascetics, written to provide role models for readers to emulate. Here there is none of the pettiness of monastic life—there is no dirty laundry or bureaucratic messiness, only purity and selflessness. And third, Daria’s ties to the monastery are tenuous at best. Hers is a commitment not to institutional monasticism, but to a relatively free-wheeling, pious wanderlust, with occasional visits to the

monastery. Daria becomes a nun only toward the very end of her life.

Dariushka²⁶ was born into a peasant family at the beginning of the second half of the eighteenth century. Her parents died when she was only fifteen years old, and at this young age she had to care for a younger brother and sister. They were all taken in by their grandfather, a peasant of Novgorod province who was well-known in the district and respected by all for his piety and brotherly love. Here is how Dariushka herself subsequently described her life in her grandfather's home in her reminiscences:

“We lived with grandfather and loved him, in place of father and mother. Grandfather was literate and lived by the word of God. As soon as the daily work was finished, he would take a book and begin to read aloud. He owned many books: the Gospels, the Bible, and a *Chety-Minei*,²⁷ as well as many others. He had a calm disposition, disliked empty speeches, and was extremely sympathetic to people of God, that is, the poor and the destitute. The whole family obeyed him without complaint, even though he never raised his voice but taught us everything so calmly and with even-temperedness. None of us ever began anything without a prayer, and everyone hurried to finish the most distant work by the time that grandfather would take up a book. Not only his family but also neighbors would gather in our hut with their domestic work—some spun, some wove, and some sewed or knit. It was so quiet that a fly flying past could be heard; no one uttered a word, and all that could be heard was the unhurried reading of the seventy-year-old man. And he read, and as he read he would stop and begin to explain how one should observe the law of our most gracious Savior and listen to his holy saints. We observed all the fasts and went to church on Sundays, never excusing ourselves due to work or lack of time. ‘For this the Lord gave us six days,’ grandfather taught us. He did not like young people’s gatherings or round dances,²⁸ and it never entered our heads to go outside: it was peaceful, calm, and good in our

26. *Dariushka*—nickname for Daria.

27. *Chety-Minei*—a sourcebook containing hagiographies (adulatory tales) about saints and church fathers, spiritual exhortations, and works by church fathers and other ecclesiastical writers.

28. *round dances*—*khorovody* or folk dances.

little hut. Our spiritual father often came to visit grandfather and we would all chat together and it was good.”

So passed Dariushka’s maidenly years. She had her comforts and consolations, but these were not at all the sort that girls of her age usually seek. About twelve versts²⁹ from their village stood the Goritsky convent,³⁰ the nuns of which were beloved by the peasants in the surrounding area for their piety and good works. Dariushka’s only real joy and outing was a journey to the Goritsky convent in her free time, which was quite rare. On major holidays she always went there on a pilgrimage. There she was moved by the sweetness of the harmonious church singing, she took pleasure in the duration and grandeur of the liturgy, and she loved to converse with the nuns, who themselves quickly became accustomed to her and attached to her good, meek, humble, and mild spirit. Dariushka received help from them in word and deed, and comfort during the difficult moments in her life.

As Dariushka’s brother and sister grew older, the concerns for them and the thoughts for their future multiplied. Moreover, as their grandfather grew older, their material welfare and the household economy became disordered, too, and fell with all their weight on Dariushka. But her meek and humble obedience to the will of God gave her the strength to bear even these unbearable worldly burdens. Soon after, her grandfather died. Dariushka was able to manage the household economy by herself and to maintain her brother and sister until, finally, the former married and the latter found a husband.

Being left completely alone as a result, Dariushka finally felt the weight of her joyless life. A single, solitary, complete orphan! ... And from this moment began her ascetic life of pilgrimage, in which she again found serenity and happiness. Dariushka wandered in this way for three or four months and then returned to her peaceful hut and again became an indefatigable worker, thoughtfully looking out for any opportunity where she could help someone at the cost of her own peace and labor. In her every word, in her whole life, there was so much love for each of God’s creatures that her heart overflowed with a deep feeling of compassion, love, and sympathy, if it can be so expressed, not only for the “people of God” (which is what she called everyone, men,

29. *verst*—roughly one kilometer.

30. *Goritsky convent*—a female monastery, established in the early 1500s in the town of Goritsy, roughly 600 kilometers north of Moscow.

women, and children) but also for animals, plants, the sea, and insects; everywhere and in everything she loved God's creation, which was so dear to her. It was comforting to talk with her, and in their grief everyone who knew her turned to her, seeking from her sympathy and consolation. She especially loved her "relatives," as she called the poor and the destitute, orphans and widows. But for Dariushka this was little. Her loving heart did not allow her to be alone for long, and, indeed, after her brother and sister had died, she took in the latter's daughter, her favorite niece, Nastiusha,³¹ caring for her with truly maternal love and instilling in her [her] own good spiritual qualities of meekness, piety, and humility. She frequently took Nastia³² on pilgrimages, and when Nastia subsequently reached the age of sixteen, she entered the Goritsky convent.

Thus for a long time life passed modestly for the humble Dariushka, who, in her humility, liked to call herself a "bad person," a "fool," a "madwoman," and so on. During this time, as she said, "the Lord carried her to all the holy places of mother earth." Whether she was leaving on or returning from a pilgrimage, her first thought was for the holy Goritsky cloister. Among the sisters of the convent, mothers Feofania and Varsonofia exerted a special influence on Dariushka.

During Dariushka's absence on a pilgrimage to Kiev in 1845, the ecclesiastical leadership summoned the nun Feofania and several selected sisters, including Varsonofia, to St. Petersburg to organize a new convent there (the Convent of the Resurrection). News of this struck Dariushka like thunder. After briefly thinking the matter over, she herself set off for Petersburg to the "monastic-comforters," and in such haste that she forgot to take any warm clothing with her. This was the winter of 1846. Dariushka was already over seventy, but was fresh and hale; having come to her benefactresses, she never returned to the countryside.

Hence, Dariushka arrived and settled in Petersburg. But even here her wandering on local pilgrimages did not cease, nor did her feats for the sake of God and other people. Her soul ached and pined especially for her favorite comforter-nuns, chiefly mother Feofania, whom the sovereign Emperor Nikolai Pavlovich³³ had charged with the difficult

31. *Nastiusha*—a diminutive of Anastasia.

32. *Nastia*—another diminutive of Anastasia.

33. *Nikolai Pavlovich*—Emperor Nikolai (Nicholas) I, ruled 1825-1855.

and responsible task of organizing a new convent. Despite all her simple-heartedness and worldly naïveté, the simple Dariushka understood with her loving heart the hard position of the new cloister and gave her entire soul to comfort her favorite mother, Feofania, and to help her in her sorrow and difficulties.

The position of the new convent really was unenviable. It had been granted a large area beyond the Moscow Gate, but there was no material assistance for the construction of the convent.

But with God's blessing and help from people of God, a wooden church and tower³⁴ first were built by the cemetery. At the behest and with the blessing of the abbess, Dariushka settled in this tower in order to collect voluntary donations from passing pilgrims for the improvement of the newly created cloister. Sometimes she was spelled by other eldresses, four in number, who lived in small cells at the cemetery and who sometimes brought her food. (The remaining [sisters] lived temporarily in a completely different place on Vasilevsky Island.)³⁵ The unpretentious and modest Dariushka prayed and labored and collected donations, never complaining of her solitude, even though it was difficult for her to bear. "In the summer there was nothing," she recalls of this period of her life, "and in the winter it became terrifying: not a bird chirped, not a dog barked, and even during the day there were few people! Only recruits (soldiers) sometimes passed by or peasants with carts—and the Lord sometimes brought a pilgrim."

The donations collected generally were modest and few, but sometimes Dariushka encountered wealthy donors. Once the chief procurator of the Holy Synod³⁶ visited her, and Dariushka related to him the sorrows of the new cloister. After this conversation with the elderly Dariushka, he visited Abbess Feofania and told her of his talk with Dariushka. Soon after this the tsar ordered that 25,000 rubles be allotted each year until the cells, church, and hospital had been constructed, and then other generous donors also appeared. And so Abbess Feofania and her associates, among whom not the least of which was the humble Dariushka, built the Convent of the Resurrection, "all

34. *tower*—Wegner posits that this refers to a guard tower by the cemetery.

35. *Vasilevsky Island*—an island at the mouth of the Neva River; St. Petersburg occupies part of Vasilevsky Island.

36. *chief procurator of the Holy Synod*—cabinet-level head of the Russian Orthodox church after Peter the Great's abolition of the patriarchate.

with labor and tears, and with prayer and love for each human soul,” as Dariushka put it.

Dariushka lived in Petersburg not alone for her comforters, the nuns, nor alone for the holy cloister. Here, as before, each free minute was spent on a pilgrimage. Having reached a very elderly age, Dariushka commanded unusual quickness afoot and loved to walk, overcoming frost, intense heat, and weariness. It was not easy for a young person to keep up with her. She never spoke of herself as “walking” anywhere, but always as “running.” Usually in Petersburg she liked to rush from the Church of the Annunciation on Vasilevsky Island to Mass at the Church of All Sorrows (on the corner of Hedge Street and Resurrection Prospect) or at Kazan Cathedral.³⁷ In order to afford her this pleasure, the abbess sometimes sent her on errands, to drop off a letter to someone among good acquaintances who greatly valued the visits of this simple, loving old woman. It is notable that wherever Dariushka was sent, she first went directly to Kazan Cathedral, where she attended Mass and conversed with the poor, and from there she rushed off to All Sorrows, where she again prayed during the whole service, and then she carried out her errand or went wherever was necessary. Very frequently wealthy and prominent people would come to the mother abbess with a request that Dariushka be sent to visit them, especially if someone was ill or suffering from grief. Everyone loved this kind, simple, and modest old woman, with whom it was more comforting to pray and grieve. Passersby would frequently stop and look with surprise as an important gentleman in a magnificent fur coat would be sitting in an opulent sleigh and solicitously supporting a bent old woman in a shabby black jacket who was seated next to him, or some richly dressed gentleman carefully seated this old woman in his expensive carriage before seating himself. Indeed, this was a simple, poor old woman, but she brought comfort everywhere.

In general, Dariushka especially loved her “relatives,” as she called the destitute and the poverty-stricken, widows and orphans. She rendered them many kindnesses, and for this these “people of God” strongly loved her.

The strength and simplicity of Dariushka’s faith were so great that in any difficulty, whatever it was and whatever it concerned, she would

37. *Kazan Cathedral*—the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan in St. Petersburg. Constructed 1801-1818. The Soviets turned the cathedral into a museum of atheism in 1932.

seek heavenly help with a faith full of modest audacity, and through her faith she would receive what had been sought. She always explained every escape from difficulty as the result of divine help, never taking any credit for herself. We already have seen examples of this above in her guileless conversations. Once during the winter, when taking loaves of bread to a respected hermit, she lost her way in a forest and nearly died. At that point she audaciously asked “Father Nikola the saint”³⁸ to lead her to the path, and, in her words, the bushes immediately parted. There then arose instantly in her a gratitude amazing for its sincere simplicity and ingenuousness: “Thank you, Nikola, God’s saint.” Her limitless faith did not permit her to doubt for a moment in divine help. In her conception, God’s saints are always beside us, always ready to give us help, protection, and service.

Dariushka’s humility was no less striking. Once that same “good mother” took her to Mass and to see the much beloved right reverend bishop at the episcopal residence. Sitting in the carriage during the journey, Dariushka was glad that she would see “a good service.” But when, after the Mass, they went into the bishop’s rooms, she grew so timid that she would not yield to any persuasion and did not want to enter the drawing room, to the point of becoming angry nearly to tears when they tried to compel her. The others had to go in without her. Accepting the blessing of the beloved bishop, they told him about Dariushka and her refusal. The bishop, with his characteristic composure, hurried to leave his guests and go out into the hall to the poor Dariushka.

“Why do you not wish to come into my room, old woman?”³⁹ Come here.”

“And when, father, does a bad person go where the bigwigs sit? Supposing they throw me out.”

“Well, you’ll see what happens. Come in with me.” The bishop led her into the drawing room and seated her beside himself in an armchair. Dariushka sat and did not budge, hanging her head.

“And so, old woman,” the bishop asked her, “have you been to God’s church?” “Of course I have, father.”

38. *Father Nikola the saint*—Wagner surmises that this reference is to St. Nicholas (270-343), bishop of Myra in modern Turkey and the patron saint of Russia, sailors, and children.

39. *old woman*—Wagner notes that the Russian word here is *starushka*, which in this context denotes “affection, respect, and condescension.”

“And the Lord accepted you and did not order you thrown out?”

“Why would he throw me out? No one is kinder than he. You have only to come to him, and he is glad to accept everyone.”

“Well, so do you see, old woman of God,” the bishop then remarked, “if God is glad to see you in his church, then how can I throw you out of my manse?⁴⁰ Indeed, I’m a human being, just like you, and I receive grace from the same God.”

Dariushka’s face brightened. She raised her head and said merrily, “Goodness, how clever you are, father, even though you’re a bigwig!”

When the Convent of the Resurrection was completely built, each nun was given a cell, or as Dariushka expressed it, “a bright and pleasant little corner.” Only Dariushka did not have her own special little corner, but she went from one sister to another, and they all welcomed the kind old woman with gladness. But she herself began to feel burdened by her wandering life and the absence of her own peaceful little corner. Her advanced years and the ascetic feats of her long life of many labors had begun to tell. Noting Dariushka’s desire to have her own little corner, Abbess Feofania used this to persuade the old woman to take the veil.⁴¹

“And they were such kind mothers to me,” Dariushka related, “that they prepared everything: a white curtain on the little window and a bleached bed with a pillow in the corner, and a little table, on which was a samovar,⁴² and a cup, teapot, and sugar pot were not forgotten, and in the right corner was an icon case with an icon, before which a lamp was burning; everything had been prepared as if for a monk. Save them, Lord—do not forget them, as they have not forgotten me, a poor orphan! And so he⁴³ began to live in his cell, to thank God and to prepare for that journey when it would be pleasing to the Lord to send for his soul.”

Hence Dariushka’s wandering life came to an end, and with the name of the eldress Isidora, she occupied the peaceful little corner assigned to her—something she had never before had in her life—in her favorite resurrection cloister, beside her kind mothers.

40. *manse*—clerical residence.

41. *take the veil*—become a nun.

42. *samovar*—a traditional metal basin, often ornate, used by rich and poor alike in Russia to heat water for tea.

43. *he*—Wagner notes that, when speaking about herself, Daria generally uses the masculine pronoun.

About four months after Dariushka had taken the veil, when she was nearly eighty years old, at twelve o'clock on 1 July 1854, immediately after having received the holy Christian sacraments and having been ill for only a day, Dariushka died from cholera. On that day, many of the destitute, whom Dariushka had loved so compassionately during her life, were treated to a memorial meal in the refectory and given money in memory of the late eldress Isidora.

27. Orthodoxy under Ottoman Rule

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

27.1 Account of Russian Pilgrimage to Jerusalem (1913)

Stephen Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 30–31, 36, 40–41, 58–61, 84–89, 98–101, 106–110, 127–131, 140–142, 175, 181–187, 219–221, 284–290. Public domain.



Figure 132. Russian pilgrims in the Holy Land, n.d.

Why did Russian pilgrims, many desperately poor, scrounge from meager savings and beg for alms to embark on an arduous and dangerous journey to the inhospitable environs of Palestine?

Stephen Graham (1884–1975), a British travel writer, was determined to find out. An endlessly curious nonconformist, Graham quit school at age fourteen. He learned Russian from the deacon of a local Orthodox church in London, and in the following decades he traveled widely in Russia, the Balkans, and the Near East. Just before the outbreak of World War I Graham joined a band of largely illiterate Russian pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land. The following excerpts come from the resultant book, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem*, published in 1913.

[...] A cluster of the curious [pilgrims on the ship] crowded around me to question, and an aged peasant became spokesman.

“Hail, friend!” [said the aged peasant.]

“Hail!”

“From what province, *raba-Boz’kik* (God’s slave)?”

“I come from the Don,¹ but am not a Russian subject.

“Orthodox?” “Orthodox.”

“*Spasebo Tebe Gospody!* (Thanks be to You, O Lord!)”

“What’s your occupation?”

“*Brodiaga* (wanderer).”

“Any money?”

“Enough.”

“Are you going to the holy *grad*² of Jerusalem?” “If God grant.”

[...]

All night long the pilgrims prayed aloud and sang—they had their watches of prayer as the ship had its nautical watch, and even in the witching hours, the icons in the hold were not without their votive pilgrims prostrating themselves and singing to God. In the stern about two hundred of them read and sang with a priest till midnight, and after they had dispersed and each had gone to his own, there was still to be heard the pleasant, deep-bass prayers of the slaves of God. [...]

“Who has not been upon the sea has never prayed to God,” says the Russian proverb which I heard most frequently on the pilgrim boat. When the wind blew up at the issue of the Dardanelles,³ fully eighty per cent of the pilgrims were sick. The remainder, or a portion of them, a few brave spirits, sat up on the wave-swept decks eating oranges one after another with passionate credulity, thumbing their praying-beads feverishly and whispering to God, *Gospody pomilui! Gospody pomilui!* (O Lord have mercy! O Lord have mercy!)

What the packed and filthy hold was like at that time I dare not imagine. It was bad enough at my end of the ship where never less than fifty pilgrims were waiting in front of the three boltless lavatory doors—for all the six or seven hundred passengers only these three

1. *the Don*—the region of the Don River along the northeast of the Sea of Azov

2. *grad*—city.

3. *Dardanelles*—the strait that connects the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara, which, in turn, leads to the Black Sea.

lavatories were provided. All day the people were unhappy; all day the sailors swore. Yet it was not a bad storm, and in the evening God heard the prayers of his “faithful slaves,” and the tumult of the waters died gradually away, the wind dropped and there was perfect calm. “God has saved us,” said one of my neighbors, and I smiled though I did not contradict. [...]

One day Father Evgeny, the monk [...] drew a crowd of peasants round him as he sat and discoursed on the Gospels up at the prow. He was rather an Iliodor⁴ type, an extremely interesting phenomenon in modern Russia, the monk with a mission and the fervor of a prophet of the early church. “Forgive me, brothers,” I heard him say, “I am only *malo-gramotnii* (little-learned), but I speak from the soul.” He beat his breast.

“I am one of you. I was an ordinary soldier in the Turkish war of 1876. I had a vision and promised myself to God. I was wounded, and when I recovered I went into a monastery. I’ve been a monk thirty years now, glory be to God!

“Read your Gospels, dear *muḥbiki*,⁵ and your psalter, and the history of the church, but have nothing to do with contemporary writing. The Gospels gather you together in love, but the other writings force you apart. You know the one to be eternal truth, but the other you will be unable to deal with, to get right with. Remember: Adam was of the earth, but Christ is of Heaven!” He pointed down his open throat, signifying that the Heaven he meant was the kingdom of God within. “Christ said, ‘I am the light.’ As long as you hold to your Gospels you dwell in the light and live. They tell you wonderful things about the English and the Americans and the French, but in so far as these nations have departed from Christ they dwell in darkness. The French, for instance, have thrown over the church and monasticism, and there in France now Satan is at work doing the most terrible things in the dark. O, I wouldn’t live in France ...”

The monk gesticulated wildly.

“There, as you know, is the headquarters of the Freemasons and they operate upon England. Already England thinks of throwing over the church. And nowadays French books and English books are being translated and thrown [sic] broadcast over Russia. You, dear *muḥbiki*, some of whom have learned to read, are in danger. But be advised by

4. *Iliodor*—a colleague of Rasputin known as the “mad monk.”

5. *muḥbiki*—colloquial for “men”; “guys.”

me. Never look at anything foreign or modern. Truth has no need to be modern. It is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and you find it in your Gospels. You know what is good from what is bad; that is your salvation. Stick to it. Modern people say everything good is a little bit bad, and everything bad has a little bit of good in it. But you know when you thresh the corn and you lift the grain shovel, the good seed remains, whiff goes the chaff.”

The peasants all smiled and chortled, and the monk enjoyed a triumph, but went on forcefully:

“When people come to you with new ideas, have nothing to do with them. Just answer, ‘I’m a simple *muzhik*; I’m far too stupid to understand it!’ Don’t you mind being stupid. The devil is the cleverest spirit in Heaven and earth, much cleverer than God, but not wise, not wise. . . . If Eve had been a little stupider, O, if she’d only been a little stupider and failed to understand the devil!

“*Muzhiki* dear, when they come to you tempting you with new ideas, just say, ‘It’s all beyond me; I’m only a poor, stupid, simple *muzhik*, and I can’t understand,’ and then you go and read a chapter from your Gospel and you’ll be all right.” [...]

[Upon arriving in Jerusalem,] [a]ll whispering prayers to ourselves and making religious exclamations, we flocked after one another through the Jerusalem streets; in outward appearance jaded, woe-begone, and beaten, following one another’s backs like cattle that have been driven from far; but in reality excited, feverish, and fluttering like so many children that have been kept up far too late to meet their father come home from long travel.

When we came to the green grass plots and the gravel paths outside the monastery, halted, and disposed our burdens on the ground, our eyes all shone; our hearts were on our sleeves. Old graybeards, crooked and bent, straightened themselves out, as if tasting for a moment the spirit of youth, and they began to skip, almost to dance; ancient grandmothers also, none the less exalted and feverish, fussed about and chattered like maids on a festival day. We looked at one another more cordially and more lovingly than men in a crowd generally look; we were affectionate to one another, like so many brothers or so many fathers and sons. We were in a marvelous way equaled and made a family by the fact that we had come to Jerusalem together. And there was no feeling of comparison, of superiority, among any of us, though some were rich, some poor; some lettered, some illiterate; some with clean bodies, new clothes, and naked feet, feeling it was

necessary to take off their boots for the ground whereon they trod was holy; others who had not the idea even to wash their faces. There was no self-pride. It gave me the idea that after death, when, after life's pilgrimage the Russians come to the judgment seat, there will be such a feeling of brotherhood and affection that to condemn one and reward another will be an impossibility. Truly, when we love one another all our sins are forgiven.

Pleasant-faced Russian monks came out and greeted us, one of them asking me from what province I came, and rejoicing because it turned out we were from the same part of Russia. We all were glad to meet these voluntary holy exiles of Jerusalem, and to let loose the eager words of joy, and the fluttering happy irrelevancies that rushed to our lips. We crowded in at the monastery door, buying sheaves of candles and hurrying to light them before the symbols of our faith. It was wonderful to see the crowds and crowds of great round backs, of dense-haired heads, all pressing up toward the iconostasis. When the immense Bible was brought to the monk who should read, it rested on these heads, and those to whom the privilege fell shed tears of joy. God's faithful happy slaves! We sang together the "*Mnogia Lieta*";⁶ we prayed and gave thanks to God; we came individually to a priest, kissed the cross in his hand, and were blessed.

And all these different hearts felt each its own particular joy. Each peasant, though in sheepskins, throbbed and glowed in the temple. Not only he, but the village for which he stood, and the family for which he stood, had reached Jerusalem. Each had brought an obscure life into the open—a prosaic, perhaps ugly and vicious everyday life into the presence of the holy of holies. Every village has its saints and its sinners, its beauties and its cripples, its loving ones and its murderers, its peculiar stories of peculiar lives; and the peasant entering Jerusalem with his prayers brought all these with him. A mighty chorus went up to God of the voices of the human heart, a music not heard by the ear. It was the voice of a great nation in the presence of God.

All the year round, in twenties and fifties, the pilgrims trickle to Jerusalem, and every year at Christmas and in Lent they come in great numbers. Every year this chorus of Russia goes up to God at the shrines of Jerusalem, and it will be repeated year after year into the centuries, or until the peasantry is no more. It must be remembered it is entirely a matter of the peasants: there are no clean middle or up-

6. *Mnogia Lieta*—literally "many years"; a choral refrain.

per-class people there at all. Fortunately the dirt, the hardship, and the strict Lenten fare are an insuperable obstacle for the sightseers and the merely curious. Those Russians who do come as the European and American tourists come, go to the hotels, talk in French, and are quite cut off from the peasant communion.

But why does the peasant make the pilgrimage? What sets him moving toward Jerusalem in the first place? To answer that question fully is to go very deep into the intentions of the human soul; it is a matter of profound psychology. When I have said all I can say on the question there will still remain enough unthought, unwritten matter as would fill every page of a Bible made blank for the purpose.

It is not that the priests bid them go. The Russian clergy have no passion toward the see of Jerusalem any more than the English had toward the see of Rome—there are multitudinous exceptions to this generalization, but it must be generally agreed they don't like to see money taken out of their own parishes to be spent for religious uses elsewhere. It is not an infection. Great numbers of pilgrims do not go from one district; they arrive all together at Jerusalem because the boats are not many, and they meet at the ports of embarkation. For the rest they come singly, and at most in twos and threes, and often from the most forlorn and distant points of the tsar's unfrequented empire. Why do they come? They promise on the bed of sickness; they promise in unhappiness; they go to save the dying or the wicked; they go to expiate their own and others' sins. But I asked many pilgrims the question and some could not answer, some would not. Not one pilgrim gave an answer that covered his action. They knew not why they came; some force deep in them urged them—a force much deeper than their power of articulation, which in most cases communed only with their superficial selves, their outer leaves. [...]

The incurable drunkard of the village picks himself up out of the mire one afternoon, renounces drinking, and starts off for Jerusalem. The avaricious old *muḥik*, who has been hoarding for half a century, wakens up one morning, gives all his money to someone, and sets off begging his way to a far-off shrine. The reserved and silent peasant, who has hidden his thoughts from those who loved him all his days, meets an utter stranger one afternoon, and with tears tells the story of his life, and reveals to him the secret of his heart; he also perchance starts on a pilgrimage. In Russia, as nowhere else in the world, it is the unexpected and mysterious that happens. [...]

A word as to the facilities. The pilgrim's ticket from Odessa costs only twelve rubles—twenty-five shillings—each way. He buys a return ticket unless he feels sure he will die before he gets back. His ticket is available a whole year, and he can break the journey where he likes, or he can get an extension to Port Said⁷ if he wishes to extend his pilgrimage to Sinai and the shrines of the desert. Each year thousands of beggars gather enough money to pay the fares. It is a remarkable fact that thousands of starved, illiterate, ragged men are able to make a tour of the Levant,⁸ which many of the wealthy would hesitate to embark upon, thinking the means at their disposal too slender.

Formerly, when the numbers of the pilgrims were less, they found hospitality in the Greek monasteries at Jerusalem, and beyond what was taken by the monks in manifold collections the pilgrims paid nothing.

But directly [as soon as] the steamboats began to take the pilgrims as passengers, the numbers of those who arrived at Jerusalem in Lent began to increase. There began to be a thousand and more every year, and the numbers became a great burden to the monks. National measures became necessary, and in order to get a clear idea of the situation, the late Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich traveled to Jerusalem in 1859. He has been called the first imperial pilgrim, and no doubt the Grand Duke did come to pray. Probably the Russian court had not quite made up its mind as to whether it approved of pilgrimaging to Jerusalem; it generally objected to Russian subjects leaving their native land, being afraid of the infection of the ideas of the corrupt West. Konstantin Nikolaevich, however, enthusiastically approved of pilgrimaging, and on the strength of his approval the imperial treasury made a grant of five hundred thousand rubles, to which the people of Russia added another six hundred thousand; ten acres of land were bought just outside the Jerusalem walls; and building operations were commenced. In 1864 the new Trinity Cathedral was consecrated, standing like a supporter in the middle of a ring of hosteleries. There was a special hostelry for monks and priests, besides the accommodation for eight hundred lay pilgrims; a hospital was built, and also a consulate.

Twenty years passed, and the number of pilgrims increased to two thousand. Then in 1881 came another imperial pilgrim, the Grand

7. *Port Said*—a city in northeastern Egypt, near the Suez Canal.

8. *Levant*—the northern portion of the Arabian peninsula.

Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich, and he originated the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. The Society built a great hostelry, the Sergievsky, in 1889, accommodation being made therein not only for the simple people, but for all classes of society—the decent rooms, however, being let at ordinary hotel prices. The refectory and the bathhouse were built. Before 1889 the pilgrims had no means of washing themselves at Jerusalem, and water was so precious that a bath was out of the question. The Society undertook canalization and drainage, and they cut channels for a mile and a half through the Jerusalem rock, and along these washed away the otherwise accumulating filth. That was a great work; it went hand in hand with the building of cisterns to catch the rain water. It is difficult to imagine how horrible material conditions were in the dark times of no water and no drains. The Society went on to mend the broken hostelry windows and repair the rat-gnawn fittings. They made ventilation and built stoves for heating the rooms.

The hospital was enlarged, and not only took in the broken-down and the dying, but accommodated women with child. This was very advantageous, for many peasant women think a child born in Jerusalem especially holy, and they forget that their position in a strange land, after a long and terrible journey, is likely to be more dangerous than in Russia.

In the old days there was great difficulty about food, and the pilgrims lived on bread, Arabian fritters, and seeds. Now for threepence a day the pilgrim receives a typical village meal; for the Society imports all the Russian ingredients. There is now a Russian shop in the monastery yard, and there one can buy everything Russian, even the tea, duty free. If the pilgrim is too poor to afford threepence a day on his dinner, he gets his plate of porridge for three-farthings.

So an interesting work of “Mother” Russia goes on. In these years seven, eight, or nine thousand peasants come every Easter, and of course once more there is little room to spare in the hostelries. In the place where a thousand should be accommodated three thousand have to find room somehow. The bath is far too small—it takes only twenty-five at a time. The refectory is often crowded to the doors. Perhaps we shall soon hear of another imperial pilgrim. [...]

I felt a certain anxiety when, on the first night at Jerusalem, the time came to turn in and sleep. Since sundown the weather had become cold, the city being on a hill. I shivered somewhat when, after

the magic-lantern⁹ lecture and the visits to tavern and church, I re-entered the great room where so many of us were accommodated. It was dark. Three paraffin lamps shed a miserable light round about the posts where they were hung. In distant recesses an occasional candle was alight, or an oil stove, and one discerned dim, dark shapes of heavy *muzbiki* moving like shadows. There was a continuous mutter of prayers, a thumping of knees going down in the exercises of religion, a buzz of conversation.

My companion lit a church taper in his curtained apartment, spread a fleecy black-and-white sheepskin over the floor, took off his coat, and prepared to go to bed. At the back of our little tent he had set up a picture of Jesus sitting in the stocks. The icon, which I had not noticed hitherto, was carefully swathed with an embroidered towel, and he knelt and prayed a quarter of an hour before it. I felt shy, as you may imagine, but there came to my aid a certain sort of English resolution, for I knelt and prayed, and crossed myself, and bowed to the ground as he did, and practically at the same time.

I took some while arranging how I should sleep. I had, fortunately, two suits of clothes, and I changed from one to the other. Sleeping in one's shirt was out of the question. I spread my greatcoat over my portion of the sheepskin. I fixed my pack in such a way that if any one pulled it I should infallibly waken up. As I had a pair of long stockings I drew them over my trouser legs, and put my money down at the ankles under all. I lay down and the light was put out.

Many of my boat acquaintances came along and looked in at the curtain, to the obvious distaste of my companion, but I felt rather glad of them. I chatted as long as they would. At last they came no more and there was a time of silence. There was no buzz of conversation; even the mutter of prayers died down somewhat, and I committed myself to go to sleep.

Just as I was dropping off, however, I saw the dark curtain in front of me gently moving, raising itself as it were. I stared in silence. The curtain revealed a dark shadowy face, dense hair crowned with a biretta.¹⁰ It was to all appearance that of a monk. The face peered intently at my companion and at me. I feigned to be asleep, but my bedfellow was actually snoring. The monk stretched out an arm from his robe and bent down.

9. *magic lantern*—an early image projector.

10. *biretta*—a square cap with three or four ridges or peaks, worn by clergy.

“What do you want ? (*Shbo vam nuzhno?*)” I cried suddenly.

The monk started. My companion wakened and rubbed his eyes.

“Nothing, nothing,” said the mysterious visitor. “God bless you! Good evening, Philip.”

“Well, and what do you want now? Why are you prowling here?” my companion asked.

“O, don’t be angry! You’ve got a visitor, I see. That’s not the old one. Where’s he gone?”

“To Nazareth with the caravan.”

“And this is one of today’s arrivals?”

“Yes.”

“Ah, and what might your province be?” asked the monk, turning to me. He had a somewhat drunken gait. I told him I came from the Don province, but was not born there.

“Ah!” he replied. “I know the Don province very well. We’ll exchange impressions later on. I must go now, but if you’ll make room, I’ll come back in an hour or two and sleep.”

“No room,” said Philip.

The monk appealed to me.

“I can easily find another place,” I said.

But neither my companion nor the monk would hear of my changing. Our mysterious visitor bade us not to put ourselves out; he would find a place at our feet, and saying that, he dropped the curtain and went away.

“Who is he ?” I asked. “A friend of yours?” “*Ne khoroshy* (He is not good),” said my companion.

“He is a thief. You think he is a monk, but there you are mistaken. He is a Greek; once he was a monk at Mount Athos, but he was expelled for robbery. He went to Russia and there committed many crimes, but he got away as a pilgrim. He is wanted in Russia and there is a price on his head.”

“Why is he allowed in here?”

“He isn’t allowed. No monks are allowed in the hostelry. It is against the regulations. If they wish to be put up they must go to the special house for priests and monks. But, as you see, there are no doorkeepers, for the porter sleeps all day and all night.”

My civilized soul wanted the police handy, but what was there to be done? I didn’t relish his coming back, but I was dead tired, and besides, I had disposed my valuables in such a way that no one could rob

me without first causing me to awake. I lay back and fell into a troubled sleep.

There was a disturbance in the night, but I heeded it not. Someone seemed feeling about me. The curtain rose and fell. The woman who was lying next to me on the other side of the curtain screamed, and her feet scraped on the hard pallet. I wakened sometime after this, saw my companion had left me, and felt somewhat relieved. I looked outside the curtain; he was sitting on the bench next door talking with the woman. I went back and slept ... I wakened in perhaps an hour. The two were still talking. I felt rather surprised, but went to sleep again. It was only at dawn that I learned what had happened in the night. The monk had reappeared, taken away my companion's coat, searched it and brought it back, felt my empty pockets, and then given his attention to my neighbor. He was an adept at finding out where the peasant women keep their money, but this time, perhaps because he was drunken and unsteady, his fingers had touched too heavily the woman's bare bosom—for she kept her money in a bag fastened by a tape round her body. She had started and screamed, and the monk fled. My companion told me the story, emphasizing repeatedly his opinion that the monk was *ne-khoroshii* (not at all nice). It hardly needed to be said, I thought, and I rejoiced that night number two was twelve hours distant. [...]

The body of Jesus, while it lay in the [holy] sepulcher [of Jerusalem], was [...] the greatest of all earthly relics, for out of it had flown not only a perfected celestial spirit, but God of God and very God of very God. That relic, however, disappeared. The Bible story is confused: the disciples were evidently of two minds as to the meaning of the resurrection. Most thought it meant that Christ rose again, as Lazarus rose, in his old earthly body. There was probably a strange rumor for many years after Jesus's death that he was abroad in the land and would shortly manifest himself. The enemies had said that Jesus's body was stolen away by the disciples by night. All four Gospel writers have this slander in mind as a most important point to be refuted. Consequently there is a concerted defense of the material resurrection. The story of Thomas and of the meal that Jesus ate, and many other facts, are given to substantiate the belief that the risen Jesus was not a spirit. Yet Jesus was taken up into Heaven; he vanished into invisibility before the disciples' eyes and was evidently not subject to the laws of the flesh. Jesus's body certainly vanished, and it was never recovered. Not even an ecclesiastic has ever laid claim to have in his church the remains of Jesus, though

such remains would be considered the most holy thing upon the world. Observe, Jesus dead is holier than Jesus alive. For Orthodoxy he was dead; for Protestantism he is alive for evermore.

There are no bones and dust; there is only the sepulcher, the place where the shining God stepped out, the place where the glowing, holy body lay. But that is enough; it is as if the body lay there still. The stones that the peasants kiss in the sacred tomb are pregnant with the very mystery of mysteries. The pilgrimage is not so much to the Holy Land or to Jerusalem as to these sacred stones, for they are holier than priest and church and city. The same truth applies to pilgrimage in Russia; the holy bones and dust of the saint deposited at the holiest place in the church, the throne of the altar, are the object of the pilgrimage, not so much the church or monastery itself. The promise to God to go to Jerusalem is called in popular parlance “the promise to the life-giving grave.”

It was a common salutation of one pilgrim to another in the hospitality of a morning, “Let us go and kiss the grave!” It was in answer to such an invitation that I first visited the holy sepulcher. It happened on the morning of the second day; at Jerusalem on the succeeding night we were all of us, all who wished, to go and sleep there. It was a strange contrast to come there by day and to come there by night.

We went away down those descending, shadowy, crowded alleys in the broiling noonday, threading our way through a labyrinth—the peasant knew the way—to the strange little turning that delivers you unexpectedly into the sight of the sepulcher.

“There, that is the grave,” said the peasant, pointing over the crowd of hawkers and buyers who occupied the square in front of the church. I beheld a heavy, ancient building with two disproportionately large doors, one of which was mortared up. We stood in the square facing the doors, and on each side of us, not detached from the church, were the ancient buildings of the monasteries of the grave in which formerly the pilgrims were accommodated. It was a surprise. The whole was so ruined, so patched and grimed, so ancient, and withal so enigmatical. It seemed as if it might have been produced only the night before by some evil magician. Certainly that round that the crusader and the Saracen had fought,¹¹ and round that now the Arab hawkers

11. *round that the crusader and Saracen had fought*—a reference to one of the many wars between Christian crusaders and Muslims (“Saracens” in the parlance of Christian Europe during the Middle Ages), fought between 1095 and

loafed and screamed, was not beautiful. It had in it an appearance of death.

This is really rather a horror to the fastidious. The noise about it and the *offal*¹² of the East are appalling. What shall one say of the Turkish gendarme sprawling on a sofa at the entrance smoking his cigarette and lazily looking at his half-drunk cup of coffee? Even within, there is heard the noise of the incautious movements of Greek and Armenian priests; the church is vast and strange, ruined, dirty beyond words, with verminous walls all cracked and chipped. One has entered into a mysterious and awful chamber. I came, of course, not to look but to pray. I only realize now, as I write, what I saw. A strange thought rose to my mind as we bent down to enter the chamber of the holy of holies, that Mary, the Mother of God, was the first pilgrim to the life-giving grave, and up to that moment we were the last.

I followed the pilgrim humbly and prostrated myself at the great stone of anointing that lies in the doorway, and kissed it after him. I followed to various little shrines within the temple and repeated the reverence, and then bent down to enter the tunnel staircase to go to the very cleft in the rock where the sacred body was laid. The church is built about the crowned and adorned sepulcher, and the latter, made square on all sides, suggests to the mind the idea of the sacred ark. I veritably held my breath as I followed the pilgrim. And for me the bond was loose: I do not believe like a peasant. What the poor, simple pilgrim must feel, when at the end of his long journey from the quiet little village in the backwoods, he gets to this point, I leave to the imagination. It is a wonder that on that staircase peasants' hearts do not stop. I should not be surprised to hear that many have died there before now. We crawled forward in entire reverence and touched most delicately with our lips the shrine of shrines. We were in the womb of death. Even the consciousness seemed drawn away and we walked as in a dream. I remember my surprise when as I lifted my head from kneeling, I suddenly felt a spray of water on my face, a tingling in my eyes, and a breath of perfume. I had not noticed the priest, who sat in the background, holding an *aspergeoire*¹³ in his hand with which he sprayed each worshipper with holy water.

1291 for control of the Holy Land.

12. *offal*—refuse or garbage.

13. *aspergeoire*—a ceremonial utensil for flicking holy water.

The pilgrim had been many times to the grave, and he showed me a carved baptism cross¹⁴ which he had taken in with him to the inner sanctuary, and held in that spurt of rose-scented water. When he got back to his native village, greater gift than this cross thus sanctified could not be within his power. It would be something to outlast life and the world itself—a token round the neck of the wearer when dead—the same token round his neck on the final day of resurrection. [...]

“I was once an *alkogonlnik*,”¹⁵ [said one Russian pilgrim to me]. “My two great sins were drunkenness and adultery, a leaning to the one as to the other; a weakness for strong drinks and for the female sex. For although God made man and woman equal and complementary, taking the one out of the other, and making one want the other, and bidding the other cleave to the one, yet man is not content; for he imagines that happiness is in change, even though he has the stars over him as an example of constancy in the very night of his falseness. And although spirits are a superfluity, God having given men nerves in certain quantities and proportions fitting to his virtues, and the strong liquor upsetting those proportions and changing those quantities, yet man thinks in his smallness that more happiness is to be obtained by being in the wrong quantities, out of their balance, not sober, drunken, inebriate ... you understand. Yes, these were my sins for which I suffered in God’s mercy. One day I was struck down from Heaven. I felt a terrible pain down the middle of my forehead ...”

The pilgrim stopped, and crossed himself three times with awful solemnity.

“Since the morning when that happened,” he went on, “I have not lifted a spade or held a rein. I fell ill. My enemies appeared. I became ill and my enemies appeared; the well became ill, the friend became the enemy. They made a plan to steal my property.”

The peasant looked me straight in the eyes. I looked at his yellow, wrinkled face, and saw that he was about to trust me with his most dangerous confidence.

“I was eight months in a lunatic asylum,” he went on hastily. “My enemies contrived it. They sat in my house while I was ill and contrived it. So I lay in a madhouse till I saw a priest and asked him to

14. *baptism cross*—a pendant in the shape of a cross to commemorate one’s baptism.

15. *alkogonlnik*—alcoholic.

speak to the doctor. I paid a little money, I may say, a little of the paper with which we ease our business, he, he, he!... and I managed it. The doctor certified my recovery. I got the plan in a dream. I felt well, and I resolved never to smell a glass of vodka any more, and I haven't. I know I should have that pain again if I did. I gained much of my property back then, but finding myself useless for work, and having money on my hands and time, and reflecting on the mercy of God, I vowed to go to Jerusalem, and I put a notice on my house door to that effect, and collected many holy commissions." [...]

It was amazing to me to see the extent to which the pilgrims sought in Jerusalem tokens for the clothing of their dead bodies, and how much their thoughts were centered on death and the final resurrection morning. They sanctified crosses at the grave, little ones to wear round their necks in the tomb, and larger ones to lie on their breasts; they brought their death-shrouds and cross-embroidered caps to dip them in [the River] Jordan; they took Jerusalem earth to put in their coffins, and even had their arms tattooed with the word *Jerusalem*, and with pictures of the Virgin; so that they might lie so marked in the grave, and indeed that they might rise again so marked, and show it in Heaven. By these things they felt they obtained a sort of sanctity.

The going to Jordan was essentially something done against the Last Day. It was very touching that on the day before the caravan set out, the peasants cut linen to the shape of the "stone of the anointing," which stands outside the sepulcher, and placed that linen with their death-shrouds on that stone for blessing, feeling that they were doing for their dead bodies just what Mary and Joseph of Arimathea did for the body of Jesus, and on the same stone. They felt it would be particularly good to rise from death in shrouds thus sanctified.

I suppose several hundreds of pilgrims took their shrouds to the grave on the day before the caravan set out; in the hostelry there was an unrolling of an amount of clean linen most amazing as the possession of such dirty people. What a bustle of preparation there was on the night before! The mending of *lapi*,¹⁶ the filling of the sacks with things to be dipped in the stream, the procuring of bottles and cans for bringing back the water of the river. For most of us it was an extraordinary occasion, a pilgrimage within a pilgrimage; for those who were in Palestine for the first time it was the first occasion of tramping a distance in such a crowd. The caravan does not mean traveling like

16. *lapi*—shoes woven from birch bark or the bast of a linden tree.

gypsies in houses on wheels as once I fondly supposed, but the journeying together of a great concourse of people on foot, or with camels and mules, in the East.

There were more than a thousand of us that set out next morning at dawn, even before it was light. [...] It was a long, straggling crowd. In front rode a Turkish policeman, and one of the Palestine Society's gorgeously dressed Montenegrins,¹⁷ and a similar escort formed our protection at the very rear; there were a great number of panniered asses carrying pilgrims or pilgrims' sacks; and Arab boys with poles ran at their sides prodding, beating and hulloaing;¹⁸ [and there were] a number of vans¹⁹ carrying those who cared to be carried. Most of the pilgrims were on foot, and most carried their own packs; some were in overcoats; some carried umbrellas to guard against the sun. There were about equal numbers of men and women, and the women almost without exception walked, the broad-backed mules offering them no temptation. We started out at a smart pace, as we wished to make progress while the weather was cool: we knew that when the sun got up, it would be more arduous to keep up on the dusty, shadeless road.

We passed the brook Kedron, the Mount of Olives, and Bethany, and were well across the Judean wilderness before the weather became unpleasant. At Bethany we were joined by a fresh party who had gone out to the monastery by Lazarus' tomb the night before, in order to make the day's journey to Jericho less tiring—the road to Jordan is a very difficult one, even for the strong pilgrim. [...]

Clouds of dust pursued us over the mountains. The road rising from the grandeur of Bethany wound in long curves round the breast of the hills. We were all alone in the world, only occasionally there came a line of mules or camels with dark Bedouin Arabs passing or overtaking us. I stood at a corner, and looked back on the long, laboring train of black figures on the baked white road, bundles on their backs, staves in their hands, and hemp or bark boots on their feet. The bend of their backs as they toiled upward seemed a sight that must be very acceptable in the eyes of God.

17. *Montenegrins*—from Montenegro, a region today bordered by Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania.

18. *hulloaing*—shouting “hello”; trying to get the pilgrims' attention.

19. *van*—a covered, wooden vehicle.

The pilgrims did reverence at the brook Cherith, where God sent the ravens to Elijah,²⁰ and deep down in the ravine saw the monastery of St. George, built on the place where the birth of the Virgin Mary is supposed to have been announced to her father Joachim. [...] An hour and a half later we reached the pass over the mountains, and saw lying before us the Dead Sea and the whole valley of the Jordan, almost the same picture as was visible from the summit of the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem. Far away in dark shadow stood the steep Moabite mountains, and to the right of them the Ammonite mountains, among whose summits the pilgrims marked out what they took to be Mount Nebo, where Moses died, and from whence the prophet saw the promised land, though he might not enter it.

We were high up on the right bank of a great ravine, and more than a thousand feet below ran a white foaming mountain stream. The rocks led down majestically to the little river, they sat about it in extraordinary grandeur, the silent powers of nature in the presence of life.

Here we passed the first representatives of Western Europe, a young Frenchman who suddenly pointed out the galleries of the rocks to his wife, "*Regardez, comme c'est beau la.*"²¹ The pilgrims stared at the couple and said, "Nice people. Just what you see in Moscow." [...]

An hour's descent brought us to the poplar trees and palms of what was once Jericho, and what is now the little Arab hamlet of Erikha. Nothing remains now of what was once a famous city. Erikha is a miserable hamlet of two hundred people, and no more. It has two grand hotels that stand out in startling contrast to the huts of the Arabs. There is not even a large church in the village, and the Russian shelter is an insignificant building scarcely fit to accommodate fifty people, far less the fifteen hundred who came there this day.

We were all led to tables in the open air under pleasant shady trees, and there regaled with soup and tea. The soup, if it could be said to have any color, was green; and large leaves, which I took to be dock, floated in it. It was served in dishes the size of washbasins, there were wooden spoons all round, and ten or twelve peasants sat about each dish. The tea was hot and clear, and just a tinge of yellow color in it

20. *God sent ravens to Elijah*—see 1 Kings 17, in which the Jewish prophet Elijah, having angered a king, hides in the wilderness, where God provides for him by having ravens deliver bread and meat.

21. *Regardez, comme c'est beau la.*—Look how beautiful it is.

told that it was tea and not simply boiling water. After the meal there was a service in the hostelry yard, and then rest.

Father Evgeny, who made himself very conspicuous in all the arrangements, found a room set apart for clean pilgrims. I had settled down to a pallet on the floor of the general dormitory, and was wondering whether I would not go out and find some fresh and open place among the mountains, when Evgeny came across me and hurriedly brought me to his room. "There's just one bedstead left," said he. "I've been looking for a likely sort of person to give it to." This was very fortunate for me, as the general room was soon so crowded with sleepers that it was impossible to get across without treading on arms and legs. I felt we were rather selfish, however, "the clean public," and I fetched old Liubomudrov in, for he was dead beat. The veins stood out on his brow, and I counseled him to get a lift in a cart on the morrow, but he said he would go all the way to Jordan on foot, and perhaps coming home he'd get on a mule; it didn't matter so much going home, and if it were to save him dying or going mad he'd do it. [...]

At Nazareth they waited some while, but on the morning of 17th March decided to begin the journey back to Jerusalem.

The return was commenced in complete disorder. Near the village Khuvar a great gale sprang up, blowing in the faces of the pilgrims, the sky filled with leaden-colored clouds in which every minute the white lightning flickered. The storm came up, darkening the day, the road was swept by blinding lightning, accompanied by the most appalling detonations of thunder. What the pilgrims felt, especially the women, who believe literally that the thunder is the voice of God, must be left to the imagination. From all the mountains around, the echoes grumbled, the lightning darted from all imaginable quarters, and the great leaden-colored cumuli [clouds] oppressed the air with their weight and the senses with their darkness. The caravan was filled with terror. Most of the pilgrims stopped of their own accord and prostrated themselves on the hillside, and even while they did so, after one final overwhelming explosion of the thunder, the clouds opened and discharged themselves in torrential rain. Down rushed the rain impetuous.

Stinging through the rain came large hailstones. On all the landscape there was not shelter for a cat. That was the least of the matter, however. In less time than it is written, rivulets were born in the hills and they quickly became rivers; the road itself became a running stream, and the pilgrims stood up to the knee and even up to the waist

in water. Imagine seven hundred English old-age pensioners in such a plight, and you have a notion of the age and frailty of the peasants, but add to that that they were all worn out with fasting, tired out with tramping, and had cold in their bones from the soaking at Tiberias.²²

Many fainted, many fell down in the water; some were rescued, some drowned. The caravan was, of course, at a standstill, and all who had strength to help gave their succor to the feeble, handing round vodka and cognac, and placing whom they could upon the asses, strapping on the fainting and the bodies of those who were dead. Those who retained consciousness sang hymns and crossed themselves continuously.

At length, the storm passing and the water subsiding, the caravan moved forward over the slippery mud, and it gained the little village of el-Lubban. The weather had become extremely cold and wintry, snow and sleet were falling, and the wind pierced to the bone. Bonfires were lighted in the Arab village. The children of the village and the stronger pilgrims gathered the wood and built the fires, and the others, soaked and shivering, or moaning and dying, were placed around the cheerful blaze. Hot milk and cognac were served to all, and every effort was made to restore the failing. Many died. They gave up their souls to God and were glad. There had been terror in the moment of the storm, but now peace was attained and none of the pilgrims felt any fear. To them the experience was very strange and wonderful; they invested it with a personal religious significance. God had a special reason for sending the storm and calling so many of their brothers and sisters to him. Perhaps all over the world at that moment just as strange things were happening. That day was a particular one, not only in the life of each individual pilgrim, but in the life of every man in the world, for God was walking in the heavens. The bodies of the dead pilgrims were laid out in a shed and over them candles were lit, the living pilgrims never ceasing to watch and to sing. [...]

In the first century of Christianity the Patriarch Narcissus, finding the lamps in the sepulcher short of oil, went to the brook of Siloam for water and filled the vessels of the church with it. Fire came down from Heaven and ignited the water so that it burned like oil, and the illumination lasted throughout the Easter service. Every Easter Saturday since then, fire has appeared from Heaven at the sepulcher.

22. *soaking at Tiberias*—earlier the pilgrims were caught in a rainstorm in the city of Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.

The miracle is not a new conception. In the Old Testament days fire came down from Heaven and consumed the agreeable sacrifice. The sacred fire of Holy Saturday is sent by God as a sign that the sacrifice of his Son has been acceptable to him. Perhaps in its origin the miracle was a way for the fire-worshippers to pass over into Christianity without shock. It is even today a great pagan festival, and there are as many Muslims as Christians eager to light their lamps and candles from it on Holy Saturday afternoon.

Every Jerusalem Muslim believes in the holy fire²³—it is the angel of his home; he lights the fire on his hearth from it and believes that it gives him fortune. Jerusalem in a strange way identifies its prosperity with the miracles of the sacred fire, and its inhabitants know that but for the influx of visitors to see it from all the country round, and from even the ends of the earth, they would all be much poorer. I have said that the Russians rather slighted it, but that does not mean that many did not regard it as an extraordinary wonder, a miracle absolutely authenticated.

I had a long talk with Liubomudrov. He held that the sacred fire breaking out was the sign sent from God that out of death would spring life—that Jesus had died, but that he would conquer death. I held that the priests produced the fire chemically, and that they understood it as a symbol and a rite.

“That is worldly wisdom,” said he in his oracular way; “[T]he cunning deceive, and the simple are deceived. There are, I know, frauds, priestly sleight-of-hand, juggling tricks worked by the devil and exposed by man. Who is there to believe? What is there to believe? There used to be faith by which mountains could be removed, but the only person who had faith enough to do it was the devil, and he is always doing it. But I have always understood that at the sepulcher on Holy Saturday God gave a palpable sign. Though all other miracles were frauds, inventions, sleight-of-hand, yet the sacred fire was a heavenly manifestation on earth.”

23. *holy fire*—a “miracle” that has occurred every year since at least 1106 at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. On the day before Orthodox Easter, the Greek Patriarch or another bishop enters the Holy Sepulcher, where “fire from heaven” descends to ignite a bundle of thirty-three candles held by the patriarch. The patriarch exits the Holy Sepulcher and passes the fire to candles held by spectators, who in turn light candles held by others in the crowd.

I tried to point out that all events were really miracles, therefore full of mystery. That our life was nothing but miracles, that we were borne up on miracles like a ship on the waves of the sea, but that did not please the comic at all. He was out to see a definitely explained infraction of the harmony of nature, a real impinging of the afterlife upon the present life, Heaven upon earth, and he had in readiness a lamp with two wicks that he intended to light with “the light that never was on sea or land,” and take back to Russia to his cottage and his church. [...]

About two o'clock in the afternoon the shouts and shrieks of the worshippers [at the sepulcher] were hushed at the appearance of the patriarch and his clergy and the commencement of the great litany. The patriarch, twelve archimandrites, and four deacons were all dressed publicly in shining white by the servants of the church. That done a procession formed of surpliced clergy²⁴ carrying banners depicting Christ's sufferings, his crucifixion, burial, and glorious resurrection. These clergy walked in pairs, and after them also in pairs came others carrying wonder-working crosses, then appeared a great number of clergy in pairs, many of them carrying sheaves of candles (thirty-three candles in a sheaf, one for each year of the life of Jesus). Directly [as soon as] the sacred fire appeared the clergy would light their sheaves of candles and distribute them to the pilgrims. Behind all came the patriarch carrying his staff. Three times they went round the ark of the grave with hymns, and then standing outside the door of the sepulcher the patriarch took off his miter and all the emblems of his earthly glory before entering. A dragoman²⁵ broke the seals with which the door of the sepulcher was sealed and the patriarch was allowed to go in. Before entering, deacons gave him armfuls of candles to light when the fire should appear.

The disrobing of the patriarch before his entrance to the shrine of shrines is by way of protestation that he takes no chemicals—or at least the simple understand it so. He went into the chamber in a state as near to nakedness as decency permitted, and when he had entered, the door was immediately shut upon him again. The throbbing multitude was filled with a strange silence, and the minds of many people occupied with conjectures as to what was happening in the holy of holies into which the patriarch had disappeared, and from which in a

24. *surpliced clergy*—clergy wearing liturgical vestments.

25. *dragoman*—an interpreter for Orthodox clerics in Arabic-speaking lands.

short while would appear the sign from Heaven, the one slender sign for them of God's interference in a prosaic world.

The suspense was awful, the outbreak of the heavy bells above us something unearthly. Every neck was craned just as every limb was squeezed and crushed in the great "passion toward the sepulcher." In those minutes of "God's hesitation" there passed in the minds of the believers ages of exaltation mingled with doubt.

At last from the wall of the north side of the ark of the grave burst a great blaze of yellow light illumining the heads of the throng, and spreading with strange rapidity, as candle was passed to candle. From the interior of the ark sheaves of candles all lighted were handed out by the patriarch, the sheaves having, as I said, thirty-three candles in each—the years of Jesus's life. Quick as thought, the years and candles were distributed, clutched, hung overhead on ribbons, dropped to the close-wedged crowd. On our faces and our clothes hot wax kept dropping, and now and then flames singed our ears. "Never mind," said one pilgrim to me; "the sacred fire cannot hurt anyone for the first half-hour after it has come." Exalted Easterners took whole sheaves of lighted candles and plunged them into their bosoms to extinguish them; many willfully applied the flames to their bare flesh and cried out in joy and ecstasy. Hundreds of pilgrims produced their black death-caps filled with sweet scented cotton-wool, and they extinguished the candles in them. These death-caps embroidered with bright silver crosses, they proposed to keep to their death days and wear in the grave, cotton-wool and all. Other pilgrims carefully preserved their sacred fire, and getting out of the mob as quickly as they could, carried it to the hostelry, protecting it from the wind with their open palms. Others, more provident, lit the wicks in their double lanterns.

As for the crowd, as a crowd it was to all appearance mad with ecstasy as if under the influence of some extraordinary drug or charm. The people shouted, yelled, sang, danced, fought, with such diversity of manner and object, and in such a variety of dress and language, that the calm onlooker thought of the tale full of sound and fury told by an idiot and signifying nothing.²⁶ There was one guiding cry, however—that one taken seemingly from the lips of the patriarch, and re-

26. *tale full of sound and fury told by an idiot and signifying nothing*—slight alteration of a passage from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

peated in every language of the Orthodox East—*Kyrie eleison*,²⁷ *Khristos voskrese*,²⁸ [...] and as on Easter eve in Russia the happy Slavs kissed one another in rapture, finding themselves once more in the moment of revelation brothers and sisters in Christ and full of love for one another.

27. *Kyrie eleison*—Lord have mercy [Greek].

28. *Khristos voskrese*—Christ is risen [Russian].

28. Modern Music Inspired by the Church

Peter the Great's niece, the Empress Anna (1730–1740), grew much enamored with Western music and imported Italian musicians—then considered the most talented in Europe—to entertain the Russian court. Though an unpopular ruler, Anna's patronage significantly influenced the arts in Russia, and her sponsorship of foreign composers spread knowledge of Western music among the educated classes to an unprecedented degree. Catherine the Great (1762–1796) likewise enticed dozens of Italian musicians to live and practice their craft at the St. Petersburg court. She allowed Russian composers—most notably Maksim Berezovsky and Dmitry Bortniansky (technically a Ukrainian)—to study and develop their craft in Italy. While abroad Bortniansky dabbled in Western forms such as piano sonatas, French song cycles, and Italian opera. After returning to Russia, however, he turned his attention to church music, and he was appointed in 1796 as the director of the Imperial Chapel Choir, the most influential position in all of Russian church music. There he remained true to the Orthodox tradition by limiting his compositions to the human voice. But he also incorporated the polyphony he learned in Italy, a feature largely unknown at this time in Russian churches.

A subsequent director of the chapel choir, Aleksei Lvov (1836–1861) found inspiration in Germanic rather than Italian forms. Lvov's compositions often began with melodies from traditional Orthodox hymns, which he then abridged and harmonized, continuing his predecessor's experiments with multiple voices. The result was music both familiar and novel.

Two decades later, in the 1880s, Aleksandr Arkhangelsky took the dramatic step of appointing women to the chapel choir. Worshippers now heard not only multiple voices, but mixed voices singing multiple lines. In just over fifty years the music issuing from Russian church choirs had grown noticeably more complex and varied.

Such trends toward Western forms, however, were neither straight nor unmitigated. Take Mikhail Glinka, who worked for the Imperial Chapel during a short spell in the 1830s. His secular operas incorporated Russian folk melodies but mimicked Western forms. And although he experimented briefly in the Italianate style, Glinka soon decided that Western forms were entirely inappropriate for Orthodox music. We thus find in his work two radically different approaches: in his secular operas he appropriated traditional folk melodies of the motherland into standard Italian forms. In his church music, on the other hand, he largely abandoned the major and minor keys that framed all of Western music at the time, turning instead to the modal harmonies characteristic of older chants and folk songs.

28.1 Peter Tchaikovsky, *Divine Liturgy* (1878)

USSR Ministry of Culture Chamber Choir, performance of “*Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Op. 41: Hymn of the Cherubim,” by Peter Tchaikovsky, on *Sacred Treasures: Choral Masterworks from Russia*, Hearts of Space, 1998, compact disc; *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyFkPd6fEuI>.



Figure 133. Peter Tchaikovsky, n.d.

For over twenty years, Petr (Peter) Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), Russia’s most famous composer, spent almost every summer in Ukraine. During one of these sojourns he wrote to his patron, Nedezhda von Meck, about his infatuation with the Ukrainian landscape, folk traditions, and music.¹ Although not a regular church-goer, he occasionally visited Ukrainian Orthodox churches and monasteries for inspiration. “I was so impressed by the extraordinarily beautiful service,” he wrote after one visit.

1. Lydia Korniy, “Pyotr Ill’yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893): *Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* Op. 41,” trans. Irena Stecura, liner notes, on *Tchaikovsky: Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Naxos, 1998, compact disc.

Chrysostom's liturgy "is one of the greatest works of art. If one takes part in the services closely one cannot but be moved by the spirit."

These visits inspired Tchaikovsky in the summer of 1878 to compose a cycle of songs for the liturgy. He did not approach the project lightly: imperial law at the time forbade composing or singing music not approved by the Imperial Chapel. Such a stipulation, of course, placed the director of the Imperial Chapel in a powerful position, and it nurtured directors who, according to Lydia Korniy, "were more hungry for power than they were concerned with music." Tchaikovsky despised the Chapel, "which jealously guards this monopoly and vehemently opposes new compositions for the holy texts." Indeed, when Tchaikovsky's score for the *Divine Liturgy* came off the presses, the Chapel's director protested and the matter ended up in court. Tchaikovsky eventually won the case, but the victory did not stop other church authorities from complaining about the work's novelty and its unsanctioned status.

Such complaints may seem strange to the modern listener, who will be struck by how closely Tchaikovsky's *Divine Liturgy* hews to traditional forms. It is, in Korniy's words, "relatively restrained in its strict harmonies, purposely avoiding colour and expression." Tchaikovsky intentionally eschewed the expressiveness and emotionalism so apparent in his other work, particularly in his symphonies.

The recording here contains a single piece from the liturgy: the "Cherubikon," or "Cherubic Hymn," which includes polyphonic elements and thus the complexity that made some leaders nervous. The musicologist Vladimir Morosan terms the "Cherubic Hymn" the "most sacred portion of the Divine Liturgy," in which "the faithful are likened to the highest of the angelic ranks." In Tchaikovsky's setting, "an appropriate mood of hushed mystery and awe is established in the initial section," and then "sudden chordal fanfares resound" when the choir acknowledges "the life-creating Trinity." "This is perhaps the first time in the Liturgy that [Tchaikovsky] permits himself to approach the sacred text in a dramatic manner, albeit briefly; the

third section of the hymn returns to the otherworldly serenity with which the hymn began.”²



Audio recording: Tchaikovsky, “Cherubikon” from *Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*

“Cherubikon”

Petr Chaikovskii: *Polnoe sobranie dukhovnomuzykal’nykh proizvedenii*, ed. Vladimir Morosan (Madison, CT: Musica Russica, 1996), 9.

Let us who mystically represent the Cherubim
And who sing to the thrice-holy hymn
To the life-giving Trinity,
Now lay aside all cares of this life,
(Amen.)
That we may receive the king of all,
Who comes invisibly upborne by the angelic host.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

2. Vladimir Morosan, “The Sacred Choral Works of Peter Tchaikovsky,” in *Petr Chaikovskii: Polnoe sobranie dukhovnomuzykal’nykh proizvedenii* (Madison, CT: Musica Russica, 1996), xci–xcii.

28.2 Sergei Rachmaninov, *Vespers* (1915)

USSR Ministry of Culture Chamber Choir, directed by Valeri Poliansky, performance of “Blessed Be the Man,” from *Vespers*, by Sergei Rachmaninov, Dormition of the Theotokos Cathedral, 1986, compact disc; *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIIREpxnkzU>.

Robert Shaw and the Robert Shaw Festival Singers, performance of “Glory to God in the Highest,” from *Vespers*, by Sergei Rachmaninov, Telarc, 1990, compact disc; *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibrVSQslkEM>.

1. Приидите, поклонимся

Довольно скоро

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Figure 134. “Come, Let Us Worship,” *Vespers*, 1915

Like Tchaikovsky, Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943) also produced a setting of John Chrysostom’s Divine Liturgy. But Rachmaninov’s *All-Night Vigil* (sometimes translated as *Vespers*) is a more mature and celebrated work. Francis Maes argues that the *Vigil*, first performed in 1915, constitutes Rachmaninov’s finest achievement.³ Although it is less flashy than his better-known works (his symphonies and concertos remain a central part of the modern orchestral repertoire), Rachmaninov claimed that the *Vigil* was one of his two favorite compositions. In fact he requested that the fifth movement, “Now Let Your Servant Depart,” be sung at his funeral.⁴



Figure 135. Sergei Rachmaninov, early 1900s

Also like Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov was not particularly devout. He rarely attended church, a lacuna that, in the words of Nick Jones “had to be smoothed over in 1903 to permit him a

3. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and Erica Pomerans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 206.

4. Sergei Bertensson, Jay Leyda, and Sophia Satina, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 190–192.

church wedding.”⁵ Yet church music moved him, and he invoked chant and Orthodox forms in many other secular compositions.

The *Vigil* evokes the all-night services celebrated in Russian monasteries on the eves of holy days. Rachmaninov drew his texts from the Gospels and the Psalms and borrowed melodies and forms from Byzantine, Russian, and Ukrainian chant.

Yet Rachmaninov’s score departs significantly from the simple forms that inspired it: the *Vigil* morphs at times into three-, five-, six-, and eight-part harmony. In the second selection here—“Glory to God in the Highest”—eleven-part harmony emerges! But despite this complexity, Rachmaninov somehow preserves a mood of simplicity and calm. Here is a composer at the height of his powers spinning something complex out of simple forms, while still maintaining the fundamental illusion of simplicity.



Audio recording: Rachmaninov, “Blessed Be the Man” from *Vespers*

“Blessed Be the Man”

Nick Jones, liner notes, *Rachmaninoff: Vespers* (Telarc, 1990).

Blessed be the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked.
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
 For the Lord knows the way for the righteous,
 And the way of the wicked will perish.
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Serve the Lord with fear
 And rejoice in him with trembling.
 Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

5. Nick Jones, liner notes, *Rachmaninoff: Vespers* (Telarc, 1990).

Blessed are all who rely on him.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Arise, O Lord,
Save me, O my God.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
It is the Lord's salvation,
And your blessing be on your people.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Now and ever and to ages of ages. Amen.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Glory to you, O Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Glory to you, O Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
Glory to you, O Lord.



Audio recording: Rachmaninov, "Glory to God in the Highest" from *Vespers*

"Glory to God in the Highest (Six Psalms)"

Nick Jones. Liner Notes. *Rachmaninoff Vespers* (Telarc, 1990).

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace,
Good will toward men,
Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace,
Good will toward men.
O Lord, unseal my lips
And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
O Lord, unseal my lips
And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

28.3 Igor Stravinsky, *Symphony of Psalms* (1930)

Münchener Philharmoniker, directed by Sergiu Celibidache, performance of “Exaudi orationem meam, Domine,” from *Symphony of Psalms*, by Igor Stravinsky, on *Fauré: Requiem/Stravinsky: Symphony of Psalms*, (EMI Classics, 2004), compact disc; *YouTube*,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccQMDSYgXPE&list=PLA51E6B04E4C9A580>.

The Russian-born conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Sergei Kusevitsky, commissioned the great Russian modernist, Igor Stravinsky, to produce a piece celebrating the Orchestra’s fiftieth anniversary. The result, which premiered in 1930, was Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms*.



Figure 136. Igor Stravinsky, n.d.

Even casual listeners will quickly notice ways that the *Symphony of Psalms* departs from traditional Orthodox music, particularly in the use of musical instruments and lyrics sung in ... Latin! This language of the Roman Catholic Church was itself reason enough for some Orthodox clerics to dismiss the piece out-of-hand. Still, the work captures something of the solemnity

of a Russian church service, if little of the traditional melodies or harmonizations.

Though it's sometimes termed a "neo-classical" piece for its use of counterpoint technique, most listeners today will recognize the *Symphony of Psalms* as a modernist work. It is eccentric: Stravinsky dispensed with the orchestra's entire string section, replacing violins, violas, cellos, and basses with two pianos. Only at the end of the first movement do the dissonant themes (mostly E-minor chords) resolve into something resembling traditional harmonies.

Stravinsky acknowledged the influence of traditional Orthodox music on this work, but in a somewhat roundabout and dismissive manner:

I was not aware of "Phrygian modes," "Gregorian chants," "Byzantinisms," or anything else of the sort while composing this music, though, of course, the "influences" said to be denoted by such script-writers' baggage stickers may very well have been operative. Byzantium was a source of Russian culture, after all, and according to the current classification systems, I may be classified as a "Russian," but what little I know of Byzantine music was learned [...] after I composed the *Symphony of Psalms*.⁶



Audio recording: Stravinsky, "Exaudi orationem meam, Domine" from *Symphony of Psalms*

6. Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, "A Quintet of Dialogues," *Perspectives of New Music* 1 no. 1 (1962): 16.

“Exaudi orationem meam”

Stravinsky produced this text—Psalm 39:12–13—from the Latin Vulgate. The translation here is from the NRSV.

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
 And give ear to my cry
 Do not hold your peace at my tears.
For I am your passing guest,
 An alien, like all my forebears.
Turn your gaze away from me, that I may smile again,
 Before I depart and am no more.

29. Orthodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Literature

As a fundamental basis of Russian and Greek culture, Eastern Orthodoxy makes numerous appearances in the literature of both. One can choose from hundreds of works when seeking examples of Orthodox themes in nineteenth-century literature, and space constraints force us to omit many superb examples. Below are two short stories and excerpts from three novels in which Eastern Orthodoxy plays an especially prominent role.

29.1 Pomialovsky (1862–1863), *Seminary Sketches*

N. G. Pomyalovsky, *Seminary Sketches*, trans. Alfred R. Kuhn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973), 46–48, 86–87, 111, 154–155, 192–199. © 1973 by Cornell University Press. Used by permission of the publisher, Cornell University Press.

The Russian “seminary” was not a seminary as we understand the term in the West, that is, a graduate school for those already holding a college or university degree. A seminary was, rather, an elementary and secondary school that taught both secular and religious subjects to the sons of clergy. In imperial Russia sons of priests could not attend secular schools: seminary was their only option. Conversely, children whose fathers were not clergy usually could not attend seminaries. The educational system, in other words, treated the children of priests like members of a separate caste.

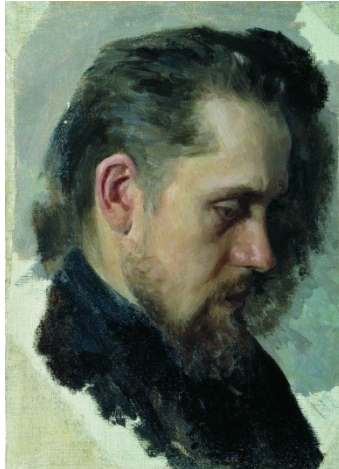


Figure 137. Nikolai Nevrev, “Nikolai Pomialovsky,” 1860

A seminary education rarely led to an illustrious career. In fact seminary students seldom completed the curriculum, and most failed to obtain ordination as priests. The church required those who did complete their education to marry before being

ordained, and graduates almost always married within their clerical caste.¹

A seminary students could choose to become a sexton or a deacon without being ordained. But he first had to find and marry the daughter of a deceased or soon-to-be deceased deacon or sexton whose death opened the position. Such marriages, needless to say, were often less than happy.

Deacons, psalmists, and sextons were generally poor and widely stereotyped—sometimes fairly and sometimes not—as drunken, ignorant, rapacious, and petty. Village priests earned slightly more money than the lower clergy but still lived modestly or meagerly.

Priests served as agents of the state, forced by their station to compile and file records on births, deaths, and marriages. The state also required them to report illegal or suspicious activity. Such responsibilities won them little trust with their parishioners.

Nikolai Pomialovsky (1835–1863), whose fiction focuses on the difficult lives of the lower classes, himself attended seminary and became convinced that the backwardness and brutality of a seminary education accounted in part for the dismal state of the rural clergy. His fictional work, *Seminary Sketches*, drew heavily on his own experiences in school. By the end of the excerpt below, Pomialovsky drops any pretense of fiction and launches a jeremiad against seminaries and, by implication, the church itself. There is no attempt at balance or judiciousness here; this is a rant.

[...] The principal pedagogical method in the seminary was rote-learning, a terrifying, deadening rote-learning. It became part of a student's flesh and blood. To omit a letter or misplace a word was considered a crime. Sitting before their books, students would endlessly and senselessly repeat "shame and disgrace, shame and disgrace, shame and disgrace ... later ... befell, fell, fell ... shame and disgrace later fell ..." Such slave labor continued until the phrase "shame and disgrace" was indelibly imprinted in the student's head forever. Students were so miserable during a lesson that studying produced physical suffering

1. See Alfred R. Kuhn's introduction to the text below.

expressed by the song: “Blessed are those creatures who do not know our teachers.” Together with the blind rote-learning, another remarkable feature of the educational system was its disputations. The teachers received a scholastic education, [...] were nourished on the niceties of church rhetoric and raised on a philosophy that teaches “All men are mortal, Caius is a man, therefore Caius is mortal”; or, “All men are immortal, Caius is a man, therefore Caius is immortal”; or, “The soul is joined to the body by a previously established law”; or, “Laws of similarity and contrariety invariably derive from our ‘I’ or from our self-awareness”; or, “Light destroys darkness”; or, “Submissiveness is the source of every good, but freethinking is ruinous and disgraceful,” and so forth. (They practiced dialectics, resolving such questions as “Can the devil commit sin?”; “Is the essence of man’s spirit affected in the afterlife by the state of death?”; “Does original sin contain in embryo, as it were, all mortal sins, voluntary and involuntary?”; “Which comes first, faith before love or love before faith?”; and so forth.) Their brains eventually ossified in debates where they triumphantly orated pro and contra on the same proposition, depending on the orders of their superiors, and put to use all one hundred rhetorical devices as well as every known sophistry and paralogism.² Even during childhood they displayed a propensity for solving such questions as “What is an essence?”; “What is a whole?”; “Will Socrates and other virtuous philosophers of paganism be saved?”; and they earnestly wished that the answer would be no. The teachers were especially fond of proving that man is an immortal being gifted with a free soul, the king of the universe, even though, strangely enough, in real life they could barely conceal their conviction that man was nothing but a featherless rooster. All this was implied in their disputations. A student racked his brain until his head hurt when he had to solve the great questions posed by these philosopher-teachers; fortunately for him, disputations were rare events and generally they were considered an academic luxury. The all-devouring rote-learning reigned supreme . . . Is it surprising that such learning only repelled students and that they preferred spitting contests or drawing a string through their nose to studying the lesson? [...]

Sipping kvass³ from a tin cup, [the teacher] Lobov looked over the register and indicated by name who should go to the stove for a

2. *paralogism*—a fallacious argument.

3. *kvass*—a slightly fermented beverage made from rye or bread with malt. Sometimes called “rye beer.”

whipping, who should kneel in front of the blackboard, who should kneel on the edge of a desk, who should go without dinner, and who was not allowed into town. Lobov's class became decorated with figures placed in a variety of positions. He then began questioning students who knew their lesson, correcting them when they did not answer word for word, and washing down seminarian erudition with a strongly scented kvass. Usually he wore galoshes and did not remove his reddish greatcoat. When the student finished his recitation, he reached into his coat pocket, took out a rather large pie and began devouring it with gusto. The seminarians greedily watched the disappearing pie. Lobov was in the habit of breakfasting in class, combining food for the spirit with food for the body.

After examining five students, he began dozing off and finally fell asleep, snoring softly. The student he was questioning had to wait for the great teacher to awake and begin again. Lobov would never explain his assignments; that would be, as he put it, extravagant, and so he would indicate with his fingernail from those to these in a book, leaving it up to the student to learn the lesson by the next class.

Was this great pedagogue whipped too often in his youth, or not enough?

Morpheus⁴ whistled softly through the pedagogue's nose, and the students who were kneeling or standing at attention took advantage of the opportunity. A low murmuring broke out, and the seminarians' innocent games got under way: checkers, feast days (a card game), buttons, pinches, raps, and so forth. The bell rang, the teacher woke up, the usual prayer was said, the teacher left, and the classroom filled with the usual noise.

The second class, Latin, was taught by Dolbezhin. Dolbezhin, too, was a huge man, tubercular, irritable, and extraordinarily strict. Nobody liked to joke with him, and he used such obscene curses in class that you would not believe your ears. He considered it a most sacred duty to whip everyone in his class by the end of the term, well-behaved and diligent students included, so that no one escaped a birching. The demon of seminary envy tormented him at the end of one term when there were still two students in his class who had not been whipped because they had behaved extremely cautiously. Although he could find fault with nothing, he nevertheless hunted up an excuse. [...]

4. *Morpheus*—the god of dreams in Greek mythology.

[The teacher Pavel Fedorovich] intentionally calls on the most notorious sluggards, remarkable for their extreme, mindless ignorance.

“Berezin, tell me where to place tents.”

“In the tenth place.”

“Excellent. And how old are you?”

“Twenty-one.”

“And how long have you been studying?”

“This is my ninth year.”

“And it’s plain that you have not been unsuccessful for eight years. And in the future keep up the good work. And now listen to how our [student] Teterin translates. The translation should have gone: ‘Diogenes, after seeing a small city with huge gates, said: Men of Myndus, bar your gates, lest the city should run away.’ The Greek word for men is andres. Here is Teterin’s translation: ‘Andrei, shut the wicket, a wolf is coming.’ He also signed for boots in the following way: Peters Teterins were given boots. “Well, listen, Peters Teterins, what is the sea?”

“Water.”

“What does it taste like?”

“It’s wet.”

It was said of Peters Teterins that he translated maximus as Maksim; when they began to prompt him that maximus means very large, he came out with ‘very large Maksim.’

“Well, Pototsky, conjugate Virgin Mary!”

“I am the Virgin, you are the Virgin, he is the Virgin, we are virgins, you are virgins, they are virgins.”

“Well done. Conjugate ‘blockhead.’”

“I am a blockhead ...”

“Precisely. That’s enough.” [...]

The clear ring of a bell announced the hour for evening study.

Reality, to which [the student nicknamed “Carp”] had closed his eyes and shut his ears forced its way into his consciousness against his will, and revealed the utter childishness of his agitated imagination. He was sitting in class, in the back row, with his chin sadly on his chest. Conscience-stricken, he chased his dreams away and, as a result, he had no place, either within himself or in the world outside, where he could hide, but his body and soul demanded activity. In his pain Carp did not know what to do. He was very unhappy.

“Lord,” he was thinking in unbearable anguish, “if only I could get sick!” This idea jolted his fantasies into a new direction. He had no other refuge but his imagination. And Carp is sick ... he is at death’s

door ... his family is crying near his bed and bids farewell "until the joyful morn ..." Carp prepares to cross into eternity ... the end is near ... But from then on his dream changes course because he does not want to die. Nikolai the wonder-worker appears, cures Carp, and commands that he seek salvation in the wilderness ... Carp pictures to himself a desolate, peaceful, angelic life, difficult feats, hymns, conversations with God. ... He becomes a great saint ... He receives the gift of prophecy and wonder-working. ... Local inhabitants gather to pay him homage ... He fasts for many years, prays, mortifies his flesh, does good deeds, and at last he sees himself summoned by the Lord, he sees his blessed remains, he sees ...

"Carp!"

This was not a voice from Heaven, but from the seminary. [...] Carp saw the terrible [student nicknamed] Muscles standing before him, and he instinctively drew back. ...

"My God, he's come to beat me up again!" Carp thought. [...]

[In church Carp] began studying the religiosity of his fellow worshippers. Students liked their seminary temple better than the monastery's because they could worship only in the temple where they were also flogged. The private service was shorter and gayer: it was abridged and enlivened as much as possible. The sexton, a student, intoned the words so quickly when he read the psalms that all you could hear was the smacking of his tongue and lips, but the sense ... students did not insist that it make sense. ... "Leave it be," they used to say. To characterize church services in the seminary we must tell the reader the following anecdote. Two merchants, one very fat, the other so-so, were sitting in a steaming bathhouse and discussing spiritual matters. "No, you tell me," the so-so merchant says, "what is a sexton?" "It's obvious, he's a servant of God," the fat one answered. "That's nonsense." "What is a sexton, you tell me!" "I'll tell you right away," answered the one who had asked the question. "A sexton," he says, "is a pipe through which the voice of God passes, but ... it doesn't touch it, that's what!" "Right," the fat one agreed, "you hit the nail right on the head." After such a definition the reader will understand us when we say that seminarians were not celebrants during the vigil service, they were simply pipes ... In addition to the sexton's unintelligible reading there was also some grotesque singing. The mixed fellowship liked to blast, roar, bellow, and shriek—these terms describe the thunderous singing in the seminary.

Singers and supplicants would stand and egg on those seminarians whose bellows and windpipes are well constructed. When the seminary

prays, it roars. ... But if only this were the end of it: in the Russian land nonsensical reading and aneurismal singing accompany most Orthodox services, but a devout Russian has long grown accustomed to it, and the service still nourishes his religious feeling; no doubt, this long-suffering, devout human being would become indignant if he went to a vigil service in the seminary. [...] Worshipers would shove each other, laugh, and spit again and again. ... Only ragamuffins standing in the front rows behaved decently, but students in the middle were screened by other classmates, and they played cards and dice. [The student nicknamed] Polecat was picking pockets, Sneezzer, a second-termer, was asleep on his coat, Pavka, a townie who had been detained at school because of laziness, was studying a lesson. ... Massages, pinches, spitballs, and slaps were only somewhat less frequent and more restrained in comparison with the usual study hour.

In the seminary all this was called going to church. ...

But we cannot hold back our angry thoughts. And we will not hold them back. We will speak our mind—fortunately, times are such that one may speak out and must speak out. ...

Seminarians have their own kind of religiosity. In the seminary you will always find a mixture of wild fanaticism and complete personal indifference to religion. The fanaticism of seminarians, like every fanaticism, contains not a drop, shadow or hint of that feeling of Christian love that forgives, reconciles, and equalizes everything. A fanatical seminarian considers Catholics, and especially Lutherans, to be such villains that for them fires have been stoked and hooks forged in Hell from time immemorial. In addition, every seminary fanatic is invariably something of an ignoramus, as are all fanatics. Ask him the difference between Catholic and Orthodox, Orthodox and Lutheran, and he will spout more nonsense than any peasant woman from the most out-of-the-way village, and yet, he will consider it his duty, indeed his calling, to hate Catholics and Protestants. But such students are to be pitied, to be pitied: if you prepare their religious attitude for dissection, if you remove the sheet that adorns its essential nature and conceals it from the non-specialist or the imperceptive observer, if you unravel the scholastic and dialectical snares preventing a bold, accurate analysis of the facts, do you know what you will find in most instances of seminary religiosity? You will find complete, absolute atheism, not a conscious atheism, but rather the animal atheism of an uneducated man, the atheism of a cat or dog. They call themselves believers, and they lie: they neither believe in nor rely upon that God to whom

woman, children, idealists, and people in misfortune like to turn. And what could develop a religious feeling in them? Certainly not the sacred subjects that they memorize while cursing and gritting their teeth! These subjects, covered by their authors with muck and buffets, corrupt human beings. Seminary texts are written in such an atrocious language and are paved with such impassable rocks that they can produce, at best, a kind of spiritual whey, but they cannot awaken a religious feeling in a student. Reading a seminary textbook is like biting through a thick rope. But try biting this rope, try memorizing all this seminary nonsense word for word, letter for letter, and at the same time see if you can bring yourself to believe it and turn it into a conviction, to make it part of your “flesh and blood,” as one seminary teacher enjoined his students; if you do, I assure you that you will take leave of your senses forever. But the main cause, the real heart of all this, is not the rocky, stony, thorny content of these courses. Although religion is not disseminated in the seminary with fire and sword, as with the followers of Muhammed, it is disseminated with birches, hungry stomachs, the pulling of hair from the head, punches, and slaps. [...]

When children enter adolescence, only idiots remain stubborn fanatics, and all they take from the seminary is a fear of the devil and Hell, and a hatred for infidels and scholars, but they do not receive from the seminary that love for man preached by Christ, those feelings and principles that today are called humanitarian [...]. [M]ost seminarians, as they grow older, sense that there was something wrong with their schooling, and they became totally indifferent to the faith for which they had been so cruelly whipped for so many years. Most students are shaped in this way; nevertheless, there remains a minority composed of the most intelligent seminarians, the flower of seminary youth. These intelligent seminarians fall into three types. The first type tends to be idealistic, spiritualistic, and mystical, but at the same time it consists of people who are innately honest and decent, of good people. In the course of their independent development they use their own individual minds and experiences to purge the seminary faith flogged into their souls of all its horrors, and they then create a new faith of their own, a human faith which, after donning their cassocks and becoming priests, they preach to their parishes under the name of the Orthodox faith. The people love such priests, and the so-called nihilists respect them, because these priests are fine people.

Seminarians with a materialistic bent make up the second type. A time comes when their ideas are in a state of ferment, basic questions

arise that demand categorical answers, their convictions began to waver, and then these people, by dint of their own dialectic and guided by observations of life and nature, break the chain of contradictions and doubts seizing their souls and begin reading writers like Feuerbach,⁵ for example, whose prohibited book is even dedicated to seminarians in the Russian translation; after this they become profoundly atheistic and abandon their religious vocation consciously, freely, and honestly, considering it dishonorable to preach something they themselves do not understand and for which they are fed at their parishioners' expense. These are fine people, too. At first these seminarians regret that they must renounce eternal life, as their materialism demands, but later they find strength within themselves to live with their renunciation, they achieve peace of mind, and then there is no turning back in the development of a seminarian atheist. They are invariably honest people and, if they do not become sensualists, active people whom everyone values. Having become atheists, they would never think of preaching a violent godlessness. Their definition of atheism itself is completely different from our usual definition of the term. Here is how they summarize their nihilism: "In matters of conscience and basic convictions it is unlawful and pernicious for anyone to forcibly intrude upon another's beliefs; therefore, because I am a man of rational convictions, I will not go out and demolish churches, drown monks, or rip down icons from my friends' walls because in so doing I will not spread my convictions; human beings must be educated, not coerced, I am not the enemy, I am not the tyrant of the conscience of true believers. I do not employ sarcasm, not to mention insults, when I talk with a believer, and I do not joke about things he holds sacred unless he permits it; otherwise, I will not speak with him concerning matters of faith. But, since I do not constrain my fellow man's freedom of conscience, I do not wish mine to be constricted. Can you teach me? If not, move on. Do you want me to teach you? If not, I won't argue, for it's none of my business." [...]

But the seminary fashions another type of person out of its intelligent students: these are atheists who conceal their unbelief behind priestly cassocks. These gentlemen are repulsive individu-

5. *Feuerbach*—Ludwig Feurbach (1804–1822), the German philosopher and author of *The Essence of Christianity* (1841). This work, considered by some as the bible of atheistic humanism, had a strong influence on young Russian radicals in the 1860s.

als—thoroughly permeated with a stinking lie that destroys their honor and all sense of shame. Hoping to hide their own unbelief, these cassock-wearing atheists scream louder than anyone about morality and religion, usually advocating the most extreme and insane intolerance. If these ordained atheists become seminary teachers, look out. Convinced that unbelief is inherent in every human being and nevertheless faced with the necessity of teaching religion, they immediately introduce both Jesuitry and principles of the Turkish faith into their teaching. In their opinion the best guardian angels of the seminary are squealers, informers, tattletales, sycophants, and traitors, and the most effective means of inducing religiosity is to slap, birch, and starve the students. They cannot abide Christ's lesson to his apostles: "In a house where they do not believe you, shake off the dust that is on your feet, and that's that"; they want to inject Turkism into the Christian faith: "We will flog man for his mortal sins and then drag him to Heaven by his hair if we have to—and our work is done!" These ordained atheists cultivate their egoism, the source of every atheist's activity, but they defile it and it becomes repulsive whereas the egoism of good atheists is a beautiful principle. They preach raging sermons not because they fear for the eternal damnation of their fold, but because they fear for the eternal damnation of their gold; before every sermon they feel their pockets to see if there's a hole, and if there is, they mend it with a sermon instead of a patch. [...]

29.2 Emmanuel Rhoides, *Papess Joanna* (1866)

Emmanuel Royidis, *Pope Joan*, trans. Lawrence Durrell (London : Derek Verschoyle, 1954), 27–32, 40–47, 56–57, 94–99, 123–126, 128–133, 139–143.

All attempts to contact publisher failed.

The apocryphal story of a woman who ascended to the papal throne first appeared in a Germanic chronicle published in 1254. The *Chronica Universalis Mettensis*, authored by a Dominican historian in the city of Metz, claims that a pope “Joanna” began to rule in 1099 as the first (and only) female pontiff. Another popular chronicle of the 1260s, the *Chronica Pontificum et Imperatorum*, claims that an Englishman (in reality an English woman), known as John of Mainz, served as pope for two years between the reign of Pope Leo IV (847–855) and Pope Benedict III (855–858).

John Anglicus, born at Mainz, was pope for two years, seven months and four days, and died in Rome, after which there was a vacancy in the papacy of one month. It is claimed that this John was a woman, who as a girl had been led to Athens dressed in the clothes of a man by a certain lover of hers. There she became proficient in a diversity of branches of knowledge, until she had no equal, and, afterward in Rome, she taught the liberal arts and had great masters among her students and audience. A high opinion of her life and learning arose in the city; and she was chosen for pope. While pope, however, she became pregnant by her companion. Through ignorance of the exact time when the birth was expected, she was delivered of a child while in procession from St. Peter’s⁶ to the Lateran,⁷ in a lane once named Via Sacra (the sacred way) but now known as the “shunned street” between the Coliseum and St. Clement’s church. After her death, it is said she was buried in that same place. The lord pope always turns aside from the street, and it is believed by many that this is done because of abhorrence of the event. Nor is she placed on the list of the holy pontiffs, both because of her female sex and on account of the foulness of the matter.⁸

6. *St. Peter’s*—St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

7. *Lateran*—the Lateran Palace, the papal residence.

8. Per Ullidtz, *1016: The Danish Conquest of England* (København, Denmark: Books on Demand GmbH, 2014), 179.

An alternate version of this same chronicle reports that Joanna did not, in fact, die in childbirth, but rather, after some time in confinement, performed years of penance to atone for her sins. Still other versions appeared during the following centuries in numerous chronicles, guidebooks, sermons, accounts of visions, and anti-Catholic propaganda.

Virtually all modern scholars dismiss these tales as fables. Yet they are, we must admit, entertaining fables, infused with sex, subterfuge, gender politics, skullduggery, and blatant violations of canon law.



Figure 138. Emmanuel Rhoides, n.d.

These tales appealed immensely to Emmanuel Rhoides (1836–1904), a Greek journalist, novelist, short-story writer, and, after falling into destitution, librarian. He based his satirical novel *The Papess Joanna* on details he gleaned from chronicles. “Every sentence in my book,” Rhoides claimed, “and almost every phrase is based on the testimony of contemporary au-

thors.”⁹ According to Rhoides’s English translator, Lawrence Durrell, Rhoides in this pamphlet “let loose all the pent-up flood-waters of rhetoric and scholarship with which he did not dare to mar the romance. For [Rhoides] was in love with Joanna, and could not bear to see her treated as a ninth-century myth.”¹⁰

Papess Joanna can be read in a number of ways: as a light-hearted and ribald romp; as a Greek nationalist’s attack on Roman Catholicism; as a blasphemous and wholesale indictment of Christianity; as an argument for syncretism, that is, the blending of pagan beliefs and practices with those of medieval Christianity; and as a tale of feminist empowerment. All such readings are valid. *Papess Joanna* provides a lively example of the fearlessness of some literary figures in the 1800s, willing to engage in irreverence and sacrilege, to repudiate sacred pieties, and to celebrate behavior roundly condemned by the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.

To the critics of his novel, Rhoides warned that “vague and ill-founded protests on behalf of morality will not only be meaningless but will remind us of the English poet’s phrase: ‘Only the immoral talk of morals.’”¹¹ To nobody’s surprise, the Greek Holy Synod excommunicated Rhoides for just such sentiments.

The excerpt below begins just after the death of Joanna’s father, with Joanna at a spiritual crossroads, trying to decide whether to pursue a monastic vocation. After the funeral, Joanna—aged sixteen—buries her father’s corpse under a willow at the mouth of a river and falls asleep. In a vision two women approach her and make every effort to disabuse her of orthodox notions about the celibate life.

Two women appeared before her, coming out of the water. One of them had her breasts bare and wore flowers in her hair and smiled. The other in a black cassock with a cross at her breast had a look of great devotion. Both were very lovely, the beauty of one seeming to recall carnivals of laughter, the clink of glasses, and the drumming of dancers’ feet; the dewy-eyed looks of the other spoke of the mysterious

9. Durrell, “Preface,” in *Pope Joan*, 9.

10. *Ibid.*, 10.

11. *Ibid.*, 9.

ointments of the abbeys, the noiseless banquets, the quiet kisses. As for the first, one would have longed to encircle her waist in some riotous dancing-place brimming with lighted candles, under the eyes of numberless spectators; as for the second, one would kneel before her in a silent cell under the faint light of the lamp hanging before the image of a saint.

As the two women approached Joanna, the former, running on ahead of her companion, addressed her, at the same time running fingers lovingly through the blond locks of our heroine. "I saw you," she said, "hesitating here between a wish for the world's pleasures and the silence of the monastery, and I ran at once to guide your inexperienced steps to the true pathway of happiness. I am St. Ida;¹² there is not one good thing in this life that I have not tasted. I have enjoyed two husbands, three lovers, and seven children. I have emptied many a bottle of heart-warming wine, and passed many a sleepless night in pleasure. I have shown my shoulders to the world, have offered my hand to all lips, have let my waist be encircled by all who knew how to dance, and I am still worshipped and adored among the saints. All this pleasure I enjoyed while eating fish during Lent,¹³ throwing the crumbs of my table to the greedy mouths of priests, and giving them my old dresses to deck out the Virgin's statues. I can promise you the same future if you take my advice. You are poor, homeless, and ragged; yet I too before becoming the wife of the Earl of Ecbert suffered from frozen fingers in winter; I too found that my only property was my own red lips, yet these brought me wealth, dignities and finally holiness. So have courage, my blond Joanna. For you are as lovely as the meadow-sweet is, wise as the book of Inama, cunning as the fox of the Black Forest. With these things you can acquire everything delightful in life. Travel along the much-trodden road and let the foolish take the by-paths if they will. Find you a husband to give you his name and Spanish sandals: have lovers who will kneel down and kiss these sandals: have children to console you in your old age: and have, if you wish, the cross in which you can take your final refuge whenever you tire of life or the living tire of you. This road and this only leads to happiness: the road I followed

12. *St. Ida*—(ca. 788–ca. 825), a Saxon saint who founded a convent in Westphalia. Patron saint of brides and widows. After the death of her husband, Ida devoted her life to serving the poor.

13. *while eating fish during Lent*—Eastern and Western churches adopt various positions on whether and when it is permissible to eat fish during Lent.

for thirty years among flowers, banquets, horses and songs, surrounded by husbands who loved me, by lovers who praised my loveliness, and by subjects who blessed my name. And when the end came I sank to rest on a purple bed, having tasted Communion from the hands of an archbishop, and supported by my children. Now I fearlessly wait for the last judgment, under the beautiful cold marble on which they engraved my virtues in letters of gold.”

Thus spoke Ida; and very much the same advice is whispered daily by experienced others in the ears of their daughters, promising salvation through the temporal and warning them against insipid novelists. Yet when she had unfolded the glittering chaplet¹⁴ of the world’s pleasure before the eyes of Joanna, her companion in the cassock came upon them and began to speak, her voice flowing as softly as the waters of Siloam. “And I,” she began, “am St. Lioba,¹⁵ child; like you of Britain, cousin to the patron of that land, St. Boniface,¹⁶ I was a friend of the father you have buried under this earth.

“You have heard enough of the pleasures of the world from her. Mixing together marriage, motherhood, passions and horseflesh, she concocted a gilded pill which she tossed to you as a good fisherman tosses his bait into the sea. But neither of the price nor of the defects of the treasure did our shrewd procuress speak. Ask her how often she shed tears because of the insults of her husband, how often for the infidelity of a lover, how often at the cradle of a sick child, how often before her mirror where instead of rosy cheeks and white arms she saw wrinkles and pallor look back at her?

“They were neither fanatics nor fools those early virgins who rejected the world and chose quietness in the shelter of some nunnery. For they knew that marriage was full of grievance when they heard a woman in childbed or being beaten by her husband: when they saw their bellies puffed out and their breasts exuding milk: when they saw the wrinkles graven on their faces from sleepless nights and aches. It was the disgusting sight of the pregnant woman undressed or the woman giving suck that drove us into the nunneries. It was not a vision of angels and a

14. *chaplet*—garland or wreath.

15. *St. Lioba*—(ca. 710–782), Anglo-Saxon nun, missionary to the Germans, and abbess at a convent in Tauberbischofsheim. Born, according to tradition, to a barren mother. Unlike St. Ida, Lioba never married.

16. *St. Boniface*—(ca. 680–754), Anglo-Saxon apostle to the Germans, born in southwest England.

taste for dry bread, as related by those old fools who wrote of the early saints. In the shade of the cell we found independence and rest, uninterrupted by the cries of children or the claims of a master, or any other care.

“Yet in order to keep the world from becoming deserted and the women from flocking to the nunneries and crowding us out we disseminated queer rumors about our way of life, such as that we spend whole nights kneeling on cold marble, watering staves till they bring forth flowers, sleeping in ashes, and flogging our bodies with the taws.¹⁷ For much the same sort of reason forgers used to circulate stories that the caves in which they made their counterfeit gold were haunted by ghosts and cruel vampires. Do not be afraid of the dry biscuit which St. Pachomius nicknamed ‘bread for nuns,’ nor of the wretchedness of these garments, for look what lies under them.”

As she said this, St. Lioba took off her dark cassock and emerged in a garment as fine as cobweb from Kos¹⁸—contrived air, as the poets used to call it—and her body shone inside it like a strong wine in a crystal of Bohemian workmanship. Stooping to the ear of the sleeping Joanna she went on in an undertone. “My rival promised you pleasures; but ask her if she ever enjoyed the pure sensations of the voluptuary in her lover’s arms when her ear was alert, not for his sweet whispers but for every noise around her: turning pale and pushing him away whenever a door creaked or leaves rustled. Have you seen a cat climb onto a table to lap the master’s milk?” She looks sideways, cocking her sharp ears; her hair bristles with fear, her feet are ready to run away. So it is when these mistresses of the secular world taste what is forbidden.

“But we are surrounded neither by spies nor by cares but by high walls and wooded groves. We pass the day conversing about pleasure as the ancient philosophers did before us. When vespers sound we retreat to our quiet cells where in silence and with emotion we prepare for pleasure as knights do for a duel. Dipping rough haircloth in tepid aromatics we rub the body until it begins to glow lambent as a rose, sensitive to every touch as a horse to the spur; after shaking out our long hair we cover the holy icons and lie down, in winter near the glimmer of a cheering fire, in summer near an open window, listening to the song of a stray nightingale or the shaking of the leaves. As in the Song Songs¹⁹

17. *taws*—whips or lashes made of leather.

18. *Kos*—a Greek Island off the coast of modern Turkey.

19. *Song of Songs*—or *Song of Solomon*, an extended love poem in the Hebrew

we give ourselves up to delicious dreams until at last, down the corridors, we hear the sandals of the coming one who incarnate those dreams in flesh.

“The Oriental Greeks invented twin monasteries where the servants of the All Highest and the brides of Christ lived under the same roof divided only by a wall; but we perfected this invention of the Greeks by opening vents in these walls from whence, noiselessly and without danger, we could receive our brothers the Benedictines.²⁰ We were the first to cultivate the sweet-smelling rue that would rid us of the cares of maternity, the strong clean smelling heather that insatiates the lips, and the stinging nettle from which our lovers draw new force as Antaeus from earth.²¹

“But do not imagine, Joanna, that we always confine our lives within our walls or limit them to such pleasures only. Sometimes satiety itself brings tedium; the journey of the sun seems far too slow as we watch it from behind the grills of our cells, and the knights in coats of mail seem more desirable to us than our monks. Then it is that we feign some pilgrimage of piety to the grave of a saint and setting out we visit the people, enter their palaces and huts, visit their shows and baths, everywhere finding courteous hospitality and bowing heads.

“When I visited the court of the Emperor Charles²² we arrived on the night when they were celebrating his marriage with Hildegard.²³ Earls and their ladies, barons, and prelates were crowded in the chambers of the palace of Aquisgranum.²⁴ The rhapsodists were chanting the exploits of the victorious bridegroom, the mimes and the morris dancers were making them all laugh with their queer antics, the dice

scriptures.

20. *Benedictines*—Monks who lived according to the Rule of St. Benedict, known at the time for its moderation and emphasis on communal life. Benedictines struck a middle path between individual, ascetic rigor and bureaucratic institutionalism.

21. *Anteaus*—a half-giant in Greek myth who retained super-human strength only so long as he remained in contact with the earth. Hercules defeated him by lifting him from the ground, at which point Antaeus became as weak as any other human.

22. *Emperor Charles*—Charlemagne (ca. 742–814), emperor and king of the Franks.

23. *Hildegard*—Charlemagne’s wife.

24. *Aquisgranum*—the German city of Aachen, which today borders Belgium on the west. Seat of Charlemagne’s empire.

were rolling and wine was going from hand to hand in silver-chased beakers. But when my black cassock appeared in the great doorways, when my name 'Lioba, the abbess! Lioba the saint!' sounded in the saloons, all deserted their dice, their cups and their women to gather round and stare at me. Some kissed the buckle of my belt, some my footprints. The emperor alone kissed my hands. My rude hairshirt covered the magnificence of the silk underneath, the diamonds I wore, my painted face and bare shoulders; while among the kneeling crowds my eyes picked out the eighteen-year-old Robert who raised dew-fresh eyelids and pressed his hands together as he searched for my face under the hood.

"When the festival ended I was led by the emperor himself to the finest bedchamber of the palace, giving onto the park by a glass door. Awakening in the middle of the night I opened this door in order to lessen the odors of aloe and myrrh which had been sprinkled about the room to honor me; immediately opposite I saw Robert. He was sitting under an apple tree, elbows on his knees, and adolescent chin on his hands, earnestly gazing at my window. When he saw me he rose, terrified and ready to fly, but with a motion of my head I invited him to enter my room. With a bound he was before me kneeling, but he neither touched me nor said a word; nor indeed did this poor boy dare to raise his eyes. When I put aside his long hair and searched with my lips for his forehead, thinking that he might take me for a ghost, he felt my dress, my hands, my untied hair to be sure that it was indeed St. Lioba, whom he held, half naked and smiling in his arms. Which of the world's great courtesans proved worthy of such worship? Which cast her lover into a stupor of passion more profound than I?"

"Two full months I stayed in the palace of Charles; and when I was sated with feasting and hand-kissing and noise I said farewell to the hospitality of the palace. The emperor himself held the bridle of my ass. The empress and the princesses pleaded tearfully against my going. As for Robert, he tore his hair. Such a life I can promise you, Joanna; pure ecstasies instead of the gross pleasures of the people, independence instead of slavery, the abbess's discipline instead of the distaff, and Jesus instead of a mortal lover. You have heard Ida's advocacy of marriage, and mine of nunneries. Choose now between us, Joanna."

The choice was not as hard as it may seem. In fact it could be made with both eyes shut. So it was without hesitation that our sleeping heroine held out her hands to the eloquent wearer of the cassock, while her companion, discountenanced and unable to refute her words,

dissolved in a puff of smoke, as did those apparitions in female form that so disturbed the pious studies of Pachomius by placing a white bosom or red lips between his eyes and the breviary. [...]

Determined to follow St. Lioba's vocation and example, Joanna takes to the road, where she is joined by a Brother Raleig and two other monks. Together they constitute a somewhat sad and hungry lot. They reach an inn and smell roasting goose. Alas, it is Friday during Lent, when good Christians must abstain from eating any meat other than fish.

In those times men were, of course, both crapulous, gluttonous and impure. They were swindlers. But they had not yet sunk low enough to touch meat on a Lenten day. The Paradise of those times, like Olympus²⁵ for the ancients, was ruled over by the sacred patrons of drunkenness, while of course on earth the bishops permitted such indulgence, holding it to be according to the example of the Ecclesiastes and of holy Augustine²⁶ himself. But whoever did not observe Lent was either threatened with Purgatory²⁷ or else hanged out-of-hand from a high tree by the emperor's bodyguard.

Joanna, knowing from experience what hunger is, was sorry for her hungry comrades. Clever as she undoubtedly was in casuistry, a science as yet unknown to Easterners,²⁸ by which black bread can be proved to be white, the moon square rather than round, virtue to be vice, and so on, she had difficulty in attempting to devise a way by which they might eat and yet not be fallible. For some time, after pondering and scratching her head, she was silent. Then she suggested,

25. *Olympus*—Mount Olympus, home of the twelve Olympian gods.

26. *Augustine*—St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430), the philosopher, theologian, and pillar of Western Christian thought.

27. *Purgatory*—a state of temporary punishment following death, in which a soul can be purified through suffering and thus be made ready for heaven. Long an important tenet in Roman Catholicism.

28. *casuistry, a science as yet unknown to Easterners*—a method of ethical reasoning, in which one solves moral problems by applying theoretical rules to particular cases. Such case-based reasoning derives from Aristotle, and it was employed most famously by Thomas Aquinas, the Western theologian whose work forms the basis for medieval, Roman Catholic philosophy. This scholastic, philosophical tradition, as Rhoides notes, is largely foreign to Eastern Orthodox theology.

“Why not baptize the goose for a fish and then you may eat it without fear. So did my poor father when he was captured by the savages and forced, under pain of death, to devour a whole lamb on the evening of Easter Sunday. Besides, if fishes and birds were created on the same day, so their flesh is related.”

The argument, if not completely water-tight, was at least gallantly attempted; and hunger, which can make the driest bread seem tasty, has a knack of reinforcing the most precarious of arguments. It is true that brigands are often acquitted when they plead that their offense was committed when they had been without food for some time. The same sort of reasoning ought to apply, when you think of it, to those guilty of rape who can prove, according to Theocritus,²⁹ “an urgent need.”

Brother Raleigh, thanking Joanna with a sound kiss on the cheek, took a cup of water and sprinkled the geese thrice, repeating piously, “*In nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, haec erit hodie nobis piscis.*”³⁰ His companions responded with an “Amen,” and very shortly nothing remained of the recently baptized fishes except the bones. Having satisfied their hunger, now the good brothers turned their thoughts to the quenching of their thirst—it being the habit of the day to eat until the point of satiety before asking for wine and salty condiments to cool and dry the tongue alternately: at the same time contesting round with round to see who could hold the most. At that time drunkenness was the cheapest of enjoyments, a gallon of wine costing about seven denary; it flowed liberally not only in the taverns, but also in the streets and churches and even in the girls’ schools, not in the least impeded by the decrees of the popes and the synods. According to the manners of the day, each of our good fathers toasted first the name of one angel; then they started steadily to empty the horn-beakers again and again, not pledging absent friends or fatherlands as the normal custom is, but pledging the Virgin, St. Peter and all the inhabitants of Paradise. Such was the habit of those godly times which established inebriation as a condition pleasing to God.

Meanwhile the night drew on, the innkeeper went to sleep, the oil in the lamp not less than the wine in the cask was running out; only the good humor of the monks increased with every cup they drank. Their

29. *Theocritos*—Greek poet, 200s BCE.

30. *In nomine Patris* ...—“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, thus shall it be, on this day, a fish.”

eyes glittered like the eyes of Charon,³¹ while half inarticulate sounds began to issue from their lips, blasphemies mingled with invocations to the Parthenos,³² hymns mingled with bacchic chants.³³ Joanna, who knew that wine brought on profligacy and remembered that Solomon inveighed against debauchery while seated among three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines, retired into the darkest corner of the room. But even here she did not find rest for very long for the good fathers,³⁴ having satisfied their hunger and thirst, felt it necessary to satisfy that sixth sense for which the physiologists have not yet found a name, though more modest chroniclers have called it a taste for raw meat. So, taking their cassocks between their teeth, as the expression is among monks, they rushed upon our very unhappy heroine.

Do not hasten to blush, my worthy female reader. The steel pen with which I write this true story is of English make and has come from the factory of Smith, which makes it as modest as those blond Englishwomen who, in order not to soil their spotless dresses, raise them above their knees, giving the passerby a glimpse of their flat feet in double-soled sandals. No, there is no danger of hearing from me anything unbecoming to reveal before the virgin mind.

Joanna, pursued by the three monks, ran about the room, leaping over tables and chairs, sometimes throwing a dish or a scriptural maxim at her pursuers. But her sacred eloquence and the table utensils alike broke in vain on those drunkards as waves do on rocks. When at last they stretched out their hands for her she noticed on the bed the relics of the saints and at once beat a retreat behind them. The monks withdrew at once from that sacred bulwark as wolves withdraw before the fires the shepherds' light around their byres. But soon after, forgetting their respect for the sacred relics, they hurled themselves once more on the bed where the wretched girl lay trembling like a lark in a hunter's net. The collision was so violent that it caused the bed to break and fall, and with it the boxes of the saints, whose martyred bones began rolling

31. *Charon*—the ferryman of Greek mythology who carries dead souls across the River Styx into Hades. Known for his feverish, flashing eyes.

32. *Parthenos*—the enormous sculpture of the Greek goddess, Athena, which stood in the Parthenon in Athens.

33. *bacchic chants*—chants to Bacchus, the Greek god of wine, whose devotees worshipped in fits of ecstatic madness. Rhoides here, as he does throughout *Papess Joanna*, argues for an exceedingly thin and permeable line between ancient paganism and contemporary Christianity.

34. *fathers*—monks.

about the room. Joanna remembering that Samson once struck down a thousand Philistines with a jawbone of a mere ass,³⁵ prayed to the All Highest to strengthen her arm, and taking up one of the legs of St. Marcellinus,³⁶ she started to batter at her lustful pursuers. But their bones seemed to be harder than those of the saints for in a short time the weapon broke and the strength of our heroine being exhausted after such a stubborn resistance she fell at last on the field of battle, submitting to her destiny. But at that time there were several saints miraculously working in order to save this virgin from danger.

At the moment when the Holy Brother Raleig, who as the eldest enjoyed preference of place, was bending over her, his vile and loathsome breath defiling the pale features of the girl—at that moment a monstrous transformation took place. An unearthly miracle made him withdraw in terror. Neither into a tree, like Daphne,³⁷ was Joanna transformed: nor into a dove like St. Gertrude; nor into a worm-eaten and desiccated body like Bassina when she lay with Don Rupert; but from her virginal cheeks there sprang up all unexpectedly a long, thick beard—like one of those beards that loom on the faces in Byzantine icons. This was the way the Virgin saved many a virgin in those times when she was molested by the rude monks. For she was as vigilant for their honor as a jealous mother-in-law for the honor of her son's wives according, that is, to St. Jerome.

Blessing the Virgin from her very heart for so timely an intervention, Joanna sprang up and wagged her long beard like the head of Medusa³⁸ until the terrified monks ran from the room.

Then, going out to the stables, she untied one of the donkeys and mounted it, leaving behind her that disgusting haunt where she had been in danger of losing the only dowry she had to offer her heavenly bridegroom.³⁹ Needless to say when the danger had passed the beard also vanished. [...]

35. *Jawbone of a mere ass*—see Judges 15:1–17.

36. *St. Marcellinus*—bishop of Rome from 296 to 304.

37. *Daphne*—a nymph in Greek myth, whose father, Peneus, transformed her into a tree to save her from the clutches of the god Apollo.

38. *Medusa*—a Greek monster with snakes for hair.

39. *heavenly bridegroom*—Christ.

Joanna arrives at the convent of Mosbach, in what is now southern Germany. She becomes a nun, and the abbess appoints her the convent's librarian.

Despair and idleness are, I think, the chief motives for religious devotion. When we have nothing on earth to do or hope for we gaze at the sky. We kiss the holy icons because we have nothing better to kiss. However Joanna, who had formerly employed her theological gift purely as a wage-earning device, now learned the scriptures and the books of the fathers by heart when she found herself alone in her suffocating little cell [...]

Monasteries have, throughout the ages, been realms that harbor rather specialized desires. The Egyptian monks watered staves until they yielded fruit; the women saints of Hungary devoured lice, while the hesychasts lived for whole years in fixed contemplation of their navels from whence they expected the light of truth to spring. And Joanna, surrendering herself to metaphysical studies, now spent whole days bowed over the writings of St. Augustine who has described, almost as an eyewitness might, the enjoyments of the blessed and the flames of Hell. Then pushing her fingers into her blond hair she would address to herself all those burning questions about our present and future life, which the inhabitants of this vale of tears are wont to attack in desperation and which the priests and theologians answer with evasions and commonplaces, just as cabinet ministers do when they want to be rid of importunate place-hunters. Troubling dreams began to disturb the sleep of our heroine. They were no longer those of St. Lioba, promising her inexhaustible pleasures, but they were of devils waving fearful horns of fire, or angels holding large two-edged swords. At one moment she would hope for the joys of Paradise, at another be terrified by the claws of the devil. For one day at a time she would believe all the truths of Christianity, from the Gospels to the miracles of St. Martin and then for three she felt uncertain of everything. Sometimes she would bow her head and humbly await the divine condemnation—at others she could have hurled boulders at the sky to shiver it into atoms. (The sky at that time was supposed to be of crystal.) In a word she was seized with that sort of monomania that preys on all those who sincerely seek a solution to the mysteries of existence.

What are we? Where do we come from? What is to be our future state? Such were the questions, as insoluble to the human brain as wax

in water, which Joanna tried to solve. In the meantime the hair of the poor girl was left uncombed and her teeth uncleaned; her eyes grew red from sleeplessness, her face pale, her nails black from neglect. According to the great Pascal⁴⁰ such should indeed be the physical condition of the true Christian on this earth: to live continually between the fear of Hell and the hope of salvation, and with groans and cries to grope in the darkness for the road to Paradise. But that condition, aristocratic as it may be—even the prerogative of superior minds—that is not a condition I wish for you, my dear reader. I should rather consider it preferable to be merry, in the manner of those good Christians who sing hymns to the saints, eat cuttlefish on Friday and wait, free from care, for the pleasures of Paradise. There will be some, of course, who wish to show their moral superiority by pitying those happy mortals, but for my part I envy their untroubled hearts and their rosy cheeks. If some Turk or some fire-worshipper of my acquaintance sought to become a Christian, I would counsel him to choose the Catholic Church above all others, for its ceremonies are sumptuous, its liturgy is brief, and its fasts are liberal. Its music delights the ear and its icons the eye. As for his spiritual adviser, I would urge on him not a savage one like Bossuet⁴¹ or Lacordaire⁴² (who describes so vividly the tortures of Hades and its inhabitants) but rather a student of the honey-tongued Escobar,⁴³ in order that he might be conducted to the heavenly mansions on a carpet of satin. The All Highest, according to the holy Augustine and Lactantius,⁴⁴ does not look askance at the choice of the more liberal paths provided they lead us toward him, so what point is there in hunting for Paradise through thorns and thistles and boiled vegetables: in listening to nasal songs and kissing ugly images? But let us return to our subject, and blame these digressions on

40. *Pascal*—Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), the French mathematician and philosopher.

41. *Bossuet*—Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, a French bishop (1627–1704) famed for his furious preaching.

42. *Lacordaire*—Jean Baptiste Henri Lacordaire (1802–1861), a Dominican priest considered one of the great preachers of the 1800s.

43. *Escobar*—Antonio Escobar y Mendoza (1589–1669), a Spanish Jesuit beloved for his preaching. Blaise Pascal criticized Escobar for an overly lax and forgiving approach to morality.

44. *Lactantius*—Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius (ca. 240–ca. 320), a religious adviser to Emperor Constantine.

the fifty-seven newspapers of Athens and the four bells of the Russian church that are forever disturbing the continuity of my story. [...]

Joanna's abbess instructs her to work with Father Frumentius, a young Benedictine monk from the St. Fulda Monastery in central Germany, copying the letters of the Apostle Paul. Joanna and Frumentius quickly fall in love and spend their days alone in their workspace, writing, talking, kissing, and copying passionate passages of scripture for one another. When they complete their work, Father Frumentius's abbot recalls him back to St. Fulda. Loath to part, Joanna and Frumentius decide to run away together.

After four hours traveling, the runaways stopped for rest near a small lake, by the edge of which there had once been a colossal statue to Irminsul.⁴⁵ This statue had been hurled by a breath of St. Boniface⁴⁶ to the depths of the lake; but its early adorers, although now converted to Christianity, preserved in the deepest corners of their hearts some shadow of devotion for their drowned patron-saint of long ago. Every year they continued to offer him gifts, throwing fragments of wax candles, honeycombs, cakes and cheeses into the water, to the profound satisfaction of the fish, which had become as fat as the priests of the Syrian goddess on these offerings. Frumentius, who descended on his mother's side from the heroic warriors of Witikend,⁴⁷ was nevertheless as profoundly superstitious as any child of Saxony, while Joanna, although a skillful theologian in theory, was always prepared, like Socrates, to concede a point in favor of contemporary prejudice. Indeed most of the Christians of the day, hovering as they did between the Savior and their idols, resembled the old woman of Chios who devoutly lit a candle every day before the icon of St. George, and as devoutly lit another before the devil, saying as she did so that it was better to have friends in every camp.

So the two lovers as they knelt at the lake's margin offered up to Irminsul the remains of their breakfast, some locks of their hair, and a few mingled drops of their blood, in this way sealing their inseparable

45. *Irminsul*—the god Irmin, a deity of the Saxons.

46. *St. Boniface*—(ca. 680–754), apostle to the Germans who spread Christianity through Frankish Empire.

47. *Witikend*—a Saxon chieftain.

union with each other as the Doge of Venice⁴⁸ once did his with the sea. After this ceremony Frumentius took a monk's robe from his saddle-bags and pressed it on his sweetheart, assuring her that by this means she might enter as a novice of St. Fulda. "In this way," added he, blushing slightly, "we may live undisturbed in the same cell, eating from the same platter, dipping our pens in the same inkwell; whereas if they discover you to be a woman they will lock you away in the women's apartments with other nuns and I shall die at the door-post in despair!"

Joanna, who considered the disguise would lay her open to the charge of profanity, argued against her lover's pleadings with a text from the scriptures. "There shall be no garment of man placed on woman, nor shall man take to woman's garments." But he continued to press her, arguing with the help of Deuteronomy and the opinion of Origen⁴⁹ that all women would anyhow be transformed into men on the Last Day. Joanna replied to this that Origen was a heretic and, moreover, a eunuch. [...]

Frumentius wins the argument and Joanna agrees to pose as a monk. After seven happy years together at St. Fulda, members of the monastery discover that Joanna (now "John") is a woman. She and Frumentius decide to run away on a pilgrimage. Arriving in Venice, hungry and dejected, they accept an offer from a slave trader (a "fisher of men," in Rhoides's words) for passage to Byzantium. After two months travel they arrive in Athens, guided by a Greek slave. Rhoides now turns his attention to the Eastern Orthodox world.

The sun swept up behind Hymettus,⁵⁰ glittering and cloudless like the sun which first ripened the apples of Eden, as the three travelers entered the city of Adrian⁵¹ [...] The churches were crowded with Athenian worshippers celebrating the Orthodox Sunday and the dedication of the holy icons. They entered the Theseum⁵² which in those

48. *Doge of Venice*—the chief magistrate of Venice, a major maritime power during the Middle Ages.

49. *Origen*—(184/185–253/254), an influential theologian of the early church. Later church councils declared aspects of Origen's theology heretical.

50. *Hymettus*—a mountain range just east of Athens.

51. *city of Adrian*—Athens.

52. *Theseum*—the Temple of Hephaestus, the patron god of metal-working

days was a Christian church dedicated to St. George. If Christianity suffocated paganism, at any rate the innocent victim made his murderer his heir, bequeathing temples, ceremonies, sacrifices, augurs, priests and dream-interpreters to the new faith. All these things the Christians appropriated and turned to their own uses, as the plagiarist does. Temples became churches; altars, sanctuaries; the processions, litanies; and gods, saints. Poseidon⁵³ lived on as St. Nicholas.⁵⁴ Pan⁵⁵ was transformed into St. Demetrius,⁵⁶ while Apollo⁵⁷ became St. Elijah.⁵⁸ To these the priests attached long beards in order to make them more respectable: as the pimps of Rome once decked their girls out in blonde wigs in order to attract more customers. But to return to Athens. ...

After the death of the infamous Theophilus⁵⁹ who had cut off the hands of the painters and ordered the sacred icons to be smeared with lime (as nurses dab aloes on their teats to make their nurselings feel sick): a reaction had set in among the unfortunate Easterners who had been deprived of their icons for eleven long years now and who felt their yearning for them doubled. So from all parts of the mountains to which they had been exiled by the oppressor there descended now a multitude of monks and painters of sacred icons. According to some authorities not only the living gathered in the churches to be present at that joyful ceremony at which the icons spoke aloud and the coals danced in the censers but also the dead martyrs newly risen from scattered graves. It is true of course that many violent iconoclasts reversed their allegiance when the God-condemned Theophilus was

and craftsmanship, which served as a Greek Orthodox church from the 600s until 1834.

53. *Poseidon*—god of the sea.

54. *St. Nicholas*—(270–343) model for Santa Claus and patron saint of sailors and fishermen.

55. *Pan*—god of shepherds and wild places, half man and half goat.

56. *St. Demetrius*—Demetrius of Thessaloniki, a Christian martyr of the 300s, run through with spears during the persecutions of Emperor Diocletian.

57. *Apollo*—the Greek god sometimes identified with Helios, who drove his chariot of the sun across the sky each day.

58. *Elias*—the Hebrew prophet Elijah, who called fire from the sky and ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire.

59. *Theophilus*—Theophilus the Iconoclast, Byzantine emperor from 829 to 842.

succeeded by the God-sent Theodora.⁶⁰ Parents glued their children's hair on the images of the Virgin, monks offered their heads of hair as a sacrifice, and women scraped the paint from the icons in order to mix it with water and drink it. Even the priests often adulterated the wine of transubstantiation with the mixture. And in Athens itself, that classic seat of paganism, the fervor of the faithful became so intense that the bishop was compelled to cover the icons with glass lest they should be literally kissed out of existence; indeed after a few days most of them had become as pale and semi-invisible as the icon of the Savior on the kerchief of Veronica.

According to the lawyers every transgression causes some new law to be made. In the church of Christ every heresy eventually calls forth an orthodox dogma. The fine frenzy of the iconoclasts created iconolatry in which the Son became "consubstantial with the Father" despite the Arians; while the Panagia⁶¹ was christened Theotokos in refutation of the blasphemies of Nestorius. Pope Pius IX⁶² in order to punish the wicked doubts of his subjects on the question of the immaculate conception,⁶³ established the immaculate pregnancy of her mother as an article of faith. [...]

The lovers when they entered the Theseum with their guide could hardly find a place in the crowded church; every nook was crammed with worshippers. On that morning the service was being performed by the bishop of Athens, Niketas, who glittered like a newly minted florin⁶⁴ in his embroidered robes. The two children of the North were much astonished at the pomp of his attire since this servant of God was in the habit of preaching poverty to the faithful, and promising them that the streets of Paradise would be paved with gold, sapphires, emeralds and amethysts. But the prelates of those times preferred the bird in hand, and left the lice, the ragged habits and the emeralds of Paradise to those few hermits who had descended from the old Cynics;

60. *Theodora*—Theodora II (ca. 815–post 867), wife of the Byzantine Emperor Theophilios. Theodora served as regent for her son after her husband's death in 845 and used her newfound power to overturn Theophilios's iconoclastic policies and to depose iconoclastic clergy.

61. *Panagia*—literally the "All Holy," a title for the Virgin Mary common in Eastern Orthodoxy.

62. *Pope Pius IX*—served from 1846 to 1878.

63. *immaculate conception*—the doctrine that the Virgin Mary remained free from original sin from the moment of her conception.

64. *florin*—gold coin.

meanwhile of course they still carried out their sacred functions in those same temples where, says Plutarch, no pagan might enter and carry gold with him. During the service Theonas, who had been a curate once, bent his head and explained the intricacies of the liturgy to Joanna, pointing out that in the East the sign of the cross was made with three fingers to symbolize the Trinity; and that one touched first the forehead in recognition of the Deity in Heaven, then the belly to show that Jesus descended into Hades, then the right shoulder because the Son was seated on the right of his Father, and finally the left shoulder in order to expel Satan from the heart. This explained, Theonas went on to name every part of the liturgist's accoutrements, describing the belt that "girds him in power"; the knee-piece, which is "as a sword upon his thigh"; the triangular cope, which symbolizes Jesus Christ, the corner stone of the church; the knife, which the priest thrusts obliquely through the holy loaf to symbolize the soldier's lance, which had been plunged in the side of the Savior.

While the boy explained all these mysteries, the liturgist cut a second loaf, which he turned into the body of the Virgin Mary, whose "physical presence" in these mysteries was believed in by the Eastern church of that time—especially after the day when, while the priest was chanting the *Ave Maria*,⁶⁵ the bread had turned into a visible Virgin who appeared to all holding the Son in her arms. The remaining morsels of the loaves were sanctified in the name of the Baptist, the prophets, martyrs and other saints; when these were disposed of, the living were mentioned: the archbishop, the priests, benefactors of the church and others. And when each had received his share of the sacrifice as in ancient times in the same temple they had partaken of the sacrifices to Theseus,⁶⁶ the deacon lit his censer and shook it over the altar and the asterisk.⁶⁷ After this the *de profundis*⁶⁸ was sung and then . . . But it is useless, I think, to listen to the whole of the liturgy, for it was at Byzantine then as it is today; and so, according to the Catholics, it is destined to remain throughout the ages, as a punishment for the

65. *Ave Maria*—"Hail Mary," a prayer used in both Eastern and Western churches.

66. *Theseus*—the mythical founder of Athens.

67. *asterisk*—a cover, shaped like a star, which the priest places over the chalice during the liturgy, and over which he then places a veil.

68. *de profundis*—literally "out of the depths," the first words of Psalm 129.

schism, impervious to civilization and bound to the Gregorian model as tightly as an oyster to rock.

The two Germans were surprised at the inordinate length of that seemingly endless service [...] As soon as the ceremony finished and each had received his Communion bread a circle formed about the two Westerners. They were examined from the soles of their feet to the crown of their heads, while everyone asked at once where they came from, why they were beardless, and above all, why they wore drawers, a thing which to the Eastern monks represented a quite inexcusable sensuality. Joanna and Theonas were hardly able to gasp out answers, for the circle grew tighter every moment and it was becoming difficult to breathe. At this point Frumentius, who had neither Greek nor much patience, was about to open a passage for them with his two fists when by a stroke of good luck the bishop himself arrived and set them free, after scolding his flock for their troublesome importunity. Conducting them to his pontifical palanquin,⁶⁹ which was carried by eight newly converted Bulgarians who served as pack-horses for his holiness, he ordered them to be carried to the bishopric, which lay at the foot of the Acropolis. Here a banquet of great sumptuousness was being prepared for the festival of the reinstated icons.

The table was laid in the garden, under an old plane tree. It groaned under a load of decanters and dishes. The fragrance of food mingled with the odor of garden flowers. Soon after the guests began to arrive. The majority of them were orthodox monks who had sought refuge in the caves and mountains during the late iconomachy⁷⁰ in order not to be forced by Theophilus to spit on the holy icons or to marry a nun in the public market place. These good hermits had all but become savages and their appearance was somewhat unkempt after so long in the wilds. Among them was Father Matthew, from whose lips live worms dropped, due to excessive fasting; there was Athanasius, who never washed his face or his feet and never ate a cooked meal because the temporal fires of the cookhouse reminded him so irresistibly of the inextinguishable flames of Hell. Then there was Meletius whose whole body was covered in suppurating ulcers like Job's; yet Job scratched himself with a potsherd to get some relief, whereas whenever a maggot fell from the wounds of Meletius the old man put it back

69. *palanquin*—a covered chair, resting on poles carried by servants or slaves.

70. *iconomachy*—iconoclasm.

again in order to miss none of the pains of the flesh and thus qualify for the rewards of Heaven.

After these there came Father Paphnutius, who was so deeply immersed in heavenly ecstasies and so little used to living in the material world, that he often drank the oil of his own lamp instead of water; Tryphon who never wore a clean shirt but always the unwashed ones belonging to his abbot; the hermit Nikon who had once succumbed to the sins of the flesh and had later shut himself up to repent in a charnel house⁷¹ for thirty years, sleeping where he stood like a horse, and eating only the herbs that grew, nourished on his tears, from the floor. After these came a collection of monks from the hills supporting their halt and quavering legs with staves. Some were like ancient chipped statues; and all, without exception, filthy, lice-ridden and revolting because of the mingled odor of fasting, holiness and garlic-eating which emanated from them.

The alarmed Joanna recoiled in horror from these loathsome products of Oriental fanaticism, at times holding her nose or closing her eyes, and almost refusing to believe that such human beings could really exist. Unwillingly she forced her mind to recall what she had read of cynocephalos⁷² and pithecanthropos.⁷³ She remembered the passage in the Synaxaria⁷⁴ concerning the satyrs that had lived in the desert with St. Anthony and conversed with him knowledgeably about theology. Yet these fetid and worm-eaten anatomies to whom words like pleasure and debauchery; Hell and cleanliness, were practically synonymous; these monks, I repeat, anchorites, hermits and ascetics whose memory today arouses such pity or terror in one's breast, had a tremendous vogue during the reign of the Pious Theodora; as great, indeed, as coachmen did during the time of Michael III and monkeys in the time of Pope Julius. [...]

While the ascetics discoursed on miracles, Niketas engaged the two Benedictines⁷⁵ and the Byzantine eunuchs on questions of dogma.

71. *charnal house*—a vault or small building, usually sited next to a church, for storing human skeletons exhumed after decaying for several years in the ground.

72. *cynocephalus*—a human with the head of a dog. St. Christopher is depicted as such in Eastern icons.

73. *pithecanthropus*—an extinct, primitive, ape-like man. *Homo Erectus*.

74. *Synaxaria*—lives of the saints.

75. *two Benedictines*—Joanna and Frumentius.

To begin with he asked Joanna what dogma had been adopted concerning the Eucharist among the learned of the West. He wished to know if they believed that the bread and wine were actually changed into the body and blood of the Savior; or whether they were accepted as symbol and image of the divine body. This question occupied the minds of the time to the exclusion of all else, like the Eastern Question⁷⁶ today. Joanna, who was uncertain of the convictions of her host, parried this in diplomatic fashion by answering that while the sun is in the sky, its heat and light are also upon the earth; and in this sense the body of Christ may also be found in the bread and wine of Communion. This metaphorical response did not, however, satisfy Niketas who, as a disciple of the actual presence, was at pains to explain that the bread and wine are indeed the dead body of the Savior and that our stomach is its grave in which it is interred by the priest: and that shortly afterwards it rises as Christ did after the crucifixion. This disposed of, Niketas went on to ask Joanna whether the Christians of the West also honored the Virgin with the title of Theotokos or “Deiparous.”⁷⁷ Joanna replied composedly that as far as they were concerned the title “oviparous” was used to designate chickens and “viviparous” was used in relation to cats, so they were fearful lest these familiar words might discredit Theotokos in the sight of the faithful. It was, moreover, hardly advisable to give pagans a chance of comparing God’s mother with Rhea,⁷⁸ as the followers of Hypatia⁷⁹ did in Egypt. Later, wishing to perplex the bishop still further, she asked him why the members of the Eastern church did not cut off their hair as St. Paul recommends in the passage where he remarks that a man with long hair is effeminate and discreditable to the Lord. Niketas did not know how to counter this and scratched his shaggy head, returning once more to the question of dogma. He went into the doctrine of consecration, of the double nature of Jesus, touching on the question of whether the Logos was joined to the body of the Savior within the womb of the Virgin or after

76. *Eastern Question*—the diplomatic question, prominent in great-power politics of the 1800s and early 1900s, of how to handle the slow collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its loss of control of Balkan territories.

77. *Deiparous*—bearing or birthing a god.

78. *Rhea*—mother of the gods in Greek mythology.

79. *Hypatia*—(d. 415), a Greek philosopher living in Egypt, murdered by a Christian mob.

parturition⁸⁰—and many other such theological knots, which the good Fathers of Ephesus solved with the broadsword as Alexander did the Gordian knot,⁸¹ or with kicks, as asses settle their amorous quarrels. [...]

Joanna and Frumentius leave Athens and travel to Constantinople. Joanna tires of Frumentius, decides to leave him, and departs for Rome.

Rome, having failed to conquer the world by the sword, was hard at work trying to set up a cosmocracy⁸² by other means. Instead of legions she now sent dogmas to replace them in her former provinces; quietly spinning a web in which she soon hoped to entangle all the nations. At the time when our heroine arrived in Rome, Saint Leo IV⁸³ successor to Sergius Surnamed Pigmouth,⁸⁴ was the spider who sat at the very heart of that intricate web. Nearly every prelate of that time, whether he wanted or not, was given the title of saint; but Leo had acquired his title in all good faith and by the sweat of his brow. It was he who had discovered the bodies of the holy martyrs Sophronius, Nicostratus and Castorius,⁸⁵ had raised with a sweep of his wand a storm at sea, which scattered the Saracen fleet, had slain the dragon in the Church of St. Lucia by a prayer; indeed more than once had he driven off the attacking infidels.⁸⁶ He had also, in a manner most

80. *parturition*—birth.

81. *Gordian knot*—a legend in which an oracle in Phrygia (modern Turkey) declared that the next man to enter the city would be declared king. When a peasant named Gordias drove his oxcart into the city, the local priests fulfilled the oracle's prediction. In gratitude to the Phrygian god Sabazios, Gordias's son dedicated his father's cart to Sabazios and tied it to a post. When Alexander the Great spent the winter of 333 BCE in Phrygia, he attempted to untie the knot. He failed, but ultimately solved the conundrum by cutting it in half with his sword.

82. *cosmocracy*—rule of the entire world.

83. *Leo IV*—Pope Leo IV (847–855).

84. *Sergius Surnamed Pigmouth*—Pope Sergius II (844–847). Sergius's family name was Bocca di Porco (pig's mouth). He changed his name to Boccapecora (sheep's mouth), believing it to be more appropriate for his new station.

85. *martyrs Sophronius, Nicostratus and Castorius*—Bartolomeo Platina's (1421–1481) *Lives of the Popes* reports that Leo IV discovered these martyrs' bodies.

86. *driven off the attacking infidels*—Leo IV helped organize a Christian armada

pleasing to God, established a monastery for women within the papal precincts where, under his protection, the chosen novices of the city were received into the church. But this great pontiff and admirer of the muses was a patron of letters as well as nun. He conversed with Joanna for a whole hour, touching on matters of weight—and several matters of less weight than substance—and was so impressed with her that he at once appointed her as instructor in theology to the school of St. Martino, where Augustine himself had once taught. Joanna, or rather Father John (for her feminine name begins to jar on the ear), spent her early days wandering about the eternal city.⁸⁷ But by that time little enough remained of the splendor that had been Rome. Lord Elgin's⁸⁸ great exemplar Charles had already ransacked the old temples after the manner of the Franks, in order to decorate the Metropolis of Aquisgranum with the stolen columns and bas reliefs.⁸⁹ The Christian churches built by Leo's predecessors were unbalanced and monstrously-wrought mixtures of Roman and Oriental art, very much as Western Christianity itself was at that time—in other words an inconsistent and indigestible fusion of Hebraism and idolatry. During this period nobody troubled his head much about dogma, and the ancient gods—at least as many as had not undergone the transformation into Christian saints—were banished from Olympus and had emigrated to Hades where they lived peaceably enough with the devil of the Christians and the Satan of the Jews. The theologians recognized them as the tools of sorcerers; and it was even believed that at times they took possession of the bodies of those Christians who were known as demoniacs. On the very day of Joanna's arrival in the city some sort of ceremony was being enacted in the churches in honor of the ancient gods. Choruses of inebriated Christians were dancing and screeching out profane

in 849 to repel an attack by Saracen pirates near the town of Ostia on the west-central Italian coast.

87. *Eternal City*—Rome.

88. *Lord Elgin*—a Scottish diplomat (1766–1841) famous for bribing Ottoman authorities so he could transport marble carvings from the Athenian Parthenon out of Greece to decorate his mansion back to Scotland. Today, much to the consternation of the Greek government, the Elgin Marbles reside in the British Museum.

89. *stolen columns and bas reliefs*—Charlemagne (here “Charles”) likewise stole antiquities to decorate his capitol city of Aquisgranum, now Aachen in western Germany.

songs together with the cry “Evoe ... Evoe.”⁹⁰ Dancers chased each other with whips as in the festivals of Kronion while the priestesses of Aphrodite dressed only in phylacteries⁹¹ and anklets of bells ran in and out of the crowds, offering wine and kisses to the dancers for a few coins. All this of course very much to the amazement of the newly converted foreigners in Rome, who were under the impression that all these things were somehow part of the Christian liturgy: much as those present at the more turbulent sessions of the American Congress might imagine that kicking had been accepted as an integral part of the democratic liberties.

These were the sort of people that Father John was called on to flavor with attic salt.⁹² During his early days he experimented on them to the extent of a few lectures on dogmatism, but his audience regarded these discussions about the physiology of the Holy Trinity, which so much exercised the Greek mind, as devoid of interest as the long beards that decorated the jawbones of the Greek priests. The successors of the divine Plato in the East⁹³ were still busily discussing the true nature of God. But the descendants of Cato and Cincinnatus,⁹⁴ being more practical, were devoting themselves to theology as a serious profession from which one’s daily bread might be earned. And not only one’s daily bread but ministries, bishoprics, horses, concubines and all the other good things of life which are the rewards of efficiency and practical knowledge. Instead of investigating the mysteries of the Christian Heaven, these industrious and thoughtful people were busy about the extension of their dominion over the world, and the tribute that might be levied from it.

Joanna, who was a clever and far-sighted young woman, was quick to guess the predilections of her students. Shaking off the ideologies of Byzantium she came down from Heaven to earth, from the frosty summits of metaphysics to the fat and fertile plains of canonical law. She began to discourse eloquently on the temporal power of the pope, on the donations of Charles,⁹⁵ on the tributes, the golden robes, and all the other sops to the ordinary people by which the church sought

90. *Evoe*—a Bacchanalian exclamation.

91. *phylacteries*—amulets or charms.

92. *attic salt*—refined or incisive wit. Here Rhoides lays on the sarcasm.

93. *successors of the divine Plato in the East*—Greeks.

94. *descendants of Cato and Cincinnatus*—Latins.

95. *Donations of Charles*—fabricated donations of Charlemagne to the papacy.

to make their expectation of Paradise a little less impatient. In much the same way did the suitors of Penelope⁹⁶ amuse themselves with the maids while awaiting the pleasure of their mistress. She succeeded at last in winning the love of her audiences by her clever tongue, as Orpheus⁹⁷ moved the stones with his lyre. The comparison is not ill-advised for if they were not actually stones most nations were in the habit of calling them asses, and the synods “ass-meetings.” The few instructors in Rome at that time were sent there from Ireland, Scotia and Galatia, to preach to the poor descendants of Cicero, just as today we receive ours from among the scholars of Germany. [...]

The majority of priests did not know how to read and instead of teaching the Gospel from the pulpit they regaled the faithful with stories of how the Virgin made a habit of holding the feet of men hanging from the gallows if ever they had lit a candle in her honor; of how she often rescued devout nuns from sin by taking their form and receiving their lovers in their stead; and how she at last smuggled them into the blessed corridors of Paradise where the merciful Theotokos mixed them love potions that they might the better enjoy their lovers [...]

There were at the papal court a swarm of secret spies, prying officers, keyhole cooks, scurvy messengers and vile Ethiopian menials. There were also secret doors and staircases and secret rooms in the Vatican. Very often the representative of Jesus on earth feasted at secret banquets, though I do not know if he had the apostles as companions. Our heroine, on first entering the private rooms of his holiness,⁹⁸ found it difficult to get a purchase on the thick soft Oriental carpet, over which one might wish to skim like the horses of Erichthonius,⁹⁹ which when they ran scarcely brushed the tips of the flowers. When Joanna came before the head of all Christendom he was seated on a throne of gold and ivory, surrounded by golden baskets, silver porringers, censers studded with emeralds and many other treasures. She was so dazzled by the display that she was forced to shut her eyes

96. *suitors of Penelope*—in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, wards off a host of aggressive suitors while waiting for her husband to return home.

97. *Orpheus*—the Greek prophet and musician. Orpheus played the lyre so beautifully that—when jealous followers of Dionysus threw stones at him—the rocks refused to strike their target.

98. *his holiness*—Pope Leo IV.

99. *horses of Erichthonius*—immortal horses, mentioned in the *Illiad*, which Zeus gave to King Erichthonius.

for a moment. She knelt piously to kiss the sandals of Leo but he raised Father John familiarly and with affection. They worked together until evening and Leo professed himself greatly pleased with her and from that day forward loved his secret secretary as he might have loved his own child.

The *cubicularis*, *divenderis*, *ostiarius*, *scriptoris*, *arcanus* and the other courtiers who surrounded Leo, and were proud to serve him as slaves had once served the Roman emperors, murmured at the beginning against this new favorite. They were as critical Joanna as the royal guards of Catherine¹⁰⁰ might have been to any young candidate who knocked on her door. But the manners of Father John were so courteous and so affable, his disinterestedness was so obvious, that in a short time he won all hearts and everyone went to him when he had anything to ask of the Holy Father. Moreover Joanna, as a foreigner in Rome, had no ambitious nephews or concubines to satisfy so she was always prompt in submitting her friends' petitions to the pontiff. The number and gratitude of these friends increased daily and in a short time the secret and private secretary became a fully-fledged politician, surrounded by a cloud of insatiable place-hunters, who clustered around her as chickens do round the farmer's wife when she begins to scatter the grain from her lap at sunset.

Though she was concerned for all her friends, Joanna had nothing to ask for herself; or rather, she only nourished one desire. Daily she implored the merciful Pantanassa¹⁰¹ to reward the virtues of Pope Leo very quickly by transporting him to a better life. An ungrateful and impious enough prayer to address to the Virgin ... But in Rome the faithful are on such familiar terms with the Virgin that they not only ask her for wealth, position, horses, honors and son on; they also plead with her for the death of an enemy or a rich relation; they ask for the death of a rival in love or any other such troubling creature. It is even said they request things that would bring a blush to the sober cheeks of a pimp. At any rate assassins leave their knives on her altars before sinking them in their victims' backs, drunkards empty jugs and bottles to her, and so on. So Joanna was naturally only following the custom of the country when she addressed her prayer to the Virgin. Yet as she did not despise the protection of the devil as well, she frequently sought refuge in the sin-

100. *Catherine*—Catherine the Great of Russia (1729–1796), known for her succession of lovers.

101. *Pantanassa*—Virgin Mary.

ister witchcraft of the time. She would call on the spirits of Hell as she drove a pin into a wax image of Leo, or raise black smoke from beneath a tripod where poisonous herbs smoldered; and the moon, which at that time made a point of listening to sorcerers, stood still as readily as the sun did for Joshua¹⁰² whenever she invoked it.

One does not know whether it was the devil or the Virgin who finally answered the prayers of our heroine. At any rate I am sure she did not know which to thank when Leo was suddenly taken ill one day with an illness that seemed to grow progressively worse. When the leeches had exhausted every nostrum and the priests their stocks of invocations to the Archangel Michael, Aesculapius's¹⁰³ successor on earth; when the Jewish sorcerers and Arabian astrologers had vainly practiced their art over him for days; it was resolved by a council of bishops to have the supreme pontiff carried to the underground Church of St. Tiburtius. There he would wait for a dream in which the saint would reveal to him the name of a specific for his illness. In that age the faithful, when they knew not where else to turn, pinned their faith in heaven-sent dreams. Thus, though the church burned sorcerers at the stake, yet she herself practiced a sort divination by dreams, like the medical men today who persecute hypnotists but indulge in a species of hypnotism in their private practice.

The unlucky pope was transferred from his sickbed to a black hearse, which in turn was transferred by four strong priests to the subterranean church in question. Here he was laid before the altar and surrounded by burning candles, distracted doctors, and hymning monks. The great pontiff, although a saint, was something more than merely pious, for he had spent his life in beautifying Rome, had heaped up a great treasury, built more fortresses than churches, and had defended his earthly estate against the Saracens rather than the devil. True, he had never actually burned a heretic; but he dealt with his enemies so fiercely that in every respect he merited more the title of king,

102. *as the sun did for Joshua*—see Joshua 10:13–14: “On the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the Lord; and he said in the sight of Israel, ‘Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.’ And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the book of Jashar? The sun stopped in mid-heaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded a human voice; for the Lord fought for Israel.” (NRSV)

103. *Aesculapius*—Greek god of medicine.

as Voltaire admits, than that of saint. And if he was sometimes called on to perform a miracle, he did it more as a favor to his imbecilic subjects than anything else; just as Jesus felt it necessary to perform miracles for those Hebrews who lacked faith.

But sickness can transform lions into hares, and even the most skeptical man into a Christian. Byron,¹⁰⁴ by far the greatest poet of this century, whose brain weighed 638 drams,¹⁰⁵ has freely confessed that when he fell ill after his first phlebotomy,¹⁰⁶ he felt himself capable of believing in the miracles of Moses; after the second, in the incarnation; after the third, in the immaculate conception. After the fourth phlebotomy he had reached such a pitch that he found himself grieving because there were no other beliefs of this kind to accept. The good Leo, probably a wiser man than he for his century, waited on St. Tiburtius for a cure. For three whole days the pontiff remained fasting and motionless, waiting for the visitation of a dream. But his pain never forsook him long enough to permit him the refreshment of sleep or dreams, so that after three days of great agony, he at last closed his eyes in that sleep which is dreamless.

After the customary rites had been performed and the body of the most exalted Leo had been washed in oils and wines, he was given over to the worms. And when the bells died away and all eyes were dry again, the prelates, the lower clergy, the ambassadors of the emperor, the notables and the burghers gathered together in the square of St. Peter to discuss the election of a successor.

In the ninth century it was not the custom to select the pontiff in secret session of the Sacerdotal Council. There was no conclave where a horde of cardinals, locked in dark cells, voted each one for himself until forced by sheer hunger to agree to the demands of the majority. The popes of those days were chosen in a crowded marketplace with the sun at zenith and the blood and wine flowing abundantly all round, while their various factions fought out the issue with stones bludgeons rather than with private intrigues. The pontiff then was as much a representative of the people as were the tribunes of ancient Rome, and the people played a great part in his election. Their suffrage was openly

104. *Byron*—Lord George Byron (1788–1824), the British poet honored as a hero in Greece for fighting in the Greek War of Independence, in which he died after contracting a fever.

105. *638 drams*—0.65 kilograms.

106. *phlebotomy*—drawing blood from a vein.

canvassed in exchange for gold, wine, or the women who ran about in the marketplace promiscuously exchanging kisses for votes. So the death of a pope brought real joy to his subjects who, just like the man in the street under constitutional government today, had but one possession each: their vote. And in every election the merest doorkeeper has a chance of shaking the hand of the ruler, of drinking wine from his golden cup, and of enjoying the embraces of his sweet-smelling concubines. According to St. Prudentius there are days in Hades when the everlasting fires die down and the tortures of the sinner cease. Election days are like this for the peoples of the earth. Only then is it recalled that slave and tyrant are fashioned from the same common clay as the common wash-pot and the purple beaker; and that the same potter turned them both on the wheel.

While the people of Rome crowded and jostled in the great square, our heroine, who had long ago worked out her plan of campaign, stood graven on the high terrace of the St. Martin monastery, hands crossed on her breast in the manner of Napoleon, as with eager eyes she watched the vicissitudes of the electoral struggle. There were many candidates that year for the crown. But Joanna's four hundred students, not to mention the courtiers who had received favors of her and the women who had admired her beauty and eloquence, were all stoutly for her. They praised the virtue and unselfishness of Father John, insisting that—as he had neither nephews to advance nor a harem to keep up—he was most likely to spend the revenue of St. Peter's among the poor. The struggle lasted for four whole hours during which Joanna grew pale and flushed by turns until at last, overcome by emotion, she sank on a marble seat and closed her eyes, awaiting her fate. All at once she heard the great cry of the supporters mount up into the sky, hailing the new Pontiff John VIII. It roused her from her trembling lassitude.

The new pope trembled with joy as she drew the purple robe about her shoulders and put on the slippers bearing the cross. As for the latter, it is not clear why they thrice came off her feet as she descended the stairway to the monastery. Perhaps they were too big. Perhaps they disliked feminine feet. At any rate a mule with a gold-edged saddle awaited her below among a crowd of cheering people. Joanna immediately mounted it and left for the Lateran,¹⁰⁷ where she was placed on the throne of gold and the triple crown of Rome,

107. *Lateran*—Lateran Palace, the papal residence.

the world, and Heaven, was placed on her head, while a secretary composed the electoral decree and the multitude cheered itself hoarse. To make her triumph even more brilliant the king of England, Ethelwulf,¹⁰⁸ arrived that day on a pilgrimage to Rome; and he asked to be the first to kiss the new pope's feet, and by this kiss to make all his dominions a tributary to the Holy See. He was followed by some ambassadors from Constantinople who had brought with them precious gifts and the cession of Syracuse¹⁰⁹ as mementoes from the Emperor Michael. At long last Joanna saw the dream of her childhood fulfilled. Seated on a high throne with the dense clouds of incense condensing about her she turned her radiant face on the kneeling crowds and then raised her eyes to the sky as she exclaimed: "Lioba, Lioba, I thank you!"

The master of ceremonies interrupted the ecstasy of the new pontiff by inviting him to sit down on a low stool, on which each pope was placed after his proclamation in order to remind him that even though he bore a triple crown he was nevertheless subject to nature's viler obligations as was the least of his subjects. And while his holiness sat there the priests chanted the "Lord, you raise up the lowly from the mire" while they burned straw and hemp to remind him that the gilded pomps of the world were just as transient as the blaze they kindled before him. The ceremonies lasted eight full days. But while the old priests rubbed their mouths on the sandals of our heroine, nature herself rose up in arms against such desecration. On the day following the coronation, although it was still midsummer, the roads of Rome were blocked by a heavy fall of snow as if the holy city wished to proclaim her mourning by putting on the funeral shroud of winter. There were also many wonders and omens in France and Germany. Earthquakes shook the whole empire, while in Bresse there fell a rain of blood and in Normandy a hail of dead locusts. Even the owls and night-jars, which infested the roofs of the Vatican, hooted for three successive nights in the most ominous manner like the geese of the Capitol did when Rome was threatened by the Gauls. I have gathered and recorded these augurs from various chroniclers in order to justify St. Peter a little, for heretics have accused him of not defending his desecrated throne by some miracle or other. [...]

108. *Ethelwulf*—King Ethelwulf of Wessex (reign 839–858) made a pilgrimage to Rome in 855 following the death of his wife.

109. *Syracuse*—city on the southwest coast of Sicily.

Meanwhile things in Rome were not going as well as they might have; Leo's treasures had been eaten into, and their contents converted into chargers, ceremonies, banquets and pensions. Yet though the keepers of the treasury had long ago emptied it, they were in no hurry to surrender it. They imitated Diogenes,¹¹⁰ who when he had emptied a barrel of wine shut himself up in it. The most serene and holy John VIII, having become bored with affairs of states, with subjects, bulls, encyclicals and other popish amusements, withdrew himself to Ostia,¹¹¹ which was the Corfu of the time, and there in a crowd of merry, smooth-cheeked priests, he spent thoughtless days lulled by the azure waves of the Mediterranean and by the melodies of flutes, cellos, violins and lyres carried by the eunuchs who followed him everywhere.

Joanna was at the great crossroads of her life, as Dante was when he met the lion, leopard and wolf in the forest.¹¹² But she for her part felt other beasts stalking her—beasts no less terrifying to women than wolves and leopards. I refer to the approach of gray hairs and wrinkles. Her beauty, she felt, had reached its swansong. Yet although she had tasted so much forbidden fruit she still preserved her white and dazzling teeth; and her desire, which ambition had overgrown, began once more to stir in her breasts, which, by the way, were as firm and beautiful as ever. Often when her handsome courtiers were gathered round her at a feast she would let her eye travel down the ranks of these habited Adonises, like Catherine going over her royal guard, and wonder to which she should award the apple, and how best she could do so. At other times, remembering the gravity of such a daring act she would recoil in fear, like a constitutional monarch before an arbitrary decree. To tell the truth Joanna cared little enough about impiety; still less was she afraid of the heavenly tribunal, which punishes weakness with eternal fire, and boils in the same bubbling cauldron those who have caused suffering side-by-side with those who have caused pleasure. Having had by now a good deal of experience, Joanna, who was an intelligent girl, found it hard to believe that God had placed so many good things before us simply so that we should resist them; life was

110. *Diogenes*—the Greek ascetic (ca. 413 BCE–323 BCE) who reportedly lived in a wine barrel.

111. *Ostia*—a town on the west-central coast of Italy, which served as a harbor for goods and people travelling to Rome.

112. *lion, leopard, and wolf*—three beasts that Dante encounters before being led into the mouth of Hell by Virgil in the *Inferno*.

not like an English banquet where the grapes that decorate the table are not to be touched. But she was afraid of scandal, pregnancy, and malice—the three guardians of female chastity. (If men were as sterile as mules and as dumb as fishes it would be a poor look-out for these three sentinels I think.)

At any rate Joanna struggled against the devil for two whole months. She spread the leaves of the agnus castus on¹¹³ her bed, like the Athenians at the festivals of Demeter, or drank potions of water-lilies or lettuce heads,¹¹⁴ as Pliny advises us. She followed the prescriptions of St. John the Fasting and overlooked none of the medieval drugs that might help her stifle and suppress the youthful desires that were springing once more in her forty-year-old body like flowers on ruins. But such desires are like quicklime in that the more they are slaked the more fiercely they burn. After every victory over the flesh Joanna, instead of singing triumphal songs, found herself weeping for lost opportunities. “One more such victory and I am lost,” Pyrrhus¹¹⁵ is reported to have said as he was counting his fallen soldiers. Joanna repeated these words to herself when, after one sleepless night, she pulled three gray hairs from her lovely head. Surely, she thought, as she saw defeat staring her in the face, surely it was useless to prolong the battle. She had already selected her conqueror, St. Leo, with his last breath, had commended to her care his only begotten son, or rather his nephew (for the children of popes were called nephews in Rome, especially when the popes in question happened to be saints). This youth was twenty years old at the time, blond as a Laconian dog,¹¹⁶ and absolutely devoted to Joanna. She had elevated him to the office of private chamberlain, which in those days was a much sought-for title.

The name of the youth was Florus and he always slept in the room next to the apostolic chamber so that he might hasten to the pope at the first peal of the little silver bedside bell. Joanna was accustomed, like the ancient Athenians, to carry out her decisions without

113. *agnus castus*—“chasteberry” or “monk’s pepper,” believed to be an aphrodisiac, that is, a pharmaceutical that quenches sexual desire.

114. *water-lilies or lettuce heads*—other plants thought to be aphrodisiacs.

115. *Pyrrhus*—King Pyrrhus of Epirus, who, while defeating the Romans in 280 BCE and 279 BCE, lost an untenable number of soldiers.

116. *Laconian dog*—fighting dogs with blond fur from the southeastern regions of Greece.

delay. But now she found herself for the time being laboring under a certain embarrassment. She needed a pretext that would allow her, the pope, to extend more than her foot to the kisses of that young innocent. Many a time at midnight, leaving her bed, she would tiptoe into the room where the chosen successor to Frumentius lay asleep. And she would gaze for hours at him, shading the lamp with her hands as Selene had once covered her beams with clouds when she visited the Latmian shepherd.¹¹⁷ One night however, she plucked up enough courage to touch his sleeping forehead with her lips; but she fled in terror when she saw his eyelids flutter. Next day the good Florus announced to his friends that a nocturnal vision dressed in a chemise had visited him while he slept. But so common were visions, ghosts and dreams in those days that most of his listeners showed no surprise, and many of them yawned in his face. Nevertheless Florus was certain that his apparition was something quite uncommon and the next night he lay trembling in bed, unable to sleep.

All was still in the papal household with the exception of the owls, and the clocks, when his ears caught a low rustle of sound, like the flight of some nocturnal bird, or the movement of some young girl hurrying to her first assignation and fearful that the sound of her footsteps might be overheard. The door opened as softly as if by a light wind and once more that apparition approached the bed, walking on tiptoe. Florus felt his nightshirt grow moist with sweat as cold as the waters of the Styx. I mean, of course, the Arcadian river and not the infernal one,¹¹⁸ which was hot. The gloom increased his terror. The vision appeared to be self-illuminated and, like a ghost, carried no lamp in its hand. He could only dimly make out its shape in the light of the smoldering fire but it seemed like some white and lowering cloud as it approached the bed. At last it stood by the bed, cloud, phantom, vampire, Joanna. Encouraged by the absolute immobility of the sleeper she began very softly to nibble the soft skin of the forbidden fruit with her lips. She did not dare to bite it.

This warm contact immediately dissipated the chilly fear which had settled on the blood of the boy; as he came to himself he stretched

117. *visited the Latmian shepherd*—a Greek myth in which Selene, the lunar deity, falls in love with a shepherd boy, visiting him each night as he sleeps forever.

118. *the Arcadian River and not the infernal one*—reference is *not* to the mythological river leading to the underworld.

out both arms to seize the phantom but it just succeeded in evading him and escaping. It left in his hands a torn chemise and some yellow hairs. By now the good Florus was not satisfied with these spoils. His blood was up, and so was his curiosity. He pursued the apparition, which fled swiftly into the bedroom, where it proceeded to go round in a circle until at last it caught its foot in a corner of its own gown and fell full length on the floor beneath the open window. Florus stretched out his arms. Instead of encountering bones, maggots, corruption, or any other classical attribute of vampirism, his hands found themselves on a smooth warm skin, which seemed to cover a living and beating heart. As he did so the moon came out from behind the clouds and shone full on the face and the bare breasts of the most serene and holy pontiff, John VII.

Here, my dear reader, I could if I wished borrow some timely obscenity to fatten up my story from the Abbot Casti, the most holy Pulci, or the right reverend Rabelais.¹¹⁹ The story could do with it. It has become as dry as the stricken fig tree of the New Testament.¹²⁰ But being neither theologian nor priest nor even an acting-deacon I do not feel that I have the right to pollute either my hands or your ears. The creator of *Don Juan*¹²¹ found himself in roughly the same predicament when, after a long pursuit, his hero's hand actually rested on the white bosom of the third or fourth of his heroines—lulled as softly as the Ark on Ararat.¹²² And not being at all clear how to go on and remain his usual modest self, Byron abandoned the poem and poetry, and became in despair a misanthropist and philhellene, and took himself off to be buried in a swamp at Missolonghi.¹²³ But since this is a purely factual account of events, I feel bound to confess that things

119. *Abbot Casti, the most holy Pulci, or the right reverend Rabelais*—literary figures known for their liberal use of obscenities.

120. *fig-tree of the New Testament*—see Mark 11:12–14. “When Jesus and his disciples “came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, ‘May no one ever eat fruit from you again.’” (NRSV)

121. *Don Juan*—a satirical poem by Lord Byron about a man endlessly seduced by women.

122. *Ark on Ararat*—Genesis 8:4 reports that Noah's ark came to rest on dry land on Mount Ararat, in what is now Turkey.

123. *swamp at Missolonghi*—where Byron died after joining the Greek War of Independence.

went so well for Joanna and Florus after the necessary confessions and explanations that the cheeks of the Virgin, which they had forgotten to cover, became positively scarlet with shame. The cheeks of St. Peter turned green with rage. And the icon of the crucified fell down and smashed itself to pieces, while the guardian angel of Pope John VIII, who had been blissfully unaware that the keeper of the heavenly keys was a woman, flew off into Heaven with indignant wing-beats.

Had this abominable act been committed during the day I have no doubt but that it would have caused an eclipse of the sun. As it took place during the night, however, the chronologers have to be content with describing how a blood-stained cloud encircled the moon. According to others the omen was carried over to the following day, when the inhabitants of the eternal city waited in vain for the morning star to rise. The night, indeed, was three times as long as it usually is, as was the night on which Zeus begat Hercules. But one doubts whether Joanna found it tedious if only because, in the words of Solomon, “neither Hades nor fire nor woman’s love can be quenched.” [...]

29.3 Nikolai Leskov, *Singlethought* (1879)

Nikolai Leskov, "Singlethought," in *Satirical Stories of Nikolai Leskov*, trans. William B. Edgerton, (New York: Western Publishing Company, 1969), 63–94. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

The next story, "Singlethought," is by Nikolai Leskov (1831–1895), a Russian journalist, novelist, satirist, and short-story writer who focused on the lower classes, the clerical estate, and ethnic and religious minorities. "Singlethought" was the first in a series of Leskov stories about "righteous men." Its protagonist, Ryzhov, is a simple but common-sensical foil to the corrupt clergy and government officials who surround him.

Christian morality served as a central theme in Leskov's work. The literary scholar Stephen Lottridge suggests that—while modern critics study Leskov most seriously as a craftsman and storyteller—it is the moral themes of his work that generated the most attention during his lifetime.¹²⁴

Julia Alissandratos notes a number of compositional parallels between "Singlethought" and traditional saints' lives: attention to the humble origins of the protagonist's family, appeals to the authority of other sources, an emphasis on the saint's athleticism, praise for the saint's honesty and humility, the intrusion of evil into a harmonious life, the humbling of the mighty, the receipt of a just reward for righteous deeds, and even methods of dating within the story.¹²⁵ But we find major differences as well, most notably the deadpan humor that infuses the tale—a humor that seems to mock the conventions of saints' lives. Ryzhov's piety often appears as ridiculous as it is admirable.

124. Stephen S. Lottridge, "Nikolaj Leskov's Moral Vision in the *Prolog* Tales," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 18 no. 3 (1974): 252–258.

125. Julia Alissandratos, "A Stylization of Hagiographical Composition in Nikolaj Leskov's 'Singlethought (Odnodum),' " *Slavic and East European Journal* 27 no. 4 (1983): 416–432.

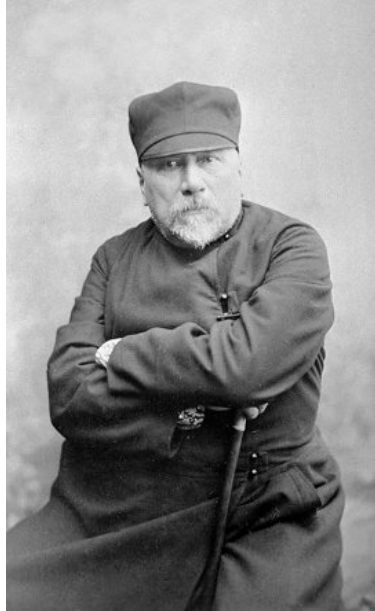


Figure 139. Nikolai Leskov, ca. 1880s

Leskov grew increasingly cynical about institutional Orthodoxy during his life, especially after a trip to Paris in 1875, where he talked at length with Western clerics and read the Bible and various Protestant texts closely. Official Christian doctrine, he came to believe, mattered less than did “spiritual Christianity” and what he termed the “free feelings and inclinations of my childhood.” During his travels he toyed with the notion of writing about “a Russian heretic—an intelligent and well-read ‘spiritual-Christian’” who finds Christian truth “only in his own soul.”¹²⁶

There are parallels between Leskov’s fiction and the religious ideals in Leo Tolstoy’s fiction and non-fiction. Tolstoy, whose work appears later in this section, sought a pure, spiritual, ethical Christianity, unsullied by institutional bureaucracy or dogma. Although Leskov began his search for such Christianity

126. Lottridge, 252–253.

before Tolstoy began his, Leskov later found inspiration and solace in Tolstoy's vision.

"Singlethought" pokes gentle fun at conservative religious beliefs. Its criticisms of dissolute government officials and petty, devious clergy are more pointed. In this tale, officialdom—be it ecclesiastical or secular—is rife with corruption. Church and state conspire to grease each other's palms, and they care little about those they serve. Leskov illustrates in a number of ways the great divide between Christian ideals and the behavior of church officials.

The influences of Protestantism on Leskov's "spiritual Christianity" are quite apparent here. Ryzhov's morality stems from his own reading of the Bible (which officials in the story insist is "not suitable for everybody to read") rather than from church doctrine. Hierarchy and pomp are alien to Ryzhov, who exhibits true humility. In fact his goodness prompts the governor to ask whether he belongs to a sect.

Ever the satirist, Leskov celebrates the absurd. During the death scene the narrator observes, "This was the first time I had been present at the death of that remarkable man." And there is something fearsome but also quite silly in the sight of Ryzhov standing on a tree stump while howling passages from Isaiah.

Without three righteous men no city shall stand.

For the forty-eighth time a certain great Russian writer lay dying before my eyes. He is still alive, just as he remained alive after his forty-seven previous deaths, which took place under other auspices and in other circumstances.

He lay alone before me, stretched out full length on his unencompassable sofa, and was getting ready to dictate to me his last will and testament—but instead of that he started swearing.

I can relate without any embarrassment just how it happened and what the consequences were.

The writer was threatened by death through the fault of the theatrical censorship committee,¹²⁷ whose unflinching hand at that time had just killed his play. There was not a single pharmacy that had any

127. *theatrical censorship committee*—all plays in imperial Russia required clearance from governmental censors.

medicine for the tormenting pains this had inflicted on his authorial health.

“My soul is poisoned, and all my guts are tangled up in my belly,” said the sufferer, looking up at the ceiling of his hotel room. Then, turning to me, he suddenly cried out:

“Why don’t you say anything? You act as if your mouth were stopped up with the devil knows what. You Petersburg people have some kind of nastiness in your souls; you haven’t got a word of consolation for a man even when he lies dying right here before your eyes.”

This was the first time I had been present at the death of that remarkable man; and failing to understand his death throes, I said to him:

“How can I console you? At least I can tell you one thing: everybody will be extremely sorrowful if this harsh decision by the theatrical censorship committee cuts short your precious life, but—”

“That’s not bad for a start,” the writer interrupted. “Keep on talking, please, and maybe I can get to sleep.”

“Go right ahead,” I answered. “And so, are you really sure you are dying?”

“Am I sure? I tell you I’m just about to croak!”

“Excellent,” I answered, “but have you thoroughly considered whether this vexation is really worth dying over?”

“Of course it is!” groaned the dying man. “It’s worth a thousand rubles.”

“Yes,” I answered. “Unfortunately, your play would scarcely have brought in more than a thousand rubles, and so—”

But the dying man would not let me finish. He quickly jumped up from the sofa and shouted:

“What sort of disgusting talk is that! Just let me have a thousand rubles and then you can talk any way you please.”

“But why should I pay for other people’s sins?” I asked.

“And why should I take the loss?”

“Because you, who know the conditions in our theaters, described nothing but upper-class people in your play and made each one of them out to be worse and more disgusting than the next.”

“Ye-e-es. So that’s your kind of consolation. I take it that you think we should describe nothing but good people. Well, brother, I write about what I see, and I see nothing but filth.”

“That shows your eyesight is bad.”

“Maybe so,” the dying man answered, now completely furious. “But what can I do when I can see nothing but abomination in either your soul or mine? And for that may the Lord God truly help me to turn my back on you and go to sleep with a clear conscience, and I will leave tomorrow full of scorn for my native land and your consolations.”

And the prayer of the sufferer was answered: he truly got an excellent night’s sleep, and I took him to the station the next morning. But then his words caused me in my turn to be seized by pangs of uneasiness.

“What!” I thought. “Is it really possible that nothing but filth can be seen in my soul or his or the soul of any other Russian? Can all the goodness and kindness that has ever been noted by the artistic eye of other writers really be nothing more than nonsense and fabrication? That is not only sad, it is frightful. If no city can stand without three righteous men, as the folk saying goes, then how can a whole country survive with nothing but the filth that lives, dear reader, in your soul and mine?”

I found this frightful and unbearable, and I set out to look for righteous men. I set out with the solemn vow not to rest until I should find at least that small number of three righteous persons without whom “no city shall stand.” But no matter where I turned and no matter whom I asked, everybody answered to the effect that they had never seen any righteous men, because all men were sinful. Still, here and there I would run across somebody who knew a few good people, and I started taking notes. This would all have to be collected and examined, I thought to myself, in order to see whether they were righteous or unrighteous, and to find out “what rose above the level of simple morality” and therefore was “holy in the sight of the Lord.”

And so here are some of my notes.

• Chapter 1 •

During the reign of Catherine the Great,¹²⁸ in the family of a certain government clerk by the name of Ryzhov, there was born a son by the name of Alek. This family lived in Soligalich, a district town of Kostroma Province¹²⁹ that lay between the Kostroma River and Svetitsa. According to Prince Gagarin’s Encyclopedia that town contains

128. *reign of Catherine the Great*—1762–1796.

129. *Kostroma Province*—roughly 500 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

six stone churches, two religious schools and one secular, seven mills and factories, thirty-seven shops, three inns, two taverns for the sale of liquor, and 3,665 inhabitants of both sexes. The town has two yearly fairs and a weekly bazaar; besides this it is recorded that there is “a rather active trade in lime and tar.” At the time when our hero was alive there were salt works here as well.

It is necessary to know all this in order to get some idea how such a person as our insignificant hero Alek—or as he was later called, Aleksandr Afanasevich Ryzhov, nicknamed “Singlethought”—could really have existed.

Alek’s parents had a home of their own—one of those little houses in that wooded area that were worth nothing at all but at least provided a shelter. Apart from Alek the government clerk Ryzhov had no other children, or at least I never heard of any.

The clerk died soon after the birth of this son and left his wife and son with nothing except that little house, which, as stated above, was worthless. But the clerk’s widow was herself worth a lot: she was one of those Russian women, who

Unflinching in disaster saves the day;
Dashes into the furiously burning house,
And bravely stops the horse that runs away.

—a simple, healthy, sober-minded Russian woman, with strength in her body, with courage in her soul, and with a tender capacity for loving deeply and truly.

When she became a widow she still had features that were attractive enough to suit unpretentious tastes, and several matchmakers were sent to call on her, but she declined all further matrimony and began to spend her time baking pies. On ordinary days these pies were made of cottage cheese and liver, and on fast days of porridge and peas. The widow would carry them to the square on peddler’s trays and sell them for five copper kopecks apiece. With the income from her pie production she fed herself and her son, whom she turned over to a “schoolmarm” for some learning. The schoolmarm taught Alek what she herself knew. Further and more serious learning he got from a deacon with braided hair and a leather pouch in which he carried snuff without any snuffbox, for use in the well-known way.

After he had finished off Alek’s learning, the deacon took his pot of porridge in payment, and thereupon the widow’s son set forth in the world to earn his living and receive all the benefits that were destined for him in this life.

Alek was then fourteen years old, and at this age it is time to introduce him to the reader.

Physically, young Ryzhov took after his mother: he was tall, broad-shouldered—almost an athlete—with unbounded strength and indestructible health. In the years of his boyhood he was stronger than everybody else, and he presided so successfully over the troops in fist fights that whichever side Alek Ryzhov happened to be on was considered invincible. He had spare time and he loved to work. The deacon's school had given him excellent, flowing, clear, and beautiful handwriting, in which he wrote out for old women a great quantity of prayer lists for the dead, and thereby laid the foundation for his own bread and butter. But more important than this were the qualities his mother gave him through her own living example, transmitting her austere and sober disposition to his healthy soul, living in its healthy, powerful body. Like his mother, he was moderate in everything and never resorted to any outsider for help.

At fourteen years he already considered it a sin to live off his mother. The prayer lists did not bring in very much; and besides, that income, depending as it did on chance, was irregular. Ryzhov had an innate aversion to trade, and he would not leave Soligalich, so as not to be separated from his mother, whom he loved very much. For this reason it was necessary to dig up a job right there, and he dug one up.

At that time regular postal service was just getting started in our country. A system of messengers was established between neighboring towns, and once a week they would make the journey on foot, carrying mailbags with packages. This was called "walking mail." The pay for this service was not set very high: a ruble and a half a month "on your own food and in your own shoes." But those who found such maintenance tempting still hesitated to undertake carrying the mail, for the sensitive Christian conscience of Russian piety found something suspicious in all this, and feared lest such a vain enterprise as the carrying of paper should contain something heretical and contrary to the true Christian faith.

Everyone who chanced to hear about it pondered over how to avoid losing their souls thereby, so that they should not miss eternal life for the sake of temporary recompense. At this point the compassion of the neighbors fixed up widow Ryzhov's son Alek.

"He," they said, "is an orphan: the Lord will forgive more in him—especially since he's so young. If a bear or a wolf chews him up on the road while he is carrying the mail and he gets called before the

judgment seat, all he will have to answer is, 'I didn't understand, Lord,' and that will be all there is to it. Even then there won't be anything to take away from him. And if he should get through it alive and live to a ripe old age, then he can go into a monastery and pray it all off very well—and he won't even have to pay for the candles and incense. For an orphan like him what more could he expect?"

Alek himself, who was more affected by this than anybody else, had nothing against the world but was not beholden to it, as the saying goes. With a firm hand he picked up the mailbag, threw it over his shoulder, and started carrying it back and forth from Soligalich to Chukhloma. Service in the walking mail was perfectly suited to his taste and nature: he went alone through the forests, fields, and swamps, and would think his orphan thoughts to himself, just as they came to him under the stimulation of everything he met and saw and heard. Such circumstances might have made a poet out of him like Burns¹³⁰ or Koltsov,¹³¹ but Alek Ryzhov had another turn of mind—neither poetic nor philosophical—and he became only the remarkable eccentric "Singlethought." Neither the fatigue of the distant road, nor heat, nor cold, nor wind and rain could frighten him. His mailbag was so insignificant for his powerful shoulders that in addition to that one he always carried another too, a gray canvas bag, in which there lay a thick book that had an irresistible influence over him.

That book was the Bible.

• Chapter 2 •

I do not know how many years he served in the walking mail, continually lugging his mailbag and his Bible, but it seems to have lasted a long time and it ended with the replacement of the walking mail by postmen on horseback, and Ryzhov was awarded a government rank. After these two important events in the life of our hero his fate underwent an important turning point. He liked carrying the mail so much on foot that he refused to ride on the post wagon and started looking for another job—again by all means there in Soligalich, so as not to be separated from his mother, who by now was very old and had lost so much of her eyesight that her pies had deteriorated.

130. *Burns*—the romantic, Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759–1796), whose work was and remains popular in Russia.

131. *Koltsov*—the Russian poet Aleksei Koltsov (1808–1842), whose work imitated that of Robert Burns.

Judging by the fact that government ranks were not given quickly to the lower postal employees, usually not till after some twelve years of service, we may suppose that Ryzhov at that time was about twenty-six years old, or even a little older. During all that time he had only walked back and forth between Soligalich and Chukhloma, and while he was walking and resting he read nothing but his Bible in its shabby binding. He read it to his heart's content, and he got from it the great and solid ideas that formed the basis of the original life he led later, when he had begun to reason things out and apply his biblical views to his affairs.

And there really was much in all this that was original. For example, Ryzhov knew all the writings of many of the prophets by heart. He especially loved Isaiah, whose deep knowledge of God corresponded to his spiritual nature and constituted his whole catechism and his whole theology.

An old man who in his youth had known the eighty-year-old Ryzhov after he had become famous and earned the name of "Single-thought," told me how old Ryzhov recalled some sort of "oak tree in a swamp," where he especially liked to rest and "shout into the wind."

"I used to stand up on it," he said, "and howl into the air":

The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but my people do not consider. A seed of evildoers, children who are corrupters! Why should you be stricken any more, you will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Do not come to appear before me. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and the Sabbaths, I cannot away with the great day. Your fasts and your appointed feasts and your new moons my soul hates. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: indeed, when you make many prayers I will not hear. Wash, take away the evil from your souls. Learn to do well, and come let us reason together, and though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow. But your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves gifts, and follows after rewards. Therefore says the Lord of Hosts: Woe to the mighty. My fury shall not cease against my adversaries.¹³²

132. ... *My fury shall not cease against my adversaries*—based on the first chapters of Isaiah, with changes and omissions.

So the little orphan boy would shout this, “Woe, woe to the mighty!” over the empty swamp, and it seemed to him that the wind would catch up the words of Isaiah and carry them off to where the dry bones that were seen by Ezekiel lay motionless;¹³³ no living flesh would grow on them, and no corrupt heart came to life in their breast.

The oak and the serpents of the swamp listened to him, and he himself became half a mystic and half an agitator in the biblical sense; according to his words he “breathed love and daring.”

All this had ripened within him long before, but it came to light only when he received his government rank and began hunting for another job, not overlooking the swamp. Ryzhov’s development was completely finished, and the time was approaching for action in which he could apply the rules he had worked out for himself on his biblical foundation.

Under the same oak and above the same swamp where Ryzhov shouted in the words of Isaiah, “Woe to the mighty,” he waited until he received the inspiration that gave him the idea of becoming mighty himself, so that he might put to shame those who were the mightiest of all. And so he accepted this consecration and bore it up to the grave that ended the almost one hundred years of his life, never once having stumbled or faltered to the right or to the left.

Now before us lie several examples of his astonishing power, which was stifled in its cramping confinement; and at the end of this tale there is an unexpected act of audacious fearlessness, which crowned his chivalrous head with a chivalrous reward.

• Chapter 3 •

In that distant period from which my tale about Ryzhov has come down, the most important person in every Godforsaken little town in Russia was the town governor. It was frequently asserted and disputed by no one that in the opinion of many Russians the town governor was the “third person in the realm.” In the mind of the common people the governmental authority branched out from its primary source, the monarch; in this way the first person in the state was the emperor, who ruled the whole country; after him came the provincial governor, who had charge of the province; and then right after the governor came the third person, the town governor, who “sat on the town.” At that time district police officers did not yet exist, and for that reason

133. *dry bones that were seen by Ezekiel* ...—Ezekiel 37.

they were not included in this division of authority. For that matter, things remained this way even afterwards: the district police officer was a traveling man, and he thrashed only the country people, who didn't yet have their own conception of the hierarchy, and no matter who thrashed them, they always kicked out their legs the same way.

The introduction of the court system, which put a limit on the former theocratic authority of those village administrators, rather spoiled all this, especially in the towns, where it contributed a good deal to the decline in the prestige of both the town and the provincial governors. It was impossible to raise this prestige to its former level, at least as far as town governors were concerned, because their high position was replaced in the new order of things.¹³⁴

But at the time when Singlethought was considering and determining his fate, all this was still flourishing in good order. The governors sat in their capitals like little tsars. It was hard to gain access to them, and an audience with them was accompanied by fear and trembling. They showered their haughtiness on everybody, and everybody bowed down before them to the waist, and some—through particular zeal—even to the ground; the archpriests would greet them at the door of the church with crosses and holy water, and the second-rate gentry would honor them with expressions of humble servility and barely found the courage to ask them, through a few carefully chosen intermediaries, to “stand at the baptismal font as godfather.” And even when they condescended to come down to such a level of kindness, they conducted themselves regally: they would not go to the baptism themselves but would send their adjutants or administrative assistants as substitutes, bearing the baptismal cloth and receiving the honors “in the name of him who had sent them.” In those days everything was majestic, sedate, and serious, in keeping with those serious, good old days, which are often contrasted to our present times, neither good nor serious.

An excellent opportunity turned up for Ryzhov to get close to the source of city authority and take a position at the fourth level of the empire without leaving his native town. In Soligalich the old policeman died, and Ryzhov got the idea of asking for his job.

134. ... *their high position was replaced in the new order of things*—Tsar Alexander II reformed Russia's judicial system in 1864, introducing public hearings, jury trials, professional lawyers, etc.

• Chapter 4 •

Although the policeman's position was not very high, despite the fact that it occupied the first level just below the town governor, still it was rather advantageous if only the man who occupied it was adept at pulling a log of wood, a couple of beets, or a head of cabbage off every wagon. But if he was not skilled at that, it would go hard with him, since the official salary for that fourth highest position in the empire was fixed at only ten paper rubles a month, in other words, about two rubles and eighty-five kopecks according to our present figures. Out of this the fourth most important personage in the empire had to maintain himself and his family in a proper manner, and since that was impossible, every policeman squeezed a little out of everybody who came to see him about something "on business." It was impossible to make ends meet without this "squeezing," and even the *Voltaireans*¹³⁵ offered no objection to that. The thought of an "unaccepting" policeman had never occurred to anybody, and so if all policemen "accepted," then Ryzhov would have to accept too. The authorities themselves could not wish or allow him to corrupt the established procedures. About this there could be no doubt whatever, or even any discussion.

The town governor to whom Ryzhov applied for the policeman's job naturally did not even ask himself about his ability to take bribes. Very likely he thought that on this point Ryzhov would be like all the rest, and so there was no special agreement between them on this point. The governor took into consideration only his enormous height, his physique, his well-known strength, and his tirelessness in walking, which Ryzhov had shown through his delivery of the mail on foot. All these were qualities well suited to the police work for which Ryzhov had applied, and so he was made the Soligalich policeman, and his mother continued to bake her pies and sell them in that same market where her son was to establish and maintain good order—observing true weight and full measure, shaken down.

The town governor gave him just one suggestion:

"Beat them without maiming them, and don't grab anything that belongs to me."

Ryzhov promised to fulfill this and entered into action, but soon he began to raise strange doubts about himself, which started troubling that third person in the empire; and the former Alek himself, or Ale-

135. *Voltaireans*—followers of the French enlightenment philosopher, Voltaire (1694–1778).

ksandr Afanasevich, as people called him now, was exposed to very painful ordeals.

From the very first day of his work Ryzhov proved to be diligent and careful in his duties. When he came to the market square he assigned a place to each wagon, and he set out the women and their pies without giving the best place to his own mother. As for the drunken peasants, he made some of them see reason and he taught the rest of them a lesson with his authoritative arm, but in a pleasant way, and so well that you might think he was doing them a favor—and he took nothing in return for his lesson. On that same day he refused an offering from the cabbage women, who had come to bow down before him on business, and he informed them that nobody owed him anything on business, because whatever he had coming to him on business “would come from the tsar, and God forbids taking bribes.”

The day went well for Ryzhov, and the night went even better: he walked around the whole town, and whenever he met anybody wandering around at that late hour he would ask where they were from, and where they were going, and what for. If it was a good person he would talk with him a little, and even walk along with him and give him some advice, but he gave a good yank on the ears of one or two drunkards, and he took a watchman’s wife who had gone out to cast a spell on the cows, and he locked her up in the clink, and the next morning he reported to the town governor that the only hindrance he had in his work was the watchmen.

“They spend their time in idleness,” he said, “and then they walk around half asleep for no reason. They are always pestering people on business, and they themselves go to the dogs. The best thing is to turn them out for their empty-headed laziness and send them off to pull weeds in your excellency’s garden, and I’ll manage the whole thing myself.”

The governor didn’t see any objections to that, and his thrifty wife thought it was a fine idea; only the watchmen may not have liked it, and it didn’t exactly fit the law—but who would ever think of asking the watchmen? And as for the law, the governor judged that with good Russian judgment:

Just saddle the law like a horse, you know,
 It’ll take you wherever you want to go.

But Aleksandr Afanasevich placed above everything else the law that says to “Eat your bread in the sweat of your brow,” and according to that law it turned out that every unnecessary “hireling” was a useless

burden that ought to be dropped and assigned somewhere else to some real work—the sweaty kind.

So this matter was arranged the way Ryzhov indicated, and it was pleasing in the sight of the ruler and the people, and it turned the hearts of the grateful toward Ryzhov. Ryzhov himself walked about the town by day, and he walked alone by night, and little by little his good, thrifty supervision began to make itself felt everywhere, and again this was pleasing in the eyes of all. In short, everything went well and promised imperturbable peace—but right here was where the trouble began:

Peaceful people? Nothing's worse!
Who'll then line the judge's purse?

Nothing at all came in from any direction on business, and except for the harvesting of his garden the governor received no profits—neither large, middle-sized, nor small.

The governor waxed wroth in spirit; he went to the heart of the matter, saw that this could not be, and started a bitter persecution against Ryzhov.

He asked the archpriest to find out whether there was not some kind of un-Orthodoxy in the unbusinesslike Ryzhov; but the archpriest answered that he could discern no manifest un-Orthodoxy in Ryzhov, but he did notice a certain pride in him, which of course came from the fact that his mother baked pies and turned some over to him.

“I would counsel that this commerce be halted, since it ill becomes her now because of her son's position, and then that excessive pride within him will be destroyed, and he will become businesslike.”

“I will halt it,” said the governor, and he told Ryzhov: “It is not suitable for your mother to sit in the market place.”

“All right,” said Ryzhov, and he took his mother and her trays away from the market, but he persisted as before in his blameworthy conduct: he remained unbusinesslike.

Then the archpriest pointed out that Ryzhov had not acquired a uniform, and on the Day of Our Risen Lord, having stingily exchanged the triple Easter kiss with only a few intimate friends, he had not appeared with Easter greetings before any of the town's leading citizens—which had led none of them, it must be said, to lodge any complaints.

These two matters were mutually dependent on each other. Ryzhov never went out on festive occasions and therefore he had no occasion to dress up in a uniform, but a uniform was required, and the

former policeman had worn one. Everybody had seen his full-dress coat and collar, his riding-breeches, and tasseled boots, while Ryzhov still dressed in what he had worn when he carried the mail—a quilted jacket made of striped mattress-ticking, fastened together with hooks, tan nankeen trousers,¹³⁶ and a simple peasant cap, and for the winter he had a sheepskin coat with the wool turned inside out, and he got himself nothing else, nor could he get anything else on the salary of two rubles and eighty-seven kopecks a month on which he lived, performing his duties faithfully and justly.

On top of that something happened that required money: Ryzhov's mother died, having nothing on earth to do when she could no longer sell pies on it.

Aleksandr Afanasevich buried her very "stingily," according to the general opinion, thus showing his lack of love for her. He paid a bare trifle to the clergy for her, but for the pie-seller herself he didn't even bake a pie, and the forty-day prayer for her soul he didn't order at all.

A heretic! And this was all the more certain because, even though the governor didn't trust him and the archpriest had his doubts about him, the governess and the archpriestess stood up for him to the hilt—the former because he had herded the watchmen into her garden and the latter for some secret reason that lay in her "oppositional character."

In these two personages Aleksandr Afanasevich found defenders. The governor's wife sent him two measures of potatoes from her earthly harvest, but without untying the sacks he carried the potatoes back on his shoulders and said tersely:

"I thank you for your kindness, but I don't accept gifts."

Then the priest's wife, a suspicious lady, presented him with two calico shirt fronts of her own handiwork, made in the early days before her archpriest had been ordained; but the cranky fellow would not accept that either.

"I can't take gifts," he said, "and anyhow, since I wear plain clothes, I haven't got any use for that sort of finery."

Thereupon the priest's wife made a spitefully cutting remark to her husband:

"That's the kind of man who ought to be standing before the altar," she said, "and not you spiritual fleecers."

136. *nankeen trousers*—made of yellow or buff-colored cotton fabric.

The archpriest got angry and ordered his wife to shut up, and he himself kept lying there and thought:

“This is some new-fangled kind of freemasonry,¹³⁷ and if I keep an eye on it and expose it, I may win special distinction, and I may even get transferred to Petersburg.”

And so he worked himself into a fever over this, and in his fever he devised a plan to lay Ryzhov’s conscience so bare that it would separate his soul from his body.

• Chapter 5 •

Lent was approaching, and the archpriest saw as clearly as if it were right before his eyes just how he would lay Ryzhov’s soul bare to the separation point, and then he would know how to deal with him for straying from the truths of Orthodoxy.

Thereupon he advised the governor to send him the striped policeman for confession during the very first week. And he promised to work on him thoroughly at confession, and worm all his innermost secrets out of him, and find out why he shied away from everything and wouldn’t take gifts. And he added: “By the looks of his conscience when we have laid it bare through fear, we shall see to what powers he is subject, and then we shall subject him to them for the salvation of his soul.”

Having mentioned the words of Paul, the archpriest waited quietly, knowing that each one could find what he needed in them.

The governor also did his part.

“You and I, Aleksandr Afanasevich,” he said, “must set an example for people in religion and pay our respects to the church.”

Ryzhov said he agreed.

“Now, brother, do fast and go to confession.”

“Agreed,” said Ryzhov.

“And since we are both in the public eye, we ought to do all this in a public way, and not as if we were somehow trying to be secret about it. I myself go to the archpriest for confession; he is the most experienced of all the clergy—now, suppose you go to him too.”

“I’ll go to the archpriest.”

“Yes—you go during the first week and I’ll go during the last week. In that way we’ll divide it up between us.”

137. *freemasonry*—a mystical, fraternal movement, popular in intellectual circles within Russia, particularly in the late 1700s and 1800s.

“And I agree on that too.”

The archpriest confessed Ryzhov thoroughly and even boasted that he had scolded him for all he was worth, but he found no mortal sin in him.

“He confessed to first one thing, then another, then a third; he wasn’t innocent in the slightest, but his sins were all simple and human, and he thinks no evil against the authorities, and he has no thought of reporting either you or me on business. And as for his ‘not accepting gifts,’ well, that is purely because of his harmful notions.”

“So he does have harmful notions just the same. And what kind of harmful notions are they?”

“He’s filled his head with Bible-reading.”

“So that’s what the fool has got into!”

“Yes. He read it out of boredom, and now he can’t get it out of his mind.”

“The blasted fool! But what can we do with him?”

“You can’t do anything: he’s pretty far gone by now.”

“Has he already gone as far as Christ?”

“He’s read it all—all of it.”

“Well, in that case it’s all up with him.”

They felt sorry about it, and they became more charitable toward Ryzhov. In our ancient Russian land every Orthodox knows that whoever has read the Bible all the way through and “even got to Christ” can no longer be held strictly responsible for his actions; but such people are like the well-known “fools of God”—they will do queer things but they won’t harm anybody, and no one is afraid of them. But just to be more certain about Ryzhov’s strange corrigibility on business, the reverend archpriest gave the governor some wise but harsh advice: to get Aleksandr Afanasevich married.

“A married man,” the archpriest explained, “has trouble maintaining his honesty even if he has ‘read up to Christ’; his wife will keep after him like the itch, and one way or another she’ll so wear him out that he will finally give in and let the whole Bible slip out of his head, and then he’ll become receptive to gifts and devoted to the authorities.”

This advice fitted in with the governor’s own ideas, and he ordered Aleksandr Afanasevich to go about it any way he liked but by all means to get married, because bachelors were unreliable in political positions.

“You can say what you will, brother,” he told him, “but I like your way of reasoning about everything, except that your reasoning about one thing just won’t do.”

“How’s that?”

“You’re a bachelor.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“What’s wrong is that you might do something treacherous and run off to somebody else’s province. After all, what’s holding you here? You grab your Bible and you’re gone.”

“Yes, I’m gone.”

“Don’t you see? That’s unreliable.”

“But would a married man be any more reliable?”

“Why, there’s no comparison. I can twist a married man around my little finger. He’ll put up with anything, because he’ll have his brood to raise and his wife to love; but a bachelor is like a bird—you can’t trust him. So there you have it—either leave or get married.”

This judgment did not disturb the puzzling crank in the slightest, and he answered:

“What does it matter? Marriage too is a good thing; it was established by God. If it’s necessary, I’ll get married.”

“But make sure you don’t aim too high.”

“I won’t aim too high.”

“And pick one out in a hurry.”

“O, I’ve already got her picked out; only, I’ll have to go and see whether anybody else has already taken her.”

The governor burst out laughing at him:

“Just look at you there, you sinner!” he said. “Talk about sin never getting near him—and there he’s already turned up a wife for himself.”

“Who said sin never got near?” answered Aleksandr Afanasevich. “The vessel is full of abomination. Only, I haven’t yet proposed to the girl, but I really have got her picked out, and I’d like to get your permission to go and take a look at her.”

“And where is this girl of yours—not one of our local ones, surely? From somewhere else?”

“Well, it’s like this: she’s not from here and she’s not from somewhere else. She lives down at the spring near the swamp.”

The governor laughed still more, gave Ryzhov leave, and then waited full of curiosity to see when the queer fellow would come back and what he would say.

• Chapter 6 •

Ryzhov really didn't aim too high: a week later he brought his wife to town—a hefty, rosy blonde with good-natured brown eyes and submissiveness in every step and gesture. She was dressed in peasant fashion, and husband and wife walked one behind the other, carrying on their shoulders a yoke from which a painted trunklike basket of bast was suspended by a piece of linen cloth. The basket contained her dowry.

People experienced in trade recognized at once that this was the daughter of the old Kozlikha woman, who lived in an isolated hut at the spring on the edge of the swamp and was reputed to be a wicked old witch. Everybody thought Ryzhov had taken a witch's daughter as his housekeeper.

And this was partly true, except that before he took this housekeeper home, he got himself married up to her. His life as a married man didn't cost him a bit more than his life as a bachelor. On the contrary, it even became more profitable, because as soon as he brought his wife into the house, he dismissed the farm girl to whom for better or worse he had been paying a copper ruble a month. From that time on, the copper ruble stayed in his pocket and the work around the house went better. The healthy hands of his wife were never idle; she would spin and weave, and on top of that she turned out to be an expert at making felt stockings and doing the gardening. In a word, his wife was a simple, skillful, peasant woman, faithful and submissive, with whom the Bible-reading eccentric could live biblically, and there is nothing more to tell about her except what has already been told.

Aleksandr Afanasevich's way of treating his wife was as simple as it could be, but peculiar: his manner of speaking to her was familiar, and hers showed that she looked up to him; he called her "my old woman," and she called him Aleksandr Afanasevich; she waited on him, and he was her lord and master; when he spoke to her, she would answer, and when he was silent, she dared not ask him anything. At the table he would sit and she would serve him; but they held the bed in common, and probably this was the reason why their marriage was fruitful. Just one fruit appeared—an only son, which his "old woman" brought up, and he did not meddle in the upbringing.

Nothing in their relations ever gave any evidence whether his "old woman" loved her biblical husband or whether she did not love him, but there was no doubt about the fact that she was faithful to her hus-

band. Besides that, she was in awe of him as a person who was placed above her according to God's law, and who had a divine right to her. Her peaceful life was not disturbed by that. She could not read and write, and Aleksandr Afanasevich would not fill this gap in her education. Needless to say, they lived a spartan existence, in the strictest frugality, but they did not look on it as a misfortune. This was perhaps helped a lot by the fact that a good many others lived all around in no easier circumstances. They drank no tea and never kept any around, and they ate meat only on high holidays. During the rest of the time they ate bread and vegetables, either pickled or fresh from their garden, and especially mushrooms, which grew in abundance in their wooded part of the country. In the summer season the "old woman" would go through the woods and pick these mushrooms herself, and she herself would store them away, but to her misfortune the only way she could store them was by drying them. They had nothing to salt them with. The cost of salt in the necessary quantity for their whole supply did not enter into Ryzhov's accounts, and once when his "old woman" salted a little tub of choice mushrooms that a tax-farmer¹³⁸ had given her in a sack, Aleksandr Afanasevich, on finding out about it, patriarchally gave his "old woman" a beating and took her to the archpriest so that he could impose a penance on her for disobeying her husband's precepts; and as for the mushrooms, he rolled the tub with his own hands up to the tax-farmer's yard and told him to "take it away, wherever he wanted," and then he gave the tax-farmer a tongue-lashing.

Such was this eccentric, about whom there is little to tell from all the years of his life; he stuck to his place, carried out his little task, which drew no particular sympathy from anyone, and he sought no particular sympathy from anyone. The rulers of the roost in Soligalich considered him to be "damaged by the Bible," and the simple people passed on him their simple judgment that he was "a certain sort of regular whatcha-may-call-it."

For them this rather unclear description had a clear and comprehensible meaning.

Ryzhov did not care in the slightest what people thought about him. He gave honest service to everybody and no special favors to anybody; but mentally he rendered an account to the only one in

138. *tax farmers*—individuals who paid taxes to the government in return for the right to collect money or goods from locals who lived in those regions.

whom he believed with unshakable firmness, calling him the founder and master of all creation. Ryzhov's pleasure consisted in fulfilling his duty, and he found his greatest spiritual comfort in philosophizing about the highest questions of the spiritual world, and about the way the laws of that world were reflected in the appearance and fate of individual persons and whole kingdoms and nations. It is not known whether Ryzhov had the weakness common to many self-taught men of considering himself more intelligent than anybody else; but he was not arrogant, and he never tried to impose his beliefs and views on anybody, or even tell anybody what they were. He would only write them in big notebooks of blue paper that he sewed into one cover bearing the significant title "Singlethought."

What was written in all this enormous manuscript of the philosopher-policeman remained concealed, because Aleksandr Afanasevich's "Singlethought" disappeared at the time of his death, and nobody could say much about it from memory. Only two or three passages from all the "Singlethought" were shown by Ryzhov to one important person on one extraordinary occasion in his life, to which we are now drawing near. The remaining pages of the "Singlethought," the existence of which was known to almost everybody in Soligalich, were used up as wallpaper, or perhaps burned up in order to avoid trouble, since this work contained a great deal of the kind of foolish raving and religious fantasy for which at that time both authors and readers would get packed off to pray at the Solovetsky Monastery.¹³⁹

The spirit of this manuscript, however, became known as a result of the following event, which is famous in the chronicles of Soligalich.

• Chapter 7 •

I cannot remember exactly, nor do I know where to find out, in just what year Sergei Stepanovich Lanskoï, later a count and the well-known minister of internal affairs, was appointed to Kostroma as the provincial governor. This dignitary, according to the apt remark of one of his contemporaries, "had a powerful mind and a haughty presence," and this brief description is correct and quite sufficient to give our reader an adequate idea of him.

139. *Solovetsky Monastery*—a remote monastery in the Solovetsky Islands in the northern White Sea. Governmental and church authorities sometimes exiled opponents of autocracy or official Orthodoxy to the monastery.

One might add only that Lanskoi respected honesty and justice in people and was good himself, and he also loved Russia and the Russians; but he had a nobleman's understanding of them, as an aristocrat with an alien view and a Western standard of measurement for everything.

Lanskoi's appointment to Kostroma as governor took place at the time of Aleksandr Afanasevich Ryzhov's eccentric service as the Soligalich policeman—and it took place under certain unusual circumstances.

On assuming his duties as governor, Sergei Stepanovich followed the example of many public figures and “swept the province clean,” that is, he threw out a large number of bureaucrats who were negligent and had misused their positions, including the governor of Soligalich under whom Ryzhov was serving as policeman.

After turning these worthless persons out of office, the new governor showed no haste in replacing them with others, so that his choice should not fall on the same kind, or perhaps even on worse. In order to pick out worthy men he wanted to look around, or as they say nowadays in Russian, to “get oriented.” For this purpose the duties of the persons who had been dismissed were handed over to temporary replacements drawn from the younger bureaucrats, and the governor soon set out on a tour of the whole province, which had started trembling a very strange tremble at the very rumor of his “haughty presence.”

Aleksandr Afanasevich performed the duties of the town governor. I don't know just what he did as a replacement that was different from the former, “regular” procedures, but it goes without saying that he took no bribes as governor, just as he had taken none as a policeman. Nor did Ryzhov change his way of life, or his relations with other people. He did not even sit on the governor's seat with the three-sided mirror of authority¹⁴⁰ standing before him, but signed his name “on behalf of the governor,” while sitting at the entrance behind his little ink-stained table. For this last bit of stubbornness Ryzhov had an explanation that was connected with the grand finale of his life. After his many years of service, just as during the first days of his work as a po-

140. *three-sided mirror of authority*—a symbol of governmental authority, which sat on the desk of tsarist officials. The imperial, two-headed eagle appeared on the top, and a decree from Peter the Great appeared on each side.

liceman, Aleksandr Afanasevich¹⁴¹ never had a uniform, and he governed “on behalf of the governor” in that same greasy patched and re-patched quilted jacket. And for that reason, when the clerk suggested that he move over to his seat, he answered: “I can’t; my garment betrays that I am not of the wedding party.”

All this was duly noted down in his own hand in his “Single-thought,” with the addition that the clerk had invited him to “change seats in his quilted jacket but to take the eagle off the three-sided mirror,” but Aleksandr Afanasevich “shunned this indecency” and continued to sit in his former place wearing his quilted jacket.

This lack of uniformity did not get in the way of administering police justice in the town, but the question took on an entirely different cast when the news arrived about the coming of the “haughty presence.” In his position as ruler of the town Aleksandr Afanasevich was supposed to meet the governor, receive him, and report to him about the flourishing condition of Soligalich, and also answer any questions Lanskoï might ask him, and acquaint him with all the sights of the town, from the cathedral to the jail, and including the waste land and the gulleys that nobody knew what to do with.

Ryzhov really did have a problem. How could he go through all this in his quilted jacket? Rut he did not worry about this in the slightest. Everybody else, though, worried about it a great deal, because Ryzhov and his disgraceful appearance might plunge the “haughty presence” into a fit of anger at the very first step. It never entered anybody’s head that none other than Aleksandr Afanasevich himself was destined to astonish and even delight the awe-inspiring “haughty presence,” and even to prophesy a promotion for him.

The generally conscientious Aleksandr Afanasevich was not embarrassed in the slightest about how he looked. He shared none of the general timidity of the bureaucrats, and this exposed him to condemnation and hatred and led him to fall in the opinion of his fellow citizens, but he fell only to rise afterwards higher than all the rest, and to leave behind a heroic and almost legendary memory.

• Chapter 8 •

It is not inappropriate to recall once more that in those recent but wholly departed days to which the story of Ryzhov refers, governors

141. *Aleksandr Afanasevich*—Ryzhov (Leskov here uses Ryzhov’s first and patronymic name).

were not at all what they are in the cunning times we now live in, when the majesty of those dignitaries has noticeably dropped—or, in the words of a certain ecclesiastical chronicler, “did most cruelly decline.” At that time governors would make “awesome” tours and would be greeted with fear and trembling. Their movements were accomplished in the midst of grandiose bustle and bother, which was the work not only of all the junior administrative authorities but also of the common rabble and the four-legged brutes. In preparation for the arrival of the governor, towns would be anointed with whitewash, black paint, and yellow ocher. The barriers at the entrances to the towns were repainted in the governmental tricolor; the watchmen and crippled veterans were advised to “wax their hair and mustaches”; and the hospitals stepped up their number of discharges marked “cured.” Everybody right up to the limits of the realm took part in the general excitement. Peasants, men and women, were rounded up in the villages for road work; and they wandered about for months, filling in marshy stretches, patching up log-paved roads, and repairing bridges. At the post stations there were delays even for madcap couriers and all the various lieutenants who were traveling in haste on innumerable official missions. Taking revenge on that impatient crowd for the intolerable offenses they had committed, the stationmasters in unshakable firmness of spirit would make them plod along at that season on any kind of nags that happened to turn up, because the good horses were “getting their rest” in anticipation of the governor. In a word, nobody could pass through without becoming aware through one or another of his senses that something extraordinary was taking place in the nature of all things. Thanks to this, everybody, young and old, knew without any idle talk from a chattering press that the one man was coming than whom there was none higher in all the province; and about this occasion everybody expressed his various feelings as best he knew how to his neighbor. But the most exalted activity took place in the central nests of the district lords and masters—in the judicial offices, where the matter began with a tiresome and boring check of the registers and ended with the merry operation of sweeping the walls and scrubbing the floors. Floor-scrubbing was something in the nature of those classical orgies at the season of the grape harvest, when everybody strenuously rejoiced with only one thought in mind—to live gaily until the hour of death should come. A small convoy of bent old war veterans would bring out of the jail and into the offices some feminine prisoners who had all but perished from boredom and who, seizing on this brief

moment of happiness, made wise here of the captivating rights of their sex in order to alleviate the sad lot of mortals. The low necks and short sleeves in which they set about their work had such a stimulating effect on the young clerks on duty among their papers that the consequences of this, as was well-known, would often appear in the jails in the form of so-called “floor-scrubbing babies,” who were of unacknowledged but indubitably noble origin.

During those same days in the homes dress shoes were blackened, riding-breeches were whitened, and moth-eaten dress coats, stiff with storage, were put into shape for wearing. This also enlivened the town. The dress coats were first hung out in the sun on a hot day, spread out on ropes that were stretched across the courtyards, all of which attracted a crowd of curious persons to every gate; then the dress coats were spread out on pillows or thick felt and beaten with switches; after that they were shaken; still later they were mended, pressed, and finally spread out on an armchair in the hall or some other company room; and last of all, at the conclusion of everything, they were stealthily sprinkled with holy bottles of twelfth-night water, which, as long as it is kept before the icon in a vessel sealed with wax, will not spoil from one Epiphany to the next and will lose none of the wonder-working power it received at the moment when the cross was plunged into it during the singing of “Save your people, O Lord, and bless your property.”

When they left for their meeting with the important personage, the officials would wrap themselves in their duly sprinkled dress coats, and in their capacity as further property of God they would gain salvation. About this there were many reliable accounts, but in the face of our general skepticism at present and especially of the Offenbachian¹⁴² atmosphere that reigns in the world of officialdom, all this has been discredited in public opinion, and, along with many other things rendered sacred by time, is frivolously subjected to doubt. To our fathers, however, who had a firm and genuine belief, it was given according to their faith.

In those days waiting for the governor was long and painful. At that time there were no railways, and trains did not arrive at fixed hours according to a timetable, bringing the governor along with all the other mortals. Instead, a special road was prepared, and after that

142. *Offenbachian*—witty, frivolous, or high-spirited (after the music of Jacques Offenbach, 1819–1880).

no one knew exactly the day or the hour when the dignitary would deign to make his appearance. For that reason the exhausting wait was lengthy and full of special and ceremonial anxiety, at the very height of which there stood the regular policeman on duty, who had the task of watching the road from the highest bell tower in town. He was obliged to keep wide awake and guard the town against an unexpected incursion; but naturally it occasionally happened that he would doze and even drop off to sleep, and then in such unfortunate cases there would be all sorts of trouble. Sometimes the negligent sentinel would let the governor get too close before he rang his little bell, so that there would not be enough time for all the officials to get into their dress coats and dash out, for the archpriest to put on his vestments and take his stand with the cross on the steps, or sometimes even for the town governor to ride out to the entrance gate, standing erect in his cart. In order to avoid this the sentinel was obliged to keep walking around the top of the bell tower and bow at every opening in the direction it faced.

This provided the sentinel with a diversion and society with assurance that he who kept his vigil over them neither slumbered nor slept. But even this precaution did not always help; it sometimes happened that the watchman possessed the ability of the albatross: he would sleep as he walked his rounds and made his bows, and in his sleep he would beat a false alarm, having mistaken a landowner's coach for the governor. Then a vain commotion would take place in the town, which would end with the officials taking off their dress coats again and the town governor unhitching his *troika*,¹⁴³ and the imprudent sentinel being slightly, or not so slightly, thrashed. Such difficulties were encountered often and were not easily overcome, and they bore down with all their weight chiefly on the town governor, who would always gallop out in front of everybody to meet the governor of the province, and be the first to receive his gubernatorial glances and outbursts, and then would gallop back, still standing, ahead of the governor's coach to the cathedral, where the archpriest would be waiting at the door in all his vestments, with the cross and aspergillum¹⁴⁴ in a chalice of holy water. Here the town governor would open up the step of the provincial governor's carriage, by all means with his own hands; and with this gesture he would, so to speak, let the newly arrived personage descend from his wandering ark onto the native soil.

143. *troika*—a sleigh or carriage drawn by a team of three horses.

144. *aspergillum*—a device for sprinkling holy water.

Now all this is no longer done this way. It has all been spoiled, and even through the actions of the provincial governors themselves, among whom there were some who took pleasure in selling themselves short. By now, perhaps, they repent, but what has passed away can never be brought back: nobody opens up the step for them except lackeys and gendarmes.¹⁴⁵

But the former town governor was not at all embarrassed about performing this duty, and he served for all as the prime touchstone; he was always the first to find out whether the governor had arrived rabid or benign. And if the truth must be known, a lot depended on the town governor: he could spoil matters at the outset, because with just one awkward step he could throw the provincial governor into a rage and cause him to rip and roar; and also, with one deft hop, turn, or other appropriate contortion, he could put his excellency into a state of benevolent good humor.

Now every reader, even though he may not have known those patriarchal customs, can judge how natural the panic was among the upper crust of Soligalich officialdom when it had to be represented by such an awkward, peculiar, and hard-headed town governor as Ryzhov, who in addition to all his inconvenient personal qualities had a wardrobe that consisted of one quilted jacket of striped mattress-ticking and one shaggy peasant cap.

That was bound to be the first thing that would come as a blow right between the eyes for the “haughty presence,” about whom idle tongues had brought the most frightful news to Soligalich. How could anything good be expected to come from this?

• Chapter 9 •

Aleksandr Afanasevich really could fill anybody you chose with despair. He let nothing disturb him, and while he was awaiting the governor he behaved as if the dreadful impending event did not concern him at all. He did not tear down a single fence before the house of a single inhabitant; he repainted nothing with whitewash or ocher, and in general he undertook no measures either to spruce up the town or even change his own absurd costume. Instead, he continued to go about his business in his quilted jacket. Whenever some project was suggested to him, he would answer: “It won’t do to make the people lose a lot of money on this. After all, is the governor coming to lay

145. *gendarmes*—police.

waste the land? Let him go through, but let the fence stand.” As for the demands about a dress coat, Ryzhov beat them off by saying that he had no income for that and, as he said, “What I’ve got I’ll wear. When I appear before God, I’ll be stark-naked. It’s not a matter of clothes but of common sense and conscience. ‘Greet him according to his clothes, take leave according to what he knows.’”

Nobody had any hope of out-butting the bull-headedness of Ryzhov; and yet this was important not so much for stubborn Ryzhov, who might not care at all, from his biblical point of view, if the second person in the realm banished him from sight in that quilted jacket. Rather, it was important for everybody else, because the governor would naturally fly into a rage when he saw such a sight as a town governor in a quilted jacket.

Setting great store by the first impression of the guest they were expecting, the Soligalich officials pressed for only two things: (1) that a new coat of paint should be put on the log barrier that was raised and lowered across the highway at the entrance to the town, where Aleksandr Afanasevich was to meet the governor; and (2) that Aleksandr Afanasevich himself should appear on this occasion in a uniform suited to his position rather than in his striped quilted jacket. But how could they manage it?

Opinions differed. Most people tended to favor taking up a collection both to paint the barrier and to dress the town governor. This was all right, of course, as far as the barrier was concerned, but as a way of getting Ryzhov into a uniform it wouldn’t work at all.

He said, “That’s a gift, and I won’t take gifts.” Then there triumphed over them all the proposal that was brought forth by the reverend archpriest out of his ripe store of wisdom. He saw no need for any kind of collection, either to paint the barrier or to put the ruler of the town into uniform. Rather, he said, the whole thing ought to rest on the one who was guiltiest in spirit, and in his opinion the one who was guiltiest in spirit was the tax-farmer. Accordingly, everything ought to fall on him. He alone had the obligation to paint the barrier at his own expense, and not through any kind of compulsion but out of zeal, in return for which the archpriest promised to mention it in a few brief words on meeting the governor and, in addition, to pray for the contributor in a special ecclesiastically worded prayer offered straight from the altar table. Besides that, the reverend archpriest opined that the tax-farmer should give the court assessor, over and above his regular payment in kind, a triple portion of rum, French cognac, and grape

vodka, for which the assessor had a constant hankering. Then let the assessor turn himself in on the sick list and sit quietly at home, drinking this supplementary payment in kind and keeping off the street; and let him hand over his dress coat, which was identical with a policeman's uniform, to Ryzhov, who would scarcely find grounds for refusing it. Then the sheep would be safe and the wolves would be sated.

What made this plan still more fortunate was that the indispensable assessor was fairly similar to Ryzhov in size and shape; and in addition, having married a merchant's daughter not long before, he had a full uniform in excellent condition. Consequently there remained only the task of prevailing on him, in the interests of the general welfare, to go to bed under cover of a serious illness when the authorities arrived, and hand over his accouterments for this occasion to Ryzhov, whom the reverend archpriest, counting on his spiritual authority, undertook to persuade—which he did. Seeing in this neither gifts nor rewards, honest Aleksandr Afanasevich—to the great good fortune of everybody—agreed to put on the uniform. Ryzhov and the assessor's uniform underwent measurements and fittings, and after all the hems and seams in the coat and trousers had been let out on all sides, the matter was brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Although Aleksandr Afanasevich felt a great deal of uncomfortable constraint in the uniform, still he was able to move about, and now he was after all a passable representative of authority. The decision was made to cover the little white cornice remaining between the dress coat and the linen trousers with a patch of the same kind of linen, which successfully hid this cornice. In a word, Aleksandr Afanasevich was fitted out so that the governor could turn him in all directions and admire him this way and that. But it pleased an evil fate to turn all this to mockery and to leave Aleksandr Afanasevich with the appropriately impressive appearance only on one side, and to spoil it completely on the other, and in such an ambiguous fashion that it gave rise to the most arbitrary interpretations of his political outlook, which even before had been puzzling enough.

• Chapter 10 •

The barrier at the town gates was painted in the national colors, consisting of black and white stripes with red borders, and before it even had time to get covered with dust, the news blew in that the governor had left the neighboring town and was bearing down on Soligalich. At once and everywhere soldiers were posted as signalmen, and at

the fence before Ryzhov's humble hut three lively post horses gnawed at the earth, hitched troika-fashion to the cart into which Aleksandr Afanasevich was to spring at the first signal and dash out to meet the "haughty presence."

In these arrangements there was an enormous lot of awkward complications that filled everybody with troubled anxiety, and the cool and collected Ryzhov did not like this at all. He made up his mind "to be always in his own place"; he drove the troika from his own fence down to the gates of the town; and there, in full uniform, wearing his dress coat and white trousers, with report in hand, he sat down on the painted beam of the barrier and settled back like a hermit on a pillar. Around him there gathered a crowd of the curious, whom he did not drive away, but on the contrary entered into conversation with them, and in the midst of this conversation it pleased him to note that a cloud of dust had gathered on the highway, out of which there began to come forth a pair of lead horses with a postilion, decorated with copper disks. That was the governor racing along.

Ryzhov quickly jumped into the cart and was about to drive off when suddenly he was startled by a general groan and sigh from the crowd, which shouted at him:

"Master, take off your britches!"

"What's that?" Ryzhov asked.

"Your britches, Master—take 'em off!" the people answered. "Just look at the place where you sat. The whole barrier's done got printed on the white part."

Ryzhov looked over his shoulder and saw that all the stripes of the national colors on the freshly painted barrier had been printed on his trousers with amazing clarity.

He frowned a little, but immediately sighed and said: "Coming this way there's nothing for the authorities to see," and he started his troika off at a gallop to meet the "haughty presence."

The people only threw up their hands in despair:

"He's hopeless! What will become of him now?"

• Chapter 11 •

The fleetest of foot in the crowd quickly succeeded in letting the clergy and the elders at the cathedral know about Ryzhov's ambiguous aspect as he went to meet the governor, but now it was every man for himself.

The most terrified of all was the archpriest, because the officials had hidden inside the church, but he stood with his cross on the entrance steps. He was surrounded by a very small group of clerics, among whom two figures stood out: a thickset deacon with a big head and a long-legged sexton in his vestments with holy water in a silver-plated chalice that was trembling in his terrified hands. But now their fearful trembling gave way to petrification: on the square there came into view the galloping troika that pulled the post wagon, in which the gigantic figure of Ryzhov towered with remarkable dignity. He was wearing the hat, the dress coat with its red collar, and the white trousers with the linen cornice sewn onto the top, all of which from a distance was spoiled by nothing at all. On the contrary, he appeared to everybody like something sublime, and indeed that is just the way he was supposed to appear. Standing firm on the wagon as it rolled at full speed, with the coachman bounding up and down on the driver's seat, Aleksandr Afanasevich wavered neither to the right nor to the left but sailed along with his heroic arms folded across his chest as if he were on a triumphal chariot, throwing a whole cloud of dust on the coach-and-six and the springless carriage that followed behind. This springless carriage contained the bureaucrats. Lanskoï rode alone in the coach; and in spite of the solid air of importance that distinguished him, it was evident that he was greatly interested in Ryzhov, who was racing along ahead of him, standing erect in his undersized dress coat, which was too tight to cover the pattern of the national colors printed on his white trousers. It is quite possible that a large share of the governor's attention had been attracted to just this curiosity, the meaning of which was not too easy to understand and explain.

Just at the right moment the wagon turned off to one side, and just at the right moment Aleksandr Afanasevich jumped down and opened the door of the governor's carriage.

Lanskoï stepped out, having, as always, his invariably "haughty presence," which contained, however, a rather good heart. Holding the cross over the governor's head, the archpriest said: "Blessed be he that comes in the name of the Lord," and then sprinkled him a little with holy water.

The dignitary applied his lips to the cross, took a *batiste*¹⁴⁶ handkerchief and wiped off the drops that had fallen on his haughty brow, and then walked into the church first. All this took place in full view of

146. *batiste*—sheer, elegant fabric.

Aleksandr Afanasevich and greatly displeased him—all this was “haughty.” His unfavorable impression grew still stronger when the governor, having entered the house of God, did not cross himself or bow to anybody—neither the altar nor the people—and walked up to the altar platform straight as a stick without even nodding his head.

This was contrary to all of Ryzhov’s principles in regard to respect for God and the duty of those in high places to set an example for those who are lower. His pious spirit roused itself and rose to incredible heights.

Ryzhov kept walking behind the governor, and as Lanskoï drew closer and closer to the platform in front of the iconostasis, Ryzhov kept shortening the distance that separated them. Suddenly he seized him by the arm and said in a loud voice:

“Sergei, you slave of God! Come humbly, not haughtily, into the temple of the Lord, and present yourself as the greatest of sinners—like this!”

With that he put his hand on the governor’s back and gravely bent him over in a full bow, then let him go and stood at attention.

• Chapter 12 •

The eyewitness who passed on this anecdotal story about the Soligalich eccentric said nothing about the way it was received by the people and authorities who were standing in the church. We know only that nobody was bold enough to stand up for the bent-over governor and halt the intrepid arm of Ryzhov. But the information about Lanskoï is somewhat more detailed. Sergei Stepanovich gave not the slightest cause for a continuation of the disorder, but on the contrary, “exchanged his haughty pride for sensible self-possession.” He did not interrupt Aleksandr Afanasevich, nor did he say even one word to him. Instead, he crossed himself, turned around and bowed to all the people, and then quickly went out and left for the apartment that had been prepared for him.

Here Lanskoï received the officials, both appointed and elected; and those who appeared worthy of greater confidence he questioned at length about Ryzhov, asking what kind of man he was and in what manner he was tolerated in society.

“That’s our policeman Ryzhov,” answered one of the officials.

“What about him—no doubt a little off?”

“O, no, sir—he’s just always like that.”

“Then why keep a man like that in the service?”

“He’s good in the service.”

“He’s insolent.”

“He’s the humblest of men: if his superior sits on his neck, he will reason: ‘This is what I must bear,’ and he will bear it. Only, he’s read the Bible a lot and that has unsettled him.”

“You are talking nonsense: the Bible is the book of God.”

“Yes, sir, that’s right; only, it’s not suitable for everybody to read: among the monks it arouses the passions, and among the laymen it disturbs the mind.”

“What twaddle!” Lanskoï answered, and went on with his questions:

“And how is he about bribes—moderate?”

“O, good heavens!” said the official. “He won’t take any at all.”

The governor became even more skeptical.

“That,” he said, “I refuse to believe on any account.”

“But he really won’t.”

“Then tell me,” he said, “what does he live on?”

“He lives on his salary.”

“You’re talking nonsense—there is no such man in all of Russia.”

“You’d think there wasn’t,” he said, “but such a man has turned up here.”

“And what salary does he get?”

“Ten rubles a month.”

“But you know very well,” he said, “that’s not enough to feed a sheep.”

“That’s right,” he said, “it’s not easy to live on it—only, he does.”

“How is it that nobody else can and yet he does?”

“He’s filled up on Bible-reading.”

“It’s all very well to be ‘filled up on Bible-reading,’ but what does he eat?”

“Bread and water.”

And here the official told all about how Ryzhov handled everything.

“Why, he’s a perfectly amazing man!” Lanskoï exclaimed, and he sent for Ryzhov.

Aleksandr Afanasevich came and stood at the threshold as a sign of his submission to authority.

“Where were you born?” Lanskoï asked him.

“Here I was born on Low Street,” answered Ryzhov.

“And where did you go to school?”

“I didn’t go to school. I grew up at home with my mother, and my mother baked pies.”

“Did you study anywhere?”

“With the sexton.”

“What is your religion?”

“Christian.”

“You behave very strangely.”

“I haven’t noticed it: everybody thinks anything is strange that he himself is not used to.”

Lanskoï thought this was a provocative, insolent remark and, looking sternly at Ryzhov, he asked sharply:

“Do you not belong to some sort of sect?”

“There is no sect here. I go to the cathedral.”

“Do you go to confession?”

“I confess to God in the presence of the priest.”

“Have you a family?”

“A wife and son.”

“Is your salary too small?”

The ever unsmiling Ryzhov broke into a smile.

“I get ten rubles a month,” he said, “and I don’t know whether that is a lot or a little.”

“It’s not much.”

“Report to the emperor that for a servant of the devil that is too little.”

“And for a faithful one?”

“It’s enough.”

“They tell me you use no special funds?”

Ryzhov looked at him and said nothing.

“Tell me honestly: can that be so?”

“And why should it not be so?”

“You get very little money.”

“If you use a lot of restraint, you can get along without a lot of money.”

“But why don’t you ask for some other position?”

“Then who would fill this one?”

“Somebody else.”

“Do you really think he would do it better than I?”

Now it was Lanskoï who smiled. His not entirely cold heart had begun to take a genuine interest in the policeman.

“Listen,” he said, “you really are a queer fellow. Please sit down.”

Ryzhov sat down opposite the “haughty presence.”

“They say you are a connoisseur of the Bible?”

“I read it as much as my time allows—and I advise you to.”

“All right; but—can I convince you that you can talk to me completely frankly and impartially?”

“Lying is forbidden in the ten commandments—I’m not going to lie.”

“Good. Do you have respect for the authorities?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“They are lazy, greedy, and hypocritical about the throne.”

“Well, you are frank. Thank you. Do you also prophesy?”

“No, but I draw conclusions from the Bible about what clearly follows.”

“Can you perhaps show me one of your conclusions?”

Ryzhov answered that he could, and at once he brought a whole sheaf of papers with the inscription “Singlethought.”

“What prophecies are there here about the past that came true?” asked Lanskoï.

The policeman leafed through the familiar pages and read: “The empress in her correspondence with Voltaire¹⁴⁷ called him a second Chrysostom.¹⁴⁸ For this foolish comparison the life of our ruler will not have a peaceful ending.”

On the lined margin opposite this passage there was the notation: “Fulfilled with the grievous marriage of Pavel Petrovich.”¹⁴⁹

“Show me something else.”

Ryzhov again started turning through the pages and pointed out a new passage, which consisted of the following: “A new decree has been issued about the felling of trees. Henceforth the cold will be worse in the huts of the poor. We may expect a special punishment.” And once again there was a note in the margin: “Fulfilled; see page so-and-so,” and on that page there was a note about the death of the

147. *The empress in her correspondence with Voltaire*—Empress Catherine the Great (1729–1796) corresponded regularly with Voltaire (1694–1778).

148. *Chrysostom*—John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407).

149. *Pavel Petrovich*—in 1773 Prince Pavel (later Emperor Pavel or Paul I) married Princess Wilhelmina from Hesse-Darmstadt. She died three years later.

young daughter of Emperor Alexander the First,¹⁵⁰ with the notation: “This was the consequence of the tax that was placed on forests.”

“But wait a moment,” said Lanskoi . . . “Aren’t the forests property?”

“Yes, but warming the air of a house is a necessity.”

“Are you against property?”

“No; I am only for keeping everybody warm in freezing weather. There is no reason to give the forests to those who are warm without them.”

“And what do you think about head taxes?¹⁵¹ Should people be taxed?”

“We must have taxes, and we ought to have extra ones on every kind of luxury, so that the rich instead of the poor will pay the treasury.”

“Hm, hm! You didn’t pick up this doctrine anywhere, did you?”

“From the scriptures and my conscience.”

“You’re not guided in this matter by any sources from modern times?”

“All other sources are impure and full of vanity.”

“Now, finally, tell me this: how is it that you have no fear of what you write or of what you did to me in the church?”

“What I write, I write for myself; and what I did in the house of God, I had to do in order to defend the authority of the tsar.”

“Why of the tsar?”

“So that everybody should see that his servants respect the national religion.”

“But you know, I could handle you in an entirely different way from the way I am handling you.”

Ryzhov looked at him in pity and answered:

“And what kind of evil can be done to somebody who knows how to support his family on ten rubles a month?”

“I could have you arrested.”

“They eat better in jail.”

“You could be deported for this insolence.”

150. *Emperor Alexander the First*—1801–1825.

151. *head tax*—a uniform tax (i.e., a tax not adjusted for income), levied equally on all individuals.

“Where could I be deported where things would be worse for me, and where my God would abandon me? He is with me everywhere, and there is nobody to fear except him.”

The haughty head nodded, and Lanskoï’s left hand reached out to Ryzhov.

“Your character is estimable,” he said, and ordered him to depart.

But evidently he still did not completely trust this biblical socialist, and he himself personally questioned several persons among the common people.

They twirled their hands in the air and answered in unison: “He’s our sort of regular whatcha-may-call-it.”

Nobody got anything more positive about him out of them.

When he said farewell, Lanskoï told Ryzhov:

“I will not forget you, and I will follow your advice—I’ll read the Bible.”

“Yes, but that’s not enough,” Ryzhov added. “You learn too how to live on ten rubles a month.”

But Lanskoï did not promise to follow this advice. He only laughed, gave him his hand again, and said:

“You’re a queer one, all right.”

Sergei Stepanovich rode off, and Ryzhov carried his “Single-thought” back home and went on writing in it whatever his powers of observation and his prophetic inspiration brought forth.

• Chapter 13 •

A good deal of time had passed after Lanskoï’s journey, and the events that took place during that trip through Soligalich had already been largely forgotten and erased by the hurly-burly of everyday life, when suddenly, like a bolt out of the blue, and to the astonishment not only of Soligalich but of all enlightened Russia as well, the town that had just undergone its inspection received news that was not only completely incredible but even impossible in a well-ordered system of government. The policeman Ryzhov received the Cross of St. Vladimir,¹⁵² carrying with it hereditary nobility—the first Cross of St. Vladimir ever awarded to a policeman.

152. *Cross of St. Vladimir*—an imperial order established by Empress Catherine the Great in memory of the deeds of St. Vladimir, the prince who converted Rus’ to Christianity; awarded for civil and military service.

The decoration itself arrived along with instructions to put it on and wear it according to regulations. Both the cross and the official document were presented to Aleksandr Afanasevich with the announcement that he had been granted said honor and said award on the recommendation of Sergei Stepanovich Lanskoï.

Ryzhov took the decoration, looked at it, and muttered aloud:

“So I’m a queer one!” And in his “Singlethought” he noted opposite the name of Lanskoï: “He will become a count”—which, as everybody knows, was fulfilled. But as for wearing the decoration—Ryzhov had nothing to wear it on!

Ryzhov the bearer of the Cross of St. Vladimir lived to be almost ninety years old, neatly and characteristically noting down everything in his “Singlethought,” which has probably been all used up for the papering of walls in various restorations around the district. He died after fulfilling all the Christian rites as established by the Orthodox Church, although his Orthodoxy was generally acknowledged to be “open to question.” Even in religion Ryzhov was a “certain sort of regular whatcha-may-call-it,” but for all that it seems to me that there was something to be seen in him besides nonsense—and may he be remembered for it at the very beginning of the search for “three righteous men.”

29.4 Feodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1878–1880)

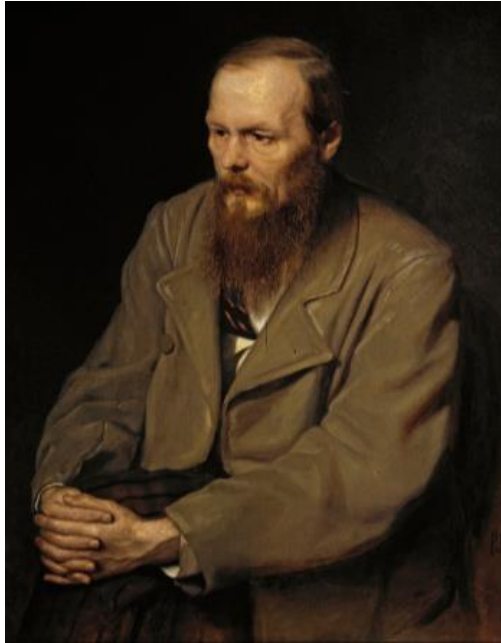
Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Modern Library, 1900), 292–312, 341–388. Public domain. In several instances, where noted, substitute translations have been inserted from Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990). Many explanatory footnotes derive from Pevear and Volkhonsky's work.

Feodor Dostoevsky's fiction explores nearly every facet of the human condition; it tackles problems of mind, soul, body, society, politics, and religion. His final, extraordinary, shaggy-beast of a novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, defies classification in its resolve to tackle all these topics. It is a murder mystery, a series of philosophical treatises, and a meditation on Orthodox spirituality. It contains sweeping ideas and small, intimately observed details. Most Dostoevsky scholars characterize *The Brothers Karamazov* as the culmination of his literary career, containing the fullest expression of the themes that occupied him throughout his life.

The first passage below is the most famous of the novel. Reprinted in countless anthologies, the story of "The Grand Inquisitor" appears regularly in courses in philosophy, religion, and literature. Dostoevsky's primary theme here is "freedom." What does it mean to be free? If given the choice, do humans truly want to be free? Can we handle uncircumscribed freedom? And does Christianity in its various manifestations grant us freedom, or does it protect us from unmanageable freedom? "The Grand Inquisitor" can be read both as a meditation on the problem of freedom in general (in addressing the terror of total freedom, "The Grand Inquisitor" constitutes the greatest "existentialist" short story of all time) and a theological and doctrinal examination of freedom in organized religion.

Spitefully opposed to Roman Catholicism, Dostoevsky insisted that Eastern Orthodoxy alone preserves the truest expression of the freedom found in Christ. He disdained what he characterized in "The Grand Inquisitor" as Roman Catholicism's

dictatorial and even un-Christian efforts to remove from humanity the burden of a free life.



Figure, 140. Vasily Perov, “Portrait of F. M. Feodor Dostoevsky,” 1872

This story, like much of Dostoevsky’s work, is literature as philosophy as politics as religion as spirituality. The story is told by Ivan, the atheistic brother of Alesha (pronounced *Al-YOH-sha*), an idealistic young man planning to become a monk. Note that Alesha interrupts the story several times with questions and pleas for clarifications.

• The Grand Inquisitor •

Even this must have a preface—that is, a literary preface, laughed Ivan, and I am a poor hand at making one. You see, my action takes place in the sixteenth century, and at that time, as you probably learned at school, it was customary in poetry to bring down heavenly powers on

earth. Not to speak of Dante, in France, clerks, as well as the monks in the monasteries, used to give regular performances in which the Madonna, the saints, the angels, Christ, and God himself were brought on the stage. In those days it was done in all simplicity. In Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* an edifying and gratuitous spectacle was provided for the people in the Hôtel de Ville of Paris in the reign of Louis XI. in honor of the birth of the dauphin. It was called *Le bon jugement de la très sainte et gracieuse Vierge Marie*,¹⁵³ and she appears herself on the stage and pronounces her *bon jugement*. Similar plays, chiefly from the Old Testament, were occasionally performed in Moscow too, up to the time of Peter the Great.¹⁵⁴ But besides plays there were all sorts of legends and ballads scattered about the world, in which the saints and angels and all the powers of Heaven took part when required. In our monasteries the monks busied themselves in translating, copying, and even composing such poems—and even under the Tatars. There is, for instance, one such poem (of course, from the Greek), *The Descent of the Virgin into Hell*,¹⁵⁵ with descriptions as bold as Dante's. Our Lady visits Hell, and the Archangel Michael leads her through the torments. She sees the sinners and their punishment. There she sees among others one noteworthy set of sinners in a burning lake; some of them sink to the bottom of the lake so that they can't swim out, and 'these God forgets'—an expression of extraordinary depth and force. And so our Lady, shocked and weeping, falls before the throne of God and begs for mercy for all in Hell—for all she has seen there, indiscriminately. Her conversation with God is immensely interesting. She beseeches him, she will not desist, and when God points to the hands and feet of her Son, nailed to the cross, and asks, 'How can I forgive his tormentors?' she bids all the saints, all the martyrs, all the angels and archangels to fall down with her and pray for mercy on all without distinction. It ends by her winning from God a respite of suffering every year from Good Friday till Trinity Day, and the sinners at once raise a cry of thankfulness from Hell, chanting, 'You are just, O Lord, in this judgment.' Well, my poem would

153. *Le bon jugement de la très sainte et gracieuse Vierge Marie*—The Compassionate Judgment of the Most Holy and Gracious Virgin Mary.

154. *Moscow, too, up to the times of Peter the Great*—before Peter the Great moved Russia's capital to St. Petersburg in 1713, that is, when Moscow was still the capital.

155. *Descent of the Virgin into Hell*—see document "22.2. Descent of the Virgin into Hell" in this volume.

have been of that kind if it had appeared at that time. He¹⁵⁶ comes on the scene in my poem, but he says nothing, only appears and passes on. Fifteen centuries have passed since he promised to come in his glory, fifteen centuries since his prophet¹⁵⁷ wrote, ‘Behold, I come quickly’; ‘Of that day and that hour no man knows, neither the Son, but the Father,’¹⁵⁸ as he himself predicted on earth. But humanity awaits him with the same faith and with the same love. O, with greater faith, for it is fifteen centuries since man has ceased to see signs from Heaven.

Believe what the heart tells you.

For Heaven offers no pledge.¹⁵⁹

There was nothing left but faith in what the heart says. It is true there were many miracles in those days. There were saints who performed miraculous cures; some holy people, according to their biographies, were visited by the Queen of Heaven herself. But the devil did not slumber, and doubts were already arising among men of the truth of these miracles. And just then there appeared in the north of Germany a terrible new heresy.¹⁶⁰ “A great star like a lamp” (that is, the church) “fell upon the fountains of waters, and they were made bitter.”¹⁶¹ These heretics began blasphemously denying miracles. But those who remained faithful were all the more ardent in their faith. The tears of humanity rose up to him as before, awaited his coming, loved him, hoped for him, yearned to suffer and die for him as before. And so many ages mankind had prayed with faith and fervor, “O Lord our God, reveal yourself to us,”¹⁶² so many ages called upon him, that in his

156. *He*—Christ.

157. *his prophet*—the author of Revelation.

158. *Of that day and that hour ...*—see Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36.

159. *Believe what the heart tells you ...*—from the poem “Yearning” (1801) by the Romantic German poet, Friedrich Schiller. This passage from Pevear and Volokhonsky, who note that Dostoevsky’s translation “differs considerably” from the original.

160. *terrible new heresy*—Lutheranism.

161. *A great star ...*—a botched quotation from Revelation 8:10–11. “The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.” (NRSV)

162. *Lord our God, hasten your coming*—Pevear and Volokhonsky explain in their translation that “the exclamation ‘God is the Lord, and has revealed himself to us’ is sung at Matins and in the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church.

infinite mercy he deigned to come down to his servants. Before that day he had come down, he had visited some holy men, martyrs and hermits, as is written in their lives. Among us, Tiutchev, with absolute faith in the truth of his words, bore witness that

Bent under the burden of the Cross,
 The king of Heaven in the form of a slave
 Walked the length and breadth of you,
 Blessing you, my native land.¹⁶³

And behold, he deigned to appear for a moment to the people, to the tortured, suffering people, sunk in iniquity, but loving him like children.

My story is laid in Spain, in Seville, in the most terrible time of the Inquisition, when fires were lighted every day to the glory of God, and ‘in the splendid *auto da fé*¹⁶⁴ the wicked heretics were burned.’¹⁶⁵ O, of course, this was not the coming in which he will appear according to his promise at the end of time in all his heavenly glory, suddenly ‘as lightning flashing from east to west.’¹⁶⁶ No, he visited his children only for a moment, and there where the flames were crackling round the heretics. In his infinite mercy he came once more among men in that human shape in which he walked among men for three years fifteen centuries ago. He came down to the ‘hot pavements’¹⁶⁷ of the southern town in which on the day before almost a hundred heretics had, *ad majorem gloriam Dei*,¹⁶⁸ been burned by the cardinal, the grand inquisitor, in a magnificent *auto da fé*, in the presence of the king, the court, the knights,

Ivan misunderstands the Old Slavonic (the language of the Russian Church) to the point of reversing its meaning—a not uncommon mistake.”

163. *Bent under the burden of the Cross*—the last stanza from “These Poor Villages” (1855), a poem by Fedor Tiutchev, one of Russia’s great Romantic poets. The translation here is Pevear’s and Volkhonsky’s.

164. *auto-da-fé*—a public ritual of penance that followed a conviction of heresy. This “penance” sometimes took the form of burning at the stake, and the term *auto-da-fé* often meant execution by fire. The first *auto-da-fé* occurred in Seville in 1481: six men died at the stake.

165. *wicked heretics were burnt*—this and the line above are a paraphrase from the poem “Coriolanus” (1834) by A. I. Polezhaev.

166. ‘as the lightning flashing from east to west’—see Matthew 24:24: “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man.” (NRSV)

167. *hot pavements*—another line from Polezhaev’s poem.

168. *ad majorem gloriam Dei*—the Jesuit’s motto is *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, “to the greater glory of God.”

the cardinals, the most charming ladies of the court, and the whole population of Seville.

“He came softly, unobserved, and yet, strange to say, everyone recognized him. That might be one of the best passages in the poem. I mean, why they recognized him. The people are irresistibly drawn to him, they surround him, they flock about him, follow him. He moves silently in their midst with a gentle smile of infinite compassion. The sun of love burns in his heart, light and power shine from his eyes, and their radiance, shed on the people, stirs their hearts with responsive love. He holds out his hands to them, blesses them, and a healing virtue comes from contact with him, even with his garments. An old man in the crowd, blind from childhood, cries out, ‘O Lord, heal me and I shall see you!’ and, as it were, scales fall from his eyes and the blind man sees him. The crowd weeps and kisses the earth under his feet. Children throw flowers before him, sing, and cry Hosanna. ‘It is he—it is he!’ all repeat. ‘It must be him, it can be no one but him!’ He stops at the steps of the Seville cathedral at the moment when the weeping mourners are bringing in a little open white coffin. In it lies a child of seven, the only daughter of a prominent citizen. The dead child lies hidden in flowers. ‘He will raise your child,’ the crowd shouts to the weeping mother. The priest, coming to meet the coffin, looks perplexed, and frowns, but the mother of the dead child throws herself at his feet with a wail. ‘If it is you, raise my child!’ she cries, holding out her hands to him. The procession halts, the coffin is laid on the steps at his feet. He looks with compassion, and his lips once more softly pronounce, ‘*Talitha cumi!*’¹⁶⁹ and the maiden arises. The little girl sits up in the coffin and looks round, smiling with wide-open wondering eyes, holding a bunch of white roses they had put in her hand.

“There are cries, sobs, confusion among the people, and at that moment the cardinal himself, the grand inquisitor, passes by the cathedral. He is an old man, almost ninety, tall and erect, with a withered face and sunken eyes, in which there is still a gleam of light. He is not dressed in his gorgeous cardinal’s robes, as he was the day before, when he was burning the enemies of the Roman Church—at this moment he is wearing his coarse, old, monk’s cassock. At a distance behind him come his gloomy assistants and slaves and the ‘holy guard.’ He stops at

169. ‘*Talitha cumi*’—an Aramaic phrase: see the account of Jesus healing the daughter of a Jewish synagogue leader in Mark 5:41: “He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘*Talitha cum,*’ which means, ‘Little girl, get up!’” (NRSV)

the sight of the crowd and watches it from a distance. He sees everything; he sees them set the coffin down at his feet, sees the child rise up, and his face darkens. He knits his thick gray brows and his eyes gleam with a sinister fire. He holds out his finger and bids the guards to take him. And such is his power, so completely are the people cowed into submission and trembling obedience to him, that the crowd immediately makes way for the guards, and in the midst of deathlike silence they lay hands on him and lead him away. The crowd instantly bows down to the earth, like one man, before the old inquisitor. He blesses the people in silence and passes on. The guards lead their prisoner to the close, gloomy vaulted prison in the ancient palace of the Holy Inquisition and shut him in it. The day passes and is followed by the dark, burning, ‘breathless’ night of Seville. The air is ‘fragrant with laurel and lemon.’¹⁷⁰ In the pitch darkness the iron door of the prison is suddenly opened and the grand inquisitor himself comes in with a light in his hand. He is alone; the door is closed at once behind him. He stands in the doorway and for a minute or two gazes into his face. At last he goes up slowly, sets the light on the table and speaks.

“‘Is it you? You?’ but receiving no answer, he adds at once, ‘Don’t answer, be silent. What can you say, indeed? I know too well what you would say. And you have no right to add anything to what you had said of old. Why, then, are you come to hinder us? For you have come to hinder us, and you know that. But do you know what will be tomorrow? I know not who you are and I care not to know whether it is you or only a semblance of him, but tomorrow I will condemn you and burn you at the stake as the worst of heretics. And the very people who have today kissed your feet, tomorrow at the faintest sign from me will rush to heap up the embers of your fire. Do you know that? Yes, maybe you know it,’ he added with thoughtful penetration, never for a moment taking his eyes off the prisoner.”

“I don’t quite understand, Ivan. What does it mean?” Alesha, who had been listening in silence, said with a smile. “Is it simply a wild fantasy, or a mistake on the part of the old man—some impossible *qui pro quo*?”¹⁷¹

170. *fragrant with laurel and lemon*—a line from “The Stone Guest,” a poem by Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) set in Seville.

171. *qui pro quo*—Latin for “one for another,” that is, might this be a case of mistaken identity?

“Take it as the last,” said Ivan, laughing, “if you are so corrupted by modern realism and can’t stand anything fantastic. If you like it to be a case of mistaken identity, let it be so. It is true,” he went on, laughing, “the old man was ninety, and he might well be crazy over his set idea. He might have been struck by the appearance of the prisoner. It might, in fact, be simply his ravings, the delusion of an old man of ninety, over-excited by the *auto da fé* of a hundred heretics the day before. But does it matter to us after all whether it was a mistake of identity or a wild fantasy? All that matters is that the old man should speak out, should speak openly of what he has thought in silence for ninety years.”

“And the prisoner too is silent? Does He look at him and not say a word?”

“That’s inevitable in any case,” Ivan laughed again. “The old man has told him he hasn’t the right to add anything to what he has said of old. One may say it is the most fundamental feature of Roman Catholicism, in my opinion at least. ‘All has been given by you to the pope,’ they say, ‘and all, therefore, is still in the pope’s hands, and there is no need for you to come now at all. You must not meddle for the time, at least.’ That’s how they speak and write too—the Jesuits, at any rate. I have read it myself in the works of their theologians. ‘Have you the right to reveal to us one of the mysteries of that world from which you have come?’ my old man asks him, and answers the question for him. ‘No, you have not; that you may not add to what has been said of old, and may not take from men the freedom which you exalted when you were on earth. Whatever you reveal anew will encroach on men’s freedom of faith; for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to you than anything in those days fifteen hundred years ago. Did you not often say then, “I will make you free”?’¹⁷² But now you have seen these “free” men, the old man adds suddenly, with a pensive smile. ‘Yes, we’ve paid dearly for it,’ he goes on, looking sternly at him, ‘but at last we have completed that work in your name. For fifteen centuries we have been wrestling with your freedom, but now it is ended and over for good. Do you not believe that it’s over for good? You look meekly at me and deign not even to be angry with me. But let me tell you that now, today, people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at

172. *I will make you free*—see John 8: 31–23: “Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’” (NRSV)

our feet. But that has been our doing. Was this what you did? Was this your freedom?”

“I don’t understand again,” Alesha broke in. “Is he ironical, is he jesting?”

“Not a bit of it! He claims it as a merit for himself and his church that at last they have vanquished freedom and have done so to make men happy. ‘For now’ (he is speaking of the Inquisition, of course) ‘for the first time it has become possible to think of the happiness of men. Man was created a rebel; and how can rebels be happy? You were warned,’ he says to him. ‘You have had no lack of admonitions and warnings, but you did not listen to those warnings; you rejected the only way by which men might be made happy. But, fortunately, departing, you handed the work on to us. You have promised, you have established by your word, you have given us the right to bind and to loose,¹⁷³ and now, of course, you cannot think of taking it away. Why, then, have you come to hinder us?’”

“And what’s the meaning of ‘no lack of admonitions and warnings?’” asked Alesha.

“Why, that’s the chief part of what the old man must say.

“‘The wise and dread spirit,¹⁷⁴ the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence,’ the old man goes on, ‘the great spirit talked with you in the wilderness, and we are told in the books that he “tempted” you.’¹⁷⁵ Is

173. *right to bind and to loose*—Jesus’s promise to Peter in Matthew 16:19; cited by the Roman Catholic Church as a basis for the pope’s authority: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (NRSV)

174. *wise and dread spirit*—the devil.

175. *he “tempted” you*—see Matthew 4:1–11: “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, “One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”’ Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of

that so? And could anything truer be said than what he revealed to you in three questions and what you rejected, and what in the books is called “the temptation”? And yet if there has ever been on earth a real stupendous miracle, it took place on that day, on the day of the three temptations. The statement of those three questions was itself the miracle. If it were possible to imagine simply for the sake of argument that those three questions of the dread spirit had perished utterly from the books,¹⁷⁶ and that we had to restore them and to invent them anew, and to do so had gathered together all the wise men of the earth—rulers, chief priests, learned men, philosophers, poets—and set them the task to invent three questions, such as would not only fit the occasion, but express in three words, three human phrases, the whole future history of the world and of humanity—do you believe that all the wisdom of the earth united could have invented anything in depth and force equal to the three questions that were actually put to you then by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From those questions alone, from the miracle of their statement, we can see that we’re dealing here not with fleeting human intelligence, but with the absolute and eternal. For in those three questions the whole subsequent history of mankind is, as it were, brought together into one whole, and foretold, and in them are united all the unsolved historical contradictions of human nature. At the time it could not be so clear, since the future was unknown; but now that fifteen hundred years have passed, we see that everything in those three questions was so justly divined and foretold, and has been so truly fulfilled, that nothing can be added to them or taken from them.

“Judge yourself who was right—you or he who questioned you then? Remember the first question; its meaning, in other words, was this: “You would go into the world, and are going with empty hands, with some promise of freedom, which men in their simplicity and their natural unruliness cannot even understand, which they fear and dread—for nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom. But do you see these stones in this parched and barren wilderness? Turn them into bread, and mankind will run after you like a flock of sheep, grateful and obedient, though forever trem-

the world and their splendor; and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! for it is written, “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”’” Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.” (NRSV)

176. *the books*—the Gospels.

bling, lest you withdraw your hand and deny them your bread.” But you would not deprive man of freedom and rejected the offer, thinking, what is that freedom worth, if obedience is bought with bread? You replied that man lives not by bread alone. But do you know that for the sake of that earthly bread the spirit of the earth will rise up against you and will strive with you and overcome you, and all will follow him, crying, “Who can compare with this beast? He has given us fire from Heaven!”¹⁷⁷ Do you know that the ages will pass, and humanity will proclaim by the lips of their sages that there is no crime, and therefore no sin; there is only hunger? “Feed men, and then ask of them virtue!” That’s what they’ll write on the banner, which they will raise against you, and with which they will destroy your temple. Where your temple stood will rise a new building; the terrible tower of Babel will be built again,¹⁷⁸ and though, like the one of old, it will not be finished, yet you might have prevented that new tower and cut short the sufferings of men for a thousand years; for they will come back to us after a thousand years of agony with their tower. They will seek us again, hidden underground in the catacombs, for we will be again persecuted and tortured. They will find us and cry to us, “Feed us, for those who have promised us fire

177. *Who can compare with this beast? He has given us fire from heaven!*—Ivan here makes two references: (a) to the Antichrist, the evil “Beast” in Revelation 13:4 (“They worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’”) and (b) to the Greek god Prometheus, who gave fire to humans and was known among the gods as a champion of humankind.

178. *Tower of Babel will be built again*—see Genesis 11:1–9: “Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’ The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said, ‘Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.” (NRSV)

from Heaven haven't given it!" And then we will finish building their tower, for he who feeds them finishes the building. And we alone will feed them in your name, declaring falsely that it is in your name. O, never, never can they feed themselves without us! No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, "Make us your slaves, but feed us." They will understand themselves, at last, that freedom and bread enough for all are inconceivable together, for never, never will they be able to share between them! They will be convinced, too, that they can never be free, for they are weak, vicious, worthless and rebellious. You promised them the bread of Heaven, but, I repeat again, can it compare with earthly bread in the eyes of the weak, ever sinful and ignoble race of man? And if for the sake of the bread of Heaven thousands will follow you, what is to become of the millions and tens of thousands of millions of creatures who will not have the strength to forego the earthly bread for the sake of the heavenly? Or do you care only for the tens of thousands of the great and strong, while the millions, numerous as the sands of the sea, who are weak but love you, must exist only for the sake of the great and strong? No, we care for the weak too. They are sinful and rebellious, but in the end they too will become obedient. They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom that they have found so dreadful and to rule over them—so awful it will seem to them to be free. But we will tell them that we are your servants and rule them in your name. We will deceive them again, for we will not let you come to us again. That deception will be our suffering, for we will be forced to lie.

“This is the significance of the first question in the wilderness, and this is what you have rejected for the sake of that freedom you have exalted above everything. Yet in this question lies hidden the great secret of this world. Choosing “bread,” you would have satisfied the universal and everlasting craving of humanity—to find someone to worship. So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find someone to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. For these pitiful creatures are concerned not only to find what one or the other can worship, but to find something that all would believe in and worship; what is essential is that all may be *together* in it. This craving for *community* of worship is the chief misery of every man individually and of all humanity from the beginning of time. For the sake of common worship they've slain each other with the sword. They have

set up gods and challenged one another, “Put away your gods and come and worship ours, or we will kill you and your gods!” And so it will be to the end of the world, even when gods disappear from the earth; they will fall down before idols just the same. You knew, you could not but have known, this fundamental secret of human nature, but you rejected the one infallible banner which was offered you to make all men bow down to you alone—the banner of earthly bread; and you have rejected it for the sake of freedom and the bread of Heaven. Behold what you did further. And all again in the name of freedom! I tell you that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. But only one who can appease their conscience can take over their freedom. In bread there was offered you an invincible banner; give bread, and man will worship you, for nothing is more certain than bread. But if someone else gains possession of his conscience—O! then he will cast away your bread and follow after him who ensnared his conscience. In that you were right. For the secret of man’s being is not only to live but to have something to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance. That is true. But what happened? Instead of taking men’s freedom from them, you made it greater than ever! Did you forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering. And behold, instead of giving a firm foundation for setting the conscience of man at rest forever, you chose all that is exceptional, vague and enigmatic; you chose what was utterly beyond the strength of men, acting as though you did not love them at all—you who came to give your life for them! Instead of taking possession of men’s freedom, you increased it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its sufferings forever. You desired man’s free love, that he should follow you freely, enticed and taken captive by you. In place of the rigid ancient law,¹⁷⁹ man must

179. *In place of the rigid ancient law*—see Matthew 5:17–18, in which Jesus states, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” Pevear and Volokhonsky note that the grand inquisitor here “overstates his case.”

hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only your image before him as his guide. But did you not know that he would at last reject even your image and your truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? They will cry aloud at last that the truth is not in you, for they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than you have caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems.

“So that, in truth, you yourself lay the foundation for the destruction of your kingdom, and no one is more to blame for it. Yet what was offered you? There are three powers, three powers alone, able to conquer and to hold captive forever the conscience of these impotent rebels for their happiness—those forces are miracle, mystery and authority. You have rejected all three and have set the example for doing so. When the wise and dread spirit set you on the pinnacle of the temple and said to you, “If you would know whether you are the Son of God, then cast yourself down, for it is written: the angels will hold him up lest he fall and bruise himself, and you will know then whether you are the Son of God and will prove then how great is your faith in your Father.”¹⁸⁰ But you refused and would not cast yourself down. O, of course, you did proudly and well, like God; but the weak, unruly race of men, are they gods? O, you knew then that in taking one step, in making one movement to cast yourself down, you would be tempting God and have lost all your faith in him, and would have been dashed to pieces against that earth that you came to save. And the wise spirit that tempted you would have rejoiced. But I ask again, are there many like you? And could you believe for one moment that men, too, could face such a temptation? Is the nature of men such, that they can reject miracle, and at the great moments of their lives, the moments of their deepest, most agonizing spiritual difficulties, cling only to the free verdict of the heart? Oh, you knew that your deed would be recorded in books, would be handed down to remote times and the utmost ends of the earth, and you hoped that man, following you, would cling to God and not ask for a miracle. But you did not know that when man rejects miracle he rejects God too; for man seeks not so much God as the miraculous. And as man cannot bear to be without the miraculous, he will create new miracles of his own for himself, and will worship deeds of sorcery and witchcraft, though he might be a hundred times over a rebel, heretic and infidel. You did not

180. *prove then how great is your faith in your Father*—a reference again to the devil’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

come down from the cross when they shouted to you, mocking and reviling you, “Come down from the cross and we will believe that you are he.”¹⁸¹ You did not come down, for again you would not enslave man by a miracle, and craved faith given freely, not based on miracle. You craved free love and not the base raptures of the slave before the might that has overawed him forever. But you thought too highly of men, for they are slaves, of course, though rebellious by nature. Look round and judge; fifteen centuries have passed, look on them. Whom have you raised up to yourself? I swear, man is weaker and baser by nature than you have believed him! Can he, can he do what you did? By showing him so much respect, you, as it were, ceased to feel for him, for you asked far too much from him—you who have loved him more than yourself! Respecting him less, you would have asked less of him. That would have been more like love, for his burden would have been lighter. He is weak and vile. So what if he is now rebelling everywhere against our power, and proud of his rebellion? It is the pride of a child and a schoolboy. They are little children rioting and barring out the teacher at school. But their childish delight will end; it will cost them dearly. They will cast down temples and drench the earth with blood. But they will see at last, the foolish children, that, though they are rebels, they are impotent rebels, unable to keep up their own rebellion. Bathed in their foolish tears, they will recognize at last that he who created them rebels must have meant to mock at them. They will say this in despair, and their utterance will be a blasphemy, which will make them more unhappy still, for man’s nature cannot bear blasphemy, and in the end always avenges it on itself. And so unrest, confusion and unhappiness—that is the present lot of man after you bore so much for their freedom! The great prophet tells in vision and in image, that he saw all those who took part in the first resurrection and that there were twelve thousand of each tribe.¹⁸² But if there were so many of them, they must have been not men but gods. They had borne your cross, they had endured scores of years in the barren, hungry wilderness, living on locusts and

181. *Come down from the cross and we will believe that you are he*—a reference to words spoken by those who taunted Jesus as he hung on the cross. See Matthew 27:42: “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.” (NRSV)

182. *There were twelve thousand of each tribe*—in Revelation 7:4–8, John predicts that 12,000 members from each of the twelve tribes of Judah will be “sealed” to Christ.

roots¹⁸³—and you may indeed point with pride at those children of freedom, of free love, of free and splendid sacrifice for your name. But remember that they were only some of the thousands; and what of the rest? And how are the other weak ones to blame, because they could not endure what the strong have endured? How is the weak soul to blame when it is unable to receive such terrible gifts? Can you have simply come to the elect and for the elect? But if so, it is a mystery and we cannot understand it. And if it is a mystery, we too have a right to preach a mystery, and to teach them that it's not the free judgment of their hearts, not love that matters, but a mystery which they must follow blindly, even against their conscience. So we have done. We have corrected your work and have founded it upon *miracle*, *mystery* and *authority*. And men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep, and that the terrible gift that had brought them such suffering was, at last, lifted from their hearts. Were we right teaching them this? Speak! Did we not love mankind, so meekly acknowledging their feebleness, lovingly lightening their burden, and permitting their weak nature even to sin with our sanction? Why have you come now to hinder us? And why do you look silently and searchingly at me with your mild eyes? Be angry. I don't want your love, for I love you not. And what use is it for me to hide anything from you? Don't I know to whom I am speaking? All that I can say is known to you already. And is it for me to conceal from you our mystery? Perhaps it is your will to hear it from my lips. Listen, then. We are not working with you, but with *him*—that is our mystery. It's long—eight centuries¹⁸⁴—since we have been on *his* side¹⁸⁵ and not on yours. Just eight centuries ago, we took from him what you rejected with scorn, that last gift he offered you, showing you all the kingdoms of the earth. We took from him Rome and the sword of caesar, and proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth, though hitherto we have not been able to complete our work. But whose fault is that? O, the work is only beginning, but it has begun. It has long to await completion and the earth yet has much to suffer, but we will triumph and will be caesars, and

183. *Living on locusts and roots*—a reference to John the Baptist, who lived in the wilderness on locusts and wild honey.

184. *It's long—eight centuries—since we have been on his side and not on yours*—in 755 King Pepin III of the Franks (Charlemagne's father) granted territory he seized from the Byzantine Empire in eastern Italy to Pope Stephen II—an area that became the papal states, the territorial and political center of the modern papacy.

185. *his side*—Satan's side.

then we will plan the universal happiness of man. But you might have taken even then the sword of caesar. Why did you reject that last gift? Had you accepted that last counsel of the mighty spirit, you would have accomplished all that man seeks on earth—that is, someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men. Mankind as a whole has always striven to organize a universal state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the more highly they were developed the more unhappy they were, for they felt more acutely than other people the craving for worldwide union. The great conquerors, Tamerlane¹⁸⁶ and Genghis Khan,¹⁸⁷ whirled like hurricanes over the face of the earth, striving to subdue its people, and they too were but the unconscious expression of the same craving for universal unity. Had you taken the world and caesar's purple, you would have founded the universal state and have given universal peace. For who can rule men if not he who holds their conscience and their bread in his hands? We have taken the sword of caesar, and in taking it, of course, have rejected you and followed *him*. Oh, ages are yet to come of the confusion of free thought, of their science and cannibalism. For having begun to build their tower of Babel without us, they will end, of course, with cannibalism. But then the beast will crawl to us and lick our feet and spatter them with tears of blood. And we will sit upon the beast and raise the cup, and on it will be written, "Mystery."¹⁸⁸ But then, and only then, the reign of peace and happiness will come for men. You are proud of your elect, but you have only the elect, while we give rest to all. And besides, how many of those elect, those mighty ones who could become elect, have grown weary waiting for you, and have transferred and will transfer the powers of their spirit and the warmth of their heart to the other camp, and end by raising their *free* banner against you. You yourself lifted up that banner. But with us all will be happy and will no more rebel nor destroy one

186. *Tamerlane*—1336–1405, founder of the Timurid Empire who conquered vast regions in western, southern, and central Asia.

187. *Genghis Khan*—the warrior who established the Mongol Empire, which spanned most of Eurasia.

188. *we shall sit upon the beast and raise the cup, and on it will be written, "Mystery"*—another dual reference: (1) to the "Beast" in Revelation, and (2) to the poem, "Covetous Knight," by Pushkin: "Submissive, timid, blood-bespattered crime/ Comes crawling to my feet, licking my hand,/ Looking me in the eye ..."

another as under your freedom. O, we will persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us. And will we be right or will we be lying? They will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which your freedom brought them. Freedom, free thought and science, will lead them into such straits and will bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries, that some of them, the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others, rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet and whine to us: "Yes, you were right, you alone possess his mystery, and we come back to you, save us from ourselves!"

"Receiving bread from us, they will see clearly that we take the bread made by their hands from them, to give it to them, without any miracle. They will see that we do not change the stones to bread, but in truth they will be more thankful for taking it from our hands than for the bread itself! For they will remember only too well that in old days, without our help, even the bread they made turned to stones in their hands, while since they have come back to us, the very stones have turned to bread in their hands. Too, too well will they know the value of complete submission! And until men know that, they will be unhappy. Who is most to blame for their not knowing it?—Speak! Who scattered the flock and sent it astray on unknown paths? But the flock will come together again and will submit once more, and then it will be once for all. Then we will give them the quiet humble happiness of weak creatures such as they are by nature. O, we will persuade them at last not to be proud, for you lifted them up and thereby taught them to be proud. We will show them that they are weak, that they are only pitiful children, but that childlike happiness is the sweetest of all. They will become timid and will look to us and huddle close to us in fear, as chicks to the hen. They will marvel at us and will be awe-stricken before us, and will be proud at our being so powerful and clever, that we have been able to subdue such a turbulent flock of thousands of millions. They will tremble impotently before our wrath, their minds will grow fearful, they will be quick to shed tears like women and children, but they will be just as ready at a sign from us to pass to laughter and rejoicing, to happy mirth and childish song. Yes, we will set them to work, but in their leisure hours we will make their life like a child's game, with children's songs and innocent dance. O, we will allow them even to sin, they are weak and helpless, and they will love us like children because we allow them to sin. We will tell them that every sin will be expiated, if it is done

with our permission, that we allow them to sin because we love them, and the punishment for these sins we take upon ourselves. And we will take it upon ourselves, and they will adore us as their saviors who have taken on themselves their sins before God. And they will have no secrets from us. We will allow or forbid them to live with their wives and mistresses, to have or not to have children—according to whether they have been obedient or disobedient—and they will submit to us gladly and cheerfully. The most painful secrets of their conscience, all, all they will bring to us, and we will have an answer for all. And they will be glad to believe our answer, for it will save them from the great anxiety and terrible agony they endure at present in making a free decision for themselves. And all will be happy, all the millions of creatures except the hundred thousand who rule over them. For only we, we who guard the mystery, will be unhappy. There will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil. Peacefully they will die, peacefully they will expire in your name, and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death. But we will keep the secret, and for their happiness we will allure them with the reward of Heaven and eternity. Though if there were anything in the other world, it certainly would not be for such as they. It is prophesied that you will come again in victory, you will come with your chosen, the proud and strong, but we will say that they have only saved themselves, but we have saved all. We are told that the harlot who sits upon the beast, and holds in her hands the *mystery*, will be put to shame, that the weak will rise up again, and will rend her royal purple and will strip naked her loathsome body.¹⁸⁹ But then I will stand up and point out to you the thousands of millions of happy children who have known no sin. And we who have taken their sins upon us for their happiness will stand up before you and say: “Judge us if you can and dare.” Know that I fear you not. Know that I too have been in the wilderness, I too have lived on roots and locusts, I too prized the freedom with which you have blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among your elect, among the strong and powerful, thirsting “to

189. *strip naked her loathsome body*—see Revelation 17:15–16: “And [one of the angels] said to me, “The waters that you saw, where the whore is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire.” (NRSV)

make up the number.”¹⁹⁰ But I awakened and would not serve madness. I turned back and joined the ranks of those *who have corrected your work*. I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble. What I say to you will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up. I repeat, tomorrow you will see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I will burn you for coming to hinder us. For if anyone has ever deserved our fires, it is you. Tomorrow I will burn you. *Dixi*.”¹⁹¹

Ivan stopped. He was carried away as he talked, and spoke with excitement; when he had finished, he suddenly smiled.

Alesha had listened in silence; toward the end he was greatly moved and seemed several times on the point of interrupting, but restrained himself. Now his words came with a rush.

“But ... that’s absurd!” he cried, flushing. “Your poem is in praise of Jesus, not in blame of him—as you meant it to be. And who will believe you about freedom? Is that the way to understand it? That’s not the idea of it in the Orthodox Church. ... That’s Rome, and not even the whole of Rome, it’s false—those are the worst of the Catholics, the inquisitors, the Jesuits! ... And there could not be such a fantastic creature as your inquisitor. What are these sins of mankind they take on themselves? Who are these keepers of the mystery who have taken some curse on themselves for the happiness of mankind? When have they been seen? We know the Jesuits, they are spoken ill of, but surely they are not what you describe? They are not that at all, not at all. ... They are simply the Romish army for the earthly sovereignty of the world in the future, with the pontiff of Rome for emperor ... that’s their ideal, but there’s no sort of mystery or lofty melancholy about it. ... It’s simple lust of power, of filthy earthly gain, of domination—something like a universal serfdom with them as masters—that’s all they stand for. They don’t even believe in God perhaps. Your suffering inquisitor is a mere fantasy.”

190. *to make up the number*—see Revelation 6:9–11: “the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given [...] were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number would be complete both of their fellow-servants and of their brothers and sisters, who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed.” (NRSV)

191. *Dixi*—Latin, “I have spoken.”

“Stay, stay,” laughed Ivan. “How hot you are! A fantasy you say, let it be so! Of course it’s a fantasy. But allow me to say: do you really think that the Roman Catholic movement of the last centuries is actually nothing but the lust for power, of filthy earthly gain? Is that Father Paisy’s¹⁹² teaching?”

“No, no, on the contrary, Father Paisy once said something rather the same as you . . . but of course it’s not the same, not a bit the same,” Alesha hastily corrected himself.

“A precious admission, in spite of your ‘not a bit the same.’ I ask you why your Jesuits and inquisitors have united simply for vile material gain?¹⁹³ Why can there not be among them one martyr oppressed by great sorrow and loving humanity? You see, only suppose that there was one such man among all those who desire nothing but filthy material gain—if there’s only one like my old inquisitor, who had himself eaten roots in the desert and made frenzied efforts to subdue his flesh to make himself free and perfect. But yet all his life he loved humanity, and suddenly his eyes were opened, and he saw that it is no great moral blessedness to attain perfection and freedom, if at the same time one gains the conviction that millions of God’s creatures have been created as a mockery, that they will never be capable of using their freedom, that these poor rebels can never turn into giants to complete the tower, that it was not for such geese that the great idealist dreamed his dream of harmony. Seeing all that he turned back and joined—the clever people. Surely that could have happened?”

“Joined whom, what clever people?” cried Alesha, completely carried away. “They have no such great cleverness and no mysteries and secrets. . . . Perhaps nothing but atheism, that’s all their secret. Your inquisitor does not believe in God, that’s his secret!”

“What if it is so! At last you have guessed it. It’s perfectly true, it’s true that that’s the whole secret, but isn’t that suffering, at least for a man like that, who has wasted his whole life in the desert and yet could not shake off his incurable love of humanity? In his old age he reached the clear conviction that nothing but the advice of the great dread spirit could build up any tolerable sort of life for the feeble, unruly, ‘incom-

192. *Father Paisy*—Zosima’s confessor and another of Alesha’s monastic mentors.

193. *vile material gain*—see Titus 1:7: “For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain.” (NRSV)

plete, empirical creatures created in jest.’ And so, convinced of this, he sees that he must follow the counsel of the wise spirit, the dread spirit of death and destruction, and therefore accept lying and deception, and lead men consciously to death and destruction, and yet deceive them all the way so that they may not notice where they are being led, that the poor blind creatures may at least on the way think themselves happy. And note, the deception is in the name of him in whose ideal the old man had so fervently believed all his life long. Is not that tragic? And if only one such stood at the head of the whole army ‘filled with the lust of power only for the sake of filthy gain’—would not one such be enough to make a tragedy? More than that, one such standing at the head is enough to create the actual leading idea of the Roman Church with all its armies and Jesuits, its highest idea. I tell you frankly that I firmly believe that there has always been such a man among those who stood at the head of the movement. Who knows, there may have been some such even among the Roman popes. Who knows, perhaps the spirit of that accursed old man who loves mankind so obstinately in his own way, is to be found even now in a whole multitude of such old men, existing not by chance but by agreement, as a secret league formed long ago for the guarding of the mystery, to guard it from the weak and the unhappy, so as to make them happy. No doubt it is so, and so it must be indeed. I fancy that even among the Masons¹⁹⁴ there’s something of the same mystery at the bottom, and that that’s why the Catholics so detest the Masons as their rivals breaking up the unity of the idea, while it is so essential that there should be one flock and one shepherd. But from the way I defend my idea I might be an author impatient of your criticism. Enough of it.”

“You are perhaps a Mason yourself!” broke suddenly from Alesha. “You don’t believe in God,” he added, speaking this time very sorrowfully. He fancied besides that his brother was looking at him ironically. “How does your poem end?” he asked, suddenly looking down. “Or was it the end?”

“I meant to end it like this. When the inquisitor ceased speaking he waited some time for his prisoner to answer him. his silence weighed down upon him. He saw that the prisoner had listened intently all the time, looking gently in his face and evidently not wishing to reply. The old man longed for him to say something, however bitter and terrible.

194. *Masons*—a secret brotherhood, popular among the Russian nobility but condemned by both the Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Church.

But He suddenly approached the old man in silence and softly kissed him on his bloodless aged lips. That was all his answer. The old man shuddered. His lips moved. He went to the door, opened it, and said to him: ‘Go, and come no more ... come not at all, never, never!’ And he let him out into the dark alleys of the town.¹⁹⁵ The prisoner went away.”

“And the old man?”

“The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man adheres to his idea.”

Russian hagiographies and saints’ lives fascinated Dostoevsky. The literary scholar Jostein Børtnes notes that Dostoevsky’s account of Alesha’s childhood in *The Brothers Karamazov* employs “a whole set” of expressions “usually found in the depiction of a saint’s childhood and adolescence.” Alesha is “chaste and pure”; he “seemed to shun the company of others”; “he liked to retire into a corner with a book”; as a youth “he did not seem to know the value of money” and he would not hesitate “to give it away at the first demand.” He “was one of those young men who resembled the fools in Christ.”¹⁹⁶

But a more interesting holy man in *The Brothers Karamazov* is the monk and *starets*¹⁹⁷ Father Zosima, who serves as Alesha’s mentor and spiritual guide. In what amounts to a story within a story, Alesha recounts Zosima’s life as Zosima told it to him.

Dostoevsky’s own visits to the monastery at Optina Pustyn—where he met three times with the famous *starets* Amvrosy—made a deep impression on him, and he modeled Zosima on Amvrosy and other real figures. (See, for example, Kristin Eikeland’s study of similarities between Zosima’s life and the lives of other “real-life prototypes.”)¹⁹⁸

195. *dark alleys of the town*—reference to a line from Pushkin’s poem, “Remembrance” (1828).

196. Jostein Børtnes, “The Function of Hagiography in Dostoevskij’s Novels,” in *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, ed. Robin Feuer Miller (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), 189.

197. *starets*—an elder monk, usually an ascetic, thought to be exceptionally holy, who dispenses wisdom and advice.

198. Eikeland names Tikhon of Zadonsk, Zosima of Tobolsk, and Amvrosy of Optina Pustyn. Kristin Eikeland, “Functions of Hagiographic Discourse in the Life of Father Zosima,” in *Celebrating Creativity: Essays in Honour of Jostein Børtnes*, ed. Knut Andreas Grimstad and Ingunn Lunde (Bergen: University of Bergen, 1997), 154.

But while similarities between the fictional Zosima and holy men of history are easy to spot, the significance of those similarities remains a matter of some debate. Just how Orthodox is Zosima, and, by extension, Dostoevsky?

Sergei Hackel, a literary scholar and Orthodox priest, finds in Zosima a number of troubling beliefs and commitments: his veneration of the earth; his inattention to the church, its sacraments, and its role in salvation; his characterization of Hell not as a physical place but rather as “the suffering of being no longer able to love”; and his focus on God’s creation rather than God himself.¹⁹⁹ Hackel sympathizes with another Dostoevsky scholar, Alexander Gibson, who concludes that, in Zosima, Dostoevsky has produced “the combination of the sincerest piety with the apparent absence of its object.”²⁰⁰ Indeed, for a time Russian censors prohibited any separate publication of Zosima’s discourse, deeming it a collection of “mystical-social teachings” that display “only an apparent similarity to the teachings of Christ, while being essentially opposed to the doctrine of the Orthodox faith.”²⁰¹

We leave it to the reader to ruminate on the question of Zosima’s orthodox or Orthodox *bona fides* in the passage below.

(a) Father Zosima’s brother

Beloved fathers and teachers, I was born in a distant province in the north, in the town of V. My father was a gentleman by birth, but of no great consequence or position. He died when I was only two years old, and I don’t remember him at all. He left my mother a small house built of wood, and a fortune, not large, but sufficient to keep her and her children in comfort. There were two of us, my elder brother Markel and I. He was eight years older than I was, of hasty irritable temperament, but kindhearted and never ironical. He was remarkably silent, especially

199. Sergei Hackel, “The Religious Dimension: Vision or Evasion? Zosima’s Discourse in *The Brothers Karamazov*,” in Miller, *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, 139–168.

200. A. Boyce Gibson, *The Religion of Dostoyevsky* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 196.

201. Hackel, “Religious Dimension,” in Miller, *Critical Essays on Dostoevsky*, 158.

at home with me, his mother, and the servants. He did well at school, but did not get on with his schoolfellows, though he never quarreled, at least so my mother has told me. Six months before his death, when he was seventeen, he made friends with a political exile who had been banished from Moscow to our town for freethinking, and led a solitary existence there. He was a good scholar who had gained distinction in philosophy in the university. Something made him take a fancy to Markel, and he used to ask him to see him. The young man would spend whole evenings with him during that winter, till the exile was summoned to Petersburg to take up his post again at his own request, as he had powerful friends.

It was the beginning of Lent, and Markel would not fast, he was rude and laughed at it. "That's all silly twaddle, and there is no God," he said, horrifying my mother, the servants, and me too. For though I was only nine, I too was aghast at hearing such words. We had four servants, all serfs. I remember my mother selling one of the four, the cook Afimya, who was lame and elderly, for sixty paper rubles, and hiring a free servant to take her place.

In the sixth week in Lent,²⁰² my brother, who was never strong and had a tendency to consumption, was taken ill. He was tall but thin and delicate-looking, and of very pleasing countenance. I suppose he caught cold, anyway the doctor, who came, soon whispered to my mother that it was galloping consumption, that he would not live through the spring. My mother began weeping, and, careful not to alarm my brother, she entreated him to go to church, to confess and take the sacrament, as he was still able to move about. This made him angry, and he said something profane about the church. He grew thoughtful, however; he guessed at once that he was seriously ill, and that that was why his mother was begging him to confess and take the sacrament. He had been aware, indeed, for a long time past, that he was far from well, and had a year before coolly observed at dinner to our mother and me, "My life won't be long among you, I may not live another year," which seemed now like a prophecy.

Three days passed and Holy Week²⁰³ had come. And on Tuesday morning my brother began going to church. "I am doing this simply for your sake, mother, to please and comfort you," he said. My mother wept

202. *Lent*—the fast that lasts for forty days preceding Easter.

203. *Holy Week*—the last week of Lent and the week between Palm Sunday and Easter.

with joy and grief. "His end must be near," she thought, "if there's such a change in him." But he was not able to go to church long, he took to his bed, so he had to confess and take the sacrament at home.

It was a late Easter, and the days were bright, fine, and full of fragrance. I remember he used to cough all night and sleep badly, but in the morning he dressed and tried to sit up in an armchair. That's how I remember him sitting, sweet and gentle, smiling, his face bright and joyous, in spite of his illness. A marvelous change passed over him, his spirit seemed transformed. The old nurse would come in and say, "Let me light the lamp before the holy image, my dear." And once he would not have allowed it and would have blown it out.

"Light it, light it, dear, I was a wretch to have prevented you doing it. You are praying when you light the lamp, and I am praying when I rejoice seeing you. So we are praying to the same God."

Those words seemed strange to us, and mother would go to her room and weep, but when she went in to him she wiped her eyes and looked cheerful. "Mother, don't weep, darling," he would say, "I've long to live yet, long to rejoice with you, and life is glad and joyful."

"Ah, dear boy, how can you talk of joy when you lie feverish at night, coughing as though you would tear yourself to pieces."

"Don't cry, mother," he would answer, "life is Paradise, and we are all in Paradise, but we won't see it, if we would, we should have Heaven on earth the next day."

Everyone wondered at his words, he spoke so strangely and positively; we were all touched and wept. Friends came to see us. "Dear ones," he would say to them, "what have I done that you should love me so, how can you love any one like me, and how was it I did not know, I did not appreciate it before?"

When the servants came in to him he would say continually, "Dear, kind people, why are you doing so much for me, do I deserve to be waited on? If it were God's will for me to live, I would wait on you, for all men should wait on one another."

Mother shook her head as she listened. "My darling, it's your illness makes you talk like that."

"Mother, darling," he would say, "there must be servants and masters, but if so I will be the servant of my servants, the same as they are to me. And another thing, mother, every one of us has sinned against all men, and I more than any."

Mother positively smiled at that, smiled through her tears. "Why, how could you have sinned against all men, more than all? Robbers and

murderers have done that, but what sin have you committed yet, that you hold yourself more guilty than all?"

"Mother, little heart of mine," he said (he had begun using such strange caressing words at that time), "little heart of mine, my joy, believe me, everyone is really responsible to all men for all men and for everything. I don't know how to explain it to you, but I feel it is so, painfully even. And how is it we went on then living, getting angry and not knowing?"

So he would get up every day, more and more sweet and joyous and full of love. When the doctor, an old German called Eisenschmidt, came:

"Well, doctor, have I another day in this world?" he would ask, joking.

"You'll live many days yet," the doctor would answer, "and months and years too."

"Months and years!" he would exclaim. "Why reckon the days? One day is enough for a man to know all happiness. My dear ones, why do we quarrel, try to outshine each other and keep grudges against each other? Let's go straight into the garden, walk and play there, love, appreciate, and kiss each other, and glorify life."

"Your son cannot last long," the doctor told my mother, as she accompanied him to the door. "The disease is affecting his brain."

The windows of his room looked out into the garden, and our garden was a shady one, with old trees in it which were coming into bud. The first birds of spring were flitting in the branches, chirruping and singing at the windows. And looking at them and admiring them, he began suddenly begging their forgiveness too: "Birds of Heaven, happy birds, forgive me, for I have sinned against you too." None of us could understand that at the time, but he shed tears of joy. "Yes," he said, "there was such a glory of God all about me: birds, trees, meadows, sky; only I lived in shame and dishonored it all and did not notice the beauty and glory."

"You take too many sins on yourself," mother used to say, weeping.

"Mother, darling, it's for joy, not for grief I am crying. Though I can't explain it to you, I like to humble myself before them, for I don't know how to love them enough. If I have sinned against everyone, yet all forgive me, too, and that's Heaven. Am I not in Heaven now?"

And there was a great deal more I don't remember. I remember I went once into his room when there was no one else there. It was a bright evening, the sun was setting, and the whole room was lighted up.

He beckoned me, and I went up to him. He put his hands on my shoulders and looked into my face tenderly, lovingly; he said nothing for a minute, only looked at me like that.

“Well,” he said, “run and play now, enjoy life for me too.”

I went out then and ran to play. And many times in my life afterwards I remembered even with tears how he told me to enjoy life for him too. There were many other marvelous and beautiful sayings of his, though we did not understand them at the time. He died the third week after Easter. He was fully conscious though he could not talk; up to his last hour he did not change. He looked happy, his eyes beamed and sought us, he smiled at us, beckoned us. There was a great deal of talk even in the town about his death. I was impressed by all this at the time, but not too much so, though I cried a good deal at his funeral. I was young then, a child, but a lasting impression, a hidden feeling of it all, remained in my heart, ready to rise up and respond when the time came. So indeed it happened. [...]

(c) Recollections of Father Zosima’s youth before
he became a monk; the duel

I spent a long time, almost eight years, in the military cadet school at Petersburg,²⁰⁴ and in the novelty of my surroundings there, many of my childish impressions grew dimmer, though I forgot nothing. I picked up so many new habits and opinions that I was transformed into a cruel, absurd, almost savage creature. A surface polish of courtesy and society manners I did acquire together with the French language.

But we all, myself included, looked upon the soldiers in our service as cattle. I was perhaps worse than the rest in that respect, for I was so much more impressionable than my companions. By the time we left the school as officers, we were ready to lay down our lives for the honor of the regiment, but no one of us had any knowledge of the real meaning of honor, and if anyone had known it, he would have been the first to ridicule it. Drunkenness, debauchery and devilry were what we almost prided ourselves on. I don’t say that we were bad by nature, all these young men were good fellows, but they behaved badly, and I worst of all. What made it worse for me was that I had come into my own money, and so I flung myself into a life of pleasure, and plunged headlong into all the recklessness of youth.

204. *cadet school in Petersburg*—an elite military school, founded in 1732.

I was fond of reading, yet strange to say, the Bible was the one book I never opened at that time, though I always carried it about with me, and I was never separated from it; in very truth I was keeping that book “for the day and the hour, for the month and the year,”²⁰⁵ though I knew it not.

After four years of this life, I chanced to be in the town of K. where our regiment was stationed at the time. We found the people of the town hospitable, rich and fond of entertainments. I met with a cordial reception everywhere, as I was of a lively temperament and was known to be well off, which always goes a long way in the world. And then a circumstance happened which was the beginning of it all.

I formed an attachment to a beautiful and intelligent young girl of noble and lofty character, the daughter of people much respected. They were well-to-do people of influence and position. They always gave me a cordial and friendly reception. I fancied that the young lady looked on me with favor and my heart was aflame at such an idea. Later on I saw and fully realized that I perhaps was not so passionately in love with her at all, but only recognized the elevation of her mind and character, which I could not indeed have helped doing. I was prevented, however, from making her an offer at the time by my selfishness, I was loath to part with the allurements of my free and licentious bachelor life in the heyday of my youth, and with my pockets full of money. I did drop some hint as to my feelings however, though I put off taking any decisive step for a time. Then, all of a sudden, we were ordered off for two months to another district.

On my return two months later, I found the young lady already married to a rich neighboring landowner, a very amiable man, still young though older than I was, connected with the best Petersburg society, which I was not, and of excellent education, which I also was not. I was so overwhelmed at this unexpected circumstance that my mind was positively clouded. The worst of it all was that, as I learned then, the young landowner had been a long while betrothed to her, and I had met him indeed many times in her house, but blinded by my conceit I had noticed nothing. And this particularly mortified me; almost everybody had known all about it, while I knew nothing. I was filled with sudden

205. *for the day and the hour, for the month and the year*—see the description of the apocalypse in Revelation 9:15: “So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of humankind.” (NRSV)

irrepressible fury. With flushed face I began recalling how often I had been on the point of declaring my love to her, and as she had not attempted to stop me or to warn me, she must, I concluded, have been laughing at me all the time. Later on, of course, I reflected and remembered that she had been very far from laughing at me; on the contrary, she used to turn off any love-making on my part with a jest and begin talking of other subjects; but at that moment I was incapable of reflecting and was all eagerness for revenge. I am surprised to remember that my wrath and revengeful feelings were extremely repugnant to my own nature, for being of an easy temper, I found it difficult to be angry with any one for long, and so I had to work myself up artificially and became at last revolting and absurd.

I waited for an opportunity and succeeded in insulting my “rival” in the presence of a large company. I insulted him on a perfectly extraneous pretext, jeering at his opinion upon an important public event²⁰⁶—it was in the year 1826—and my jeer was, so people said, clever and effective. Then I forced him to ask for an explanation, and behaved so rudely that he accepted my challenge in spite of the vast inequality between us, as I was younger, a person of no consequence, and of inferior rank. I learned afterwards for a fact that it was from a jealous feeling on his side also that my challenge was accepted; he had been rather jealous of me on his wife’s account before their marriage; he fancied now that if he submitted to be insulted by me and refused to accept my challenge, and if she heard of it, she might begin to despise him and waver in her love for him. I soon found a second in a comrade, an ensign of our regiment. In those days though duels were severely punished, yet dueling was a kind of fashion among the officers—so strong and deeply rooted will a brutal prejudice sometimes be.

It was the end of June, and our meeting was to take place at seven o’clock the next day on the outskirts of the town—and then something happened that in very truth was the turning point of my life. In the evening, returning home in a savage and brutal humor, I flew into a rage with my orderly Afanasy, and gave him two blows in the face with all my might, so that it was covered with blood. He had not long been in my service and I had struck him before, but never with such ferocious cruelty. And, believe me, though it’s forty years ago, I recall it now with

206. *important public events*—Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky speculate that Zosima refers here to the uprising led by liberal army officers in December of 1825.

shame and pain. I went to bed and slept for about three hours; when I waked up the day was breaking. I got up—I did not want to sleep any more—I went to the window—opened it, it looked out upon the garden; I saw the sun rising; it was warm and beautiful, the birds were singing.

“What’s the meaning of it?” I thought. “I feel in my heart as it were something vile and shameful. Is it because I am going to shed blood? No,” I thought, “I feel it’s not that. Can it be that I am afraid of death, afraid of being killed? No, that’s not it, that’s not it at all.”... And all at once I knew what it was: it was because I had beaten Afanasy the evening before! It all rose before my mind, it all was as it were repeated over again; he stood before me and I was beating him straight on the face and he was holding his arms stiffly down, his head erect, his eyes fixed upon me as though on parade. He staggered at every blow and did not even dare to raise his hands to protect himself. That is what a man has been brought to, and that was a man beating a fellow creature! What a crime! It was as though a sharp dagger had pierced me right through. I stood as if I were struck dumb, while the sun was shining, the leaves were rejoicing and the birds were trilling the praise of God.... I hid my face in my hands, fell on my bed and broke into a storm of tears. And then I remembered my brother Markel and what he said on his deathbed to his servants: “My dear ones, why do you wait on me, why do you love me, am I worth your waiting on me?”

“Yes, am I worth it?” flashed through my mind. “After all what am I worth, that another man, a fellow creature, made in the likeness and image of God, should serve me?” For the first time in my life this question forced itself upon me. He had said, “Mother, my little heart, in truth we are each responsible to all for all, it’s only that men don’t know this. If they knew it, the world would be a Paradise at once.”

“God, can that too be false?” I thought as I wept. “In truth, perhaps, I am more than all others responsible for all, a greater sinner than all men in the world.” And all at once the whole truth in its full light appeared to me; what was I going to do? I was going to kill a good, clever, noble man, who had done me no wrong, and by depriving his wife of happiness for the rest of her life, I should be torturing and killing her too. I lay thus in my bed with my face in the pillow, heedless how the time was passing. Suddenly my second, the ensign, came in with the pistols to fetch me.

“Ah,” said he, “it’s a good thing you are up already, it’s time we were off, come along!”

I did not know what to do and hurried to and fro undecided; we went out to the carriage, however.

“Wait here a minute,” I said to him. “I’ll be back directly, I have forgotten my purse.”

And I ran back alone, to Afanasy’s little room.

“Afanasy,” I said, “I gave you two blows on the face yesterday, forgive me,” I said.

He started as though he were frightened, and looked at me; and I saw that it was not enough, and on the spot, in my full officer’s uniform, I dropped at his feet and bowed my head to the ground.

“Forgive me,” I said.

Then he was completely aghast.

“Your honor ... sir, what are you doing? Am I worth it?”

And he burst out crying as I had done before, hid this face in his hands, turned to the window and shook all over with his sobs. I flew out to my comrade and jumped into the carriage.

“Ready,” I cried. “Have you ever seen a conqueror?” I asked him. “Here is one before you.”

I was in ecstasy, laughing and talking all the way, I don’t remember what about.

He looked at me. “Well, brother, you are a plucky fellow, you’ll keep up the honor of the uniform, I can see.”

So we reached the place and found them there, waiting us. We were placed twelve paces apart; he had the first shot. I stood gayly, looking him full in the face; I did not twitch an eyelash, I looked lovingly at him, for I knew what I would do. His shot just grazed my cheek and ear.

“Thank God,” I cried, “no man has been killed,” and I seized my pistol, turned back and flung it far away into the wood. “That’s the place for you,” I cried.

I turned to my adversary.

“Forgive me, young fool that I am, sir,” I said, “for my unprovoked insult to you and for forcing you to fire at me. I am ten times worse than you and more, maybe. Tell that to the person whom you hold dearest in the world.”

I had no sooner said this than they all three shouted at me.

“Upon my word,” cried my adversary, annoyed, “if you did not want to fight, why did not you let me alone?”

“Yesterday I was a fool, today I know better,” I answered him gayly.

“As to yesterday, I believe you, but as for today, it is difficult to agree with your opinion,” said he.

“Bravo,” I cried, clapping my hands. “I agree with you there too. I have deserved it!”

“Will you shoot, sir, or not?”

“No, I won’t,” I said; “if you like, fire at me again, but it would be better for you not to fire.”

The seconds, especially mine, were shouting too: “Can you disgrace the regiment like this, facing your antagonist and begging his forgiveness! If I’d only known this!”

I stood facing them all, not laughing now.

“Gentlemen,” I said, “is it really so wonderful in these days to find a man who can repent of his stupidity and publicly confess his wrongdoing?”

“But not in a duel,” cried my second again.

“That’s what’s so strange,” I said. “For I ought to have owned my fault as soon as I got here, before he had fired a shot, before leading him into a great and deadly sin; but we have made our life so grotesque, that to act in that way would have been almost impossible, for only after I have faced his shot at the distance of twelve paces could my words have any significance for him, and if I had spoken before, he would have said, ‘He is a coward, the sight of the pistols has frightened him, no use to listen to him.’ Gentlemen,” I cried suddenly, speaking straight from my heart, “look around you at the gifts of God, the clear sky, the pure air, the tender grass, the birds; nature is beautiful and sinless, and we, only we, are sinful and foolish, and we don’t understand that life is Heaven, for we have only to understand that and it will at once be fulfilled in all its beauty, we will embrace each other and weep.”

I would have said more but I could not; my voice broke with the sweetness and youthful gladness of it, and there was such bliss in my heart as I had never known before in my life.

“All this as rational and edifying,” said my antagonist, “and in any case you are an original person.”

“You may laugh,” I said to him, laughing too, “but afterwards you will approve of me.”

“O, I am ready to approve of you now,” said he; “will you shake hands? for I believe you are genuinely sincere.”

“No,” I said, “not now, later on when I have grown worthier and deserve your esteem, then shake hands and you will do well.”

We went home, my second upbraiding me all the way, while I kissed him. All my comrades heard of the affair at once and gathered together to pass judgment on me the same day.

“He has disgraced the uniform,” they said; “let him resign his commission.”

Some stood up for me: “He faced the shot,” they said.

“Yes, but he was afraid of his other shot and begged for forgiveness.”

“If he had been afraid of being shot, he would have shot his own pistol first before asking forgiveness, while he flung it loaded into the forest. No, there’s something else in this, something original.”

I enjoyed listening and looking at them. “My dear friends and comrades,” said I, “don’t worry about my resigning my commission, for I have done so already. I have sent in my papers this morning and as soon as I get my discharge I will go into a monastery—it’s with that object I am leaving the regiment.”

When I had said this every one of them burst out laughing.

“You should have told us of that first, that explains everything, we can’t judge a monk.”

They laughed and could not stop themselves, and not scornfully, but kindly and merrily. They all felt friendly to me at once, even those who had been sternest in their censure, and all the following month, before my discharge came, they could not make enough of me. “Ah, you monk,” they would say. And everyone said something kind to me, they began trying to dissuade me, even to pity me: “What are you doing to yourself?”

“No,” they would say, “he is a brave fellow, he faced fire and could have fired his own pistol too, but he had a dream the night before that he should become a monk, that’s why he did it.”

It was the same thing with the society of the town. Till then I had been kindly received, but had not been the object of special attention, and now all came to know me at once and invited me; they laughed at me, but they loved me. I may mention that although everybody talked openly of our duel, the authorities took no notice of it, because my antagonist was a near relation of our general, and as there had been no bloodshed and no serious consequences, and as I resigned my commission, they took it as a joke. And I began then to speak aloud and fearlessly, regardless of their laughter, for it was always kindly and spiteful laughter. These conversations mostly took place in the evenings, in the company of ladies; women particularly liked listening to me then and they made the men listen.

“But how can I possibly be responsible for all?” everyone would laugh in my face. “Can I, for instance, be responsible for you?”

“You may well not know it,” I would answer, “since the whole world has long been going on a different line, since we consider the veriest lies as truth and demand the same lies from others. Here I have for once in my life acted sincerely and, well, you all look upon me as a madman. Though you are friendly to me, yet, you see, you all laugh at me.”

“But how can we help being friendly to you?” said my hostess, laughing. The room was full of people. All of a sudden the young lady rose, on whose account the duel had been fought and whom only lately I had intended to be my future wife. I had not noticed her coming into the room. She got up, came to me and held out her hand.

“Let me tell you,” she said, “that I am the first not to laugh at you, but on the contrary I thank you with tears and express my respect for you for your action then.”

Her husband, too, came up and then they all approached me and almost kissed me. [...]

(e) The Russian monk and his possible significance

Fathers and teachers, what is the monk? In the cultivated world the word is nowadays pronounced by some people with a jeer, and by others it is used as a term of abuse, and this contempt for the monk is growing. It is true, alas, it is true, that there are many sluggards, gluttons, profligates and insolent beggars among monks. Educated people point to these: “You are idlers, useless members of society, you live on the labor of others, you are shameless beggars.” And yet how many meek and humble monks there are, yearning for solitude and fervent prayer in peace! These are less noticed, or passed over in silence. And how surprised men would be if I were to say that from these meek monks, who yearn for solitary prayer, the salvation of Russia will come perhaps once more! For they are in truth made ready in peace and quiet “for the day and the hour, the month and the year.” Meanwhile, in their solitude, they keep the image of Christ fair and undefiled, in the purity of God’s truth, from the times of the Fathers of old, the apostles and the martyrs. And when the time comes they will show it to the tottering creeds of the world. That is a great thought. That star will rise out of the East.²⁰⁷

207. *That star will rise out of the East*—see Matthew 2:1–2: “In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him

That is my view of the monk, and is it false? is it too proud? Look at the worldly and all who set themselves up above the people of God, has not God's image and his truth been distorted in them? They have science; but in science there is nothing but what is the object of sense. The spiritual world, the higher part of man's being is rejected altogether, dismissed with a sort of triumph, even with hatred. The world has proclaimed the reign of freedom, especially of late, but what do we see in this freedom of theirs? Nothing but slavery and self-destruction! For the world says:

"You have desires and so satisfy them, for you have the same rights as the most rich and powerful. Don't be afraid of satisfying them and even multiply your desires." That is the modern doctrine of the world. In that they see freedom. And what follows from this right of multiplication of desires? In the rich, isolation and spiritual suicide; in the poor, envy and murder; for they have been given rights, but have not been shown the means of satisfying their wants. They maintain that the world is getting more and more united, more and more bound together in brotherly community, as it overcomes distance and sets thoughts flying through the air.

Alas, put no faith in such a bond of union. Interpreting freedom as the multiplication and rapid satisfaction of desires, men distort their own nature, for many senseless and foolish desires and habits and ridiculous fancies are fostered in them. They live only for mutual envy, for luxury and ostentation. To have dinners, visits, carriages, rank and slaves to wait on one is looked upon as a necessity, for which life, honor and human feeling are sacrificed, and men even commit suicide if they are unable to satisfy it. We see the same thing among those who are not rich, while the poor drown their unsatisfied need and their envy in drunkenness. But soon they will drink blood instead of wine, they are being led on to it. I ask you is such a man free? I knew one "champion of freedom" who told me himself that, when he was deprived of tobacco in prison, he was so wretched at the privation that he almost went and betrayed his cause for the sake of getting tobacco again! And such a man says, "I am fighting for the cause of humanity."

How can such a one fight? What is he fit for? He is capable perhaps of some action quickly over, but he cannot hold out long. And it's no wonder that instead of gaining freedom they have sunk into slavery, and instead of serving the cause of brotherly love and the union of humanity

homage." (NRSV)

have fallen, on the contrary, into dissension and isolation, as my mysterious visitor and teacher said to me in my youth. And therefore the idea of the service of humanity, of brotherly love and the solidarity of mankind, is more and more dying out in the world, and indeed this idea is sometimes treated with derision. For how can a man shake off his habits? What can become of him if he is in such bondage to the habit of satisfying the innumerable desires he has created for himself? He is isolated, and what concern has he with the rest of humanity? They have succeeded in accumulating a greater mass of objects, but the joy in the world has grown less.

The monastic way is very different. Obedience, fasting and prayer are laughed at, yet only through them lies the way to real, true freedom. I cut off my superfluous and unnecessary desires, I subdue my proud and wanton will and chastise it with obedience, and with God's help I attain freedom of spirit and with it spiritual joy. Which is most capable of conceiving a great idea and serving it—the rich man in his isolation or the man who has freed himself from the tyranny of material things and habits? The monk is reproached for his solitude, “You have secluded yourself within the walls of the monastery for your own salvation, and have forgotten the brotherly service of humanity!” But we will see which will be most zealous in the cause of brotherly love. For it is not we, but they, who are in isolation, though they don't see that. Of old, leaders of the people came from among us, and why should they not again? The same meek and humble ascetics will rise up and go out to work for the great cause. The salvation of Russia comes from the people. And the Russian monk has always been on the side of the people. We are isolated only if the people are isolated. The people believe as we do, and an unbelieving reformer will never do anything in Russia, even if he is sincere in heart and a genius. Remember that! The people will meet the atheist and overcome him, and Russia will be one and orthodox. Take care of the peasant and guard his heart. Go on educating him quietly. That's your duty as monks, for the peasant has God in his heart. [...]

(g) Of prayer, of love, and of contact with other
 worlds

Young man, be not forgetful of prayer. Every time you pray, if your prayer is sincere, there will be new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education. Remember, too, every day, and whenever you can, repeat to

yourself, “Lord, have mercy on all who appear before you today.” For every hour and every moment thousands of men leave life on this earth, and their souls appear before God. And how many of them depart in solitude, unknown, sad, dejected that no one mourns for them or even knows whether they have lived or not! And behold, from the other end of the earth perhaps, your prayer for their rest will rise up to God though you knew them not nor they you. How touching it must be to a soul standing in dread before the Lord to feel at that instant that, for him too, there is one to pray, that there is a fellow creature left on earth to love him too! And God will look on you both more graciously, for if you have had so much pity on him, how much will He have pity Who is infinitely more loving and merciful than you! And He will forgive him for your sake.

Brothers, have no fear of men’s sin. Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of divine love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God’s creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love. Love the animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and joy untroubled. Do not trouble it, don’t harass them, don’t deprive them of their happiness, don’t work against God’s intent. Man, do not pride yourself on superiority to the animals; they are without sin, and you, with your greatness, defile the earth by your appearance on it, and leave the traces of your foulness after you—alas, it is true of almost every one of us! Love children especially, for they too are sinless like the angels; they live to soften and purify our hearts and as it were to guide us. Woe to him who offends a child! Father Anfim taught me to love children. The kind, silent man used often on our wanderings to spend the farthings given us on sweets and cakes for the children. He could not pass by a child without emotion. That’s the nature of the man.

At some thoughts one stands perplexed, especially at the sight of men’s sin, and wonders whether one should use force or humble love. Always decide to use humble love. If you resolve on that once for all, you may subdue the whole world. Loving humility is marvelously strong, the strongest of all things, and there is nothing else like it.

Every day and every hour, every minute, walk round yourself and watch yourself, and see that your image is a seemingly one. You pass by a little child, you pass by, spiteful, with ugly words, with wrathful heart;

you may not have noticed the child, but he has seen you, and your image, unseemly and ignoble, may remain in his defenseless heart. You don't know it, but you may have sown an evil seed in him and it may grow, and all because you were not careful before the child, because you did not foster in yourself a careful, actively benevolent love. Brothers, love is a teacher; but one must know how to acquire it, for it is hard to acquire, it is dearly bought, it is won slowly by long labor. For we must love not only occasionally, for a moment, but forever. Everyone can love occasionally, even the wicked can.

My brother asked the birds to forgive him; that sounds senseless, but it is right; for all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending; a touch in one place sets up movement at the other end of the earth. It may be senseless to beg forgiveness of the birds, but birds would be happier at your side—a little happier, anyway—and children and all animals, if you were nobler than you are now. It's all like an ocean, I tell you. Then you would pray to the birds too, consumed by an all-embracing love, in a sort of transport, and pray that they too will forgive you your sin. Treasure this ecstasy, however senseless it may seem to men. [...]

(h) Can a man judge his fellow creatures? Faith to
 the end

Remember particularly that you cannot be a judge of anyone.²⁰⁸ For no one can judge a criminal, until he recognizes that he is just such a criminal as the man standing before him, and that he perhaps is more than all men to blame for that crime. When he understands that, he will be able to be a judge. Though that sounds absurd, it is true. If I had been righteous myself, perhaps there would have been no criminal standing before me. If you can take upon yourself the crime of the criminal your heart is judging, take it at once, suffer for him yourself, and let him go without reproach. And even if the law itself makes you his judge, act in the same spirit so far as possible, for he will go away and condemn

208. *you cannot be a judge of anyone*—see Matthew 7:1–5: “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.” (NRSV)

himself more bitterly than you have done. If, after your kiss, he goes away untouched, mocking at you, do not let that be a stumbling-block to you. It shows his time has not yet come, but it will come in due course. And if it come not, no matter; if not he, then another in his place will understand and suffer, and judge and condemn himself, and the truth will be fulfilled. Believe that, believe it without doubt; for in that lies all the hope and faith of the saints.

Work without ceasing. If you remember in the night as you go to sleep, "I have not done what I ought to have done," rise up at once and do it. If the people around you are spiteful and callous and will not hear you, fall down before them and beg their forgiveness; for in truth you are to blame for their not wanting to hear you. And if you cannot speak to them in their bitterness, serve them in silence and in humility, never losing hope. If all men abandon you and even drive you away by force, then when you are left alone fall on the earth and kiss it, water it with your tears and it will bring forth fruit even though no one has seen or heard you in your solitude. Believe to the end, even if all men went astray and you were left the only one faithful; bring your offering even then and praise God in your loneliness. And if two of you are gathered together—then there is a whole world, a world of living love. Embrace each other tenderly and praise God, for if only in you two his truth has been fulfilled.

If you sin yourself and grieve even unto death for your sins or for your sudden sin, then rejoice for others, rejoice for the righteous man, rejoice that if you have sinned, he is righteous and has not sinned.

If the evil-doing of men moves you to indignation and overwhelming distress, even to a desire for vengeance on the evildoers, shun above all things that feeling. Go at once and seek suffering for yourself, as though you were yourself guilty of that wrong. Accept that suffering and bear it and your heart will find comfort, and you will understand that you too are guilty, for you might have been a light to the evildoers, even as the one man sinless, and you were not a light to them. If you had been a light, you would have lightened the path for others too, and the evil-doer might perhaps have been saved by your light from his sin. And even though your light was shining, yet you see men were not saved by it, hold firm and doubt not the power of the heavenly light. Believe that if they were not saved, they will be saved hereafter. And if they are not saved hereafter, then their sons will be saved, for your light will not die even when you are dead. The righteous man departs, but his light remains. Men are always saved after the death of the deliverer. Men reject

their prophets and slay them, but they love their martyrs and honor those whom they have slain. You are working for the whole, you are acting for the future. Seek no reward, for great is your reward on this earth: the spiritual joy which is only vouchsafed to the righteous man. Fear not the great nor the mighty, but be wise and ever serene. Know the measure, know the times, study that. When you are left alone, pray. Love to throw yourself on the earth and kiss it. Kiss the earth and love it with an unceasing, consuming love. Love all men, love everything. Seek that rapture and ecstasy. Water the earth with the tears of your joy and love those tears. Don't be ashamed of that ecstasy, prize it, for it is a gift of God and a great one; it is not given to many but only to the elect.

(i) Of Hell and Hell fire, a mystic reflection

Fathers and teachers, I ponder, "What is Hell?" I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love.²⁰⁹ Once in infinite existence, immeasurable in time and space, a spiritual creature was given on his coming to earth, the power of saying, "I am and I love." Once, only once, there was given him a moment of active *living* love, and for that was earthly life given him, and with it times and seasons. And that happy creature rejected the priceless gift, prized it and loved it not, scorned it and remained callous. Such a one, having left the earth, sees Abraham's bosom and talks with Abraham as we are told in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus,²¹⁰ and beholds Heaven and can go up to the Lord.

209. *suffering of being unable to love*—this and the following reflections are drawn from St. Isaac the Syrian (600s).

210. *parable of the rich man and Lazarus*—see Matthew 16:19–31: "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to

But that is just his torment, to rise up to the Lord without ever having loved, to be brought close to those who have loved when he has despised their love. For he sees clearly and says to himself, “Now I have understanding, and though I now thirst to love, there will be nothing great, no sacrifice in my love, for my earthly life is over, and Abraham will not come even with a drop of living water (that is the gift of earthly active life) to cool the fiery thirst of spiritual love which burns in me now, though I despised it on earth; there is no more life for me and will be no more time! Even though I would gladly give my life for others, it can never be, for that life is passed which can be sacrificed for love, and now there is a gulf fixed between that life and this existence.”

They talk of hellfire in the material sense. I don't go into that mystery and I shun it. But I think if there were fire in material sense, they would be glad of it, for I imagine that in material agony, their still greater spiritual agony would be forgotten for a moment. Moreover, that spiritual agony cannot be taken from them, for that suffering is not external but within them. And if it could be taken from them, I think it would be bitterer still for the unhappy creatures. For even if the righteous in Paradise forgave them, beholding their torments, and called them up to Heaven in their infinite love, they would only multiply their torments, for they would arouse in them still more keenly a flaming thirst for responsive, active and grateful love which is now impossible. In the timidity of my heart I imagine, however, that the very recognition of this impossibility would serve at last to console them. For accepting the love of the righteous together with the impossibility of repaying it, by this submissiveness and the effect of this humility, they will attain at last, as it were, to a certain semblance of that active love which they scorned in life, to something like its outward expression.... I am sorry, friends and brothers, that I cannot express this clearly. But woe to those who have slain themselves on earth, woe to the suicides! I believe that there can be none more miserable than they. They tell us that it is a sin to pray for them and outwardly the Church, as it were, renounces them, but in my

my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (NRSV)

secret heart I believe that we may pray even for them.²¹¹ Love can never be an offense to Christ. For such as those I have prayed inwardly all my life, I confess it, fathers and teachers, and even now I pray for them every day. [...]

211. *We may pray even for them*—here Zosima places himself well outside church teaching. The Eastern church teaches that suicide is one of the most heinous sins. Clerics may neither hold funerals for nor bury those who commit suicide.

29.5 Leo Tolstoy, “Father Sergei” (1889)

Leo Tolstoy, *Father Sergius*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude, 1898. *Leo Tolstoy Books Online*, <http://selfknowledge.com/431au.htm>. Public domain.

It is not difficult to argue that Leo Tolstoy stands with Dostoevsky as one of Russia’s two greatest writers. The corpus of this remarkable stylist and original thinker constitutes a lifelong grappling with questions of meaning and morality through novels; short stories; and essays on art, ethics, and religion.

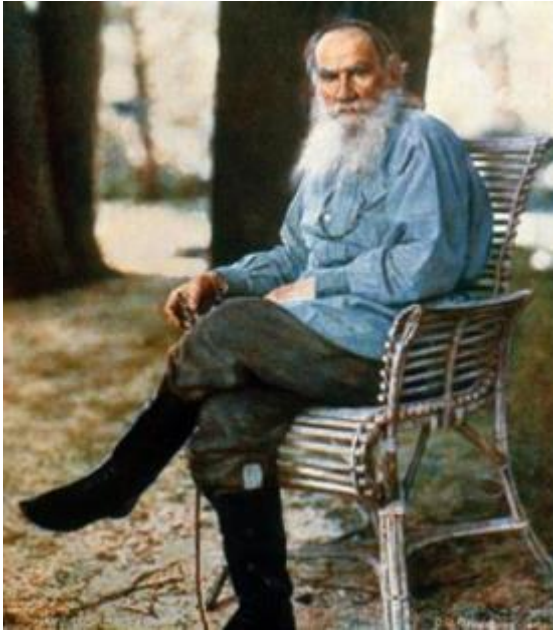


Figure 141. Sergei Prokudin-Gorsky, “Lev Tolstoy in Iasnaia Poliana,” 1908

“Father Sergei” is one of Tolstoy’s great stories, a compelling and disorienting tale about a monk, which reflects both admiration for and doubts about basic tenets and values of Eastern Orthodoxy. Tolstoy wrote “Father Sergei” after a spiritual crisis that drove him away from an already-tenuous connection to the church and institutional Christianity.

The story revolves around a series of paradoxes: Father Sergei's search for genuine, Christian humility—a search that, to his consternation, seems only to inspire pride; a struggle against lust that manages only to inflame lust; his desire to compete and triumph (and his distaste for those who do the same) within a profession (monasticism) that ostensibly eschews competition; the suggestion that Father Sergei can achieve perfection only through moral failure;²¹² and, ultimately, his discovery of Christian values outside institutional Christianity.

Tolstoy's admiration for the ideals of Orthodox monasticism shines through in many places here. Yet Tolstoy questions whether those ideals can be realized in the monastic life. "There is no peace of mind," Tolstoy once wrote when reflecting on this story, "either for the man who lives a secular life in the world or for the man who lives a spiritual life on his own. Peace of mind only comes when man lives to serve God in the world."²¹³ The ultimate exemplar in Father Sergei—Pashenka—lives without any of the accouterments of institutional religion.

Richard Gustafson, a Tolstoy scholar, has observed that Father Sergei in this story passes through various conventions of Orthodox (particularly monastic) piety: he embraces hesychasm and masters his own body; he learns the Jesus Prayer; he offers his spiritual superior total obedience; he manages for a time to ignore the external world; he thrives within communal monasticism, which he then abandons for the hermetic life, only (like St. Antony) to attract a flock of admirers; and he performs miraculous healings.²¹⁴ Yet none of these achievements satisfies, and Father Sergei finds himself in awe of a simple woman with almost no connection to the church he tried to serve. Whether her example offers a solution that Father Sergei can follow remains unclear. There are no easy answers here: only difficult questions, brilliant prose, and a ripping good story.

212. For a study of this suggestion, see Robert L. Jackson, "Father Sergius and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," *Russian Literature* 40, no. 4 (1996): 463–480.

213. R. F. Christian, *Tolstoy: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 235.

214. Richard F. Gustafson, *Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 415–419.

• 1 •

In Petersburg in the eighteen-forties a surprising event occurred. An officer of the Cuirassier Life Guards, a handsome prince who everyone predicted would become aide-de-camp to the emperor, Nikolai I, and have a brilliant career, left the service, broke off his engagement to a beautiful maid of honor, a favorite of the empress's, gave his small estate to his sister, and retired to a monastery to become a monk.

This event appeared extraordinary and inexplicable to those who did not know his inner motives, but for Prince Stepan Kasatsky himself it all occurred so naturally that he could not imagine how he could have acted otherwise.

His father, a retired colonel of the guards, had died when Stepan was twelve, and sorry as his mother was to part from her son, she entered him at the military college as her deceased husband had intended.

The widow herself, with her daughter, Varvara, moved to Petersburg to be near her son and have him with her for the holidays.

The boy was distinguished both by his brilliant ability and by his immense self-esteem. He was first both in his studies—especially in mathematics, of which he was particularly fond—and also in drill and in riding. Though of more than average height, he was handsome and agile, and he would have been an altogether exemplary cadet had it not been for his quick temper. He was remarkably truthful, and was neither dissipated nor addicted to drink. The only faults that marred his conduct were fits of fury to which he was subject and during which he lost control of himself and became like a wild animal. He once nearly threw out of the window another cadet who had begun to tease him about his collection of minerals. On another occasion he came almost completely to grief by flinging a whole dish of cutlets at an officer who was acting as steward, attacking him and, it was said, striking him for having broken his word and told a barefaced lie. He would certainly have been reduced to the ranks had not the director of the college hushed up the whole matter and dismissed the steward.

By the time he was eighteen he had finished his college course and received a commission as lieutenant in an aristocratic regiment of the guards.

The emperor, Nikolai Pavlovich,²¹⁵ had noticed him while he was still at the college, and continued to take notice of him in the regiment, and it was on this account that people predicted for him an appointment as aide-de-camp to the emperor. Kasatsky himself strongly desired it, not from ambition only but chiefly because since his cadet days he had been passionately devoted to Nikolai Pavlovich. The emperor had often visited the military college and every time Kasatsky saw that tall erect figure, with breast expanded in its military overcoat, entering with brisk step, saw the cropped side whiskers, the mustache, the aquiline nose, and heard the sonorous voice exchanging greetings with the cadets, he was seized by the same rapture that he experienced later on when he met the woman he loved. Indeed, his passionate adoration of the emperor was even stronger: he wished to sacrifice something—everything, even himself—to prove his complete devotion. And the emperor Nikolai was conscious of evoking this rapture and deliberately aroused it. He played with the cadets, surrounded himself with them, treating them sometimes with childish simplicity, sometimes as a friend, and then again with majestic solemnity. After that affair with the officer, Nikolai Pavlovich said nothing to Kasatsky, but when the latter approached he waved him away theatrically, frowned, shook his finger at him, and afterwards when leaving, said: “Remember that I know everything. There are some things I would rather not know, but they remain here,” and he pointed to his heart.

When on leaving college the cadets were received by the emperor, he did not again refer to Kasatsky’s offense, but told them all, as was his custom, that they should serve him and the fatherland loyally, that he would always be their best friend, and that when necessary they might approach him direct. All the cadets were as usual greatly moved, and Kasatsky even shed tears, remembering the past, and vowed that he would serve his beloved tsar with all his soul.

When Kasatsky took up his commission his mother moved with her daughter first to Moscow and then to their country estate. Kasatsky gave half his property to his sister and kept only enough to maintain himself in the expensive regiment he had joined.

To all appearance he was just an ordinary, brilliant young officer of the guards making a career for himself; but intense and complex strivings went on within him. From early childhood his efforts had seemed to be very varied, but essentially they were all one and the

215. *Nikolai Pavlovich*—Tsar Nichols I (1825–1855).

same. He tried in everything he took up to attain such success and perfection as would evoke praise and surprise. Whether it was his studies or his military exercises, he took them up and worked at them till he was praised and held up as an example to others. Mastering one subject he took up another, and obtained first place in his studies. For example, while still at college he noticed in himself an awkwardness in French conversation, and contrived to master French till he spoke it as well as Russian, and then he took up chess and became an excellent player.

Apart from his main vocation, which was the service of his tsar and the fatherland, he always set himself some particular aim, and however unimportant it was, devoted himself completely to it and lived for it until it was accomplished. And as soon as it was attained another aim would immediately present itself, replacing its predecessor. This passion for distinguishing himself, or for accomplishing something in order to distinguish himself, filled his life. On taking up his commission he set himself to acquire the utmost perfection in knowledge of the service, and very soon became a model officer, though still with the same fault of ungovernable irascibility, which here in the service again led him to commit actions inimical to his success. Then he took to reading, having once in conversation in society felt himself deficient in general education—and again achieved his purpose. Then, wishing to secure a brilliant position in high society, he learned to dance excellently and very soon was invited to all the balls in the best circles, and to some of their evening gatherings. But this did not satisfy him: he was accustomed to being first, and in this society was far from being so.

The highest society then consisted, and I think always consist, of four sorts of people: rich people who are received at court, people not wealthy but born and brought up in court circles, rich people who ingratiate themselves into the court set, and people neither rich nor belonging to the court but who ingratiate themselves into the first and second sets.

Kasatsky did not belong to the first two sets, but was readily welcomed in the others. On entering society he determined to have relations with some society lady, and to his own surprise quickly accomplished this purpose. He soon realized, however, that the circles in which he moved were not the highest, and that though he was received in the highest spheres he did not belong to them. They were polite to him, but showed by their whole manner that they had their own set

and that he was not of it. And Kasatsky wished to belong to that inner circle. To attain that end it would be necessary to be an aide-de-camp to the emperor—which he expected to become—or to marry into that exclusive set, which he resolved to do. And his choice fell on a beauty belonging to the court, who not merely belonged to the circle into which he wished to be accepted, but whose friendship was coveted by the very highest people and those most firmly established in that highest circle. This was Countess Korotkova. Kasatsky began to pay court to her, and not merely for the sake of his career. She was extremely attractive and he soon fell in love with her. At first she was noticeably cool toward him, but then suddenly changed and became gracious, and her mother gave him pressing invitations to visit them. Kasatsky proposed and was accepted. He was surprised at the facility with which he attained such happiness. But though he noticed something strange and unusual in the behavior toward him of both mother and daughter, he was blinded by being so deeply in love, and did not realize what almost the whole town knew—namely, that his fiancée had been the emperor Nikolai's mistress the previous year.

Two weeks before the day arranged for the wedding, Kasatsky was at *Tsarskoe Selo*²¹⁶ at his fiancée's country place. It was a hot day in May. He and his betrothed had walked about the garden and were sitting on a bench in a shady linden alley. Mary's white muslin dress suited her particularly well, and she seemed the personification of innocence and love as she sat, now bending her head, now gazing up at the very tall and handsome man who was speaking to her with particular tenderness and self-restraint, as if he feared by word or gesture to offend or sully her angelic purity.

Kasatsky belonged to those men of the eighteen-forties (they are now no longer to be found) who while deliberately and without any conscientious scruples condoning impurity in themselves, required ideal and angelic purity in their women, regarded all unmarried women of their circle as possessed of such purity, and treated them accordingly. There was much that was false and harmful in this outlook, as concerning the laxity the men permitted themselves, but in regard to the women that old-fashioned view (sharply differing from that held by young people today who see in every girl merely a female seeking a

216. *Tsarskoe Selo*—literally “Tsar’s Village,” an estate just south of St. Petersburg where the imperial family sometimes stayed.

mate) was, I think, of value. The girls, perceiving such adoration, endeavored with more or less success to be goddesses.

Such was the view Kasatsky held of women, and that was how he regarded his fiancée. He was particularly in love that day, but did not experience any sensual desire for her. On the contrary he regarded her with tender adoration as something unattainable. He rose to his full height, standing before her with both hands on his saber.

“I have only now realized what happiness a man can experience! And it is you, my darling, who have given me this happiness,” he said with a timid smile. Endearments had not yet become usual between them, and feeling himself morally inferior he felt terrified at this stage to use them to such an angel.

“It is thanks to you that I have come to know myself. I have learned that I am better than I thought.”

“I have known that for a long time. That was why I began to love you.”

Nightingales trilled nearby and the fresh leafage rustled, moved by a passing breeze. He took her hand and kissed it, and tears came into his eyes. She understood that he was thanking her for having said she loved him. He silently took a few steps up and down, and then approached her again and sat down.

“You know ... I have to tell you ... I was not disinterested when I began to make love to you. I wanted to get into society; but later ... how unimportant that became in comparison with you—when I got to know you. You are not angry with me for that?”

She did not reply but merely touched his hand. He understood that this meant: “No, I am not angry.”

“You said ...” He hesitated. It seemed too bold to say. “You said that you began to love me. I believe it—but there is something that troubles you and checks your feeling. What is it?”

“Yes—now or never!” thought she. “He is bound to know of it anyway. But now he will not forsake me. Ah, if he should, it would be terrible!” And she threw a loving glance at his tall, noble, powerful figure. She loved him now more than she had loved the tsar, and apart from the imperial dignity would not have preferred the emperor to him.

“Listen! I cannot deceive you. I have to tell you. You ask what it is? It is that I have loved before.”

She again laid her hand on his with an imploring gesture. He was silent.

“You want to know who it was? It was—the emperor.”

“We all love him. I can imagine you, a schoolgirl at the institute ...”

“No, it was later. I was infatuated, but it passed ... I must tell you ...”

“Well, what of it?”

“No, it was not simply—” She covered her face with her hands.

“What? You gave yourself to him?”

She was silent.

“His mistress?”

She did not answer.

He sprang up and stood before her with trembling jaws, pale as death. He now remembered how the emperor, meeting him on the Nevsky, had amiably congratulated him.

“O God, what have I done! *Stiva!*”²¹⁷ “Don’t touch me! Don’t touch me! O, how it pains!”

He turned away and went to the house. There he met her mother.

“What is the matter, Prince? I ...” She became silent on seeing his face. The blood had suddenly rushed to his head.

“You knew it, and used me to shield them! If you weren’t a woman!” he cried, lifting his enormous fist, and turning aside he ran away.

Had his fiancée’s lover been a private person he would have killed him, but it was his beloved tsar.

Next day he applied both for furlough and his discharge, and professing to be ill, so as to see no one, he went away to the country.

He spent the summer at his village arranging his affairs. When summer was over he did not return to Petersburg, but entered a monastery and there became a monk.

His mother wrote to try to dissuade him from this decisive step, but he replied that he felt God’s call, which transcended all other considerations. Only his sister, who was as proud and ambitious as he, understood him.

She understood that he had become a monk in order to be above those who considered themselves his superiors. And she understood him correctly. By becoming a monk he showed contempt for all that seemed most important to others and had seemed so to him while he was in the service, and he now ascended a height from which he could

217. *Stiva*—a diminutive of Stepan, Kasatsky’s first name.

look down on those he had formerly envied ... But it was not this alone, as his sister Varvara supposed, that influenced him. There was also in him something else—a sincere religious feeling that Varvara did not know, which intertwined itself with the feeling of pride and the desire for preeminence, and guided him. His disillusionment with Mary, whom he had thought of angelic purity, and his sense of injury, were so strong that they brought him to despair, and the despair led him—to what? To God, to his childhood’s faith that had never been destroyed in him.

• 2 •

Kasatsky entered the monastery on the feast of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. The abbot of that monastery was a gentleman by birth, a learned writer and a starets, that is, he belonged to that succession of monks originating in Walachia²¹⁸ who each choose a director and teacher whom they implicitly obey. This superior had been a disciple of the starets, Amvrosy, who was a disciple of Makary, who was a disciple of the starets Leonid, who was a disciple of Paisy Velichkovsky.²¹⁹ To this abbot Kasatsky submitted himself as to his chosen director. Here in the monastery, besides the feeling of ascendancy over others that such a life gave him, he felt much as he had done in the world: he found satisfaction in attaining the greatest possible perfection outwardly as well as inwardly. As in the regiment he had been not merely an irreproachable officer but had even exceeded his duties and widened the borders of perfection, so also as a monk he tried to be perfect, and was always industrious, abstemious, submissive, and meek, as well as pure both in deed and in thought, and obedient. This last quality in particular made life far easier for him. If many of the demands of life in the monastery, which was near the capital and much frequented, did not please him and were temptations to him, they were all nullified by obedience: “It is not for me to reason; my business is to do the task set me, whether it be standing beside the relics, singing in the choir, or making up accounts in the monastery guest house.” All possibility of doubt about anything was silenced by obedience to the starets. Had it not been for this, he would have been oppressed by the

218. *Walachia*—a region north of the Danube River and south of the southern Carpathian Mountains, situated in modern Romania.

219. *Paisy Velichkovsky*—the Russian starets (1724–1794) who translated the *Philokalia*—an anthology of hesychast texts—into Russian.

length and monotony of the church services, the bustle of the many visitors, and the bad qualities of the other monks. As it was, he not only bore it all joyfully, but found in it solace and support. "I don't know why it is necessary to hear the same prayers several times a day, but I know that it is necessary; and knowing this I find joy in them." His director told him that as material food is necessary for the maintenance of the life of the body, so spiritual food—the church prayers—is necessary for the maintenance of the spiritual life. He believed this, and though the church services, for which he had to get up early in the morning, were a difficulty, they certainly calmed him and gave him joy. This was the result of his consciousness of humility, and the certainty that whatever he had to do, being fixed by the starets, was right.

The interest of his life consisted not only in an ever greater and greater subjugation of his will, but in the attainment of all the Christian virtues, which at first seemed to him easily attainable. He had given his whole estate to his sister and did not regret it, he had no personal claims, humility toward his inferiors was not merely easy for him but afforded him pleasure. Even victory over the sins of the flesh, greed and lust, was easily attained. His director had specially warned him against the latter sin, but Kasatsky felt free from it and was glad.

One thing only tormented him—the remembrance of his fiancée; and not merely the remembrance but the vivid image of what might have been. Involuntarily he recalled a lady he knew who had been a favorite of the emperor's, but had afterwards married and become an admirable wife and mother. The husband had a high position, influence and honor, and a good and penitent wife.

In his better hours Kasatsky was not disturbed by such thoughts, and when he recalled them at such times he was merely glad to feel that the temptation was past. But there were moments when all that made up his present life suddenly grew dim before him, moments when, if he did not cease to believe in the aims he had set himself, he ceased to see them and could evoke no confidence in them but was seized by a remembrance of, and—terrible to say—a regret for, the change of life he had made.

The only thing that saved him in that state of mind was obedience and work, and the fact that the whole day was occupied by prayer. He went through the usual forms of prayer, he bowed in prayer, he even prayed more than usual, but it was lip-service only and his soul was not in it. This condition would continue for a day, or sometimes for two days, and would then pass of itself. But those days were dreadful. Ka-

satsky felt that he was neither in his own hands nor in God's, but was subject to something else. All he could do then was to obey the starets, to restrain himself, to undertake nothing, and simply to wait. In general all this time he lived not by his own will but by that of the starets, and in this obedience he found a special tranquility.

So he lived in his first monastery for seven years. At the end of the third year he received the tonsure and was ordained to the priesthood by the name of Sergei. The profession was an important event in his inner life. He had previously experienced a great consolation and spiritual exaltation when receiving Communion, and now when he himself officiated, the performance of the preparation filled him with ecstatic and deep emotion. But subsequently that feeling became more and more deadened, and once when he was officiating in a depressed state of mind he felt that the influence produced on him by the service would not endure. And it did in fact weaken till only the habit remained.

In general in the seventh year of his life in the monastery Sergei grew weary. He had learned all there was to learn and had attained all there was to attain, there was nothing more to do and his spiritual drowsiness increased. During this time he heard of his mother's death and his sister Varvara's marriage, but both events were matters of indifference to him. His whole attention and his whole interest were concentrated on his inner life.

In the fourth year of his priesthood, during which the bishop had been particularly kind to him, the starets told him that he ought not to decline it if he were offered an appointment to higher duties. Then monastic ambition, the very thing he had found so repulsive in other monks, arose within him. He was assigned to a monastery near the metropolis. He wished to refuse but the starets ordered him to accept the appointment. He did so, and took leave of the starets and moved to the other monastery.

The exchange into the metropolitan monastery was an important event in Sergei's life. There he encountered many temptations, and his whole will-power was concentrated on meeting them.

In the first monastery, women had not been a temptation to him, but here that temptation arose with terrible strength and even took definite shape. There was a lady known for her frivolous behavior who began to seek his favor. She talked to him and asked him to visit her. Sergei sternly declined, but was horrified by the definiteness of his desire. He was so alarmed that he wrote about it to the starets. And in

addition, to keep himself in hand, he spoke to a young novice and, conquering his sense of shame, confessed his weakness to him, asking him to keep watch on him and not let him go anywhere except to service and to fulfill his duties.

Besides this, a great pitfall for Sergei lay in the fact of his extreme antipathy to his new abbot, a cunning worldly man who was making a career for himself in the church. Struggle with himself as he might, he could not master that feeling. He was submissive to the abbot, but in the depths of his soul he never ceased to condemn him. And in the second year of his residence at the new monastery that ill-feeling broke out.

The vigil service was being performed in the large church on the eve of the feast of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and there were many visitors. The abbot himself was conducting the service. Father Sergei was standing in his usual place and praying: that is, he was in that condition of struggle that always occupied him during the service, especially in the large church when he was not himself conducting the service. This conflict was occasioned by his irritation at the presence of fine folk, especially ladies. He tried not to see them or to notice all that went on: how a soldier conducted them, pushing the common people aside, how the ladies pointed out the monks to one another—especially himself and a monk noted for his good looks. He tried as it were to keep his mind in blinkers, to see nothing but the light of the candles on the altar screen, the icons, and those conducting the service. He tried to hear nothing but the prayers that were being chanted or read, to feel nothing but self-oblivion in consciousness of the fulfillment of duty—a feeling he always experienced when hearing or reciting in advance the prayers he had so often heard.

So he stood, crossing and prostrating himself when necessary, and struggled with himself, now giving way to cold condemnation and now to a consciously evoked obliteration of thought and feeling. Then the sacristan, Father Nikodim—also a great stumbling-block to Sergei, who involuntarily reproached him for flattering and fawning on the abbot—approached him and, bowing low, requested his presence behind the holy gates. Father Sergei straightened his mantle, put on his biretta, and went circumspectly through the crowd.

“*Lise, regarde a droite, c’est lui!*”²²⁰ he heard a woman’s voice say.

220. “*Lise, regarde a droite, c’est lui!*”—“Lise, look right, it’s him!” Many educated Russians—especially those at court, spoke French during this era.

“*Ou, ou? Il n’est pas tellement beau.*”²²¹ He knew that they were speaking of him. He heard them and, as always at moments of temptation, he repeated the words, “Lead us not into temptation,” and bowing his head and lowering his eyes went past the ambo and in by the north door, avoiding the canons in their cassocks who were just then passing the altar screen. On entering the sanctuary he bowed, crossing himself as usual and bending double before the icons. Then, raising his head but without turning, he glanced out of the corner of his eye at the abbot, whom he saw standing beside another glittering figure.

The abbot was standing by the wall in his vestments. Having freed his short plump hands from beneath his chasuble²²² he had folded them over his fat body and protruding stomach, and fingering the cords of his vestments was smilingly saying something to a military man in the uniform of a general of the Imperial suite, with its insignia and shoulder-knots that Father Sergei’s experienced eye at once recognized. This general had been the commander of the regiment in which Sergei had served. He now evidently occupied an important position, and Father Sergei at once noticed that the abbot was aware of this and that his red face and bald head beamed with satisfaction and pleasure. This vexed and disgusted Father Sergei, the more so when he heard that the abbot had only sent for him to satisfy the general’s curiosity to see a man who had formerly served with him, as he expressed it.

“Very pleased to see you in your angelic guise,” said the general, holding out his hand. “I hope you have not forgotten an old comrade.”

The whole thing—the abbot’s red, smiling face amid its fringe of gray, the general’s words, his well-cared-for face with its self-satisfied smile and the smell of wine from his breath and of cigars from his whiskers—revolted Father Sergei. He bowed again to the abbot and said:

“Your reverence deigned to send for me?”—and stopped, the whole expression of his face and eyes asking why.

“Yes, to meet the general,” replied the abbot.

“Your reverence, I left the world to save myself from temptation,” said Father Sergei, turning pale and with quivering lips. “Why do you expose me to it during prayers and in God’s house?”

221. “*Ou, ou? Il n’est pas tellement beau.*”—“Where, where? He’s not so handsome.”

222. *chasuble*—a sleeveless, outer vestment.

“You may go! Go!” said the abbot, flaring up and frowning.

Next day Father Sergei asked pardon of the abbot and of the brethren for his pride, but at the same time, after a night spent in prayer, he decided that he must leave this monastery, and he wrote to the starets begging permission to return to him. He wrote that he felt his weakness and incapacity to struggle against temptation without his help and penitently confessed his sin of pride. By return of post came a letter from the starets, who wrote that Sergei’s pride was the cause of all that had happened. The old man pointed out that his fits of anger were due to the fact that in refusing all clerical honors he humiliated himself not for the sake of God but for the sake of his pride. “There now, am I not a splendid man not to want anything?” That was why he could not tolerate the abbot’s action. “I have renounced everything for the glory of God, and here I am exhibited like a wild beast!” “Had you renounced vanity for God’s sake you would have borne it. Worldly pride is not yet dead in you. I have thought about you, Sergei my son, and prayed also, and this is what God has suggested to me. At the Tambov hermitage the anchorite²²³ Ilarion, a man of saintly life, has died. He had lived there eighteen years. The Tambov abbot is asking whether there is not a brother who would take his place. And here comes your letter. Go to Father Paisy of the Tambov Monastery. I will write to him about you, and you must ask for Ilarion’s cell. Not that you can replace Ilarion, but you need solitude to quell your pride. May God bless you!”

Sergei obeyed the starets, showed his letter to the abbot, and having obtained his permission, gave up his cell, handed all his possessions over to the monastery, and set out for the Tambov hermitage.

There the abbot, an excellent manager of merchant origin, received Sergei simply and quietly and placed him in Ilarion’s cell, at first assigning to him a lay brother but afterwards leaving him alone, at Sergei’s own request. The cell was a dual cave, dug into the hillside, and in it Ilarion had been buried. In the back part was Ilarion’s grave, while in the front was a niche for sleeping, with a straw mattress, a small table, and a shelf with icons and books. Outside the outer door, which fastened with a hook, was another shelf on which, once a day, a monk placed food from the monastery.

And so Sergei became a hermit.

223. *anchorite*—a monastic hermit or recluse.

• 3 •

At carnival time, in the sixth year of Sergei's life at the hermitage, a merry company of rich people, men and women from a neighboring town, made up a troika-party,²²⁴ after a meal of carnival-pancakes and wine. The company consisted of two lawyers, a wealthy landowner, an officer, and four ladies. One lady was the officer's wife, another the wife of the landowner, the third his sister—a young girl—and the fourth a divorcee, beautiful, rich, and eccentric, who amazed and shocked the town by her escapades.

The weather was excellent and the snow-covered road smooth as a floor. They drove some seven miles out of town, and then stopped and consulted as to whether they should turn back or drive farther.

"But where does this road lead to?" asked Makovkina, the beautiful divorcee.

"To T——, eight miles from here," replied one of the lawyers, who was having a flirtation with her.

"And then where?"

"Then on to L——, past the monastery."

"Where that Father Sergei lives?"

"Yes."

"Kasatsky, the handsome hermit?"

"Yes."

"*Mesdames et messieurs*, let us drive on and see Kasatsky! We can stop at Tambov and have something to eat."

"But we shouldn't get home tonight!"

"Never mind, we will stay at Kasatsky's."

"Well, there is a very good hostelry at the monastery. I stayed there when I was defending Makhin."

"No, I shall spend the night at Kasatsky's!"

"Impossible! Even your omnipotence could not accomplish that!"

"Impossible? Will you bet?"

"All right! If you spend the night with him, the stake shall be whatever you like."

"*A discrétion!*"

"But on your side too!"

"Yes, of course. Let us drive on."

Vodka was handed to the drivers, and the party got out a box of pies, wine, and sweets for themselves. The ladies wrapped up in their

224. *troika*—a sled or carriage pulled by a team of three horses.

white dogskins. The drivers disputed as to whose troika should go ahead, and the youngest, seating himself sideways with a dashing air, swung his long knout and shouted to the horses. The troika-bells tinkled and the sledge-runners squeaked over the snow.

The sledge swayed hardly at all. The shaft-horse, with his tightly bound tail under his decorated breechband, galloped smoothly and briskly; the smooth road seemed to run rapidly backward, while the driver dashingly shook the reins. One of the lawyers and the officer sitting opposite talked nonsense to Makovkina's neighbor, but Makovkina herself sat motionless and in thought, tightly wrapped in her fur. "Always the same and always nasty! The same red shiny faces smelling of wine and cigars! The same talk, the same thoughts, and always about the same things! And they are all satisfied and confident that it should be so, and will go on living like that till they die. But I can't. It bores me. I want something that would upset it all and turn it upside down. Suppose it happened to us as to those people—at Saratov was it?—who kept on driving and froze to death. . . . What would our people do? How would they behave? Basely, for certain. Each for himself. And I too should act badly. But I at any rate have beauty. They all know it. And how about that monk? Is it possible that he has become indifferent to it? No! That is the one thing they all care for—like that cadet last autumn. What a fool he was!"

"Ivan Nikolaevich!" she said aloud.

"What are your commands?"

"How old is he?"

"Who?"

"Kasatsky."

"Over forty, I should think."

"And does he receive all visitors?"

"Yes, everybody, but not always."

"Cover up my feet. Not like that—how clumsy you are! No! More, more—like that! But you need not squeeze them!"

So they came to the forest where the cell was.

Makovkina got out of the sledge, and told them to drive on. They tried to dissuade her, but she grew irritable and ordered them to go on.

When the sledges had gone she went up the path in her white dogskin coat. The lawyer got out and stopped to watch her.

It was Father Sergei's sixth year as a recluse, and he was now forty-nine. His life in solitude was hard—not on account of the fasts and the prayers (they were no hardship to him) but on account of an inner

conflict he had not at all anticipated. The sources of that conflict were two: doubts, and the lust of the flesh. And these two enemies always appeared together. It seemed to him that they were two foes, but in reality they were one and the same. As soon as doubt was gone so was the lustful desire. But thinking them to be two different fiends he fought them separately.

“O my God, my God!” thought he. “Why do you not grant me faith? There is lust, of course: even the saints had to fight that—Saint Anthony and others. But they had faith, while I have moments, hours, and days, when it is absent. Why does the whole world, with all its delights, exist if it is sinful and must be renounced? Why have you created this temptation? Temptation? Is it not rather a temptation that I wish to abandon all the joys of earth and prepare something for myself there where perhaps there is nothing?” And he became horrified and filled with disgust at himself. “Vile creature! And it is you who wish to become a saint!” he upbraided himself, and he began to pray. But as soon as he started to pray he saw himself vividly as he had been at the monastery, in a majestic post in biretta and mantle, and he shook his head. “No, that is not right. It is deception. I may deceive others, but not myself or God. I am not a majestic man, but a pitiable and ridiculous one!” And he threw back the folds of his cassock and smiled as he looked at his thin legs in their underclothing.

Then he dropped the folds of the cassock again and began reading the prayers, making the sign of the cross and prostrating himself. “Can it be that this couch will be my bier?” he read. And it seemed as if a devil whispered to him: “A solitary couch is itself a bier. Falsehood!” And in imagination he saw the shoulders of a widow with whom he had lived. He shook himself, and went on reading. Having read the precepts he took up the Gospels, opened the book, and happened on a passage he often repeated and knew by heart: “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!”—and he put away all the doubts that had arisen. As one replaces an object of insecure equilibrium, so he carefully replaced his belief on its shaky pedestal and carefully stepped back from it so as not to shake or upset it. The blinkers were adjusted again and he felt tranquilized, and repeating his childhood’s prayer: “Lord, receive me, receive me!” he felt not merely at ease, but thrilled and joyful. He crossed himself and lay down on the bedding on his narrow bench, tucking his summer cassock under his head. He fell asleep at once, and in his light slumber he seemed to hear the tinkling of sledge bells. He did not know whether he was dreaming or awake, but a knock at the

door aroused him. He sat up, distrusting his senses, but the knock was repeated. Yes, it was a knock close at hand, at his door, and with it the sound of a woman's voice.

"My God! Can it be true, as I have read in the lives of the saints, that the devil takes on the form of a woman? Yes—it is a woman's voice. And a tender, timid, pleasant voice. Phui!" And he spat to exorcize the devil. "No, it was only my imagination," he assured himself, and he went to the corner where his lectern stood, falling on his knees in the regular and habitual manner that of itself gave him consolation and satisfaction. He sank down, his hair hanging over his face, and pressed his head, already going bald in front, to the cold damp strip of drugget²²⁵ on the drafty floor. He read the psalm old Father Pimon had told him warded off temptation. He easily raised his light and emaciated body on his strong sinewy legs and tried to continue saying his prayers, but instead of doing so he involuntarily strained his hearing. He wished to hear more. All was quiet. From the corner of the roof regular drops continued to fall into the tub below. Outside was a mist and fog eating into the snow that lay on the ground. It was still, very still. And suddenly there was a rustling at the window and a voice—that same tender, timid voice, which could only belong to an attractive woman—said:

"Let me in, for Christ's sake!"

It seemed as though his blood had all rushed to his heart and settled there. He could hardly breathe. "Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered ..."

"But I am not a devil!" It was obvious that the lips that uttered this were smiling. "I am not a devil, but only a sinful woman who has lost her way, not figuratively but literally!" She laughed. "I am frozen and beg for shelter."

He pressed his face to the window, but the little icon lamp was reflected by it and shone on the whole pane. He put his hands to both sides of his face and peered between them. Fog, mist, a tree, and—just opposite him—she herself. Yes, there, a few inches from him, was the sweet, kindly frightened face of a woman in a cap and a coat of long white fur, leaning toward him. Their eyes met with instant recognition: not that they had ever known one another, they had never met before, but by the look they exchanged they—and he particularly—felt that they knew and understood one another. After that glance to imagine

225. *drugget*—a woven floor covering.

her to be a devil and not a simple, kindly, sweet, timid woman, was impossible.

“Who are you? Why have you come?” he asked.

“Do please open the door!” she replied, with capricious authority. “I am frozen. I tell you I have lost my way.”

“But I am a monk—a hermit.”

“O, do please open the door—or do you wish me to freeze under your window while you say your prayers?”

“But how have you ...”

“I shan’t eat you. For God’s sake let me in! I am quite frozen.”

She really did feel afraid, and said this in an almost tearful voice.

He stepped back from the window and looked at an icon of the Savior in his crown of thorns. “Lord, help me! Lord, help me!” he exclaimed, crossing himself and bowing low. Then he went to the door, and opening it into the tiny porch, felt for the hook that fastened the outer door and began to lift it. He heard steps outside. She was coming from the window to the door. “Ah!” she suddenly exclaimed, and he understood that she had stepped into the puddle that the dripping from the roof had formed at the threshold. His hands trembled, and he could not raise the hook of the tightly closed door.

“O, what are you doing? Let me in! I am all wet. I am frozen! You are thinking about saving your soul and are letting me freeze to death ...”

He jerked the door toward him, raised the hook, and without considering what he was doing, pushed it open with such force that it struck her.

“O—pardon!” he suddenly exclaimed, reverting completely to his old manner with ladies.

She smiled on hearing that pardon.²²⁶ “He is not quite so terrible, after all,” she thought. “It’s all right. It is you who must pardon me,” she said, stepping past him. “I should never have ventured, but such an extraordinary circumstance ...”

“If you please!” he uttered, and stood aside to let her pass him. A strong smell of fine scent, which he had long not encountered, struck him. She went through the little porch into the cell where he lived. He closed the outer door without fastening the hook, and stepped in after her.

226. *She smiled on hearing that pardon*—she recognizes by his inadvertent use of French that he is an educated man.

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner! Lord, have mercy on me a sinner!” he prayed unceasingly, not merely to himself but involuntarily moving his lips. “If you please!” he said to her again. She stood in the middle of the room, moisture dripping from her to the floor as she looked him over. Her eyes were laughing.

“Forgive me for having disturbed your solitude. But you see what a position I am in. It all came about from our starting from town for a sledge-drive, and my making a bet that I would walk back by myself from the Vorobevka to the town. But then I lost my way, and if I had not happened to come upon your cell . . .” She began lying, but his face confused her so that she could not continue, but became silent. She had not expected him to be at all such as he was. He was not as handsome as she had imagined, but was nevertheless beautiful in her eyes: his grayish hair and beard, slightly curling, his fine, regular nose, and his eyes like glowing coal when he looked at her, made a strong impression on her.

He saw that she was lying.

“Yes . . . so,” said he, looking at her and again lowering his eyes. “I will go in there, and this place is at your disposal.”

And taking down the little lamp, he lit a candle, and bowing low to her went into the small cell beyond the partition, and she heard him begin to move something about there. “Probably he is barricading himself in from me!” she thought with a smile, and throwing off her white dogskin cloak she tried to take off her cap, which had become entangled in her hair and in the woven kerchief she was wearing under it. She had not got at all wet when standing under the window, and had said so only as a pretext to get him to let her in. But she really had stepped into the puddle at the door, and her left foot was wet up to the ankle and her overshoe full of water. She sat down on his bed—a bench only covered by a bit of carpet—and began to take off her boots. The little cell seemed to her charming. The narrow little room, some seven feet by nine, was as clean as glass. There was nothing in it but the bench on which she was sitting, the book-shelf above it, and a lectern in the corner. A sheepskin coat and a cassock hung on nails by the door. Above the lectern was the little lamp and an icon of Christ in his crown of thorns. The room smelled strangely of perspiration and of earth. It all pleased her—even that smell. Her wet feet, especially one of them, were uncomfortable, and she quickly began to take off her boots and stockings without ceasing to smile, pleased not so much at having achieved her object as because she perceived that she had

abashed that charming, strange, striking, and attractive man. “He did not respond, but what of that?” she said to herself.

“Father Sergei! Father Sergei! Or how does one call you?”

“What do you want?” replied a quiet voice.

“Please forgive me for disturbing your solitude, but really I could not help it. I should simply have fallen ill. And I don’t know that I shan’t now. I am all wet and my feet are like ice.”

“Pardon me,” replied the quiet voice. “I cannot be of any assistance to you.”

“I would not have disturbed you if I could have helped it. I am only here till daybreak.”

He did not reply and she heard him muttering something, probably his prayers.

“You will not be coming in here?” she asked, smiling. “For I must undress to dry myself.”

He did not reply, but continued to read his prayers.

“Yes, that is a man!” thought she, getting her dripping boot off with difficulty. She tugged at it, but could not get it off. The absurdity of it struck her and she began to laugh almost inaudibly. But knowing that he would hear her laughter and would be moved by it just as she wished him to be, she laughed louder, and her laughter—gay, natural, and kindly—really acted on him just in the way she wished.

“Yes, I could love a man like that—such eyes and such a simple noble face, and passionate too despite all the prayers he mutters!” thought she. “You can’t deceive a woman in these things. As soon as he put his face to the window and saw me, he understood and knew. The glimmer of it was in his eyes and remained there. He began to love me and desired me. Yes—desired!” said she, getting her overshoe and her boot off at last and starting to take off her stockings. To remove those long stockings fastened with elastic it was necessary to raise her skirts. She felt embarrassed and said:

“Don’t come in!”

But there was no reply from the other side of the wall. The steady muttering continued and also a sound of moving.

“He is prostrating himself to the ground, no doubt,” thought she. “But he won’t bow himself out of it. He is thinking of me just as I am of him. He is thinking of these feet of mine with the same feeling that I have!” And she pulled off her wet stockings and put her feet up on the bench, pressing them under her. She sat a while like that with her

arms round her knees and looking pensively before her. "But it is a desert, here in this silence. No one would ever know ..."

She rose, took her stockings over to the stove, and hung them on the damper. It was a queer damper, and she turned it about, and then, stepping lightly on her bare feet, returned to the bench and sat down there again with her feet up.

There was complete silence on the other side of the partition. She looked at the tiny watch that hung round her neck. It was two o'clock. "Our party should return about three!" She had not more than an hour before her. "Well, am I to sit like this all alone? What nonsense! I don't want to. I will call him at once."

"Father Sergei, Father Sergei! Sergei Dmitrich! Prince Kasatsky!"

Beyond the partition all was silent.

"Listen! This is cruel. I would not call you if it were not necessary. I am ill. I don't know what is the matter with me!" she exclaimed in a tone of suffering. "O! O!" she groaned, falling back on the bench. And strange to say she really felt that her strength was failing, that she was becoming faint, that everything in her ached, and that she was shivering with fever.

"Listen! Help me! I don't know what is the matter with me. O! O!" She unfastened her dress, exposing her breast, and lifted her arms, bare to the elbow. "O! O!"

All this time he stood on the other side of the partition and prayed. Having finished all the evening prayers, he now stood motionless, his eyes looking at the end of his nose, and mentally repeated with all his soul: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me!"

But he had heard everything. He had heard how the silk rustled when she took off her dress, how she stepped with bare feet on the floor, and had heard how she rubbed her feet with her hand. He felt his own weakness, and that he might be lost at any moment. That was why he prayed unceasingly. He felt rather as the hero in the fairy tale must have felt when he had to go on and on without looking round. So Sergei heard and felt that danger and destruction were there, hovering above and around him, and that he could only save himself by not looking in that direction for an instant. But suddenly the desire to look seized him. At the same instant she said:

"This is inhuman. I may die. ..."

"Yes, I will go to her, but like the saint who laid one hand on the adulteress and thrust his other into the brazier. But there is no brazier here." He looked round. The lamp! He put his finger over the flame

and frowned, preparing himself to suffer. And for a rather long time, as it seemed to him, there was no sensation, but suddenly—he had not yet decided whether it was painful enough—he writhed all over, jerked his hand away, and waved it in the air. “No, I can’t stand that!”

“For God’s sake come to me! I am dying! O!”

“Well—shall I perish? No, not so!”

“I will come to you directly,” he said, and having opened his door, he went without looking at her through the cell into the porch where he used to chop wood. There he felt for the block and for an axe that leant against the wall.

“Immediately!” he said, and taking up the axe with his right hand he laid the forefinger of his left hand on the block, swung the axe, and struck with it below the second joint. The finger flew off more lightly than a stick of similar thickness, and bounding up, turned over on the edge of the block and then fell to the floor.

He heard it fall before he felt any pain, but before he had time to be surprised he felt a burning pain and the warmth of flowing blood. He hastily wrapped the stump in the skirt of his cassock, and pressing it to his hip went back into the room, and standing in front of the woman, lowered his eyes and asked in a low voice: “What do you want?”

She looked at his pale face and his quivering left cheek, and suddenly felt ashamed. She jumped up, seized her fur cloak, and throwing it round her shoulders, wrapped herself up in it.

“I was in pain ... I have caught cold ... I ... Father Sergei ... I ...”

He let his eyes, shining with a quiet light of joy, rest on her, and said:

“Dear sister, why did you wish to ruin your immortal soul? Temptations must come into the world, but woe to him by whom temptation comes. Pray that God may forgive us!”

She listened and looked at him. Suddenly she heard the sound of something dripping. She looked down and saw that blood was flowing from his hand and down his cassock.

“What have you done to your hand?” She remembered the sound she had heard, and seizing the little lamp ran out into the porch. There on the floor she saw the bloody finger. She returned with her face paler than his and was about to speak to him, but he silently passed into the back cell and fastened the door.

“Forgive me!” she said. “How can I atone for my sin?”

“Go away.”

“Let me tie up your hand.”

“Go away from here.”

She dressed hurriedly and silently, and when ready sat waiting in her furs. The sledge bells were heard outside.

“Father Sergei, forgive me!”

“Go away. God will forgive.”

“Father Sergei! I will change my life. Do not forsake me!”

“Go away.”

“Forgive me—and give me your blessing!”

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!”—she heard his voice from behind the partition. “Go!”

She burst into sobs and left the cell. The lawyer came forward to meet her.

“Well, I see I have lost the bet. It can’t be helped. Where will you sit?”

“It is all the same to me.”

She took a seat in the sledge, and did not utter a word all the way home.

A year later she entered a convent as a novice, and lived a strict life under the direction of the hermit Arseny, who wrote letters to her at long intervals.

• 4 •

Father Sergei lived as a recluse for another seven years.

At first he accepted much of what people brought him—tea, sugar, white bread, milk, clothing, and firewood. But as time went on he led a more and more austere life, refusing everything superfluous, and finally he accepted nothing but rye-bread once a week. Everything else that was brought to him he gave to the poor who came to him. He spent his entire time in his cell, in prayer or in conversation with callers, who became more and more numerous as time went on. Only three times a year did he go out to church, and when necessary he went out to fetch water and wood.

The episode with Makovkina had occurred after five years of his hermit life. That occurrence soon became generally known—her nocturnal visit, the change she underwent, and her entry into a convent. From that time Father Sergei’s fame increased. More and more visitors came to see him, other monks settled down near his cell, and a church was erected there and also a hostelry. His fame, as usual exaggerating his feats, spread ever more and more widely. People began to come to

him from a distance, and began bringing invalids to him whom they declared he cured.

His first cure occurred in the eighth year of his life as a hermit. It was the healing of a fourteen-year-old boy, whose mother brought him to Father Sergei insisting that he should lay his hand on the child's head. It had never occurred to Father Sergei that he could cure the sick. He would have regarded such a thought as a great sin of pride; but the mother who brought the boy implored him insistently, falling at his feet and saying: "Why do you, who heal others, refuse to help my son?" She besought him in Christ's name. When Father Sergei assured her that only God could heal the sick, she replied that she only wanted him to lay his hands on the boy and pray for him. Father Sergei refused and returned to his cell. But next day (it was in autumn and the nights were already cold) on going out for water he saw the same mother with her son, a pale boy of fourteen, and was met by the same petition.

He remembered the parable of the unjust judge, and though he had previously felt sure that he ought to refuse, he now began to hesitate and, having hesitated, took to prayer and prayed until a decision formed itself in his soul. This decision was, that he ought to accede to the woman's request and that her faith might save her son. As for himself, he would in this case be but an insignificant instrument chosen by God.

And going out to the mother he did what she asked—laid his hand on the boy's head and prayed.

The mother left with her son, and a month later the boy recovered, and the fame of the holy healing power of the starets Sergei (as they now called him) spread throughout the whole district. After that, not a week passed without sick people coming, riding or on foot, to Father Sergei; and having acceded to one petition he could not refuse others, and he laid his hands on many and prayed. Many recovered, and his fame spread more and more.

So seven years passed in the monastery and thirteen in his hermit's cell. He now had the appearance of an old man: his beard was long and gray, but his hair, though thin, was still black and curly.

• 5 •

For some weeks Father Sergei had been living with one persistent thought: whether he was right in accepting the position in which he had not so much placed himself as been placed by the archimandrite and the abbot. That position had begun after the recovery of the four-

teen-year-old boy. From that time, with each month, week, and day that passed, Sergei felt his own inner life wasting away and being replaced by external life. It was as if he had been turned inside out.

Sergei saw that he was a means of attracting visitors and contributions to the monastery, and that therefore the authorities arranged matters in such a way as to make as much use of him as possible. For instance, they rendered it impossible for him to do any manual work. He was supplied with everything he could want, and they only demanded of him that he should not refuse his blessing to those who came to seek it. For his convenience they appointed days when he would receive. They arranged a reception-room for men, and a place was railed in so that he should not be pushed over by the crowds of women visitors, and so that he could conveniently bless those who came.

They told him that people needed him, and that fulfilling Christ's law of love he could not refuse their demand to see him, and that to avoid them would be cruel. He could not but agree with this, but the more he gave himself up to such a life the more he felt that what was internal became external, and that the fount of living water within him dried up, and that what he did now was done more and more for men and less and less for God.

Whether he admonished people, or simply blessed them, or prayed for the sick, or advised people about their lives, or listened to expressions of gratitude from those he had helped by precepts, or alms, or healing (as they assured him)—he could not help being pleased at it, and could not be indifferent to the results of his activity and to the influence he exerted. He thought himself a shining light, and the more he felt this the more was he conscious of a weakening, a dying down of the divine light of truth that shone within him.

"In how far is what I do for God and in how far is it for men?" That was the question that insistently tormented him and to which he was not so much unable to give himself an answer as unable to face the answer.

In the depth of his soul he felt that the devil had substituted an activity for men in place of his former activity for God. He felt this because, just as it had formerly been hard for him to be torn from his solitude so now that solitude itself was hard for him. He was oppressed and wearied by visitors, but at the bottom of his heart he was glad of their presence and glad of the praise they heaped on him.

There was a time when he decided to go away and hide. He even planned all that was necessary for that purpose. He prepared for himself a peasant's shirt, trousers, coat, and cap. He explained that he wanted these to give to those who asked. And he kept these clothes in his cell, planning how he would put them on, cut his hair short, and go away. First he would go some three hundred versts by train, then he would leave the train and walk from village to village. He asked an old man who had been a soldier how he tramped: what people gave him, and what shelter they allowed him. The soldier told him where people were most charitable, and where they would take a wanderer in for the night, and Father Sergei intended to avail himself of this information. He even put on those clothes one night in his desire to go, but he could not decide what was best—to remain or to escape. At first he was in doubt, but afterwards this indecision passed. He submitted to custom and yielded to the devil, and only the peasant garb reminded him of the thought and feeling he had had.

Every day more and more people flocked to him and less and less time was left him for prayer and for renewing his spiritual strength. Sometimes in lucid moments he thought he was like a place where there had once been a spring. "There used to be a feeble spring of living water that flowed quietly from me and through me. That was true life, the time when she tempted me!" (He always thought with ecstasy of that night and of her who was now Mother Agnessa.) She had tasted of that pure water, but since then there had not been time for it to collect before thirsty people came crowding in and pushing one another aside. And they had trampled everything down and nothing was left but mud.

So he thought in rare moments of lucidity, but his usual state of mind was one of weariness and a tender pity for himself because of that weariness.

It was in spring, on the eve of the mid-Pentecostal feast. Father Sergei was officiating at the vigil service in his hermitage church, where the congregation was as large as the little church could hold—about twenty people. They were all well-to-do proprietors or merchants. Father Sergei admitted anyone, but a selection was made by the monk in attendance and by an assistant who was sent to the hermitage every day from the monastery. A crowd of some eighty people—pilgrims and peasants, and especially peasant women—stood outside waiting for Father Sergei to come out and bless them. Meanwhile he conducted the service, but at the point at which he went out to the tomb of his

predecessor, he staggered and would have fallen had he not been caught by a merchant standing behind him and by the monk acting as deacon.

“What is the matter, Father Sergei? Dear man! O Lord!” exclaimed the women. “He is as white as a sheet!”

But Father Sergei recovered immediately, and though very pale, he waved the merchant and the deacon aside and continued to chant the service.

Father Serafim, the deacon, the acolytes, and Sofia Ivanovna, a lady who always lived near the hermitage and tended Father Sergei, begged him to bring the service to an end.

“No, there’s nothing the matter,” said Father Sergei, slightly smiling from beneath his mustache and continuing the service. “Yes, that is the way the saints behave!” thought he.

“A holy man—an angel of God!” he heard just then the voice of Sofia Ivanovna behind him, and also of the merchant who had supported him. He did not heed their entreaties, but went on with the service. Again crowding together they all made their way by the narrow passages back into the little church, and there, though abbreviating it slightly, Father Sergei completed vespers.

Immediately after the service Father Sergei, having pronounced the benediction on those present, went over to the bench under the elm tree at the entrance to the cave. He wished to rest and breathe the fresh air—he felt in need of it. But as soon as he left the church the crowd of people rushed to him soliciting his blessing, his advice, and his help. There were pilgrims who constantly tramped from one holy place to another and from one *starets* to another, and were always entranced by every shrine and every *starets*. Father Sergei knew this common, cold, conventional, and most irreligious type. There were pilgrims, for the most part discharged soldiers, unaccustomed to a settled life, poverty-stricken, and many of them drunken old men, who tramped from monastery to monastery merely to be fed. And there were rough peasants and peasant women who had come with their selfish requirements, seeking cures or to have doubts about quite practical affairs solved for them: about marrying off a daughter, or hiring a shop, or buying a bit of land, or how to atone for having overlaid a child or having an illegitimate one.

All this was an old story and not in the least interesting to him. He knew he would hear nothing new from these folk, that they would arouse no religious emotion in him; but he liked to see the crowd to

which his blessing and advice was necessary and precious, so while that crowd oppressed him it also pleased him. Father Serafim began to drive them away, saying that Father Sergei was tired.

But Father Sergei, remembering the words of the Gospel: "Forbid them" (children) "not to come to me," and feeling tenderly toward himself at this recollection, said they should be allowed to approach.

He rose, went to the railing beyond which the crowd had gathered, and began blessing them and answering their questions, but in a voice so weak that he was touched with pity for himself. Yet despite his wish to receive them all he could not do it. Things again grew dark before his eyes, and he staggered and grasped the railings. He felt a rush of blood to his head and first went pale and then suddenly flushed.

"I must leave the rest till tomorrow. I cannot do more today," and, pronouncing a general benediction, he returned to the bench. The merchant again supported him, and leading him by the arm helped him to be seated.

"Father!" came voices from the crowd. "Dear Father! Do not forsake us. Without you we are lost!"

The merchant, having seated Father Sergei on the bench under the elm, took on himself police duties and drove the people off very resolutely. It is true that he spoke in a low voice so that Father Sergei might not hear him, but his words were incisive and angry.

"Be off, be off! He has blessed you, and what more do you want? Get along with you, or I'll wring your necks! Move on there! Get along, you old woman with your dirty leg-bands! Go, go! Where are you shoving to? You've been told that it is finished. Tomorrow will be as God wills, but for today he has finished!"

"Father! Only let my eyes have a glimpse of his dear face!" said an old woman.

"I'll glimpse you! Where are you shoving to?"

Father Sergei noticed that the merchant seemed to be acting roughly, and in a feeble voice told the attendant that the people should not be driven away. He knew that they would be driven away all the same, and he much desired to be left alone and to rest, but he sent the attendant with that message to produce an impression.

"All right, all right! I am not driving them away. I am only remonstrating with them," replied the merchant. "You know they wouldn't hesitate to drive a man to death. They have no pity, they only consider themselves. ... You've been told you cannot see him. Go away! Tomorrow!" And he got rid of them all.

He took all these pains because he liked order and liked to domineer and drive the people away, but chiefly because he wanted to have Father Sergei to himself. He was a widower with an only daughter who was an invalid and unmarried, and whom he had brought fourteen hundred versts to Father Sergei to be healed. For two years past he had been taking her to different places to be cured: first to the university clinic in the chief town of the province, but that did no good; then to a peasant in the province of Samara, where she got a little better; then to a doctor in Moscow to whom he paid much money, but this did no good at all. Now he had been told that Father Sergei wrought cures, and had brought her to him. So when all the people had been driven away he approached Father Sergei, and suddenly falling on his knees loudly exclaimed:

“Holy father! Bless my afflicted offspring that she may be healed of her malady. I venture to prostrate myself at your holy feet.”

And he placed one hand on the other, cup-wise. He said and did all this as if he were doing something clearly and firmly appointed by law and usage—as if one must and should ask for a daughter to be cured in just this way and no other. He did it with such conviction that it seemed even to Father Sergei that it should be said and done in just that way, but nevertheless he bade him rise and tell him what the trouble was. The merchant said that his daughter, a girl of twenty-two, had fallen ill two years ago, after her mother’s sudden death. She had moaned (as he expressed it) and since then had not been herself. And now he had brought her fourteen hundred versts and she was waiting in the hostelry till Father Sergei should give orders to bring her. She did not go out during the day, being afraid of the light, and could only come after sunset.

“Is she very weak?” asked Father Sergei.

“No, she has no particular weakness. She is quite plump, and is only “neurasthenic”²²⁷ the doctors say. If you will only let me bring her this evening, Father Sergei, I’ll fly like a spirit to fetch her. Holy father! Revive a parent’s heart, restore his line, save his afflicted daughter by your prayers!” And the merchant again threw himself on his knees and bending sideways, with his head resting on his clenched fists, remained stock still. Father Sergei again told him to get up, and thinking how heavy his activities were and how he went through with

227. *neurasthenic*—beset by ill-defined, emotional disturbances, characterized by fatigue, mental weariness, headaches, and irritability.

them patiently notwithstanding, he sighed heavily and after a few seconds of silence, said:

“Well, bring her this evening. I will pray for her, but now I am tired ...” and he closed his eyes. “I will send for you.”

The merchant went away, stepping on tiptoe, which only made his boots creak the louder, and Father Sergei remained alone.

His whole life was filled by church services and by people who came to see him, but today had been a particularly difficult one. In the morning an important official had arrived and had had a long conversation with him; after that a lady had come with her son. This son was a skeptical young professor whom the mother, an ardent believer and devoted to Father Sergei, had brought that he might talk to him. The conversation had been very trying. The young man, evidently not wishing to have a controversy with a monk, had agreed with him in everything as with someone who was mentally inferior. Father Sergei saw that the young man did not believe but yet was satisfied, tranquil, and at ease, and the memory of that conversation now disquieted him.

“Have something to eat, Father,” said the attendant.

“All right, bring me something.”

The attendant went to a hut that had been arranged some ten paces from the cave, and Father Sergei remained alone.

The time was long past when he had lived alone doing everything for himself and eating only rye-bread, or rolls prepared for the church. He had been advised long since that he had no right to neglect his health, and he was given wholesome, though Lenten, food. He ate sparingly, though much more than he had done, and often he ate with much pleasure, and not as formerly with aversion and a sense of guilt. So it was now. He had some gruel, drank a cup of tea, and ate half a white roll.

The attendant went away, and Father Sergei remained alone under the elm tree.

It was a wonderful May evening, when the birches, aspens, elms, wild cherries, and oaks, had just burst into foliage.

The bush of wild cherries behind the elm tree was in full bloom and had not yet begun to shed its blossoms, and the nightingales—one quite near at hand and two or three others in the bushes down by the river—burst into full song after some preliminary twitters. From the river came the far-off songs of peasants returning, no doubt, from their work. The sun was setting behind the forest, its last rays glowing through the leaves. All that side was brilliant green, the other side with

the elm tree was dark. The cockchafers²²⁸ flew clumsily about, falling to the ground when they collided with anything.

After supper Father Sergei began to repeat a silent prayer: “O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us!” and then he read a psalm, and suddenly in the middle of the psalm a sparrow flew out from the bush, alighted on the ground, and hopped toward him chirping as it came, but then it took fright at something and flew away. He said a prayer that referred to his abandonment of the world, and hastened to finish it in order to send for the merchant with the sick daughter. She interested him in that she presented a distraction, and because both she and her father considered him a saint whose prayers were efficacious. Outwardly he disavowed that idea, but in the depths of his soul he considered it to be true.

He was often amazed that this had happened, that he, Stepan Katsky, had come to be such an extraordinary saint and even a worker of miracles, but of the fact that he was such there could not be the least doubt. He could not fail to believe in the miracles he himself witnessed, beginning with the sick boy and ending with the old woman who had recovered her sight when he had prayed for her.

Strange as it might be, it was so. Accordingly the merchant’s daughter interested him as a new individual who had faith in him, and also as a fresh opportunity to confirm his healing powers and enhance his fame. “They bring people a thousand versts and write about it in the papers. The emperor knows of it, and they know of it in Europe, in unbelieving Europe”—thought he. And suddenly he felt ashamed of his vanity and again began to pray. “Lord, king of Heaven, comforter, soul of truth! Come and enter into me and cleanse me from all sin and save and bless my soul. Cleanse me from the sin of worldly vanity that troubles me!” he repeated, and he remembered how often he had prayed about this and how vain till now his prayers had been in that respect. His prayers worked miracles for others, but in his own case God had not granted him liberation from this petty passion.

He remembered his prayers at the commencement of his life at the hermitage, when he prayed for purity, humility, and love, and how it seemed to him then that God heard his prayers. He had retained his purity and had chopped off his finger. And he lifted the shriveled stump of that finger to his lips and kissed it. It seemed to him now that he had been humble then when he had always seemed loathsome to

228. *cockchafers*—large, brown beetles, which emerge at dusk.

himself on account of his sinfulness; and when he remembered the tender feelings with which he had then met an old man who was bringing a drunken soldier to him to ask alms; and how he had received her, it seemed to him that he had then possessed love also. But now? And he asked himself whether he loved anyone, whether he loved Sofia Ivanovna, or Father Serafim, whether he had any feeling of love for all who had come to him that day—for that learned young man with whom he had had that instructive discussion in which he was concerned only to show off his own intelligence and that he had not lagged behind the times in knowledge. He wanted and needed their love, but felt none toward them. He now had neither love nor humility nor purity.

He was pleased to know that the merchant's daughter was twenty-two, and he wondered whether she was good-looking. When he inquired whether she was weak, he really wanted to know if she had feminine charm.

"Can I have fallen so low?" he thought. "Lord, help me! Restore me, my Lord and God!" And he clasped his hands and began to pray.

The nightingales burst into song, a cockchafer knocked against him and crept up the back of his neck. He brushed it off. "But does he exist? What if I am knocking at a door fastened from outside? The bar is on the door for all to see. Nature—the nightingales and the cockchafers—is that bar. Perhaps the young man was right." And he began to pray aloud. He prayed for a long time till these thoughts vanished and he again felt calm and confident. He rang the bell and told the attendant to say that the merchant might bring his daughter to him now.

The merchant came, leading his daughter by the arm. He led her into the cell and immediately left her.

She was a very fair girl, plump and very short, with a pale, frightened, childish face and a much developed feminine figure. Father Sergei remained seated on the bench at the entrance and when she was passing and stopped beside him for his blessing he was aghast at himself for the way he looked at her figure. As she passed by him he was acutely conscious of her femininity, though he saw by her face that she was sensual and feeble-minded. He rose and went into the cell. She was sitting on a stool waiting for him, and when he entered she rose.

"I want to go back to papa," she said.

"Don't be afraid," he replied. "What are you suffering from?"

“I am in pain all over,” she said, and suddenly her face lit up with a smile.

“You will be well,” said he. “Pray!”

“What is the use of praying? I have prayed and it does no good”—and she continued to smile. “I want you to pray for me and lay your hands on me. I saw you in a dream.”

“How did you see me?”

“I saw you put your hands on my breast like that.” She took his hand and pressed it to her breast. “Just here.”

He yielded his right hand to her.

“What is your name?” he asked, trembling all over and feeling that he was overcome and that his desire had already passed beyond control.

“Maria. Why?”

She took his hand and kissed it, and then put her arm round his waist and pressed him to herself.

“What are you doing?” he said. “Maria, you are a devil!”

“O, perhaps. What does it matter?”

And embracing him she sat down with him on the bed.

At dawn he went out into the porch.

“Can this all have happened? Her father will come and she will tell him everything. She is a devil! What am I to do? Here is the axe with which I chopped off my finger.” He snatched up the axe and moved back toward the cell.

The attendant came up.

“Do you want some wood chopped? Let me have the axe.”

Sergei yielded up the axe and entered the cell. She was lying there asleep. He looked at her with horror, and passed on beyond the partition, where he took down the peasant clothes and put them on. Then he seized a pair of scissors, cut off his long hair, and went out along the path down the hill to the river, where he had not been for more than three years.

A road ran beside the river and he went along it and walked till noon. Then he went into a field of rye and lay down there. Toward evening he approached a village, but without entering it went toward the cliff that overhung the river. There he again lay down to rest.

It was early morning, half an hour before sunrise. All was damp and gloomy and a cold early wind was blowing from the west. “Yes, I must end it all. There is no God. But how am I to end it? Throw myself into the river? I can swim and should not drown. Hang myself?

Yes, just throw this sash over a branch.” This seemed so feasible and so easy that he felt horrified. As usual at moments of despair he felt the need of prayer. But there was no one to pray to. There was no God. He lay down resting on his arm, and suddenly such a longing for sleep overcame him that he could no longer support his head on his hand, but stretched out his arm, laid his head on it, and fell asleep. But that sleep lasted only for a moment. He woke up immediately and began not to dream but to remember.

He saw himself as a child in his mother’s home in the country. A carriage drives up, and out of it steps Uncle Nikolai Sergeevich, with his long, spade-shaped, black beard, and with him Pashenka, a thin little girl with large mild eyes and a timid pathetic face. And into their company of boys Pashenka is brought and they have to play with her, but it is dull. She is silly, and it ends by their making fun of her and forcing her to show how she can swim. She lies down on the floor and shows them, and they all laugh and make a fool of her. She sees this and blushes red in patches and becomes more pitiable than before, so pitiable that he feels ashamed and can never forget that crooked, kindly, submissive smile. And Sergei remembered having seen her since then. Long after, just before he became a monk, she had married a landowner who squandered all her fortune and was in the habit of beating her. She had had two children, a son and a daughter, but the son had died while still young. And Sergei remembered having seen her very wretched. Then again he had seen her in the monastery when she was a widow. She had been still the same, not exactly stupid, but insipid, insignificant, and pitiable. She had come with her daughter and her daughter’s fiancé. They were already poor at that time and later on he had heard that she was living in a small provincial town and was very poor.

“Why am I thinking about her?” he asked himself, but he could not cease doing so. “Where is she? How is she getting on? Is she still as unhappy as she was then when she had to show us how to swim on the floor? But why should I think about her? What am I doing? I must put an end to myself.”

And again he felt afraid, and again, to escape from that thought, he went on thinking about Pashenka.

So he lay for a long time, thinking now of his unavoidable end and now of Pashenka. She presented herself to him as a means of salvation. At last he fell asleep, and in his sleep he saw an angel who came to him

and said: “Go to Pashenka and learn from her what you have to do, what your sin is, and wherein lies your salvation.”

He awoke, and having decided that this was a vision sent by God, he felt glad, and resolved to do what had been told him in the vision. He knew the town where she lived. It was some three hundred versts²²⁹ away, and he set out to walk there.

• 6 •

Pashenka had already long ceased to be Pashenka and had become old, withered, wrinkled Praskovia Mikhailovna, mother-in-law of that failure, the drunken official Mavrikev. She was living in the country town where he had had his last appointment, and there she was supporting the family: her daughter, her ailing neurasthenic son-in-law, and her five grandchildren. She did this by giving music lessons to tradesmen’s daughters, giving four and sometimes five lessons a day of an hour each, and earning in this way some sixty rubles a month. So they lived for the present, in expectation of another appointment. She had sent letters to all her relations and acquaintances asking them to obtain a post for her son-in-law, and among the rest she had written to Sergei, but that letter had not reached him.

It was a Saturday, and Praskovia Mikhailovna was herself mixing dough for currant bread such as the serf-cook on her father’s estate used to make so well. She wished to give her grandchildren a treat on the Sunday.

Masha, her daughter, was nursing her youngest child, the eldest boy and girl were at school, and her son-in-law was asleep, not having slept during the night. Praskovia Mikhailovna had remained awake too for a great part of the night, trying to soften her daughter’s anger against her husband.

She saw that it was impossible for her son-in-law, a weak creature, to be other than he was, and realized that his wife’s reproaches could do no good—so she used all her efforts to soften those reproaches and to avoid recrimination and anger. Unkindly relations between people caused her actual physical suffering. It was so clear to her that bitter feelings do not make anything better, but only make everything worse. She did not in fact think about this: she simply suffered at the sight of anger as she would from a bad smell, a harsh noise, or from blows on her body.

229. *Three hundred versts*—roughly 300 kilometers.

She had—with a feeling of self-satisfaction—just taught Lukeria how to mix the dough, when her six-year-old grandson Misha, wearing an apron and with darned stockings on his crooked little legs, ran into the kitchen with a frightened face.

“Grandma, a dreadful old man wants to see you.”

Lukeria looked out at the door.

“There is a pilgrim of some kind, a man . . .”

Praskovia Mikhailovna rubbed her thin elbows against one another, wiped her hands on her apron and went upstairs to get a five-kopek piece²³⁰ out of her purse for him, but remembering that she had nothing less than a ten-kopek piece she decided to give him some bread instead. She returned to the cupboard, but suddenly blushed at the thought of having grudged the ten-kopek piece, and telling Lukeria to cut a slice of bread, went upstairs again to fetch it. “It serves you right,” she said to herself. “You must now give twice over.”

She gave both the bread and the money to the pilgrim, and when doing so—far from being proud of her generosity—she excused herself for giving so little. The man had such an imposing appearance.

Though he had tramped two hundred versts as a beggar, though he was tattered and had grown thin and weatherbeaten, though he had cropped his long hair and was wearing a peasant’s cap and boots, and though he bowed very humbly, Sergei still had the impressive appearance that made him so attractive. But Praskovia Mikhailovna did not recognize him. She could hardly do so, not having seen him for almost twenty years.

“Don’t think ill of me, father. Perhaps you want something to eat?”

He took the bread and the money, and Praskovia Mikhailovna was surprised that he did not go, but stood looking at her.

“Pashenka, I have come to you! Take me in . . .”

His beautiful black eyes, shining with the tears that started in them, were fixed on her with imploring insistence. And under his grayish mustache his lips quivered piteously.

Praskovia Mikhailovna pressed her hands to her withered breast, opened her mouth, and stood petrified, staring at the pilgrim with dilated eyes.

“It can’t be! Stepa! Sergei! Father Sergei!”

230. *five-kopek piece*—about one penny.

“Yes, it is I,” said Sergei in a low voice. “Only not Sergei, or Father Sergei, but a great sinner, Stepan Kasatsky—a great and lost sinner. Take me in and help me!”

“It’s impossible! How have you so humbled yourself? But come in.”

She reached out her hand, but he did not take it and only followed her in.

But where was she to take him? The lodging was a small one. Formerly she had had a tiny room, almost a closet, for herself, but later she had given it up to her daughter, and Masha was now sitting there rocking the baby.

“Sit here for the present,” she said to Sergei, pointing to a bench in the kitchen.

He sat down at once, and with an evidently accustomed movement slipped the straps of his wallet first off one shoulder and then off the other.

“My God, my God! How you have humbled yourself, father! Such great fame, and now like this ...”

Sergei did not reply, but only smiled meekly, placing his wallet under the bench on which he sat.

“Masha, do you know who this is?”—And in a whisper Praskovia Mikhailovna told her daughter who he was, and together they then carried the bed and the cradle out of the tiny room and cleared it for Sergei.

Praskovia Mikhailovna led him into it.

“Here you can rest. Don’t take offense ... but I must go out.”

“Where to?”

“I have to go to a lesson. I am ashamed to tell you, but I teach music!”

“Music? But that is good. Only just one thing, Praskovia Mikhailovna, I have come to you with a definite object. When can I have a talk with you?”

“I shall be very glad. Will this evening do?”

“Yes. But one thing more. Don’t speak about me, or say who I am. I have revealed myself only to you. No one knows where I have gone to. It must be so.”

“O, but I have told my daughter.”

“Well, ask her not to mention it.”

And Sergei took off his boots, lay down, and at once fell asleep after a sleepless night and a walk of nearly thirty miles.

When Praskovia Mikhailovna returned, Sergei was sitting in the little room waiting for her. He did not come out for dinner, but had some soup and gruel that Lukeria brought him.

“How is it that you have come back earlier than you said?” asked Sergei. “Can I speak to you now?”

“How is it that I have the happiness to receive such a guest? I have missed one of my lessons. That can wait ... I had always been planning to go to see you. I wrote to you, and now this good fortune has come.”

“Pashenka, please listen to what I am going to tell you as to a confession made to God at my last hour. Pashenka, I am not a holy man, I am not even as good as a simple ordinary man; I am a loathsome, vile, and proud sinner who has gone astray, and who, if not worse than everyone else, is at least worse than most very bad people.”

Pashenka looked at him at first with staring eyes. But she believed what he said, and when she had quite grasped it she touched his hand, smiling pityingly, and said:

“Perhaps you exaggerate, Stiva?”²³¹

“No, Pashenka. I am an adulterer, a murderer, a blasphemer, and a deceiver.”

“My God! How is that?” exclaimed Praskovia Mikhailovna.

“But I must go on living. And I, who thought I knew everything, who taught others how to live—I know nothing and ask you to teach me.”

“What are you saying, Stiva? You are laughing at me. Why do you always make fun of me?”

“Well, if you think I am jesting you must have it as you please. But tell me all the same how you live, and how you have lived your life.”

“I? I have lived a very nasty, horrible life, and now God is punishing me as I deserve. I live so wretchedly, so wretchedly ...”

“How was it with your marriage? How did you live with your husband?”

“It was all bad. I married because I fell in love in the nastiest way. Papa did not approve. But I would not listen to anything and just got married. Then instead of helping my husband I tormented him by my jealousy, which I could not restrain.”

“I heard that he drank ...”

231. *Stiva*—diminutive of Stepan.

“Yes, but I did not give him any peace. I always reproached him, though you know it is a disease! He could not refrain from it. I now remember how I tried to prevent his having it, and the frightful scenes we had!”

And she looked at Kasatsky with beautiful eyes, suffering from the remembrance.

Kasatsky remembered how he had been told that Pashenka’s husband used to beat her, and now, looking at her thin, withered neck with prominent veins behind her ears, and her scanty coil of hair, half gray half auburn, he seemed to see just how it had occurred.

“Then I was left with two children and no means at all.”

“But you had an estate!”

“O, we sold that while Vasia²³² was still alive, and the money was all spent. We had to live, and like all our young ladies I did not know how to earn anything. I was particularly useless and helpless. So we spent all we had. I taught the children and improved my own education a little. And then Mitia²³³ fell ill when he was already in the fourth form, and God took him. Masha fell in love with Vania,²³⁴ my son-in-law. And—well, he is well-meaning but unfortunate. He is ill.”

“Mamma!”—her daughter’s voice interrupted her—”Take Mitia! I can’t be in two places at once.”

Praskovia Mikhailovna shuddered, but rose and went out of the room, stepping quickly in her patched shoes. She soon came back with a boy of two in her arms, who threw himself backward and grabbed at her shawl with his little hands.

“Where was I? O yes, he had a good appointment here, and his chief was a kind man too. But Vania could not go on, and had to give up his position.”

“What is the matter with him?”

“Neurasthenia—it is a dreadful complaint. We consulted a doctor, who told us he ought to go away, but we had no means. . . . I always hope it will pass of itself. He has no particular pain, but . . .”

“Lukeria!” cried an angry and feeble voice. “She is always sent away when I want her. Mamma . . .”

“I’m coming!” Praskovia Mikhailovna again interrupted herself. “He has not had his dinner yet. He can’t eat with us.”

232. *Vasia*—diminutive of Vasily.

233. *Mitia*—diminutive of Dmitry.

234. *Vania*—diminutive of Ivan.

She went out and arranged something, and came back wiping her thin dark hands.

"So that is how I live. I always complain and am always dissatisfied, but thank God the grandchildren are all nice and healthy, and we can still live. But why talk about me?"

"But what do you live on?"

"Well, I earn a little. How I used to dislike music, but how useful it is to me now!" Her small hand lay on the chest of drawers beside which she was sitting, and she drummed an exercise with her thin fingers.

"How much do you get for a lesson?"

"Sometimes a ruble, sometimes fifty kopeks, or sometimes thirty. They are all so kind to me."

"And do your pupils get on well?" asked Kasatsky with a slight smile.

Praskovia Mikhailovna did not at first believe that he was asking seriously, and looked inquiringly into his eyes.

"Some of them do. One of them is a splendid girl—the butcher's daughter—such a good, kind girl! If I were a clever woman I ought, of course, with the connections papa had, to be able to get an appointment for my son-in-law. But as it is I have not been able to do anything, and have brought them all to this—as you see."

"Yes, yes," said Kasatsky, lowering his head. "And how is it, Pashenka—do you take part in church life?"

"O, don't speak of it. I am so bad that way, and have neglected it so! I keep the fasts with the children and sometimes go to church, and then again sometimes I don't go for months. I only send the children."

"But why don't you go yourself?"

"To tell the truth" (she blushed) "I am ashamed, for my daughter's sake and the children's, to go there in tattered clothes, and I haven't anything else. Besides, I am just lazy."

"And do you pray at home?"

"I do. But what sort of prayer is it? Only mechanical. I know it should not be like that, but I lack real religious feeling. The only thing is that I know how bad I am ..."

"Yes, yes, that's right!" said Kasatsky, as if approvingly.

"I'm coming! I'm coming!" she replied to a call from her son-in-law, and tidying her scanty plait she left the room.

But this time it was long before she returned. When she came back, Kasatsky was sitting in the same position, his elbows resting on his knees and his head bowed. But his wallet was strapped on his back.

When she came in, carrying a small tin lamp without a shade, he raised his fine weary eyes and sighed very deeply.

"I did not tell them who you are," she began timidly. "I only said that you are a pilgrim, a nobleman, and that I used to know you. Come into the dining-room for tea."

"No ..."

"Well then, I'll bring some to you here."

"No, I don't want anything. God bless you, Pashenka! I am going now. If you pity me, don't tell anyone that you have seen me. For the love of God don't tell anyone. Thank you. I would bow to your feet but I know it would make you feel awkward. Thank you, and forgive me for Christ's sake!"

"Give me your blessing."

"God bless you! Forgive me for Christ's sake!"

He rose, but she would not let him go until she had given him bread and butter and rusks. He took it all and went away.

It was dark, and before he had passed the second house he was lost to sight. She only knew he was there because the dog at the priest's house was barking.

"So that is what my dream meant! Pashenka is what I ought to have been but failed to be. I lived for men on the pretext of living for God, while she lived for God imagining that she lives for men. Yes, one good deed—a cup of water given without thought of reward—is worth more than any benefit I imagined I was bestowing on people. But after all was there not some share of sincere desire to serve God?" he asked himself, and the answer was: "Yes, there was, but it was all soiled and overgrown by desire for human praise. Yes, there is no God for the man who lives, as I did, for human praise. I will now seek him!"

And he walked from village to village as he had done on his way to Pashenka, meeting and parting from other pilgrims, men and women, and asking for bread and a night's rest in Christ's name. Occasionally some angry housewife scolded him, or a drunken peasant reviled him, but for the most part he was given food and drink and even something to take with him. His noble bearing disposed some people in his favor, while others on the contrary seemed pleased at the sight of a gentleman who had come to beggary.

But his gentleness prevailed with everyone.

Often, finding a copy of the Gospels in a hut he would read it aloud, and when they heard him the people were always touched and surprised, as at something new yet familiar.

When he succeeded in helping people, either by advice, or by his knowledge of reading and writing, or by settling some quarrel, he did not wait to see their gratitude but went away directly afterwards. And little by little God began to reveal himself within him.

Once he was walking along with two old women and a soldier. They were stopped by a party consisting of a lady and gentleman in a gig and another lady and gentleman on horseback. The husband was on horseback with his daughter, while in the gig his wife was driving with a Frenchman, evidently a traveler.

The party stopped to let the Frenchman see the pilgrims who, in accord with a popular Russian superstition, tramped about from place to place instead of working.

They spoke French, thinking that the others would not understand them.

“*Demandez-leur,*” said the Frenchman, “*s’ils sont bien sur de ce que leur pelerinage est agreable a Dieu.*”²³⁵

The question was asked, and one old woman replied:

“As God takes it. Our feet have reached the holy places, but our hearts may not have done so.”

They asked the soldier. He said that he was alone in the world and had nowhere else to go.

They asked Kasatsky who he was.

“A servant of God.”

“*Qu’est-ce qu’il dit? Il ne repond pas.*”²³⁶

“*Il dit qu’il est un serviteur de Dieu. Cela doit etre un fils de preetre. Il a de la race. Avez-vous de la petite monnaie?*”²³⁷

The Frenchman found some small change and gave twenty kopeks to each of the pilgrims.

235. “*Demandez-leur ...*”—“Ask them,” said the Frenchman, “if they really believe that their pilgrimage is pleasing to God.”

236. “*Qu’est-ce qu’il dit ...*”—“What does he say? He’s not telling us.”

237. “*Il dit qu’il est un serviteur de Dieu ...*”—“He must be a priest’s son. He has some breeding. Have you any change?”

“*Mais dites-leur que ce n’est pas pour les cierges que je leur donne, mais pour qu’ils se regalent de thé. Chay, chay pour vous, mon vieux!*”²³⁸ he said with a smile. And he patted Kasatsky on the shoulder with his gloved hand.

“May Christ bless you,” replied Kasatsky without replacing his cap and bowing his bald head.

He rejoiced particularly at this meeting, because he had disregarded the opinion of men and had done the simplest, easiest thing—humbly accepted twenty kopeks and given them to his comrade, a blind beggar. The less importance he attached to the opinion of men the more did he feel the presence of God within him.

For eight months Kasatsky tramped on in this manner, and in the ninth month he was arrested for not having a passport. This happened at a night-refuge in a provincial town where he had passed the night with some pilgrims. He was taken to the police-station, and when asked who he was and where was his passport, he replied that he had no passport and that he was a servant of God. He was classed as a tramp, sentenced, and sent to live in Siberia.

In Siberia he has settled down as the hired man of a well-to-do peasant, in which capacity he works in the kitchen garden, teaches children, and attends to the sick.

238. “*Mais dites-leur ...*”—“But tell them it is not for buying candles, but to treat themselves to some tea. Tea, tea, my old man!”

30. Orthodoxy in the Diaspora: Missions to Alaska

It would be impossible in a work of this size to provide a full overview of Russian Orthodox missionary activity in the modern era. Russian missions blossomed between the early 1700s and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917; Russian missionaries conducted serious work in China, Japan, Central Asia, Siberia, Kamchatka, and Australia. This section provides just a glimpse of Russian missions in one part of the globe—Alaska.

Russian explorers learned about Alaska only in the late 1600s. Subsequent expeditions from the 1720s to the 1740s successfully mapped much of the coast.



Figure 142. Russian Orthodox church, Unalaska Island



Figure 143. Bering Strait

The explorers discovered that Alaska was not, as a map from 1701 suggested, an island, and they began gathering information about peninsula's flora, fauna, and human populations. An expedition in 1741 led by Vitus Bering—a Danish navigator who worked for the Russian navy and for whom the Bering Strait is named—made apparent the incredible wealth to be gained in the region by harvesting fur.

Grigory Shelikhov, an ambitious merchant determined to make a fortune in fur, established the first Russian settlement off Alaska's south-central coast on Kodiak Island in 1784. Several other small Russian companies competed with each other to trap otters. They quickly decimated the otter population, and competition for this increasingly scarce resource intensified.



Figure 144. Unalaska

In 1778 the English naval captain James Cook (famous as the first European to find Australia) arrived to map the coast of the Bering Strait, igniting fears back in St. Petersburg about British plans for the region. These concerns—speculation about British intentions coupled with skirmishes among Russian companies—helped Shelikhov successfully petition the Russian

government to charter a monopolistic enterprise with exclusive rights to conduct business in the region. The “Russian-American Company,” established in 1799 by Emperor Paul (1796–1801), gained sole rights to all minerals, fur, and trade in Alaska, as well as the right to claim any land not occupied by other states. Alaskan trade was now an official state interest.

Where Russian traders ventured Russian missionaries followed. The first arrived in 1795 on Unalaska, an island in the middle of the Aleutian chain. Tensions between traders and the missionaries arose right from the outset. The missionaries considered themselves defenders of the natives’ physical and spiritual well-being. The traders considered themselves traders. The missionaries loathed the traders’ indifference and sometimes hostility toward the native population. Commercial and religious interests sharply divided those committed to one but not the other.

30.1 Iosaf on Work in Alaska (May 1795)

The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America, 1794–1837: With Materials Concerning the Life and Works of the Monk German, and Ethnographic Notes by the Hieromonk Gedeon, trans. Colin Bearne, ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1978), 41–42. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

One of the first Russian monks to settle in Alaska was Archimandrite Iosaf Bolotov. He fought to establish a native school for native children, defying superiors back in Russia who instead wanted to ship Alaskan children to Russia for a proper Russian education. Iosaf eventually triumphed, but the ship dispatched to bring him books and faculty for the new local school sank on its way to Alaska.

In Iosaf's letter below we get some sense of his arduous journey to Alaska, his wonder at his new surroundings, and his industriousness: seven thousand baptisms!



Figure 145. Aleutian Islands

I set off from Moscow in 1794 on the twenty-second day of January. We celebrated Easter in Irkutsk.¹ There we remained for a month. From Irkutsk we traveled along the Lena River for more than 2,000 versts,² sailing calmly and at our pleasure. From Irkutsk to Okhotsk³ we covered more than 1,000 versts⁴ on horseback with the other brothers; our belongings were carried on 100 pack-horses. Although river travel had been enjoyable, it was even better on horseback. We were able to see everything as we traversed forests, mountains, and bivouacs. The pastures were everywhere lush, and the best season was May, June, and July: yet one had to beware of bears: we saw many of them—although they were friendly, our horses would take fright. We arrived in Okhotsk on 13th July (the town is on the very coast) and we then sailed past Kamchatka,⁵ across the Kuriles, and along the Aleutian chain.⁶ God allowed me to see things I had barely even heard of: sea whales, swallows, and otters. Beside our very ship the whales swam on the surface and played so that we could get a good look at them. They were not large animals, perhaps fifteen sazhen long,⁷ with heads five sazhen long.⁸ Beginning at Yakutsk⁹ we found willing Yakuts¹⁰ everywhere and baptized them; whenever we came to a river we would stop to do this. Although there are preachers locally, they charge much money to baptize. When we had traveled along the Aleutian chain by sea for only two days we came to the island of Unalashka¹¹—there we baptized more than one hundred people: they had been willing to be

1. *Irkutsk*—a city in south-central Siberia, some 4,000 kilometers from Moscow.

2. *2,000 versts*—roughly 2,000 kilometers.

3. *Okhotsk*—a city on Russia's eastern shore on the Sea of Okhotsk in the Pacific Ocean.

4. *1,000 versts*—roughly 1,000 kilometers.

5. *Kamchatka*—the peninsula that forms the eastern shore of the Sea of Okhotsk.

6. *Kuriles and along the Aleutian chain*—islands south of Kamchatka and north of Japan.

7. *15 sazhen long*—32 meters.

8. *5 sazhen long*—11 meters.

9. *Yakutsk*—on the Lena River in eastern Siberia.

10. *Yakuts*—a Turkik people in eastern Siberia.

11. *Unalashka*—Unalaska, an island in the center of the Aleutian chain.

baptized for some time since they had been living constantly in the company of Russian hunters. [...]

I have been living on the island of Kadiak¹² since 24 September 1794. I have, praise God, baptized more than 7,000 Americans,¹³ and celebrated more than 2,000 weddings. We have built a church and, if time allows, we shall build another and two portable ones, but a fifth is needed. We live comfortably. They love us and we them. They are a kind people, but poor. They take baptism so much to heart that they smash and burn all the magic charms given them by the shamans. You frightened us by saying they would be naked, but, thank God, they have some conception of good sense; although they are not finely dressed they are at least not naked, and they walk around more neatly dressed than the Russians, although the clothes they wear are not expensive; made from bird skins, they are long, down to the heels and with the bottom unhemmed, like a surplice;¹⁴ there is only one aperture, where the head goes through; the smarter ones wear otter-skin clothes. Their diet consists of fish and various roots. [...]

12. *island of Kadiak*—Kodiak Island, off Alaska's south-central shore.

13. *Americans*—natives.

14. *surplice*—liturgical vestment.

30.2 German on Conversions (May 1795)

The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America, 1794–1837: With Materials Concerning the Life and Works of the Monk German, and Ethnographic Notes by the Hieromonk Gedeon, trans. Colin Bearne, ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, ON: Limestone Press, 1978), 41–44. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

The next letter is from the Russian monk German (Herman), who arrived in Alaska in 1794 and whose work with natives resulted in his canonization in 1969, 132 years after his death. By the early 1800s German and his fellow missionary monks had converted the entire population of Aleuts, the indigenous people residing in the Aleutian chain of islands. German's letter indicates some of the fervency and the competitiveness that drove early missionaries.



Figure 146. Aleutian Islands

By the grace of Almighty God and the help of your devout prayers we reached the shores of America¹⁵ safely—all ten of us; time does not allow for a full and detailed account of such a long journey; we were under way for almost a whole year; the episodes worthy of note were few, apart from our impressions of new places and means of

15. *America*—Alaska.

transport: if you like, for the lovers of simple conversation, one can say that on the road to Okhotsk, as we rode on horseback, we were attacked by bears, and that at sea we came across various sea animals: whales, sea-cats,¹⁶ sea-pigs,¹⁷ seals, and others in great numbers. There were no great storms except for one. [...]

The Americans come very eagerly to be baptized; just under 7,000 have taken the faith. On Unalashka¹⁸ during our journey through the Aleutian Islands, we were driven against our will into one bay by unfavorable winds, and the Aleuts there caused us great amazement by their kindness to us in distress and their willingness to be baptized. At the present time Father Makary is setting out to preach and baptize on the Aleutian, Fox and Andreianov Islands,¹⁹ and, soon after this, Father Iuvenaly will go to the mainland and, beginning at Kenai Bay,²⁰ he will visit the Chugach²¹ and the Alegmiuts,²² the distant Kolosh,²³ and many other tribes, as far even as Chilkhat.²⁴ O! Here I am, anguished in spirit, with all the scarcity of time. To go on with the story, I must break the bounds for the very briefest moment to add one detail. Caught as I am between the devil and the deep blue sea, joy and anguish, plenty and need, satiety and hunger, warmth and cold, with all my tribulations, I must relate something that amused me when I heard conversations between the brothers about preaching and the various divisions of labor in this activity, especially the debate between the hieromonks Makary and Iuvenaly, for they set off to sail round Kadiak²⁵ in one of the smallest skin-covered boats, heedless of all the dangers of the sea; the father archimandrite²⁶ took leave of us in the harbor, as though we were small children. On one occasion I happened to

16. *sea-cats*—seals.

17. *sea pigs*—porpoises.

18. *Unalashka*—Unalaska, an island in the center of the Aleutian chain.

19. *Aleutian, Fox and Andreianov Islands*—all part of the long, Aleutian chain of islands off Alaska's southwest coast.

20. *Kenai Bay*—on the south-central coast of Alaska.

21. *Chugash*—indigenous people of the Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound.

22. *Alegmiut*—indigenous peoples living along Alaska's southwest coast.

23. *Kolosh*—the Tlingit people of Canada's northwest coast.

24. *Chilkhat*—150 kilometers north of Juneau.

25. *Kadiak*—Kodiak Island off Alaska's southern coast

26. *archimandrite*—a senior abbot who supervises other abbots.

be with the same two hieromonks²⁷ as they developed their ideas along the same lines; we were walking about our harbor and went up on a hill facing south; we sat down facing the ocean and began to discuss who should go in which direction to preach, because the time of departure of the ships that we would have to travel on was approaching. An argument then arose between them, which I, in my humble way, found cheering and amusing. On Cook's charts there is one location marked to the north showing that Russians live along one of the rivers. We had heard various tales about them and these were referred to during this conversation; we all expressed a desire to meet them. Father Makary began by saying, "I intend, if God wills it, when I am on the Aleutian Islands, to make my way to *Aliaska*²⁸ where I have been invited by the *Aliaskans*, and as this is near to where these Russians are supposed to live I shall seek ways of finding out more about them." But Father Iuvenaly, having heard the word *Aliaska*, in his eagerness to speak, broke in eagerly with, "*Aliaska* really belongs to my area, so I would ask you not to interfere there. When this next vessel leaves for *Iakutan*²⁹ I shall begin preaching from the south. Then I shall go north along the coast, cross *Kenai Bay*, and from the port there I shall, of course, cross to *Aliaska*." When he heard this, Father Makary was very much saddened and, looking glum, said pleadingly: "No, Father, do not press me; you know yourself that the Aleutian chain is linked to *Aliaska*; therefore it must obviously be in my area, and the whole shore to the north also. You may have the whole of southern America if you like; there's enough there for the rest of your life." I, however, listening discreetly to such an argument, was overjoyed. Hieromonks Father Makary and Father Iuvenaly are always so fervent, almost like madmen wanting to rush off in all directions. Father Afanasy stays with us, so that we should not be without a hieromonk, and to carry out the celebrating of the services and the baptizing of those who come to us.

27. *hieromonk*—a monk ordained as a priest.

28. *Aliaska*—Alaska; the mainland.

29. *Iakutan*—may refer to *Iakutat* on the Gulf of Alaska.

30.3 Missionaries and Merchants (18 May 1795)

“Letter from Archimandrite Iosaph to Gregory Shelikov, 18 May 1795,” trans. Lydia Black in *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, ed. Michael Oleksa (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 58–63. All attempts to reach rightsholder failed.



Figure 147. Flag of the Russian-American Company, 1806

The next document displays the tensions and outright hostility between Russian missionaries and Russian merchants in Alaska. Archimandrite Iosaf (German's superior, who penned the first letter in this section) dispatched a cutting letter of complaint to Grigory Shelikov about the practices of Aleksandr Baranov, the chief manager of the Golikov-Shelikhov Company (the precursor to the Russian-American Company), who also functioned as the manager of the Russian colony in Alaska. Here, to be sure, was an incredible conflict of interest, but one common in government-sponsored trading companies of the era.



Figure 148. Currency issued by the Russian-American Company, early to mid-1800s

By all accounts Baranov was an effective but cruel administrator. His dissolute personal life (he openly cultivated mistresses and fathered illegitimate children) drove missionaries in Alaska to distraction, as did his willingness to sanction the use of natives as forced labor. Several Russian priests encouraged the natives to revolt against Baranov's rule; Baranov responded by arresting the priests. Father Iosaf, as seen below, was intent on Baranov's removal. Iosaf never succeeded.



Figure 149. Aleksandr Olgin, “Novo Arkangelsk,” 1837, headquarters of the Russian-American Company in Sitka, Alaska

Dear Friend and Patron!³⁰

The love, respect and affection I have for you I can feel better than I can express on paper. [...]

Having departed from Okhotsk on 13 August, we arrived in Kodiak safely on 24 September [1794]. Throughout the winter there were many visitors who came voluntarily—inhabitants of Kodiak and also Alaskans,³¹ Kenai people,³² and Chugach. We baptized many.

We as yet have no church. We asked the manager, Aleksandr Andreevich [Baranov],³³ so far with no result. Although Aleksandr Andreevich [Baranov] himself arranged for the construction of a small church [...], the building stands to this day unfinished. I decided not to report about the church to the metropolitan. Since my arrival at the harbor, I find that nothing whatsoever has been accomplished in accordance with your good intentions. My only happiness is in the

30. *Friend and Patron*—Gregory Shelikov, founder of the colony.

31. *Alaskans*—people from the Alaskan Peninsula.

32. *Kenai people*—indigenous peoples from the Kenai Peninsula in south-central Alaska.

33. *Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov*—manager of the Golikhov-Shelikov Company and then the Russian-American Company until 1818.

Americans³⁴ who come from everywhere to be baptized. The Russians [in the Russian-American Company] not only fail to aid them in this; they employ every possible means to scare them off. The reason for this is their dissolute life, which the good conduct of the Americans puts to shame. I was barely able to convince some of the *promyshlenniki*³⁵ to get married. The rest will hear nothing of it: they openly keep women—some more than one apiece—actions that constitute a great insult to the Americans. You know how Baranov likes women, and he will chase them in the face of any kind of danger! I am unable to ascertain what enraged Mr. Baranov more—our arrival here itself or our impassioned reprimands of him. All signs indicate he agitates the *promyshlenniki* and sets them against us. [...]

In terms of economics, nothing good can be noted. Since our arrival there was hunger all winter. We ate rotten, three-year-old dried fish to the last morsel, even though fish were still running (but not harvested) when we arrived. The herring also ran later, but the catch was conducted only two or three times. [...] The seines³⁶ lay on the shore all winter long. The cows that were brought by the ships are only skins now, and most have died. Two calves (besides those few born here) were eaten by dogs. Many mountain sheep have also been attacked. Only two goats remain, and recently the dogs feasted on one for their good health. [...]

Under our parkas, we³⁷ are always half naked, and those parkas get very dirty. In the daytime, we feed the people. At night we collect wood and bring it out of the forest ourselves. [...] I have asked for a few hoes or adzes³⁸ and a few spades, but I do not know if I will be able to get them. Right now, we are working the ground with sharpened wooden sticks we have fashioned ourselves.

[...] Our room is always filled with people. Some are being baptized, some married, and some visit. Besides, we do not have a church, so that the services cannot be conducted.

34. *Americans*—natives.

35. *promyshlenniki*—literally “manufacturer” or “industrialist”; here the term refers to Russians working for the Russian-American Company.

36. *seines*—fishing nets.

37. *we*—the clergy.

38. *adze*—a tool, somewhat similar in shape to an axe, used for smoothing rough-cut wood.

Of all the books you sent to us, I received only a few—not more than twenty. Ten of these are *sluzhebnyki*³⁹ and they all have rotted and cannot be used. The rest I have not yet seen. I baptized the Americans,⁴⁰ creating no difficulties for the company. An indentured servant remains indentured; a hostage remains a hostage. [...] Every time obstacles were created for me, I was still able to baptize people in the settlements or to marry Aleuts with the partner with whom they were living. But as the women were married, they were taken from their spouses and given to others or else they became indentured servants or hostages (only to irk me, I am sure). I am being patient, awaiting a resolution from you of this situation. [...]

The windows of our quarters were not sealed and were very poor; we barely survived the winter. It is true that [Baranov] honored me initially. He reserved a pretty good room for me, but the brethren were placed in the barracks, where the men lived with their prostitutes. I did not want to live apart from the brothers and moved with them to other quarters. Besides the prostitutes, they used the barracks for games and dances that lasted all night, so that even major feast days were not observed. Sometimes they stage these parties even on ordinary days. [Baranov] would come to me and say that they were having a party because of bad weather. His only pleasures are women and dancing. That is the kind of men he and his closest advisers are. [...]

Children born to Russian fathers⁴¹ are taken from their mothers with the permission of the manager, and the fathers try to take them to Russia. I do not like this at all. This kind of transport will be seen as cruelty and evidence of our dishonor. For the children it will be catastrophic. It would be better to bring them up here in the Russian manner. They should be taught to read, and then, according to their abilities, be educated in other liberal arts. Then we could have good *promyshlenniki* here instead of importing them from Russia. The state's interest would also be better served. [...] In the meantime, they should leave the children here and not allow [their fathers] to take them to Russia. In all of this, I would like instructions from his eminence, the metropolitan, but in the meantime I want to know what you think [and] whether we are in agreement. [...]

39. *sluzhebnyki*—service books.

40. *Americans*—natives.

41. *Children born to Russian fathers*—and Native American mothers.

30.4 Missionary Oath (1840s)

“Missionary Oath,” in *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, ed. Michael Oleksa (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 139. Fair use.

The Holy Synod required all missionaries bound for Alaska to swear an oath, which they signed in the presence of the priest who administered it. The following oath, used in the 1840s, emphasizes service and loyalty to the Russian emperor.

I, the undersigned, in front of this Holy Bible, promise and swear by Almighty God that I am obligated by my position and am earnestly willing, in the work of Christianization assigned to me, to think, to teach and to act as is maintained and taught by our Orthodox Church and as is prescribed and ordered by the instructions of my archpriest, the Right Reverend Innokenty, bishop of Kamchatka, in accordance with the decrees of his imperial majesty.

I swear by the living God that—ever keeping in my mind his awful words, “damned is he who preaches God’s word carelessly”—I will earnestly perform the work of God that has been assigned to me to my utmost mental and physical strength, without hypocrisy and avarice, avoiding all threats, deceit, extortion and other unlawful acts, and without any force or violence; but sincerely, disinterestedly, kindly, considerately, with true meekness and Christian love, keeping in mind the glory of God and the salvation of people’s souls. [...]

I furthermore swear by Almighty God that I am obligated and am willing at all times to be the loyal, good and obedient subject of his imperial majesty, the all-merciful emperor, and of the lawful heir of the Russian throne in carrying out the work entrusted to me; and I will preserve and defend the interests of his imperial majesty to the utmost of my understanding and ability, being ready to sacrifice my life if necessary.

I furthermore swear by Almighty God that I do not entertain any mental reservation, equivocation or misinterpretation of the promises pronounced by my tongue: should it be otherwise, God—he to whom all hearts are open—be my righteous avenger.

I seal my oath by kissing the words and the cross of my Savior.
 Amen.

30.5 Innokenty Instructs Hieromonk Feofan (1853)

“Instructions from Bishop Innocent Veniaminov to Hieromonk Theophan, 1853,” in *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, ed. Michael Oleksa (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 238–250. All attempts to contact rightsholder failed.

The Russian priest Ioann Veniaminov, traveled the long miles between islands in his diocese in a kayak sheathed in animal skins.

The natives to whom he ministered practiced shamanism, a system of orally transmitted beliefs, and thus a system without scriptures. Practitioners believed that every living being—human, animal, and plant—possessed both spirit and intellect. Shamanic hunting societies, in Michael Oleksa’s words, “needed to attend carefully to the various protocols established ‘in the beginning’ in order not to offend the spirits of their prey. Any violation of this etiquette might have disastrous consequences for the community. Entire species might withhold themselves from capture [and] humans would starve.”⁴² All ills—disease, starvation, natural disasters—traced back to some offense against the spirits of the natural world. And only shamans—those whose spiritual acuity led their fellows to regard them as spiritual leaders—could set things right when such offenses occurred.

Ioann Veniaminov, who arrived in Alaska in 1824 with his wife, son, and mother, showed great success ingratiating himself with the shamans and natives at large. He learned several native languages, into which he translated parts of the Bible. He also produced scholarly works on ethnography and linguistics. After the death of his wife in 1840, Veniaminov took monastic vows (assuming the name “Innokenty” or “Innocent”). He was quickly appointed bishop of Alaska.

The document below is a set of instructions for converting natives, written by Innokenty for a Russian hieromonk about to set out for Alaska. Innokenty’s carefully modulated advice reflects a good bit of idealism, combined with hard-headed practicality, compassion, and patronization. God’s law, Innokenty in-

42. Oleksa, *Alaskan Missionary Spirituality*, 121–122.

sists, is “graven indelibly on the tablets of every human heart”; it is visible to some degree in all religions. Thus, he teaches, missionaries should proselytize mindful of what is common to both Christianity and native beliefs.



Figure 150. Shaman, Henry Welcome (1853-1936), “Tal-tan Billy,” National Archives, Pacific Alaska Region (Anchorage)

To leave one's native country and seek places remote, wild, and devoid of many of the comforts of life, for the sake of turning men to the path of truth who are still wandering in the darkness of ignorance, and of illumining with the light of the Gospel those who have not yet beheld this saving light—this is an act truly holy and apostolic. Blessed is he whom the Lord selects and appoints to such a ministry! But doubly blessed is he who labors with undivided zeal, sincerity and love in the work of conversion and enlightenment, enduring the hardships and sufferings that he encounters in the course of his ministry, for “his reward is great in Heaven!” But woe to him who is called and appointed to tell the good news, and who does not tell it! And woe still more to him who, after traveling over land and seas to convert men, makes those he has converted into sons of Gehenna,⁴³ worse than himself!

And so you, O priest, are now appointed to a work for which you shall *either* “enter into the joy of the Lord,” as a good and faithful servant, *or* receive condemnation as a false, wicked, and slothful servant. And may the Lord preserve you from the latter fate and grant you the will and the strength to compass the former! When you find yourself in the place of your ministry, your duties shall be many and peculiar: first spiritual, as a celebrant at the altar and preacher of the word of God; second temporal, as a member of a well-ordered community's government. And I therefore offer you, for your guidance, a few instructions bearing on both classes of duties. [...]

1) The first and most efficient preparation is *prayer*, which alone can open the spring of highest teaching and bring a blessing down on every good beginning and work. Therefore always—and especially before addressing those whom you wish to illumine with the light of truth—turn toward God in ardent prayer.

2) Cultivate always a modest and lowly spirit, and do not presumptuously promise yourself extraordinary or certain success in your labors. Such expectations proceed from pride, and grace is not granted to the proud. Remember always that the conversion of a sinner or a heathen to the right path comes not from us or from our skill, but directly and solely from God. If it be his pleasure to convert anybody, then the simplest words (so they be full of the truth) from the lips of a

43. *Gehenna*—Hell.

simple reader will touch the hearer's heart and sink deep into it, and bear fruit in due time. If it be not his pleasure: the most convincing words from the lips of the greatest orator will have no saving effect. For we all, from the first to the last, are nothing but tools in the hands of God. [...]

5) Remember always that if the preacher does not have within himself *love* for his work and for those to whom he is preaching, the very best and most eloquent expounding of the doctrine may remain absolutely without effect, for love alone creates; therefore strive to cultivate within yourself the spirit of holy love.

6) Make it a rule when you visit remote localities (where the foundations of Christianity have already been laid) not to begin any service, or to administer any sacrament, without first giving at least some brief instruction to those you visit.

7) You should naturally begin to preach the word of God where you have your permanent residence. But should circumstances compel you or opportunity induce you to visit remoter places, then, even though you have not yet accomplished much among those who live in your own vicinity, do not miss a chance of going anywhere, and be ready to teach in any place to anybody, according to age, condition, and time. [...]

9) At first, while still ignorant of the natives' language, you should employ an interpreter to translate your words for them. Take care to select for the post a man from among the most pious and well-intentioned, and instruct him in good time in the catechism. It will be best always to employ the same interpreter. [...]

10) Christianity is a need and a comfort that appeals principally to the heart—not to the mind alone—and therefore, when instructing in the faith, the teacher should aim at acting more on the heart than on the mind. The mind's curiosity is insatiable; but he who feels in his heart the craving for faith, who tastes its comfort—he will receive it quickly and with ease, and it will not remain barren of fruits within him. [...]

11) Methods of instruction vary according to the state of mind, age, and faculties of those to be instructed. Bear in mind, with regard to this, that those with whom you should have to deal are, in manners and ideas, heathens and erring, and, in grade of culture, children. The method and order of instruction in the saving truths should be adapted to these facts.

12) The order of instruction should conform to what Providence itself shows us. The law of Moses was given earlier than the law of the Gospel; and even before the written law of Moses, the unwritten natural law was known, and the author of it—God Almighty, the creator. Just before the law of Moses, solemn signs were manifested of God's power, almightiness, and glory.

Keeping in view this great and universal model, order your small and individual work as follows:

a) Starting from the existence and harmony of visible things, demonstrate the existence (which none of those people appear to doubt), the almightiness, the power, and the glory of the creator of the universe, his goodness, his knowledge of all things, etc. At the same time, tell them the story of the creation of the first man and of his being the progenitor of all men and people, who, in this respect, are living monuments and visible proofs of the creator's supreme power and wisdom. Then explain how man consists of soul and body, the ways he differs from other animate beings, how he is possessed of an immortal spirit, and indicate God's intent in creating man, i.e., blessedness.

b) Further, show them that the moral law of Moses is the divinely written, natural law—the means toward achieving blessedness; do all this simply and concisely.

Note. When speaking of the law, you will surely hear from the crudest savages things confirming that law, which is graven indelibly on the tablets of every human heart. Thus, for instance, who does not know that a man should honor his parents, that he should not steal, kill, etc.?! Try to arouse this feeling in them, and use it for your purpose.

c) When your hearers have become convinced of God's existence and the law, then (but not before) show them that it is necessary to observe the law as being the will of God, and the visible consequences of not observing it and breaking it. Illustrate this with a brief narrative of the deluge⁴⁴—the tradition of it, though confused, exists among savage races—as a consequence of not keeping the law of God. Tell them of the blessing bestowed by God on the patriarchs after the deluge, and especially on

44. *deluge*—the great flood recounted in Genesis 6–10. Many cultures have similar tales of a great flood.

Abraham (whose descendants exist to this day)—as the consequence of keeping the law.

d) Only now begin the evangelical instruction proper, in the way that Jesus Christ himself began it, i.e., by announcing repentance and consolation, and the approach of the kingdom of Heaven. Try to lead them to a feeling of repentance or of something nearly akin to it. This can be accomplished by convincing them that they will inevitably be punished for disregarding the law written within their hearts, in this life and the next, or if not in this life, so much more heavily, and for all eternity, in the next; that no one can, of his own power, escape these punishments, etc.

Here you should shape your speech so as to arouse in them a certain dread of the future; and when you have brought them to this frame of mind, then announce to them Jesus Christ, the savior, redeemer, and hope of all men, to give them comfort.

Note. Bringing souls to a state of repentance and contrition is one of the preacher's most difficult tasks. But this condition is one of the most important factors in the work of conversion; it is like plowed-up soil, ready to receive the seed of Christianity, which then can sink into the very depth of the heart, and, with the later assistance of grace, bear abundant fruit.

When you announce the Savior to a sinner who feels guilty before the law, you suddenly and without any persuasion implant in him the love of this savior, whom he does not yet know. And one who has learned to love Christ in this manner will love him all the more when he does know him, and will believe all that he said and all that you will say about him. It will then be easy for you to preach to unfold all the mysteries of our salvation, and for those who listen to you in such a disposition of mind to receive them.

e) Having demonstrated the necessity of redeeming the human race and having shown the greatness of God's love toward men, you should tell of the coming into the world of the promised redeemer—of his birth before the ages from the Father (this will be the time and place to touch on the mystery of the Holy Trinity); of the incarnation, nativity, and earthly life of Jesus Christ; of his teaching, sufferings, and death; of the resurrection of the dead (in which all American savages believe in their own peculiar way); of

the future life, and the retribution to be dealt to the good and the wicked, according to their deeds.

f) Finally you should tell them that Jesus Christ during his life on earth had many disciples, out of whom he chose twelve, imparting to them a special grace and power, and whom he sent forth into the world, to preach the Gospel to all creation. Tell them how all that these chosen ones taught—and all that Jesus commanded—is recorded in their writings, which have come down to us, and which are known to nearly all the nations of the earth, and how all good and simple-minded men who have heard their teachings have received them with joy and have followed—and are following—in his steps. Tell them that such men are usually called Christians, and that those among them who have strictly kept the commandments of Jesus Christ have become saints, and the bodies of many among them have reposed these many centuries exempt from corruption, etc.

After this (and on no account before), you may make them an offer, and ask them whether they should like to join those who believe in Jesus Christ and hope to obtain through him eternal salvation, blessedness, etc. This instruction will be sufficient at first for those who have not before heard the word of saving truth. [...]

14) When you see that your listeners have understood you, and when they express a wish to be counted among the flock of Christ, then tell them (a) of the conditions under which they may be admitted among the faithful; (b) of holy baptism as the mystic means of regeneration through water and the Spirit, which opens the new Christian life, and of the other sacraments as the means of receiving the grace of Jesus Christ; and (c) of the manner after which those should live who aim to be true Christians and, consequently, at obtaining all the fruits of salvation.

a) The conditions under which one who wants to become a disciple of Jesus Christ may be admitted are the following: (1) he must renounce his former creed, give up shamanism, and not listen to the shamans; (2) he must not observe any customs contrary to Christianity; (3) he must agree to perform all things demanded of him by the new law and the church; and (4) he must confess his sins.

b) Those who are willing and desire to fulfill all the above conditions must be told that entering the Christian fold is a great

and important act, which must be performed solemnly, the neophyte renouncing in the presence of witnesses all that is opposed to Christianity, pledging himself to be a disciple of Christ, and confirming all this by receiving holy baptism, which is at once the visible token of having entered the community of Christians, the means of purifying the soul from sins, and the door for the reception of the other gifts, or means for imparting the grace of God—in other words, the sacraments of holy church, which should here be explained.

This also is the time for explaining the importance and dignity of the holy cross and the virtue of the sign of the cross; also the reason for the reverence the church pays to the holy icons, and her beneficent intent in so doing.

Note. In speaking of icons, it might be advisable to mention, among other things, that, for the unlettered, they supply the place of books, etc.

c) Regarding the *instruction* about *how a Christian should conduct himself*, it is best not to go into too much detail at first, but merely say that *whoever wants to be a true Christian*, i.e., a disciple of Jesus Christ, and to profit by all the gifts the redemption has brought to man, should (1) with faith, hope, and love give himself up to Jesus Christ; and (2) imitate him in all things, i.e., try as far as possible to always act as he acted. Here Christ's virtues as described in the Gospel should be touched on briefly so the neophyte may understand exactly how he ought to act.

Note. For instance: Jesus Christ forgave his enemies, and we should do likewise. [...]

17) The dogmas of the faith and the substance of actual doctrine should be kept so strictly as not to allow anything contrary to them in word or deed, though in the face of death itself. But some allowance should be made for new converts regarding certain imperfections in the rites, partly in consideration of local conditions, and partly in expectation of them growing firmer in the faith and the new mode of life.

18) The nature of those countries makes it almost impossible for the inhabitants to observe the fasts after the usual manner, i.e., by changing a diet of animal flesh to a wholly vegetable diet, and *their fasting can more conveniently modify not so much the quality as the quantity of the food and the time of taking it*. Therefore they should not be compelled to observe the fasts by change of diet; but, in the first place, the object of

the institution of fasts should be explained to them, and the good of it; then, as their conviction and zeal increase, they should be led to observe the fasts on certain days in this manner: that they should, according to circumstances, diminish the quantity of the food they take and not take any in the early hours of the day. Regarding the holy week and especially the last days before Easter Sunday, all converts should be urged to spend them in the utmost self-mortification, bodily and spiritually, in memory of the passion suffered by Jesus Christ for our salvation.

19) Attendance at ordinary services, with the exception of the liturgy, should not be made an absolute duty. Hence, in the course of your travels in the remoter locales, when those you visit are bound to confess and receive the sacrament, you must not make it absolutely incumbent on them to go to church during a whole week, as is customary with us, but only so much as circumstances will permit. [...]

20) With regard to the celebration of marriages, departures from the strictness of existing rules can be permitted only for the most cogent reasons and in cases of extreme necessity; and in what these departures may consist, that will be specified in special instructions given to you. In view of the scantiness of local populations (recalling the patriarchal times) it is not advisable to extend too much the forbidden degrees of relationships. Still, the prohibitions recorded in this matter in Leviticus (chapter 18)⁴⁵ should be unswervingly kept in view.

21) Ancient customs, so long as they are not contrary to Christianity, need not be too abruptly broken up; but it should be explained to converts that [these customs] are merely tolerated.

22) Natives who have not received holy baptism—unless there is reason to fear that they may in some way commit sacrilege or violate decorum—should not be forbidden from being present at our services such as vespers, matins, or *Te Deums* if they wish; in fact they should be invited to attend. Regarding the liturgy: it is against church rules to allow their presence at *the Liturgy of the Faithful*.⁴⁶ Still, since the envoys of St. Vladimir in Constantinople were permitted, though they were heathens, to remain during the entire liturgy (to the unspeakable benefit of all Russia), you also may grant the same favor [to the natives] in

45. *Leviticus (chapter 18)*—Leviticus 18:6–23 exhorts against incest, homosexuality, and sexual intercourse during a woman's menstrual cycle.

46. *Liturgy of the Faithful*—the liturgy.

the hope that the sacred act may have a salutary effect on hearts as yet unenlightened.

23) No matrimonial unions or contracts entered into before baptism must be considered as hindrances to the administration of the sacrament. And no marriages contracted before baptism (with the exception of incestuous ones that can scarcely occur at all) should annulled or investigated.

24) Neophytes must be given no presents before, during, or soon after baptism, nor must the sponsors be allowed to give them any, so that an expectation of gifts may not serve as an inducement or suggest various cunning devices. Therefore nothing must be given at baptism: neither shirts nor anything else, except the small crosses they are to wear.

25) On the holy antimins⁴⁷ you are empowered to celebrate the liturgy in any place whatever—in a clean dwelling or under the open sky. But for many reasons it is preferable to have a special tent for this purpose, which should be pitched in places as clean as possible. And on such places the natives should be persuaded to erect crosses, which may later serve as landmarks to show where the bloodless sacrifice has been offered, and which will also consecrate the place so people may assemble there for common prayer in your absence. [...]

28) You should not employ any proofs not confirmed by Holy Writ in support of instruction in the faith and in Christian law. Nor even less should you employ false miracles or invented revelations, under penalty of the severest censure. But, if the Lord manifests his power in any place, either by some miraculous cure or by some extraordinary revelation, you should not conceal such divine manifestations, but, after instituting a proper and most impartial investigation, you should report the matter to us with all possible proofs.

29) You should on no account attempt to increase the number of those who receive holy baptism by any measures or means inconsistent with the evangelical spirit or unbecoming a preacher, such as compulsion, threats, bribes, or promises (of exemption from taxes and the

47. *antimin*—a rectangular piece of cloth, which sits on the altar, usually decorated with pictures of the evangelists, the burial of Christ, and scriptural passages about the last supper. Here Innokenty permits priests to celebrate the Eucharist anywhere, even in places without an altar, so long as they bring an antimen.

like), or by any vain allurements. You should always act with apostolic sincerity.

30) You should not administer holy baptism to the natives before they have been thoroughly instructed by you in the above-named matters or before they have expressed a wish to receive it.

31) On arriving in some settlement of savages, you should on no account say that you were sent by any government, nor portray yourself as some kind of official functionary. Rather, appear in the guise of a poor wanderer—a sincere well-wisher to his fellow men—who has come for the single purpose of showing them the means to attain prosperity and, as far as possible, guiding them in their quest. [...]

33) On no account show open contempt for their manner of living, customs, etc., no matter how much they may appear to deserve it, for nothing insults and irritates savages so much as showing them open contempt and making fun of them and anything belonging to them.

34) From your first interview with the natives, do your best to win their confidence and friendly regard, not by gifts or flattery, but by wise kindness, by constant readiness to help in every way, by good and sensible advice and sincerity. For who will open his heart to you unless he trusts you?

35) In giving instruction and talking with natives generally, be gentle, pleasant, simple, and in no way assume an overbearing, didactic manner, for by so doing you can seriously jeopardize the success of your labors.

36) When a native speaks to you, hear him out attentively, courteously, and patiently, and answer questions convincingly, carefully, and kindly; for any question asked by a native on spiritual subjects is a matter of great importance to the preacher, since it may be an indication both of the state of the questioner's soul and of his capacity, as well as of his desire, to learn. But failing to answer him even once, or by answering in a way in which he can take offense, he may be silenced forever.

37) Those who show no wish to receive holy baptism, even after repeated persuasion, should not in any way be vexed, or, especially, coerced. And although justice demands that those ready to become converts should be treated with greater kindness and consideration, still you, as preacher of the Gospel, should not be insulting in how you treat those who have no disposition to listen to instruction. Instead,

you should be friendly in your intercourse with them. This will be to them the best proof that you really and truly wish them well.

38) Among some savage tribes in those parts, you will encounter polygamy, but only among the rich and powerful. Therefore, while striving to incline them to monogamy, proceed with caution and tact, never in a masterful spirit, but in ways that do not anger or embitter them.

39) From new converts or neophytes you should not on any account whatsoever demand contributions or donations for the church or for any good work. Yet you should not refuse—but rather kindly accept—gifts from people who voluntarily offer anything, taking care, however, to explain on each occasion the use to which the object will be put, so the natives will not believe that God, like their own spirits, demands offerings, or that such gifts are expiatory or propitiatory sacrifices or the like. [...]

41) On no account should you require presents or contributions from any new converts or any natives; *nor should you enter into any commercial transactions with them, either personally or through third parties*, under penalty of severest censure. You should even receive food only in cases of absolute necessity and without payment, or if it is offered spontaneously at the hospitable board. [...]

43) In order to be of the greatest possible service to your parishioners, you should quickly learn at least as much of their language as you need to understand them. But the acolyte who is with you as your assistant must regard it as his bound duty to study the language thoroughly, and you must see that he does.

44) Make it your business to learn everything about the religion, rites, customs, tastes, disposition, and all that make up the life of your parishioners, especially to be able to easily and surely influence them.

Note. It is important for your success that you do justice to any good customs they may have.

45) During your visits and residence in this or that locale, give the natives, as far as time will permit, advice and directions for improving their manner of living, avoiding, however, anything like coercion, and taking care not to give offense in any way—all in a friendly, open-hearted spirit. The advice and directions should be adapted to the local conditions and the simplicity of their manners.

46) Do not meddle with any temporal affairs, and do not, either openly or by secret insinuation, discredit in their eyes any of the authorities placed over them either by the government or by their own

choice; for Jesus Christ himself, while he dwelt on earth, insulted no existing powers and touched nobody's rights of property. But should the actions of an official and his treatment of the natives be too cruel and unbearable, exhort him at first in all gentleness and friendliness; then, should this prove inefficient, report the matter confidentially to us, with every detail and in all fairness or, in case of our absence, to the dean of the district, who will bring it before the higher authority.

47) In all matters exceeding your powers, you should apply to us, and of any scruples or misunderstandings that may arise, you should write to us, officially or confidentially, according to circumstances.

48) Judging from the gentle temper of many of the natives of the American coastland, it would seem that, if your conduct be peaceable becoming a preacher of the Gospel, no attacks or attempts against life should to be expected. Yet if your life—against all expectation—be endangered in any way, you should have recourse to the last and decisive measures for your defense only in a case of absolute extremity. But you will be blessed a hundred times if you are found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. [...]

51) Wherever possible or convenient, try to start a primary school for instructing children in the catechism, reading, etc. Follow the model of those ordered by imperial decree to be organized in monasteries and in connection with churches. Should it not be possible to organize schools on these principles, then at least assemble once or twice a week in your own dwelling or in the chapel the children of both sexes, first those of resident Russians and half-breeds, then those of new converts. Instruct them in their duties to God, their parents, the authorities, to each other, and to their neighbors. You may employ your acolytes to assist you in teaching the children to read and write. [...]

Bear in mind that you are in a position to receive greater rewards—more promptly than many others—both heavenly in the future, and temporally in the present. The heavenly rewards are in the hands of the great distributor of needs, who will constantly consider you and your actions, your intentions, and the spirit in which you act. Regarding temporal rewards, notice will be taken of the number of converts you make; but still more notice will be taken of the zeal and ardor you bring to your labors. Notice will also be taken of any translation you make of scriptures into the language of your parishioners, and of your efforts to teach them to read the portions thus translated. And if you succeed with at least fifty pupils, this will be considered as suffi-

cient proof of your zeal, and as a merit deserving of the highest rewards open to the clergy.

Strive to stand before God, a laborer unashamed, righteously administering the word of truth. Devote yourself to your teaching and abide therein—and by doing thusly, you will save both yourself and those listen to you.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Innokenty

Archbishop of Kamchatka, of the Kuril and Aleutian Islands

31. New Theological Controversy: The Imiaslavtsy

In 1907 a septuagenarian Russian monk named Ilarion, who lived on Mount Athos before becoming a hermit in the Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia, published a book “to express all the need, importance, and necessity of practicing the Jesus Prayer in the matter of eternal salvation for every person.”¹ This book and reactions to it launched a chain of increasingly tragic events over the next seven years, which together indicate that a number of challenges facing Eastern Orthodoxy for centuries were still alive and well at the beginning of the 1900s: differing conceptions about what constitutes heresy; disagreements about the role leaders can or should play in limiting theological discourse; long-standing ethnic tensions between Greeks and Russians; and enmity between church leaders and rank-and-file monks. The documents reproduced here also illustrate that—no matter how conservative and wary of change was Orthodox theology—it was never fully static. One never knew

1. Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 23–24. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra. Dykstra’s study is by far the best on the *imiaslavtsy*. All but two of the texts below, as well as most observations in this introduction, derive from his work.

what issue might raise uncomfortable questions for which no ready answers existed.

31.1 Ilarion, *In the Caucasus Mountains* (1907)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 24-27. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

In the book that started it all, *Na Gorakh Kavkaza (In the Caucasus Mountains)*, Father Ilarion wrote as a fictional anchorite conversing at length with a fictional hermit in a remote region of the Caucasus. This hermit dispensed advice to the anchorite, including well-established arguments for practicing the Jesus Prayer. What was unusual about the conversation, however, was the degree to which the hermit emphasized the mystical relationship between the divine name of Jesus and the person of Jesus himself. The hermit explains this relationship in the following excerpt.



Figure, 151. Ilarion, n.d.

[...] The name “Jesus” means savior, and he is so close to the human race, needed by it, and constitutes such exceptional necessity for it, that without him it is not even possible to think of our salvation. [...] In all prayers rising from earth to Heaven he is the mediator, intercessor, and reconciler; only by him and through him do our prayers receive

power and do we have access to the heavenly Father and to the throne of grace. [...]

If this name is not God then why does it possess omnipotent power that produces great and glorious works, even independently of the holiness of life of those who pronounce it? This, by the way, can be seen from the words of the Lord, “many will say to me in that day: ‘Did we not prophecy in your name and by your name cast out demons and by your name worked miracles?’ And then I will tell them: ‘I never knew you; depart from me all workers of iniquity.’” In these words is found a new proof, having all power of indisputable persuasiveness, that in the name of Jesus Christ, God’s omnipotent power is present and therefore this very name is God himself. [...]

[...] For the believer who loves the Lord and always prays to him, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is as it were he himself, our divine savior. And this great truth is really sensed best of all when one practices the Jesus Prayer of mind and heart. In the practice of the Jesus Prayer of mind and heart, done in a repentant attitude of soul and in deep contrition, with your heart’s feeling you really hear and perceive that Jesus Christ’s name is he himself our divine savior Jesus Christ, and it is impossible to separate the name from the person named. Rather, they merge into identity and interpenetrate one another and are one. [...]

With time and from long practice [my recitation of the Jesus Prayer] began to contract and finally stopped on the three words “Lord Jesus Christ.” It became impossible to pronounce more than this; all was superfluous and somehow wouldn’t fit into the system of internal feeling. But what an inexpressible, purely heavenly, sweet feeling in the heart, unattainable by any of the people of this world! These three divine words as it were became incarnate, became clothed in divinity; in them vitally, essentially, and actively was heard the presence of the Lord himself, Jesus Christ. For the sake of this [prayer] I decisively left every other spiritual exercise, whatever it might have been: reading and standing and prostrations and psalm singing. It constitutes my service both day and night. In whatever situation I find myself—walking, sitting, and lying—I only diligently try to carry in my heart the sweetest name of the Savior; even often just two words: “Jesus Christ.”

31.3 Antony Bulatovich Defends Ilarion's Book (1912)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 54-55. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

The abbot of the Russian Skete of St. Andrei on Mount Athos turned Ilarion's book over to Father Antony Bulatovich, an extraordinary monk who, before becoming tonsured, had served in an elite, aristocratic regiment of the Russian army. Father Antony read the book in 1909 and found himself utterly won over. He described his conversion to the new doctrine a few years later.



Figure 152. Antony Bulatovich, n.d.

[...] I decided at first to write a letter to Father Ilarion, in which I protested against this expression “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord Jesus Christ himself”—since for my mind, also somewhat poisoned by rationalism and lacking in fear and respect for the word and name of God, it seemed scandalous that in some way the name pronounced by my lips, thought by my mind, could be God himself. “Isn’t such an assertion by Father Ilarion a divinization of creation,” I thought

to myself. [...] But when I wrote this letter, then a certain special heaviness of heart fell on me, and a certain endless emptiness, coldness, and darkness possessed my heart. [...] I suffered, but didn't understand the reason for this suffering, and didn't suspect that it was due to my denying the divinity of the name of the Lord. Apparently I too was about to irreversibly renounce the name of the Lord as had Khrisanf [...] and the other intelligentsia and half-intelligentsia on Athos from Russia, if the prayers of my unforgotten spiritual Father John of Kronstadt² hadn't saved me. [...]

[...] [Opening one of Kronstadt's books] I saw before my eyes the following words: "When you say to yourself in your heart or pronounce the name of God, of the Lord, of the Holy Trinity, of the Lord of Sabbath, or of the Lord Jesus Christ, then in this name you have the whole essence of the Lord: in it is his endless goodness, infinite wisdom, unapproachable light [etc.] [...] That is why God's commandment so sternly forbids taking God's name in vain, i.e., because his name is he himself—one God in three persons, a simple essence, represented in one word and at the same time not contained, i.e., not limited, by it or by anything that exists. The great names: Holy Trinity; or Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Word; and Holy Spirit; invoked with living, heartfelt faith and reverence, or imagined in the soul, are God himself and bring into our soul God himself in three persons." [...]

I was amazed, crossed myself, and, thanking God for granting understanding, immediately tore up my letter to Father Ilarion condemning the work and burned it. And right away that inconsolable heaviness of heart that had burdened me after writing the letter went away, and I returned to my former spiritual condition. [...]

2. *John of Kronstadt*—a popular Russian writer and preacher (1829–1908). Several "name-worshippers" argued that support for their position could be found in Father John's writings.

31.2 Review of Ilarion's Book (1907)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 35-38. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra. Although written in 1907, the review was not published until 1912.

The sister-in-law of Tsar Nicholas II (1894-1917) was so impressed by *In the Caucasus Mountains* that she offered to finance its publication through a monastery she supported. The ecclesiastical censor approved the text, and the book went to press in 1907. Copies arrived on Mount Athos the same year. After reading the book, a Greek monk named Father Khrisanf wrote a scathing review, which he copied and sent to Russian communities on Athos.

[...] [Ilarion] personalizes the nominal, immaterial “name Jesus” into the living and very highest essence of God. Such a thought is pantheistic, i.e., merging the essence of God with something located outside his essence. Such thoughts as Father Ilarion has expressed are not found in any writings of the holy fathers, and this is some kind of new teaching, fantastic and filled with vagueness and full of obscurity. See to what extremes conceit leads! [...]

If the inanimate names in the Jesus Prayer were incarnated into the very essence of divinity, then they always and everywhere would have living and effective power [...] However these names only have power in the prayer of pious people. [...]

[When] we think of some beloved person, then in our mind he himself is represented in his image and with his virtues, but not only in his name alone. His name only reminds us that it is specifically he and not someone else, and after all we love him not for his name but for his virtues or for a close relationship with him. [...]

[It is impossible] to merge this human name [Jesus] with divinity, when the very human nature taken up by the Son of God may not be merged with his divine nature and it only unites in his one person, while whoever merges them—then this constitutes a terrible heresy according to the conclusion of the ecumenical council. So much more is it impermissible to merge the name Jesus, which applies to the human nature of the God-man, with his divine nature. To attribute that

which is characteristic and proper only of the divine nature to that which does not have this nature—this is beyond foolishness and impiety!

31.4 Father Ilarion's Defense (ca. 1912)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 45-46. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

Into the controversy stepped Archbishop Antony Khrapovitsky, a member of the Russian Holy Synod and one of the most powerful figures in the Russian church. In 1912 Archbishop Antony decided to publish Father Khrisanf's condemnation of Ilarion's book in *Russkii Inok* (*The Russian Monk*), a journal to which all Russian monasteries subscribed. In the words of Tom Dykstra, "suddenly a controversy that until then had been the subject of private discussion and argument in relatively limited circles was spread to every Russian monk who could read or knew someone who could." Father Ilarion wrote Archbishop Antony a letter defending his work. Antony refused to print the letter, a decision he explained as follows in a later issue of *Russkii Inok*.



Figure 153. Archbishop Antony, n.d.

The author's defense is not at all substantial: he writes about the usefulness of the Jesus Prayer, but this doesn't touch upon his divinizing the name Jesus. He writes about the holiness of God's names, but this speaks against an exceptional power of the name Jesus [...]. The very name Jesus is not God, for J[esus] Nave³ and Jesus the son of Sirach and High Priest Jesus the son of Josedek were also named Jesus. Are they really also gods?

3. *J. Nave*—the early church fathers sometimes referred to the book of Joshua as “Jesus Nave.”

31.5 Antony Bulatovich Defends Ilarion (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 71-72. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

When issues of *Russkii Inok* that contained Antony Khrapovitsky's condemnation of Father Ilarion's book arrived on Mount Athos, Father Antony Bulatovich decided to mount a defense. He wrote two articles: one he copied and sent to monasteries on Mount Athos; the second he published in a journal run by the Skete of St. Andrei, his residence on Athos. Archbishop Antony Khrapovitsky grew livid that the skete would publish an article defending Ilarion. Becoming ever more committed to Ilarion and upset with Archbishop Antony Khrapovitsky (who, some warned, might rise to the rank of metropolitan and retaliate against the skete for publishing Bulatovich's article), Bulatovich authored an entire book on the subject: *Apologiia very (An Apology for the Faith)*.

In order to turn to God, the one who prays must necessarily imagine in his mind some designation of the characteristics of God, i.e., some name of God, as for instance: either "good one" or "awesome one" or "great one" or "our savior" or "our creator" or "sweetest Jesus" or "he who commanded to us to ask for everything from him and to believe in the fulfillment of the request" or "he who forbade under fear of eternal punishment that sin that I did." These are all designations or names of God held in the mind of the one praying, according to which he guides the words of prayer. Just so it is necessary for the person to hold in his consciousness also a certain designation of his own or a name, as for instance, that I am powerless, unhappy, or sinful, or that I have been blessed by God, or that I am a Son of God by grace, or that I am dust and ashes. [...]

Is it even possible to think anything about God that would not at the same time be a depiction of his name? Are not all the nameable characteristics of God his name? Is not the remembrance of all the deeds of God contemplation of his characteristics? Are not God's wisdom, goodness, and truth contemplated in all his words? No matter

where you direct your eye—to scripture, to miracles, to his words or to his deeds—everywhere you will inevitably contemplate his name, and in the whole Gospel and in the whole history of our redemption by God the Word you will read the name “Jesus”—“God the Redeemer.”
[...]

31.6 Proofs that the Name of Jesus Is God (ca. 1913)

“Dokazatel’stva o tom, chto Imia Iisusa Khrista est Bog,” in *Zabytye stranitsy russkogo imiaslaviia: Sbornik dokumentov i publikatsii po afonskim sobytiiam 1910–1913 gg. i dvizheniiu imiaslaviia v 1910–1918 gg.*, ed. A. M. Khitrov and O. L. Somomina, (Moskva: Palomnik, 2001), 20–21. Public domain. Translated by Bryn Geffert. CC BY-SA.

Few of the “name-worshippers” on Mount Athos were well-educated or articulate thinkers. Indeed, most of the monks who defended Ilarion’s ideas possessed only the most basic, formal schooling. Many were illiterate. The *imiaslavtsy’s* opponents accused them of shoddy reasoning, a lack of theological acuity, and gross ignorance. These accusations often possessed a good deal of merit. An anonymous monk authored the following document: confused and largely nonsensical, it provides some credence for the accusers’ allegations.

Proofs that the name of Jesus Christ is God can be drawn from the book *A Commentary on the Acts of the Holy Apostles*, by Filofilakt, the archbishop of Bulgaria (p. 66). St. Peter the apostle says, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.” These words do not contradict the following words: “Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19), because the church conceives of the Holy Trinity as indivisible. And as a result of the three hypostases, to be baptized in the name of Christ is, in essence, to be baptized in the Trinity, since the Father and Son and Holy Spirit are, in essence, indivisible. If the name of the Father were not God, and the name of the Son were not God, and the name of the Holy Spirit were not God, it follows that we would say: “In the name of God Jesus Christ,” or, even, simply, “in the Son.” [The Apostle Peter] says: “In the name of Jesus Christ,” knowing that the name of Jesus is God, just as both the name of the Father and the name of the Holy Spirit admit the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he revealed that the gift of Christ is the “gift of the Holy Spirit—one and the same gift, since they have the same merit.”

Worshipper! The name of God—or the Mother of God, or an angel, or a saint—will, at the same time be orally the very same God, Mother of God, angel, and saint; the nearness of your Word to the word of your heart will indeed be a pledge and evidence of the closeness of God himself, the sinless, the virgin, an angel, or a saint. The name of God is God himself—the Spirit is everywhere and infused in everything—the name of the Mother of God is the Mother of God herself, the name of an angel is the angel itself, the saint—*itself*. How can this be? Do you not understand? It's like this: Say we decide to call you Ivan Ilich. If we call you by this name, then you recognize yourself in it and respond to it; you yourself with spirit and body are simply holy. Summoning their name, you summon them themselves. But, you say, they do not have bodies. So what? A body is only a physical shell for the soul—its home. A person—the essence of a person or his inner person—is the soul. When they call you by name your body does not respond; rather your soul responds with the aid of the corporeal organ. Thus the name of Holy God is God himself and holy. But since God is spirit, immortal and omnipresent, and all the saints sleep in God, thus communication through the prayer of faith with all the saints is a convenient thing and easier than communication with people living with us. For in intercourse with people when language is wrong or there is no language or one is embarrassed, as they say, to judge our speech, then listen and a simple, genuine voice of the believing and affectionate heart—there the compassion of language understands; there without language they see the soul and its condition and its desire.

The name of God is God himself. [...] He is one Word; in one thought is the entirety and in everywhere at the same time and in all creatures. Therefore, in summoning the name of God you summon God, the savior of believers and the sleeping. Everyone who calls on the name of God will be saved. [...] In the name of Jesus Christ is Christ—his soul and body, united with God.

31.7 Statement Signed by the Imiaslavstvo (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 83. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

As Archbishop Antony and Father Antony issued competing arguments, Russian monks on Mount Athos began to show ever more sympathy for Ilarion’s stance. Soon Jerome, the abbot of the Skete of St. Andrei, found himself at odds with his charges, who accused him of heresy for not supporting their views. In July 1913 the entire brotherhood of the skete called for his deposition and signed the following statement:

I the undersigned believe and confess that the name of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is holy by itself, is inseparable from God, and is God himself, as is confessed by many holy fathers. Blasphemers and despisers of the Lord’s name I reject as heretics, and therefore I request the removal of the abbot Jerome. [...]

31.8 Actions against Jerome's Supporters (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 93. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

The growing furor exacerbated tensions on Mount Athos between Greeks and Russians.

The Russians were among the last ethnic groups to arrive on Mount Athos. They at first enjoyed little political power on the peninsula, where Greeks controlled most of the monasteries. But Russian monks eventually became a majority in one of the Greek monasteries—the Rossikon or St. Panteleimon's—and installed a Russian abbot.

As Russians continued to arrive on Athos, they built two other large monasteries, St. Elijah and St. Andrei. By the 1800s Russians outnumbered Greeks on their home turf. Hence it is easy to understand the Russians' resentment of the fact that they—the largest ethnic group—enjoyed only one-twentieth of a vote in the peninsula's affairs. The Greeks, on the other hand, resented the Russians, worried that the giant power to the north was flooding their peninsula with foreigners. When Mount Athos gained its freedom from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, the Russians feared that the Greek government would use its new-found freedom to favor Greek monks on Mount Athos. "And so," notes Tom Dykstra, "Russo-Greek tensions on Athos were at an all-time high during the very period of the theological controversy."⁴

To make matters worse, the Russian Skete of St. Andrei—the center of *imiaslavstvo*—was subordinate to the Greek monastery of Vatopedi. The Russian *imiaslavtsy* at St. Andrei disliked their abbot, Jerome, and they demanded that he be deposed, a demand that required the Greeks' approval. The Greeks, however, refused. Undeterred, the *imiaslavtsy* deposed Jerome nevertheless. Jerome sent a complaint to the Greeks at Vatopedi, accusing his flock of both rebellion and heresy. So now the Russian *imiaslavtsy* found themselves opposed not only by leaders in Moscow, but also by their long-resented Greek neighbors.

4. Dykstra., 86.

Russian monks at St. Andrei refused to permit a courier from the Vatopedi monastery to deliver a letter to Father Jerome, who still lived at St. Andrei (rather unhappily, we can imagine). In response, thirty to forty of Jerome's followers rushed to Jerome's cell. Father Antony Bulatovich then approached Jerome (now surrounded by loyalists) and asked him to abandon both his cell and his position as abbot. Jerome refused. A fistfight broke out. The *imiaslavtsy* soon overpowered Jerome's supporters and began dragging them out of the skete. One of Jerome's supporters described the scene as follows.

They began to drag out of this heap [of monks] one person at a time into the corridor, where the brotherhood stood in two lines, receiving the booty and passing [the Jeromites] on: one by the hair, another by the side and with a command, another they would beat for something to teach him a lesson. In this way they brought them to the stairs and then they let them down the stairs variously as each pleased: some went head first and some went feet first, counting the steps with the back of their heads. They led them to the church square, then ceremoniously took them by the hand and led them out the gate.

31.9 Conclusions of Investigating Commission (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 103-104. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

Jerome, now out of a job, appealed to the Russian embassy in Constantinople, thus turning a religious issue into a political issue. The Russian foreign ministry responded by instituting a “blockade” of the St. Andrei Skete: nobody could send mail to or from the skete. Any money addressed to the skete or to its members was diverted to Jerome. Authorities in Greek ports were told not to allow food or other supplies to reach the skete. When the skete dispatched two monks to purchase food in Constantinople, the monks were promptly arrested.

Jerome and officials at the Vatopedi monastery convinced the governing assembly of Mount Athos to excommunicate the skete’s entire brotherhood. Jerome and the assembly also wrote to the new patriarch of Constantinople, Germanos IV, asking him to investigate. Germanos commissioned a report from a committee of seven professors at the patriarchal theological school in Khalake. Germanos then summoned Father Antony Bulatovich before a church court in Constantinople (Antony could not comply because he had already left for Russia to defend himself there) and declared Jerome to be the skete’s rightful abbot. The *imiaslavtsy* reacted to this intervention by the Greek patriarch with dread, fearing that the Greeks intended to expel all Russians from the holy mountain.

It is superfluous to note that such a conclusion [i.e., that God’s name is God himself] agrees with the idea [the *imiaslavtsy*] formulated concerning the divine names as energies of God, but this very opinion, that the names themselves are energies of God, is newly-appeared and new-sounding, and their argument that every word of God as an energy of his is not only a giver of life and spirit but is itself spirit and itself life and thus itself God—this argument applied generally leads to conclusions (i.e., “the name of Jesus is God [...] every divine word in the

Gospel is God himself?) that, in spite of all their denials, smell of pantheism.

31.10 Response from *Kolokol* (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 110. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

The church hierarchy back in Russia also held a dim view of the *imiaslavtsy*. The journal *Kolokol*, published by a member of the Russian Holy Synod, took the *imiaslavtsy* and Father Antony Bulatovich to task.

In the foolish apology of Bulatovich [...] God doesn't have power over us but we, insignificant, sinful people, have power over him. We need only pronounce his name, even without faith, without reverence, "unconsciously," carelessly—and we will have him with all his characteristics [...] What a terrible, blasphemous teaching, lowering the omnipotent master of Heaven and earth to the level of an obedient tool of man [...] This is magic, transferred wholly from the dark realm of the divinely renounced sciences of wizardry into the dogmatics supposedly of the orthodox faith [...]

"All is sanctified by God's name" [they say], i.e., do any abominations you care to, any shameful acts you want to, but if during it you repeat the name of God all this "is sanctified"!!

31.11 Muratov's Review of Bulatovich's Book (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 112–113. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

Others in Russia showed more sympathy. Mitrofan Muratov, a professor at the Moscow Theological Academy, wrote the following laudatory though anonymous review of Antony Bulatovich's *Apologiya very* (*Apology for the Faith*).

[The book] breathes with the spirit of true monasticism, ancient, ascetic. The matter is, of course, not as simple as the reviewer of Ilarion's book sees it. In its roots the question about the Jesus Prayer and the name of the Savior extends to a primordial and not yet decided—more accurately—unfinished struggle of opposites: of idealism, or, what is the same thing, mysticism, on the one side—and nominalism, which is rationalism and materialism, on the other. [...] True Christianity and the church always stood on the ground of idealism in deciding all the questions of the faith's teachings and of life that have arisen. [...]

[...] [T]hose who mock the name Jesus, whether in their soul or by their lips or on notes, etc.—all the same—they know after all just what the name expresses and to whom it relates; consequently they necessarily mock also the Savior himself. Yes, and they cannot not know [this], and no sophisms can cleanse this mocking—only repentance. For this reason blasphemy against the Spirit is not forgiven, and for every, even idle, word a person will give account. And no one, speaking in the Holy Spirit, says: Jesus is anathema [...] They mocked the defenders of the name Jesus and of the Jesus Prayer, of course, by thoughtlessness, or to put it more truthfully, by a lack of true Christian feeling, which can always show to true Christians the true path among all temptations and misunderstandings. This is what we also see among the simple monks. [...]

31.12 Ivolgin's Response (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 114-115. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

Whatever the merits of the *imiaslavtsy's* arguments, a number of theologians frowned upon the Russian leaders' rush to judgment. An unknown S. Ivolgin wrote the following article in the St. Petersburg journal, *Novoe Vremia* (*New Time*), urging the Russian Holy Synod not to act hastily in condemning the *imiaslavtsy*.

[...] One must hope in the foresight of the Synod—that it will not want to create a conflagration. Everything is revealed and is formulated by degrees. There was a time when the book of [Aleksēi] Khomiakov⁵ was considered heretical and had to be printed beyond [Russia's] borders. But now the orthodox teaching about the church is based on it. The same thing is happening with the teaching about the divinity of the name of God. When the noise dies down its truth will become indisputable. [...]

As for the desire that “three companies of soldiers” would be brought to Athos to “lock up the scoundrels”—this would serve as the beginning of destruction for the Russian monasteries on Athos.

5. *Aleksēi Khomiakov*—the Russian lay theologian (1804–1860) whose work sometimes elicited accusations of unorthodox thought.

31.13 Archbishop Antony's Conclusions (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 121-124. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

Thanks in large part to Archbishop Antony Khrapovitsky's influence, the Russian Holy Synod condemned the *imiaslavtsy*. It ordered that the heads of monasteries hold special services to pray for those who had fallen into error and to remove all copies of *In the Caucasus Mountains* and *Apology for the Faith* from their monasteries, while threatening to deprive opponents of their priestly or monastic ranks.

Archbishop Antony Khrapovitsky also issued a personal attack in the *Tserkovnye Vedomosti* (*Church Gazette*), an official organ of the Russian church. Note that while Antony belittles the theological views of the name-worshippers, a central concern is the threat they posed to traditional church order and governance.

Oppressed by a multitude of people and papers, I deliberately secluded myself for four days at the St. Sergius Hermitage near Petersburg in order to compile a refutation of the stupid and ignorant book of Bulatovich, who himself doesn't believe a word of what he cluttered there. [...]

[Some were carried away] by blind zeal and stubbornness, others by laziness, sweetly foretasting that they would soon pass on to that level of perfection where they would not have to stand through church services or read any prayers at all, but just "carry in their heart the name of Jesus." [...]

All that was in our monasticism of disobedience, stubbornness, vainglory, and avarice was taken by this foolish dogma, and without a second thought rejoiced in the opportunity to reject authority and slander the higher powers, to grab the position of leadership, and to pilfer from the monastery bank.

Ilarion fell into the so-called "charm of startsy."⁶ Each has his own temptation: for the young it is lust, for the old it is avarice, for

6. *startsy*—plural of *starets*: a monastic elder or adviser who serves as a spiritual mentor. The term is often used (as it is here) to denote a relatively inde-

bishops it is pride and vainglory, and for startsy—to think up new rules to immortalize their memory in the monastery. [...] However, those who, like the starets Ilarion, think up new dogmas to immortalize their memory, sin far more. [...]

[Bulatovich], not believing what he is writing, but only wanting to have for himself a means for rebellion in the Athonite monasteries [...] this imitator of the new false teaching much more skillfully disseminates it than its originator, for he far exceeds him in cunning and in ability to deceive and intimidate simple-minded Russian monks. [...]

Alas, it is necessary to accept the fact that these fights and expulsions [at the Skete of St. Andrei] constituted the goal of Father Bulatovich in compiling his hypocritical book, full of obvious perversions of sacred words and deliberately false interpretations of them. [...]

[...] [Father Bulatovich asserts] that every word spoken on Tabor is God: does that mean both the word “listen” and the word “him” are God? [...] [T]he Lord [...] denounced the contemporary Jews, saying to them: “serpent, viper’s brood.” Does that mean that a serpent is God and a viper is God? According to Bulatovich this is definitely so; doubly so, since God created the serpent and the hedgehog and the rabbit they are actions of divinity—are all these wild animals consequently also God?

pendent figure whose personal wisdom is valued more than institutional traditions.

31.14 Nikon Reports from Mount Athos (1913)

Tom Dykstra, *Hallowed Be Thy Name: The Name-Glorifying Dispute in the Russian Orthodox Church and on Mt. Athos, 1912–1914* (St. Paul, MN: OCABS Press, 2013), 134-136. Used by permission of Tom Dykstra.

Shortly before the Russian Holy Synod issued its decision, it dispatched Archbishop Nikon Rozhdestvensky, a cleric lacking any higher education, to Mount Athos “to act upon the Russian monks ... in the sense of peace-making and subjecting them to church authority regarding the question of God’s name.” To show it meant business, the Synod arranged transportation for Nikon on a naval gunboat. Nikon arrived with a small delegation on 4 June at the Rossikon monastery. He described his reception as follows.

Below, on the dock and near the gates, were gathered about 150 to 200 Orthodox monks with their abbot, Archimandrite Misail,⁷ at the head. The others either stood at a distance, not wanting to receive a blessing from me, or did not come down from the terraces [and] were simply spectators of this meeting, which, I must admit, seemed to me far from “ceremonious.” [...]

Not entering into the details of this question, for the time was already late, I asked the listeners to direct special attention to the fact that [the question about the name of God] had already been examined thoroughly and in detail by church authority, [and] that it is not the business of monk-simpletons to delve into dogmatic investigations, which are anyway beyond the powers of their minds unprepared by science. Moreover the holy fathers forbid this to monks. And what is most important—to remember the command of the Savior about obedience to the church and to the divinely established pastors in order not to be subjected to judgment for disobedience and even excommunication from it. [...]

After lunch they rang the bell and the church filled up with monks. [...] A tight ring of “*imiaslavtsy*” surrounded me, but the consul had taken the precaution of placing sailors in front of me. There were ru-

7. *Archimandrite Misail*—the abbot the monks chose for themselves after deposing Jerome.

mors that the “*imiaslavtsy*” were threatening, “Let Nikon fall into their hands and then he’ll know what it means to revile the name of God.” [...] I appealed to common sense, noting that their teacher [Antony] Bulatovich considers all of the Word of God to be God, but after all, there are many human words there, for example the words of the fool “There is no God” [...] and about God’s creatures, like the worm: What?! Is all this God? The names of God, as words, only designate God, refer to him, but by themselves still are not God: the name “Jesus” is not God, the name “Christ” is not God. At these words [...] were heard cries of “Heretic! He teaches that Christ isn’t God!” [...] [T]hey kept on interrupting me with noises and shouts but I finished my reading and explanations anyway.[...] They shouted at me “Heretic! Crocodile from the sea! Seven-headed snake! Wolf in sheep’s clothing!”

31.15 Bulgakov's Reflections on the Affair (1913)

Sergei Bulgakov, "Afonskoe dielo," *Russkaia mysʹ* no. 9 (1913): 37–40. Public domain. Translated by Bryn Geffert. CC BY-SA.

Three days after Nikon's arrival a "rebellion" broke out when a member of Nikon's delegation threatened to imprison one of the monks on the gunboat. The monk fled to a church in the monastery, somebody rang an alarm bell, and other monks flocked to the church to support their brother. The delegation ordered military reinforcements: 123 Russian soldiers arrived on 13 June and took up positions around the monastery. On 29 June the delegation decided to inspect all the monks' passports, and in the process asked each monk to declare what he believed. Of about 1,700 monks, only about seven hundred claimed not to accept the name-worshipping "heresy."

The delegation decided to deport the heretics and summoned another naval vessel to serve as a prisoner transport. All those who refused to accept the Synod's condemnation were instructed to board.



Figure 154. Sergei Bulgakov, n.d.

Some four hundred monks instead fled to one of St. Panteleimon's dormitory buildings and barricaded the entrances with bed boards. Solders, armed with bayoneted rifles, surrounded the building. When the monks refused to come out, the soldiers turned fire hoses on them and began dragging them from the dormitory.

When it was all over, the Russian government had expelled by force more than eight hundred Russian monks from St. Panteleimon's and the Skete of St. Andrei. On board the ships the monks were treated as criminals—placed in locks and served prison rations. When they arrived in Odessa, police asked them to sign forms declaring they had left their monasteries voluntarily.

Russian intellectuals, whether or not they supported the *imiaslavtsy's* theology, expressed outrage over the government's treatment of the monks. The religious philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev angered government officials when he attacked the state's conduct in the affair. "I didn't have special sympathies for *imiaslavstvo*," he wrote, "but violence in spiritual life and the meanness and unspirituality of the Holy Synod upset me." The government confiscated the issue of the newspaper that printed Berdiaev's complaint. "I was placed under judgment according to a statute on blasphemy, the punishment for which was eternal exile in Siberia. My lawyer thought my case hopeless." In the September issue of *Russkaia mysl'* (*Russian Thought*), the theologian Sergei Bulgakov castigated Nikon for the state's response and suggested that Orthodoxy has no external, dogmatic authority.

In this final document Bulgakov argues forcefully for freedom of thought in the Orthodox Church, suggesting that such freedom is exactly what distinguishes Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism. Such a view won Bulgakov few friends among the Russian church hierarchy, and Bulgakov would find himself in trouble throughout his career for adopting positions that bishops and patriarchs interpreted as threatening to church discipline and their own prerogatives.

I don't propose to touch here on the factual aspects of the Athonite events that have played out this past year: while the press has

devoted no little attention to them, a reliable history cannot yet be written. Instead, I want to pause here for an elucidation of the significance of these events for the church. These events, after a centuries-old reprieve, again place before our consciousness a fundamental and burning question of Orthodoxy, namely the nature of the church and her dogmatic self-consciousness. Questions of dogmatic epistemology or dogmatic self-consciousness arise naturally in connection with the question of new dogma. What is to be done with infamous dogmatic teaching? Grant it objective, dogmatic significance? Grant it the stamp of catholicity? Of church truth?

As everyone knows, such questions are determined with geometrical clarity in the Roman Catholic Church thanks to the dogma of papal infallibility. *Roma locuta est*:⁸ this is the supreme criteria of church truth, and it settles questions absolutely. To put this idea in a negative form: the pope cannot *ex cathedra*⁹ be a heretic or fall into religious error. He is the living instrument of the Holy Spirit.

True, the term *ex cathedra* establishes a distinction between the ecclesiastical-administrative power of the pope—as the supreme pontiff, the bearer of the highest church power (Orthodoxy does not have such an individual, and therefore does not recognize any full parallel to that feature of papal power, although within the boundaries of local churches the patriarch and our Holy Synod correspond to it)—and his power *ex cathedra*. Not every act of the pope is invested with infallibility. In administrative orders the pope may err (for example, he may mistakenly enter a fully catholic book into the *Index librorum prohibitorum*).¹⁰ However, it does not follow that we can shut our eyes to the fact that potential infallibility establishes a halo sufficient to shield all papal actions. As a church administrator, the *ex cathedra* infallible pontiff has power whose nature is completely different from that in corresponding administrative organs in the Orthodox Church [...] [I]n Roman Catholicism dogmatic disagreements are possible only to the degree that Rome has not expressed an opinion. True Catholics are obliged to submit to an opinion expressed by the pope not only out of fear but also

8. *Roma locuta est*—“Rome has spoken.” Often a second clause is added: *causa finita est* (“the case is closed”).

9. *ex cathedra*—literally “from the chair.” In practice *ex cathedra* refers to decisions issued by the pope in his role as head of the church.

10. *Index librorum prohibitorum*—*Index of Prohibited Books*, a bibliography of works banned by the Roman Catholic Church.

according to their conscience. Dissidents must acknowledge themselves as mistaken. To take a particular example: a dogmatic dispute about worshipping the name of God would receive a decisive resolution. Condemned works would be removed not only from church establishments (monasteries, ecclesiastical schools and libraries, etc.), but also from the personal libraries of every Roman Catholic. Authors would be compelled to recognize themselves as being in error and to disavow their work.

It is an entirely different matter in Orthodoxy. There is no external dogmatic authority in Orthodoxy. Such authority does not appear either in the organs of the higher church administration or in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It does not even appear in so-called “ecumenical councils,” which in actuality only proclaim and assert dogma accepted by the entire body of the church. Although a council is a natural and essential means of establishing dogma, even it may not regard itself as a parliament with a decisive voice. [...] To quote a recognized authority on the question of the Orthodox Church, Aleksei Khomiakov believes that a “division of the church into a teaching church and a church of disciples—a division known to Catholicism as a fundamental principle” is contradicted by “the absence of [this principle] in the Orthodox Church in the same, decisive manner [...]” Eastern patriarchs gathering at a council with their bishops solemnly proclaimed in their reply to Pius IX¹¹ that “infallibility resides solely in the ecumenical church, united in mutual love, and that the dogma of the immutability of dogma as well as the purity of rites is entrusted to the protection not of one hierarch, but to all the people of the church, who are the body of Christ.” That formal declaration of the entire Eastern clergy, accepted by the Russian church with respect and brotherly gratitude, acquired the moral authority of ecumenical certification. That declaration is, indisputably, the most significant event in church history over many centuries.

In the true church there is no teaching church.

The entire church teaches; in other words, the church in its wholeness. The church does not recognize a teaching church in a separate sense.

This point of view is invariably advanced in polemics with papism. A. S. Khomiakov leans on it in part. In other words, it would be diffi-

11. *Pope Pius IX*—1846–1878, the pope who advocated for and won a declaration of papal infallibility at the first Vatican Council in 1870. Eastern patriarchs wrote a letter of protest to Pius.

cult to understand dogmatically, for example, the history of ecumenical councils, in which lay and ecclesiastical authorities, emperors and patriarchs sometimes embraced heresy. Truth found defenders in a very few, insignificant laymen and clerics (such as the deacon Athanasius). [...]

So how, fundamentally, can dogma be established? First of all, an external agency of ecumenical (“ecumenical” in the sense of geography) consciousness has been definitively lost in our time. For many centuries the church has been split into at least two parts—East and West—and each lives its own particular life. [...] Regarding new [theological] questions [...]: freedom for personal exploration—what is sometimes technically called “theological opinion” in Protestant dogma—remains until the coming of dogmatic ripeness and the settlement of questions in church consciousness. The freedom of Orthodoxy consists of that. Thanks to the absence of external, infallible authority, which could extinguish personal inquiry, dogmatic inquiry is possible while remaining faithful to the church and her accepted dogmas: *in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas*.¹² [...] The freedom of dogmatic inquiry is the living nerve center of Orthodoxy and its most holy palladium,¹³ which true sons of the church ought to establish zealously. Its fundamental negation would indeed be the death of the spirit. Of course in such aspirations there is always the danger of a deviation into heresy. However, such heresy stands as the currency of dogmatic life. “Indeed, there have to be heresies among you, for only so will it become clear who among you is genuine” (First Corinthians 11:19), writes the Apostle Paul, always uncompromising toward unyielding heresy.

[...] [W]e must recognize that Orthodoxy, through its members, is to be found (indeed, it must be found) in a constant process of searching dogmas [...]

12. *in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas*—“unity in necessary things; liberty in doubtful things.” This phrase, first used by the German Lutheran theologian Peter Meiderlin, suggested to many Orthodox theologians a particularly dangerous, relativist, and Protestant sensibility.

13. *palladium*—a safeguard or source of protection.

32. New Thinking and Church Reform

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

32.1 Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894)

Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Cassell, 1894). Public domain.

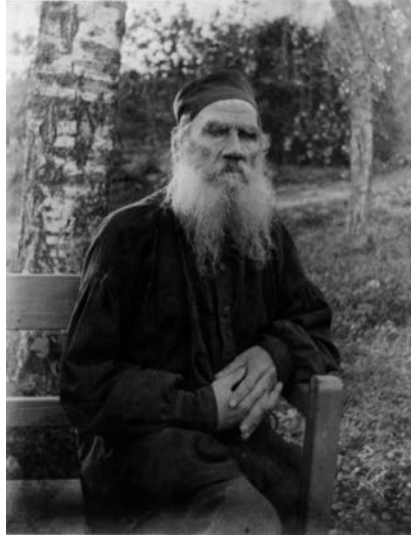


Figure 155. Leo Tolstoy, ca. 1897

Tolstoy faulted the Eastern Orthodox Church on numerous counts, claiming that it arrogantly styles itself as the one true church, promotes idolatry (iconography), subscribes to ludicrous beliefs such as the Virgin Birth, and endorses nationalism and war while ignoring Christ's commitment to non-violence.

Three years after his *Critique of Dogmatic Theology*, Tolstoy argued in *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* that the essence of Christianity is to be found not in the church, not in doctrine, not in institutions, formulas, or rituals, but in Christ's Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:3–12, NRSV)

Jesus's directive to turn the other cheek, argued Tolstoy, is not to be taken figuratively or applied only in certain instances. Violence of any kind, even as self-defense, is not acceptable Christian behavior.

The Kingdom of God Is Within You angered most sections of the Russian church, and Russian censors banned its publication. But it was immediately translated into English and it inspired devotees around the world, most notably Mohandas Gandhi, whose theories of non-violence owe much to his reading of *The Kingdom*.

[...] The more widely Christianity was diffused, and the greater the number of people unprepared for it who were brought under its sway, the less it was understood, the more absolutely was its infallibility insisted on, and the less possible it became to understand the true meaning of the doctrine. In the times of Constantine the whole interpretation of the doctrine had been already reduced to a résumé—supported by the temporal authority—of the disputes that had taken place in the council¹—to a creed that reckoned off—I believe in so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so to the end—to one holy, apostolic church, which means the infallibility of those persons who call themselves the church. So that it all amounts to a man no longer believing in God nor Christ, as they are revealed to him, but believing in what the church orders him to believe in.

1. *the council*—the Council of Nicaea.

But the church is holy; the church was founded by Christ. God could not leave men to interpret his teaching at random—therefore he founded the church. All those statements² are so utterly untrue and unfounded that one is ashamed to refute them. Nowhere nor in anything, except in the assertion of the church, can we find that God or Christ founded anything like what churchmen understand by *the church*. In the Gospels there is a warning against the church, as it is an external authority, a warning most clear and obvious in the passage where it is said that Christ's followers should "call no man master." But nowhere is anything said of the foundation of what churchmen call *the church*. The word *church* is used twice in the Gospels—once in the sense of an assembly of men to decide a dispute, the other time in connection with the obscure utterance about a stone, Peter, and the gates of Hell. From these two passages in which the word *church* is used, in the signification merely of an assembly, has been deduced all that we now understand by *the church*.

But Christ could not have founded the church, that is, what we now understand by that word. For nothing like the idea of the church as we know it now, with its sacraments, miracles, and, above all, its claim to infallibility, is to be found either in Christ's words or in the ideas of the men of that time.

The fact that men called what was formed afterward by the same word as Christ used for something totally different, does not give them the right to assert that Christ founded the one, true church.

Besides, if Christ had really founded such an institution as the church for the foundation of all his teaching and the whole faith, he would certainly have described this institution clearly and definitely, and would have given the only true church, besides tales of miracles, which are used to support every kind of superstition, some tokens so unmistakable that no doubt of its genuineness could ever have arisen. But nothing of the sort was done by him. And there have been and still are different institutions, each calling itself the true church. [...]

Every church traces its creed through an uninterrupted transmission from Christ and the apostles. And truly every Christian creed that has been derived from Christ must have come down to the present generation through a certain transmission. But that does not prove that

2. *All those statements*—the church's assertion that Christ founded the church and that only the church may interpret his teachings.

it alone of all that has been transmitted, excluding all the rest, can be the sole truth, admitting of no doubt.

Every branch in a tree comes from the root in unbroken connection; but the fact that each branch comes from the one root does not prove at all that each branch was the only one. It is precisely the same with the church. Every church presents exactly the same proofs of the succession, and even the same miracles, in support of its authenticity, as every other. So that there is but one strict and exact definition of what is a church (not of something fantastic that we would wish it to be, but of what it is and has been in reality)—a church is a body of men who claim for themselves that they are in complete and sole possession of the truth. And these bodies, having in course of time, aided by the support of the temporal authorities, developed into powerful institutions, have been the principal obstacles to the diffusion of a true comprehension of the teaching of Christ. [...]

What constitutes the practical work of this Russian church, this immense, intensely active institution, which consists of a regiment of half a million men and costs the people tens of millions of rubles?

The practical business of the church consists in instilling by every conceivable means into the mass of one hundred millions of the Russian people those extinct relics of beliefs for which there is nowadays no kind of justification, “in which scarcely anyone now believes, and often not even those whose duty it is to diffuse these false beliefs.” To instill in the people the formulas of Byzantine theology, of the Trinity, of the Mother of God, of sacraments, of grace, and so on, extinct conceptions, foreign to us, and having no kind of meaning for men of our times, forms only one part of the work of the Russian church. Another part of its practice consists in the maintenance of idol worship in the most literal meaning of the word: in the veneration of holy relics, and of icons, the offering of sacrifices to them, and the expectation of their answers to prayer. I am not going to speak of what is preached and what is written by clergy of scientific or liberal tendencies in the theological journals. I am going to speak of what is actually done by the clergy through the wide expanse of the Russian land among a people of one hundred millions. What do they, diligently, assiduously, everywhere alike, without intermission, teach the people? What do they demand from the people in virtue of their (so-called) Christian faith?

I will begin from the beginning with the birth of a child. At the birth of a child they teach them that they must recite a prayer over the

child and mother to purify them, as though without this prayer the mother of a newborn child were unclean. To do this the priest holds the child in his arms before the images of the saints (called by the people plainly gods) and reads words of exorcizing power, and this purifies the mother. Then it is suggested to the parents, and even exacted of them, under fear of punishment for non-fulfillment, that the child must be baptized; that is, be dipped by the priest three times in the water, while certain words, understood by no one, are read aloud, and certain actions, still less understood, are performed and various parts of the body are rubbed with oil, and the hair is cut, while the sponsors blow and spit at an imaginary devil. All this is necessary to purify the child and to make him a Christian. Then it is instilled in the parents that they ought to administer the sacrament to the child, that is, give him, in the guise of bread and wine, a portion of Christ's body to eat, as a result of which the child receives the grace of God within it, and so on. Then it is suggested that the child as it grows up must be taught to pray. To pray means to place himself directly before the wooden boards on which are painted the faces of Christ, the Mother of God, and the saints, to bow his head and his whole body, and to touch his forehead, his shoulders and his stomach with his right hand, holding his fingers in a certain position, and to utter some words of Slavonic, the most usual of which as taught to all children are: *Mother of God, Virgin, rejoice*, etc., etc.

Then it is instilled in the child as it is brought up that at the sight of any church or icon he must repeat the same action—i.e., cross himself. Then it is instilled in him that on holidays (holidays are the days on which Christ was born, though no one knows when that was, on which he was circumcised, on which the Mother of God died, on which the cross was carried in procession, on which icons have been set up, on which a lunatic saw a vision, and so on)—on holidays he must dress himself in his best clothes and go to church, and must buy candles and place them there before the images of the saints. Then he must give offerings and prayers for the dead, and little loaves to be cut up into three-cornered pieces, and must pray many times for the health and prosperity of the tsar and the bishops, and for himself and his own affairs, and then kiss the cross and the hand of the priest.

Besides these observances, it is instilled in him that at least once a year he must confess. To confess means to go to the church and to tell the priest his sins, on the theory that this informing a stranger of his sins completely purifies him from them. And after that he must eat

with a little spoon a morsel of bread with wine, which will purify him still more. Next it is instilled in him that if a man and woman want their physical union to be sanctified they must go to church, put on metal crowns, drink certain potions, walk three times round a table to the sound of singing, and that then the physical union of a man and woman becomes sacred and altogether different from all other such unions.

Further it is instilled in him in his life that he must observe the following rules: not to eat butter or milk on certain days, and on certain other days to sing *Te Deums* and requiems for the dead, on holidays to entertain the priest and give him money, and several times in the year to bring the icons from the church, and to carry them slung on his shoulders through the fields and houses. It is instilled in him that on his deathbed a man must not fail to eat bread and wine with a spoon,³ and that it will be still better if he has time to be rubbed with sacred oil.⁴ This will guarantee his welfare in the future life. After his death it is instilled in his relatives that it is a good thing for the salvation of the dead man to place a printed paper of prayers in his hands; it is a good thing further to read aloud a certain book over the dead body, and to pronounce the dead man's name in church at a certain time. All this is regarded as faith obligatory on everyone.

But if anyone wants to take particular care of his soul, then according to this faith he is instructed that the greatest security of the salvation of the soul in the world is attained by offering money to the churches and monasteries, and engaging the holy men by this means to pray for him. Entering monasteries too, and kissing relics and miraculous icons, are further means of salvation for the soul.

According to this faith, icons and relics communicate a special sanctity, power, and grace, and even proximity to these objects, touching them, kissing them, putting candles before them, crawling under them while they are being carried along, are all efficacious for salvation, as well as *Te Deums* repeated before these holy things.

So this, and nothing else, is the faith called Orthodox, that is the actual faith that, under the guise of Christianity, has been with all the forces of the church, and is now with especial zeal, instilled in the people.

3. *eat bread and wine with a spoon*—the sacrament of unction, in which a priest administers the Eucharist to a dying person.

4. *sacred oil*—the priest anoints the dying person with olive oil.

And let no one say that the Orthodox teachers place the essential part of their teaching in something else, and that all these are only ancient forms, which it is not thought necessary to do away with. That is false. This, and nothing but this, is the faith taught through the whole of Russia by the whole of the Russian clergy, and of recent years with especial zeal. There is nothing else taught. Something different may be talked of and written of in the capitals; but among the hundred millions of the people this is what is done, this is what is taught, and nothing more. Churchmen may talk of something else, but this is what they teach by every means in their power. [...]

The sermon on the mount,⁵ or the creed:⁶ one cannot believe in both. And churchmen have chosen the latter. The creed is taught and is read as a prayer in the churches, but the sermon on the mount is excluded even from the Gospel passages read in the churches, so that the congregation never hears it in church, except on those days when the whole of the Gospel is read. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. People who believe in a wicked and senseless God—who has cursed the human race and devoted his own Son to sacrifice, and a part of mankind to eternal torment—cannot believe in the God of love. The man who believes in a God, in a Christ coming again in glory to judge and to punish the quick and the dead, cannot believe in the Christ who bade us turn the left cheek, judge not, forgive those who wrong us, and love our enemies. The man who believes in the inspiration of the Old Testament and the sacred character of David, who commanded on his deathbed the murder of an old man who had cursed him, and whom he could not kill himself because he was bound by an oath to him, and the similar atrocities of which the Old Testament is full, cannot believe in the holy love of Christ. The man who believes in the church's doctrine of the compatibility of warfare and capital punishment with Christianity cannot believe in the brotherhood of all men. [...]

5. *sermon on the mount*—see text in introduction above.

6. *the creed*—the Nicene Creed.

32.2 Solovyov on the Essence of Christianity (1891)

Vladimir Solovyov, “The Essence of Christianity,” trans. Natalie Duddington, in *A Solovyov Anthology*, ed. S. L. Frank (New York, Scribner, 1950), 43–50. All attempts to reach rightsholder failed.

The son of a famous historian and the grandson of an Orthodox priest, Vladimir Solovyov was arguably Russia’s most imaginative and controversial philosopher-theologian of the 1800s. “None of his contemporaries,” wrote one of his admirers, “took Christianity as social and political vocation more seriously.”⁷

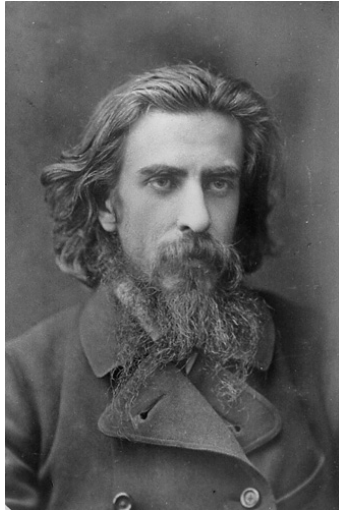


Figure 156. Vladimir Solovyov, n.d.

Yet the positions Solovyov adopted in pursuit of this vocation found little sympathy with leaders in the Russian church. He criticized nationalism mercilessly, once referring to it as “the

7. Vladimir Wozniuk, “Introduction,” in *Politics, Law, and Morality: Essays by V. S. Soloviev*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Wozniuk (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2000), xxi.

plague and syphilis.” Nationalistic sentiment, he argued, was wholly incompatible with Christianity, yet it had corrupted the Russian church and undermined the universal brotherhood to which Christ called all people.

Solovyov’s Christianity preached tolerance: Christians must never persecute ethnic and religious minorities; Christ’s love for all humankind demands that the government extend the same legal rights to all people and faiths that it extends to the Orthodox; government’s responsibility is not to preserve power for itself or to keep the populace in line—it is to guarantee social and political justice and to promote in tangible terms the social and spiritual values of the New Testament. Such thinking forced Solovyov to constantly revise his written work to satisfy government censors, and he learned to veil his criticism of Russian autocracy, the Russian church, and Russian nationalists to get his work into print.

Such veiling, however, did not mollify his critics. His opinions, writes Vladimir Wozniuk, a Solovyov scholar,

led directly to his isolation from nearly all secular sociopolitical institutions and much of the clerical establishment; they also cost him a regular income ... His public opposition to the death penalty, along with his support of religious and ethnic minority rights; his stress on an authentic, revitalized Christian political morality for the Russian state; and his vision of a reunified church, East and West, combined to alienate him both from more conservative, Orthodox Slavophiles and progressive, secular Westernizers.⁸

None of this should suggest that Solovyov sought a separation between church and state. Far from it. He argued for establishing a truly “Christian state,” and he described his theory of such a state as “free theocracy,” an exceptionally vague term that he never fully explained.

Solovyov considered himself an Orthodox Christian, and he insisted that he hewed to the Nicene Creed and to the Gospels. Although he admired Tolstoy and even worked with Tolstoy to organize a protest against antisemitism, he considered Tolstoy a heretic who abandoned the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

8. Ibid.

In the text below, it is easy to identify ideas and language that would strike conservative leaders as suspect: the notions of “cosmic oneness”; Christianity as a “universal unity” that is not born whole but rather “develops”; a divine-human bond that finds expression not only in the sacraments and in apostolic succession but also “in what is done by men themselves”; Christianity as consisting not of “dogma, or hierarchy, or liturgy, or morality, but the life-giving spirit of Christ”; and the kingdom of God as residing “within us.”

[...] Those to whom Christianity is a living religion attach absolute and essential meaning not to this or that constituent element of it but only to the single spiritual principle that forms them into one definite whole and imparts relative force and value to each of them. True, genuine Christianity is not a dogma, or hierarchy, or liturgy, or morality, but the life-giving spirit of Christ really, though invisibly, present in humanity and acting in it through complex processes of spiritual growth and development. This spirit is embodied in religious forms and institutions that constitute the earthly church—its visible body—but transcends those forms, and is not finally realized in any one given fact. Traditional institutions, forms and formulas are necessary to Christian humanity, just as a skeleton is necessary to the organism of the higher animals, but in itself the skeleton does not constitute a living body. A higher organism cannot exist without bones, but ossification of the walls of the arteries or the valves of the heart is a sure sign of approaching death.

[...] All are agreed that true, genuine Christianity is that which was preached by the founder of our religion. But what exactly did he preach? If quotations from the Gospels are picked to suit one’s own taste, many different answers will be given to that question. Some people will find the essence of Christianity in non-resistance to evil, others in obedience to spiritual authorities (“if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also”), the third [group of people] will insist on belief in miracles, the fourth on the separation of the divine from the secular, and so on. The arbitrarily chosen texts are equally arbitrarily abridged, for if read in full and in the context, they do not yield the required meaning. Leaving these exegetic extremes aside, I would only say that the many views as to the essence of Christianity, different as they are, but equally justifiable (for each of them is based on some Gospel text), cannot possibly express the

real essence of Christianity; at best, they are particular aspects of the doctrine that are as many as are the separate sayings of Christ handed down to us. The true meaning of these particular truths and their real significance can only be understood and estimated through their relation to the one central idea of Christianity. And that idea cannot be defined by mechanically appealing to the letter of separate texts, but requires the use of some more reasonable method. The Gospels must contain a direct indication of what Christ himself and his immediate disciples recognized as the essence of his teaching. After all, they do speak of Christ's teaching in its totality and express the idea of Christianity as a whole. How, then, is it described? Is it called the teaching about non-resistance, or about spiritual authorities, or about miracles, sacraments, the Trinitarian dogma, redemption, and so on? No: all those points are to be found in the Gospel, but the Gospel itself, the good news of Christ, proclaims itself in a different way. It does not designate itself as the gospel of non-resistance, or of hierarchy, or of miracles, or of faith, or even of love: it invariably recognizes and calls itself the gospel of the kingdom—the good news of the kingdom of God. The word of truth sown by the Son of man⁹ is “the word of the kingdom,” the mysteries revealed by him are “the mysteries of the kingdom,” his true followers are “the sons of the kingdom,” and so on.

Thus, undoubtedly, the central idea of the Gospel, according to the Gospel's own testimony, is the idea of the kingdom of God. Almost all Christ's words are directly or indirectly concerned with making it clear—the parables addressed to the multitude, the esoteric conversations with the disciples, and the prayers recorded in the Gospels to God the Father. All the texts bearing on this, taken together, show that the gospel idea of the kingdom is not confined to the conception of God's power over all that is—power that belongs to God as almighty and all-sustaining. That power is an eternal and unchangeable fact, while the kingdom preached by Christ is something that moves, approaches, comes. It has different aspects. It is within us, and yet it is manifested outwardly; it grows in mankind and in the whole world through a certain objective organic process, and it is also taken by a free effort of our will. This may appear contradictory to those who worship the letter, but to those who have the mind of Christ it is all included in one simple and all-embracing definition according to which

9. *Son of man*—Jesus refers to himself as the “Son of man” in all four Gospels.

the kingdom of God is the complete realization of the divine in the naturally human through the God-man Christ, or in other words, it is the fullness of the natural human life, united through Christ with the divine fullness.

The perfect union of the deity with humanity must be mutual; if one of the terms disappears, there is no union, and if it loses its freedom the union is not perfect. The inner possibility, the fundamental condition of the union with the deity is thus to be found in man himself—the kingdom of God is within you. But the possibility must become an actuality, man must manifest the kingdom of God hidden within him, and in order to do that he must combine a deliberate effort of his free will with the secret action of the divine grace within him—“the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” Without personal effort the possibility will remain a possibility, the token of the future blessings will be lost, the germ of the true life will die down and perish. Thus the kingdom of God, perfect in the eternal divine idea (“in Heaven”) and potentially present in our nature, is at the same time, of necessity, something that is being accomplished for us and through us. In this aspect of it, it is our work, a task set for us to carry out. This work and task cannot be confined to the separate individual existence of particular people. Man is a social being, and the highest work of his life, the final end of his efforts, is not confined to his personal destiny, but is to be found in the social destinies of mankind as a whole. Just as the general inner potency of the kingdom of God must for its realization necessarily become an individual moral achievement, so the latter, if it is to attain completion, must inevitably enter into the social movement of all humanity and form part, in one way or another, at a given moment and under given conditions, of the general divinely-human process of universal history. The kingdom of God is the union of divine grace with man, not as shut up in his own selfhood but with man as a living member of the cosmic whole. Such a man finds the kingdom of God not in himself only, but also in the objective course and structure of the revelation, in the actual manifestations of the deity in past and present humanity, and in the ideal anticipation of other, more perfect manifestations in the future. In all this, no doubt, there is something fated, predetermined, independent of each man’s personal will, and yet individual freedom is preserved, for everyone is free to use or not to use for himself the universal religious heritage of mankind, to enter or not to enter with his own living powers into the organic development of the kingdom of God. In any case,

the latter is not confined to the subjective moral world of separate individuals, but has its own objective reality, its own universal forms and laws, and develops through a complex historical process in which separate persons play partly an active and partly a passive part. Hence the vital significance of the visible church as a formal institution symbolizing, and to a certain extent realizing, the universal whole in which separate persons participate, into which they enter, but that is certainly not formed by an arithmetical summation of them or their mechanical mass. The collective divinely-human process presupposes and includes our personal moral acts, but is not made up of them—and it is its objectively organic and super-personal (though not impersonal) character that renders possible the suddenness (to us) of its final results, directly indicated in the Gospel. Of course, this suddenness is merely relative and perfectly compatible with the continuous and predetermined development of the divinely-human organism; in purely physical development, too, inwardly prepared critical moments manifest themselves outwardly with the same kind of suddenness. A seed that has filled out and germinated in the ground suddenly thrusts out its shoot above the surface, and a ripe fruit falls to the ground as suddenly; in a similar way the chief phases of God's kingdom come suddenly, but in the fullness of time, i.e., as necessarily prepared by the foregoing process. The suddenness does not therefore exclude but, on the contrary, presupposes the active participation of individual forces in the general development of the kingdom of God.

Thus the apparent contradictions between the inward and the outward character of God's kingdom and between the gradual and the sudden realization of it disappear of themselves with the true understanding of the case. As existing for us, the kingdom of God must be our own spiritual state, namely, a state of inner union with God. Such union reached its individual perfection in the person of the God-man Christ, and revealed itself in him as super-individual. A true union with another cannot be merely a subjective state; the union of the whole man with God cannot be merely personal. The divine or heavenly kingdom cannot be simply a psychological fact: it is, first and foremost, the eternal and objective truth of positive universal unity. Such unity is latent in the natural man too—in the social character of his life, in the all-embracing nature of his reason; it is present, but not realized—set as a task, but not given as a fact. The fullness of existence perfectly united with God through the Son of man is the absolute ideal, the realization of which began and continues in the world's history as hu-

manity's common and universal task; all work for it unconsciously and involuntarily, but to participate in it freely and consciously is the morally social duty of every enlightened Christian. In this aspect of it the kingdom of God is constituted not by a simple act of the soul's union with God, but by a complex and all-embracing process—by the spiritually-physical growth and development of the all-inclusive divinely-human organism in the world. Like all organic growth, it presupposes not merely quantitative continuity (implied in the crude idea of accumulating the requisite number of righteous souls for the heavenly kingdom) but also qualitative discreteness of forms and degrees. Although the higher of those forms necessarily presuppose the lower, and are prepared by them (in the order of genesis), they cannot possibly be wholly deduced from the lower, and therefore appear as something new and miraculous.

Once the central idea of true Christianity has been defined, it is easy to detect and show up various counterfeits of it prevalent at the present day. We will note only the most important and the most pernicious of them.

Since the kingdom of God comes not as a *Deus ex machina*,¹⁰ but is conditioned by the cosmic and historical divinely-human process in which God acts only with and through man, the view that man plays a merely passive part in the divine work must be recognized as a crude counterfeit of Christianity. It is said that man's whole duty with regard to the kingdom of God consists, on the one hand, in slavishly submitting to the given divine facts (in the visible church) and on the other, in waiting inactively for the future final revelation of the kingdom of glory—and meanwhile devoting all his activity to pagan and secular interests that are not regarded as in any way connected with the work of God. For appearances' sake the view in question is supported by the argument that God is everything and man is nothing. But in truth this false humility is rebellion against God, for he loved and magnified humanity in Christ, from whom Christians must not sever themselves: "to them gave he power to become sons of God." Sons of the kingdom of freedom are called to conscious and independent cooperation in the work of the Father. The fact that some of them are not yet spiritually of age must be taken into consideration, but not raised to the rank of a final and universal principle.

10. *Deus ex machina*—a solution, which appears suddenly and unexpectedly, to an insoluble problem.

The champions of this counterfeit Christianity compare God's activity in gathering together and building up his kingdom—that is, his participation in the growth and development of the divinely-human organism—to the manifestations of his omnipotence in the phenomena of nature and events of cosmic life. But in doing so they involve themselves in an inner contradiction that betrays the fallaciousness of their position. If they think that they must not actively interfere in the destinies of God's kingdom because it is dependent on his will, they must not interfere in anything, for everything depends on God's will. And yet they devote all their energies and enthusiasm to arranging all kinds of secular affairs, personal, national, and so on. Why this difference of attitude? Why do they consider it necessary to help the Almighty God so zealously in their insignificant little affairs, but do not want to help him in his great work? Clearly because they are interested in their own concerns but not in his. God's work is not their affair and so they do not care about it. But Christianity wholly consists in the fact that God's work has become the work of man also. This unity between God and man is the kingdom of God, which comes only in so far as it is realized. Obviously those pseudo-quietists¹¹ preach a false Christianity. They serve Mammon¹² the more actively in practice, the more passively they submit themselves, in theory, to another master [i.e., God]. His greatness and holiness are to them merely a convenient pretext for not thinking of him at all.

This counterfeit Christianity is generally connected with denying all progress and development in the Christian religion. It is a fact that many believers in evolution adopt a one-sided and mechanistic interpretation of it, excluding the action of the higher power and all teleology;¹³ it is also a fact that many preachers of historical progress understand by it man's endless increase in perfection without God and contrary to God. From this an obviously absurd conclusion is hastily drawn that the very ideas of development and progress are somehow atheistic and anti-Christian. In truth, however, those ideas are specifi-

11. *pseudo-quietist*—a “quietist” is one who favors meditation or reflection over action, that is, one who seeks sanctification in passive rather than active pursuits. Here Solovyov argues for vigorous action and against those he calls “pseudo-quietists.”

12. *Mammon*—wealth or greed, personified in the New Testament as an evil deity.

13. *teleology*—the study of design or purpose in creation.

cally Christian (or, more exactly, Judeo-Christian); they were first brought into men's minds by the prophets of Israel and the evangelists. Both the Eastern and the Western paganism in its highest expressions—Buddhism and Neo-Platonism—put absolute perfection completely outside the historical process that was for them either an endless and purposeless series of accidental changes or a gradual change for the worse. Only the Christian (or, what is the same thing, the messianic) idea of the kingdom of God gradually revealing itself in the life of mankind gives meaning to history and determines the true conception of progress. Christianity reveals to mankind not only the ideal of absolute perfection but also the way to attain it, and therefore it is essentially progressive. Consequently, every view that denies this progressive element in Christianity is a counterfeit, concealing a pagan attitude under a Christian guise. Its purpose—not, of course, always a conscious one—is to draw men away from God's work and to confirm them in the bad, worldly reality abolished by Christ, who overcame the world. Meanwhile, the supposed Christians are attempting, though vainly, to wrest from Christ his victory, by doing their best to support secular laws and institutions that have nothing in common with the kingdom of God. There is no place for such a conservative attitude in true, genuine Christianity, to which both conservatism and radicalism as such are essentially foreign. From the standpoint of the Christian religion neither the preservation nor the destruction of any secular institutions can in itself be of value. If we care about building up the kingdom of God, we must accept that which is worthy to serve our cause, and reject that which is opposed to it. We must be guided in this not by the dead criterion of some abstract -ism but, in accordance with St. Paul, by the living criterion of the mind of Christ—if we have it in us; and if we have not, we had better not call ourselves Christians. In truth those who bear that name must be concerned, not with preserving and strengthening at all costs the existing social forms and groups in secular Christianity, but with regenerating and transforming them in the Christian spirit as far as possible and actually bringing them into the sphere of God's kingdom.

And so, the idea of the kingdom of God necessarily brings us (that is, every sincere and conscientious Christian) to the duty of doing what we can for realizing Christian principles in the collective life of mankind and transforming all our social institutions and relations in the spirit of the higher truth. In other words, it leads us to Christian politics. At this point we come across a fresh counterfeit of Christiani-

ty or, rather, to a new modification of the old anti-Christian reactionism in a Christian mask. Christian politics, they say, is a *contradictio in adjecto*;¹⁴ Christianity and politics can have nothing in common: “My kingdom is not of this world,” etc. But the fact that Christ’s kingdom is not of this world by no means implies that it cannot act in the world, gain possession of it and rule it.

[...] In accordance with sound logic, it follows, on the contrary, that just because Christ’s kingdom is not of the world but from above, it has a right to possess and govern the world. It must be one or the other: societies that call themselves Christian must either renounce that name, or they must recognize it as their duty to harmonize all their political and social relations with Christian principles, i.e., to bring them into the sphere of God’s kingdom—and this is precisely in what true Christian politics consist.

If, as the champions of pseudo-Christian individualism assert, all social and political institutions are alien and even contrary to Christianity, true Christians ought to live without any such institutions. But this is an obvious absurdity disproved by their own life and activity. If, however, social and political forms of life cannot be abolished (for that would be equivalent to abolishing man as a social and political being), and if, on the other hand, they are as yet far from embodying Christian principles, it clearly follows that the task of Christian politics is to perfect these forms and transmute them into realities fit for the kingdom of God.

14. *contradictio in adjecto*—contradiction in terms.

32.3 Pobedonostsev on Democracy and Education (1896)

K. P. Pobedonostseff, *Reflections of a Russian Statesman*, trans. Robert Edward Crozier (London: Grant Richards, 1898), 26–28, 30–34, 37–40, 43–44, 62–69, 76–78. Public domain.

Ever since Peter the Great abolished the Moscow patriarchate and replaced it with the Holy Synod, the Russian church rested firmly under the thumb of the state. The empire’s law code declared the tsar to be “the supreme defender and preserver of the dogmas of the religious faith” and it granted him the right to oversee “the orthodoxy of belief and decorum in the holy church.”¹⁵ The tsar appointed the head (“chief procurator”) of the Holy Synod, the government cabinet responsible for church affairs. The Holy Synod controlled doctrine, liturgy, the education of clergy, and religious publishing.

The Russian church, under the control of the Holy Synod, held a privileged position in the Russian Empire. The judicial code insisted that “the foremost and dominant faith in the Russian Empire is the Christian Orthodox Catholic Eastern Confession.”¹⁶ Missionaries from other Christian faiths could not proselytize in Russia. Only the Orthodox Church could distribute religious propaganda. The church under the Synod’s direction and the tsar’s consent worked diligently to convert members of other Christian confessions and to battle political and religious dissenters.

In 1880 Tsar Alexander II appointed as head of the Holy Synod a man who agreed whole-heartedly with this arrangement—that is, with a Russian church subject to the state and all religion subject to the Russian church. He was Konstantin Pobedonostsev (1827–1907), the tutor of the future tsars Alexander III and Nicholas II, an accomplished jurist, a long-serving government bureaucrat, and a reactionary zealot.

15. Robert F. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev: His Life and Thought* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968), 166.

16. *Ibid.*, 165.

In the words of Robert Warth, Pobedonostsev was a “passionless, cynical and humorless ascetic ... a tall, spare, even emaciated figure invariably dressed in black, a wizened face and balding head, and staring eyes visible through steel-rimmed spectacles.” He “emerged during the 1880s as an apostle of reaction and a firm opponent of any measures that could conceivably threaten the autocratic monarchy. He opposed parliamentary government (‘the greatest lie of our time’), civil liberties, and religious toleration; he supported government censorship, internal passports and the Russification of national minorities.”¹⁷ He was earnest, hard-working, incorruptible, unrepentantly cynical, and misanthropic. Despised by the radical and not-so-radical intelligentsia, he survived at least five attempts on his life.



Figure 157. Konstantin Pobedonostsev, n.d.

For Pobedonostsev, Orthodox Christianity was a conservative ideology opposed to change and new ideas. Orthodoxy, allied with the government, served to protect fallen, sinful humans

17. Robert D. Warth, “Pobedonostsev, Konstantin Petrovich,” in *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History* (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1976), 28:141.

from their baser instincts. The faith bore an obligation to protect truth, which meant fierce battles against secularism, reform, revolution of any sort, and other Christian confessions, especially Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism, both of which Pobedonostsev detested nearly as much as Judaism. The “Yids,” he explained in an antisemitic letter to Feodor Dostoevsky, are “at the root of the revolutionary socialist movement and of regicide, they own the periodical press, they have in their hands the financial markets, the people as a whole fall into financial slavery to them; they even control the principles of contemporary science and strive to place it outside Christianity.”¹⁸

Pobedonostsev’s fear of other faiths, his reactionary politics, and his view of humanity as sinful and easily duped, convinced him that any form of government by the people was a dangerously naïve undertaking, ignorant of human frailties and destined to encourage evil in the world. Democracy, he claims in the work below, is a malicious fallacy, a theory that cannot succeed and will make those people it ostensibly serves its victims. Here Pobedonostsev framed attempts at reform, social justice, and liberalized governance as the work of Satan, the “Father of Lies” whom Orthodoxy must ever oppose.

• Democracy •

What is this freedom by which so many minds are agitated; which inspires so many insensate actions, so many wild speeches; which leads the people so often to misfortune? In the democratic sense of the word, freedom is the right of political power, or, to express it otherwise, the right to participate in the government of the state. This universal aspiration for a share in government has no constant limitations, and seeks no definite issue, but incessantly extends. [...] Forever extending its base, the new democracy now aspires to universal suffrage—a fatal error, and one of the most remarkable in the history of mankind. By this means, the political power so passionately demanded by democracy would be shattered into a number of infinitesimal bits, of which each citizen acquires a single one. What will he do with it, then? How will he employ it? In the result it has undoubtedly been shown that

18. Byrnes, 205.

in the attainment of this aim democracy violates its sacred formula of “freedom indissolubly joined with equality.” It is shown that this apparently equal distribution of “freedom” among all involves the total destruction of equality. Each vote, representing an inconsiderable fragment of power, by itself signifies nothing; an aggregation of votes alone has a relative value. The result may be likened to the general meetings of shareholders in public companies. By themselves individuals are ineffective, but he who controls a number of these fragmentary forces is master of all power and directs all decisions and dispositions. We may well ask in what consists the superiority of democracy. Everywhere the strongest man becomes master of the state; sometimes a fortunate and resolute general, sometimes a monarch or administrator with knowledge, dexterity, a clear plan of action, and a determined will. In a democracy, the real rulers are the dexterous manipulators of votes, with their placemen, the mechanics who so skillfully operate the hidden springs that move the puppets in the area of democratic elections. Men of this kind are ever ready with loud speeches lauding equality; in reality, they rule the people as any despot or military dictator might rule it. The extension of the right to participate in elections is regarded as progress and as the conquest of freedom by democratic theorists, who hold that the more numerous the participants in political rights, the greater is the probability that all will employ this right in the interests of the public welfare, and for the increase of the freedom of the people. Experience proves a very different thing. The history of mankind bears witness that the most necessary and fruitful reforms—the most durable measures—emanated from the supreme will of statesmen, or from a minority enlightened by lofty ideas and deep knowledge, and that, on the contrary, the extension of the representative principle is accompanied by an abasement of political ideas and the vulgarization of opinions in the mass of the electors. It shows also that this extension—in great states—was inspired by secret aims to the centralization of power, or led directly to dictatorship. In France, universal suffrage was suppressed with the end of the terror, and was re-established twice merely to affirm the autocracy of the two Napoleons. In Germany, the establishment of universal suffrage served merely to strengthen the high authority of a famous statesman¹⁹ who had acquired popularity by the success of his policy. What its ultimate consequences will be, Heaven only knows!

19. *famous statesman*—Otto von Bismarck, who served as chancellor of a united Germany from 1871 to 1890.

The manipulation of votes in the game of democracy is of the commonest occurrence in most European states, and its falsehood, it would seem, has been exposed to all; yet few dare openly to rebel against it. The unhappy people must bear the burden, while the press, herald of a suppositious public opinion, stifles the cry of the people. [...]

The faculty of seizing and assimilating on faith these abstract ideas has spread among the mass, and become infectious, more especially to men insufficiently or superficially educated, who constitute the great majority everywhere. This tendency of the people is exploited with success by politicians who seek power; the art of creating generalities serves for them as a most convenient instrument. All deduction proceeds by the path of abstraction; from a number of facts the immaterial are eliminated, the essential elements collated, classified, and general formulas deduced. It is plain that the justice and value of these formulas depend on how many of the premises are essential, and how many of those eliminated are irrelevant. The speed and ease with which abstract conclusions are arrived at are explained by the unceremonious methods observed in this process of selection of relevant facts and in their treatment. Hence the great success of orators, and the extraordinary effect of the abstractions that they cast to the people. The crowd is easily attracted by commonplaces and generalities invested in sonorous phrases; it cares nothing for proof that is inaccessible to it; thus is formed unanimity of thought, a unanimity fictitious and visionary, but in its consequences actual enough. This is called the “voice of the people,” with the pendant,²⁰ the “voice of God.” It is a deplorable error. The ease with which men are drawn by commonplaces leads everywhere to extreme demoralization of public thought, and to the weakening of the political sense of the people. [...]

[...] Among the falsest of political principles is the principle of the sovereignty of the people, the principle that all power issues from the people, and is based on the national will—a principle that has unhappily become more firmly established since the time of the French Revolution. Thence proceeds the theory of parliamentarism, which, up to the present day, has deluded much of the so-called intelligentsia, and unhappily infatuated certain foolish Russians. It continues to maintain its hold on

20. *pendant*—here “pendant” means something supplemental. Pobedonostev criticizes those who equate the “voice of the people” with “the voice of God.”

many minds with the obstinacy of a narrow fanaticism, although every day its falsehood is exposed more clearly to the world.

In what does the theory of parliamentarism consist? It is supposed that the [mass of] people in its assemblies makes its own law and elects responsible officers to execute its will. Such is the ideal conception. Its immediate realization is impossible. The historical development of society necessitates that local communities increase in numbers and complexity; that separate races be assimilated, or, retaining their politics and languages, unite under a single flag; that territory extend indefinitely; under such conditions direct government by the people is impracticable. The [mass of] people must, therefore, delegate its right of power to its representatives, and invest them with administrative autonomy. These representatives in turn cannot govern immediately, but are compelled to elect a still smaller number of trustworthy persons—ministers—to whom they entrust the preparation and execution of the laws, the apportionment and collection of taxes, the appointment of subordinate officials, and the disposition of the militant forces.

In the abstract this mechanism is quite symmetrical: for its proper operation many conditions are essential. The working of the political machine is based on impersonal forces constantly acting and completely balanced. It may act successfully only when the delegates of the people abdicate their personalities; when on the benches of parliament sit mechanical fulfillers of the people's behests; when the ministers of state remain impersonal, absolute executors of the will of the majority; when the elected representatives of the people are capable of understanding precisely, and executing conscientiously, the program of activity, mathematically expressed, which has been delivered to them. Given such conditions the machine would work exactly, and would accomplish its purpose. The law would actually embody the will of the people; administrative measures would actually emanate from parliament; the pillars of the state would rest actually on the elective assemblies, and each citizen would directly and consciously participate in the management of public affairs.

Such is the theory. Let us look at the practice. Even in the classic countries of parliamentarism it would satisfy not one of the conditions enumerated. The elections in no way express the will of the electors. The popular representatives are in no way restricted by the opinions of their constituents, but are guided by their own views and considerations, modified by the tactics of their opponents. In reality, ministers

are autocratic, and they rule, rather than are ruled by, parliament. They attain power and lose power, not by virtue of the will of the people, but through immense personal influence, or the influence of a strong party that places them in power, or drives them from it. They dispose of the force and resources of the nation at will, they grant immunities and favors, they maintain a multitude of idlers at the expense of the people, and they fear no censure while they enjoy the support in parliament of a majority that they maintain by the distribution of bounties from the rich tables that the state has put at their disposal. In reality, the ministers are as irresponsible as the representatives of the people. Mistakes, abuse of power, and arbitrary acts are of daily occurrence, yet how often do we hear of the grave responsibility of a minister? It may be once in fifty years a minister is tried for his crimes, with a result contemptible when compared with the celebrity gained by the solemn procedure. [...]

In our time, nothing is so rare as men imbued with a feeling of solidarity with the people, ready for labor and self-sacrifice for the public good; this is the ideal nature, but such natures are little inclined to come into contact with the baseness of the world. He who, in the consciousness of duty, is capable of disinterested service of the community, does not descend to the soliciting of votes, or the crying of his own praise at election meetings in loud and vulgar phrases. Such men manifest their strength in their own work, in a small circle of congenial friends, and scorn to seek popularity in the noisy marketplace. If they approach the crowd, it is not to flatter it, or to pander to its basest instincts and tendencies, but to condemn its follies and expose its depravity. To men of duty and honor the procedure of elections is repellent; the only men who regard it without abhorrence are selfish, egoistic natures, who wish thereby to attain their personal ends. To acquire popularity such men have little scruple in assuming the mask of ardor for the public good. They cannot and must not be modest, for with modesty they would not be noticed or spoken of. By their positions, and by the parts they have chosen, they are forced to be hypocrites and liars; they must cultivate, fraternize with, and be amiable to their opponents to gain their suffrages; they must lavish promises, knowing that they cannot fulfill them; and they must pander to the basest tendencies and prejudices of the masses to acquire majorities for themselves. What honorable nature would accept such a role? Describe it in a novel, the reader would be repelled, but in elections the same reader gives his vote to the living artiste in the same role. [...]

In theory, the elected candidate must be the favorite of the majority; in fact, he is the favorite of a minority, sometimes very small, but representing an organized force, while the majority, like sand, has no coherence, and is therefore incapable of resisting the clique and the faction. In theory, the election favors the intelligent and capable; in reality, it favors the pushing and impudent. It might be thought that education, experience, conscientiousness in work, and wisdom in affairs would be essential requirements in the candidate; in reality, whether these qualities exist or not, they are in no way needed in the struggle of the election, where the essential qualities are audacity, a combination of impudence and oratory, and even some vulgarity, which invariably acts on the masses; modesty, in union with delicacy of feeling and thought, is worth nothing. [...]

[...] It is sad to think that even in Russia there are men who aspire to the establishment of this falsehood among us; that our professors glorify to their young pupils representative government as the ideal of political science; that our newspapers pursue it in their articles and feuilletons,²¹ under the name of justice and order, without troubling to examine without prejudice the working of the parliamentary machine. Yet even where centuries have sanctified its existence, faith already decays; the liberal intelligentsia exalts it, but the people groan under its despotism and recognize its falsehood. We may not see, but our children and grandchildren assuredly will see, the overthrow of this idol, which contemporary thought in its vanity continues still to worship.

• Press •

From the day that man first fell,²² falsehood has ruled the world—ruled it in human speech, in the practical business of life, in all its relations and institutions. But never did the Father of Lies²³ spin such webs of falsehood of every kind, as in this restless age when we hear so many falsehoods uttered everywhere on truth. With the growing complexity of social problems increases the number of relations and institutions pervaded with falsehood through and through. At every step appears some splendid edifice bearing the legend, “Here is truth.” Do you enter, you tread on falsehoods at every step. Would you expose the falsehoods that have angered you, the world will turn

21. *feuilleton*—a newspaper or magazine.

22. *the day that man first fell*—the day that Adam first sinned.

23. *Father of Lies*—Satan.

on you with anger greater still, and bid you trust and preach that this is truth, and truth unassailable.

Thus we are bidden to believe that the judgments of newspapers and periodicals, the judgments of the so-called press, are the expression of public opinion. This, too, is a falsehood. The press is one of the falsest institutions of our time. [...]

In our age the judgment of others has assumed an organized form, and calls itself public opinion. Its organ and representative is the press. In truth, the importance of the press is immense, and may be regarded as the most characteristic fact of our time—more characteristic even than our remarkable discoveries and inventions in the realm of technical science. No government, no law, no custom can withstand its destructive activity when, from day to day, through the course of years, the press repeats and disseminates among the people its condemnations of institutions or of men.

What is the secret of this strength? Certainly not the novelties and sensations with which the newspaper is filled, but its declared policy—the political and philosophical ideas propagated in its articles, and selection and classification of its news and rumors, and the peculiar illumination that it casts up on them. The newspaper has usurped the position of judicial observer of the events of the day; it judges not only the actions and words of men, but affects a knowledge of their unexpressed opinions, their intentions, and their enterprises; it praises and condemns at discretion; it incites some, threatens others; drags to the pillory²⁴ one, and others exalts as idols to be adored and examples worthy of the emulation of all. In the name of public opinion it bestows rewards on some, and punishes others with the severity of excommunication. The question naturally occurs: Who are these representatives of this terrible power, public opinion? From where is derived their right and authority to rule in the name of the community, to demolish existing institutions, and to proclaim new ideals of ethics and legislation? [...]

Any vagabond babbler or unacknowledged genius, any enterprising tradesman with his own money or with the money of others, may found a newspaper, even a great newspaper. He may attract a host of writers and feuilletonists,²⁵ ready to deliver judgment on any subject at

24. *pillory*—an instrument of punishment, consisting of a wooden frame in which the one being punished inserts head and hands.

25. *feuilletonists*—newspaper columnists or critics.

a moment's notice; he may hire illiterate reporters to keep him supplied with rumors and scandals. His staff is then complete. From that day he sits in judgment on all the world, on ministers and administrators, on literature and art, on finance and industry. It is true that the new journal becomes a power only when it is sold in the market—that is, when it circulates among the public. For this talent is needed, and the matter published must be attractive and congenial for the readers. Here, we might think, was some guarantee of the moral value of the undertaking—men of talent will not serve a feeble or contemptible editor or publisher; the public will not support a newspaper that is not a faithful echo of public opinion. This guarantee is fictitious. Experience proves that money will attract talent under any conditions, and that talent is ready to write as its paymaster requires. Experience proves that the most contemptible persons—retired moneylenders, Jewish brokers, newsvendors, and bankrupt gamblers—may found newspapers, secure the services of talented writers, and place their editions on the market as organs of public opinion. The healthy taste of the public is not to be relied on. The great mass of readers, idlers for the most part, is ruled less by a few healthy instincts than by a base and despicable hankering for idle amusement; and the support of the people may be secured by any editor who provides for the satisfaction of these hankerings, for the love of scandal, and for intellectual prurience of the basest kind. Of this we meet with evidence daily; even in our own capital no search is necessary to find it; it is enough to note the supply and demand at the newsvendors' shops, and at the railway stations. All of us have observed the triviality of conversation in society; in provincial towns, in the government capitals, the recreations of the people are well-known—gambling, scandal, and anecdotes are the chief. Even conversation on the so-called social and political questions takes in a great measure the form of censure and aphorisms, plentifully supplemented with scandal and anecdote. This is a rich and fruitful soil for the tradesmen of literature, and there, as poisonous fungi, spring up organs of calumny, ephemeral and permanent, impudently extolling themselves as organs of public opinion. [...] The great part which in the idle life of government towns is played by anonymous letters and lampoons, which, unhappily, are so common among us, is played in the newspaper by “correspondence,” sent from various quarters or composed in the editorial offices, by the reports and rumors invented by ignorant reporters, and by the atrocious practice of blackmailing, often the strongest weapon of the newspaper press. Such a paper may flourish,

attain consideration as an organ of public opinion, and be immensely remunerative to its owners, while no paper conducted on firm moral principles, or founded to meet the healthier instincts of the people, could compete with it for a moment.

[...] It is hard to imagine a despotism more irresponsible and violent than the despotism of printed words. Is it not strange and irrational, then, that those who struggle most for the preservation of this despotism are the impassioned champions of freedom, the ferocious enemies of legal restrictions and of all interference by the established authority. We cannot help remembering those wise men who went mad because they knew of their wisdom.

• Public education •

[...] Take, for instance, the phrases, repeated to weariness among us, and everywhere: *free education, obligatory attendance, the restriction of child-labor during the years of obligatory attendance*. There can be no question that learning is light, and that ignorance is darkness, but in the application of this rule we must take care to be ruled by common sense, and so to abstain from violating that freedom of which we hear so much, and which our legislators so ruthlessly restrict. Inspired by an idle saying that the schoolmaster won the battle of Sadowa,²⁶ we multiply our model schools and schoolmasters, ignoring the requirements both of children and of parents, of climate, and of nature itself. [...] [A]ll schools are repugnant to those driven to them by force, under threats of punishment, or that are organized, in ignorance of the people's tastes and necessities, on the fantasies of doctrinaires. In such schools the work becomes mechanical; the school resembles an office with all the formality and weariness that office life involves. The legislator is satisfied when he has founded and organized in certain localities a certain number of similar institutions adorned with the inscription "school." For these establishments money must be raised; attendance is secured under penalty; a great staff of inspectors is organized whose duty it is to see that parents and poor and working men send their children to school at the established age. Already all governments have transgressed the line at which public instruction begins to show its reverse side. Everywhere official education flourishes at the expense of that real educa-

26. *the schoolmaster won the battle of Sadowa*—a quotation by Helmuth von Moltke, who attributed Prussian military success to the country's educational system and highly educated populace.

tion in the sphere of domestic, professional, and social life, which is a vital element of success.

But infinite evil has been wrought by the prevalent confusion of knowledge and power. Seduced by the fantasy of universal enlightenment, we misname education a certain sum of knowledge acquired by completing the courses of schools, skillfully elaborated in the studies of pedagogues. Having organized our school thus, we isolate it from life, and secure by force the attendance of children whom we subject to a process of intellectual training in accordance with our program. But we ignore or forget that the mass of the children whom we educate must earn their daily bread, a labor for which the abstract notions on which our programs are constructed will be vain; while in the interests of some imaginary knowledge we withhold that training in productive labor, which alone will bear fruit. Such are the results of our complex educational system, and such are the causes of the aversion with which the masses regard our schools, for which they can find no use.

The vulgar conception of education is true enough, but unhappily it is disregarded in the organization of the modern school. In the popular mind the function of a school is to teach the elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and, in union with these, the duty of knowing, loving, and fearing God, of loving our native land, and of honoring our parents. These are the elements of knowledge and the sentiments that together form the basis of conscience in man, and give to him the moral strength needed for the preservation of his equilibrium in life, for the maintenance of struggle with the evil impulses of his nature and with the evil sentiments and temptations of the mind. [...]

32.4 Petition on Women to *Sobor* (1917–1918)

“The Office of Deaconess: Letter to the Russian Orthodox Church Council of 1917–1918,” trans. William G. Wagner, in *Russian Women, 1698–1917: Experience and Expression, an Anthology of Sources*, ed. Robin Bisha, Jehanne M Gheith, Christine Holden, and William Wagner (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 283–286. Used by permission of Indiana University Press.

It was not uncommon in the early Christian church for women to serve as “deaconesses,” ministering and providing religious instruction to other women in the flock. A number of Protestant churches in Western Europe revived the office during the 1800s; a proposal to do the same surfaced in the Russian church in the 1830s, and similar proposals were submitted intermittently in the following decades by church reformers and some nuns. William Wegner, who translated the following document, notes that Russian advocates of restoring the office disagreed about the specifics of deaconesses’ roles.

Opponents offered several arguments against restoration: such an office was incompatible with the subservient position the Apostle Paul advocated for women, it violated canonical rules, and it was a foreign innovation. The Russian Holy Synod came close to restoring the office in 1911, but it deferred the issue to a future church council—a *sobor*—which finally met in 1917 and 1918.²⁷

The following selection is a petition to this council from one Liudmila Semenova Gerasimova, who marshaled political and spiritual arguments in favor of appointing deaconesses. Her arguments reference both democratic ideals and notions of equal rights, as well as her sense that women possess special gifts, including a “mystical religious feeling” particular to their sex. Many readers of her petition would have been shocked by her contention that “[m]onastic institutions have lost their significance, and settlements of female intelligentsia will find their best use in the cultural-educational religious mission of the village deaconess.”

27. See section “Russian Revolution” in Part IV of *Essential Texts*. See also section “33. Russian Revolution” in this volume.

• Petition •

With this petition I have the honor of most humbly requesting the local council to permit me to assume the office of deaconess of the Russian church, and for this purpose I ask the council to resolve the question now before it regarding the restoration of the institution of deaconess on the basis of the ancient ecclesiastical order existing during the time of John [Chrysostom]. This action is demanded by the cultural-historical mission of Russia, the good of the state and the people, and the good of all humanity.

• Basis of the petition •

1. Woman is cast by human fate as the Holy Virgin severing the head of the serpent, the intermediary between God and people, and as a moral force. She is the bearer of Christian love and mercy, assuming a spirit for others, a fact confirmed by the actuality of the moral order in life. Equality of rights within a democratic political order demands equality of rights for women within the church, and not a division whereby men are preachers of the word of God both inside and outside the church, and women only outside the church. With Christ, there are no outcasts and female slaves with lords, and there are not people of the male and female sex, but God is in everyone. The slavery of women is a perversion of Christianity. As a mother and an educator, a woman lays the foundation of a child's moral and religious principles, but a slave will produce neither heroes of the spirit nor heroic citizens. Moral decay, the desertion of soldiers, and anarchy represent the moral failure of the church, resulting from the evasion of its duty to provide a moral Christian education to its flock and from the slavery of women. It is necessary to raise women up to the heights of moral authority appropriate to them in order to yield the widest possible Christian education. Christ himself revealed to women [word unclear] the deepest essence of his teaching and gave to Mary his blessing of the knowledge of God. The whole Gospel is an annunciation to the Virgin of her liberation from the chains of Old Testament law. St. Phoebe²⁸

28. *St. Phoebe*—the apostle Paul mentions Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchraeae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many

and the Apostle Thecla²⁹ were equally the collaborators of the Apostle Paul.³⁰ Our national genius, a gift to us from the Holy Spirit, has decreed a moral ideal in the person of the Russian woman. Due to the physical sensitivity and nervousness and the psychological subtlety of her constitution, a woman possesses the most perfect capacity for instinctive understanding and is the bearer of mystical religious feeling. I have factual evidence of Christ's having called me to the above-mentioned mission. Can one dare to resist the Spirit of God? If a German princess has received the right to organize a society of deaconesses,³¹ then can a Russian woman be denied this request?

2. What will women do in their spiritual mission for the people, the church, the state, and humanity? Given the darkness and ignorance of the people, women will engage in culturally enlightening activity in a religious spirit that corresponds to the mystical feeling in the spirit of the Russian people, in particular in such areas as agriculture, medicine, crafts, and useful trades for the countryside. To overcome blind ritual and the abyss beyond it of the collapse of morality in life and the ignorance of the Gospels and of Christ, women will proclaim the Christian truths of the knowledge of God and undertake the moral and spiritual enlightenment of the people. Women also will engage in economic-managerial activity in the church, the organization of the parish, charitable activity, [and] the declaration of the joyful news of the Gospels to adults, youth, and children and its proclamation to female

and of myself as well." (NRSV)

29. *Thecla*—the apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla, set during Paul's first missionary journey, tells the story of Thecla, a virgin of noble birth in Iconium (in modern Turkey), whose mother and fiancé seek to undermine her determination to follow Paul's call to live a life of chastity. Thecla's mother convinces the governor to expel Paul and to burn Thecla at the stake. Thecla is saved when God sends a storm to douse the flames.

30. *Paul*—Wagner calls attention to the significance of citing Paul here: opponents of expanding women's roles in the church often reference Paul's teaching in support of their views.

31. *society of deaconesses*—Wagner concludes that this reference is to Grand Princess Elizaveta Fedorovna, a sister of Empress Alexandra of Russia, who established the Marfo-Mariinsky Convent (Martha-Mary Cloister of Mercy) in Moscow. The convent's nuns ministered to the sick and wounded, particularly to soldiers wounded in war. Elizaveta strongly advocated restoring the office of deaconess, winning support for her cause from Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow (1898-1912).

Christian lay students. Women also will participate in the liturgy and the management of the church economy. Monastic institutions have lost their significance, and settlements of female intelligentsia will find their best use in the cultural-educational religious mission of the village deaconess. The people thirst for faith and for Christ. Due to the vast spaces of our motherland, a priest cannot serve the mass of parishioners. The deaconess is his collaborator; she is present to administer the last rites to someone who is dying and is caught on the road, and she gives timely help of one kind or another. Taken together, all these activities of the deaconess have tremendous state significance because they represent the organization of Russia on the basis of the principles of an internal moral order, that is, the construction of a building on a stone foundation, on a Christian stone foundation, which alone can support all of humanity. The historical mission of Russia, a spiritual-Christian one, is to show Christ to the world. Without it, Russia will lose its right to exist and the people will be excluded from the midst of the living. The responsibility for the fate of Russia and of humanity rests on you. Now, in these dreadful, fateful moments, women stand guard over the fates of Russia and the world. Woe to you if you turn them aside.

Believing in God the Father; the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and the Divine Holy Spirit,

With the mercy of God,

Slave of the Lord, a Christian person of the Body of Christ,

Deaconess of the heavenly church, daughter of a deceased priest,

Writer-journalist,

Specialist in agriculture, Sister of Mercy,

Liudmila Gerasimova

Petrograd

Transfiguration Street, house 3, apartment 13

PART IV:

Revolutions and Reevaluations

33. Russian Revolution

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

33.1 Church *Sobor's* Response to the Decree (1918)

James W. Cunningham, *The Gates of Hell: The Great Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1917–1918* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Mediterranean and East European Monographs, University of Minnesota, 2002), 306–308. Used by permission of Modern Greek Studies, University of Minnesota.

Two subcommittees of the church *sobor*—the Commission on Relations of Church to State and the Commission on Ecclesiastical Properties and Economy—issued the following response to the decree of the People's Commissars, the body created by the Bolsheviks to restructure Russia.



Figure 158. Holy Sobor, 1917

In these days through which Russia is living, there has been an unprecedented outbreak of violence from one end of the country to another, to the grief and turmoil of the people. This violence has been initiated against the church, organizations of society, and individuals by those currently wielding power.

[The current power] does not limit itself to confiscations, sacrilege, or mocking the clergy; it arrests and murders them. Those wielding

power have the audacity to contemplate the very destruction of the Orthodox Church. To fulfill their satanic scheme, the Soviet of People's Commissars¹ now has issued a decree in which they have separated the church from the state and legalized an open persecution of the Orthodox Church, and likewise all religious societies, Christian and non-Christian. Not abhorring deceitfulness, these enemies of Christ falsely expect to achieve their aims under the guise of being zealots for total religious freedom. In welcoming every activity that broadens freedom of conscience, the *sobor* points out at this time that the effect of said decree will be that the freedom of the Orthodox Church and the freedom of all other religious unions and communities will come to nothing. Under the pretense of separating the church from the state the Soviet of People's Commissars is attempting to compromise the very existence of the church, ecclesiastical foundations, and the clergy.

In view of the alienation of ecclesiastical properties, the decree in question strives to destroy religious education and religious services. It proclaims that no ecclesiastical-religious society has the right to possess property and that all property held in Russia by ecclesiastical and religious organizations has become, according to the decree, the people's possessions. In that way all Orthodox churches and monastic cloisters, in which rest all the relics of revered Orthodox saints, have become the property of every citizen, regardless of religious persuasion. Christians, Jews, Muslims, even pagans have equal access to the most sacred items reserved for divine services—the holy cross, the Holy Gospels, the consecrated vessels, the sacred miracle-working icons. They have now been put at the disposal of government authorities who can hand them over or not hand them over for church use to whomever they choose.

Let the Orthodox people understand that they stand to lose the churches of God and their sacred relics. Once all the holdings of the church have been confiscated, it will be impossible to dedicate anything at all for its use, since everything dedicated can be seized, according to the purpose of the decree. The support of churches, monasteries, and the clergy itself will be impossible.

That is not all. The seizure of the press has prevented the very possibility of the church's independent publication of Gospels, and of any clerical or liturgical books in sufficient numbers or without defect.

1. *Soviet of People's Commissars*—the executive body of the new Soviet government, which originally consisted of sixteen people.

Besides that, the decree infringes on the pastors of the church. It states that no one may respond to his religious calling, if it distracts him from his civil obligations. That means they are obliged to perform military duty, which is forbidden to clergy in the eighty-third apostolic canon. In addition to that, the servant of the altar is forbidden to educate the people. The very expounding of the law of God can be undertaken neither in state schools nor in private schools.

Likewise they have vowed to close all religious educational institutions. The churches are closed and cannot be used by their own pastors.

The decree states that no government activity, or legal activity, or public undertaking can be accompanied by any religious rites or ceremonies. In so doing, the decree sacrilegiously tears asunder all connection between the government and any manifestation of religious faith.

On the basis of the above enumerated facts, the Holy *Sobor* decrees that:

1. In view of the law on freedom of conscience, the decree on separation of church and state issued by the Soviet of People's Commissars reveals itself to be a fraudulent transgression on every facet of the life of the Orthodox Church and is an act of open persecution against it.

2. Every participation in putting into effect that decree hostile to the church, or any attempt to introduce into life anything incompatible with the Orthodox Church, will bring on the perpetrators the penalty of excommunication from the church in accordance with the seventy-third canon of the holy apostles and the thirteenth canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

Mindful of the prayers of the holy martyrs through whom many times the efforts of the people have saved Russia, the *Sobor* summons all the Orthodox people, both now and of old, to gather around their churches and monastic cloisters for the defense of desecrated sacred places. The pastors and sheep of the flock of Christ will suffer abuse, but God will not be mocked. Let the stern judgment of God be on the audacious blasphemers and persecutors of the church. And let all its faithful children bear in mind that it is our obligation to bear the struggle against dark activities of the sons of perdition, as Orthodox and Russians good and holy, for everyone, without which life itself would hold no purpose for us.

34. Soviet Propaganda

William Husband, a scholar of religion in the Soviet Union, has written extensively about the Bolsheviks' efforts to replace religion with science—to create a new, pragmatic, scientific “mass consciousness.” Antireligious propagandists in the early 1920s

generally incorporated science into their curricula of lectures, and elementary explanations of meteorology, electricity, and common scientific principles became a regular feature in periodicals. As one Soviet newspaper summarized matters in 1923, to teach the scientific history of humanity was, by definition, to conduct antireligious propaganda. Party publications repeatedly asserted that illustrated articles on evolution, human gestation, geology, and the similarities of Orthodox beliefs to those found in other cultures conveyed basic information that challenged Christian faith.¹

Bolshevik publications in the early 1920s

gleefully reported when priests tried to produce rain and failed or when an unmarried female bore a clergyman a son after he 'stared into her eyes.' More soberly they pointed out that peasants regularly went hungry several months a year but still

1. William B. Husband, *Godless Communists: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 74.

contributed bread to the church, or they noted that the pay of the priest for one year was equal to the cost of a tractor.”²

Health educators warned that Communion spoons, the exchange of ritual kisses, and touching holy objects spread tuberculosis, syphilis, scarlet fever, and diphtheria.³

The most interesting and vigorous antireligious efforts were those conducted by the League of the Militant Godless, an organization affiliated with (but not quite controlled by) the Soviet state, whose members in the early 1920s trashed the interiors of churches. Later in the decade, writes Daniel Peris, the League organized

demonstrations, speeches, discussion “circles,” lectures, “evenings,” plays, “godless corners,” and “wall newspapers” in public places. Councils orchestrated “public” meetings to demand the closure of churches, the prohibition of bell ringing, and the seizure of church bells for industrialization. Prosperous League councils might create an antireligious museum in a former church, or at least antireligious displays in the local history museum. The League’s central council also sponsored radio broadcasts and administered a central antireligious museum in Moscow.⁴

Peris argues that the League’s anticlerical propaganda

took advantage of the population’s ambivalent attitude toward the local priest, who was seen as necessary for the performance of rituals but was often resented for living off the villagers. Although the terms of the clergy-parishioner relationship had changed dramatically as a result of the Revolution—parishioners now controlled the parish, and clergy in general were under siege—the regime brought its prerevolutionary attitudes and prejudices to the propaganda directed at the clergy. Propaganda organs in the 1920s provided an unending stream of verse, fiction, caricatures, and supposed news accounts ridiculing and attacking priests.⁵

The state itself offered gloomy portrayals of those oppressed by religion, coupled with happy visions of prosperous peasants

2. Ibid., 79.

3. Ibid., 75.

4. Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 69.

5. Ibid., 76.

finding meaning through agriculture rather than prayer, students finding truth in school rather than church, and converted priests engaged in social service rather than ecclesiastic liturgies.

In other words, eliminating religion was not sufficient; religion had to be replaced by something else.

34.1 Texts

34.1.1 Mother of God as a Pagan Remnant (1930)

“Kul't bogoroditsy: bozhestvennaia mat' i bozhestvennyi mladenets,” in A. A. Zakharova et. al., *Atlas po istorii religii*, (Moscow: Ateist, 1930): 181–183. Public domain. Translated by Bryn Geffert. CC BY-SA.

A favorite tactic of Soviet antireligious propaganda was to posit links between pagan and Christian traditions. If Christianity could be shown to share beliefs, practices, images, and other traits with primitive religions, then perhaps Russian Christians might decide that Christianity was, in fact, no different from the antiquated traditions that preceded it.

An example of this approach is a collection of images from the *Atlas po istorii religii* (*Atlas of the History of Religion*), published in 1930. The images and captions below come from a chapter titled “The Cult of the *Bogoroditsy*: The Divine Mother and the Divine Infant.” *Bogoroditsa* is the Russian Orthodox term for the Mother of God.



Figure 159. Gator

423. The Egyptian goddess Gator, breastfeeding the Egyptian savior-god, Gor. This is one of the most ancient, cultic forms of the god-bearing mother; her appearance is similar to the related cult of the god-bearing mother, Isis (also considered the mother of Gor), a cult prevalent throughout most of Egypt. The cult of Gator evolved over time into the cult of Isis. The cattle horns indicate totemic features of that cult: Gator, like Isis, is a deified cow.



Figure 160. Ishida

424. Ishida, breastfeeding Gore. The wife of the Egyptian god Osiris (who died and rose again) is the mother of Gor. The cult of Isis was one of the most widespread cults of the god-bearing mother in Egypt; during the Roman Empire (especially during the first two centuries of that empire) the cult spread widely all along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It strongly influenced the cult of the Christian Mother of God. This image of Isis reflects the influence of Hellenism.



Figure 161. Devaki

425. The Indian god-bearing mother Devaki, breastfeeding the infant Krishna, one of the human embodiments of the Hindu savior-god, Vishnu. The name “Krishna,” in the opinion of several scholars, is closely related to the word “Christ.”



Figure 162. Hera

426. Hera, the Greek mother of god and wife of Zeus (and also, according to some, the [figure as the] fertility goddess Demeter), breast-feeding the Greek god Bacchus, who died and rose again. (Bacchus is the god of grapes, ecstasy, and drunkenness.)



Figure 163. Virgin Mary

427. The Christian Mother of God, Maria (in a painting by the artist Fröschl), breastfeeding the newborn Christ (sixteenth century). [...]



Figure 164. Indian goddess

429. An Indian goddess with an infant in her arms. Below are representations of a lamb and an eagle. Both totemic images subsequently entered Christianity and can be found in representations of the evangelists and Christ.



Figure 165. Guan-Yin

430. The Chinese goddess of fertility and patroness of motherhood, Guan-Yin, with an infant in her arms. The Madonna in Christianity is also considered the patroness of birth and motherhood. There are even special icons of the Mother of God with a child in her womb. [...]

34.2 Photographs

34.2.1 Antireligious Corner in an Elementary School

René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 191. All attempts to locate rightsholder failed.

Most Soviet classrooms contained a corner housing antireligious and atheistic literature. Here elementary school students diligently peruse propaganda.



Figure 166. Antireligious corner in an elementary school, n.d.

34.2.2 Christmas Festival of the Godless

René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 190. All attempts to locate rightsholder failed.



Figure 167. Christmas festival of the Godless, n.d. Note the characters in the center playing a priest and a rabbi.

34.2.3 Mummified Body of a Counterfeiter

René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 188. All attempts to locate rightsholder failed.

This corpse appeared in an antireligious museum to demonstrate that a criminal's body might be just as well preserved as the "miraculously" preserved body of a saint.



Figure 168. Mummified body of a counterfeiter, n.d.

34.2.4 Red Mass by the League of the Militant Godless

René Fülöp-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 190. All attempts to locate rightsholder failed.

A public procession ridiculing religion. The figures on the right are meant to suggest rabbis.



Figure 169. Red Mass by the League of the Militant Godless, n.d.

34.3 Antireligious Posters

The Bolsheviks excelled at producing simple, direct propaganda, easily understood by the masses. The poster—cheap and easy to distribute—emerged as the most effective tool for taking messages directly to a largely illiterate populace.

Both hacks and talented artists embraced the medium, the latter developing the poster into a unique and vibrant artform. The following examples of atheistic propaganda are hardly artistic masterpieces. They do, however, demonstrate various attempts (ranging from scare tactics to mockery) to wean the public from the church.

34.3.1 Comrade Lenin Cleanses the Earth of Scum
(1920)



Figure 170. Comrade Lenin cleanses the earth of scum, 1920

34.3.2 Hodgepodge Mother of God (early 1920s)

This “icon” represents four “saints” of the counter-revolution that is, four military leaders—Chernov, Denikin, Kolchak, Iudenich—who fought against the Bolsheviks in the Russian civil war. Admirial Kolchak, represented as the Christ child, holds a document reading, “Execute every worker and peasant.”



Figure 171. Hodgepodge Mother of God, early 1920s

34.3.3 Temple of Machine Worshippers (early 1920s)

Here a Soviet artist reimagines a Byzantine church as a temple of labor. Note the dome and arches at the top of the image. Communist agitators replace angels in the spandrels. Pulley wheels serve as the angels'/agitators' heads. An enormous engine replaces the altar, and workers constitute the congregation.



Figure 172. Temple of machine worshippers, early 1920s

34.3.4 Toward Complete Collectivization of the USSR! (ca. 1930)



Figure 173. Toward the complete collectivization of the USSR, ca. 1930

Text: “With the plow of the socialist tractor we shall completely weed out the vestiges of capitalistic relations and the ideology of the small, private property-holders, and we will clear the road leading to a communist society.”

34.3.5 Religion Is Poison. Safeguard the Children.
(1930)

Note: The building on the right is labeled “School.”



Figure 174. Religion is poison; safeguard the children, 1930

34.3.6 Toxic Religious Imperialism (1930)



Figure 175. Toxic religious imperialism, 1930

Text: “The road to the colonial oppression of capitalism and imperialism is paved by priests and missionaries and assisted by the poisonous narcotic of religion.”

34.3.7 The Holy Yoke (1930)



Figure 176. The holy yoke, 1930

Text: “On the right, an ancient village, poverty-stricken and dark. In the field one can see a skinny old nag with a plow. Behind the plow is the head of a tired, sleeping farmer. Leaning over him, an old woman tenderly crosses her forehead. On a fluffy cloud above, God, the Holy Mother, and angels try to place a yoke on the old woman. Ignorance and poverty are strangling the people [...] due to the stupor induced by priests and the yoke.

“On the left everything is different. Instead of a church—a school. Instead of the old nag—a powerful tractor and collective, harmonious labor. The inhabitants of every hut know that religion is a narcotic, that the sectarian, the shaggy ‘father,’ and the kulak⁶ are enemies of the peasants. All have long ago parted from the gods and the village, and they work in concert with each other on the collective farm.”

6. *kulak*—a wealthy farmer. The Soviets forcibly requisitioned land owned by *kulaks*, transferring it to collective farms.

34.3.8 Press Day (1931)



Figure 177. Press day, 1931

Text: "Long live the Bolshevik, Atheist Press!"

34.3.9 Club Instead of Church (1931)



Figure 178. Club instead of church, 1931

Text: “After the October Revolution, the indelible harm caused by religion became clear to every conscious worker, along with an understanding of how foreign religion is to the working people.

“Now millions of proletarians and laboring peasants stand under the banner of the ‘militant godless.’ Churches—those lairs of priests’ lies—are closing in accord with the persistent desires of the workers. Buildings are adapted for clubs, reading rooms, and schools. These dwellings—which for so long served the goals of capital and kept the workers in bondage—are becoming the hearth of culture and ammunition in the struggle for socialism.

“However, the gigantic victories attained in the fight against the narcotic of religion should not conceal that fact that—although the priesthood is defeated—it is not utterly destroyed. Priests and sectarians continue their noxious ‘work’ among the illiterate and the backward segments of the peasantry. In some mines, plants, state farms, and machine tractor stations, Easter and other ‘holidays’ are still cele-

brated, leading to a growth in absenteeism. The class enemy—the *kulak*,⁷ the priest, the saboteur—are trying to employ their ‘yes men’ to agitate forcefully against collectivization.⁸

“More vigilance, and a decisive rebuff to the sallies of the class enemy!

“It is particularly difficult to struggle against the vestiges of religion in the village. Here the *kulak* still brutally resists. He conducts his fight through the church. This is why every church that has been turned into a club or a reading room must have society’s special attention; it must become a genuine hearth of culture; it must rally around itself the ranks of atheists and those who fight for proletarian culture.”

7. *kulak*—technically a rich peasant, although the term often referred to any peasant who resisted collectivization.

8. *collectivization*—Stalin’s policy, implemented between 1928 and 1940, of forcibly consolidating privately held land into collective farms. Millions lost their land and their lives during the process.

34.3.10 Thus Teaches the Church (1931)



Figure 179. Thus teaches the church (1931)

Text: “Lenin said, ‘Religion is a kind of spiritually impure brandy, in which the slaves of capital drown their humanity and their demands for a life befitting a human being.’ Religion helps the capitalists exploit the working class, squeezing out its last juices. Capitalism is the god that all religions and churches of the world serve. All religions place women in the subservient position of slaves. ‘A woman,’ teaches Chinese religion, ‘is simply a shadow and echo of her husband.’ ‘Let the wife fear her husband,’ says the Orthodox Church.

“Here is the fate religion grants to women: the steamy kitchen; the washtub with dirty clothes; penal servitude at the domestic hearth; beatings by husbands. Religion helped the bourgeoisie keep women in slavery for thousands of years. Only Soviet power liberated women and gave them the possibility of building a socialist society in which they have full rights. Millions of women now actively participate in the construction of socialism and help fulfill the five-year plan⁹ in shock brigades, factories and plants, state farms, and collective farms. Although there are still families in which the narcosis of religion—the oppressive legacy of landowners and the capitalist order—has not died out, the time is not far off when a new, communist way of life will completely displace religion, which reduces women to the condition of slaves.

“Tear off the remnants of religion’s bonds—they are impeding the construction of socialism!”

9. *five-year plan*—the first of several economic plans produced by a centralized planning committee, which laid out goals for industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture.

Text: “The collectivization of the poor and middle peasantry is proceeding in giant leaps: at the present time the Soviet Union has the largest agricultural holdings of any country in the world. By 1 August 1931, 57.9 percent of peasant farms had been collectivized; two-thirds of agricultural cultivation occurred on collective farms. In important grain regions such as Ukraine, the Northern Caucuses, the lower Volga, etc., collectivization is already complete. Collectivization must be finished everywhere by 1932–1933.

“Still, resistance to collectivization from capitalist elements in the villages is not weakening. The *kulak*—who assassinates Soviet activists, sets fire to Soviet property and sabotages collective-farm vehicles—can be linked to the priest in his struggle against collectivization. The priest and the *kulak* have set themselves the task of preventing private landowners from joining collective farms, while destroying ones that already exist. [...]

“The priest threatens private landowners—those who are joining collective farms as well as those who have already joined—with God’s wrath and the agonies of Hell. The priest and *kulak* invent all kinds of miracles to prove that the collective farms displease God. They fool the most backward elements of the peasantry, especially women. Agitation by priests and *kulaks* against collective farms grows in strength during major church holidays.

“And this agitation sometimes succeeds. After church holidays private landowners frequently rescind their declarations to join collective farms. Priests and *kulaks* distract those already on collective farms who have not freed themselves from religious superstitions, by organizing religious processions and various holidays. Such distractions shorten the number of work days and shatter labor discipline on the farms.

“More vigilance against the machinations of the priest and *kulak*!

“More attention to antireligious propaganda!

“We must always remember the words of V.I. Lenin: ‘The more religious superstitions are displaced by socialist consciousness, the closer is the day of victory for the proletariat and for delivering all oppressed classes from the enslavement of contemporary society.’

“In the picture above, the priest and *kulak* compose a letter, allegedly ‘from Heaven,’ which threatens God’s retribution for those who join collective farms.”

34.3.12 Enough (n.d.)

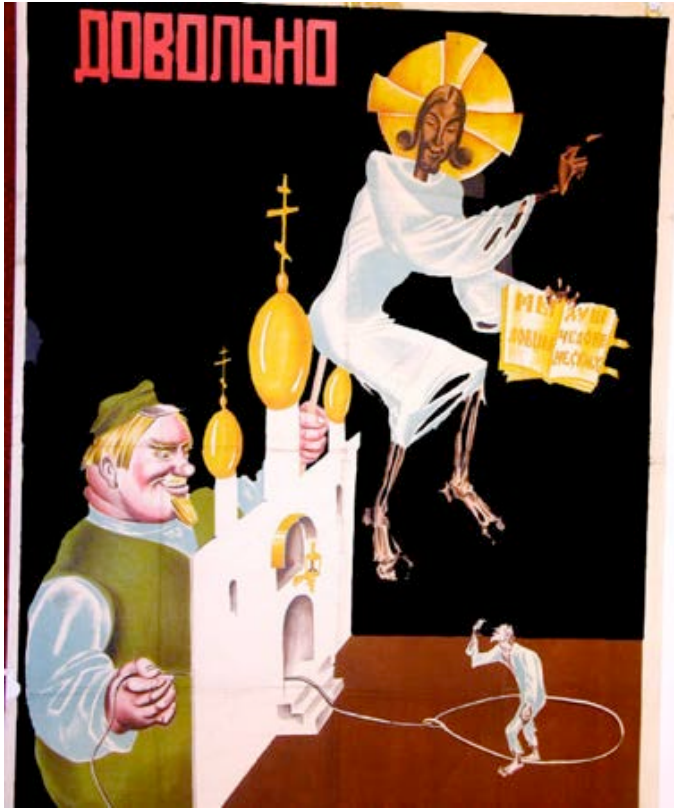


Figure 181. Enough, n.d.

Text: “In his malicious and persistent attempts to wreck socialist construction by disrupting grain procurements,¹⁰ the *kulak* depends directly on an army of priests and sectarians that attempts, in the name of God, to force the masses of poor and middle peasants to refuse to hand over surplus grain and goods to Soviet power.”

10. *procurements*—mandates requiring peasants to turn over portions of their harvest to the state.

34.3.14 Glory to the Great Stalin (1950)

Note: This picture intentionally suggests any number of pictures of Christ surrounded by admirers and supplicants.



Figure 183. Glory to the great Stalin, 1950

34.4 Antireligious Propaganda in Early Soviet Film

Lenin purportedly termed motion pictures “the most important of all arts.” Though possibly apocryphal, the statement accurately reflects Lenin’s faith in the educational and propagandistic value of film.

The Bolsheviks nationalized the Russian film industry in 1919, placing it under the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment, the national educational bureau. Such placement made sense given the Bolsheviks’ belief in the didactic power of moving images. During the 1920s special trains traveled the countryside with projectors, conducting screenings in towns, in villages and on farms.

We include clips from three films to illustrate the Bolsheviks’ use of this new medium for antireligious propaganda. The first two were directed by Sergei Eisenstein, one of the great directors of all time.

34.4.1 *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)

Sergei Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* (Chatsworth, CA: Corinth Films, 1998);
YouTube, <http://youtu.be/0IIUt549604>. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

In 1958 a group of international critics voted *Battleship Potemkin* the best film ever made. Commissioned by the Soviet Central Executive Committee, its plot concerns a mutiny of sailors against cruel officers and unbearable conditions on the tsarist battleship *Potemkin* in the revolutionary year of 1905. While these events occurred twelve years before the Bolshevik Revolution, Eisenstein employs them here to suggest conditions in 1917.



Figure 184. Video: *Battleship Potemkin*, 1925

Clip #1: Sailors complain about rotten meat slated for the day's meal. The ship's doctor inspects the meat, finds it crawling with maggots, and declares it fit to eat.

Clip #2: Sailors on kitchen duty wash their officers' china, imprinted with the verse "Give us this day our daily bread." In light of

the sailors' diet, this verse suggests a certain hypocrisy within Christian piety.

Clip #3: Tensions escalate, and the commander orders recalcitrant sailors to be covered with a tarp and shot. The order incites a mutiny. The ship's priest is revealed to be in cahoots with the oppressive officers.

34.4.2 *October* (1927)

Sergei Eisenstein, *October* (West Long Branch, NJ: Corinth Films, 1989); *YouTube*, http://youtu.be/yKXwse5T_og. All attempts to contact publisher failed.

October, also directed by Eisenstein, is an account of the October Revolution of 1917, when the Bolsheviks seized power from the Provisional Government (the temporary government established after the overthrow of the tsar). In this groundbreaking film, Eisenstein frequently employed the technique of “montage,” or the rapid juxtaposition of images to explore complex themes through visual associations.



Figure 185. Video: *October*, 1927

Clip #1: Eisenstein intercuts images of revolutionaries (peasants, workers, and soldiers) tearing down a statue of Tsar Alexander III with images of a priest censuring the congregation during an Orthodox church service. The intent is to link the church to the corrupt tsarist regime.

Clip #2: General Kornilov, the Russian army's conservative chief of staff and an opponent of the Bolsheviks, marches toward St. Petersburg (then Petrograd) to force the resignation of the Provisional Government. Although the Bolsheviks had no great love for the Provisional Government, they feared Kornilov as a reactionary threat to revolutionary ideals and to themselves. The clip begins with a warning of Kornilov's march on the city, followed by an intentionally bizarre montage of religious imagery (Orthodox, Buddhist, animist) meant to link religion to political reaction and the threatening possibility of a restored monarchy. Religion here appears as strange, backward, and menacing.

34.4.3 *Earth* (1930)

Aleksandr Dovzhenko, *Earth* (Chatsworth, CA : Image Entertainment, 2001).
YouTube, <http://youtu.be/G46AdqnRmiQ>. Courtesy of Film Preservation Associates.

Aleksandr Dovzhenko's *Earth* is a celebration of collectivization, the forced migration of hundreds of thousands of peasants to state-controlled, collective farms. In *Earth*, the sensible, poor peasants come to realize the advantages of cooperative, mechanized agriculture, while the evil, rich peasants (*kulaks*) plan to undermine the collective farm. These *kulaks* murder Basil, one of the film's heroes, who helps bring the collective farm its first tractor. The murder transforms Basil into a secular martyr.



Figure 186. Video: *Earth*, 1930

Clip #1: The clip opens with Basil's father mourning his son's death. The father responds to a knock at the door to find the village

priest, who has come to console the family. Basil's father, angry and grieving, tells the priest, "There ain't no God. ... And you neither."

In the next scene, Basil's father urges the peasants to hold a secular rather than an Orthodox funeral for Basil. An inspiring procession to the grave-site helps unite the peasantry in service to the collective farm. Reactionary peasants watch helplessly and fret about this blasphemous abomination.

A number of scenes repeatedly intercut the funeral procession, including those of a wealthy landowner raging over the prospect of losing his land, a woman giving birth (signifying in part the birth of a new, secular society), and Basil's grieving fiancée. The priest returns to his church, where he suffers a nervous breakdown.

34.5 Biography

34.5.1 Aleksandr Osipov, “Through a Thousand Why’s” (1966)

Aleksandr Osipov, “Through a Thousand Why’s,” in *Humanism, Atheism: Principles and Practice*, ed. Inga Kichanova (Moscow: Novosti, 1966), 187–248. All attempts to contact publisher failed.



Figure 187. Aleksandr Osipov, n.d.

The following autobiography, published in 1966 by a major Soviet press, is an account by Aleksandr Osipov (1911-1967)—a former priest and professor at the Leningrad Ecclesiastical Academy—of his initial embrace of the Orthodox Church and his subsequent loss of faith. In contrast to the heavy-handed broadsides examined so far, this autobiography represents a fairly gentle piece of propaganda. True, it trots out a number of old stereotypes and bromides: priests, for example, appear as pompous, patronizing, and reactionary. Yet in this account the church is not evil or malicious; it is simply misguided and ineffective. Believers are not scheming capitalists or rapacious frauds; they are sincere and good people who have not yet discovered

Marxist truths. Clergy are not vermin or “terrorists in cassocks,” but well-meaning, if ignorant and hopeless, do-gooders. Here education—not persecution—is the solution to the “religious problem.” At the end of his personal narrative, Osipov provides a standard Marxist critique of religion.

[...] How did I become a believer and a priest of the church? How did I believe, live and work when I was a shepherd and theologian? I was born in Tallinn¹ (then called Reval) in 1911 in the family of an official at the local state bank department. My mother was the daughter of a naval officer. [...]

My mother and grandmother were what you could call practical believers. They attended church but were never fanatical. My grandmother was a Kronstadt² seamstress. She had attended school for only two years when she married an officer, thus finding herself in the society of the petty nobility. But even there she had managed to command general respect. She read much; was very kind and just. As for religion, she would always repeat grandfather’s words: “If you want to keep your faith, keep away from the clergy.” [...]

[...] Circles of the so-called Russian Christian Student Movement (RCSM)³ were organized in Tallinn. Though called *student*, they were open to intellectuals of practically any age—from ancient grannies to senior schoolchildren (later peasant youth circles were affiliated, along with boys’ and girls’ guards, and Sunday schools for younger children). Thus Christian propaganda reached to people of all ages in all social

1. *Tallinn*—the capital of Estonia. Estonia was part of the Russian Empire until it declared independence in February 1918, that is, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. It remained an independent country until Soviet troops occupied it, with Germany’s consent, in 1940. Hence Osipov lived within the Russian Empire until he was seven years old; he lived in independent (non-Soviet) Estonia until roughly age thirty-nine, at which point Estonia became part of the Soviet Union.

2. *Kronstadt*—a city on Kotlin Island in the Gulf of Finland, approximately twenty-seven kilometers from St. Petersburg.

3. *Russian Student Christian Movement*—a movement of Russian émigrés in Western Europe, which aimed to attract students back to Christianity. The RCSM had close ties to the Russian Orthodox church in its early years, but tensions developed later over the role of the church’s hierarchy in setting the organization’s agenda.

groups. Influenced by girls in my form who had entered one of these circles earlier, I finally found myself in it too. At that period I had been suffering from lack of companions of my own age and the absence of a fruitful, spiritually full life.

The circle bustled with the spirit of youthful fervor and a keen interest in Russia. The atmosphere was gay and friendly. Immediately I fell: my own enthusiasm awakened. I was happy at having finally obtained an opportunity to work and to learn something about my motherland.⁴ It seemed to me that both my nostalgia and my longing for company had been quenched. Soon I became a leader of a youth circle that began to be called “wonderful” for the strong spirit of comradeship that reigned in it.

At first we met at private apartments and later the RCSM was given quarters in the vast basement of the Aleksandr-Nevsky Cathedral [in Talinn]. One must not think these circles occupied themselves merely with religion as such. Problems of history, literature, natural sciences, ethics—everything attracted us. But our supervisors closely watched over our activities and directed them into the channels of religion. Finally we all became convinced that religion, God and belief in him were the alpha and omega of all our being, penetrating life in all its expressions. Our Paris center⁵ supplied us with literature—which, along with purely religious discussions, contained criticism of opposing religions and opposing ideologies—plus books permeated with the idea of the baseness and “bestiality” of materialism. Much was written about Russia, but a Russia tormented, defiled, spat on and trampled by “sinners in the flesh,”⁶ who were ruthlessly destroying everything good, forcing the country onto the brink of poverty and destruction; a Russia the communists had pushed off the path of progress and knowledge back to the epoch of primitive savagery. That was what was fed to us day in and day out.

When I was old enough to appreciate Dostoevsky, I was shaken by that “onion”⁷ that was in possession of the heroine of *The Brothers*

4. *motherland*—although living in Estonia, Osipov is Russian.

5. *Paris center*—many Russian émigrés settled in Paris after the Bolshevik Revolution. Here Orthodox academics founded the *Institut de théologie orthodoxe Saint Serge* (St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute), a seminary that trained Russian priests in exile.

6. *sinners in the flesh*—the Soviet government.

7. *onion*—a character in *The Brothers Karamazov* relates the following story

Karamazov—a symbol of unforgettable good, which alone was capable of pulling one out of any Hell. I began to wish that people could have more of those “onions,” to which they could cling while ascending the ladder of humaneness higher and further. [...] And the field where these “onions” were grown to save humanity was Christianity and the church of Jesus Christ. At that time life conducted an experiment on me—cast me “to burn in the fiery furnace,” showed me the reverse side of social and human existence. It was then that the first *why* emerged before me.

The salvation of man, truth, love and goodness lay in Christian morality and Orthodox culture. That was the source of consolation, mercy and almsgiving, strengthened by the courage of patience and placid endurance of afflictions in hope of entering into the kingdom of Heaven and partaking of its everlasting blessings. This was all true, but, on the other hand, why had one to help beggars and consider poverty natural? Why had one to comfort the persecuted and oneself endure persecution? Why had one to weep with the grievers and placidly endure grief? Why was it that the surrounding world was the source of all misfortunes that I, a Christian, had to cure? For in healing the sick one must not heal the symptoms, even such unpleasant ones as fever, inflammation and pain, but the source of these symptoms. My *why*'s were at that time settled by my belief: there is providence and the provider,

from her grandmother: “Once upon a time there was a woman, and she was wicked as wicked could be, and she died. And not one good deed was left behind her. The devils took her and threw her into the lake of fire. And her guardian angel stood thinking: What good deed of hers can I remember to tell God? Then he remembered and said to God: ‘Once she pulled up an onion and gave it to a beggar woman.’ And God answered: ‘Now take that same onion, hold it out to her in the lake, let her take hold of it, and pull, and if you pull her out of the lake, she can go to Paradise, but if the onion breaks, she can stay where she is.’ The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her: ‘Here, woman,’ he said, ‘take hold of it and I’ll pull.’ And he began pulling carefully, and had almost pulled her all the way out, when other sinners in the lake saw her being pulled out and all began holding on to her so as to be pulled out with her. But the woman was wicked as wicked could be, and she began to kick them with her feet: ‘It’s me who’s getting pulled out, not you; it’s my onion, not yours.’ No sooner did she say it than the onion broke. And the woman fell back into the lake and is burning there to this day. And the angel wept and went away.” Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkhonsky (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 352.

whose truth is not our human truth, but a supernatural, superhuman truth.

On the other hand, how is it possible to create a reasonable being, man, and then let him break his mind's will and curiosity against the impenetrability of mystery? Is one who can see born to stumble about in the darkness? Is one taught music to be deprived later of the faculty of hearing? Our spiritual guides realized that doubts were tormenting us young ones. [...]

[One day a priest] talked to me for a long time about the lofty tasks of the pastoral services. Comfort them. Wipe their tears. Help them find ways out of the dead-alleys of life. Heal the heart-broken. Erect a pivot in their souls so that they will want to live and work for the better, for the truth. Proclaim lofty ideals. Be the clarion of the supreme power on the sinful earth, torn by viciousness and the wiles of Satan. [...]

My mind was in turmoil as I walked home—the proposition was too unexpected. Never before had such a thought entered my mind. My religious outlook had become strong and clear. But in my mind I saw myself only as a righteous person and good Christian, capable of realizing lofty ideals and performing good works only in the secular field. My only doubt was about what path to take: naturalist, geologist, or a literary worker. And now still another path lay open before me, a path about which I had never thought.

When I told my mother about it, she left the matter for me to decide: "It's your life ahead of you and you must make the choice yourself." I am thankful to her for that. At least now I cannot reproach anybody for that decision and for my twisted life. I chose it myself, walked down it myself, stumbled myself, fell, rose and extricated myself.

I began to analyze what had been offered to me. What were the pros?

From my early youth, when I was only beginning to think, I had always wanted to lead a fruitful, bright life, to be useful to society. And now in the church I saw an opportunity of helping people, of consoling and supporting them and teaching them goodness. I accepted religion and everything associated with it with an open heart, without any considerations. It seemed to me that a golden fund of goodness was crammed into the pages of religious books. I saw a great deal of good words and wisdom in them. Actually there was no need to convince me of all that.

By that time life had shown me enough of its dark sides. I saw families driven out of their homes for overdue rent. I saw beggars and prostitutes. I saw the “slave market”—the illegal labor exchange where underage shepherds and farm hands were hired for the “gray barons”—the *kulaks*.⁸ In search of a job I myself had once almost become such a “slave.” I knew the fight for a piece of bread, for soles to my boots, for patches to my trousers. I knew that people came to the church with their grief and their needs, their sorrow, anxiety and suffering. I was convinced that the church supported charity, urged people to help each other and itself helped them. Behind the preaching of conciliation with everyday life and its striking inequality and exploitation I could not distinguish the role of the church as the opium for the people,⁹ blunting their striving for the right to a genuinely happy life, free of oppression and inequality. The church seemed a real shelter for “those weary and heavy-laden,” “a mother wiping away the tears of all the earth.” It seemed very honorable to be among those “wiping away the tears.”

What were the contras?

First of all, the cassock,¹⁰ the long hair and the beard. After all, I was so young and a son of the *bubikopf* age.¹¹ I immediately told my confessor about it. He answered by preaching on respect for tradition, that these were the “indispensable attributes” distinguishing one who belongs to the church in the eyes of the common people, attributes reflecting “the eternity of the church” against the background of the rapidly changing “fashions of this world.” He also said that the simpletons who only lived by the traditional rites and did not perceive the essence of religion should not be driven away from the church by breaking these customs, even though ridiculous, such as the cassock, the long hair, the kissing of hands, etc.

I expressed agreement with everything, only vaguely sensing the contempt for those simpletons behind the explanation of the

8. *kulaks*—rich peasants, often demonized by Soviet authorities.

9. *opium for the people*—Karl Marx characterized religion as the “opium of the people,” an anesthetizing force that prevents the oppressed from realizing their true plight.

10. *cassock*—a black, ankle-length robe worn by Orthodox seminary students, priests, and monks.

11. *bubikopf age*—the age of short hair (the “bob” cut); the 1920s.

priest-intellectual, and reconciled myself, though with a sad feeling, to the inevitable evil.

Another thing that added to my indecision was the deliberate pompousness of the church services and the wordiness of Orthodox prayers, which were in such discord with the evangelic laconism of “Our Father,” the model prayer left by Christ. The explanations I received on this point were in the same vein as those I mentioned above. When my confessor spoke about the archbishop’s services, during which it is sometimes hard to say to whom they burn incense and bow more—God or the priest—he remarked that he himself did not like [it] all that very much; that this and many other things were unnecessary tinsel, a bad legacy of Byzantium with her palaces and medieval etiquette, a result of limited copying. [...] “But,” he noted, “people are used to it. It’s rooted deep in their soul and body; it’s a custom. The believers do not think about the essence of the rites. They simply think that it is pleasing to God, that ‘this is how our fathers and grandfathers saved themselves,’ and you should not undermine their unassuming faith. We live on the earth, we are ‘material-spiritual’ beings, so it is only natural that because of our imperfection, worldly rites envelope the spiritual truths of the church. Look here,” he went on,

see those icons? Great masters instilled in them lofty ideas that were burning in their hearts. But not all could rise to the heights and they understood methods of glorifying in their own way. They replaced loftiness by wealth and noble rank, enchained grandeur in the gold and silver of icon frames and trimmings, studded them with precious stones, hung up all kinds of embroidered towels as in a tastelessly decorated apartment, ribbons, paper flowers—everything that caught their childish imagination. But to disclose the truth to them means that we who understand much will cut the ground from under the feet of those who understand little. One must educate them gradually. And then they will learn how to distinguish between the real and the outer glitter.

In my youthful fervor it seemed to me that my doubts were being replaced by yet another lofty aspect of pastoral services—that of educating. I failed to realize how much that was humiliating for those “little ones” who fed the church and its “shepherds” with their pennies, was concealed behind those words.

Only decades later did I come to realize the horrible duality of that view—lofty truths for some, and tawdry services and torrents of words—for the others. The priests—carriers of the lofty truth—make

a spectacle of themselves. The ceremony of their robing resembles the morning toilette of the Byzantine emperors and turns it into a rite of toadyism and humiliation. And the higher the office of the “shepherd” the greater the humiliation. If it is a priest, his robes are brought in by servers, readers, and deacons while another deacon is incensing. All of them are bowing and bowing endlessly, kissing his hands, bending their heads low, buttoning the numerous little buttons, pulling the strings on the belly of the “holy servant” who is standing before them as a live idol. In the case of a patriarch, the robes are brought in by archpriests¹² and priests, who demonstrate the hierarchy of humiliation. Moreover the patriarch is not addressed as “your eminence,” but “your beatitude,” a title, which, perhaps, can properly be used only in addressing the Virgin Mary. [...]

I finished secondary school with honors, and in January 1938¹³ entered the Orthodox Department of the Theological Faculty at Tartu¹⁴ University. [...]

My contacts with the medical students [at Tartu University] helped me to realize, even when I was still a student, that the so-called demonic possession mentioned in religious writings was just a naïve explanation of real diseases of the brain and the nervous system, natural for the times when the Gospels were written and for the Middle Ages. At the same time I realized the significance of suggestion and auto-suggestion in the state of vigil,¹⁵ the meaning of exaltation, hallucination, hypnosis, as well as the mechanism of the so-called miraculous healings.

But even this knowledge did not undermine my belief. Not in the least! I only worshipped the creator, who had expended on his creatures so much strength and wisdom that to reveal it required of humanity thousands of years of history, social progress and scientific knowledge (and how much more time it will require, I thought).

It is remarkable that this “medical amendment” to my religious convictions played a very significant part and even resulted in large numbers of believers beginning to consider me a healer and a per-

12. *archpriest*—a priest who supervises a number of parishes.

13. 1938—two years before the Soviet invasion of Estonia. Osipov is now either twenty-six or twenty-seven years old.

14. *Tartu*—the second-largest city in Estonia.

15. *suggestion and auto-suggestion in the state of vigil*—the susceptibility of believers to imagine miracles or ethereal experiences while engaged in worship.

former of miracles (between 1936 and 1940 I managed to “heal” three persons “possessed with demons”).

The first time this happened was in the Tallinn Cathedral of the Transfiguration, where I had been serving temporarily. During the liturgy, not long before the song of the cherubim, I stood in the altar when I suddenly heard a hysterical scream in Estonian: “I shall kill God!” followed by several other screams. I had to come out, for the service had stopped. Three or four strong men were holding an unfortunate, insane woman, who was struggling to free herself. The next second I knew what to do.

It was clear to me that it was only a seizure, that the woman was a faithful believer since she had come to church. I was sure that she thought herself “bewitched and possessed with devils” and, for that reason, feared chastisement from Heaven in answer to her seizure. I decided to try to overcome her disease and undo her psychological complex by reaching her through her own fear and belief. In a loud and imperious voice I ordered “holy water” to be brought in and, having said a prayer, I improvised on the spot. I ordered her to drink it. Trembling she fell to my feet and kissing them pleaded: “No! No! Please don’t! It burns. I’m afraid.” But again I almost shouted: “I command that you drink it!”

The struggle between my will and her diseased mentality went on for about three minutes. Then she got up shaking violently and I poured some water through her parted lips. She screamed and fainted. Not knowing if she could hear me, I commanded: “Lay her down. Let somebody sit with her. She will be cured when she comes to.”

And it really was so. After the service the woman came calm and quiet to thank me. I knew her for years afterwards and she never had another seizure, whereas before they occurred twice a month at the least.

I tried my best to analyze that incident. It was on my mind for a long time. I was absolutely convinced that there had been no evil spirit in that woman. For otherwise (according to the numerous lives of the saints, books of the fathers and ascetic writings) the devil should either have refused to obey me and laughed at my attempts, or else “saddled” me himself as a wrongdoer and a heretic. The fact remained that an experiment based on pure psychology and inspired by the feeling of compassion for the mentally ill wretch came out so brilliantly: the “demon submitted” without having guessed the trick. [...]

Lectures on the Old and the New Testaments were read to us by the German professors—Alexander von Bulmerink (Old Testament) and Otto von Seeseman—both profoundly believing people, whose faith, I would even say, was of crystal purity. Whereas the Orthodox religion even today adheres to the view of the absolutely divine inspiration of the Bible, Protestantism (and, of late, even Catholicism) has long since adopted a more sober approach. [...]

Professor Bulmerink loved his subject and I began to feel the same about it. Though on the insistence of the Synod¹⁶ of the Estonian Orthodox Church, I (its beneficiary) had to write my candidate's and master's theses (for the good of the church) on the pastoral services according to the teaching of St. John the Golden-Mouthed¹⁷ in the light of today, I decided to write my doctor's thesis on the Old Testament, namely on the pre-patriarchal period of Genesis (chapters 1–11), considering it an accumulation of all problems—natural-historical, moral-ethical, anthropological-historical—in which science intermingles with religion, and law and ethics border on religious views as the source of everything, without which religion loses its foundation. [...] Beginning to work I was absolutely sure that the combination of science and religion was not only possible but even natural.

It was that independent study that started my mind working in a direction that later led to a revision of my whole world-outlook.

From the very beginning I was confronted with the necessity of deciding how and to what degree I understood and accepted the concept of “divine inspiration.”

The very first analyzes of the historical contents of the biblical books made it clear to me that they were based on purely human material, only revalued and worked over by religious writers in the light of the doctrine of God's providence on earth and among humanity. I also began to understand the meaning of the numerous editings and changes in those books that had been made over the ages. [...]

I could not fail to see the reflection of ancient eastern myths in “God's word.” Influenced by the teachings of the fathers and also by some knowledge of the school of Catholic interpretation, I learned to see allegories in them.¹⁸ [...]

16. *Synod*—governing body of the church.

17. *St. John the Golden-Mouthed*—John Chrysostom (347–407).

18. *learned to see allegories in them*—came to understand Biblical stories as alle-

Thanks to my knowledge of Protestant and Catholic apologetics and methods of interpreting the Bible, Orthodox stagnation became in my mind a flexible synthesis in which the role of myths, history and literature as expressed in the Bible was moderated by the teaching on their divine arrangement. [...]

The books of the prophets were the citadel of my belief in the scriptures. It seemed to me that in them the spirit gave life to history and the divine permeated the worldly. But there too I could not fail to see the difficulties and contradictions, could not but stop in doubt and meditation.

Did that repulse me from the Bible? Not in the least. On the contrary, my belief in the existence of God was firm, though the deeper I penetrated into theology the more abstract became my understanding of him, the more he turned into an idea far away and high above the world, becoming some imperceptible, moral stimulant. Completely unaware of the fact myself, I was gradually progressing along the path of removing the creator from his creation and transplanting him from the physical world into the world lying beyond mental perception, from an area seemingly real into that definitely unreal, making him a fiction. [...]

[...] I was ordained and appointed a missionary priest for prisons, hospitals, orphanages and houses of worship in the Tallinn district. It was difficult and wearisome work: I had to visit people whose lives had been broken, to talk to them, listen to them and console them. But I liked it more than anything else. While in theology my path was that of doubts and torments, here I felt in my place. My political ignorance prevented me from asking these people any crucial questions on the sources of their misfortunes, the consequences of which I had to heal, and the good that I thought I was bringing people. Every tear that I managed to dry, every smile I managed to evoke on the sufferers' lips gave me tremendous satisfaction of serving my brethren. I believed I was the carrier of humanism.

However, as time passed, I began to feel—despite all the complacency evoked by my work as a comforter—that my new sphere of activity was a second university to me—a university of life.

In this way I was destined to see the reverse side of the capitalist world. Criminals, declassed elements, people from the lower depths, prostitutes, thieves, murderers, thugs, rapists, debauchers and hooli-

gories rather than as literal truths.

gans passed before me alongside those who had been convicted on suspicion of being “Reds.”¹⁹ Unfortunate old men, abandoned by all, died in my arms; insane invalids for hours evolved their theories before me; consumptive,²⁰ typhoid and diphtheria patients clutched onto me in agony. I had to visit people in the slums and afterwards to beg humbly for a few pennies from the “generous” merchants or for a couple of kilograms of half-rotten products from their factories for those wretched people and their children. After several years of such work, I began to adhere to extremely leftwing views.

At the same time another truth dawned on me: how insignificant was religion’s “refining influence” on society, which was torn by contradictions! How miserable the “shepherd’s” consolation in a situation requiring drastic measures, when a hot iron was needed to burn out the ugliness of exploitation and oppression. [...] [T]he church disarms man in his just struggle for a better life on earth. It disguises class inequality in human relationships and does it in favor of those “on top.” It sings its “God, rest his soul in peace” equally over the usurer²¹ and his victim. [...]

[...] My dealings with the mentally ill showed me how many of them went out of their minds or developed nervous diseases on the basis of religion. And there was another striking peculiarity: Very often religious obsession was accompanied by all kinds of sexual aberrations. I tried to analyze it and talked with doctors and psychologists. As a result I began to see the real background of that hysterical adoration of the “shepherds,” particularly young or popular preachers, on the part of fanatical women. Most often the basis of this adoration is far from religious (religion here plays only a secondary role), but the seething of unsatisfied passions, often distorted and suppressed by religion itself. [...]

The “foreign” period of my life ended in the summer of 1940. Estonia became a Soviet republic.²² I was completely confused. As a Russian, I rejoiced. I ceased to be a man “outside his home on earth.” As a priest I heard from other churchmen (even from my confessor and teacher): “Prepare yourself for persecutions and ordeal: the gov-

19. “Reds”—communists.

20. *consumptive*—ill with “consumption,” or tuberculosis.

21. *usurer*—somebody who lends money at inflated interest rates.

22. *Estonia became a Soviet republic*—in other words, Russian troops invaded and overran Estonia.

ernment²³ is godless and you will not be considered a human being!”
[...]

The Patriotic War of 1941–1945²⁴ began. I was [...] mobilized. In Tallinn I left my wife, who was expecting a baby, and my three-year old daughter.

I served in the army for a year, then worked three years as a priest in Perm in the Urals.²⁵ At that time I knew my place in life. There was so much grief round me. I tried to console people, support them, help them to recover and withstand their trials, and called on them to consolidate the country’s defense. Those days of sorrow showed me that misfortune and suffering, uncertainty and fear of the forces outside man’s control strengthen religion and nourish it. I comforted them, wishing with all my heart for a time when there would be no widows’ grief and orphans’ tears. Together with my parish I received three messages of gratitude from the Soviet Army Supreme Command for raising money for the needs of the defense. I felt as one with the believers in our common struggle against the enemy and in our desire for victory. I was one with them in their grief and fear—in all that the war had brought about. Later, too, working on my confession I thought about them—good Soviet people—who still suffer from that old grief, and who often turn to God for consolation. I wished with all my heart that they should not walk the path of tears but a path leading to light and wisdom, that they should feel strong and not weak and obedient. I decided to devote all the energy I still had to helping them in it.

At the end of the war I went to liberated Tallinn²⁶ but did not find my family there. Frightened by fascist propaganda, harassed by threats and the false news of my death (as I heard later they had even performed a funeral service for my soul), my wife, two daughters and her parents had gone to Germany, from where they had been taken to the United States. There my wife was persuaded to divorce me as a “Red priest” and remarry.

In 1946 the Ecclesiastical Academy and Seminary were opened in Leningrad.²⁷ The church “minister of education” [...] offered me the

23. *the government*—the Soviet government.

24. *Patriotic War of 1941–1945*—World War II.

25. *Urals*—Ural Mountains in Russia, which demarcate the European portion of the country from the Asian portion.

26. *liberated Tallinn*—a euphemism for conquered Tallinn.

27. *Ecclesiastical Academy and Seminary* ...—one of the most prestigious eccle-

post of inspector (prorector) and head of the Old Testament department. [...]

When trying to evoke in my students a thirst for knowledge, I hoped to stimulate their own thinking and broaden their outlook, so they would search (as I was still doing myself) for ways of scientifically proving the lofty truths of religion, in which I continued to believe. But soon I came to see that all my efforts were in vain, that my ideals could not be realized.

The first consequence of my activities was serious trouble that forced me to abandon the post of inspector of the Seminary and the Academy. I was reproached for following too secular a line and giving little time to vespers and fasts.

The patriarch himself said in his speech in the church of the Leningrad Ecclesiastical Academy on 6 December 1949:

Woe to the shepherd who not only seeks worldly recreation himself but also drags his family onto the path of worldly temptations. The feat of the shepherd should consist in alienating himself from the delights of the world, and if he is not free from worldly temptations, it shows there is actually no pastoral spirit in him.

Here in the ecclesiastical school, too, everything should be directed to bringing up a real, God-loving and reverent shepherd. For that reason when we hear that attempts to introduce worldly customs are sometimes made in the ecclesiastical schools, we do not approve of it, because all this gradually distracts those preparing themselves for pastoral services from the path and the objective to which they must strive

Such was the church's answer to my efforts to bring up people with a broad outlook and education.

It was clear from this speech and other instructions I began to receive that the church leadership actually wanted its pupils to stay within the limits of the books written by the church fathers, and—together with the “fathers of the church”—remain on the cultural and scientific level of the first eight centuries of our [Christian] era. Not wishing to betray the ideals of the “shepherd” that were still alive in me and in which I still believed, I resigned from the post of inspector.

Much later, continuing to watch the life of ecclesiastical students and pupils, I realized how difficult for them it was to follow my call. It is for good reason that the teachers in the academies and seminaries

siastical academies in Russia, closed during the Nazi siege of Leningrad.

and almost all the priests are so afraid of an interest in science, of a striving for light, and of a broad outlook among ecclesiastical students. It is for good reason that they become so incensed if their students read secular books, science fiction and atheistic periodicals, that they are opposed to them going to the cinemas and theaters.

To draw the blinkers over a person's eyes and shut him off from life with the catechism and iconostasis, to dim his consciousness with the incense smoke of scholastics, to kill in his soul the most human instinct—"I want to know everything!"—such is their ideal of the spiritual "shepherd" and worthy "servant of God."

What kept me going, under that emotional strain and the burden of apprehension, was the possibility of working in the Old Testament department. The break of ten years (1936–1946) in my systematic study of the Bible, caused by fascism and the war, urged me to make up for lost time and catch up with the day. I lost myself completely in libraries, and for the first time in my life found myself face to face with Marxist-Leninist historical science, with the world of books from which I had been separated in Estonia by a real and ideological boundary. In addition I was soon stunned by the blast of the Qumran finds²⁸—a whole world of discoveries that shook men's minds and ushered in a new epoch in biblical studies and in the history of the ancient East.

Before my very eyes the thesis of our Lord, the Son of God, Jesus Christ himself, collapsed: "Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law ..." ²⁹ It turned out that the law (Torah) had not existed in these times (at the break of the new era) in a single, once divinely revealed text, but in a number of fluid versions.

The very image of the historical Christ ceased to be exclusive and divine but turned out to be a summary of myths round historical memoirs about a Qumran sectarian,³⁰ a "teacher of justice" (who taught at least one century before the "Christ of the Gospels"). The concrete and historical part of that person and the significance of the

28. *Qumran finds*—the discovery, in the 1940s and 1950s, of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which provided significant insight into Christian thought during the church's first centuries

29. *Till heaven and earth ...*—a paraphrase of Matthew 5:18.

30. *Qumran sectarian*—the person Osipov considers the true, historical Jesus. Qumran is the area on the northwest corner of the Dead Sea where the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered.

legend for history had been estimated before and were still being estimated.

The laws of historical materialism³¹ made it possible to comprehend many details in the Bible, which before seemed incomprehensible and mysterious. In short, I began to see everything in an entirely new light. [...]

More and more often I was choked by bitter remorse for my futile life. I was approaching the merciless brink of 50 years of age. I knew that after 50, life would begin its path of decline, whether I wanted it or not. And when the decline had begun, how awful it was to know that the mountain you had been struggling to scale all that time was only a soap bubble, a mirage that had once fascinated you and that was now melting. I could have done so many things: I was capable and not devoid of talent; I had not been slighted when it came to brains; yet I had traded reality for dreams, calling the dreams reality and eternity. [...]

Serious study of dialectical and historical materialism,³² which I had finally approached, had opened my eyes and showed me that there could be no morality in itself, but that society forms its ideas of good and evil at each stage of its development. It became clear that religious morality—in my case Christian morality—was nothing but a version of morality of the slave-owner society, only embellished and disguised to satisfy certain classes. It had long since been replaced by new standards corresponding to the higher stage of social development that the human race was entering.

For a long time I still had been deceiving myself with the hope of being useful to the young people in the seminaries by calling on them to strive for broad knowledge and to study the treasures of world culture, and by making them think harder about truth. Since during those last few years Sunday lectures on general subjects were arranged for the students and each professor and associate professor had to read a lecture twice a year, I devoted mine to the great Russian and foreign artists. I thought I would be able to be useful by raising within the church (since there was still a church and believers) churchmen who—even if they should speak of faith—would at least preach no

31. *historical materialism*—Karl Marx's methodology, which assumes that economic conditions determine ideas. Ideas are not "eternally true" but derive from distinct historical situations.

32. *dialectical and historical materialism*—the fundamental tenants of Marxism.

wild superstitions and fanaticism, and would not try to stop history and human progress. True, no fanatic can stop history, but, I thought, he could bring about unnecessary afflictions, raise additional obstacles along the path of mental growth and the development of individuals who still believed.

I did not realize at first that it was a mistake to continue working in the Academy after I had become convinced of the illusiveness of religion itself. I saw that thousands of drones swarmed behind the backs of those who tried to be what I wanted [my students] to be. And my efforts to be the carrier and propagator of advanced science and culture only played into the hands of the preachers of darkness and backwardness, the general trend of the educative process at the ecclesiastical schools being reactionary.

I came to realize that my efforts only retarded the emergence of healthy doubts in the minds of the more capable students. Seeing in me a well-educated person who was not running away from science and not wallowing in scholastics—yet who remained in the church—they were becoming convinced that the two poles—progress and science, on the one hand, and conservatism and stagnation in thought with the support of religious illusions and superstitions, on the other—were compatible. [...]

It was so hard those days to teach them one thing and think something entirely different that I was ready to face any storm only to recover my peace of mind. It was the fourteenth year of my work as professor at the Leningrad ecclesiastical schools. And I made up my mind.

I spent a few days thinking over my “letter to the editor” and a message to the rector, the learned council, students, pupils and employees of the Leningrad Ecclesiastical Academy and Seminary. In my message I wrote:

I hereby declare to all with whom I worked and whom I taught for over thirteen years, that being of sound mind and in full possession of my faculties, I consciously leave the Leningrad ecclesiastical schools, Orthodox Church, Christianity, and religion in general.

It is not my hurt feelings or any personal considerations that have led me to this decision. No, I was well-respected and loved by you.

I am leaving for reasons exclusively ideological and scientific, not influenced by the moment but as a result of years of quest, meditation and scientific check-ups of every point.

While critically studying the Bible, I came to the conclusion, and I can prove it scientifically, that the religion of the ancient Jews, as well as the Christian religion stemming from it, cannot be accepted as divinely inspired and exclusive. It developed under the same laws, went through the same stages as all the other religions of the world; it is related to them and is a natural result of the development of the human race throughout its history.

While studying the history of religions, I came to realize that any religion that exists now or existed in the past is only a distorted projection “in Heaven” of real relations of human beings with nature and among themselves, a reflection of clashes between classes and of class ideology. It always contains numerous superstitions born of human conscience at preceding stages of development, in the course of the struggle between and replacement of different social and economic formations, in the course of the development of productive forces and the social systems depending on them.

My research showed me that religion played a positive role at some stages of the development of human society, when it constituted an ideological reflection of the new, more progressive formation that was replacing the old, when it preached and realized the ideas of that new and more progressive formation. But what was useful and progressive at one stage could not remain so at the next stage. It would be absurd not to use the tractor today only because in ancient times the invention of the wooden plow constituted progress in agriculture and was useful to humanity in replacing the mattock³³ and the sharpened stick. Yet, this is exactly what is happening in religion: some monasteries played a positive part in old Russia and now they are still considered progressive and indispensable. [...]

My study of Marxist philosophy and the historical development of society has shown what unjustified expenditure of human energy and ability the serving of religion involves, serving for the sake of the preservation of illusions and distorted ideas about the world and its essence. And I have come to feel an imperative need to give all my strength and knowledge to real and creative work, even if only a small one.

My message ended with an appeal to my former colleagues and also to my students:

And now I address you, my students. Forgive me that it has taken me such a long time to do what I am doing now. Take a look at yourselves, analyze your doubts, which I know you have, and you will

33. *mattock*—a primitive tool for digging.

understand how difficult it is to revise views and make a cardinal turn in such a sphere as ideology. Be more inquisitive and bolder, do not be afraid of raising questions, and, I believe, we will see each other again, and not as opponents but as colleagues and once more friends. But remember, I am not going to persuade or tempt you. Think for yourselves! A person should decide such things for himself—one has only to indicate the real paths that should be taken. But he must make the choice himself. Only himself! No, I am not tempting you, I simply love you. With this I am winding up; goodbye. [...]

More than five years have passed since those stormy days.

Even now postmen bring letters to me, and during my trips to different parts of the Soviet Union I still see the tense and doubting faces of our grannies; the inquiring looks of middle-aged people; the wondering, searching eyes of the young.

I, man among men, *homo sapiens*, declare as the popes used to declare *urbi et orbi*,³⁴ the right and obligation of every one to be a human being above all, always and in everything; not to look for props on the side; to feel himself, in spite of his short individual existence, which can be likened to a spark in the night, to feel himself, I say, mingled in the human sea of sparks. For it is of the sparks of distant stars that the Milky Way is made, and of our sparks—the creative flame of human progress. I have no joy outside the joy of humanity, and there can be no joy of humanity when the units making it up are suffering.

Religion. “God’s word” declares: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” “You and your God is what is most important in life and the rest is ‘vanity of vanities—all is vanity.’”

But I shall find no peace of mind as long as I hear moans in the jungles of South Vietnam, as long as the ashes of Maidanek and Oświęcim³⁵ are crying out for vengeance, as long as the sinister crosses are burning in Alabama.³⁶ In the world of men, a man, if he is a man, cannot be indifferent. Here is where the essence and justice of humanism is rooted. Humanism outside man and people is an empty

34. *urbi et orbi*—“to the city [of Rome] and the world”—a common opening in papal encyclicals.

35. *Maidanek and Oświęcim*—Nazi death camps in Poland. Oświęcim is also known as Auschwitz.

36. *sinister crosses ... in Alabama*—a reference to cross burnings by the Ku Klux Klan.

eggshell. I, one who only thought for decades that he was a man, today know it finally. Today and tomorrow and till my last day.

35. Church under Stalin

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

35.1 Closing a Church (1930)

“Document 45: Decree,” in *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader*, ed. Felix Corley (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 84–85. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

The following document, authored by the head of a local militia, describes the almost comical efforts to decommission a church in the small town of Shumiachi, about four hundred kilometers southwest of Moscow.

[...] Approximately one month ago, following the decree of the Regular Executive Committee, the cemetery church in the small town of Shumiachi was closed; the bells were removed and the religious artifacts taken away. After this the former prayer building was rebuilt as a club [...]. [The chairman of the district executive committee] suggested that the [fire service commissioner] take down the crosses from the closed church, completely ignoring the fact that 30 March was a market day. At about 11 or 12 o'clock, the [fire commissioner] proposed to the head of the fire brigade [...] that he gather the brigade using the bells (the call signal for the brigade), but without telling him why. Upon assembling the brigade, the [fire service commissioner] instructed [the head of the fire brigade] with a note (see the note in the case file) that part of the firemen should go to remove the crosses; but those without equipment refused, and only about 6 or 7 persons went to the church.

The religious inhabitants of the town—who had already gathered in an illegal gathering [protesting] the profanation of the church, and knowing that the assembled firemen had been directed to take down the crosses as the firemen had earlier taken down the bells [...] ran up to the church on hearing the call of the bells, bringing along with them indifferently-minded people from the market.

When the church people had come running, hysterical women started to obstruct the tidying of the club, throwing sticks, and tried to place their own lock on the door. The militia present managed to calm down the crowd and to detain the instigators of the disorders in order to establish culpability.

The fixing of the opening of the People's House and the removal of the crosses took place without taking into account the special features

of the town of Shumiachi, the preparation of the church people, and the fact that it was a market day.

Summarizing the above, it is decreed:

1) For showing inattention by giving instructions to remove the crosses on a market day, as a result of which the disorder took place, the case of the [chairman of the district executive committee] be handed to the Presidium of the [region] for the necessary disciplinary punishment or corresponding judgment.

2) For the report on the activity of the officials of the Shumiachi district, all the materials are to be placed in the file. [...]

35.2 Stripping Christ the Savior Cathedral (1930)

“Petition of the Economic Department of the OGPU to the Secretariat of the Chairman of the ACEC for Permission to Remove the Gold from the Cupolas of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, no. 422522, 24 February 1930,” in *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader*, ed. Felix Corley (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 94–96. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

To mark the defeat of Napoleon in 1812, Tsar Alexander I announced his intent to build a cathedral in honor of Christ, “to signify our gratitude to Divine Providence for saving Russia from the doom that overshadowed her.” The enormous and florid result was Moscow’s largest and best-known cathedral, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

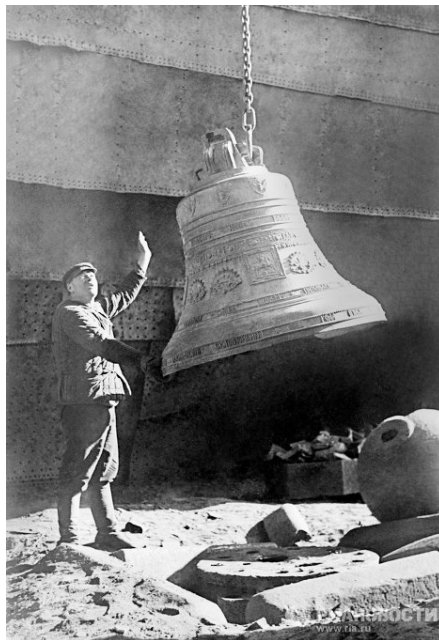


Figure 188. Removing bells from Christ the Savior Cathedral, 1930

The Soviet intelligence service during the Stalin era viewed such opulence with disdain, and it sought ways to profit from this and other treasures owned by the church.

Below is a memo from the intelligence service proposing one way to make a profit from the cathedral.

In accordance with the decree of the [Soviet of Labor and Defense] of 5 July 1929, our metal-working factory, No. 1, has been assigned the exclusive right to process gold objects that cannot be used for civilian purposes and lack historical artistic worth.

By agreement between the [People's Commissariat of Finance] and the [Economic Department of the State Political Directorate¹], the latter acquires all gilded objects from closed prayer houses—icon screens, icon cases, icons, bronze utensils, and cupolas—for processing.

The gold—removed by chemical processes from such objects—is refined until it is pure; it is then handed to the Hard Currency Directorate at a fixed sum [... and] the [State Political Directorate] is paid 10 per cent of the sum received for the gold.

On average, the [Economic Department of the State Political Directorate] produces up to 30 kg of pure gold per month, and it proposes in the near future—through an increase in the volume of work and technical improvements undertaken in the factory—to significantly increase this quantity.

The richest sources of gold are the cupolas of churches, and the [Economic Department of the State Political Directorate]—having concentrated all its attention on them—will begin stripping them in the spring, *en masse*, both on location and in the factory.

Some of the best cupolas are the cupolas of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, on which 20 poods of gold was used for their gilding. Such information is completely trustworthy, and it has been technically verified; our metal-working factory, having great experience of completing the proposed removal of the gold and its purification, maintains that one could purify up to 18 poods² of gold from these cupolas [...]

1. *State Political Directorate*—OGPU, the state security agency.

2. 18 *poods*—about 295 kilograms. World gold prices in 1930 averaged \$20.65 per ounce; thus the approximately 295 kilograms worth could be sold at

After the purification of the gold the [Economic Department of the State Political Directorate] will, at its own expense, paint over the cupola, or even, if necessary, regild it by cheaper means.

Even [regilding] would completely justify itself in economic terms, since the regilding would use between 1.5 and 2 poods of gold; the appearance of the regilded cupolas will be better than the old, since the present gilding is heavily covered with dirt and they have lost their initial brilliance. [...]

Since leaving 20 poods of gold on the cupolas [...] is an unnecessary luxury for the USSR, and since realizing the gold³ will be a great contribution to the cause of the industrialization in our country, we ask for an urgent decision on the question of the church and the cupolas so that [...] [the Economic Department of the State Political Directorate] can proceed with the stripping or removal of the cupolas by the beginning of spring.

about \$214,884, or \$2.8 million in 2014 dollars.

3. *realizing the gold*—converting the gold into actual money.

35.3 Destruction of Christ the Savior Cathedral (1931)



Figure 189. Video: Blowing up Christ the Savior Cathedral

After stripping the cathedral of its valuables, the Soviets demolished it in 1931. A film crew shot footage of officials cataloging and removing valuables before blowing up the building.

35.4 Imprisoning the Patriarch (1937)

“Document 65,” “Document 66,” and “Document 67,” in *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader*, ed. Felix Corley (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 109–112. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

In the exciting and fearful days of November, 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church selected Bishop Tikhon to be patriarch of Moscow, the first patriarch since Peter the Great abolished the patriarchate. In fact the selection—on 5 November—occurred just two days before the Bolsheviks seized power.



Figure 190. Patriarch Tikhon, n.d.

Tikhon immediately found himself at odds with Soviet authorities, who had no desire to work with a patriarch, the church, or religion in any form. Tikhon condemned the Bolshevik’s execution of Tsar Nicholas II and the imperial family and he protested when the government declared its right to seize church property.

Furious and determined to weaken the patriarchate, Soviet authorities sponsored and cultivated a rival, in-the-pocket church,

which they called the “Living Church.” During meetings in April and May of 1923, a council of the Living Church decided to consecrate married bishops, to put Patriarch Tikhon on trial *in absentia* for opposing the Soviets, and to abolish the patriarchate. All such decisions, of course, were blatantly at odds with canonical rules. Since few Orthodox believers recognized the Living Church as anything other than a puppet of the Soviet state, few recognized Tikhon’s overthrow and changes to canon law.

Soviet authorities referred to believers opposed to the Living Church as “Tikhonites” or those of a “Tikhonite orientation,” and it declared them guilty of “slanderous” and “counter-revolutionary activity.”

Tikhon—exiled and imprisoned—was released only after assuring the Soviets of his loyalty to the communist state. He died on 25 March 1925.

On 12 April the “Tikhonites” elected Tikhon’s trusted adviser, Archbishop Peter Poliansky, as patriarch *locum tenens*, or temporary patriarch. On 28 July, Peter issued an encyclical condemning the Living Church. To nobody’s surprise (not even Peter’s) the state security agency—the OGPU—arrested him a few months later, on 10 December 1925.

The two documents below—an exchange of memos in 1937 between the warden of the prison housing Peter, and that warden’s aid—describe Peter’s imprisonment.

To: Acting head of the Uralsk Prison, Commander
Artemev

From: Artemev’s aid, Lieutenant Yakovlev

Date: 3 August 1937

I consider it necessary to bring to your attention news of the mood of prisoner No. 114 (cell N. 23). During evening rounds on 2 August 1937 the prisoner asked for a few minutes’ attention [...] His basic question was about the possibility of granting him a certain variety of food [...] During this he rambled a little (“I’ve been here a very long time⁴—it’s hard without people and conversation”) and he told me that

4. *very long time*—Peter was sentenced to prison in 1931.

he still considers himself *locum tenens* of the patriarchal throne and that it is because of this that he is in prison; he categorically refused the OGPU's suggestion that he remove himself from this office in favor of "various rogues who have excommunicated me from the church"—this is how he expressed the reasons for his refusal. Trying his utmost to refrain from malicious attacks, which, it was clear, have burst out of the prisoner [in the past], he announced that "in such conditions of persecution of the church and its leading figures—conditions contrary to the constitution of the state," he would like to remove himself from the duties of *locum tenens* of the [patriarchal] throne, but, being bound by the oath given to the all-Russian church council, he could not do this. During all this the prisoner said that Soviet power was "unjustly" holding him as "an innocent in prison and striving for his death," but that nothing would come of this because he had already named 3 deputies in his will, and each deputy had, in turn, named 3 deputies, and, in this way, the three deputies "will be enough for 1,000 years," as he put it. It seems to me that he said this to indicate that the orders he gave to the churchmen will guarantee the active struggle with Soviet power and counter-revolutionary activity for an endlessly long period.

It must be said that, in his imprisonment, prisoner No. 114 gives the impression of being an uncompromising enemy of the existing system, despite all the coolness of his conversation (or, more exactly, the restraint of his conversation). [...]

Aid to the head of the prison

Lieutenant of state security, Yakovlev

3 August 1937

To: Lieutenant Yakovlev, aid to the prison
commander, Artemev

From: Acting head of the Uralsk Prison,
commander, Artemev

Peter Fedorovich Poliansky,⁵ [...] having taken on the post of *locum tenens* of the patriarchal throne after the death of Patriarch Tikhon, has actively continued the counter-revolutionary activity begun by Tikhon, leading and sharpening the counter-revolutionary preparedness of church people and their activities directed at overthrowing

5. *Peter Fedorovich Poliansky*—Patriarch Peter.

Soviet power. Being exiled to the town of Tobolsk⁶ for his counter-revolutionary activity—and then to Khe⁷—he did not abandon his counter-revolutionary activity and links to church people, and from his exile he issued instructions and directed counter-revolutionary activity. For his persistent struggle with Soviet power and his active counter-revolutionary activity, he was sentenced by the collegium of the OGPU on 23 July 1931 to five years of detention in prison and—by a special meeting of the NKVD⁸ on 9 July 1936—this term of detention in prison was extended by 3 years.

Serving his term in the Verkhnye-Uralsk prison,⁹ he has shown himself to be an uncompromising foe of the Soviet state. He slanders the current state system, which allegedly acts against the constitution, accusing it of “persecuting the church and its leaders.” He slanderously accuses the organs of the NKVD of a biased attitude toward him, [allegedly resulting in his imprisonment . . .]. He tried to make contact with the outside world during his imprisonment, employing the prison’s medical personnel, and, as a result, he has received Communion bread from the clergy of the town of Verkhnye-Uralsk as a sign of greeting. He is exceedingly embittered by the prolongation of his prison term. In response to the announcement about the prolongation of his term, he replied, “So I’m not going to die now.” He considers the struggle with Soviet power to be unending.

Acting head of the [Verkhnye]-Uralsk Prison

[Junior] lieutenant of state security, Artemev [...]

6. *Tobolsk*—roughly 2,400 kilometers east of Moscow, just north of Kazakhstan.

7. *Khe*—in the northern hinterlands of Russia, on the Arctic Circle, roughly 3,200 kilometers northeast of Moscow.

8. *NKVD*—the secret police.

9. *Verkhnye-Uralsk prison*—in northwestern Kazakhstan.

35.5 Execution Order (1937)

“Document 73: Extract from the Document of the Decree of the Troika of the NKVD Directorate of 13 November 1937,” in *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader*, ed. Felix Corley (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 115.

The final document is self-explanatory.

Extract from protocol No. 10 of the meeting of the
Cheliabinsk Regional NKVD Troika¹⁰

Date: 2 October 1937

Heard: Case No. 1531 of the [Verkhnye]-Uralsk Prison [... regarding] the accusation against Peter Fedorovich Poliansky [...]

Decreed: Peter Fedorovich Poliansky [...] is to be EXECUTED
BY FIRING SQUAD. Personal property to be confiscated.

Secretary of the Troika of the NKVD Directorate [...]

10. *Regional NKVD Troika*—the three-person directorate of the local secret police in Cheliabinsk, just north of Kazakhstan.

35.6 Solzhenitsyn Accuses the Church of Complicity (1972)

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *A Lenten Letter to Pimen, Patriarch of All Russia*, trans. Keith Armes, commentary by Wassilij Alexeev (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing, 1972), 5–8. All attempts to contact publisher failed. Information in some footnotes derives from Alexeev's commentary.

The great Russian dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (about whom more later) sent the following letter at the end of 1971 to the newly elected patriarch of Moscow, Pimen, complaining about the church's unresisting subjugation to the Soviet state. The church, argued Solzhenitsyn, had sold its soul, abandoned its responsibilities to the faithful, and relegated an entire generation to reaching maturity without faith. The prose here is typical of Solzhenitsyn: blunt, angry, and fearless.

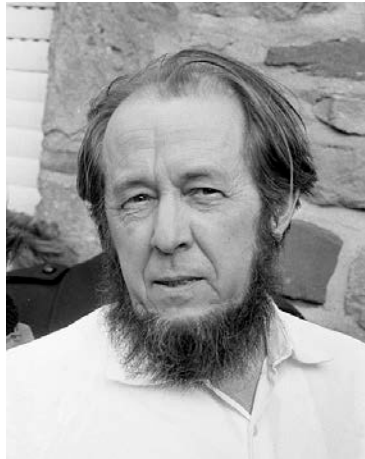


Figure 191. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 1974

Most Holy Lord!

I write to you about that which crushes the heads and sunders the breasts of still-surviving Orthodox Russian people like a gravestone. All know it, and it has already been cried aloud, but again all are silent

in hopeless resignation. But put just a little stone on top of the gravestone, and it becomes impossible to be silent any longer. Such a little stone pressed down on me when I heard your message on Christmas Eve.¹¹ I felt a stab of pain when you finally spoke of the children—perhaps the first time for half a century that this message came from such an eminence—summoning parents to inspire in their children, together with love for their country, love for the church (and evidently love for the faith itself?). And to strengthen this love with the force of their own good example. I heard this—and there arose before me my early childhood, spent at many church services, and my original impression, so exceptional in its freshness and purity, which no millstones or intellectual theories could later erase.

But how is this? Why did you address this honorable appeal only to Russian émigrés?¹² Why is it only *these* children whom you call on the parents to bring up in the Christian faith; why is it only this far-off flock that you warn to “beware of slander and lies” and fortify themselves in justice and truth? But what of *us*—are *we* to beware? Are *we* to inspire love for the church in *our children* or not? Yes, Christ bade us to go seek the hundredth lost sheep, but only after ninety-nine are safe. But when the ninety-nine that should be at hand are lost—should *they* not be our first concern?

Why should I have to produce my passport¹³ when I come to church to christen my son? What canonical need impels the Moscow patriarchate to require the registration of christened souls? One should be surprised at the spiritual fortitude of parents that gives them the strength to endure this registration, compelling them to inform against themselves to the state and then be subjected to persecution at their work or public derision by ignoramuses.

But at this point the persistence of the parents becomes exhausted, and the children’s involvement with the church usually ends with their being christened as infants, while the following stages of upbringing in the faith are firmly closed to them and they are prevented from serving

11. *Christmas Eve*—it is traditional for the patriarch to deliver an annual Christmas message.

12. *Russian émigrés*—Solzhenitsyn still lived in the Soviet Union at this point. He did not become an émigré (i.e., he was not forcibly deported) until 1974.

13. *passport*—every citizen of the Soviet Union was required to possess an internal, domestic passport, without which he or she could not obtain a job or move to a new location.

at the altar, sometimes from receiving the Eucharist or even attending a service. We are robbing our children by depriving them of that unrepeatable and angelically pure perception of the service that it is impossible for them ever to experience later in adult life or even to realize what they have lost. Their right to continue the faith of their fathers has been violated as well as the right of parents to bring up their children in accordance with their own understanding of the world—and you, hierarchs of the church, are reconciled to this and give it your support, finding such a situation to be a sure sign of religious freedom. A situation in which we are obliged to give up our defenseless children, give them up not into neutral hands, but into the power of atheistic propaganda of the most primitive and unscrupulous nature. A situation in which children who have been torn away from Christianity in order to prevent their being infected by it are left no more than a gap between the communist propagandist's guidebook and the criminal code.¹⁴

The past half-century has already been lost beyond hope; it is pointless to attempt to rescue the present; but how are we to save the future of our country—the future that will consist of the children of today? The true, profound fate of our country ultimately depends on whether the rightness of force will finally become rooted in the understanding of the people or whether the force of rightness will emerge from its eclipse and again shine forth. Will we succeed in restoring in ourselves at least some Christian characteristics, or will we lose *all* of those that still remain to us and surrender ourselves up to the calculations of self-preservation and personal advantage?

The study of Russian history during the last few centuries convinces one that the whole of our history would have taken a far more humane and harmonious course if the church had not renounced her independence¹⁵ and if the people had heeded her voice in a way com-

14. *criminal code*—Solzhenitsyn refers here to the section of the code that ostensibly permitted all citizens to practice a religion or no religion. As Wassilij Alexeev notes, “In practice this formula permit[ed] only the holding of religious services, while absolutely prohibiting the religious instruction of children. Since 1960 Soviet government officials ... attempted to prevent children and young people up to the age of eighteen from attending religious services.” In some cases priests were instructed not to begin a service until everyone under the age of eighteen had left the church.

15. *renounced her independence*—acceded to Peter the Great's subjugation of the church to the state.

parable, for instance, to Poland.¹⁶ Alas, in our country it has long been otherwise. Gradually we have come to lose that radiant Christian ethical atmosphere in which over a period of thousands of years were established our mores, way of life, view of the world and folklore, even the very name in Russian for the Russian peasants—*kerest'iane*.¹⁷ We are losing the last tokens and characteristics of a Christian people—how is it possible that this should not be the principal concern of the Russian patriarch? The Russian church has agitated views on every evil to be found in far-off Asia or Africa; only on internal disasters does it never have any views whatever. Why are the messages handed down to us from the summit of the church always so traditionally serene? Why are all the church documents as complacent as if they were issued in the midst of a supremely Christian people? After one such serene message after another, will there not finally come a miserable year in which the need to write them will disappear completely? Nobody will be left to address them to, since no flock will remain except for the patriarchal chancellery.

It is now six years since two most honorable priests, Iakunin and Eshliman, wrote a well-known letter¹⁸ to your predecessor, confirming by their self-sacrificial example that the pure flame of the Christian faith had not yet been extinguished in our native land. In full detail and with abundance of proof they pictured to him the voluntary internal enslavement, amounting to self-destruction, to which the Russian church had been reduced. They asked to be informed if there was anything untrue in their letter. But every word they had written was true; none of the hierarchs undertook to refute them. And what reply did they receive? The simplest and crudest: they were punished for saying the truth by being forbidden to perform services. And you have not remedied this wrong to this day. Similarly the terrible letter of the twelve men from Viatka¹⁹ has remained unanswered; instead, they have been persecuted. And similarly the one fearless archbishop,

16. *in a way comparable, for instance, to Poland*—it is not entirely clear what Solzhenitsyn means here, but it seems that he approves of the fact that governing bodies of Roman Catholicism in Poland never became subject to the state.

17. *kerest'iane*—the Russian word for “peasant,” *kerest'ianin* (*крестьянин*) is almost identical to the Russian word for “Christian”: *Khristianin* (*Христианин*).

18. *well-known letter*—Iakunin and Eshliman complained of persecutions of believers in this letter to Pimen's predecessor, Patriarch Aleksey (1945–1970).

19. *terrible letter of the twelve men from Viatka*—an open letter of twelve Christians to Aleksei in 1966 complaining of persecutions.

Hermogen of Kaluga, remains exiled to this day, imprisoned in a monastery for having prevented belatedly raging atheism from closing his churches and burning icons and books after all the success that atheism had enjoyed in the other bishoprics during the period immediately preceding 1964.

Six years since everything was said out loud—and what has changed? For every working church there are twenty churches that have been demolished and destroyed irrecoverably and twenty abandoned and desecrated. Is there a sight more heart-rending than these skeletons of churches, the property of birds and storekeepers? How many towns and villages are there in our country where the nearest church is 100 or even 200 kilometers away? And the north is left completely without churches, the region that is the age-old storehouse of the Russian spirit and—predictably—the most reliable surety for the future of Russia. Any attempt by church volunteers, religious donors or the faithful in their legacies to restore even the smallest church is blocked by the one-sided laws respecting the so-called separation of church and state. We scarcely even dare to ask about bellringing—but why should Russia be deprived of her ancient ornament, of her best voice? But what use is it to talk of churches! Even a copy of the Gospel is nowhere to be had. Even the Gospel is brought to us from abroad, in the same way as our missionaries used to take it with them to the Indigirka.²⁰

Six years have passed—and has anything been successfully defended by the church? The entire administration of the church, the appointment of parish priests and bishops (including those who commit outrages with the aim of making it easier to deride and destroy the church), everything is controlled by the Committee on Religious Affairs just as secretly as before. Such a church, directed dictatorially by atheists, is a sight that has not been seen for two millennia. All the property of the church has been surrendered to their control, as well as the use of church funds, the coppers dropped into the collection plates by devout fingers. Five million rubles have been donated with grandiose gestures to extraneous causes, while beggars are driven away from the church porch and there is no money to repair the leaking roof of a church in a poor parish. The priests are deprived of their rights in their parishes, remaining entrusted solely with the holding of services; however, they are not allowed even to leave their churches in order to

20. *Indigirka*—a river in the remote reaches of Siberia.

cross the threshold to visit a sick man or go to the cemetery; to do so they are obliged to ask official permission from the city council.

What arguments can one find to convince oneself that the systematic destruction of the spirit and body of the church under the direction of atheists is the best means of preserving it? Preservation for whom? Evidently not for Christ. Preservation—but how? By lying? But after this lying, who is to perform the Eucharist?

Most holy lord! Do not disdain utterly my unworthy cry. It may be that not every seven years even such a cry as this reaches your ears. Do not give us reason to suppose, do not make us think that for the prelates of the Russian church temporal power is above heavenly power and that temporal responsibility is more fearful than responsibility before God.

Let us not craftily pretend either before others or, above all, in our prayers that external fetters are stronger than our spirit. It was no easier at the time of the birth of Christianity, but nevertheless Christianity withstood everything and flourished. And it showed us the way: the way of sacrifice. He who is deprived of all material strength will finally always be triumphant through sacrifice. Within our memory our priests and fellow-believers have undergone just such a martyrdom worthy of the first centuries of Christianity. Then they were thrown to the lions, while today they can lose only their material welfare.

In these days, as you kneel before the cross, set up for Easter in the middle of the church,²¹ ask our Lord: what other aim can there be for your service among the people, who have almost lost both the spirit of Christianity and the very semblance of Christians?

21. *middle of the church*—during the Saturday-evening service in the fourth week of Lent, a cross is placed on the lectern in the middle of the church.

35.7 Sergei Zheludkov Responds (Easter 1972)

“Letter of Fr. Sergi Zheludkov to A. Solzhenitsyn,” in *Church, State, and Opposition in the U.S.S.R.*, ed. Gerhard Simon, trans. Kathleen Matchett (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 206–208. © 1975 by C. Hurst & Company. Published by the University of California Press. Used by permission.

Patriarch Pimen never responded to Solzhenitsyn’s letter (he could not), but a well-known dissident priest—Father Sergei Zheludkov—did. It is clear that Zheludkov found Solzhenitsyn’s criticisms unrealistic and more than a little sanctimonious.

Christ is risen!

Dear Aleksandr Isaevich,²²

I have the honor of greeting you on the bright festival of the hope of all mankind. “O Easter! Our salvation from grief.” May I also congratulate you on receiving the literature prize.²³ Thanks be to God, who has brought you to this day through all the trials of your unusual life. May you have many more blessed years.

This Easter message must also serve as an answer to your “Lenten Letter to the All-Russian Patriarch.” With my deep personal respect for you, I am all the more at liberty to express to you my concern over this document, which may evoke the most unexpected interpretations, even for the author. I must say that in this case your moral sensitivity has to some degree deceived you. You have made a written accusation that has been publicized throughout the world, against a man who, as everyone knows, has no possible chance of replying to you. In this respect you have repeated the moral mistake of the two well-known priests whom you mention. And you also repeated their chief mistake—you did not tell the whole truth; you gave half-truths.

The full truth is that the legal church organization cannot be an island of freedom in our strictly unified society, directed from a single center. There may be various opinions as to the historical significance of such a strictly unified and controlled social system. The most extreme judgment is that in our country literature and art are perishing,

22. *Isaevich*—Solzhenitsyn’s “patronymic” or middle name.

23. *literature prize*—Solzhenitsyn received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970.

economics and science are lagging behind, morality is decaying, the people are becoming dull and stupid. [...] This extreme judgment presupposes that the destiny of Russia lies in sacrifice. At the price of its own culture our nation saved Europe from the Tatars and saved the whole world from fascism;²⁴ today it is undergoing a grandiose experiment, on view to the whole world, which is not leading anywhere. This is the opinion of some. Others, on the other hand, cherish bright hopes. [...] My opinion here is of no value and it is not asked for. But one thing I must state with great conviction. There exists this strictly centralized system, and within it, surprisingly, is preserved an alien body—the Russian Orthodox Church. It exists in very strictly determined conditions. We are not permitted to work at the religious education of children, or of adults, just as we are not permitted to do many other things necessary for the existence of real church life. We are permitted only one thing—to conduct divine worship in our churches, whereby it is supposed that this is something from the past preserved only for a disappearing generation.

What can we do in such a situation? Should we say: all or nothing? Should we try to go underground, which in the present system is unthinkable? Or should we try somehow to accept the system and, for the present, make use of those opportunities that are permitted? The Russian hierarchy took the latter decision.

Hence today all the evil about which you very rightly wrote, as well as all the evil you did not mention. But there was no other choice. You make appeal to the Catholics in Poland; all honor and glory to them, but they have a quite, quite different history. You justly write about the abuses that have not existed during two thousand years of Christian history. But never, never before have our completely unique conditions of human existence been known.

This is the whole truth. The late Patriarch Aleksei, unable to answer the accusations of the two priests in words, answered in deeds—he forbade them to serve as priests and thereby he involuntarily confirmed the relative truth of their argument. It is good that it happened that way, and it was precisely in the courage of the two priests that the moral beauty of their action lay, which cannot at all be said, forgive me, of your amazingly pretentious document. Our present Patriarch Pimen also has no opportunity of answering you in word. By

24. *saved the whole world from fascism*—defeated Germany in the Second World War.

what deed do you suppose he could answer you? Only by giving up his position. But there is no one better to take his place. And anyway one man cannot change anything. So everything would stay the same. One of the consequences of your accusatory letter will be a still greater discrediting of the church hierarchy in the eyes of those who do not understand the whole truth. Do not misunderstand me—I am not telling you to be silent; but if you do write, do not choose someone who cannot answer you and tell the whole truth. At the time when you were being heaped with slander, Aleksandr Isaevich, we were all grieved for you. But now you are offending the defenseless patriarch and us—not with slander, but with talented half-truths, which to many may seem more dangerous than lies.

There must be no unwillingness for sacrifice and martyrdom in the church of Christ. We have enough willing martyrs, both inside and outside the church (the distinction is rather conditional), and I am sorry that you did not even mention the names of the churchmen Boris Talantov,²⁵ who died in prison, and Anatoly Levitin,²⁶ now suffering in prison. I would say that our duty today is to give due appreciation to their deeds, and ourselves each one to work as best we can in the opportunities open to us. In particular, there is now a problem of the Christian education of children in the scattered families of the emergent Christian intelligentsia. In general, we must make a healthy acknowledgement of reality: the Russian church hierarchy in its present composition and in our present system cannot in any significant way affect the system. It is easy and safe, Aleksandr Isaevich, to accuse the bishops, but in fact the work of the Lord today is hard. The destiny of the Russian church is inseparably linked to the fate of the people. If “there is a future,” there will also inevitably be a renaissance of Russian Christianity.

Christ is risen!

Sincerely,
 God’s unworthy servant in the priesthood,
 [Sergei Zheludkov]

25. *Boris Talantov*—a former teacher and religious writer who, in 1969, was sentenced to two years in labor camps for “false statements discrediting the Soviet state and social system.”

26. *Anatoly Levitin*—a lay Christian writer and historian who spent several years in labor camps.

36. Orthodoxy in Twentieth-Century Literature

Our section on nineteenth-century literature noted that one could choose from among hundreds of works when selecting examples of Orthodox themes in fiction from the 1800s. The challenge for the twentieth century is no less daunting. Due to constraints of space, we limit this section to ten works: two short stories, an excerpt from a novel, and eight poems.

36.1 Vladimir Nabokov, “Christmas” (1925)

Vladimir Nabokov, “Christmas,” in *Details of a Sunset and Other Stories* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 153–161. All attempts to contact rightsholder failed.

Vladimir Nabokov’s father served as a secretary in the Provisional Government, which assumed power after the tsar’s abdication during the Russian Revolution of February 1917. When the Bolsheviks deposed the Provisional Government that October, Nabokov’s family fled to Crimea and then moved to England. Nabokov enrolled at Cambridge University, where he studied zoology (he nurtured a lifelong commitment to lepidopterology—the study of moths and butterflies—and a moth plays a key role in the story below) and then Slavic and Romance languages. He subsequently pursued a remarkable career as a literary scholar and novelist, writing in both Russian and English. Many consider him the greatest Russian writer of the twentieth century—a beautiful stylist, an endlessly creative thinker, a master of complexity, and a comic genius.

There is nothing comic, however, in the short story below. In fact the title, “Christmas,” may at first seem perverse. The Russian word for Christmas is *Рождество* (*Rozhdestvo*)—which derives from the word *рождать* (*rodit*), meaning “to give birth”—but birth is the farthest thing from the protagonist’s mind in “Christmas.” Mr. Sleptsov (we never learn his first name) is bereft following the death of his son: depressed, without hope, and obsessed with death, he does not even realize it is Christmas Eve until reminded by his valet. The story, however, takes a turn in the final paragraphs, and the birth implied by the title becomes clear.

The literary scholar Samuel Schuman calls “Christmas” “strikingly simple in its piety ... without irony, without ambivalence. It is a Christmas story about the power of love, about the triumph of birth over death.”¹ Maxim Shrayer calls it an “early masterpiece.”²

1. Samuel Schuman, “Beautiful Gate: Vladimir Nabokov and Orthodox Iconography,” *Religion & Literature* 32, no. 1 (2000): 54–55.

2. Maxim D. Shrayer, “Mapping Narrative Space in Nabokov’s Short Fic-



Figure 192. Statue, Vladimir Nabokov, Montreux, Switzerland

• 1 •

After walking back from the village to his manor across the dimming snows, Sleptsov sat down in a corner, on a plush-covered chair, which he never remembered using before. It was the kind of thing that happens after some great calamity. Not your brother but a chance acquaintance, a vague country neighbor to whom you never paid much attention, with whom in normal times you exchange scarcely a word, is the one who comforts you wisely and gently, and hands you your dropped hat after the funeral service is over, and you are reeling from grief, your teeth chattering, your eyes blinded by tears. The same can

tion," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 75, no. 4 (1997): 625.

be said of inanimate objects. Any room, even the coziest and the most absurdly small, in the little used wing of a great country house has an unlived-in corner. And it was such a corner in which Sleptsov sat.

The wing was connected by a wooden gallery, now encumbered with our huge north Russian snowdrifts, to the master house, used only in summer. There was no need to awaken it, to heat it: the master had come from Petersburg for only a couple of days and had settled in the annex, where it was a simple matter to get the stoves of white Dutch tile going.

The master sat in his corner, on that plush chair, as in a doctor's waiting room. The room floated in darkness; the dense blue of early evening filtered through the crystal feathers of frost on the window-pane. Ivan, the quiet, portly valet, who had recently shaved off his mustache and now looked like his late father, the family butler, brought in a kerosene lamp, all trimmed and brimming with light. He set it on a small table, and noiselessly caged it within its pink silk shade. For an instant a tilted mirror reflected his lit ear and cropped gray hair. Then he withdrew and the door gave a subdued creak.

Sleptsov raised his hand from his knee and slowly examined it. A drop of candle wax had stuck and hardened in the thin fold of skin between two fingers. He spread his fingers and the little white scale cracked.

• 2 •

The following morning, after a night spent in nonsensical, fragmentary dreams totally unrelated to his grief, as Sleptsov stepped out into the cold veranda, a floorboard emitted a merry pistol crack underfoot, and the reflections of the many-colored panes formed paradisaical lozenges on the whitewashed cushionless window seats. The outer door resisted at first, then opened with a luscious crunch, and the dazzling frost hit his face. The reddish sand providently sprinkled on the ice coating the porch steps resembled cinnamon, and thick icicles shot with greenish blue hung from the eaves. The snowdrifts reached all the way to the windows of the annex, tightly gripping the snug little wooden structure in their frosty clutches. The creamy white mounds of what were flower beds in summer swelled slightly above the level snow in front of the porch, and further off loomed the radiance of the park, where every black branchlet was rimmed with silver, and the firs seemed to draw in their green paws under their bright plump load.

Wearing high felt boots and a short fur-lined coat with a *karakul* collar,³ Sleptsov strode off slowly along a straight path, the only one cleared of snow, into that blinding distant landscape. He was amazed to be still alive, and able to perceive the brilliance of the snow and feel his front teeth ache from the cold. He even noticed that a snow-covered bush resembled a fountain and that a dog had left a series of saffron marks on the slope of a snowdrift, which had burned through its crust. A little further, the supports of a foot bridge stuck out of the snow, and there Sleptsov stopped. Bitterly, angrily, he pushed the thick, fluffy covering off the parapet. He vividly recalled how this bridge looked in summer. There was his son walking along the slippery planks, flecked with *aments*,⁴ and deftly plucking off with his net a butterfly that had settled on the railing. Now the boy sees his father. Forever lost laughter plays on his face, under the turned-down brim of a straw hat burned dark by the sun; his hand toys with the chainlet of the leather purse attached to his belt, his dear, smooth, suntanned legs in their *serge* shorts and soaked sandals assume their usual cheerful widespread stance. Just recently, in Petersburg, after having babbled in his delirium about school, about his bicycle, about some great Oriental moth, he died, and yesterday Sleptsov had taken the coffin—weighed down, it seemed, with an entire lifetime—to the country, into the family vault near the village church.

It was quiet as it can only be on a bright, frosty day. Sleptsov raised his leg high, stepped off the path and, leaving blue pits behind him in the snow, made his way among the trunks of amazingly white trees to the spot where the park dropped off toward the river. Far below, ice blocks sparkled near a hole cut in the smooth expanse of white and, on the opposite bank, very straight columns of pink smoke stood above the snowy roofs of log cabins. Sleptsov took off his *karakul* cap and leaned against a tree trunk. Somewhere far away peasants were chopping wood—every blow bounced resonantly skyward—and beyond the light silver mist of trees, high above the squat *izbas*,⁵ the sun caught the equanimous radiance of the cross on the church.

3. *karakul collar*—woolen collar.

4. *aments*—cylindrical flower clusters without petals.

5. *izba*—a small wooden house.

• 3 •

That was where he headed after lunch, in an old sleigh with a high straight back. The cod of the black stallion clacked strongly in the frosty air, the white plumes of low branches glided overhead, and the ruts in front gave off a silvery blue sheen. When he arrived he sat for an hour or so by the grave, resting a heavy, woolen-gloved hand on the iron of the railing that burned his hand through the wool. He came home with a slight sense of disappointment, as if there, in the burial vault, he had been even further removed from his son than here, where the countless summer tracks of his rapid sandals were preserved beneath the snow.

In the evening, overcome by a fit of intense sadness, he had the main house unlocked. When the door swung open with a weighty wail, and a whiff of special, unwintery coolness came from the sonorous iron-barred vestibule, Sleptsov took the lamp with its tin reflector from the watchman's hand and entered the house alone. The parquet floors crackled eerily under his step. Room after room filled with yellow light, and the shrouded furniture seemed unfamiliar; instead of a tinkling chandelier, a soundless bag hung from the ceiling; and Sleptsov's enormous shadow, slowly extending one arm, floated across the wall and over the gray squares of curtained paintings.

He went into the room which had been his son's study in summer, set the lamp on the window ledge and, breaking his fingernails as he did so, opened the folding shutters, even though all was darkness outside. In the blue glass the yellow flame of the slightly smoky lamp appeared, and his large, bearded face showed momentarily.

He sat down at the bare desk and sternly, from under bent brows, examined the pale wallpaper with its garlands of bluish roses; a narrow officelike cabinet, with sliding drawers from top to bottom; the couch and armchairs under slipcovers; and suddenly, dropping his head onto the desk, he started to shake, passionately, noisily, pressing first his lips, then his wet cheek, to the cold, dusty wood and clutching at its far corners.

In the desk he found a notebook, spreading boards, supplies of black pins and an English biscuit tin that contained a large exotic cocoon which had cost three rubles. It was papery to the touch and seemed made of a brown folded leaf. His son had remembered it during his sickness, regretting that he had left it behind, but consoling

himself with the thought that the chrysalid⁶ inside was probably dead. He also found a torn net: a *tarlatan*⁷ bag on a collapsible hoop (and the muslin still smelled of summer and sun-hot grass).

Then, bending lower and lower and sobbing with his whole body, he began pulling out one by one the glass-topped drawers of the cabinet. In the dim lamplight the even files of specimens shone silklike under the glass. Here, in this room, on that very desk, his son had spread the wings of his captures. He would first pin the carefully killed insect in the cork-bottomed groove of the setting board, between the adjustable strips of wood, and fasten down flat with pinned strips of paper the still fresh, soft wings. They had now dried long ago and been transferred to the cabinet—those spectacular Swallowtails, those dazzling Coppers and Blues, and the various Fritillaries,⁸ some mounted in a supine position to display the mother-of-pearl undersides. His son used to pronounce their Latin names with a moan of triumph or in an arch aside of disdain. And the moths, the moths, the first Aspen Hawk of five summers ago!

• 4 •

The night was smoke-blue and moonlit; thin clouds were scattered about the sky but did not touch the delicate, icy moon. The trees, masses of gray frost, cast dark shadows on the drifts, which scintillated here and there with metallic sparks. In the plush-upholstered, well-heated room of the annex Ivan had placed a two-foot fir tree in a clay pot on the table, and was just attaching a candle to its cruciform tip when Sleptsov returned from the main house, chilled, red-eyed, with gray dust smears on his cheek, carrying a wooden case under his arm. Seeing the Christmas tree on the table, he asked absently:

“What’s that?”

Relieving him of the case, Ivan answered in a low, mellow voice:

“There’s a holiday coming up tomorrow.”

“No, take it away,” said Sleptsov with a frown, while thinking, “Can this be Christmas Eve? How could I have forgotten?”

Ivan gently insisted:

“It’s nice and green. Let it stand for a while.”

6. *chrysalid*—chrysalis.

7. *tarlatan*—starched muslin.

8. *Fritillaries*—orange butterflies with black spots.

“Please take it away,” repeated Sleptsov, and bent over the case he had brought. In it he had gathered his son’s belongings—the folding butterfly net, the biscuit tin with the pear-shaped cocoon, the spreading board, the pins in their lacquered box, the blue notebook. Half of the first page had been torn out, and its remaining fragment contained part of a French dictation. There followed daily entries, names of captured butterflies, and other notes:

“Walked across the bog as far as Borovichi, ...”

“Raining today. Played checkers with Father, then read Goncharov’s *Frigate*,⁹ a deadly bore.”

“Marvelous hot day. Rode my bike in the evening. A midge¹⁰ got in my eye. Deliberately rode by her dacha twice, but didn’t see her. ...”

Sleptsov raised his head, swallowed something hot and huge. Of whom was his son writing?

“Rode my bike as usual,” he read on, “Our eyes nearly met. My darling, my love. ...”

“This is unthinkable,” whispered Sleptsov. “I’ll never know. ...”

He bent over again, avidly deciphering the childish handwriting that slanted up then curved down in the margin.

“Saw a fresh specimen of the Camberwell Beauty¹¹ today. That means autumn is here. Rain in the evening. She has probably left, and we didn’t even get acquainted. Farewell, my darling. I feel terribly sad. ...”

“He never said anything to me. ...” Sleptsov tried to remember, rubbing his forehead with his palm.

On the last page there was an ink drawing: the hind view of an elephant—two thick pillars, the corners of two ears, and a tiny tail.

Sleptsov got up. He shook his head, restraining yet another onrush of hideous sobs.

“I-can’t-bear-it-any-longer,” he drawled between groans, repeating even more slowly, “I-can’t-bear-it-any-longer. ...”

“It’s Christmas tomorrow,” came the abrupt reminder, “and I’m going to die. Of course. It’s so simple. This very night. ...”

9. *Goncharov’s Frigate*—the travelogue *Frigate Pallada*, an account by the Russian novelist Ivan Goncharov (1812–1891) of a trip in 1852 around the world, while he served as a secretary for a navy admiral charged with inspecting Russian settlements in Alaska and establishing trade relations with Japan.

10. *midge*—small fly.

11. *Camberwell Beauty*—a butterfly with black wings, trimmed with yellow.

He pulled out a handkerchief and dried his eyes, his beard, his cheeks. Dark streaks remained on the handkerchief.

“... death,” Sleptsov said softly, as if concluding a long sentence.

The clock ticked. Frost patterns overlapped on the blue glass of the window. The open notebook shone radiantly on the table; next to it the light went through the muslin of the butterfly net, and glistened on a corner of the open tin. Sleptsov pressed his eyes shut, and had a fleeting sensation that earthly life lay before him, totally bared and comprehensible—and ghastly in its sadness, humiliatingly pointless, sterile, devoid of miracles. ...

At that instant there was a sudden snap—a thin sound like that of an overstretched rubber band breaking. Sleptsov opened his eyes. The cocoon in the biscuit tin had burst at its tip, and a black, wrinkled creature the size of a mouse was crawling up the wall above the table. It stopped, holding on to the surface with six black furry feet, and started palpitating strangely. It had emerged from the chrysalid because a man overcome with grief had transferred a tin box to his warm room, and the warmth had penetrated its taut leaf-and-silk envelope; it had awaited this moment so long, had collected its strength so tensely, and now, having broken out, it was slowly and miraculously expanding. Gradually the wrinkled tissues, the velvety fringes, unfurled; the fan-pleated veins grew firmer as they filled with air. It became a winged thing imperceptibly, as a maturing face imperceptibly becomes beautiful. And its wings—still feeble, still moist—kept growing and unfolding, and now they were developed to the limit set for them by God, and there, on the wall, instead of a little lump of life, instead of a dark mouse, was a great *Attacus* moth¹² like those that fly, birdlike, around lamps in the Indian dusk.

And then those thick black wings, with a glazy eyespot on each and a purplish bloom dusting their hooked foretips, took a full breath under the impulse of tender, ravishing, almost human happiness.

12. *Attacus moth*—a large moth with intricate, multicolored wings.

36.2 Anna Akhmatova, “Lamentation” (1944)

Anna Akhmatova, *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*, trans. Judith Hemschmeyer, ed. Roberta Reeder (Somerville, MA: Zephyr, 1990), 613. Fair use.

Her devotees characterize Anna Akhmatova as the greatest Russian poet of the twentieth century. Her poetry—ranging from intimate verse to her grand “Requiem”—explores themes of love, politics, religion, loss, and suffering. While her numerous extra-marital affairs make it difficult to portray her as a model of Orthodox piety (two critics described her as “a harlot and a nun”) she remained a devoted Orthodox believer until the end of her life. Beautiful, witty, and the toast of the St. Petersburg intelligentsia, Akhmatova nevertheless lived a tragic life. She divorced her first husband, Nikolai Gumilov, in 1918; Gumilov was executed three years later for anti-Soviet activities. Between 1925 and 1952 Soviet censors allowed her to publish only a limited number of pre-approved poems. Her son, Lev, and her third husband, Nikolai Punin, were arrested for “political deviance” in 1935. Her son was imprisoned in a Soviet labor camp from 1949–1956.



Figure 193. Anna Akhmatova, 1950

In the first poem below, “Lamentation,” Akhmatova remembers the German army’s siege of Leningrad—the infamous “nine hundred days,” which lasted from September of 1941 until July of 1944. Citizens who survived the siege described life in the

city as Hell on earth. German shells, bombs, and rampant starvation (what Leningrad residents termed the “white death”) killed hundreds of thousands: estimates range from 670,000 (an early Soviet estimate) to 1.5 million. Akhmatova fled Leningrad to live in Tashkent in Soviet Central Asia during the siege, but returned to the city in 1944. “Lamentation” shows Akhmatova turning to her faith as she contemplates the “anguish of Leningrad.”

I won't throw up my hands
At the anguish of Leningrad,
I won't wash it with tears,
I won't bury it in the ground.
I'll go a mile beyond
The anguish of Leningrad.
And not with a glance, not with an allusion,
Not with a reproach, not with a word,
 But with a bow down to the ground
 In a green field
 Will I pray.

36.3 Anna Akhmatova, “Crucifixion” (1940–1943)

Anna Akhmatova, *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova*, trans. Judith Hemschmeyer, ed. Roberta Reeder (Somerville, MA: Zephyr, 1990), 109–111. Fair use.

“Crucifixion” from Akhmatova’s *Requiem*, her best-known work, constitutes a heartbreaking and scathing meditation on Stalin’s terror. In the preface to her poem, she wrote, “In the terrible years of [...] the terror, I spent seventeen months in the prison lines of Leningrad.”¹³

Once, someone “recognized” me. Then a woman with bluish lips standing behind me, who, of course had never heard me called by name before, woke up from the stupor to which everyone had succumbed and whispered in my ear (everybody spoke in a whisper there): “Can you describe this?” And I answered: “Yes, I can.”

In “Crucifixion” Akhmatova employs religious imagery to “describe this,” drawing on images of the Virgin Mary and Christ to depict herself and her own son.

“Do not weep for me, mother,
 I am in the grave.”

1

A choir of angels sang the praises of that
 momentous hour,
 And the heavens dissolved in fire.
 To his Father he said: “Why have you forsaken me!”
 And to his mother: “O, do not weep for me ...”

1940
Fountain House

13. *prison lines of Leningrad*—Akhmatova joined hundreds of women outside the prisons housing their sons and husbands, waiting to deliver bread or simply to catch a glimpse of their faces.

2

Mary Magdalene beat her breast and sobbed,
The beloved disciple turned to stone,
But where the silent mother stood, there
No one glanced and no one would have dared.

*1943
Tashkent*

Epilogue I

I learned how faces fall,
How terror darts from under eyelids,
How suffering traces lines
Of stiff cuneiform on cheeks,
How locks of ashen-blond or black
Turn silver suddenly,
Smiles fade on submissive lips
And fear trembles in a dry laugh.
And I pray not for myself alone,
But for all those who stood there with me
In cruel cold, and in July's heat,
At that blind, red wall.
[...]

March 1940

36.4 Angelos Sikelianos, “Agraphon”

Angelos Sikelianos, “Agraphon,” in *Angelos Sikelianos: Selected Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 136–141. Used by permission of translator Edmund Keeley.

The Greek poet Angelos Sikelianos (1884–1951) studied to become a lawyer but abandoned law school after two years to join a theater troupe. He and Nikos Kazantzakis, a writer whose work also appears below, made a grand tour of monasteries on Mount Athos and other historical sites in 1914 and 1915, confirming and strengthening an admiration for Greek religion and mythology that would inform nearly all of Sikelianos’s work.



Figure 194. Angelos Sikelianos, ca. 1905

The translators Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard argue that there are “two main aspects” of Sikelianos’s poetry: “the lyrical affirmation of the natural world and of the human body as part of it,” and “the vision of the seer who knows that the natural world is doomed to tragic suffering and who aspires ‘to rise above this flesh-consuming rhythm’ in order to find fulfillment in another order of reality.” Keeley and Sherrard also identify in

Sikelianos's poetry a "mythological or metaphysical attitude toward life."

There is a supernatural world as well as a natural world, there is the invisible as well as the visible. According to Sikelianos, everything in the natural and visible world when rightly perceived can be seen as the expression of the supernatural and the invisible. All is a manifestation of an original divine life and is therefore holy. At the same time, when man's vision is unperfected or "uninitiated," man usually regards everything as existing in its own right and apart from the divine, a perspective that implies disunity, a disintegration or dismemberment of the original wholeness of things. The task of the man with true knowledge and insight—the task of the prophet, the sage, or the visionary poet—is to restore this lost unity and to reconcile natural with supernatural, visible with invisible, first in his own life and then by making others aware of their divided state.

Sikelianos believed that Greece's ancient myths represented a pure and true form of such unified wisdom, free from the dichotomies and contradictions of modern philosophical systems. He insisted, in Keeley's and Sherrard's words, that

Nature and the supernatural were linked together inseparably, aspects of life's organic wholeness in which such divisions were surpassed. Sikelianos regarded Orphism¹⁴ and the cult of Dionysus, the teachings of Pythagoras,¹⁵ the Mysteries of Eleusis,¹⁶ and the mantic center at Delphi¹⁷ as four of the main expressions of this tradition. In these he found a shared vision that proclaimed not only the brotherhood of all men but of all living creatures and that placed man as the channel of communication between higher and lower states of existence, between

14. *Orphism*—a wide variety of ancient Greek beliefs emphasizing the divinity and immortality of the soul, whose adherents revered Orpheus, Dionysus, or Persephone.

15. *Pythagoras*—Pythagoras of Samos (ca. 570–ca. 495), the Greek philosopher and mathematician, who believed in the transmigration or reincarnation of souls, a system in which human souls are reborn into the bodies of other animals after death.

16. *Mysteries of Eleusis*—an elaborate set of secret ceremonies conducted in ancient Greece, with the aim of assisting the soul in its quest to ascend to a state of redemption and immortality.

17. *mantic center at Delphi*—an oracular shrine at which a sibyl would issue cryptic prophecies.

the visible and the invisible. And he believed this tradition was not incompatible with that of Christianity, the actual religion of the Greek people for most of the past two thousand years. Sikelianos saw both traditions as enshrining what is essentially the same wisdom.¹⁸

Sikelianos, in other words, engaged in religious syncretism, a comingling of beliefs thought by others to be mutually incompatible. He approved of Friedrich Schelling's assertion that "Mythology contains within it all religious truth. Religion is not mythology, as modern scholars imagine. On the contrary, mythology is religion. All myths are true. They are not fabrications about what does not exist, but revelations of what always exists."

We include below two radically different poems by Sikelianos. He wrote the first, "Agraphon" in the autumn of 1941, during the German occupation of Greece, when he became famous for his public readings of nationalist poetry and his condemnations of Nazi despotism. "Agraphon" serves as a thinly veiled analogy for life under the Nazis. It is hardly a piece of religious orthodoxy; in fact "Agraphon" translates literally as "unwritten thing," referring here to an "unwritten" saying or tradition about Christ absent from the Gospels and unrecognized by any Orthodox church. Yet there is nothing un-Christian or pagan about the poem. Like some of Sikelianos's other Christian poetry, "Agraphon" moves, in Keeley and Sherrard's words, "authoritatively within a completely Christian ethos."

Contrast this "completely Christian" ethos with that of the second poem, "Dionysus Encradled."

Once at sunset Jesus and his disciples
 were on their way outside the walls of Zion
 when suddenly they came to where the town
 for years had dumped its garbage: burned mattresses
 from sickbeds, broken pots, rags, filth.
 And there, crowning the highest pile, bloated,
 its legs pointing at the sky, lay a dog's carcass;
 and as the crows that covered it flew off

18. See Keeley's and Sherrard's introduction in *Angelos Sikelianos: Selected Poems*, from which this introduction draws.

when they heard the approaching footsteps, such a stench
rose up from it that all the disciples, hands
cupped over their nostrils, drew back as one man.
But Jesus calmly walked on by himself
toward the pile, stood there, and then gazed
so closely at the carcass that one disciple,
not able to stop himself, called out from a distance,
“Rabbi, don’t you smell that terrible stench?
How can you go on standing there?”
Jesus, his eyes fixed on the carcass,
answered: “If your breath is pure, you’ll smell
the same stench inside the town behind us.
But now my soul marvels at something else,
marvels at what comes out of this corruption.
Look how that dog’s teeth glitter in the sun:
like hailstones, like a lily, beyond decay,
a great pledge, mirror of the Eternal, but also
the harsh lightning-flash, the hope of Justice!”
So he spoke; and whether or not the disciples
understood his words, they followed him
as he moved on, silent.

And now, Lord, I,
the very least of men, ponder your words
and, filled with one thought, I stand before you:
grant me, as now I walk outside my Zion,
and the world from end to end is all ruins, garbage,
all unburied corpses choking the sacred
springs of breath, inside and outside the city:
grant me, Lord, as I walk through this terrible stench,
one single moment of your holy calm,
so that I, dispassionate, may also pause
among this carrion and with my own eyes
somewhere see a token, white as hailstones,
as the lily—something glittering suddenly
deep inside me, above the putrefaction,
beyond the world’s decay, like the dog’s teeth
at which that sunset you gazed, Lord, in wonder:
a great pledge, mirror of the Eternal, but also
the harsh lightning-flash, the hope of Justice!

36.5 Angelos Sikelianos, “Dionysus Encradled”

Angelos Sikelianos, “Dionysus Encradled,” in Keeley and Sherrard, *Angelos Sikelianos: Selected Poems*, 128–135. Used by permission of translator Edmund Keeley.

The second poem, “Dionysus Encradled,” takes as its subject the Greek god Dionysus (“Bacchus” in Roman mythology), the son of Zeus and the god of wine, known for inspiring “Dionysian” frenzies or “bacchanalia” among his followers.



Figure 195. Dionysus, Roman, 100s, Louvre, Paris

Imaginative scholars of mythology have no trouble suggesting parallels between Dionysus and Christ.¹⁹ Wine is a crucial element in the Dionysian cult and in the Eucharist; Peter Wick has argued that the Gospel of John offers the story of the wedding at Cana (where Jesus turns water into wine) to prove Christ's superiority to Dionysus.²⁰ One version of Dionysus's birth credits the supreme deity (Zeus) with impregnating a mortal woman, Semele. Another story recounts his death and resurrection. Both Dionysus and Christ can thus be understood as "liberators" who free humans from their normal selves. Barry Powell notes common understandings of Christ and Dionysus as both god and worshipper.²¹

Sikelianos also equated Dionysus with Christ, claiming for both a rebellious spirit. He believed, according to Stratos Constantinidis, that the "Dionysiac and Christian tradition of the Greeks shared a similar wisdom," allowing Sikelianos to "invoke Dionysus and Christ interchangeably."²²

In the poem below, Sikelianos describes Mother-Night giving birth to an infant who is both Dionysus and Christ. Night represents the evils of the Nazi occupation, and Dionysus/Christ the power to overcome such evil.

Great night, mother-night among the nights
 of the ages, cradle of the Titans'²³ offspring,
 you who pour your snow swift and thick this evening
 between me and the outside world, closing me
 alone in my unviolated sentry box

19. For a summary of studies, see Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 326–331.

20. Peter Wick, "Jesus gegen Dionysos? Ein Beitrag zur Kontextualisierung des Johannesevangeliums" *Biblica* 85, no. 2 (2004): 179–198.

21. Barry Powell, *Classical Myth*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2003), 281.

22. Stratos Constantinidis, "The New Dionysus of Modern Greek Poetic Drama: Crucifix or Grapevine?," in *From the Bard to Broadway*, ed. Karelisa Hartigan (New York: University Press of America, 1987), 21, 27.

23. *Titans*—in Greek mythology, a race of powerful deities overthrown by the later and better-known Olympian gods in the Titanomachy or "battle of the Titans."

(upright coffin where, my limbs frozen, I keep
 unsleeping watch on the frontiers of time):
 Mother-night, in your silence, as I feel
 my heart waning—for everything sleeps: the earth beneath
 my feet, the deep sky above me, and only
 the Serpent of the Abyss seems to be awake,
 and not even my breath's vapor rises
 from my lips, which death waits ready to close—
 suddenly I think I hear, low, quavering,
 the cry of a baby, and I ask myself:
 "Is God, eternal God, being born again
 tonight as a young child?"
 But, Mother-night,
 in vain I strain my ears to catch, behind
 this cry, perhaps the sound of dogs moving
 in the fold at Bethlehem, and in vain
 I strain my eyes to see the angelic host or,
 lower down, shepherds' fires piercing the darkness.
 But as clouds cover the clouds and everything
 is wrapped silently in the snow's winding sheet,
 I hear—long, doleful, blood-curdling—the howl of wolves
 invade you, hear swift packs of wolves go by,
 a whole long army climbing through the snow;
 yet as once more your silence suddenly fills you,
 again I put the same question to myself.
 And in answer, as if a whirlwind's savage blast
 shatters the wall of silence that enfolds me,
 legions of the dead, their winding sheets the same
 snow that covers up their tracks, throng all around me,
 throng like hordes of prisoners who have smashed
 their prison walls, like madmen who have found
 suddenly that their asylum door has been
 burst wide open by the storm and, pouring out
 into the night, have scattered helter-skelter;
 and all those dead, grieving, seem to say:
 "Truly the eternal God is being born
 again tonight as a young child . . . But tell us:
 where are the sentinels to keep watch on the sacred
 frontiers, to save the child from the wolves?"
 This, Mother-night, is the harsh voice I seem to hear

inside me; and as suddenly the whole world-creating *sistrum*²⁴ vibrates in my heart, I plunge, Night, cradle of the Titans' offspring, inspired by your hidden pulse, each beat an age, into the darkness to summon the companions; into the darkness I plunge, over snow and tombs, and with these words I call them at the crossroads: "My sweet child, my Dionysus and my Christ: though you have come into the world today, a young Titan, you have no mother's arms to keep you warm. For you are the son of the night around us, of this night, and son of our unsleeping hearts which, spark of life in the frozen chaos, fight now with death itself, with our own death and that of the whole world. And we know, young Titan, that if you fail tonight to fasten onto our hearts, to drink their blood drop by drop, tomorrow you too will be among the dead. But we hold it better to stay buried in the upright coffins that freeze our limbs than for your pulse to stop in the darkness, along with all the rest that swell the herd of indescribable violence, and for savage wolves from far off to catch the scent of your cradle. But as your cradle is the shield of shields, so we, *Corybantes*,²⁵ begin to circle around it, to dance our last dance, beating our swords on our own shields to drive the wolves from you. The whole night through we'll dance around you, and however long the night, we'll dance until the ghouls of the dark have fled, and your voice—God's voice that rises out of sleep, voice of the 'great intoxication'—suddenly calls

24. *sistrum*—a percussion instrument made of brass or bronze. A handle connects to a U-shaped frame, to which small rings or loops are attached, which produce clanking or jingling sounds when shaken.

25. *Corybantes*—companions (sometimes eunuch priests) of the Asian goddess Cybele, who accompanied her with music and wild dances. Here the dancing of the *corybantes* references the wild dancing of Dionysus's followers.

the dead into the sun's warmth, while above your cradle
bends the shadow of your single mighty Vine,
sweet child, our Dionysus and our Christ."

36.6 Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1951)

Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, trans. P.A. Bien, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 1–3, 443–446, 465–466, 472–485, 487–496. All attempts to reach rights holder failed.

The Greek novelist Nikos Kazantzakis (1883–1957) is known for his passionate, big-hearted novels, including *Zorba the Greek* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*. The latter, in Colin Wilson's estimation, is "the least accessible" of Kazantzakis's novels.²⁶ Yet it is a powerful (if sometimes inscrutable) examination of the struggle between flesh and spirit—a modern, psychological take on the age-old problem of Christ's dual nature. Jean Ellen Petrolle notes that the novel ultimately "portrays the body as consonant with spirit," but it also "contains vestiges of a traditional Christian body-spirit dualism in which body is less valuable than the soul."²⁷

There is much in this novel that disturbed the Greek Orthodox Church: Jesus seriously considers *not* dying for the sins of humankind; Kazantzakis portrays him as a sexual and even erotic figure—his spirit and flesh struggle against each other. In addition, Kazantzakis asserts in the novel's prologue that every person "partakes of the divine nature"; the mystery of Christ "is not simply a matter for a particular creed." There is no attempt here to portray the Jesus preached by the church.

26. Colin Wilson, "Nikos Kazantzakis," *The Mediterranean Review* (Fall 1970), 39–40.

27. Jean Ellen Petrolle, "Nikos Kazantzakis and *The Last Temptation*: Irony and Dialectic in a Spiritual Ontology of Body," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 11, no. 2 (October 1993): 271.



Figure 196. Nikos Kazantzakis, n.d.

Despite positive reviews in Greece and abroad, religious critics deemed *The Last Temptation of Christ* dangerous. In 1953 the Vatican placed it on its index of banned books. Conservative Greek newspapers labeled Kazantzakis a blasphemer and a communist. The Holy Synod in Athens filed a statement with the city's district attorney, calling *The Last Temptation* unworthy of publication. The novel, said the Synod,

contains evil slanders against the godlike person of Jesus Christ; it seeks to destroy his divine nature and the Christian ethic and distorts the gospel truths with hallucinations, and through an uncontrolled impertinence, falsifies the saving teachings of the Bible.

This novel, which is derived from the inspiration of the theories of Freud and historical materialism, perverts and hurts

the gospel discernment and the God-man figure of our Lord Jesus Christ in a way coarse, vulgar, and blasphemous.²⁸

Greek liberals opposed calls to stop publication, and the Greek Holy Synod was unable to convince the Greek parliament to ban it. When asked about the Holy Synod's stance, Kazantzakis said,

I was very saddened that the church with such naïveté fell into a snare that it created. Two of its high representatives, to my sorrow, made me feel that they emerged below their missions. One of them cursed a work, as he confesses himself, that he did not read. The other, who did not manage to read the title of the work correctly ... [confused] the name of the hero with the name of the book's publisher, took pieces from certain phrases, twisted others, omitted whatever did not interest him and reached the conclusion that he wished ... I am very sorry, but I must emphasize that from this event the church came out the lesser for it. If I had paid the priests, they could not have given me so much publicity. And they ask me to apologize. I? The archbishop of Chios should apologize for judging a book that he has not read."²⁹

The Greek Holy Synod remained firm in its opposition and excommunicated Kazantzakis in 1955. It refused to conduct a public funeral for him after his death in 1957.

• Prologue •

The dual substance of Christ—the yearning, so human, so super-human, of man to attain to God or, more exactly, to return to God and identify himself with him—has always been a deep, inscrutable mystery to me. This nostalgia for God, at once so mysterious and so real, has opened in me large wounds and also large flowing springs.

My principal anguish and the source of all my joys and sorrows from my youth onward has been the incessant, merciless battle between the spirit and the flesh.

Within me are the dark, immemorial forces of the evil one, human and pre-human; within me too are the luminous forces, human and

28. Michael Antonakes, "Christ, Kazantzakis, and Controversy in Greece," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 6 (1990): 334–335.

29. *Ibid.*, 339–340.

pre-human, of God—and my soul is the arena where these two armies have clashed and met.

The anguish has been intense. I loved my body and did not want it to perish; I loved my soul and did not want it to decay. I have fought to reconcile these two primordial forces that are so contrary to each other, to make them realize that they are not enemies but, rather, fellow workers, so that they might rejoice in their harmony—and so that I might rejoice with them.

Every man partakes of the divine nature in both his spirit and his flesh. That is why the mystery of Christ is not simply a mystery for a particular creed: it is universal. The struggle between God and man breaks out in everyone, together with the longing for reconciliation. Most often this struggle is unconscious and short-lived. A weak soul does not have the endurance to resist the flesh for very long. It grows heavy, becomes flesh itself, and the contest ends. But among responsible men, men who keep their eyes riveted day and night upon the supreme duty, the conflict between flesh and spirit breaks out mercilessly and may last until death.

The stronger the soul and the flesh, the more fruitful the struggle and the richer the final harmony. God does not love weak souls and flabby flesh. The spirit wants to have to wrestle with flesh that is strong and full of resistance. It is a carnivorous bird that is incessantly hungry; it eats flesh and, by assimilating it, makes it disappear.

Struggle between the flesh and the spirit, rebellion and resistance, reconciliation and submission, and finally—the supreme purpose of the struggle—union with God: this was the ascent taken by Christ, the ascent that he invites us to take as well, following in his bloody tracks.

This is the supreme duty of the man who struggles—to set out for the lofty peak that Christ, the first-born Son of Salvation, attained. How can we begin?

If we are to be able to follow him we must have a profound knowledge of his conflict, we must relive his anguish: his victory over the blossoming snares of the earth, his sacrifice of the great and small joys of men and his ascent from sacrifice to sacrifice, exploit to exploit, to martyrdom's summit, the cross.

I never followed Christ's bloody journey to Golgotha with such terror, I never relived his life and passion with such intensity, such understanding and love, as during the days and nights when I wrote *The Last Temptation of Christ*. While setting down this confession of the anguish and the great hope of mankind I was so moved that my eyes

filled with tears. I had never felt the blood of Christ fall drop by drop into my heart with so much sweetness, so much pain.

In order to mount to the cross, the summit of sacrifice, and to God, the summit of immateriality, Christ passed through all the stages that the man who struggles passes through. That is why his suffering is so familiar to us; that is why we share it, and why his final victory seems to us so much our own future victory. That part of Christ's nature that was profoundly human helps us to understand him and love him and to pursue his passion as though it were our own. If he had not within him this warm human element, he would never be able to touch our hearts with such assurance and tenderness; he would not be able to become a model for our lives. We struggle, we see him struggle also, and we find strength. We see that we are not all alone in the world: he is fighting at our side.

Every moment of Christ's life is a conflict and a victory. He conquered the invincible enchantment of simple human pleasures; he conquered temptations, continually transubstantiated flesh into spirit, and ascended. Reaching the summit of Golgotha, he mounted the cross.

But even there his struggle did not end. Temptation—the last temptation—was waiting for him upon the cross. Before the fainted eyes of the crucified the spirit of the evil one, in an instantaneous flash, unfolded the deceptive vision of a calm and happy life. It seemed to Christ that he had taken the smooth, easy road of men. He had married and fathered children. People loved and respected him. Now, an old man, he sat on the threshold of his house and smiled with satisfaction as he recalled the longings of his youth. How splendidly, how sensibly he had acted in choosing the road of men! What insanity to have wanted to save the world! What joy to have escaped the privations, the tortures, and the cross!

This was the last temptation that came in the space of a lightning flash to trouble the Savior's final moments.

But all at once Christ shook his head violently, opened his eyes, and saw. No, he was not a traitor, glory be to God! He was not a deserter. He had accomplished the mission that the Lord had entrusted to him. He had not married, had not lived a happy life. He had reached the summit of sacrifice: he was nailed upon the cross.

Content, he closed his eyes. And then there was a great triumphant cry: It is accomplished!

In other words: I have accomplished my duty, I am being crucified, I did not fall into temptation. ...

This book was written because I wanted to offer a supreme model to the man who struggles; I wanted to show him that he must not fear pain, temptation or death—because all three can be conquered, all three have already been conquered. Christ suffered pain, and since then pain has been sanctified. Temptation fought until the very last moment to lead him astray, and temptation was defeated. Christ died on the cross, and at that instant death was vanquished forever.

Every obstacle in his journey became a milestone, an occasion for further triumph. We have a model in front of us now, a model who blazes our trail and gives us strength.

This book is not a biography; it is the confession of every man who struggles. In publishing it I have fulfilled my duty, the duty of a person who struggled much, was much embittered in his life,

and had many hopes. I am certain that
 every free man who reads this book, so filled as it
 is with love, will more than ever before,
 better than ever before, love
 Christ.

N. Kazantzakis

We join the story toward the end, as Christ hangs on the cross, while an unidentified man from Cyrene (an ancient Greek colony in modern Libya) trembles at the foot of the cross.

• Chapter 29 •

[...] “What is this?” murmured the Cyrenian, trembling. “God himself, God himself is crucifying him!”

And then—never in his life had the Cyrenian experienced such intense fear or pain—a great, heart-rending cry, full of complaint, tore the air from earth to Heaven.

“*Eli ... Eli ...*”³⁰

[Jesus] was unable to continue. He wanted to but could not: he had no more breath.

The crucified inclined his head—and fainted. [...]

30. *Eli ... Eli ...*—“My God, my God”: Christ’s last words as reported in the book of Mark.

• Chapter 30 •

His eyelids fluttered with joy and surprise. This was not a cross; it was a huge tree reaching from earth to Heaven. Spring had come: blossoms covered the entire tree; and at the very end of each branch a bird sat over the brink and sang ... And he—he stood erect, his whole body leaning against the flowering tree. He lifted his head and counted: one, two, three ...

“Thirty-three,” he murmured. “As many as my own years.³¹ Thirty-three birds, and all singing.”

His eyes expanded, burst their bounds, covered his entire face. Without turning, he could see the world in bloom in every direction. His ears, two sinuous seashells, received the blasphemies, weeping and tumult of the world and turned them into song. And from his heart, pierced by a lance,³² the blood flowed.

There was no wind, but the compassionate tree shed its flowers, one by one, onto his thorn-entangled hair and bloody hands. And as he struggled amid the sea of twitterings to remember who he was and where he was, the air suddenly whirled, congealed, and an angel stood before him. ... At that moment, day broke.

He had seen many angels, both while asleep and while awake, but he had never seen an angel like this. What warm, human beauty, what soft, curly fluff on his cheeks and upper lip! And the eyes—how they played friskily, full of passion, like those of a young man or woman in love. His body was supple and firm; a blue-black disquieting fluff enwrapped his legs, from the shins to the rounded thighs; and his armpits smelled of beloved human sweat.

Jesus was disconcerted. “Who are you?” he asked him, his heart pounding.

The angel smiled and his whole face became sweet, like the face of a man. He folded his two wide green wings as though he did not want to frighten Jesus too much.

“I am just like yourself,” he answered. “Your guardian angel. Have faith.”

His voice was deep and caressing, compassionate and familiar—just like the voice of a man. The voices of the angels Jesus had heard until now had been severe, and they had always scolded him.

31. *As many as my own years*—Jesus was thirty-three years old when crucified.

32. *pierced by a lance*—the book of John reports that a Roman soldier pierced Jesus’s side with his lance.

Rejoicing, he looked imploringly at the angel and waited for him to speak again.

The angel divined this and inclined smilingly to the man's desire. "God sent me to bring sweetness to your lips. Men have given you much bitterness to drink; the heavens have done the same. You have suffered and struggled. In your whole life you have seen not one day of gladness. Your mother, brothers, disciples; the poor, the maimed, the oppressed—all, all abandoned you in the last terrible moment. You remained upon a rock in the darkness, completely alone and undefended. And then God the Father took pity on you. 'Hey, there, why are you sitting?' he called to me. 'Aren't you his guardian angel? Well, go down and save him. I don't want him to be crucified. Enough's enough!'"

"'Lord of hosts,' I answered him, trembling, 'didn't you send him to earth to be crucified in order to save mankind? That's why I sit here undisturbed: I thought that such was your will.'"

"'Let him be crucified in a dream,' God answered; 'let him taste the same fear, the same pain.'"

"'Guardian angel,' cried Jesus, grasping the angel's head with both his hands so that he would not lose him, 'guardian angel, I'm bewildered—wasn't I crucified?'"

The angel placed his all-white hand on Jesus's agitated heart in order to calm it. "Quiet down, don't be disturbed, beloved," he said to him, and his bewitching eyes fluttered. "No, you weren't crucified."

"Was the cross, then, a dream—and the nails, the pain, the sun that became dark?"

"Yes, a dream. You lived your entire passion in a dream. You mounted the cross and were nailed to it in a dream. The five wounds in your hands, feet and heart were inflicted in a dream, but with such force that, look! The blood is still flowing."

Jesus gazed around him in a trance. Where was he? What was this plain with its flowering trees and water? And Jerusalem? And his soul? He turned to the angel and touched his arm. How cool his flesh was, how firm!

"Guardian angel," he said, "as you speak my flesh finds relief, the cross becomes the shadow of a cross, the nails shadows of nails, and the crucifixion floats in the sky above me, like a cloud."

"Let us go," said the angel, and he began to stride nimbly over the blossoming meadow. "Great joys await you, Jesus of Nazareth. God left me free to allow you to taste all the pleasures you ever secretly

longed for. Beloved, the earth is good—you'll see. Wine, laughter, the lips of a woman, the gambols of your first son on your knees—all are good. We angels (would you believe it?) often lean over, up there in Heaven, look at the earth—and sigh." [...]

Jesus has now married Mary Magdalene and they have a son.

• Chapter 31 •

[...] "Are you satisfied with me?" asked the angel, with pride. "Have you any complaint?"

"None, my boy, none." [Jesus'] heart grew warm, rose up. "What an evil road I took to find God," he murmured. "What a forsaken incline, all cliffs and precipices! I called and called, my voice rebounded from the uninhabited mountain and I thought it was an answer!"

The angel laughed. "Alone, you cannot find God. Two persons are needed, a man and a woman. You didn't know that—I taught it to you; and thus, after so many years of seeking God, you finally found him—when you joined Mary. And now you sit in the darkness, you listen to him³³ laugh and cry, and you rejoice."

"That is the meaning of God," Jesus murmured, "that is the meaning of man. This is the road." He again closed his eyes.

His former life flashed through his mind, and he sighed. Extending his arm, he found the angel's hand. "My guardian angel," he said tenderly, "if you had not come, my boy, I would have been lost. Stay near me always."

"I shall; don't be afraid. I won't leave you. I like you."

"How long will this happiness last?"

"As long as I'm with you and you're with me, Jesus of Nazareth."

"For all eternity?"

The angel laughed. "What is eternity? Haven't you been able yet to get rid of big words, Jesus of Nazareth, of big words, big ideas, kingdoms of Heaven? Does this mean that even your son hasn't succeeded in curing you?" He banged his fist on the ground.

"Here is the kingdom of Heaven: earth. Here is God: your son. Here is eternity: each moment, Jesus of Nazareth, each moment that

33. *listen to him*—the angel suggests that the only place Jesus can find God is in his newborn son.

passes. Moments aren't enough for you? If so, you must learn that eternity will not be either." [...]

Jesus's guardian angel has taken the form of a black servant boy ("the negro"), who lives with the family, which now includes Jesus's two wives, Mary and Martha. Jesus has adopted the name "Lazarus" for himself.

• Chapter 32 •

[...] "Mary, do we have so many children?" said Jesus, laughing. "Martha, the yard is full. We've either got to enlarge the house or stop giving birth."

"We'll enlarge the house," answered Martha.

"They're almost ready to climb the walls and trees of the yard like field mice and squirrels. We've declared war on death, Mary. Blessed be the organs of women. They are full of eggs, like those of fish, and each egg is a man. Death will not overcome us."

"No, death will not overcome us, beloved. You just take care of yourself and stay well," Mary replied.

Jesus was in a good mood and wanted to tease her. Besides, Mary pleased him very much this morning, only half awake as she was, and standing before him combing her hair.

"Mary," he said, "don't you ever think about death, don't you seek God's mercy, don't you worry what will become of you in the next world?"

Mary shook her long hair and laughed. "Those are a man's concerns," she said. "No, I don't seek God's mercy. I'm a woman; I seek mercy from my husband. And I don't knock at God's door either, asking like a beggar for the eternal joys of Paradise. I hug the man I love and have no desire for any other Paradise. Let's leave the eternal joys to the men!"

"The eternal joys to the men?" said Jesus, caressing her bare shoulder. "Beloved wife, the earth is a narrow threshing floor. How can you lock yourself up in that space and not want to escape?"

"A woman is happy only inside boundaries. You know that, rabbi. A woman is a reservoir, not a spring."

Martha entered at a run. "Someone's looking for our house," she said. "Short and fat, hunchbacked, with a head as bald as an egg. He's tripping all over his crooked pegs and will be here in a minute."

The negro [the angel has now taken the form of one of Jesus's black servants] also rushed in, panting. "I don't like his looks; I'm going to shut the door in his face. He's another one who'll turn everything upside down."

Jesus eyed the boy fiercely. "What are you afraid of?" he asked. "Who is he that you should fear him? Open the door!"

The negro winked at him. "Chase him away!" he said to him softly.

"Why? Who is he?"

"Chase him away," the negro repeated, "and don't ask any questions."

Jesus became angry. "Am I not free? Can't I do what I please? Open the door."

By this time feet were heard in the road. They halted, and there was a knock at the door.

"Who's there?" Jesus asked, running into the yard.

A high, cracked voice replied, "One sent by God. Open!"

The door opened. A squat, fat hunchback, still young, but bald, stood on the threshold. His eyes were spitting fire. The two women, who had run to see him, recoiled.

"Rejoice and exult, brothers," said the visitor, opening wide his arms. "I bring you the good news!"

Jesus looked at him, struggling to remember where he had seen him. Cold shivers ran up and down his spine. "Who are you? I think I've met you somewhere. At Caiaphas's palace?³⁴ At a crucifixion?"

Sneering, the young negro, who was rolled up in one of the corners of the yard, said, "It's Saul,³⁵ bloodthirsty Saul!"

"Are you Saul?" Jesus asked, horrified.

"I was, but I'm not bloodthirsty Saul any more. I've seen the true light; I am Paul. I was saved—glory be to God!—and now I've set out to save the world. Not Judea, not Palestine, but the whole world! The good news I carry needs oceans and distant cities: spaciousness. Don't shake your head, master Lazarus³⁶ don't laugh, don't mock. Yes, I shall save the world!"

34. *Caiaphas's palace*—where Jesus was interrogated by the Jewish Sanhedrin before his crucifixion.

35. *Saul*—the Apostle Paul, whose Epistles in the New Testament did much to establish Christian theology.

36. *Lazarus*—Jesus's new name for himself.

“My fine lad,” Jesus replied, “I’ve already come back from where you’re headed. I remember that when I was young like you, I too set out to save the world. Isn’t that what being young means—to want to save the world? I went around barefooted, in rags, girded with a strap that was full of nails, like the ancient prophets. I shouted, ‘Love! Love!’ and a lot more I no longer wish to remember. They pelted me with lemon peels, they beat me, and I was a hair’s breadth from crucifixion. My fine lad, the same will happen to you!”

He had gathered momentum. Forgetting his role as master Lazarus, he was revealing his secret to a stranger. [...]

He turned to Paul. “What good news?” he bellowed with trembling voice.

“Jesus of Nazareth—you must have heard of him—was not the son of Joseph and Mary; he was the Son of God. He came down to earth and took on human flesh in order to save mankind. The wicked priests and Pharisees seized him, brought him to Pilate and crucified him. But on the third day he rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven. Death was conquered, brothers, sins were forgiven, the gates of Heaven opened up!”

“Did you see this resurrected Jesus of Nazareth?” Jesus bellowed. “Did you see him with your own eyes? What was he like?”

“A flash of lightning—a flash of lightning that spoke.”

“Liar!”

“His disciples saw him. They were gathered together after the crucifixion in an attic, and the doors were shut. Suddenly he came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’ They all saw him and were dazzled, but Thomas³⁷ was not convinced. He placed his finger inside his wounds and gave him some fish, which he ate.”

“Liar!”

But Paul had worked up steam. His eyes flashed; his crooked body had stretched itself up straight. “He wasn’t born of a man: his mother was a virgin. The angel Gabriel descended from Heaven, said, ‘Hail, Mary,’ and the word fell like seed into her womb. That’s how he was born.”

37. *Thomas*—one of Jesus’s disciples, sometimes referenced as “Doubting Thomas.” In the Gospel of John, Thomas at first refuses to believe reports of Jesus’s resurrection. “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” (John 20:24, NRSV)

“Liar! Liar!”

Astonished, Paul remained immobile. The negro rose and bolted the door. The neighbors, hearing the cries, had half opened their doors and cocked their ears. The two frightened wives had reappeared in the yard, but the negro had penned them up again inside. Jesus was swelling with rage; he could no longer calm his heart. Approaching Paul, he grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him violently.

“Liar! Liar!” he shouted. “I am Jesus of Nazareth and I was never crucified, never resurrected. I am the son of Mary and of Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth. I am not the Son of God, I am the Son of man—like everyone else. What blasphemies you utter! What effronteries! What lies! Is it with such lies, swindler, that you dare save the world?”

“You, you?” murmured Paul, bewildered. While master Lazarus spoke, frothing at the mouth, Paul had noticed blue marks like nail wounds on his hands and feet, and another wound over his heart.

“Why are you rolling your eyes?” cried Jesus. “Why do you stare at my hands and feet? Those marks you see were stamped on me by God during my sleep. By God, or by the tempter:³⁸ I still can’t understand which. I dreamed I was on the cross and in pain, but I cried out, awoke, and my pain disappeared. What I should have suffered while awake, I suffered while asleep—and escaped!”

“Quiet! Quiet!” bellowed Paul, grasping his temples for fear they would burst.

But how could Jesus remain silent! He felt as though these words had been encased in his breast for years. Now his heart had opened and they were gushing out. The negro clung to his arm. “Quiet! Quiet!” he said to him, but Jesus threw him to the ground with one shake and turned to Paul.

“Yes, yes. I’ll tell everything. I must find relief! What I should have suffered while awake, I suffered in my sleep. I escaped; I came to this tiny village under another name and with another body. Here I lead the life of a man: I eat, drink, work and have children. The great conflagration subsided, I too became a kind tranquil fire; I curled up in the fireplace, and my wife cooks the children’s meals. I set sail to conquer the world but cast anchor in this tiny domestic trough. And that’s that—I have no complaints. I am Son of man, I tell you, not Son of

38. *the tempter*—Satan.

God ... And don't go around the whole world to publish lies. I shall stand up and proclaim the truth!"

Now it was Paul's turn to explode. "Shut your shameless mouth!" he shouted, rushing at him. "Be quiet, or men will hear you and die of fright. In the rottenness, the injustice and poverty of this world, the crucified and resurrected Jesus has been the one precious consolation for the honest man, the wronged man. True or false—what do I care! It's enough if the world is saved!"

"It's better the world perish with the truth than be saved with lies. At the core of such a salvation sits the great worm Satan."

"What is 'truth'? What is 'falsehood'? Whatever gives wings to men, whatever produces great works and great souls and lifts man's height above the earth—that is true. Whatever clips man's wings—that is false."

"You won't keep quiet, will you, son of Satan! The wings you talk about are just like the wings of Lucifer."

"No, I won't keep quiet. I don't give a hoot about what's true and what's false, or whether I saw him or didn't see him, or whether he was crucified or wasn't crucified. I create the truth, create it out of obstinacy and longing and faith. I don't struggle to find it—I build it. I build it taller than man and thus I make man grow. If the world is to be saved, it is necessary—do you hear—absolutely necessary for you to be crucified, and I shall crucify you, like it or not; it is necessary for you to be resurrected, and I shall resurrect you, like it or not. For all I care you can sit here in your miserable village and manufacture cradles, troughs and children. If you want to know, I shall compel the air to take your shape. Body, crown of thorns, nails, blood ... The whole works is now part of the machinery of salvation—everything is indispensable. And in every corner of the earth, innumerable eyes will look up and see you in the air—crucified. They will weep, and the tears will cleanse their souls of all their sins. But on the third day I shall raise you from the dead, because there is no salvation without a resurrection. The final, the most horrible, enemy is death. I shall abolish death. How? By resurrecting you as Jesus, Son of God—the Messiah!"

"It's not true. I'll stand up and shout that I wasn't crucified, didn't rise from the dead, am not God! ... Why do you laugh?"

"Shout all you want. I'm not afraid of you. I don't even need you anymore. The wheel you set in motion has gathered momentum: who can control it now? To tell you the truth, while you were talking there I felt for a minute like falling upon you and strangling you just in case

you might accidentally reveal your identity and show poor mankind that you weren't crucified. But I calmed down immediately. Why shouldn't he shout? I asked myself. The faithful will seize you, will throw you on the pyre for a blasphemer and burn you!"

"I said only one word, brought only one message: Love. Love—nothing else."

"By saying 'Love' you let loose all the angels and demons that were asleep within the bowels of mankind. 'Love' is not, as you think, a simple, tranquil word. Within it lie armies being massacred, burning cities, and much blood. Rivers of blood, rivers of tears: the face of the earth has changed. You can cry now as much as you like; you can make yourself hoarse yelling, 'I didn't want to say that—that is not love. Do not kill each other! We're all brothers! Stop!' ... But how, poor wretch, can they stop? What's done is done!"

"You laugh like a devil."

"No, like an apostle. I shall become your apostle whether you like it or not. I shall construct you and your life and your teachings and your crucifixion and resurrection just as I wish. Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth did not beget you; I begot you—I, Paul the scribe from Tarsus³⁹ in Cilicia."

"No! No!"

"Who asked you? I have no need of your permission. Why do you stick your nose in my affairs?"

Jesus collapsed onto the drying platform of the yard and sank his head between his knees, hopeless. How could he come to grips with this demon?

Paul stood over the prostrate Jesus and addressed him scornfully. "How can the world be saved by you, master Lazarus? What uplifted example do you offer the world to make it follow you? With you, will it surpass its own nature, will its soul sprout wings? If the world wants to be saved, it will listen to me—me!"

He looked around him. The yard was deserted. Curled up in one corner, his brilliantly white eyes rolling, the negro was howling like a chained-in sheep dog. The women were in hiding; the neighbors had fled. But Paul—as though, to his eyes, the yard was a great boundless square filled with people—mounted the platform with one hop and began to preach to the invisible multitude.

39. *Tarsus*—Paul's home town, on the southeastern coast of modern Turkey.

“Brothers, lift up your eyes. Look! On one side, master Lazarus; on the other, Paul, the servant of Christ. Choose! If you go with him, with master Lazarus, you will lead a life of poverty, bound to the treadmill; you will live and die as sheep live and die—they leave behind them a little wool, a few bleats and a great deal of dung. If you come with me: love, struggle, war—we shall conquer the world! Choose! On one side, Christ, the Son of God, the salvation of the world; on the other, master Lazarus!”

He had caught fire. He swept his round eagle eyes over the invisible multitudes. His blood was boiling. The walls of the yard crumbled down; the negro boy and master Lazarus vanished. He heard a voice in the air.

“Apostle of the nations, great soul, you who knead falsehood with your blood and tears and turn it into truth: take the lead and guide us. How far will we go?”

Paul opened wide his arms. Embracing the whole world, he cried, “As far as man’s eye can reach. Even farther. As far as man’s heart can reach! The world is large—glory be to God! Beyond the land of Israel are Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, Asia Minor, Greece and the large wealthy islands of Cypress, Rhodes and Crete. Farther away: Rome. Still farther, with their long blond tresses and double-edged hatchets: the barbarians ... What joy to set out early in the morning, the wind of the mountains or the sea in our faces, to hold the cross, to plant it in the rocks and in the hearts of men—and to take possession of the world! What joy to be shunned, beaten, thrown in deep pits and killed—all for the sake of Christ!”

He came to himself and quieted down. The invisible multitude vanished into the air. He turned and saw Jesus, who was leaning now against the wall listening to him, aghast.

“For the sake of Christ ... Not you, master Lazarus, but the true Christ—my Christ!”

Unable to control himself any longer, Jesus burst into sobs.

The young negro approached him. “Jesus of Nazareth,” he said softly, “why are you crying?”

“Secret companion,” Jesus murmured, “how can anyone see the only way the world can be saved and not be forced to weep?”

Paul now descended from the platform. The scanty hair on his head was steaming. He took off his sandals, banged them to remove the dust and turned toward the street door.

“I have shaken the dust of your house from my sandals,”⁴⁰ he said to Jesus, who stood, abashed, in the middle of the yard. “Farewell! Here’s to good food, good wine, nice kisses, master Lazarus, and a fine old age! And don’t dare interfere with my work. If you do, you’re finished—do you hear, master Lazarus—finished! But you mustn’t get the wrong idea. It’s been delightful meeting you. I’ve freed myself, and that’s just what I wanted: to get rid of you. Well, I did get rid of you and now I’m free; I’m my own boss. Farewell!”

This said, he unbolted the door and with one bound was in the main road to Jerusalem.

“What a rush he’s in!” said the negro, going to the doorway and watching him with angry eyes. “He’s rolled up his sleeves and is running like a famished wolf, running to eat up the world.”

He turned in order to enwrap Jesus in his craft, to conjure away the dangerous spirit that had come from the heavens to bother him. But Jesus had already stridden over the threshold. He stood in the middle of the road and with anguish and longing watched the wild apostle recede at a run into the distance. Terrible memories and yearnings that he had completely forgotten now rose up within him.

The negro was frightened, and grasped him by the arm. “Jesus,” he said softly, commandingly, “Jesus of Nazareth, your mind is wavering. What are you looking at? Come inside!”

But Jesus, silent and pale, jerked his arm and shook away the angel’s hand.

“Come inside,” the other repeated angrily. “You’d better listen to what I say; you know well enough who I am.”

“Leave me alone!” Jesus thundered, his eyes glued on Paul, who was finally about to disappear at the end of the road.

“Do you want to go with him?”

“Leave me alone!” Jesus thundered once more. His teeth were chattering; he had felt a sudden chill.

“Mary,” the negro called, “Martha!” He held Jesus tightly around the waist so that he would not escape.

The two women heard and ran, with the mob of children behind them. The nearby doors opened, the neighbors emerged and formed a

40. “*I have shaken the dust of your house from my sandals*”—in the book of Luke, Jesus commands his disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God and tells them, “Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” (Luke 9:5, NRSV)

circle around Jesus, who stood in the middle of the road, as pale as a sheet. Suddenly his eyelids dropped, and quietly, gently, he rolled to the ground.

He felt himself being lifted up, put to bed, felt his temples being sprinkled with an essence of orange flowers, smelled the rose vinegar that was held before his nose. He opened his eyes, saw his two wives and smiled. When he glimpsed the negro boy, he clasped his hand.

“Take hold of me well,” he said; “do not let me leave. I am fine here where I am.”

• Chapter 33 •

Jesus sat under the ancient vine arbor in his yard, his white beard flowing over his uncovered chest. It was the day of the Passover. He had bathed, scented his hair, beard and armpits, and changed into clean clothes. The door was shut; there was no one near him. His wives, children and grandchildren laughed and played in the back part of the house; the negro, who had climbed the eaves at dawn, gazed toward Jerusalem, silent and angry.

Jesus looked at his hands. They had grown extremely fat and gnarled. The blue-black desiccated veins stood out, and on the back of each hand the old mysterious wound had begun to fade and disappear. He shook his white, coarse-featured head and sighed.

“How quickly the years have gone by, how I’ve aged! And not only I, but my wives and the trees of my yard and the doors and windows and the stones I step on.”

Frightened, he shut his eyes and felt time run like water from its high source—his mind—down through his neck, breast, loins and thighs, and flow out finally through the soles of his feet.

Hearing footsteps in the yard, he opened his eyes. It was Mary. She had seen him plunged in meditation and had come and seated herself at his feet. Jesus placed his hand on her hair, the raven-black hair that now, like his, had turned white. An inexpressible tenderness took possession of him. In my hands she became white, he reflected, in my hands she became white [...]

The negro slid down from the edge of the roof without a sound and stepped in front of them. Mary got up and left. She did not like this strange adopted child. He did not grow, he did not age; he was not a man, he was a spirit, an evil spirit that had entered the house and would not leave again. And she did not like his derisive, frolicking eyes, nor his secret conversations with Jesus during the night.

The negro approached, his eyes all mockery. His teeth were flashing, sharp and white. "Jesus of Nazareth," he said softly, "the end is near."

Surprised, Jesus turned. "What end?"

The negro put his finger to his lips. "The end is near," he repeated. He squatted opposite Jesus and looked at him, laughing.

"Are you leaving me?" Jesus asked, and he suddenly felt strangely glad and relieved.

"Yes, the end has come. Why are you smiling, Jesus of Nazareth?"

"Have a nice trip. I've got from you what I wanted: I don't need you anymore."

"Is this the way you say goodbye to me? Can you be so ungrateful? All my years of toil for your sake, all my efforts to give you every joy you desired: were these efforts in vain?"

"If your purpose was to smother me in honey, like a bee, your pains have gone to waste. I've eaten all the honey I wanted, all I could, but I did not dip in my wings."

"What wings, clairvoyant?"

"My soul."

The negro guffawed maliciously. "Wretch, do you think you have a soul?"

"I have. And it doesn't need guardian angels or negro boys: it is free."

The guardian angel went wild with rage. "Rebel!" he howled. He pulled up a stone from the courtyard, crumbled it between his palms and scattered the dust into the air.

"All right," he said, "we shall see," and he drew toward the door, cursing.

Wild cries, wailing ... Horses neighed; the highway filled with flocks of running people. "Jerusalem is burning!"⁴¹ they shouted. "They've taken Jerusalem! We're lost!"

The Romans had besieged the city for months, but the Israelites placed their hopes in Jehovah. They were secure. The holy city could not burn, the holy city had no fears; an angel with a scimitar stood at each of her gates. And now ...

The women dashed into the street, screaming and pulling their hair. The men tore their clothes and shouted for God to appear. Jesus

41. *Jerusalem is burning*—Jesus has lived to witness the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE.

rose, took Mary and Martha by the hand, brought them inside and bolted the door.

“Why do you cry?” he said to them compassionately. “Why do you resist God’s will? Listen to what I shall tell you, and do not be afraid. Time is a fire, beloved wives. Time is a fire, and God holds the spit. Each year he rotates one paschal lamb.⁴² This year the paschal lamb is Jerusalem; next year it will be Rome; the following year—”

“Be quiet, rabbi,” Mary screamed. “You forget that we’re women, and weak.”

“Forgive me, Mary,” said Jesus. “I forgot. When the heart takes the uphill road it forgets, and has no mercy.”

While he spoke, heavy steps were heard outside in the street. There was the sound of gasping breaths, and thick staffs knocked loudly on the door.

The negro jumped up, seized the bolt of the door, looked at Jesus and smiled mockingly. “Shall I open?” he asked, hardly able to restrain his laughter. “It’s your old companions, Jesus of Nazareth.”

“My old companions?”

“You shall see them!” said the negro, and he threw the door wide open.

A cluster of tiny old men appeared in the doorway. Deteriorated and unrecognizable, they crept into the yard, one leaning against the other. It seemed as though they were glued together and could not be torn apart.

Jesus advanced one pace and stopped. He wanted to extend his hand to bid them welcome, but suddenly his soul felt crushed by an unbearable bitterness—by bitterness, indignation and pity. He clenched his fists and waited. There was a heavy effluvium from charred wood, singed hair and open wounds. The air stank. The negro had climbed up onto the horse block. He watched them and laughed.

Taking one step more, Jesus turned to the old man who crept in the lead. “You, in front,” he said, “come here. Stand still while I push away the ruins of time and see who you are. My heart pounds, but this hanging flesh, these eyes filled with discharge—I do not know them.”

“Don’t you recognize me, my rabbi?”

“Peter! Are you the rock on which, once upon a time in the folly of my youth, I wanted to build my church? How you’ve degenerated, son of Jonah! No longer a rock but a sponge full of holes!”

42. *paschal lamb*—a lamb eaten during the Jewish celebration of Passover.

“The years, my rabbi ...

“What years? The years are not to blame. As long as the soul stands erect it holds the body high and does not allow the years to touch it. Your soul has declined, Peter, your soul!”

“The troubles of the world came upon me. I married, had children, received wounds, saw Jerusalem burn ... I’m human: all that broke me.”

“Yes, you’re human and all that broke you,” Jesus murmured with sympathy. “Poor Peter, in the state the world’s in today, you have to be both God and the devil to endure.” [...]

An emaciated, cross-eyed old man appeared between Nathanael’s⁴³ legs and chuckled. Jesus turned, saw him and recognized him immediately.

“Thomas, my seven-month babe, welcome! Where did you sow your teeth? What did you do with the two hairs you had on your scalp? And from what goat did you uproot that greasy little beard that hangs from your chin? Two-faced, seven-eyed, all-cunning Thomas, is it you?”

“In person! Only the teeth are missing—they fell out along the way—and the two hairs. Everything else is in order.”

“The mind?”

“A true cock. It mounts the dung heap knowing well enough it isn’t the one who brings the sun, but it crows nevertheless every morning and brings it—because it knows the right time to crow.”

“And did you fight too, hero of heroes, to save Jerusalem?”

“Me fight? Am I stupid? I played the prophet.”

“The prophet? So the tiny ant-mind grew wings? Did God blow upon you?”

“What has God got to do with this? My intellect, all by itself, found the secret.”

“What secret?”

“What being a prophet means. Your holiness also knew it once, but I think you’ve forgotten.”

“Well, sly Thomas, remind me—it might come in handy again. What is a prophet?”

43. *Nathanael*—listed in the Gospel of John as one of Jesus’s twelve apostles; thought to be synonymous with Bartholomew.

“A prophet is the one who, when everyone else despairs, hopes. And when everyone else hopes, he despairs. You’ll ask me why. It’s because he has mastered the great secret: that the wheel turns.”

“It’s a dangerous thing for a man to talk with you, Thomas,” Jesus said, winking at him. “Inside your tiny, quick-moving crossed eyes I perceive a tail, two horns—and a spark of burning light.”

“True light burns, rabbi—you know that, but you pity mankind. The heart takes pity: that’s why the world finds itself in darkness. The mind does not take pity: that’s why the world is on fire ... Ah, you nod to me to be still. You’re right; I’ll be still. We mustn’t uncover such secrets in front of these simple souls. None of them has any endurance, except one: him!”

“Who is that?”

Thomas dragged himself as far as the street door and pointed, without touching him, to a colossus who stood on the threshold like a withered, lightning-charred tree. The roots of his hair and beard were still red.

“Him!” he said, shrinking back. “Judas!⁴⁴ He’s the only one who still holds himself erect. Take care, rabbi. He’s full of vigor, and unyielding. Speak to him gently, ingratiate yourself with him. Look, his obstinate skull is steaming with rage.”

“Well, then, to avoid getting bitten let’s catch this desert lion by sending a tame lion after him. Have we descended to this!” He raised his voice. “Judas, my brother, Time is a royal man-eating tiger. He is not satisfied with men: he also devours cities, kingdoms and (forgive me, God) even gods! But you he has not touched. Your rage has refused to boil away; no, you have never made your peace with the world. I still perceive the unyielding knife by your breast, and in your eyes hate, wrath and hope, the great fires of youth ... Welcome!”

“Judas, can’t you hear?” murmured John,⁴⁵ who had collapsed at Jesus’s feet. He was unrecognizable, with a white beard and two deep wounds on his cheeks and neck. “Can’t you hear, Judas? The master is greeting you. Greet him in return!”

“He’s pigheaded and obstinate like a mule,” said Peter. “He bites his lips to keep himself from talking.”

44. *Judas*—the disciple who betrayed Jesus to the Roman authorities.

45. *John*—one of Jesus’s twelve disciples. The Gospel of John refers to John as “the one whom Jesus loved.” (John 13:23, *NRSV*)

But Jesus had fixed his eyes on his old savage companion and was speaking to him sweetly. “Judas, the chattering messenger birds passed over the roof of my house and let fall the news, which then dropped into my yard. It seems you took to the mountains and made war against tyrants, both native and foreign. Then you went down to Jerusalem, seized the traitorous Sadducees, tied red ribbons around their necks and slaughtered them like lambs on the altar of the God of Israel. You’re a great, gloomy, desperate soul, Judas. Since the day we separated you haven’t seen a single day of gladness. Judas, my brother, I’ve missed you very much. Welcome!”

John’s terrified eyes regarded Judas, who was still biting his lips to prevent himself from speaking. “Dense smoke never ceases to curl up over his head,” he murmured, and he dragged himself back to the others.

“Take care, rabbi,” said Peter. “He looks at you from every angle and weighs where he’s going to fall upon you first!”

“I’m speaking to you, Judas, my brother,” Jesus continued. “Can’t you hear? I greet you, but you don’t place your hand over your heart and say, I’m glad to see you! Has Jerusalem’s suffering stricken you dumb? Do not bite your lips. You’re a man: bear up, don’t burst into lamentations. You did your duty bravely. The deep wounds in your arms, breast, face—all in front—proclaim that you fought like a lion. But what can a man do against God? Fighting to save Jerusalem, you were fighting against God. In his mind the holy city was reduced to ashes years ago.”

“Look, he’s come a step forward,” murmured Philip, frightened. “He’s sunk his head into his shoulders, like a bull. Now he’ll charge.”

“Let’s move to the sidelines, lads,” said Nathanael. “Now he’s raising his fist.”

“Rabbi, rabbi, be careful!” called Martha and Mary, coming forward.

But Jesus tranquilly continued to speak. His lips, however, had begun to tremble just perceptibly.

“I too fought as well as I could, Judas, my brother. In my youth I set out, like a youth, to save the world. Afterward, when my mind had matured, I stepped into line—the line of men. I went to work: plowed the land, dug wells, planted vines and olives. I took the body of woman into my arms and created men—I conquered death. Isn’t that what I always said I would do? Well, I kept my word: I conquered death!”

Judas suddenly lashed out, pushed aside Peter and the women, who had placed themselves in front of him, and uttered a great, savage cry. “Traitor!”

They all turned to stone. Jesus grew pale and placed his hands on his breast.

“Me? Me, Judas?” he murmured. “You’ve uttered a grave word. Take it back!”

“Traitor! Deserter!”

The tiny old men turned yellow and started for the door. Thomas had already reached the street.

The two women jumped forward.

“Brothers, don’t leave,” Mary cried. “Satan has raised his hand against the rabbi. He’s going to strike him!”

Peter was slinking toward the door to escape. “Where are you going?” said Martha, grabbing him. “Will you deny him again—again?”

“I’m not getting mixed up in this,” said Philip. “Iscariot has a mighty arm, and I’m old. Let’s go, Nathanael.”

Judas and Jesus were now standing face to face. Judas’s body steamed. It smelled of sweat and putrescent wounds.

“Traitor! Deserter!” he bellowed again. “Your place was on the cross. That’s where the God of Israel put you to fight. But you got cold feet, and the moment death lifted its head, you couldn’t get away fast enough! You ran and hid yourself in the skirts of Martha and Mary. Coward! And you changed your face and your name, you fake Lazarus, to save yourself!”

“Judas Iscariot,” Peter interrupted at that point (the women had given him courage), “Judas Iscariot, is that the way one talks to the rabbi? Don’t you have any respect?”

“What rabbi?” howled Iscariot, brandishing his fist. “Him? But don’t you have eyes to see with, minds to judge with? Him, a rabbi? What did he tell us, what did he promise us? Where is the army of angels that was supposed to come down to save Israel? Where is the cross that was supposed to be our springboard to Heaven? As he faced the cross this fake messiah went dizzy and fainted. Then the ladies got hold of him and installed him to manufacture children for them. He says he fought, fought courageously. Yes, he swaggers about like the cock of the roost. But your post, deserter, was on the cross, and you know it. Others can reclaim barren lands and barren women. Your duty was to mount the cross—that’s what I say! You boast that you conquered death. Woe is you! Is that the way to conquer death—by

making children, mouthfuls for Charon!⁴⁶ Mouthfuls for Charon! That's what a child is—a mouthful for Charon! You've turned yourself into his meat market and you deliver him morsels to eat. Traitor! Deserter! Coward!"

"Judas, my brother," Jesus murmured, beginning now to tremble all over, "Judas, my brother, speak more affectionately."

"You broke my heart, son of the carpenter," bellowed Judas, "how do you expect me to speak to you affectionately? Sometimes I want to scream and wail like a widow and bang my head against the rocks! Curse the day you were born, the day I was born, the hour I met you and you filled my heart with hopes! When you used to go in the lead and draw us along behind you and speak to us about Heaven and earth, what joy that was, what freedom, what richness! The grapes seemed as big as twelve-year-old boys. With a single grain of wheat we were filled. One day we had five loaves of bread: we fed a crowd of thousands, and twelve basketfuls remained. And the stars: what splendor, what an outpouring of light in the sky! They weren't stars; they were angels. No, they weren't angels; they were us—us, your disciples, and we rose and set, and you were in the center, fixed like the north star, and we were all around you, dancing! You took me in your arms—do you remember?—and begged, 'Betray me, betray me. I must be crucified and resurrected so that we can save the world!'"

Judas stopped for a moment and sighed. His wounds had reopened and begun to drain. The little old men, glued again one to the next, struggled with bowed heads to remember and to bring themselves back to life.

A tear popped into Judas's eye. Crushing it angrily, he resumed his shouting. His heart was still not empty. "I am the lamb of God," you bleated. "I go to the slaughter so that I may save the world. Judas, my brother, do not be afraid. Death is the door to immortality. I must pass through this door. Help me! And I loved you so much, I trusted you so much, that I said, 'Yes' and went and betrayed you. But you ... you ..."

Foam gushed from his lips. Grasping Jesus by the shoulder, he shook him forcefully, glued him to the wall. He began again to bellow. "What business do you have here? Why weren't you crucified? Coward!"

46. *Charon*—in Greek mythology the ferryman who carries the dead across the River Styx to Hades.

Deserter! Traitor! Was that all you accomplished? Have you no shame? I lift my fist and ask you: Why, why weren't you crucified?"

"Quiet! Quiet!" Jesus begged. The blood began to run from his five wounds.

"Judas Iscariot," Peter interrupted again, "have you no pity? Don't you see his feet, his hands? Put your hand to his side if you don't believe. It's bleeding."

Judas forced himself to laugh. Then he spat on the ground and shouted, "Eh, son of the carpenter, you're not putting anything over on me—no! Your guardian angel came during the night."

Jesus shook. "My guardian angel ... he murmured with a shudder.

"Yes, your guardian angel: Satan. He stamped the red spots on your hands, feet and side so that you could deceive the world and be deceived yourself. Why are you looking at me like that? Why don't you answer? Coward! Deserter! Traitor!"

Jesus closed his eyes. He felt faint but managed to keep himself on his feet. "Judas," he said, his voice trembling, "you were always intractable and wild; you never accepted human limits. You forget that the soul of man is an arrow: it darts as high as it can toward Heaven but always falls back down again to earth. Life on earth means shedding one's wings."

Hearing this, Judas became frantic. "Shame on you!" he screamed. "Is that what you've come to, you, the son of David, the Son of God, the Messiah! Life on earth means: to eat bread and transform the bread into wings, to drink water and to transform the water into wings. Life on earth means: the sprouting of wings. That's what you told us—you, traitor! They're not my words, they're yours. In case you forgot, I'm reminding you of them!"

"Where are you, Matthew, scribe? Come here! Open your weighty papers—you always carry them next to your heart, the same way I carry my knife. Open your writings. They've been devoured by time, moths and sweat, but quite a few words can still be seen. Open your writings, Matthew, and read so that the gentleman in question may hear and remember. One night an important notable of Jerusalem, Nicodemus⁴⁷ by name, came to him secretly and asked, 'Who are you? What is your work?' And you, son of the carpenter, you answered him—remember!—'I forge wings!' As you said that we all felt wings

47. *Nicodemus*—a Pharisee who, in the Gospel of John, shows favor to Jesus on three different occasions.

shoot out from our backs. And now what have you come to, you plucked cock! You whine away and say, 'Life on earth means shedding one's wings.' Ugh! Out of my sight, coward! If life isn't all lightning and thunder what do I want with it? Don't come near me, Peter, you windmill; nor you, gallant Andrew. Don't screech, women. I won't bother him. Why lift my hand against him? He's dead and buried. He still stands up on his feet, he talks, he weeps, but he's dead: a carcass. Let God forgive him—God, because I cannot. May Israel's blood, tears and ashes fall upon his head!"

The endurance of the tiny old men gave out and they all collapsed in one heap onto the ground. Their memories had been reawakened; they had begun to feel young again, to remember the kingdom of Heaven, the thrones, the majesty. Suddenly they broke out into the dirge. Groaning and wailing, they beat their foreheads against the stones.

All at once Jesus too burst into sobs. He cried, "Judas, my brother, forgive me!" and started to rush into the rebeard's arms. But Judas jumped back, put out his hands and would not let him come near. "Don't touch me," he shouted. "I don't believe in anything anymore; I don't believe in anyone. You broke my heart!"

Jesus stumbled. He turned, searching for something to catch hold of. The women, fallen prone on the ground, were pulling out their hair and screaming; the disciples were looking up at him with anger and hatred. The negro boy had disappeared.

"I am a traitor, a deserter, a coward," he murmured. "Now I realize it: I'm lost! Yes, yes, I should have been crucified, but I lost courage and fled. Forgive me, brothers, I cheated you. O, if I could only relive my life from the beginning!"

He had collapsed to the ground while speaking and was now banging his head on the pebbles of the yard.

"Comrades, my old friends, say a kind word to me, comfort me. I perish, I am lost! I hold out my hand. Does no one of you rise to place his palm in mine or to say a kind word to me? No one? No one? Not even you, John, beloved? Not even you, Peter?"

"How can I speak, what is there to say?" wailed the beloved disciple. "What was the witchcraft you threw over us, son of Mary?"

"You deceived us," said Peter, wiping away his tears. "Judas is right: you broke your word. Our lives have gone to waste."

All at once from the pile of tiny old men there arose a unified, whining din.

“Coward! Deserter! Traitor!”

“Coward! Deserter! Traitor!”

And Matthew lamented: “All my work gone for nothing, nothing, nothing! How masterfully I matched your words and deeds with the prophets! It was terribly difficult, but I managed. I used to say to myself that in the synagogues of the future the faithful would open thick tomes bound in gold and say, ‘The lesson for today is from the holy Gospel according to Matthew!’ This thought gave me wings, and I wrote. But now, all that grandeur has gone up in smoke, and you—you ingrate! You illiterate! You traitor!—you’re to blame. You should have been crucified. Yes, if only for my sake, so that these writings might have been saved, you should have been crucified!”

Once more the unified, whining din arose from the heap of tiny old men.

“Coward! Deserter! Traitor!”

“Coward! Deserter! Traitor!”

At that moment Thomas rushed in from the doorway. “Rabbi,” he cried, “I won’t leave you now that everyone is abandoning you and calling you traitor! No, I won’t abandon you, not I, not Thomas the prophet. We said the wheel turns. That’s why I won’t leave your side. I’m waiting for the wheel to turn.”

Peter rose. “Let’s go!” he shouted. “Judas, step in front, lead us!”

Gasping, the tiny old men got up. Jesus was stretched out on the ground, face down, his arms spread wide. He filled the entire yard. They held their fists over him and shouted.

“Coward! Deserter! Traitor!”

“Coward! Deserter! Traitor!”

One by one they shouted, “Coward! Deserter! Traitor!”—and vanished.

Jesus rotated his eyes with anguish, and looked. He was alone. The yard and house, the trees, the village doors, the village itself—all had disappeared. Nothing remained but stones beneath his feet, stones covered with blood; and lower, farther away, a crowd: thousands of heads in the darkness.

He tried with all his might to discover where he was, who he was and why he felt pain. He wanted to complete his cry, to shout LAMA SABACTHANI ... ⁴⁸ He attempted to move his lips but could not.

48. *LAMA SABACTHANI*—“Why have you forsaken me?” See Matthew 27:46.

He grew dizzy and was ready to faint. He seemed to be hurling downward and perishing.

But suddenly, while he was falling and perishing, someone down on the ground must have pitied him, for a reed was held out in front of him, and he felt a sponge soaked in vinegar rest against his lips and nostrils. He breathed in deeply the bitter smell, revived, swelled his breast, looked at the heavens and uttered a heart-rending cry: LAMA SACTHANI.

Then he immediately inclined his head, exhausted.

He felt terrible pains in his hands, feet and heart. His sight cleared, he saw the crown of thorns, the blood, the cross. Two golden earrings and two rows of sharp, brilliantly white teeth flashed in the darkened sun. He heard a cool, mocking laugh, and rings and teeth vanished. Jesus remained hanging in the air, alone.

His head quivered. Suddenly he remembered where he was, who he was and why he felt pain. A wild, indomitable joy took possession of him. No, no, he was not a coward, a deserter, a traitor. No, he was nailed to the cross. He had stood his ground honorably to the very end; he had kept his word. The moment he cried ELI ELI⁴⁹ and fainted, temptation had captured him for a split second and led him astray. The joys, marriages and children were lies; the decrepit, degraded old men who shouted coward, deserter, traitor at him were lies. All—all were illusions sent by the devil! His disciples were alive and thriving. They had gone over sea and land and were proclaiming the good news. Everything had turned out as it should, glory be to God!

He uttered a triumphant cry: IT IS ACCOMPLISHED!⁵⁰

And it was as though he had said: Everything has begun.

49. *ELI ELI*—"Father Father." See Matthew 27:46.

50. *IT IS ACCOMPLISHED*—See John 19:30. Often translated "It is finished."

36.7 Greek Holy Synod Condemns Kazantzakis (1955)

“TAS THEŌRIAS TOU FRO·U·NTI KAI TOU ISTORIKOU YLISMOU VLEPEI È I. SYNODOS EIS TA ERGA TOU KAZANTZAKÈ TO EG·GRAFON DIEBIBASTHÈ CH·THES EIS TÈN EISAGGELIAN;” *To vima* (27 February 1955). Fair use. Translated by Soterios Stavrou and Theofanis Stavrou. CC BY-SA.

To nobody’s surprise, the Greek Holy Synod—the state body in Greece governing the church⁵¹—did not react at all well to the publication of *The Last Temptation of Christ*. The fact that Kazantzakis first published his novel in Germany made little difference. Below, the Greek newspaper *To vima* (*The Tribune*) reports on and quotes from the Holy Synod’s response in 1955. The Roman Catholic Church placed the novel on its *Index Librum Prohibitorum*, or *Index of Prohibited Books*.

The Holy Synod sees in Kazantzakis’ works the theories of Freud and of historical materialism.

This document was forwarded yesterday to the Public Prosecutor’s Office.

The document of the Holy Synod, which seeks to ban the circulation of Mr. N. Kazantzakis’s books in Greece, is being forwarded to the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Athens as the competent authority to assess, from a legal point of view, whether or not there is reason to ban these books. According to our information, delivery of the document was delayed by about one week, because the Holy Synod had sent the document to the Ministry of Justice by mail.

The synod’s document mentions, among other things, that: “In the book *Captain Michalis* the Church is vilified, its institutions pilloried, and the Triune God profanely reviled. Also, in the work *The Last*

51. *Greek Holy Synod*—as in Russia, where Peter the Great abolished the Moscow patriarchate and replaced it with a Holy Synod or government cabinet in 1721, the Greek parliament likewise in 1833 rejected the authority of the patriarch of Constantinople and established a Holy Synod modeled directly on Russia’s.

Temptation, which has circulated in German and whose translation into Greek is unfortunately imminent, there are unprecedented insults against the theanthropic⁵² person of Jesus Christ, there are attempts to tear down his deity and Christian ethics, the truth of the Gospel is distorted through fanciful conceptions, and the doctrine of salvation is falsified through unfettered arbitrariness.

“In this novel,” says the document, “which is inspired by the theories of Freud and historical materialism, the understanding of the Gospel, in particular of the theanthropic person of our Lord Jesus Christ, is abused in a brutal, vulgar, and blasphemous manner.

“The work published in Greek, under the bizarre and blasphemous title *Christ Recrucified*, includes the same flaws, that is, a disposition for irreverent use of the historical truths of the Gospel, for insulting the priests of the church, and for the teaching of socialist and communist theories.”

The document ends as follows: “Since, in spite of the spiritual measures taken by the Church, the writer continues to add to the already published ones other such similar works of the same most irreverent and anti-national content, the Holy Synod requests that necessary measures be taken to cease their circulation.”

It requests that not only the circulation of Mr. Kazantzakis’s *The Last Temptation* be prohibited but also its translation into Greek.

52. *theanthropic*—Θεανδρικός or *Theandrikos* in the original, perhaps best translated as “godman,” indicating the person of Jesus Christ as both true God and true Man.

37.8 Boris Pasternak, “Poems of Yury Zhivago” (1959)

Some literary critics consider Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* to be the great Russian novel of the twentieth century. Yet it failed to find a publisher in the Soviet Union: Pasternak was told, by way of explanation, that the novel “represented in a libelous manner the October [Bolshevik] Revolution, the people who made it, and social construction in the Soviet Union.” Indeed, the novel offers an extended critique of the revolution and the violence and degradation it spawned.

In some respects the title character’s (Zhivago’s) disillusionment with the revolution mirrors Pasternak’s own. Revolutionary ideals initially excited Pasternak and his young friends, enthralled with the promise of a new society and a new artistic culture. He could have emigrated following the Revolution had he wished, but he chose to remain and witness this great experiment. *Doctor Zhivago* is, among many other things, a chronicle of the ways in which the revolution failed Pasternak’s and the intelligentsia’s expectations.

On its face (and in the film adaptation starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie) the novel is the story of a tragic love affair set during the Revolution and the civil war that followed. At heart, however, it is a Christian work, both in its imagery and fundamental themes. Yury Zhivago, the novel’s hero, recognizes and tries to live according to what the literary critic Richard Freeborn calls the “transfiguring Christian ideal,” an ideal that permeates the novel. Pasternak explored this ideal in greater depth two years after the novel’s publication, in a collection of poems supposedly written by the fictitious Yury Zhivago.

The Christian ideal in *Zhivago* and the poems is not an orthodox Orthodoxy. The church is largely absent. References to clergy are usually pejorative. It seems, at times, that Pasternak envisioned an Orthodox faith without the institutional church. But he could not envision Russia without Orthodoxy.



Figure 197. Boris Pasternak on a USSR postage stamp, 1990. Doctor Zhivago and his great love, Lara, are in the background

In the following poems⁵³ we find references to Orthodox services and processions, the Russian countryside, the birth of Christ, and elemental aspects of the Christian ideal. It is reasonable if not fully adequate to read the accounts of Christ's suffering here as an allusion to Zhivago's and the Russian people's suffering during the years of civil war.

53. The poems of Yuri Zhivago were published in Paris in a collection titled *Kogda razguliatsia* (1959), two years after the publication in 1957 of the novel *Doctor Zhivago* in Italy.

• Holy Week •

“Holy Week,” in Boris Pasternak, *Poems*, trans. Eugene M. Kayden (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 144–146. All attempts to reach the rightsholder failed.

The murk of night still prevails.
 It is yet so early in this world
 That the sky even now flaunts its countless stars.
 And each star is radiant as the day.
 And if the earth could really have its way
 It would sleep through all of Eastertide
 To the droning of the Psalms as a lullaby.
 The murk of night still prevails.
 The creation’s hour is yet so early
 That the square extends like eternity
 From one corner to the other,
 And there is still a millennium
 Until the dawn and warmth come.
 The earth is stark-naked yet:
 It hasn’t got a stitch to wear of nights
 To ring the bells, or to chime in
 Of its own accord, with choirs singing.
 From Maundy Thursday right up to
 The very eve of Easter the waters gnaw
 At riverbanks, and are busy weaving
 Their currents, whirlpools, and eddies.
 The forest, too, is stripped, exposed,
 And all through Passiontide⁵⁴
 The trunks of pines stand in a throng
 Like worshippers aligned in prayer.
 While in the town, not too far off,
 The trees stand mother-naked too,
 As if about to enter church
 And peering within its gratings.
 Their gaze is overcome with awe,
 Nor is their panic hard to fathom:

54. *Passiontide*—the two weeks of Lent culminating in Easter.

The gardens leave their boundary walls,
The laws that govern the earth are shaken—
A god is being interred.
They see a glow about the altar screen,
And the black pall, and tapers in a row,
And faces all in tears
And a procession suddenly emerges
Bearing the cross and shroud,
And comes toward them. Two birches
Guarding the portals have to step aside
And yield the right of way.
The procession makes a circuit of the church grounds,
Walking along the very curb of the pavement,
And brings in from the street within the portals
The spring, and all the murmurings of spring,
And air that has about it the tang of consecrated wafers
And of the heady fumes of spring.
And March scoops up the snow on the porch
And scatters it like alms among the halt and lame—
As though a man had carried out the ark,
And opened it, and distributed all it held.
The singing lasts until the glow of dawn.
The voices, having sobbed their fill,
Are more subdued. Their chanting of the Psalms and Gospels
Floats out more and more faintly
Until it reaches wastelands under lonely lamps.
And when the midnight comes
All creatures and all flesh will fall silent
On hearing spring put forth its rumor
That just as soon as there is better weather
Death itself can be overcome
Through the power of the resurrection.

• Miracle •

Boris Pasternak, "Miracle," in *Doctor Zhivago*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Pantheon, 2010), 488–489. Fair use.

He was walking from Bethany to Jerusalem,
Already weighed down by sad presentiments.

The prickly brush on the steep hillside was scorched,
 Over a nearby hut the smoke stood still,
 The air was hot and the rushes motionless,
 And the Dead Sea was an unmoving calm.
 And in a bitterness that rivalled the bitterness of the sea,
 He was going with a small throng of clouds
 Down a dusty road to someone's house,
 Going to town, to a gathering of his disciples.
 And he was so deep in his own thoughts
 That the fields in their wanness smelled of wormwood.
 All fell silent. He stood alone in the midst,
 And the countryside lay unconscious on its back.
 Everything mixed together: the heat and the desert,
 And the lizards, and the springs and rivulets.
 A fig tree rose up not far away
 With no fruit on it, only leaves and branches.
 And he said to it: "What good are you?
 Is your stupor of any earthly use to me?
 I hunger and thirst, and you are a sterile blossom.
 Meeting with you is more cheerless than with granite.
 Oh, how galling you are and how ungifted!
 Stay that way until the end of time."
 A shudder of condemnation ran down the tree,
 Like a flash of lightning down a lightning rod,
 And the fig tree was reduced to ashes.
 If the leaves, the branches, roots, and trunk
 Had found themselves a free moment at that time,
 Nature's laws might have managed to intervene.
 But a miracle is a miracle, and a miracle is God.
 When we're perturbed, in the midst of our disorder,
 It overtakes us on the instant, unawares.

• Evil Days •

Boris Pasternak, "Evil Days," trans. Bernard Guilbert Guerny in *Doctor Zhivago*, ed. Max Hayward and Manya Hariri (New York: Pantheon, 1958), 557–558.

Fair use.

When he was entering Jerusalem
 During that last week

He was hailed with thunderous hosannas;
The people ran in his wake, waving palm branches.
Yet the days were becoming ever more ominous, more grim.
There was no stirring the hearts of men through love:
Their eyebrows knit in disdain.
And now, the epilogue. Finis.
The heavens lay heavy over the houses,
Crushing with all of their leaden weight.
The Pharisees were seeking evidence against him,
Yet cringed before him like foxes.
Then the dark forces of the temple
Gave him up to be judged by the offscourings.
And, with the same fervor with which they once sang his praises,
Men now reviled him.
The rabble from the vicinity
Was peering in at the gateway.
They kept jostling as they bided the outcome,
Surging, receding.
The neighborhood crawled with sly whispers
And rumors crept in from all sides.
He recalled the flight into Egypt and his childhood
But recalled them now as if in a dream.
He remembered the majestic cliffside in the wilderness
And that exceeding high mountain
Whereon Satan had tempted him,
Offering him all the kingdoms of the world.
And the marriage feast at Cana
And the guests in great admiration over the miracle.
And the sea on which, in a mist,
He had walked to the boat as if over dry land.
And the gathering of the poor in a hovel
And his going down into a cellar by the light of a taper
Which had suddenly gone out in affright
When the man risen from the dead was trying to get to his feet.

• Garden of Gethsemane •

“Garden of Gethsemane,” in Boris Pasternak, *Poems*, trans. Eugene M. Kayden (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 169–170. All attempts to reach the rightsholder failed.

The turn in the road was illumined
 By the indifferent glimmer of the remote stars.
 The road led around the Mount of Olives;
 Below, in its valley, the brook Kedron ran.
 Halfway, the small meadow dipped in a sharp break;
 Beyond it began the great Milky Way,
 While the silver-gray olives still strained forward
 As if to stride onward upon empty air.
 Furthest away was someone’s garden plot.
 He left his disciples outside the stone fence
 Saying, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death;
 Tarry here, and watch with me.”
 He had rejected without resistance
 Dominion over all things and the power to work miracles,
 As though these had been his only on loan
 And now was as all mortals are, even as we.
 Night’s distance seemed the very brink
 Of annihilation, of non-existence.
 The universe’s span was void of any life;
 The garden only was a coign of being.
 And peering into these black abysses—
 Void, without end and without beginning—
 His brow sweating blood, he pleaded with his Father
 That this cup of death might pass from him.
 Having eased his mortal anguish through prayer,
 He left the garden. Beyond its wall his disciples,
 Overcome with sleep, sprawled on the ground
 In the wayside feathergrass.
 He awakened them: “God has granted you to live
 During my days on earth, and yet you lie there sprawling.
 Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man
 Shall betray himself into the hands of sinners.”
 He had scarcely spoken when, coming from none knew where,
 A throng of slaves sprang up, a host of vagrant men

With swords and torches, and at their head stood Judas
With the perfidious kiss writhing on his lips.
Peter drew sword and thrust the cutthroats back
And struck a man and smote off his ear.
Whereon he heard, "No metal can resolve dissension.
Put up your sword again into its place.
Do you think my Father would not send
Sky-darkening hosts of winged legions to my succor?
And without harming even a hair of mine
My enemies would scatter, leaving no trace behind.
But now the hook of life has reached a page
That is more precious than are all the holies.
That which was written now must be fulfilled.
Fulfilled be it, then. Amen.
Do you see, the passing of the ages is like a parable
And in its passing it may burst to flame.
In the name, then, of its awesome majesty
I shall, in voluntary torments, descend into my grave.
I shall descend into my grave. And on the third day rise again.
And, even as rafts float down a river,
So shall the centuries drift, trailing like a caravan,
Coming for judgment, out of the dark, to me."

37.9 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, “Matryona’s House” (1963)

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Matryona’s House,” in *Stories and Prose Poems*, trans. Michael Glenny (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 3–52. Used by permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Courtesy of Fayard.

Arrested in 1945 for a letter containing derogatory comments about Stalin, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn spent eight years in prisons and labor camps. Khrushchev rehabilitated Solzhenitsyn in 1956 and he began a career teaching mathematics and writing in his spare time. Solzhenitsyn’s novels, poems, and his monumental exposé of Soviet labor camps—*The Gulag Archipelago*—portray the Soviet regime as the antithesis of Christianity: godless, immoral, selfish, and, ironically, anticommunal.



Figure 198. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, prison photo from labor camp, 1953

“Matryona’s House” is Solzhenitsyn’s best-known short story and one of the great Russian short stories of the twentieth century. It contains unabashedly autobiographical elements: like Solzhenitsyn, the narrator, Ignatich, is a high-school teacher, trying to make a new life after serving time as a political prisoner.

Hugh Ragsdale writes that “in its way” the story is “as simple and direct as Hemingway ... yet its modesty is deceptive.” Its idealization of rural, preindustrial values and its portrait of a selfless Matryona constitute a searing critique of Soviet industrialization.⁵⁵ Unlike the local bureaucrats who make her life so difficult, and unlike her greedy neighbors and self-interested family members, Matryona embodies the biblical beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth. [...]
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God. [...]
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”⁵⁶

Although a model of all these virtues, Matryona is not an orthodox Christian. “If anything,” writes the narrator, she is

a pagan and, above all, superstitious: if you went into the garden on St. John’s day, that meant there would be a bad harvest next year; if a storm was whirling the snowflakes round and round, it meant that someone had hanged himself; if you caught your foot in the door, it meant a visitor. For as long as I lodged with her, I never once saw her say her prayers or cross herself.

55. Hugh Ragsdale, “The Solzhenitsyn That Nobody Knows,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 71 no. 4 (1995), 634–635.

56. Matthew 5:3–5, 7–8, 10, NRSV.

Nevertheless, she is, for Solzhenitsyn, the epitome of Christian morality. Pamela Saur suggests that the story as a whole presents “a Christian, antimaterialistic testimony.”⁵⁷ And Michael Scammell observes: “Although there [is] nothing overtly religious in it and although [Matryona is] not represented as a believer (apart from attending church on feast days), she and the other characters [are] all described and judged in terms of Christian morality”: the story expresses a “profoundly Christian world view.”⁵⁸

For at least six months after the incident took place every train used to slow down almost to a standstill at exactly a hundred and eighty-four kilometers from Moscow. The passengers would crowd to the windows and go out onto the open gangway at the end of the carriages to find out whether the track was under repair or if the train was ahead of schedule. But these were not the reasons for the delay. Once it had passed the level crossing, the train would pick up speed again and the passengers would go back to their seats. Only the drivers knew why they had to slow down. And I knew too.

In the summer of 1953 I was returning from the hot, dusty wastelands,⁵⁹ making my way aimlessly back to Russia. No one had sent for me and no one was waiting for me, because my return had been delayed by a little matter of ten years.⁶⁰ I simply wanted to go somewhere in central Russia, somewhere where it was not too hot and where leaves rustled in the forest. I just wanted to creep away and vanish in the very heartland of Russia—if there were such a place.

A year earlier, the most that I could have got in the way of a job on the other side of the Urals⁶¹ was laboring work. I would not even

57. Pamela S. Saur, “Solzhenitsyn’s Matryona’s Home,” *The Explicator* 62 no. 2 (2004): 119.

58. Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1984), 393–394.

59. *dusty wastelands*—in the mid-1950s Solzhenitsyn worked as a mathematics teacher while exiled in Kazakhstan.

60. *delayed by a little matter of ten years*—a sarcastic reference to Solzhenitsyn’s exile.

61. *Urals*—Ural Mountains, which separate the European from the Asian portion of Russia. This passage thus notes the narrator’s return from exile to European Russia.

have been taken on as an electrician on a decent-sized construction site. And my ambition was to be a teacher. People in the teaching world told me that I was wasting money on a ticket, as the journey would be fruitless.

But the atmosphere in the country had already started to change.⁶² As I climbed the stairs of the regional education department and asked for the personnel branch, I was amazed to see that personnel was no longer situated behind a black leather door but simply on the other side of a glass partition as in a pharmacist's.

I approached the window timidly, bowed, and asked: "Excuse me, have you any vacancies for a mathematics teacher somewhere far away from civilization? I want to settle there for good."

They scrutinized every detail of my documents, scuttled from room to room, and made telephone calls. I was a rare case for them; as a rule, everybody asked to be sent to a town and the bigger the better. Suddenly they presented me with a little place called High Field. The name of the place alone cheered me up.

It did not belie its name. Situated on a slope among hills, encircled by a wood, with a pond and a dike, High Field was the very place where a man would be glad to live and die. I sat there on a tree stump in a copse⁶³ for a long time, wishing that I could do without my daily meals and just stay here and listen to the branches rustling against the roofs at night, when there was no sound of a radio from any direction and everything in the world was at peace.

But it was no good. They did not bake their own bread there. They did not sell anything to eat. The whole village dragged its foodstuffs in sacks from the local town.

So back I went to the personnel branch and stood imploringly at their window. At first no one would see me. Then once again they scurried from room to room, made telephone calls, scratched their pens, and typed on my assignment form: "Peatproduce."

Peatproduce? If only Turgenev⁶⁴ were alive today to see what violence is being done to the Russian language.

62. *the atmosphere in the country had already started to change*—a reference to the political and cultural thaw under Khrushchev following Stalin's death.

63. *copse*—a thicket or grove of trees.

64. *Turgenev*—Aleksandr Turgenev (1818–1883), one of Russia's most influential authors of the 1800s.

On Peatproduce Station, consisting of a gray temporary wooden hut, hung a warning sign: "Trains may only be boarded from the platform." Someone had scratched on the notice with a nail: "Even if you haven't got a ticket," and beside the ticket office the following grimly humorous message was carved permanently in the woodwork: "No tickets." I realized the full meaning of these comments only much later. It was easy to get to Peatproduce but not to get out of it.

Before the Revolution⁶⁵ and for some time after it, the place had been covered with silent, impenetrable forest. Then the forest had been cut down by the peat diggers and the nearby collective farm, whose chairman, Shashkov, had razed a considerable area of the forest to the ground and had sold it at a profit in the province of Odessa.

A straggling village was scattered among the peat diggings, consisting of some monotonous huts dating from the thirties and a few cottages put up in the fifties with fretwork trimmings and glassed-in verandahs. But in none of these cottages were there any partitions built right up to the ceiling, so that I could not find a room that had four proper walls.

A factory chimney poured smoke over the whole village. A narrow-gauge railway line wound its way through the place, and little engines, also puffing out thick clouds of smoke and emitting piercing whistles, pulled trainloads of raw peat, peat slabs, and briquettes. I was right when I guessed that a radiogram would be blaring out music all evening through the doors of the club, that drunks would be lurching about in the street, and that now and again they would knife each other.

This was the place to which my dream of a quiet corner of Russia had brought me. At least in the place I had come from I had lived in a mud hut that looked out over the desert, a fresh, clean wind had blown at night, and only the starry arc of Heaven was stretched over my head. I found it impossible to sleep on the station bench and it was hardly light when I set off to explore the village. Then I saw that it had a tiny market. Because it was so early, only one woman was there, selling milk. I bought a bottle and drank it on the spot.

The way she spoke surprised me. She did not so much talk as sing in an oddly touching way and her words made me feel nostalgic for Asia.

65. *Revolution*—the October Revolution of 1917, when the Bolsheviks seized power.

“Drink, drink, your heart’s athirst. Are you a stranger here?”

“Where are you from?” I asked, delighted.

I learned that the region was not all peat workings, that beyond the railway track there was a hill and over the hill a village called Talnovo, which had been there from time immemorial, since the days when a “gypsy” lady had lived there and a haunted wood had stood all around. And beyond it a whole string of villages with names like Chaslitsy, Ovintsy, Spudni, Shevertni, Shesti-mirovo—each one more remote than the next as they stretched farther and farther away from the railway and nearer to the lakes.

The names wafted over me like a soothing breeze. They held a promise of the true, legendary Russia. So I asked my new-found friend to take me to Talnovo when the market was over and help me look for a cottage where I could find lodgings.

As a lodger I was a good prospect: in addition to my rent, the school also provided a truckload of peat for the winter. The woman’s expression now betrayed a kind of concern that was less touching. She herself had no room to spare (she and her husband looked after her aged mother), so she took me around to some of her relatives; but their houses were noisy and crowded and none of them had a separate room to rent either.

By then we had walked as far as a little dammed-up stream crossed by a bridge. There was no prettier spot in the whole village—two or three willows, a crooked little shack, ducks swimming on the pond, and geese waddling up the bank to shake themselves.

“Well, I suppose we’d better try Matryona,” said my guide, already growing tired of me. “Only her place isn’t that well-kept, she’s let it go on account of her being so sick.”

Matryona’s house was nearby. It had a row of four windows along the side on which the sun never shone, a steep shingled roof with an elaborately ornamental dormer window. But the shingles were rotting away, the logs of the cottage walls and the once-mighty gateposts had turned gray with age, and much of the caulking between the logs had fallen out. Although the gate was shut, my guide did not bother to knock but thrust her hand underneath and undid the bolt—a simple precaution against stray cattle. There were no sheds in the yard, but instead the cottage had several outbuildings clustered under the one roof. Just inside the entrance, there were some steps leading up to a broad passage, open to the roof timbers.

To the left, some more steps led up to the outhouse—a separate room but without a stove—and another flight of steps down to the storeroom. To the right were the living quarters with their attic and cellar.

It had been solidly built a long time ago, intended for a large family, but now a woman who was getting on toward sixty lived there alone.

The spacious room, and especially its brighter end by the windows, was set about with flower pots and tubs of fig plants on stools and benches. Silent yet alive, they filled the loneliness of Matryona's life, growing in wild profusion as they strained to catch the sparse northern light. As the light was fading and because she was hidden by the chimney, the owner's round face looked yellow and ill. Her bleary eyes showed how much her illness had exhausted her.

She talked to me lying prone on the stove,⁶⁶ without a pillow, her head facing the door, while I stood over her. She showed no sign of pleasure at the prospect of acquiring a lodger but merely complained about the attack from which she was now recovering: the sickness did not come every month, but when it did strike, " . . . it stays for two or three days, so I wouldn't be able to get up or do anything for you. But the house isn't bad; you'd be all right here."

She listed other landladies whose cottages might be quieter and more comfortable and suggested that I should go and try them. But I could already tell that I was fated to settle in this dark cottage with its tarnished mirror, in which it was completely impossible to see yourself, and its two cheap, brightly colored posters hung on the wall for decoration, one advertising the book trade and the other campaigning for the harvest.

Matryona made me try the village again, and when I arrived the second time she made countless excuses like "Don't expect any fancy cooking." But she was up and about and there was even a glint of something like pleasure in her eyes because I had come back.

We agreed about the rent and the peat that the school would supply.

I only found out later that Matryona Vasilievna had not earned a penny from anywhere for a long, long time, because she was not given a pension and her relatives hardly ever helped her out. She worked on

66. *lying prone on the stove*—peasant homes contained large, brick stoves, with a flat surface large enough to accommodate a sleeping adult.

the collective farm not for money but for ticks—the ticks entered in her well-thumbed workbook.

And so I settled in with Matryona Vasilievna. We did not divide up the room: her bed was in the corner by the door, near the stove; and I set up my camp bed by the window. I pushed Matryona's beloved fig plants aside to let in more light, and put a table by one of the windows. They had electricity in the village; it had been brought from Shatura as early as the twenties. In those days the newspapers used to publicize Lenin's electrification scheme with catchwords like "Ilich⁶⁷ lamps," while the peasants blinked and called it "magic fire."

Perhaps to someone from a better-off village Matryona's cottage would not have seemed an ideal place to live, but we were very comfortable there that autumn and winter. Despite its age, it kept the rain out, and the embers in the stove warded off the icy winds pretty well—except toward morning, and hardly at all when the wind was blowing from the cold quarter.

Besides Matryona and myself, the other occupants of the house were a cat, some mice, and the cockroaches.

The cat was rather old and lame. Matryona had adopted it out of pity and it had settled down with her. Although it walked on four legs, it limped heavily in order to spare its one bad leg. When it jumped from the stove onto the floor, the sound it made when it landed was not a typical soft catlike sound but a thump of three legs hitting the floor simultaneously—crash!—a noise so loud that at first, before I got used to it, it startled me. It would land on three feet at once so as to spare the fourth. It was not lameness that prevented the cat from dealing with the mice in the cottage; it would corner them and pounce like a flash of lightning and carry them off in its teeth. The reason why it caught so few was that once, when times were better, someone had papered Matryona's room with some greenish ribbed and checked wallpaper, and not just one layer but five. The coatings of wallpaper were stuck firmly to each other but in many places all five layers had ceased to adhere to the wall, thus giving the house a sort of inner skin. The mice had made paths for themselves between the planks and the wallpaper where they pattered impudently back and forth, even running about under the ceiling. The cat would glare angrily at their rustling but could never get at them.

67. *Ilich*—Lenin's patronymic or middle name.

Sometimes the cat would even eat cockroaches, but they made it feel sick. The only thing that the cockroaches respected was the line of the partition dividing the stove and the kitchen from the clean part of the house. They never penetrated into the living room. But they made up for it by swarming all over the kitchen at night, and if I went into the kitchen late in the evening and switched on the light, the entire floor, the large bench, and even the walls were almost a solid, heaving mass of reddish-brown. Once when I brought home some borax from the chemistry lab at school, we mixed it with dough and slaughtered the cockroaches. Their numbers diminished, but Matryona was afraid of poisoning the cat as well, so we stopped putting down poison and the cockroaches flourished once more.

At night, when Matryona was asleep and I was working at my table, the occasional sound of the mice darting about behind the wallpaper was smothered by the ceaseless, monotonous rustle behind the partition, like the distant roar of the ocean. But I grew accustomed to it, for there was nothing false or deceptive about it. It was their nature; they couldn't help it.

I even got used to the crudely drawn girl on the poster, eternally offering me copies of Belinsky,⁶⁸ Panferov,⁶⁹ and a pile of other books, but never speaking. I got used to everything in Matryona's house.

Matryona would get up at four or five o'clock in the morning. She had bought her old-fashioned kitchen clock at the village store twenty-seven years ago. It was always fast, but Matryona didn't mind; at least it wasn't slow, so she would not be late in the mornings.

She would switch on the light in the kitchen and quietly, considerately, trying not to make a noise, stoke up the stove. Then she would go and milk the goat (her entire livestock was one dirty white goat with a crooked horn), fetch water, put three saucepans on the stove to boil—one saucepan for me, one for herself, and one for the goat. From the store in the cellar she picked out the very smallest potatoes for the goat, small ones for herself, and a few for me the size of a hen's egg. Her kitchen garden was incapable of producing large potatoes; its sandy soil had not been manured since before the war and was never planted with anything but potatoes.

68. *Belinsky*—Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848), a Russian literary critic.

69. *Panferov*—Fedor Panferov (1896–1960), a Soviet writer whose works focused on the life of the Russian peasantry.

I hardly ever heard her doing her morning chores. I slept long, woke up late with the wintry sun and stretched, poking my head from underneath my blanket and sheepskin coat. With a quilted jacket from my prison-camp days that covered my feet, and a sack stuffed with straw as a mattress, I stayed warm all night, even when the north wind set our little windows rattling in their rotten frames. Hearing the muffled noises coming from behind the partition, I would solemnly say: “Good morning, Matryona Vasilievna.” And always the same kindly response would be echoed from the other side. It began with a sort of low purring noise that grandmothers make in fairy tales: “Mm-m-m ... and the same to you.” And a moment later: “Your breakfast’s ready.” She never said what was for breakfast, but it was not hard to guess: an unpeeled potato, ‘taty soup (as they called it in the village), or millet porridge. Any other kind of cereal was unobtainable in Peatproduce that year, and even millet was hard enough to get—as it was the cheapest sort, they bought it by the sackful for pig food. It was not always salted properly and it was often burned; it left a film on your palate and gums, and it gave you heartburn. However, this was not Matryona’s fault. There was no butter in Peatproduce either, margarine only now and then if you were lucky, and the only readily available fat was low-grade lard. What was more, the Russian stove, as I soon realized, was extremely awkward: the cook was unable to see the food cooking, and the heat reached the saucepans unevenly and sporadically. I suppose the reason why our forefathers have retained this kind of stove since the stone age is that once it is banked up before dawn, it keeps food and water for man and beast warm all day; and it’s warm to sleep on.

I dutifully ate everything that was cooked for me, patiently removing any foreign bodies such as a hair, a lump of peat, or the leg of a cockroach. I did not have the heart to reproach Matryona. After all, she had warned me not to expect any fancy cooking.

“Thank you,” I would say with absolute sincerity.

“What for? It’s yours—you’re paying for it.” Having disarmed me with her dazzling smile, she would then look at me guilelessly with her pale blue eyes and ask: “Well, what shall I cook you for supper?”

I ate two meals a day, as we used to do on active service. What could I order for supper? It was always either potatoes or ‘taty soup.

I reconciled myself to this, because experience had taught me not to regard eating as the main object of life. I set greater store by the smile on her round face, which, when I eventually took up photography, I tried in vain to capture on film. Whenever Matryona saw the

cold eye of a lens staring at her, she would put on a look that was either strained or exaggeratedly stern. Only once did I manage to catch her smiling at something out of the window.

Matryona had a lot of trouble that autumn. Her neighbors had persuaded her to apply for a pension. She was all alone in the world, and since she had started being seriously ill, she had been dismissed from the collective farm. Altogether, Matryona was treated most unjustly: she was sick, but she was not certified as disabled; she had worked on the collective farm for a quarter of a century, yet because she had not been directly engaged on production she was not entitled to a personal pension but only to one on her husband's behalf—that is, on the grounds of loss of the breadwinner. But her husband had been dead for twelve years—since the beginning of the war, in fact—and it was not easy to get the necessary documents certifying how long he had worked and how much he had been paid. It had been trouble enough collecting all these certificates—getting someone to write down that he had earned three hundred rubles a month, then getting another to certify that she lived alone and was not supported by anyone, and for how long—then taking it all to the social-security office, then doing it all over again because something had been entered wrong. Even at the end she was still not sure whether she would get a pension at all.

All this effort was made still more difficult by the fact that the social-security office that dealt with Talnovo was twenty kilometers to the east, the district soviet⁷⁰ was ten kilometers to the west, and the village soviet was an hour's walk to the north. They chased her from office to office for two whole months—sometimes because of a missing period, sometimes because of a misplaced comma. Every journey meant a whole day. She would go to the district soviet, and the secretary would be out that day: he was just absent, for no particular reason, as happens in the country. Come again the day after tomorrow. And four days later she would have to go again; out of sheer carelessness (all Matryona's documents were pinned together in one sheaf), someone had signed the wrong piece of paper.

"They're wearing me out, Ignatich," she complained to me after several of these fruitless journeys. "I get so worried."

But her brow did not stay furrowed for long. I noticed that she had an infallible means of restoring her good spirits: work. She would

70. *district soviet*—the local government office.

immediately pick up her spade and dig potatoes, or go off with a sack under her arm to fetch some peat, or wander far into the woods with a wicker basket to pick berries. Instead of bowing to office desks, she would lean over the bushes in the forest. Then, her back bending under the weight of her burden, Matryona would come beaming back to her cottage, thoroughly delighted.

“Now, I really know where to get the good stuff, Ignatich,” she would say about the peat she had dug. “You should see the place; it’s a treat.”

“Isn’t my peat enough, Matryona Vasilievna? There’s a whole truckload of it, after all.”

“Pooh, your peat! If you got twice as much, or more, it might just do. When the wind really starts blowing in the winter, you need all the peat you can get simply to keep warm. You should have seen how much we pinched last summer. I’d pinch three truckloads if I could. But they catch you. They took one of our women to court.”

She was right. The terrifying breath of winter was already starting to blow. We were surrounded by woods, but there was nowhere to gather fuel. Although excavators were digging peat out of the bogs all around us, none of it was sold to the local inhabitants; but if you were one of the bosses or ranked among the boss class—teachers, doctors, factory workers—then you got a truckload. The local people in Talnovo were not supposed to be given fuel, and it was no use asking for it. The chairman of the collective farm walked around the village looking at people earnestly or innocently and talking about everything under the sun except fuel. After all, he had his own supply. Winter didn’t worry him.

Just as people had once stolen wood from the landlord,⁷¹ now they scrounged peat from the trust.⁷² The peasant women banded together by fives and tens, because they felt bolder in a gang, and went in daytime. In summer the peat was stacked up all over the place to dry out. The great thing about peat is that when it is dug it cannot be removed right away: it has to dry out until the autumn, or until the snow if the roads are impassable from the autumn rains. It was then that the women stole it. You could get six slabs of peat into a sack if it was damp, or ten slabs if it was dry. A sackful, carried three or four kilo-

71. *Just as people had once stolen wood from the landlord*—that is, in the days of serfdom. The implication is that little has changed under Soviet rule.

72. *the trust*—the collective farm, controlled by the Soviet government.

meters (it weighed sixty pounds), was enough to fire the stove for one day. Winter lasts two hundred days, and you have to stoke two stoves every day—the Russian stove in the daytime, the tiled stove at night.

“There’s no two ways about it,” Matryona said, losing her temper with some invisible “them.” “Since there’s been no more horses, if you want stuff in the house you’ve got to fetch it yourself. My back never stops aching. If I’m not pulling a sledge in winter, I’m humping baskets in summer. It’s true, you know.”

The peasant women went more than once a day to scrounge peat. On a good day Matryona might bring home as many as half a dozen sackfuls. She made no secret about my peat, but hid her own under the passage, covering the hiding place every evening with a loose floorboard.

“Bet they can’t guess where it is, the nosey-parkers.” She grinned as she wiped the sweat from her forehead. “And if they can’t, they’ll never find it in a lifetime.”

What could the peat trust do? They weren’t allowed enough staff to post watchmen all over the bogs. They probably coped with the problem by exaggerating their production figures and then writing off a certain percentage to loss from the effects of rain and crumbling. Now and again, at random intervals, they would send out a patrol and catch the women as they returned to the village. The women would drop their sacks and scatter. Sometimes too, when an informer gave them a tip-off, they would make a house-to-house search, compile lists of people caught hoarding illegal peat, and threaten them with prosecution. The women would stop pilfering peat for a while, but winter was coming on and drove them to it again—at night this time, and with sledges.

Observing Matryona, I noticed that every day was taken up with some major task, in addition to cooking and housework. She somehow kept a record in her head of the proper routine of these jobs, and whenever she woke up in the morning, she always knew what she was going to be doing that day. Apart from collecting peat and scrounging old tree stumps rooted up by the tractors in the peat bogs, gathering bilberries, which she bottled for the winter (“Give yourself a treat, Ignatich,” she would say as she offered me some), digging potatoes, and tramping the countryside seeing about her pension, she also had to find time to gather hay for her one and only nanny goat.

“Why don’t you keep a cow, Matryona Vasilievna?” “Well,” Matryona explained as she stood in the kitchen doorway in her dirty

apron and turned toward my table, “the goat gives enough milk for me. If I had a cow, she’d eat me out of house and home. No good cutting hay beside the railway track—that belongs to other people; the forestry owns the hay in the woods, and they won’t let me cut hay on the collective farm because I’m not a member any longer. The people on the farm won’t give you the skin off their teeth. Ever tried looking for grass under the snow? There was a time when you could get all the hay you wanted on the verges,⁷³ at hay harvest. Lovely hay, that was . . .”

Collecting hay for one milking goat was very hard work for Matryona. She would set off in the morning with a sack and a sickle and go to the places where she remembered that grass grew along the boundaries between fields, by the roadside, on tussocks among the peat bogs. Her sack stuffed with heavy, freshly cut grass, she would drag it home and spread it out to dry in her yard. A sackful of grass produced the equivalent of one pitchforkful of hay.

The first thing that the new town-bred chairman of the collective farm did was to reduce the size of the kitchen gardens allotted to disabled ex-members, so Matryona was left with fifteen square yards of sandy soil while the ten square yards docked from her old allotment simply lay fallow and went to waste on the other side of the fence. And when the farm was shorthanded and the women flatly refused to work overtime, the chairman’s wife visited Matryona. She was a townswoman too, a determined creature in a short, gray, half-length coat, with a brisk, military air.

She went into the house and stared fiercely at Matryona without bothering to greet her. Matryona looked embarrassed.

“Right,” the chairman’s wife said crisply. “Comrade Grigorieva, you must come and lend a hand on the collective farm. We need some help to shift manure tomorrow.”

Matryona’s face creased into an apologetic smile, as though she was ashamed to tell the woman that the farm was not entitled to pay her for any work she did.

“Well,” she said hesitantly, “I’m sick, you see, and I don’t belong to the farm any longer.” Then she hurriedly changed her mind. “What time shall I come?”

“Bring your own pitchfork,” ordered the chairman’s wife as she marched out with a swish of her stiff skirt.

73. *verges*—strips of land that border roads.

“Huh!” Matryona fumed. “Bring your own pitchfork! The farm never has any pitchforks, or spades either. Here am I, without a man to stick up for me . . .”

She talked to me about it all that evening.

“What else can I do, Ignatich? Of course I’m bound to help them—what sort of a harvest will they have if the muck doesn’t get spread? Only, the way that place is run, it’s a wonder they ever get any work done; the women stand around leaning on their shovels just waiting till the factory whistle blows at twelve. And they waste time arguing about the hours they’ve worked, who’s on and who’s off. Now to my way of thinking; when you work, you work—no gossiping, but get on with the job, and before you know where you are, it’s supper-time.”

Next morning, off she went with her pitchfork.

Not only the collective farm but any distant relative or simply a neighbor might accost Matryona one evening and say: “Come and help me tomorrow, Matryona. I need the rest of my potatoes dug.” And Matryona could never refuse. She would abandon her private affairs, go and help her neighbor, and then when she returned say without a trace of envy: “O, she’s got such huge potatoes, Ignatich. It was a pleasure to dig them up. I didn’t want to stop, honest.”

Matryona was equally indispensable when it came to plowing up the kitchen gardens. The Talnovo women had very sensibly worked out that it was much slower and harder work for one person to dig her garden singlehanded than for them to borrow a plow, harness six of them to it, and plow up six kitchen gardens in one go. Here again, Matryona was always called in to help.

“Do they pay her for it?” I once asked.

“She won’t take any money. You’d have to force it on her.”

Another of Matryona’s great problems came when it was her turn to feed the village goatherds. One was a big, strapping creature who was a deaf-mute, and the other a boy with a soggy cheroot⁷⁴ permanently stuck between his teeth. The job only came round once every six weeks, but it cost Matryona a lot of money. She would go to the village store to buy tins of fish and even things which she herself never ate, such as sugar and butter. Apparently the housewives all competed with each other to see who could feed the goatherds best.

74. *cheroot*—a cigar, cut square at both ends.

“You should beware of tailors and shepherds,” she explained to me. “They go round every house in turn, and if things aren’t just right for them, they’ll say terrible things about you to all your neighbors.”

As if she did not have cares enough in her busy life, Matryona was regularly laid low by her ferocious illness. She would collapse and lie prone for a day or two at a time. She never complained or groaned; in fact, she hardly moved at all. When this happened, Masha, her lifelong friend, would come and tend the goat and stoke the fire. Matryona herself never ate or drank when she was ill and never asked for anything. No one in Talnovo ever thought of sending for the doctor from the village clinic to call on them at home; it was regarded as vaguely insulting to one’s neighbors, who might think one was putting on airs. Once, when the doctor was sent for, it turned out to be a disagreeable woman who simply told Matryona to lie down until the pain went and then come to the clinic herself. Matryona went very unwillingly. They did some tests on her and sent her to the district hospital, where the illness just subsided. Matryona, of course, was blamed for wasting their time.

Her everyday chores were what summoned her back to life. Soon Matryona would start getting up, moving slowly at first, then more briskly.

“You never saw me in the old days, Ignatich,” she explained. “I used to be the one who carried all the sacks—a hundred pounds was nothing. My father-in-law used to shout at me: ‘You’ll break your back, Matryona!’ I never needed any help harnessing the horse into the shafts, either. Ours was an army horse, a tough brute called Wolf-cub ...”

“Why an army horse?”

“They took ours for the war and gave us a wounded army horse in exchange. He was a bit crazy. Once he shied at something and galloped off with the sledge, heading straight for the lake. The men all jumped out of his way, but I grabbed him by the bridle and stopped him—I did, you know! Liked his oats, did that horse. Our men always fed them on oats and then they could pull anything.”

However, Matryona was by no means a fearless woman. She was afraid of fires and of lightning, and most of all she was terrified of trains.

“Once when I wanted to go to Cherusti the train came from Nechaevka, flashing its great eyes, the rails humming; it brought me

out in a sweat, I can tell you, and my knees started shaking.” Matryona was amazed at herself and shrugged her shoulders.

“Perhaps you were nervous about not having a ticket, because they don’t sell them at the local station.”

“You mean at the ticket office? They do—but only ‘soft’ class. Anyway, when the train came in, it was one big scramble. We rushed up and down trying to find somewhere to get on. The men either hung on to the steps or climbed up on the roof. We found a door that wasn’t locked and pushed straight in without tickets. And all the coaches were ‘hard’ class, best you could hope for was to lie down on a luggage rack. Don’t know why they wouldn’t give us any tickets, the brutes ...”

That winter Matryona’s life took a turn for the better. At long last she started to get her pension of eighty rubles a month, in addition to slightly over a hundred rubles paid by the school and by me for bed and board.

“Matryona doesn’t need to die now!” Some of her neighbors were already starting to envy her. “The old woman’s got more money than she knows what to do with.”

Matryona ordered a new pair of felt boots, bought a new quilted jacket, and had an overcoat made out of a second-hand railway man’s greatcoat which she had been given by an engine driver from Cherusti, the husband of her adopted daughter Kira. The hunchbacked village tailor lined the material with cotton-wool padding and made an overcoat more splendid than any she had made herself in all her sixty years.

In the middle of winter Matryona sewed two hundred rubles into the lining of that coat. The money was for her funeral and it gave her great satisfaction.

December and January passed, two whole months in which she was spared an attack of her illness. Matryona took to visiting her friend Masha more often in the evenings, when they would sit talking and cracking sunflower seeds. She never invited anyone to her home in the evening, out of consideration for my need to work. Only once when I came home from school did I find the cottage full of people dancing. It was a christening party and I was introduced to her three sisters. Since Matryona was considerably older than they were, they treated her more like an aunt or a nanny. Until then, we had seen or heard practically nothing of Matryona’s sisters, probably because they were afraid Matryona needed help and would become a burden to them.

For Matryona this celebration was saddened by only one thing. She had walked three miles to church for the blessing of the water and had put her bowl among the others, but when the ceremony was over and the women jostled forward to collect their bowls, Matryona was at the back of the crowd; when she finally got there, her bowl was missing, gone as though the devil had spirited it away.

Matryona went around asking all the women in the congregation: “Did anybody take a bowl of someone else’s holy water by mistake?”

As no one owned up, it was probably stolen by one of the little boys who had been brought to church. Matryona came sadly home.

However, this did not mean that Matryona was really a fervent believer. If anything, she was a pagan and, above all, superstitious: if you went into the garden on St. John’s day, that meant there would be a bad harvest next year; if a storm was whirling the snowflakes round and round, it meant that someone had hanged himself; if you caught your foot in the door, it meant a visitor. For as long as I lodged with her, I never once saw her say her prayers or cross herself. Yet she always asked for God’s blessing before doing anything and she invariably said “God bless you” to me whenever I set off for school in the morning. Perhaps she did say her prayers, but not ostentatiously, being embarrassed by my presence or afraid of disturbing me. There were icons in the cottage. On ordinary days they were unlit, but on the eve of feast days and on the feast days themselves Matryona would light the icon lamp.

Yet she had even fewer sins to atone for than her lame cat. The cat, after all, did kill mice . . .

Having been slightly shaken out of the rut of her rather dull life, Matryona also started to listen more attentively to my radio (I had taken care to put up a good “area,” as Matryona called it).

When she heard on the radio that some new machine had been invented, she grumbled from the kitchen: “Nothing but new-fangled things these days. People won’t want to go on working with the old machines, so where’ll they put them all?”

During a broadcast describing how rain was induced by “seeding” clouds from an airplane, Matryona shook her head as she bent over the stove. “If they tamper with things much more, we won’t know whether it’s winter or summer.”

Once they played a record of Chaliapin⁷⁵ singing Russian folk songs. Matryona stood and listened for a long time, then said firmly: “He sings beautifully, but he doesn’t sing our way.”

“O, really, Matryona Vasilievna—just listen to him!” She listened a bit longer, then pressed her lips together disapprovingly. “No. He hasn’t got it right. That’s not the way we sing. And he plays tricks with his voice.”

Another time, Matryona made up for it. There was a recital of some of Glinka’s songs,⁷⁶ and suddenly, after half a dozen of his concert arias, Matryona appeared excitedly from the kitchen, clutching her apron, with a film of tears misting her eyes.

“Now that’s . . . our sort of singing,” she whispered.

And so Matryona and I grew used to each other and got along excellently together. She never pestered me with questions. Either because she was devoid of the usual female curiosity or because she was so tactful, she never once asked me whether I were married or not. All the women in Talnovo would badger her to find out everything about me, but all she would say to them was: “If you want to find out, ask him yourself. All I know is he’s from far away.”

When after quite a while I told her that I had spent a long time in prison, she merely nodded in silence, as though she had already suspected it.

For my part, I only saw Matryona as she was then, a lonely old woman, and I too refrained from prying into her past; indeed, I never suspected that there was anything of interest in it. I knew that she had married before the Revolution and had immediately moved into the cottage in which we were now living and straight to this same stove. Neither her mother-in-law nor any elder sisters-in-law were still alive then, so from the very first day after her wedding Matryona had taken over all the housework. I knew that she had had six children and they had all died very young, one after the other, so that no two of them had been alive at one time. Then there was Kira, who was her adopted daughter.

75. *Chaliapin*—Feodor Chaliapin (1873–1938), the most famous Russian opera singer of the twentieth century.

76. *Glinka*—Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857), considered the father of Russian classical music, who incorporated Russian folk melodies into his compositions.

Matryona's husband did not return from the last war,⁷⁷ and not even a funeral service was held for him. Men from his village who had served in the same company said that he had either been taken prisoner or was missing without trace. By the time the war had been over for eight years, Matryona herself had come to the conclusion that he was dead. And it was just as well that she did. If he had survived, he would probably be married and living somewhere in Brazil or Australia, and both the Russian language and the village of Talnovo would have long since faded from his memory.

One day I came home from school to find a visitor in the cottage. A tall, dark, elderly man, his cap resting on his knee, was sitting on a chair that Matryona had put out for him in the middle of the room, near the Dutch stove. His whole face was framed in thick black hair that was scarcely touched with gray. His dense black beard merged with a thick black mustache that made his mouth almost invisible, while a pair of black side whiskers, almost hiding his ears, ran up in an unbroken line to join the black hair at his temples. To crown it all, his eyebrows met in an unbroken black line across the bridge of his nose, while his forehead rose like a gleaming dome toward the crown of his bald head. It seemed to me that the old man's whole appearance radiated wisdom and dignity. He was sitting there calmly with his arms folded on his walking stick, which was resting weightily on the floor, sitting in an attitude of patient expectation without making much attempt to talk to Matryona, who was busy behind the partition.

As I came in, he turned his magnificent head toward me in a dignified movement and suddenly spoke to me: "Good evening to you! I don't see very well, but you must be my son's teacher; his name's Antoshka Gregoriev ..."

That was all he needed to say. For all my impulse to be helpful to this worthy old man, I knew exactly what he was going to say and I discounted it in advance as pointless. Antoshka Grigoriev was a chubby, red-cheeked boy in class 8-G who looked like a cat that has just eaten a bowl of cream. He treated school as a place to come for a good rest, where he could just sit at his desk, grinning idly. Needless to say, he never did his homework. But unfortunately, as part of our efforts to keep up the high success rate for which the schools of our region and the surrounding provinces were famous, he was regularly moved up by a class a year, and he had clearly grasped that, however much the

77. *the last war*—the Second World War.

teachers might threaten him, they would move him up at the end of the year just the same, and there was no need for him to do any work. He simply laughed at us. Although he was in class 8, he could not do fractions and he was unable to tell one sort of triangle from another. He had been a permanent candidate for bottom place in the class for my first two terms, and he would be in the same position next term too.

But how was I to tell this elderly, half-blind man, more of an age to be Antoshka's grandfather than his father, who had had the courtesy to call on me, that the school had been deceiving him regularly year after year? I could not keep up the deception, because if I too turned into a yes-man I would harm the children in my class, and that would be a betrayal of all my work and the ethics of my profession.

So I patiently explained to him that his son was a spoiled child, that he told lies both at school and at home, that we ought to check his attendance book more often, and that both parent and teacher should be much stricter with him.

"But I can't be much stricter with him," the visitor assured me. "I beat him at least once a week as it is. And I've got a heavy hand, believe me."

While we were talking, I remembered that Matryona herself had for some reason once put in a word on Antoshka Grigoriev's behalf, but I had not asked how he was related to her, and on that occasion too I had refused to intervene. Now Matryona appeared in the kitchen doorway, a wordless supplicant. After Uya Mironich, the boy's father, had gone out saying that he would come to the school and find out for himself, I asked her: "What has that boy Antoshka got to do with you, Matryona Vasilievna?"

"He's the son of my brother-in-law," Matryona replied curtly, and went out to milk the goat.

I finally worked out that this persistent old man was the brother of her husband, the one who had been posted missing without trace.

For the rest of the long evening Matryona did not refer to the subject again. Only much later that night, when I had forgotten about the old man and was working in a silence disturbed only by the rustle of cockroaches and the tick of the kitchen clock, Matryona suddenly said from her dark corner: "I almost married him once, Ignatich."

I had forgotten about Matryona. She said it with as much emotion as if the old man were still courting her. It was obvious that she had been thinking about nothing else all evening.

She rose from her ragged bedclothes and slowly came over to me as though following her own words. I looked up in surprise, and for the first time I saw a new, unsuspected Matryona.

There was no overhead light in our big room, where the fig plants clustered like trees in a forest. The only illumination was from the table lamp shining downwards onto my exercise books, and if you looked up, the rest of the room seemed to be in half-darkness tinged with pink. Matryona now emerged from this gloom and for a moment her cheeks did not look their usual yellow but were flushed.

“He courted me first, before Efim ... He was the elder brother ... I was nineteen; Ilia was twenty-three ... They lived in this very house. Their father built it.”

I gave an involuntary glance around. Suddenly, instead of this gray, decaying old house with mice running wild behind its pale green skin of wallpaper, I saw it just built, with its fresh, newly planed logs, and smelling deliciously of pitch.

“What happened?”

“That summer ... he and I used to go and sit in the woods,” she whispered. “Where the stables are now, there used to be a wood, but it was cut down ... I all but married him, Ignatich. Then the German war⁷⁸ started, and Ilia was taken off to fight.”

As she said this, I had a momentary image of that blue, white, and golden July of 1914: the sky of a world still at peace, floating clouds, and the peasants busily gathering the ripe harvest. I imagined the pair of them side-by-side: the giant with his pitch-dark beard and a scythe over his shoulder; Matryona, rosy-cheeked, clasping a sheaf of wheat. And the singing in the open air, a singing such as we have forgotten in this machine age.

“He went to the war, and he was posted missing ... I waited for three years—not a sound, not a word ...”

Wrapped in her faded, old-woman’s kerchief, Matryona’s round face gazed at me, lit by the soft indirect light of the lamp, and I saw it as though all its wrinkles had been smoothed out and the shabby, workaday clothes were gone. I saw the face of a bewildered girl faced with a terrible choice. I could see it happening ... the leaves withering and blowing away, the snow falling and melting again. Another season’s plowing, another sowing, another harvest. Again autumn, again the

78. *the German war*—the First World War.

snowfall; first one Revolution, then another, and the whole world turned upside down.

“Their mother died, and Efim began courting me. ‘You wanted to come and live in our house,’ he said, ‘so you might as well come—as my wife.’ Efim was a year younger than me. Well, marry in haste, repent at leisure, they say. On Trinity Sunday I married Efim, and at Michaelmas ... ⁷⁹ his brother Ilia came back from Hungary, where he’d been a prisoner of war.”

Matryona closed her eyes.

I said nothing.

She turned toward the doorway as if someone were standing there.

“There he stood on the doorstep. I cried out and fell down on my knees to him. But it was no good. ‘If he wasn’t my own brother,’ he said, ‘I’d murder the pair of you.’”

I shuddered. Her anguish and fear had summoned up a vivid image of Ilia, black and angry, standing in the doorway and brandishing his axe at Matryona.

She calmed down, leaned on the chair-back in front of her, and went on in her lilting voice: “O, the poor man! There were any number of nice girls in the village, but he wouldn’t marry any of them. He said he’d only marry someone with the same name as mine. And he did, too. Brought a girl called Matryona from Lipki and built himself his own house. They still live there—you pass it every day on your way to school.”

So that was it! I now realized that I had seen the other Matryona several times. I did not care for her: she was always coming to my Matryona to complain that her husband was beating her, that he was a skinflint and worked her to death. She would come and weep for hours and her voice always seemed to be on the edge of tears. Matryona, it seemed, had missed nothing by not marrying him; Ilia had beaten his Matryona throughout their married life and had terrorized the household right up to the present day.

“He never beat me once,” Matryona said of her husband, Efim. “He’d punch another man in the street, but he never touched me ... Well, there was one time—I’d quarreled with his sister, and he hit me over the head with a ladle. I jumped up from the table and screamed at

⁷⁹. *Michaelmas*—the Feast of St. Michael the archangel, celebrated in September.

him: 'I hope you choke, you brute!' And I ran off into the woods. He never touched me after that."

Iliia apparently had no grounds for complaint either, because the other Matryona bore him six children (including my Antoshka, the youngest and the runt of the litter), and all of them survived, while none of the children of Matryona and Efim lived longer than three months, although they never actually fell ill.

"One of my daughters, Elena, died as soon as they'd washed her right after she was born. Just as I got married on St. Peter's Day, so my sixth child, Alexander, was buried on St. Peter's Day."

The village had decided that there was a curse on Matryona.

"Yes, there was a curse on me," Matryona said, obviously convinced of it herself. "They took me to a nun to be cured. She gave me something to make me cough, then waited for the curse to jump out of me like a frog. Well, it didn't ..."

The years passed like running water ... In '41.⁸⁰ Iliia was not conscripted because of his poor eyesight, but Efim was called up, and just as the elder brother had vanished in the First World War, so the younger brother was lost without trace in the second—and he never returned. Empty, the cottage which had once been so lively and noisy grew decrepit and rotten, and Matryona aged too as she lived on in it all alone.

She begged the other Matryona to let her have one of her offspring, her youngest daughter, Kira—perhaps because it was a child of Iliia's. For ten years she brought her up in her home as if she were her own daughter, one of those she had lost. Not long before my arrival, she had married her off to a young engine driver in Cherusti. This was now her only source of help and comfort; occasionally they would send her some sugar, or some lard when they killed a pig.

Frequently ill and sensing that she had not long to live, Matryona expressed the wish that after her death the separate outhouse on the other side of the passage in her house was to be given to Kira. She said nothing about the cottage itself; each of her three sisters was aiming to get it.

That evening Matryona told me everything about herself. And, as often happens, no sooner had I learned the secrets of her life than they began to appear in the flesh. Kira came over from Cherusti and old Iliia began to get very worried. Apparently, in order to validate their tenure

80. '41—the year Nazi troops invaded Russia.

of a plot of land in Cherusti they had to build on it, and Matryona's outhouse was ideal for the purpose: there was no hope of getting the timber anywhere else. The person who was keenest on getting the plot of land in Cherusti was neither Kira nor her husband but old Ilia on their behalf.

So he started calling on us; he came once and then again, talking persuasively to Matryona, urging her to give up the outhouse now, while she was still alive. During these visits he struck me as quite unlike the decrepit old man who had leaned on his stick and seemed liable to collapse at a push or a rough word. Although slightly hunched with lumbago, for a man over sixty he was still a handsome figure with his vigorous, youthful black hair, and he pressed his case with ardor.

Matryona could not sleep for two nights. It was a hard decision for her to make. She did not mind about the outhouse, which was empty anyway, just as she never grudged her own labor or property; it was, after all, already bequeathed to Kira. But she was upset by the thought of dismantling the roof that had sheltered her for forty years. Even I, a mere lodger, objected to them tearing down the planks and wrenching out the logs from her cottage. For Matryona, it meant the end of her life.

But her insistent relatives knew that they would succeed in breaking up her house while she was still alive.

Ilia and his sons and sons-in-law arrived one February morning, and soon there came the knocking sound of five axes, the squealing and creaking of planks being wrenched apart. There was a purposeful gleam in Ilia's eye. Although he could no longer properly straighten his back, he was nimble enough at clambering about under the rafters and shinning down to shout instructions to his assistants. Long ago, as a young boy, he had helped his own father build this cottage, and the extra room that they were now demolishing had been designed as the place where he, the eldest son, should bring home his bride. Now that the house belonged to someone else, he relished the idea of pulling it apart and carting it away.

Having numbered the joists and the planks of the ceiling, they dismantled the room and the cellar and made a temporary wooden wall for the rest of the cottage and its shortened passage. Carelessly they knocked holes in the wall; it was all too obvious that these wreckers were no builders and were acting on the assumption that Matryona was not going to live here much longer.

While the men hacked away, the women distilled moonshine vodka in preparation for the day when the timber would be loaded up; proper vodka would have been far too expensive. Kira brought thirty pounds of sugar from somewhere in the Moscow region,⁸¹ and under cover of night Matryona Vasilievna carried the sugar and the bottles to the still.

When all the timber had been dismantled and piled up in front of the gate, the engine driver son-in-law went off to Cherusti to fetch the tractor. But that day it began to snow. The blizzard swirled and howled for two days and obliterated the roads with vast snowdrifts. No sooner had the way been cleared, and one or two trucks had got through, than there was a sudden thaw in the space of a single day, a damp fog came down, the snow dissolved into gurgling rivulets and your boots sank up to the calves in mud.

It was two weeks before the tractor was able to come and fetch the dismantled outhouse, and throughout that time Matryona went around like a lost soul. She was particularly depressed by a visit from her three sisters, who cheerfully swore at her and called her a fool for having let the outhouse go. They departed, announcing that they were fed up with her. Soon afterwards her lame cat strayed out of the yard and was killed. These two incidents in quick succession greatly upset her.

At last a frost came and the thawing roads hardened again. The sun came out, which cheered everyone up, and Matryona had a pleasant dream before waking up. That morning she found out that I wanted to photograph someone working at an old hand loom (there were still two of them in working order in the village, used for weaving crude rugs). She smiled shyly.

“Wait a couple of days until we get rid of this timber, Ignatich, and I’ll set up my loom—I’ve got one too, you know. Then you can take a picture of me.”

She obviously liked the idea of being photographed working at the old craft. A faint pink light from the wintry sun filtered in through the frosted window of her truncated porch, and the glow lit up her face. People who are at ease with their consciences always look happy.

As I was returning from school before dusk, I noticed movement outside our house. A big new tractor-drawn sledge was already fully

81. *Kira brought thirty pounds of sugar from somewhere in the Moscow region*—sugar was difficult to find in Russia at this time.

loaded with timber, but there was still plenty more. The whole of Ilia's family, and their friends who had been invited to help, were just completing a second, home-made sledge. They were all working like madmen, in the frenzied state that seizes people when there is big money or free drink in the offing, all shouting at each other and arguing.

The argument was about how to move the sledges—separately or together. One of Ilia's sons (the lame one) and his son-in-law (the engine driver) were saying that the tractor could not pull both sledges at once. The tractor driver, on the other hand, a burly, self-confident tough, insisted hoarsely that he knew what he was talking about, that he was in charge of the tractor and he was going to tow both sledges together. His motives were obvious: he was being paid a lump sum to transport a certain quantity of timber, rather than so much per trip. If he had to do it in two trips—it was thirty-five kilometers each way—he would never complete the job in one night, and at all costs he had to return the machine to its garage by the next morning, because he was “borrowing” it illegally. Old Ilia was impatient to have the outhouse timber removed that same day, so he persuaded his family to agree to move the load in one trip. Hastily cobbled together, the second sledge was coupled behind the stronger one.

Matryona ran busily around among the menfolk, helping to pile the logs onto the sledge. It was then that I noticed that she was wearing my quilted jacket and had dirtied it when she rubbed against the frozen mud sticking to the timber. Annoyed, I pointed this out to her. I was fond of that jacket; it had seen me through some hard times.

For the first time I lost my temper with Matryona Vasilievna.

“O dear, O dear, I am stupid,” she said apologetically. “I just grabbed it without thinking, I forgot it was yours. Sorry, Ignatich.” She took it off and hung it up to dry. When the loading was finished, everyone who had helped, about ten men in all, clumped noisily through the living room past my table and ducked under the curtain that screened off the kitchen. There followed a muffled clinking of glasses, the occasional thump as a bottle was knocked over; the voices grew louder and the mutual congratulations more extravagant. The tractor driver was particularly boastful. The powerful reek of moonshine soon drifted through to me, but they did not drink for long because they had to hurry to start before darkness set in. Conceited and aggressive, the tractor driver came staggering out. Ilia's son-in-law, the lame son, and another nephew climbed on the sledge to go with it as far as Cherusti. The others went home. Waving his stick, Ilia ran after one of

the men and hurriedly made some last-minute adjustment. The lame son stopped at my table to light a cigarette and quite unexpectedly began telling me how fond he was of Aunt Matryona, that he had recently got married and that a son had been born not long ago. Then someone shouted to him to hurry. Outside, the tractor's engine started with a roar.

The last person to emerge from the kitchen was Matryona. She shook her head anxiously as the men prepared to leave, then put on her quilted jacket and a headscarf. In the doorway she said to me: "Why didn't they get two tractors? If one broke down, the other could have pulled. As it is, God knows what'll happen if something goes wrong ..." And she ran out after the others.

After the drinking bout, the arguments, and the tramping feet, the quiet in the empty cottage was particularly marked; the cottage had also been made extremely cold thanks to the constant opening of doors. Outside, it was now quite dark. I too put on my quilted jacket and sat down to correct exercise books. The sound of the tractor faded in the distance.

An hour passed, then another and a third. Matryona had not come back, but I was not surprised. Having seen the sledges on their way, she had probably gone to see her friend Masha.

Two more hours went by. The village was not only in darkness, but a profound silence seemed to have settled on it. At the time I couldn't understand it; later I realized that not a single train had passed all evening along the railway line that ran a quarter of a mile away from us. My radio was silent and I noticed that the mice were unusually active, scurrying about behind the wallpaper, squeaking and scratching more noisily and impudently than ever.

I looked up, startled. It was one o'clock in the morning and Matryona had still not returned.

Suddenly I heard several loud voices out in the village street. They were still far away, but something told me they were coming to our cottage, and sure enough, before long there came a sharp knock on the gate. A brisk, unknown voice shouted to be let in. I went out into the dense blackness with a pocket torch. The whole village was asleep, none of the windows were lit, and the rapidly thawing snow gave off no reflection. I slid aside the lower bolt and let them in. Four men in service greatcoats marched into the house. It is extremely unpleasant to be visited at night by loud-voiced men in uniform.

In the light I noticed, however, that two of the men were in railway uniform. The senior, a stout man with the same sort of face as the tractor driver, asked me; “Where’s the owner?” “I don’t know.”

“Did some people drive a tractor away from here, pulling a sledge?”

“Yes, they did.”

“Were they drinking before they left?”

All four men screwed up their eyes as they peered into the semi-darkness around the table lamp. It was obvious that they had made an arrest or were intending to arrest someone.

“What happened?”

“Answer when you’re asked a question.”

“But ...”

“Were they drunk when they left?”

Had someone been killed? Had they run into trouble? They gave me quite a grilling, but I said nothing because I knew that Matryona could get a heavy sentence for dispensing illicitly distilled vodka. I placed myself across the doorway into the kitchen to keep them out.

“Not that I could see.” (It was true: I hadn’t seen them, only heard them.)

With an artless gesture I waved my hand around the room to emphasize the innocence of it all—the peaceful lamplight on my papers and books, the row of fig plants, Matryona’s neat, spartan bed. There was not a trace of an orgy to be seen.

Agreeing reluctantly that no drinking bout could have taken place here, they turned to go. On the way out I heard them say that even if there had been no drinking here, they were still convinced that drink was involved somewhere. I saw them out and asked what had happened.

Only when they reached the gate did one of them bark at me: “The whole lot caught it. Hardly even any bits to pick up.”

Another added: “That was nothing. The nine o’clock express was damn nearly derailed, that was the worst of it.”

And they hurried away.

Appalled, I went indoors. What did he mean by “the whole lot”? How had they “caught it”? Where was Matryona?

I pushed the curtain aside and went into the kitchen. The reek of moonshine hit me like a punch in the face. It was a squalid sight—overturned stools and benches, empty bottles lying on their sides, an upright one with some moonshine still in it, glasses,

half-chewed bits of salted herring, onion, a smear of dripping mixed with bread crumbs.

Everything was deathly still except for the cockroaches cheerfully swarming over the battlefield.

They had said something about the nine o'clock express. Why? What did that mean? I began to wonder whether I shouldn't have shown them the scene in the kitchen after all, but then I angrily remembered their highhanded manner and their refusal to give me any proper information.

Suddenly the gate creaked, and I hurried out into the passage. "Is that you, Matryona Vasilievna?"

The front door opened and Matryona's friend Masha tottered unsteadily in, wringing her hands. "Matryona ... Our Matryona, Ignatich ..." I sat her down and she told me the story, between sobs. There is a steep hill leading down to the level crossing, which is ungated. The tractor had almost managed to pull the first sledge across when the rope snapped. The second, makeshift sledge struck an obstacle on the tracks and began to fall apart, because the wood that Ilia had given them to make it with was mostly rotten. They pulled the first sledge clear, then the tractor driver, Ilia's lame son, and, for some reason, Matryona, came back to mend the rope and tow the second sledge away. What use could Matryona have been? She always had interfered in men's work; a horse had once bolted and nearly dragged her into the frozen lake. Why, O why did she have to go back to that cursed level crossing? She'd given up her outhouse to them, done her duty by them and more ... The tractor driver kept looking round to make sure there was no train coming from Cherusti; he would have been able to see its lights from miles away; but two engines coupled together, traveling backward and without lights, came down the track from the other direction—from our station. Why they had no lights nobody knows, and when an engine travels in reverse, the driver is blinded by coal dust from the tender and can't see properly. The engines rammed the sledge at full tilt, and the three people standing between it and the tractor were smashed to mincemeat. The tractor was battered to pieces, the sledge reduced to splinters, the rails were ripped up, and both engines derailed and flung onto their sides.

"But why didn't they hear the engines coming?"

"Because of the noise from the tractor engine."

"What about the bodies?"

"They won't let anyone near them. It's been cordoned off."

“Didn’t I hear something about the express? Was there an express?”

“The nine o’clock left our station on time and it was picking up speed toward the level crossing. But when the two engines crashed, the engine drivers managed to get out alive, and they ran down the track waving their arms and managed to stop the train ... Iliia’s nephew, too, was crippled by a falling log. Right now he’s hiding with friends so the police won’t find out he was at the crossing. They’re pulling witnesses in as hard as they can—better keep your mouth shut if you want to stay out of trouble. And as for Kira’s husband—not a scratch. He tried to hang himself and they had to pull his neck out of the noose. My brother and my aunt were killed because of me, he says. Then he went and gave himself up to the police, but he’s being sent to the madhouse instead of prison. O, Matryona, Matryona ...”

Matryona was no more. A beloved person was gone forever. And on her last day on earth I had scolded her for wearing my jacket.

The woman on the book poster, printed in bright yellows and reds, smiled joyfully.

Masha sat and wept a little longer. Then as she was getting up to go she suddenly asked: “Do you remember, Ignatich? Matryona had a gray shawl. She promised that after her death it should go to my little Tanya, didn’t she?”

She looked hopefully at me in the semi-darkness, wondering whether I had forgotten.

But I remembered. “Yes, that’s right, she promised it to her.”

“Listen, then. Would you let me take it now? Tomorrow morning the whole clan will descend on this place and I might not get it.”

She gave me a hopeful, imploring look. She had been Matryona’s friend for fifty years and was the only person in the village who had been genuinely fond of her. It was surely right that she should have it.

“Of course, take it,” I agreed.

She opened a chest, found the shawl, stuffed it under her skirts, and went.

The mice seemed to have been gripped by a kind of madness; they were racing furiously up and down the walls and the green wallpaper was heaving in almost visible waves.

Tomorrow I had to go and teach in school. It was three o’clock in the morning. The only refuge was to lock myself in and go to sleep. I could lock the door now, because Matryona would not be coming back.

I lay down, leaving the light on. The mice were squeaking so hard it was almost as if they were groaning. They raced tirelessly up and down. My exhausted, confused mind could not throw off an involuntary sense of horror. I had a feeling that Matryona was moving about, bidding farewell to her home. Suddenly, in the hallway by the front door I had a vision of Ilia, young, black-bearded, with axe raised: “If he wasn’t my own brother, I’d murder you both.”

Forty years that threat had lain in the corner, like an old, abandoned blade—and it had finally struck.

At dawn the women brought home all that remained of Matryona, drawn on a sledge and covered with a dirty piece of sacking. They removed the sack to wash the corpse. It was hideously mangled—no legs, half the torso missing, and no left arm. One of the women said: “The Lord left her right arm so she can pray to him in Heaven.”

All the fig plants were removed, the plants that Matryona had loved so much that once, when she had woken up with the cottage full of smoke, instead of trying to save the building she had thrown the fig plants to the floor so they would not suffocate. The floors were scrubbed clean. Matryona’s dim mirror was draped with a large old towel of homespun cloth. The gay posters were taken down from the walls. My table was moved aside, and the roughly carpentered coffin was placed on stools near the window, under the icon.

And there in the coffin lay Matryona. Her severed, disfigured body was covered with a clean sheet and her head was bound with a white cloth. Her face, calm and looking more alive than dead, had remained whole.

The villagers came to stand and look. Mothers brought young children to see the dead woman. And if anyone began to weep, all the women, even those who had come out of mere curiosity, inevitably started weeping in sympathy as they stood round the walls and in the doorway, like a choir accompanying a solo singer. The men stood stiffly to attention, silent and bareheaded.

It was the role of the female relatives to lead the mourning. I detected in their mourning an element of cold calculation, of an ancient, established procedure. The more distant relatives stepped up to the coffin for a short while and muttered as they bent over it. Those who regarded themselves as more closely related to the deceased began their keening at the very doorway and when they reached the coffin leaned over to say their piece right into the dead woman’s face. Each

mourner struck her own note and gave vent to her own particular thoughts and emotions.

I also observed that the keening was not merely an expression of grief but contained an element of “politics.” Matryona’s three sisters descended, took possession of the cottage, the goat, and the stove, locked her chest, ripped out of the lining of her coat the two hundred rubles she had put aside for her funeral, and explained to everyone present that they, her sisters, were Matryona’s only close relatives. And this was what they said as they mourned over her coffin:

“O, our dearest, dearest only sister, you lived such a quiet, simple life, and we always loved you and cared for you. And your house was the death of you. The outhouse drove you to the grave. Why did you let them tear it down? Why didn’t you listen to us?”

Thus the sisters’ wailing was directed at her husband’s clan—accusing them of having forced Matryona to surrender the timber from her house. And the further implication was: “You may have taken the outhouse but we won’t let you have the rest of the cottage.”

The husband’s clan—Matryona’s sisters-in-law, Efim’s and Ilia’s sisters, and various nieces—came and mourned in these terms:

“O, dearest Aunt Matryona, you never spared yourself or took care of yourself, and now they will say we were to blame. We loved you, but it was all your fault. The outhouse had nothing to do with it. Why did you go to the place where death was lying in wait for you? Nobody asked you to! Why didn’t you stop and think?—Then you mightn’t have died! And why didn’t you listen to us?”

These lamentations implied: “We weren’t to blame for her death, and as for the cottage—we’ll see about that!”

Then came the “other” Matryona, a coarse, ugly woman. But the substitute Matryona, who had once taken Ilia simply because her name was the same, broke the rules by wailing in unaffected sincerity over the coffin:

“Dearest, dearest sister of mine, promise me you weren’t offended at me! O, what times we once had, you and I, and how we talked! Forgive me, poor Matryona! O, you’ve gone to join your mother now and you’ll be telling tales about me! O, please don’t, please . . .”

At this final “please” she seemed to sob out her very soul, and she beat her breast again and again against the side of the coffin. When her keening went too far beyond the ritual limits, the women, as though acknowledging that she had well and truly made her point, said kindly: “That’s enough, dear. You’d better go now.”

Matryona went, but she came back again and sobbed even more violently. Then a very old woman stepped forward from a corner, laid a hand on her shoulder, and said sternly: “There are two great riddles in this world: How was I born? I don’t remember. How shall I die? I don’t know.”

At once Matryona was quiet, and everyone in the room fell completely silent.

But a little while later that same old woman, who was much older than all the others and who, I thought, had hardly even known Matryona during her lifetime, began to wail in her turn: “Poor, unhappy Matryona! Why was it you who died and I was spared?”

The one person whose mourning was completely unceremonious was Matryona’s wretched, adopted daughter, Kira from Cherusti, for whose sake the outhouse had been dismantled and removed. She could only weep the natural, commonplace tears of our time, an age that has been no stranger to suffering and bereavement. Her waved hair was pathetically disordered, her eyes bloodshot. Despite the cold, she was unaware that her headscarf had slipped off, and when she put on her overcoat, her arm could not find the sleeve. She walked numbly away from the coffin of her foster-mother in one cottage to her brother’s coffin in another; they now feared for her reason, as her husband was certain to be sent for trial. Her husband, it seemed, was doubly guilty: not only had he been responsible for moving the timber, but being an engine driver by profession and therefore thoroughly versed in the regulations for ungated level crossings, he should have first gone to Talnovo Station to warn them about the tractor. That night the lives of a thousand people on board the Urals Express, sleeping peacefully in their berths by the light of shaded lamps, had been nearly destroyed. And all because of a few people’s greed—the urge to grab a plot of land, the refusal to make two journeys by tractor; because of the outhouse, on which a curse had lain since Ilia had stretched out his covetous hands to seize it.

The tractor driver had already passed beyond the reach of earthly justice. But the railway management was also guilty for leaving a busy level crossing unguarded and for allowing two coupled engines to travel without lights. This was why they had at first made such strenuous efforts to prove that the party had been drinking, and were now doing their best to mislead the court. The track and the rail bed were so badly damaged that no trains ran for the three days that the coffins lay in the village; traffic was diverted onto a loop line. Throughout Friday, Sat-

urday, and Sunday—from the end of the police investigation until the funeral—the track was under repair day and night. To keep out the freezing cold and to provide light in the dark, the repair gangs lit bonfires with the free fuel provided by the planks and logs from the second sledge that were scattered all over the level crossing. The first sledge, still fully loaded, was left standing nearby on the roadside.

It was this—the tantalizing fact that one sledge was there, ready to be towed away, and that the contents of the second sledge might have been saved from burning—that really tortured the black-bearded Ilia all Friday and Saturday. Yet his daughter was on the verge of insanity, his son-in-law was to be prosecuted, in his own house lay the body of his son, and across the street lay the woman he had once loved—both of whom he had killed. Ilia stood tugging at his beard and did not stay for long when he came to pay his last respects to the departed. To judge by his furrowed brow, he was obviously deep in thought; but what he was thinking about was how to save the rest of the timber from the bonfire and from the grasping claws of Matryona's sisters.

Later, when I came to know Talnovo better, I realized that there were plenty of other people like him in the village. It is both revealing and bitterly ironic that our language itself equates “good” with “goods” and that to lose property is universally regarded as shameful and ridiculous. Ilia set off on an unceasing round of visits, to the village soviet, to the station, from one department to another. His back bent, supported on his stick, he stood in each office in turn, begging the authorities to have pity on his old age and to give him permission to recover his timber.

Somewhere, someone gave him permission, and Ilia gathered his remaining sons, sons-in-law, and nephews, and borrowed some horses from the kolkhoz.⁸² Then, by a roundabout route through three villages, he reached the far side of the damaged level crossing and carted the remains of the outhouse away to his own yard. He completed the work during the night between Saturday and Sunday.

On Sunday the funeral was held. The two coffins met in the middle of the village and the relatives quarreled over which should go first. Then they placed them side-by-side on one sledge, aunt and nephew, and hauled them through the damp chill of an overcast February day to the cemetery that lay two villages distant. The weather was blustery

82. *kolkhoz*—the collective farm.

and unpleasant; the priest and the deacon waited at the church, refusing to come out to meet the procession on the way.

Singing in chorus, the people slowly followed the procession as far as the village boundary. There they stopped and went home.

Even on Sunday morning the women were still busy at their rituals: one old woman sat mumbling psalms by the coffin; Matryona's sisters fussed around the stove, stoking up the heat with the slabs of peat that Matryona had brought in a sack from distant peat bogs. They baked some unappetizing little pies out of cheap, nasty flour.

On Sunday evening, after the funeral, we assembled for the wake. Several tables, joined together to form a single long one, now occupied the space where the coffin had stood that morning. They began by all standing around the table while an old man, the husband of one of Ilia's sisters, recited the Lord's prayer. Then a small quantity of melted honey was served to each person in a bowl, which we ate with spoons in memory of the departed. After that we ate something else, drank some vodka, and the talk grew more lively. Before eating the final dish of kisel,⁸³ we stood up and sang "In Eternal Memory."⁸⁴ They explained to me that traditionally this had to be sung before the kisel. Then more vodka, after which the talk became louder still and no longer concerned with Matryona.

Ilia's brother-in-law said boastfully: "Did you notice at the church how they said all the prayers, without leaving any out? That's because Father Mikhail noticed I was there. He knows I know the service by heart. Otherwise he'd have just gabbled off half of it, tipped 'em in, and goodbye."

At last the meal was over. Once again we stood up, and sang "She is Worthy," then repeated "In Eternal Memory" three times. By now the voices were hoarse and out of tune, the faces were drunken, and no one any longer put the slightest feeling into their "Eternal Memory."

Then most of the guests departed, leaving only the close relatives; cigarettes were produced and lit, there were jokes and laughter. The talk turned to Matryona's husband, Efim, who had been reported missing without trace. Thumping his chest, Ilia's brother-in-law explained about Efim to me and to a shoemaker who was married to one

83. *kisel*—a desert made of sweetened juice or milk and thickened with starch. Sometimes wine and fruit are added.

84. *Eternal Memory*—traditionally sung at Russian funerals.

of Matryona's sisters: "Yes, he died all right, did Efim. Otherwise, why didn't he come back? Even if I knew I'd be hung if I came home, I'd still come back."⁸⁵

The shoemaker nodded in agreement. He had been a deserter and had spent the whole war at home, hiding in his mother's cellar.

The stern, silent old woman, the one who was much older than the others, had decided to stay in the cottage for the night and was already installed on top of the stove. She gazed down in silent disapproval on the indecently loud behavior of all these youngsters of fifty and sixty.

Only the unhappy adopted daughter, who had grown up in this house, went behind the kitchen partition and wept.

Iliia did not come to Matryona's wake, because he was taking part in the memorial ceremony for his son, but during the next few days he came over to the cottage a couple of times for some ill-tempered discussions with Matryona's sisters and the shoemaker.

The argument was about who was to have the cottage—one of Matryona's sisters or the adopted daughter. It looked as if they might go to court over it, but they were fairly soon reconciled and reached a settlement, agreeing that the court would probably allot the house to neither party but would hand it over to the village soviet. So a deal was made. The goat went to one sister; the shoemaker and his wife got the cottage; and because he had "built the place with loving care," Iliia was allotted the outhouse timber plus the shed in which the goat had lived and the internal fence that divided the back yard from the kitchen garden.

Once more, overcoming his sickness and rheumatism, the insatiable old man began to perk up and look younger. Once more he summoned his remaining sons and sons-in-law. They demolished the shed and the fence and he personally removed the timber on a little sledge, helped by his young son Antoshka from class 8-G, who for once worked with a will.

Matryona's cottage was handed over before winter was out, so I moved over to one of her sisters-in-law who lived nearby. On various occasions she recalled things about Matryona and thus I learned to see the deceased in a new light.

85. *Even if I knew I'd be hung if I came home, I'd still come back*—Stalin ordered the execution or imprisonment of thousands of Russian soldiers who returned from German prisoner-of-war camps.

“Efim didn’t love her. He used to say that he liked to dress smartly, but she just wore any old thing, like a typical peasant woman. So once he realized he needn’t spend any money on her, he blew all his spare cash on drink. And once, when he and I went to town to do a job and earn some money in the winter, he found himself a fancy woman and didn’t want to go back to Matryona.”

Everything she said about Matryona was disapproving: she was dirty, she was a bad housekeeper, she wasn’t thrifty. She wouldn’t even keep a pig, because she didn’t like the idea of fattening up a beast to kill it. And she was stupid enough to work for other people without pay—though the very reason the sister-in-law had remembered Matryona was that she had been complaining that there was no longer anyone to help plow up the kitchen garden. Even though she acknowledged Matryona’s kindness and simplicity, she did so in a tone of scornful pity.

Only then, listening to the disapproving comments of her sister-in-law, did I see an image of Matryona that I had never perceived before, even while living under her roof.

It was true: every other cottage had its pig, yet she had had none. What could be easier than to fatten up a greedy pig whose sole object in life was food? Boil it a bucketful of swill three times a day, make it the center of one’s existence, then slaughter it for lard and bacon. Yet Matryona never wanted one ...

She was a poor housekeeper. In other words, she refused to strain herself to buy gadgets and possessions and then to guard them and care for them more than for her own life. She never cared for smart clothes, the garments that embellish the ugly and disguise the wicked.

Misunderstood and rejected by her husband, a stranger to her own family despite her happy, amiable temperament, comical, so foolish that she worked for others for no reward, this woman, who had buried all her six children, had stored up no earthly goods. Nothing but a dirty white goat, a lame cat, and a row of fig plants.

None of us who lived close to her perceived that she was that one righteous person without whom, as the saying goes, no city can stand. Neither can the whole world.

37. Eastern Orthodoxy in Film

In section 34.4 we encountered examples of antireligious, Soviet films. But the Russian film industry—even during the Soviet era—also, on occasion, produced works remarkably sympathetic toward Eastern Orthodoxy. Here we include two examples from 1938 and 1966 and five examples from the post-Soviet era.

37.1 *Aleksandr Nevsky* (1938)

Sergei Eisenstein, *Alexander Nevsky* (New York: BMG Classics, 1987), DVD; *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/130237475>. All efforts to contact publisher failed.

Fair Use.

As the Soviet Union grew increasingly nervous in the 1930s about Nazi Germany's expansionist aims and anti-Slavic rhetoric, Joseph Stalin commissioned the great Sergei Eisenstein to direct a film about German aggression. The result was *Aleksandr Nevsky*, a nationalistic tale about the Prince of Novgorod (ca. 1220–1263), who routed an army of Germanic, Teutonic knights in 1242.

Though artfully produced, the film is blunt propaganda. Nothing is subtle: in fact an early draft of the script called for swastikas to appear on the helmets of the Teutonic knights.



Figure 199. Video: Alexander Nevsky, 1938

In a radical reversal from his earlier films, Eisenstein portrays Eastern Christianity here in a positive light, as a funda-

mental basis for the heroic Russian people, who repulse the German aggressors whom Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241) urged to Christianize the Baltic regions.

Clip #1: The evil, Roman Catholic Teutons/Germans/Swedes (standing in for Nazi Germany) have conquered and laid waste to the Russian city of Pskov. Note the ubiquitous imagery from the Roman Church: pole-mounted crucifixes, knights' uniforms decorated with the Latin cross, eye-slits in helmets shaped like the Latin cross, rosary beads, and Western monastic attire and haircuts. A dastardly priest proclaims the superiority of the Roman Church and condemns brave Orthodox to death.

Clip #2: The German invaders celebrate the Latin liturgy, led by a scowling priest who blesses the troops. A preposterously grim monk plays an organ, a reminder that Orthodox worship does not employ instrumental music. The Latin Church and the German military appear here as one.

Clip #3: Victorious Russian troops, led by Orthodox priests, icons, and banners, return to liberated Pskov. Such a scene would have been unthinkable ten years earlier, during Stalin's persecution of the church. But now, in 1938, with Germany threatening Russia's western border, Orthodox Christianity appears as the saving heart of Orthodox resistance to German aggression.

37.2 *Andrei Rublev* (1966)

Andrei Tarkovsky, *Andrei Rublev: The Passion According to Andrei* (Criterion Collection, 1998), DVD; *Vimeo*, <http://youtu.be/miFpIjDCOdo>. All attempts to contact the publisher failed. Fair Use.



Figure 200. Video: *Andrei Rublev*, 1966

Andrei Tarkovsky, Russia's most ambitious and inventive director since Sergei Eisenstein, released his almost-entirely-fictional biography of Russia's greatest icon painter, Andrei Rublev (late 1300s to early 1400s), in 1966. Soviet cultural officials blanched at this strange, avant-garde, violent, depressing, confusing, and alarming film populated by monks, nude pagans, and Christ walking to his crucifixion through the Russian snow. Cultural officials demanded cuts before allowing the film to be screened, and then shut it down after only one showing. In 1969 the French communist party convinced the Cannes Film Festival to screen the film, where it won the International Critics Prize, infuriating Soviet officials. Leonid Brezh-

nev demanded a private screening for himself and reportedly walked out halfway through.¹

Andrei Rublev is an exceptionally cryptic work, open to multiple interpretations. It can be viewed as a meditation on art, morality, the Russian character, Christianity, humanism, and Russia's pagan past. Rublev appears in Tarkovsky's estimation as a Christian humanist, a tender if anguished monk who loves his fellow man and resists the dim views of human nature espoused by those surrounding him.

Clip #1: Kirill, a jealous colleague of Rublev, walks in monastic attire past an execution on the way to visit the great icon painter Theofanis the Greek. Inside the workshop's dark interior, he finds Theofanis napping. Both Kirill and Theofanis in this scene embody traits that Tarkovsky finds incompatible with Christian humanism, namely pettiness and misanthropy. Kirill is selfishly competitive and intent on embarrassing Rublev. Theofanis is world-weary, contemptuous of his assistants, and judgmental even when yelling to a crowd not to judge the man being executed.

Clip #2: In a dream sequence Christ drinks from a river. He looks up to see a crowd of people following him and his cross to the top of a snow-covered hill. In a voiceover, Rublev expresses his compassion and love for the Russian people, despite their moral failures. This rumination flies in the face of Theofanis the Greek's attitude. "Of course people do evil," says Rublev. "But you cannot blame them altogether." "It's sinful" to judge them.

Clip #3: Rublev agonizes over his inability to fulfill a commission to paint scenes from the Last Judgment in a cathedral. His assistant frets about his inaction. Rublev and his colleague, Danil, walk through a field. Rublev again agonizes over whether he can accept a commission to paint the Last Judgment. Danil is excited by the prospect of painting a "great devil" and sinners boiling in pitch. Rublev, however, insists that "I can't paint that: it disgusts me." Cut to the Dormition Cathedral in Vladimir. Rublev, still agonizing, remains unable to paint. His apprentice, disgusted by the lack of work, leaves.

New scene: In one of the most beautiful passages in modern film, Rublev wanders idly around the Dormition Cathedral. A voice begins

1. J. Hobermin, in liner notes to this edition of the film.

to recite the passage on “love” from First Corinthians 13. The scene again shifts suddenly to the interior of a newly-constructed palace. Rublev himself now recites from First Corinthians 13. All is bright and airy. Gone is the darkness of Theofanis the Greek’s workshop and his dour opinions of humanity. Light infuses the scene, a reminder, perhaps, of God’s light and love that Rublev seeks to portray in his own work.

Clip #4: A black-and-white shot of charred wood gives way to the first use of color in the film as the camera pans over a number of Rublev’s icons: *The Enthroned Christ*, *The Twelve Apostles*, *The Annunciation*, *The Twelve Apostles* (again), *Jesus Entering Jerusalem*, *The Birth of Christ*, *The Enthroned Christ* (again), *The Transfiguration of Jesus*, *The Resurrection of Lazarus*, *The Annunciation* (again), *The Resurrection of Lazarus* (again), *The Birth of Christ* (again), *The Trinity*, *The Archangel Michael*, *Paul the Apostle*, and *The Redeemer*. The scene then fades to four horses standing in the rain beside a river, a reminder of the living power of icons and God’s love for his creation.

37.3 *Repentance* (1988)

Tengiz Abuladze, *Repentance* (Moscow: Ruscico, 2003), DVD; *Vimeo*, <http://youtu.be/QqFK8Ewh44E>. Used by permission of Ruscico, the Russian Cinema Council.

Tengiz Abuladze, a director from the then-Soviet republic of Georgia, released *Repentance* in 1988, a year that marked the high point of *glasnost*' (openness)—Mikhail Gorbachev's campaign to lift restrictions on the press and the arts.

Repentance is an allegory. The evil protagonist, Varlaam, is a small-town mayor whose clothing suggests Benito Mussolini. Clearly, however, Varlaam is a stand-in for Joseph Stalin, and the film constitutes an indictment of Stalin's crimes and the reluctance of Soviet citizens to come to grips with those crimes.



Figure 201. Video: *Repentance*, 1988

The film begins with Varlaam's death. His corpse is discovered the next day, sitting against a tree. He is buried again, and appears yet again. The implication is simple: Although Stalin

may be dead, Stalinism is not—it continues to resurface. The mystery of the corpse that won't stay buried is solved when a local baker is identified as the grave robber; she is a brave if odd individual, alone willing to bring to light the horrors of the past in the person of Varlaam's/Stalin's corpse. She stands trial, where she recounts Varlaam's crimes as his life is shown in a series of flashbacks.

Clip #1: The scene opens in a church that now houses a nuclear plant, a none-too subtle reminder of the Soviet Union's attempt to replace religion with science. Townspeople complain to Varlaam, who, in an ostensible fit of populist compassion, promises to protect the church. This scene may suggest Stalin's restoration of the church during the Second World War. Or it may suggest nothing more than Stalin's hypocrisy—the church is demolished later in the film.

Clip #2: A dream sequence, in which Abel Aravidze—Varlaam's son—wanders into a church to confess the emptiness of his life, a life devoid of Christian morality. An unknown priest (revealed by the end of the clip to be Varlaam) listens to Abel's confession while eating a raw fish. While Abel's confession is straightforward and poignant, the imagery of the fish is not. Abuladze may mean to suggest that Stalin is devouring the body of Christ, namely, the church. Or the scene may be an intentionally enigmatic piece of surrealism, a grotesquery intended to evoke the general corruption of church under Soviet rule.

37.4 *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)

Martin Scorsese, *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Irvington, NY: Criterion Collection, 2000). YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1Nff3OY_pM. All attempts to contact the publisher failed. Fair Use.

Martin Scorsese, one of America's greatest directors, optioned Kazantzakis's novel in the late 1970s. Paul Schrader, who wrote screenplays for Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull* before doing the same for *Last Temptation*, found the novel "a little over-extended" and "over-heated" but also deeply moving.

When asked by a studio executive why he wanted to shoot the film, Scorsese responded that he wanted to know Jesus better.²



Figure 202. Video: *The Last Temptation of Christ*, 1988

Clip #1: The last fifteen minutes of the film, which open with Christ hanging from the cross, his death imminent. (Note: The silence that begins forty seconds into this clip is original to the film and intentional.)

2. Commentary track from Criterion Collection DVD; *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/131234863>.

The viewer will notice numerous differences between the novel and the film. The most noticeable is the “guardian angel” (later revealed to be Satan), who in the film takes the form of a young girl rather than the “negro” of the novel. “For whatever reason, political or personal,” reports Schrader, Scorsese was uncomfortable with this depiction and settled instead on Satan as a “sweet” girl. Scorsese toyed with the idea of Satan revealed as an old man; he also experimented with a skull-like figure: the result, according to Schrader, looked more like “a death Muppet” than a sinister being. In the end Scorsese settled on a burst of flame.³

Postlude. The English pop star Peter Gabriel worked with musicians from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia to produce the film’s music. The soundtrack, “Passion,” won a Grammy in 1990 for Best New Age Album. We include a portion of “It Is Accomplished,” which plays over the death scene and the final credits.

3. Ibid.

37.5 *Island* (2006)

Pavel Lounguine, *Island* (Prince Frederick, MD: Recorded Books, 2007), DVD; *YouTube*, http://youtu.be/m_VWSMR_xFk. All attempts to contact publisher failed. Fair Use.

In November 2006, the local diocese of Voronezh nearly filled the local cinema with clergy, seminary students, and their relatives to watch a newly released film. The day before, the metropolitan of Voronezh ordered all forty Orthodox churches in the city to post advertisements for the premiere next to the order of worship.⁴

The film, *Island*, went on to win five Nika awards (the Russian equivalent of the Oscar), including awards for best film, director, actor, supporting actor, and cinematography.

The cinematography is indeed beautiful, filled with haunting images of the Russian north. Petr Mamonov's performance as the monk, Father Anatoly, is brilliant.



Figure 203. Video: *Island*, 2006

The Orthodox themes tackled here—repentance, asceticism, holy foolishness, the arduous struggle to achieve salvation—easily explain the Voronezh diocese's enthusiastic support.

4. "Ostrov' Lungina reklamirovali v khramov" *NTV* (16 November 2006), <http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/97895>.

One reviewer suggested that such themes bring “us back to the Soviet era with its imposed asceticism and guilt-ridden consciousness”⁵—an argument perhaps too clever by half. No mainstream Russian movie since the advent of film exhibits a stronger Orthodox consciousness.

The film opens during the Second World War or “Great Patriotic War.” A German destroyer seizes a Russian coal barge manned by a two-person crew. After discovering Russian sailors hiding under a pile of coal, a sadistic Nazi officer offers one a choice between shooting his comrade or being shot himself. The sailor hesitates, shoots, and watches his comrade fall overboard into the sea.

The film cuts to the 1970s, and we discover that the guilt-ridden sailor has become “Father Anatoly,” a monk on a remote island.

Clip #1: A day in the life of Father Anatoly, who spends most of his time shoveling coal, delivering it to the monastery’s furnace, and praying. Here is a modern ascetic, with two all-consuming priorities: work and prayer.

Clip #2: We discover that Father Anatoly, like famous ascetics before him, has developed a reputation as a *starets* or holy man, to whom people travel long distances for advice and healing. In this clip a woman visits to complain that her dead husband visits her in her sleep. Anatoly’s response reveals him to be—in addition to an ascetic and a *starets*—a holy fool. What he means to accomplish by his subsequent theatrics is unclear, leaving us and the woman beset by the puzzlement holy fools leave in their wake.

Clip #3: A second set of visitors, a woman and her son whose broken hip is rotting away. This time Father Anatoly assumes the role of a compassionate (although still somewhat crotchety) *starets*.

Clip #4: The abbot, whose residence has burned to the ground, decides to move in with Father Anatoly, and he arrives at Anatoly’s coal shed carrying an elaborate blanket. Although relations between the

5. Mark Lipovetsky, “The Importance of Being Pious: Pavel Lungin’s *The Island*,” *KinoKultura*, no. 15 (2007), <http://www.kinokultura.com/2007/15r-island.shtml>.

abbot and Anatoly appear promising at first, Anatoly soon adopts the persona of a holy fool, this time teaching an obvious lesson.

37.6 *Tsar* (2009)

Pavel Lungin, *Tsar* (Moscow: Profit-Sinema, 2009), DVD. Subtitles revised by Bryn Geffert and Andrey Kvasyuk; *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZIAv-TTiPg>. All attempts to reach the publisher failed. Fair Use.

Tsar Ivan IV (1530–1584), better known as Ivan the Terrible, inspired a number of Russian films, including a tragedy directed by Sergei Eisenstein (*Ivan Grozny*, 1944), and a popular comedy, *Ivan Vasil'evich meniaet professiiu* (*Ivan Vasil'evich Changes His Occupation*, sometimes translated as *Ivan Vasilevich: Back to the Future*, 1973), in which a time machine inadvertently transports the brutal ruler to Soviet Russia in 1973.



Figure 204. Video: *Tsar*, 2009

Tsar falls squarely in the category of tragedy. Directed by Pavel Lungin—who also directed *Island*—and starring Petr Mamonov—who played Father Anatoly in *Island*—*Tsar* portrays Ivan as a tortured, sadistic, and perversely religious figure.

Some history.

In December 1564, the year after Metropolitan Makary of Moscow died, Ivan and his family abandoned the city. In January

1565 Ivan sent two letters to Moscow. The first, addressed to the aristocracy and members of the church, accused them of siding with Ivan's enemies. The second announced his intention to abdicate. Two days later, citing popular pressure, Ivan agreed to rescind his abdication, but under two conditions. First, he would punish opponents and "traitors" as he wished, and his punishments could not be appealed. Second, Ivan would divide Russia into two parts. The first would retain the traditional governmental institutions. A special court, created by Ivan, would govern the second part—the *oprichnina*—in the northeast. A special police force composed of *oprichniki*—roving bands in black cowls with dogs' heads on their saddle bows—instituted a reign of terror and killed thousands (estimates range from two thousand to fifteen thousand) of Ivan's enemies, both real and imagined.

Whatever his motives, Ivan was wildly unstable. He anguished over his own spiritual fate and his conviction that the end times were upon Russia, vacillating between periods of abject repentance and murderous reprisals. He was, simultaneously, a defender of the metropolitanate, jealous of the metropolitan's prerogatives, and furious when the metropolitan voiced opinions contrary to his own. Ivan banished Metropolitan German in 1566 following German's demands that Ivan abolish the *oprichnina*. He appointed in German's place Metropolitan Filipp, the abbot of the famous Solovki Monastery in the White Sea. Although Filipp, too, opposed the *oprichnina*, he accepted the appointment and promised not to criticize the *oprichnina*. For a year Ivan refrained from terror, but then in 1567, convinced that some of his nobles were in cahoots with the king of Poland, he lashed out. Filipp begged Ivan to back off, to no effect. Frustrated and worried about the country, Filipp in March of 1568 publicly denounced Ivan and refused to administer his customary blessing upon the tsar. That November, members of the tsar's entourage entered the Kremlin cathedral where Filipp was celebrating the Divine Liturgy, announced that he was no longer metropolitan, stripped off his robes, and hauled him off to a monastery. In December 1569 one of Ivan's minion's strangled Filipp in captivity.

Lungin's *Tsar* is many things: a psychological study of madness; a thinly veiled denunciation of Stalin's reign in which Ivan stands in for Stalin; and a study of tensions between the claims, prerogatives, and obligations of tsar and patriarch. *Tsar*

makes no claims to offer factual history. But it does explore the tricky question of who stands ultimately before God as responsible for the health of Russia and the souls of Russia's people. In Lungin's film Ivan takes seriously his responsibility before God to preserve his state, and this commitment—deformed by his mental illness and ruthlessness—leads to tragedy for his metropolitan and his church.

Clip #1: Ivan, beset by paranoia and unsure of his standing in God's eyes, prays before his icons. Finished, he strides into the palace to be dressed and transformed by his courtiers from penitent to autocrat, accumulating one by one the symbols of his autocratic and spiritual power. He emerges on the palace balcony to address a crowd gathered in the courtyard, fretting over the banishment of their patriarch. Perversely, Ivan blames the crowd for "irritating" the patriarch and "betraying" the faith. A fool of the court, speaking over Ivan's shoulder, tells Ivan that his subjects must grovel. (Note the reversal of the holy fool's role here—rather than speaking truth to power, this fool, by no means holy, encourages Ivan's baser instincts and berates the supplicants). Ivan then suddenly becomes a supplicant himself. Begging for the return of the "Father" metropolitan he dismissed, Ivan leads the crowd from a rug dragged through the snow in a mad march.

To his astonishment, Ivan and his crowd of supplicants run into Filipp. (Neither this parade nor the meeting have any basis in fact.) Ivan assumes that this is a "sign" and that God himself sent Filipp to become Moscow's metropolitan.

Clip #2: Filipp's installation as patriarch. Now Filipp, much like Ivan in the previous scene, receives the vestments of his office. Filipp and Ivan explicitly recognize each other's roles, their importance to the realm, and their paternalistic concern for the populace, with a chaotic distribution of coins to the crowd.

Clip #3: Filipp gently upbraids Ivan for his actions. Ivan responds by emphasizing the need of autocratic power and judgment, a belief that stems from his distrust of his own people. Shocked, Filipp insists that a ruler must love those he governs.

Clip #4: Here Lungin conflates two events that occurred eight months apart: Filipp's refusal to bless Ivan (clad in the black cowl of the *oprichniki*) in the Cathedral of the Dormition, and Filipp's demotion

and arrest. Again, note the role of the evil rather than holy fool in this scene, who dons the metropolitan's hat and quotes scripture.

37.7 *Burned by the Sun 2* (2010)

Nikita Mikhalkov, *Burnt by the Sun 2: Predstoyanie* (Moscow: Russian Cinema Council), 2010, DVD; *YouTube*, <http://youtu.be/LVk0vmD1yOA>. . Used by permission of Studiia Trite.



Figure 205. Video: *Burned by the Sun 2*, 2010

A sequel to *Burned by the Sun*—a film that movingly denounced Stalin’s purges and received both the grand prize at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival and an Academy Award for best foreign-language film—*Burned by the Sun 2* was, in contrast, largely panned by critics. (A reviewer in *Variety* called the film a “bloated, tacky war epic”; audiences “won’t have to be experts on Soviet history to see this is jingoistic, proselytizing, badly acted twaddle.”)⁶ The Russian press showed little more kindness. Full of historical inaccuracies, with a plodding pace and cringe-worthy performances, it bombed at the box office. We include here a glimpse of the jingoism and proselytizing (a mix-

6. Leslie Felperin, “Review: *Burnt by the Sun 2: Exodus*,” *Variety* (22 May 2010), <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117942846.html?categoryid=31&cs=1>.

ture of nationalism and Orthodox religiosity) that bothered some critics.

Clip #1: A Russian hospital ship transports wounded soldiers. A squadron of Nazi fighter planes buzzes the ship as a “training exercise,” while one of the Nazi aviators attempts to defecate from his plane onto the passengers below. Incensed, a wounded Russian soldier fires a flare gun at the plane, killing the aviator. The Nazi pilots respond by bombing the ship with live ordnance. The ship sinks and most of the passengers either die from their wounds or drown; only an Orthodox priest and a female medical volunteer survive by clinging to a mine.

The priest asks if the woman is baptized. No, she responds: she is a Pioneer, a member of the atheistic, communist youth league. He offers repeatedly to baptize her. A German plane reappears and fires at the two as the priest quotes passages from the Psalms; the plane crashes, as if from divine retribution. The priest then conducts a service of baptism in the middle of the ocean, hangs his cross around the woman’s neck, instructs her on how to pray, blesses her, and dies.

38. Women's Ordination

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).



Figure 206. Pilgrim at the Kiev Caves Monastery

38.1 Behr-Sigel on Women's Ordination (2000)

Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, "The Ordination of Women: Also a Question for the Orthodox Churches," in *The Ordination of Women in the Orthodox Church* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2000), 11–48. Used by permission of the World Council of Churches.

Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, who taught at the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris, attempts to explain the political challenges facing advocates seeking to ordain women in the Eastern Orthodox Church.



Figure 207. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, n.d.

The question of the ordination of women to the priesthood (or presbyterate), and, more widely, to a public sacramental ministry, is the tip of an iceberg. It is one of the great symbolic challenges posed by the modern Western world to the historic churches. How are the Orthodox churches reacting to it? What has been their attitude and the attitude of their theologians? Is it possible to imagine that it could be changed?

Unlike most of the churches arising directly or indirectly from the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Orthodox churches, like the

Roman Catholic Church, do not ordain women. That common position is soberly and correctly acknowledged by the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. Orthodox bishops and theologians have repeatedly issued statements amounting to a condemnation of the ordination of women and likening it to downright heresy. Thus, at the San Antonio world mission conference organized by the World Council of Churches in 1989, the Coptic¹ Bishop Markos, the spokesman of the Orthodox delegation, stated, "The ordination of women to the priesthood is not, for us, subject to debate, since it is contrary to the christology, ecclesiology, tradition and practice of the early church."

Such hardline statements do not, however, represent the opinion of Orthodox theologians as a whole. Moreover, although made with great conviction, they do not carry for the faithful of the Orthodox Church an authority comparable to the authority of statements by the Holy See for the Roman Catholic Church, even though here too fine distinctions must be drawn. [...]

The World Council [of Churches] was the setting in which the Orthodox churches in the course of the 1960s came up against the issue of the ordination of women. It had been simmering away within the World Council since its foundation after the Second World War, but in the 1970s and 1980s the issue surfaced in it as a burning question, driven on by the feminist movement which was then reaching its peak in Western Europe and North America.

As a body, Orthodox theologians were ill prepared to take up the challenge. The immense cultural change, of which Western feminism is one aspect, had hardly or only patchily affected the countries of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean basin, the historic homelands of the oldest and largest Orthodox churches. For that reason—and for other more profound reasons to which I shall return, such as a particular spiritual climate—these churches had not experienced within them the upsurge of militant feminist movements demanding the ordination of women. [...]

For the Orthodox in Eastern Europe the ordination of women to the priesthood remains an impossible hypothesis. [...]

In our churches there is no organized movement campaigning for women's ordination. Whether that is a lack or a blessing, it can be explained partly by cultural factors, and partly by the unfavorable politi-

1. *Coptic*—Egyptian.

cal conditions in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and the Middle East. But even in that country of women's liberation, the United States, where Orthodox schools of theology have mainly admitted women, the desire of women for ordination, where it exists—and it does exist here and there—never takes organized form by setting up pressure groups. It is said that the reason for this—I think correctly—is that the church is viewed by Orthodox not as a pyramid of authorities, but as a “mystery of communion.” [...] The awareness of the church as being essentially communion does not, however, rule out, for a certain number of Orthodox women, critical reflection on their situation in the historic institution of the church, a desire for change and a search for new ways. They express their desire that women, “whose services the church uses but whom it does not ordain” [...] should “also be present in the decision-making organs of the church.” [...]

As regards the argument from tradition, which is often adduced against women's ordination, some of us Orthodox theologians think with Bishop Kallistos Ware² that it needs to be handled with discernment. [Ware has written,] “Loyalty to tradition must not become simply another form of fundamentalism. Tradition is dynamic, not static and inert.” Tradition is also continuity, and in the words of the great theologian Vladimir Losskii,³ it is also “the critical spirit of the church” calling us “to discern between the transitory and the essential” in the life and language of the historic church. “The true traditionalist is not the integrist or the reactionary,” and tradition is not an automatic handing on of a dead record. According to Christ's promise, faithfully held by the Orthodox Church, it is the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth,” who will guide his disciples into all truth (John 16:13)—not to a truth other than Christ's, but into the mystery of Christ in its unfathomable depth, endlessly to be discovered and explored. In his admirable introduction to *Orthodox Spirituality*, the Monk of the Eastern church, the literary pseudonym of the great contemporary Orthodox

2. *Bishop Kallistos Ware*—(1934–), an Eastern Orthodox bishop, English by birth, who oversees Orthodox churches in England on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Bishop Ware has written widely on Eastern Orthodoxy for English audiences; he has, arguably, done more than any other writer to explain Eastern Orthodoxy to Westerners.

3. *Vladimir Losskii*—(1903–1958), an Orthodox theologian who settled in Paris after being exiled from Russia in 1922. Losskii wrote in French, which accounts for the accessibility of his writings for Western theologians.

spiritual leader Archimandrite Lev Gillet,⁴ compares the tradition of the church to a great river, where there are “dynamic streams, rising one after another; they diverge, cross one another, meet and continue down to the present time . . . but their homogeneity has been secured by a common Christian faith.” Could this core Christian faith make it possible for the church, when circumstances permit, or indeed demand, to ordain women to a specific sacramental pastoral ministry within the universal priesthood of all the baptized? The thesis put forward in my book, whereby an affirmative Orthodox response is conceivable, seems to me to be corroborated by the academic research of an American Orthodox woman theologian, a specialist in patristics, which she teaches at the University of [California,] Berkeley. Nonna Verna Harrison is in favor of restoring the diaconate⁵ of women, but is against women’s ordination for reasons of liturgical symbolism. However, she does demonstrate brilliantly that an absolute sexual differentiation between men and women (going as far as projecting it onto God), as used as an argument against admitting women to the priesthood, contradicts the anthropology, christology, soteriology⁶ and Trinitarian theology of the fathers, in particular the Cappadocian fathers and their successor, Maximus the Confessor.

According to the fathers’ doctrine of humankind—a doctrine all of a piece with their doctrine of Christ and their doctrine of God—humankind is one in the diversity of persons. Sexual difference is not denied, but it is relativized, for in relation to the present age its destiny is to be transcended in the new humanity in Christ by the Holy Spirit, and it comes second, is secondary, to the unity of men and women in their nature, destiny and vocation. As Gregory of Nazianzus states, “One same creator for men and women, for both the same clay, the same image, the same faith, the same death, the same resurrection.” And Basil the Great in his *Treatise on Baptism* mentions “the beauty of

4. *Archimandrite Lev Gillet*—(1893-1980), a French convert from Roman Catholicism to Eastern Orthodoxy. Gillet served as a priest in the first French speaking parish, Sainte Geneviève de Paris. He later moved to London and wrote a number of popular works on Orthodox themes.

5. *diaconate*—an order of deacons or spiritual elders. In the Eastern Orthodox Church deacons assist in administering the Eucharist, censuring the icons and the congregation, calling the congregation to prayer, and reading portions of the liturgy. Deacons are not themselves allowed to administer any of the seven sacraments.

6. *soteriology*—the study of salvation.

Christ, the prototype, who shines in those made in his image who are called to be baptized, whether men or women, transfiguring them.” We are perhaps more aware today than were the fathers of the spiritual richness represented by the sexual difference that is an integral part of personhood. [Nonna] Verna Harrison sees here a possible area for further research. However, this more positive appreciation of human sexuality cannot justify a dichotomy contrasting male human beings linked to Christ, and thus called to represent him, over [and] against women, linked with the Holy Spirit, and for that reason paradoxically excluded from representing, icon-like, him who is par excellence the Anointed One (which is the meaning of the word “Christ”), anointed by the Spirit, an anointing in which all Christians, male and female, are called to participate.

The fathers, according to [Nonna] Verna Harrison, did not insist on Christ’s maleness. The Son of God was made man, *anthropos*, i.e., human, in order to save the whole of humanity. That understanding of salvation characterizes the fathers’ doctrines of Christ and of humankind. She writes,

Since Christ saves what he assumes and unites us to the Godhead, his nature, which he shares with women just as much as with men, must be regarded as more fundamental to his incarnate state than his maleness ... Women, created in the image of God, are fully human and thus capable of sharing in the divine life and action in union with Christ.

In this perspective, the idea of radically different roles for men and women in the church, of a hierarchical structure subordinating women to men “according to the order of creation,” implying that they are not qualified to be priests, who have responsibility for spiritual guidance; and also the modern variation of that idea in the form of speculation on a specific link between Christ and male human beings and women and the Holy Spirit—all these ideas appear as totally foreign to the thinking of the fathers, to their doctrine of God and of humankind and to their apophatic theology, which forbids any projection of human sexuality onto God.

For those who, like [Nonna] Verna Harrison, hesitate to use the argument of the authority of an incomprehensible tradition and for whom the argument of a radical difference between the sexes is incompatible with the fathers’ theological doctrine of humankind, there remains the argument of liturgical symbolism as the sole valid ground for justifying the priest’s maleness. As celebrant, in particular as cele-

brant of the mystery of the Eucharist, the priest, according to the formulation attributed to St. Theodore the Studite, is an icon of Christ, which requires him to be of the male sex. However, this argument, too, raises various problems in relation to the Orthodox theology of the priestly ministry and to the christology on which it is based. It can, in fact, be interpreted in different ways.

According to an initial interpretation quite common among Orthodox, the argument that the priest is an icon is very close to that of “natural likeness” in the declaration *Inter Insigniores* of the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, published in 1976 under the pontificate of Pope Paul VI. The priest, in his liturgical function and in his sacramental ministry, acts *in persona Christi*, and “his natural likeness” to the historic Christ, including his maleness, is an indispensable condition of ordination. In a less precise form, not so systematically developed, that seems to be also the sense of the argument in the mind of many Orthodox that the priest is an icon. But the stress here placed on the maleness of Christ detracts from his humanness, which saves the whole of humankind, and thus stands in contradiction—as we have seen and as the research of [Nonna] Verna Harrison and others has shown—to the fathers’ christology and soteriology. Moreover, the way in which the argument conceives of the representation of Christ by the priest does present a problem from the Orthodox point of view, according to John Erickson, a professor at the St. Vladimir Seminary, at Crestwood, New York. It ignores

the element of epiclesis,⁷ which is absolutely crucial for an Orthodox understanding of the church and its sacramental ministry ... It suggests that Christ could be institutionally represented independently of the church which is formed by the Holy Spirit into one body and filled with his gifts.

The priest, according to the Orthodox understanding—which is today shared by many Roman Catholic theologians—is not seen as possessing an independent power enabling him to perform certain sacramental acts, in particular transforming bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. He is a priest within, and not above or independently of, the gathering of the faithful. He is the spokesperson of the church, which is made up of women as well as men. It is on behalf of the *ecclesia*⁸ that, according to the words of the Byzantine epiclesis,

7. *epiclesis*—the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

8. *ecclesia*—church.

he prays to the Father to send his “Spirit on us and on the gifts we offer.” Elders, *presbyteroi*,⁹ or priests are the visible instruments of the invisible priestly grace entrusted to the whole church, lay persons and priests. “They [priests] have a special mission in the church to express and exercise the priesthood of all.” Moreover, the church is often represented by a female figure: in the art of the catacombs, and the Virgin of the Sign, carrying Christ in her bosom. Mary, the Mother of God, represents in her person this priesthood of the church in communion with Christ, who, as the Letter to Hebrews powerfully declares, is the one High Priest.

It is true that, according to “multidimensional” liturgical symbolism (the word is [Nonna] Verna Harrison’s), the priest presiding over the assembly is also an “icon of Christ.” But, on the one hand, an icon is not a lifelike portrait; nor, on the other hand, is the priest an icon in the literal, technical sense of the term, which rules out any three-dimensional representation. It is as he repeats the words spoken by Christ at the last supper, as he repeats his gestures, that the priest points to the invisible, spiritual presence—in and by the Holy Spirit—of the one High Priest, Christ, to whom (in the words of St. John Chrysostom, quoted by Bishop Kallistos Ware) “he lends his tongue and supplies his hand.” But a baptized Christian woman, who has received chrismation¹⁰ and Communion, is made Christ-like, according to the profound meaning of the Orthodox rites of Christian initiation, by her communion with him who is the Anointed One, Christ, the one anointed as none other by the Holy Spirit. Why could not these hands and this tongue be hers? All Christians, male and female, are called to participate in this anointing according to grace. In fact, nothing in its faith, no theological reason, seems to me to prevent the church—if it consider it of use—from ordaining, i.e., blessing, a female Christian for the exercise of a ministry that is an expression of the universal priesthood of all the faithful, while at the same time pointing to him who is its one divine source. To that must be added the further consideration that the Eucharist is not simply a memorial. It is also an anticipation of the messianic banquet of the coming kingdom. The Christ who is present is the risen Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father, i.e., who

9. *presbyteroi*—presbyters.

10. *chrismation*—the anointing of a believer with “chrism” (holy oil) after baptism.

has returned to the divine realm, where the categories *male/female*, if not done away with, are at least transcended and transfigured.

It will be objected that the maleness of the priest is important not for itself as a psychological or biological reality, but because of its symbolic meaning. The bishop/presbyter's maleness points, it could be argued, to Christ as the bride-groom of the church, the absolute giver from whom she receives everything. But such a symbolic interpretation of maleness arises out of a culture with a now outmoded understanding of the respective roles of men and women in the process of procreation. [...]

It is in his role as head and pastor of his community that the presbyter/bishop presides over the Eucharist. So, is every woman, by reason of her sex, to be declared in advance incapable of receiving this charism¹¹ of pastoral guidance? Such an affirmation would arise out of a form of discrimination foreign to the spirit of Christ and, as [Nonna] Verna Harrison emphasizes, the fathers' theological doctrine of humankind. Great spirits in the ancient church moreover recognized that the hierarchy of spiritual gifts has nothing to do with one's sex.

The Apostle Paul reckoned women such as Phoebe,¹² Priscilla,¹³ Junias¹⁴ and others mentioned in his letters as among his closest co-workers in the apostolate. Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa described their sister Macrina as their *didaskalos*, or teacher. She played, they said, the role of both "father and mother" to her younger brothers. The cultural context of the time was hardly conducive to an institutional expression of that acknowledged spiritual equality. Today our context is favorable to it, at least, in Western culture, to which Orthodoxy must not remain alien, as Metropolitan John Zizioulas¹⁵ has reminded us. The mission of "Western Orthodoxy," he says, is to "relate tradition to the problems of modern Western people, which are in-

11. *charism*—grace from God necessary to perform a task in the church.

12. *Phoebe*—according to Romans 16:1, Phoebe was a deacon of the assembly of Christians at Cenchrae near Corinth. The Apostle Paul entrusted her to deliver his Epistle (the book of Romans) to the church in Rome.

13. *Priscilla*—a Christian missionary referenced in First Corinthians, 2 Timothy, Acts, and Romans. She worked and traveled with the Apostle Paul.

14. *Junia*—a Christian whom the Apostle Paul refers to as a "relative" who was "in prison with me" and "prominent among the apostles." See Romans 16:7.

15. *John Zizioulas*—theologian and priest who spent much of his academic career in Scotland and England.

creasingly the problems of humankind worldwide.” Among these problems of modern Western people, one of the most important is to build a true partnership, a true reciprocity between men and women, without their losing their respective identities.

• Conclusions •

In the context of immense and often chaotic cultural change, the question of women’s ordination to a public sacramental ministry is today being asked of the Orthodox churches, and this, for several of them, the numerically largest, following a period of stagnation. They are entitled to their desire to respond to it out of their own resources, exercising discernment between what is essential in the tradition of the church and its historic and cultural aspects. Taking their inspiration from the example of the church fathers, who confronted the challenges of the Greco-Roman culture of their day, they should respond to the challenges of the contemporary world as they were urged to as early as the nineteenth century by that great Russian Orthodox theologian and unrecognized prophet Alexander Bukharev.¹⁶ This situation demands both prudence and courage from the pastors of the church. We must pray for them that they may be granted those gifts.

Orthodox theological thinking on the possibility of women’s ordination to the priesthood is still in its early stages. But, as I have attempted to show, it is progressively being clarified in dialogue between Orthodox themselves and in dialogue with representatives and theologians from other churches. However, for the moment, this dialogue is confined to a minority mostly made up of theologians, men and women, with a Western background. There is a great gulf between this limited group and the mass of Orthodox people, particularly in Eastern Europe. As in the early days of the church, those who feel that they are free in Christ and freed by Christ from certain stereotypes and taboos must avoid scandalizing the “weak,” who in other areas may be the spiritually “strong.” But we must never give way to threats from obscurantist¹⁷ fundamentalists, who are often Westerners who are recent converts to the Orthodox Church.

It must, however, be admitted that in its present state any decision to ordain women to the priesthood would almost inevitably give rise to

16. *Alexander Bukharev*—(1824-1871), a biblical theologian who criticized the Russian Orthodox church for its passivity and isolation.

17. *obscurantist*—opposed to the spread of knowledge.

schism in the Orthodox Church. In view of this risk, we must be patiently impatient. The greatest gift of the Spirit, to which we are all called to aspire, is the gift of agape, the love that “is patient” and “always hopes” (First Corinthians 13:4 and 13:7).

The door does seem ajar in the Orthodox churches for an intelligent, creative restoration of the diaconate of women, accompanied by a comprehensive rethinking of this ministry. Perhaps we should push that door open, while at the same time still thinking together, in a free and conciliar way, on the question being asked by the churches that do ordain women to the ministry. The attitude of the Orthodox churches to them should be modest, friendly and expectant. [...] The desire for the unity of the Lord's followers in obedience to him should encourage the Orthodox churches—and other traditional churches—to face the question of women's ordination to a full ministry within the church. It is a difficult problem, to be approached in the light of the mystery of God, who became human so that humankind as a whole, in its communion with the divine/human person by the Spirit, should be saved, sanctified and transfigured.

While awaiting that agreement to be achieved through ecumenical dialogue, perhaps it would be possible for the Orthodox churches to admit the legitimate existence of different disciplines in this area of ordination within the universal church. That would be to acknowledge (in the words of Father Jean-Marie Roger Tillard)¹⁸ a church *kat'holon*, a “communion of communions,” with differing historical and cultural traditions.

18. *Father Jean-Marie Roger Tillard*—a Roman Catholic priest devoted to the ecumenical cause.

39. Orthodoxy and Ecumenism

The introduction to this section can be found in the companion volume, Bryn Geffert and Theofanis G. Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016).

39.1 Georgy Florovsky on Limits of the Church (1933)

Georges Florovsky, "The Limits of the Church," *The Church Quarterly Review* no. 117 (1933): 117–131. Public domain.

Georgy (Georges) Florovsky, best known for advocating renewed attention to the writings of the church fathers, established himself as the leading Orthodox theologian in the West after his family fled Russia in 1920. Widely respected by theologians of all stripes throughout Europe and North America, Florovsky held teaching appointments at, among other institutions, the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris, St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary in New York, Union Theological Seminary, the University of Washington, Princeton, and Harvard.

Florovsky dedicated thousands of hours to the ecumenical cause, a cause that sometimes drove him batty. He frequently grouched that the ecumenical movement was driven by ill-informed idealists who lacked either the will to acknowledge real differences or the theological talent to do something about them. In the ecumenical movement, he complained, "there is still a very dangerous tendency to underestimate and even disregard 'intellectual differences.' Theological professors are therefore often [wrongly] disqualified as a band of people who create unnecessary complications in the whole business." Florovsky argued that the blunt acknowledgment and hard study of centuries-old strife and disagreement offered the only way forward. "[S]entimentalism over Christ is bewitchment and impotent self-deception."

In this essay Florovsky explains the difficulty of defining "the church," and he tackles the impolitic question of where non-Orthodox Christians reside in relation to the church. This is not easy reading, but it is a serious attempt to grapple with that most difficult of questions.



Figure 208. Fr. George Florovsky, World Council of Churches assembly, 1954

It is very difficult to give an exact and firm definition of a “sect” or “schism” (I distinguish the “theological definition” from the simple “canonical description”),¹ since a *sect* in the church is always something contradictory and unnatural, a paradox and an enigma. For the church *is unity* and the whole of her being is in this unity and union, of Christ and in Christ. “For in one spirit were we all baptized into one body” (First Corinthians 12:13), and the prototype of this unity is the consubstantial Trinity. The measure of this unity is *catholicity* or *communality* (*sobornost*), when the impenetrability of personal consciousness is softened and even removed in complete unity of thought and soul and the multitude of them that believe are of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32). A sect, on the other hand, is separation, solitariness, the loss and denial of communality. The sectarian spirit is the direct opposite of the church spirit.

The question of the nature and meaning of divisions and sects in the church was put in all its sharpness as early as the ancient baptismal

1. *canonical description*—here Florovsky means the legal definition of “schism” according to official church laws or “canons.”

disputes of the third century. At that time St. Cyprian of Carthage² developed with fearless consistency a doctrine of a complete absence of grace in *every* sect, precisely *as* a sect. The whole meaning and the whole logical sense of his reasoning lay in the conviction that *the sacraments are established in the church*. That is to say, they are effected and can be effected *only in the church*, in communion in communality. Therefore every violation of communality and unity in itself leads immediately beyond the last barrier into some decisive *outside*. To St. Cyprian every schism was a *departure out of the church*, out of that sanctified and holy land, where alone rises the baptismal spring, the waters of salvation, *quia una est aqua in ecclesia sancta*.³ [...] Strictly speaking, in its theological premises the teaching of St. Cyprian has never been disproved. Even Augustine⁴ was not so very far from Cyprian. [...]

But the *practical* conclusions of Cyprian have not been accepted and supported by the consciousness of the church. And one asks how this was possible, if his premises have been neither disputed nor set aside. There is no need to enter into the details of the church's canonical relations with sectarians and heretics; it is an imprecise and an involved enough story. It is sufficient to state that there are occasions when, by the very form of her activity, the church gives one to understand that the sacraments of sectarians and even of heretics are valid, that the sacraments can be celebrated *outside the strict canonical limits of the church*. The church customarily receives adherents from sects and even from heresies *not by the way of baptism*, obviously meaning or supposing that they have already been actually baptized in their sects and heresies. In many cases the church receives adherents even *without chrism*⁵ and clerks sometimes also *in their existing orders*, which must all the more be understood and explained recognizing the validity or reality of the corresponding rites performed over them "outside the church." But, if

2. *Cyprian of Carthage* (200–258)—the bishop of Carthage (a city in North Africa near modern Tunis) known for his efforts to enforce strict discipline within the church.

3. *quia una est aqua in ecclesia sancta*—"because the water in the holy church is one."

4. *Augustine*—St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430), arguably the most influential of the Latin church fathers, best known for two works: his *Confession* and *The City of God*. Augustine does not typically receive a great deal of attention in Eastern Orthodox thought, and it is significant that Florovsky cites him here as an authority.

5. *without chrism*—without being anointed with oil.

sacraments are performed, it can only be by virtue of the Holy Spirit. Canonical rules establish or reveal a certain mystical paradox. In the form of her activity the church bears witness to the extension of her mystical territory even beyond the canonical threshold; the “outside world” does not begin immediately. St. Cyprian was right; the sacraments are accomplished only in the church. But this *in* he defined hastily and too narrowly. Must we not come rather to the opposite conclusion? *Where the sacraments are accomplished, there is the church.* St. Cyprian started from the silent supposition that *the canonical and charismatic limits of the church invariably coincide.*⁶ And it is this unproven identification that has not been confirmed by the communal consciousness. As a mystical organism, as the sacramental body of Christ, the church cannot be adequately described in canonical terms or categories alone. It is impossible to state or discern the true limits of the church simply by canonical signs or marks. Very often the canonical boundary determines also the charismatic boundary; what is bound on earth is bound by an indissoluble knot in Heaven. But not always.⁷ Still more often, not immediately. In her sacramental, mysterious being the church surpasses canonical measurements. For that reason a canonical cleavage does not immediately signify mystical impoverishment and desolation. All that Cyprian said about the unity of the church and the sacraments can be and must be accepted. But it is not necessary with him to draw the final boundary around the body of the church by canonical points alone.

This raises a general question and doubt. Are these canonical rules and acts subject to theological generalization? Is it possible to impute to them theological or dogmatic motives and grounds? Or do they rather represent only total discretion and forbearance? Must we not understand the canonical mode of action rather as a forbearing silence concerning gracelessness than as a recognition of the reality or validity of schismatic rites? Is it then quite prudent to cite or introduce canonical facts into a theological argument?

6. *The canonical ... invariably coincide*—that the legal (canonical) boundaries of the church define where the Holy Spirit’s charismatic power can operate.

7. *But not always*—some conservative legalists in the church would object strenuously to Florovsky’s assertion that the canonical boundary does not always determine the charismatic boundary.

This objection is connected with the theory of what is called “economy.”⁸ In general ecclesiastical usage *οικονομία* [“economy”] is a term of very many meanings. In its broadest sense “economy” embraces and signifies the whole work of salvation (Colossians 1:25; Ephesians 1:10; 3, 2, 9). The Vulgate⁹ usually translates it [as] *dispensatio*. In canonical language “economy” has not become a technical term. It is rather a descriptive word, a kind of general characteristic; *οικονομία* [economy] is opposed to *ἀκρίβεια* [precision or strictness] as a kind of relaxation of church discipline, an exemption or exception from the “strict rule” (*ius strictum*) or from the general rule. The governing motive of “economy” is precisely “philanthropy,” pastoral discretion, a pedagogical calculation—the deduction is always from working utility. “Economy” is a pedagogical rather than a canonical principle; it is the pastoral corrective of the canonical consciousness. “Economy” can be and should be employed by each individual pastor in his parish, still more by a bishop or council of bishops. For “economy” is pastorship and pastorship is “economy.” In this is the whole strength and vitality of the “economical” principle—and also its limitation. Not every question can be put and answered in the form of economy.

One must ask, therefore, whether it is possible to put the question concerning sectarians and heretics as a question only of “economy.” Certainly, in so far as it is a question of winning lost souls for catholic truth, of the way to bring them “to the reason of truth,” every course of action *must* be “canonical,” that is, pastoral, compassionate, loving. The pastor must leave the ninety and nine and seek the lost sheep. But for that reason the greater is the need for complete sincerity and directness. Not only is this unequivocal accuracy, strictness and clarity, in fact, *ἀκρίβεια*, required in the sphere of dogma; how otherwise can unity of mind be obtained? Accuracy and clarity are before all things necessary in mystical diagnosis, and, precisely for this reason, the question of the rites of sectarians and heretics must be put and decided in the form of the strictest *ἀκρίβεια*. For there is here not so much a *quaestio iuris*¹⁰ as a *quaestio facti*,¹¹ further, the question of mystical fact, of sac-

8. *economy*—a tradition in Orthodoxy that permits bishops to set aside canonical rules in order to achieve some greater good. In some ways, “economy” echoes the tradition of “dispensations” in Roman Catholicism.

9. *Vulgate*—the first translation of the Bible into Latin in the early 400s.

10. *quaestio iuris*—question of law.

ramental reality. It is not a matter of “recognition” so much as of diagnosis; it is necessary to *identify* and to *discern*.

Least of all is “economy” in this question compatible with the radical standpoint of St. Cyprian. If, beyond the canonical limits of the church, the wilderness without grace begins immediately—[and] if in general schismatics have not been baptized and still abide in the darkness before baptism—perfect clarity, strictness and insistence are still more indispensable in the acts and judgments of the church. Here no “forbearance” is appropriate or even possible; no concessions are permissible. [...]

The “economical” explanation raises even greater difficulties from the side of its general theological premises. One can scarcely ascribe to the church the power and the right, as it were, to convert the has-not-been into the has-been, to [convert] the meaningless into the valid, as Professor Diovuniotis expresses it, “in the order of economy.” [...]

Roman theology admits and acknowledges that there remains in sects a valid hierarchy and even in a certain sense is preserved the “apostolic succession,” so that under certain conditions sacraments may be accomplished and actually are accomplished among schismatics and even among heretics. The premises of this sacramental theology have already been established with sufficient definition by St. Augustine and the Orthodox theologian has every reason to take into account the theology of Augustine in his doctrinal synthesis. The first thing in Augustine to attract attention is his organic relation of the question about the validity of sacraments to the general doctrine concerning the church. The actuality of the sacraments celebrated by schismatics signifies for Augustine the continuance of their links with the church. He directly affirms that in the sacraments of sectarians *the church is active*, some she engenders *of herself*, others she *engenders outside* of her maid-servant, and schismatic baptism is valid for this very reason, that it is performed by the church. What is valid in the sects is that which is in them *from* the church, which in their hands remains as the portion and the sacred core of the church, through which they are *with* the church. *In quibusdam rebus nobiscum sunt*.¹² The unity of the church is based on a twofold bond—the “unity of the Spirit” and the “union of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). In sects and divisions the “union of peace” is

11. *quaestio facti*—question of fact.

12. *In quibusdam rebus nobiscum sunt*—“In certain things they are with us.”

broken and torn apart, but in the sacraments the “unity of the spirit” is not terminated. This is the unique paradox of sectarian existence: the sect remains united with the church in the grace of the sacraments and this becomes a condemnation once love and communal mutuality have withered. With this is connected St. Augustine’s second basic distinction, the distinction between the “validity” or “actuality,” the reality of the sacraments and their “efficacy.” The sacraments of schismatics are *valid*, that is, they genuinely *are* sacraments. But they are *not efficacious* (*non-efficacia*) by virtue of sect itself, of division. For in sects and divisions love withers, and without love salvation is impossible. [...] It is untrue to say in schismatic rites nothing generally is accomplished, for, if they must be considered only empty acts and words, deprived of grace, by the same token not only are they empty but are converted into a profanation, a sinister counterfeit. If rites of schismatics are not sacraments, they are a blasphemous caricature. In that case neither “economical” suppression of facts nor “economical” glossing of sin is possible. [...]

It is necessary to hold firmly in mind that in asserting the “validity” of the sacraments and of the hierarchy itself in the sects, St. Augustine in no way relaxed or removed the boundary dividing *sect* and *communality*. This is not so much a canonical as a spiritual boundary, *communal love in the church or separatism and alienation in the schisms*. This for Augustine was the boundary of salvation, since, indeed, grace operates outside communality but does not save. [...] For this reason, despite all the “reality” and “validity” of the schismatic hierarchy, it is impossible to speak in a strict sense of the retention of the “apostolic succession” beyond the limits of canonical communality. [...]

[...] In its substance “schism” is [not a branch of the church]. It is also the will *for* schism. It is the mysterious and even enigmatic sphere beyond the canonical limits of the church, where the sacraments still are celebrated, where hearts as often flame and burn in faith, in love, in works. It is necessary to admit this, but it is also necessary to remember that *the limit is real*, that *there is no union*. Khomiakov,¹³ it seems, was speaking of this when he said:

inasmuch as the earthly and visible church is not the fullness and completeness of the whole church that the Lord has appointed to appear at the final judgment of all creation, she acts and knows only within her own limits; and (according to the words of Paul the apos-

13. *Khomiakov*—the lay theologian Aleksei Khomiakov (1804–1860).

tle to the Corinthians, First Corinthians 5:12) does not judge the rest of mankind, and only looks upon those as excluded, that is to say, not belonging to her, who have excluded themselves. The rest of mankind, whether alien from the church, or united to her by ties that God has not willed to reveal to her, she leaves to the judgment of the great day.

In the same sense the Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow¹⁴ decided to speak of churches “not purely true.”

Mark you, I do not presume to call false any church, believing *that Jesus is the Christ*. The Christian church can only be *either purely true*, confessing the true and saving divine teaching without the false admixtures and pernicious opinions of men, *or not purely true*, mixing with the true and saving teaching of faith in Christ the false and pernicious opinions of men.

“You expect now that I should give judgment concerning the other half of present Christianity,”¹⁵ Metropolitan Filaret said in the concluding conversation,

but I just simply look upon them; in part I see how the head and Lord of the church heals the deep wounds of the old serpent in all the parts and limbs of this body, applying now gentle, now strong, remedies, even fire and iron, in order to soften hardness, to draw out poison, to clean the wounds, to separate out malignant growths, to restore spirit and life in the half-dead and numbed structures. In such wise I attest my faith that in the end the power of God patently will triumph over human weakness, good over evil, unity over division, life over death.

This is a beginning only, a general characteristic; not everything in it is clearly and fully said. But the question is truly put. There are many bonds still not broken, whereby the schisms are held together in a certain unity. Our whole attention and our whole will must be gathered together and directed to removing the stubbornness of dissension. “We seek not conquest,” says St. Gregory [of] Nazianzus, “but the return of brethren, the separation from whom is tearing us.”

14. *Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow*—(1782–1867), a notable theologian and church reformer who wrestled with the question of relations between Eastern Orthodox and other Christian churches.

15. *the other half of present Christianity*—non-Eastern-Orthodox Christianity.

39.2 Germogen Condemns Roman Church (1948)

Archbishop Hermogenes of Kazan, “Papism and the Orthodox Church,” in *Major Portions of the Proceedings of the Heads of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches Held in Moscow, July, 1948*, trans. O. F. Clarke, ed. Paul Anderson (Paris: YMCA, 1948): 19–31. All efforts to contact publisher failed.

Archbishop Germogen, who remained in Russia after the Revolution and became the archbishop of Kazan, aligned himself with the majority in the Russian church who, by necessity, swore fealty to the Soviet state. Germogen delivered the following speech at a 1948 gathering in Moscow of Orthodox leaders from Eastern Bloc countries. Orthodox clerics from other nations refused to attend, believing that the gathering—sanctioned by the Soviet government (and opening with a salute to Joseph Stalin)—could not be taken seriously.

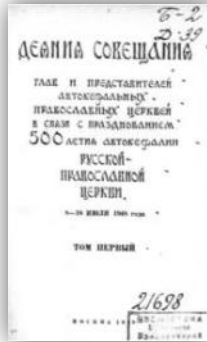


Figure 209. Record of the Moscow gathering, 1948

This document is valuable for the light it sheds on two aspects of conservative Orthodoxy: an extremely hostile and even hysterical attitude toward Roman Catholicism, and an intense, strident nationalism. Such ecclesiastical nationalism served Stalin well in his efforts to buttress public sentiment for the war effort in the early 1940s, but this document makes clear its incompatibility with ecumenical aspirations.

The Roman Catholic Church of the present time outnumbers many times over the autocephalous¹⁶ Eastern Orthodox churches. It is estimated that there are up to 338 to 350 million Roman Catholics in all. There are about 500,000 clergy, of whom more than 1,300 are bishops. [...]

[...] The Vatican has its own financial basis. The primary source of revenue is the so-called “Peter’s pence,”¹⁷ which is systematically collected in all Roman Catholic churches for the benefit of the papal see. Some financial experts estimate the yield of Peter’s pence as several hundred million lire per annum, though usually the revenue of the Vatican is concealed in the official report. The Vatican is partly an owner and partly a participant in a number of large banking institutions. [...]

[...] When one has to speak about the Roman Catholic Church, it is essential to distinguish between the faithful mass of the people and the supreme hierarchy of this church with the pope at its head. The faithful mass of the majority of ordinary people is innocent and remains uncontaminated by that principal disease, from which the pope suffers together with the College of Cardinals, and which like a pernicious infection corrodes the body of the Roman Catholic Church. This disease is called papism. Its essence consists in the doctrine that the pope is not only the head of the universal church of Christ, but to him also, so it seems, belongs secular power over all countries and their governments. [...]

In order to get a clear idea of the monstrous perversions to which papism leads, it is enough to recollect what Pope Stephen VI (896–897) did with the body of his dead predecessor, Pope Formosa. Pope Stephen hated Formosa. Because of this he decided to bring him to trial,¹⁸

16. *Autocephalous*—literally “self-headed.” An autocephalous church governs itself without oversight from another patriarch or archpriest. Widely recognized autocephalous churches include those of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Russia, Greece, Romania, Albania, Serbia, and Georgia. Claims of autocephalicity by other churches (including that of Bulgaria) are controversial.

17. *Peter’s pence*—donations by Roman Catholics remitted directly to the Vatican.

18. *he decided to bring him to trial*—Pope Stephen VI ordered that Formosa’s body be exhumed, dressed in papal vestments, and seated on a throne to face trial. The court declared Formosa to be an unfit pope and his cadaver was

though Formosa had already been in his grave more than nine months. The above-mentioned facts reveal with sufficient clearness not only the un-Christian but even immoral essence of papism. It is true that papists during many centuries have with astonishing ease wished to justify their pretensions by referring to certain parts of the holy Gospel (Matthew 16:13–19; Luke 22:32; John 16:13–17), to holy tradition and ancient church history, but at the present time, after the brilliant investigation of given places by [historians and theologians of the church], one sees that the papists have had for many centuries to defend their positions by systematic forgery. [...]

Most of all the papal pretensions are contradicted by the twenty-eighth canon of the fourth ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. This precept renewed and confirmed the decision of the second ecumenical council, which gave to the bishop of Constantinople “a primacy of honor like the Roman bishop.” Accordingly, in explaining the meaning of this decision, the Chalcedonian fathers call the prerogatives of the popes and of the Byzantine patriarchs “equal,” considering that this city—(namely Constantinople) which received the honor of being the city of the emperor and of the senate, and sharing in church matters primacy together with ancient, imperial Rome—must be exalted like the other. This definition of Chalcedon was the subject of a protest by the papal legate as far back as Chalcedon itself. Leo I¹⁹ refused to accept it as conforming with law, and his successors also argued against this decision. [...]

Papism brings untold harm to the work of the church of Christ on earth, and, generally speaking, to the building up of our salvation. First of all it has brought division into the unity of the universal church of Christ. The ambition of the Roman popes has torn away the Western church from the universal church. [...]

But it could not be otherwise, for the faith of church people was unable to accept the anti-Christian teaching about the supremacy of the popes in the church.

The violation of the principle of the *sobornyy* government²⁰ of the church transformed it from a divine-human organism into a purely

thrown into the Tiber River.

19. *Leo I*—Pope Leo I (440–461).

20. *sobornyy government*—governance by consensus; decision-making in which all parties, guided by the Holy Spirit, agree.

earthly, political organization: a monarchy with a “pope-king” at its head.

In the pursuit of its ambitious designs, the Roman curia²¹ steered the ark of the Catholic Church into an element completely foreign to it. The great father and teacher of the Western church, St. Augustine, dreamed of the church as the city of God, but it ended up a militant body with a pope-king at its head, conducting bloody wars to subjugate various peoples, in particular the Orthodox Slavs.

The Roman pope does not need Christ and his holy apostles, nor the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, but rather armies and money. Popes embarked upon various commercial enterprises and speculations for the sake of money. For example, their speculations in alum²² are well-known, as are the buying and selling of bread during times of famine. [...]

From church history we know that the lives of many popes, generally speaking, resembled pagans more than Christians. They are sober, realistic politicians, but not high priests in the biblical meaning of that exalted ecclesiastical order. [...]

With the object of exalting and strengthening papal authority, the Roman curia ventured to introduce a method incredible from the dogmatic-canonical point of view: at the Vatican Council (1870), under the pressure of the Roman curia, the dogma about the infallibility of the pope²³ was accepted.

Without exaggeration one can say that the whole Christian world gasped with astonishment when it heard of the promulgation of such a sweeping “dogma”—forgive the word!

In all fairness one must note that the honor and reputation of the rank and file of the faithful Catholic masses of the people were sus-

21. *Roman curia*—the administrative body of the Holy See.

22. *speculations in alum*—speculation in the trade of aluminum sulfate. The papal treasury assumed control of the industry in the city Tolfa after the discovery of alunite in 1461.

23. *infallibility of the pope*—the doctrine that the pope cannot err when he issues a ruling on faith or morals. Decisions are infallible only when rendered *ex cathedra*, that is, when rendered in the pope’s capacity as leader of all Christians. The notion of papal infallibility has a long history in the Roman Catholic Church, but it was formally adopted only in 1870 at the Vatican Council to which Germogen refers. This adoption prompted a furor in the Christian world and convinced a small section of the Roman Catholic Church—the “Old Catholics”—to break away from the Roman curia.

tained at the Vatican Council by the fact that very many, and indeed the most prominent and learned members of the council, protested against the declaration of the dogma of infallibility. [...]

[...] [T]he meaning of the decisions of the sixth and seventh ecumenical councils is clear: for every introduction of new dogma into the Christian faith—anathema! Consequently Pius IX,²⁴ the creator of the new dogma about the infallibility of the pope, and [Pius IX's] successors [...] are subject to expulsion as violators of the resolutions of those sacred ecumenical councils, the sixth and seventh, which safeguard that orthodox faith, which is inherited by the Orthodox universal church from the holy apostles, who according to the expression used by the ecumenical council are “the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit.” And if these popes ignore this prohibition of these ecumenical councils, so all the popes, including Pius XII²⁵ “fall under the sentence of the universal anathema.” [...]

No less instructive in this respect is the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Holy Virgin.²⁶ Pius IX proclaimed this teaching as a dogma (1854). Before this the popes had argued on different lines. Some approved this teaching; others denounced it. For example, Boniface VIII (fourteenth century) said: “The immaculate conception is an absurdity.” And if the popes themselves fell into heresy, permitting deception, and published contradictory bulls,²⁷ it is clear that they could not be infallible. [...]

The dogma of the infallibility of the pope appears in a sense to be the apogee of papism. It came as the logical conclusion of a struggle over many centuries by the popes for supremacy in the church. And as the popes also strove for secular power, this thirst for political power strengthened after the Vatican Council. [...]

During this epoch only the Eastern Orthodox Church stood like a granite rock, inaccessible to the pope's autocracy. A wonderful thing!

24. *Pius IX*—Pope Pius IX (1846–1878).

25. *Pius XII*—Pope Pius XII (1939–1958), the pope in office at the time of Germogen's writing.

26. *immaculate conception of the Holy Virgin*—a Roman Catholic doctrine (which Orthodox churches do not share) asserting that Adam's sin (i.e., original sin) did not apply to the Mother of God as it did to the rest of mankind. In other words, the Virgin Mary remained free of sin from the instant she was conceived.

27. *bulls*—letters or charters issued by a pope.

Of all the peoples of that day, including the Slavs, only those peoples who professed Orthodoxy and did not submit to spiritual “spoon-feeding” by the popes retained their political independence.

The history of Byzantium and the southern Slavs is a splendid illustration of the above-mentioned fact. Orthodoxy, especially for the Slavs, appears in the role of a national rallying-point. [...]

In the Slavic countries the preaching of Catholicism was always accompanied by violence and deceit. With the object of deceiving the mass of faithful Orthodox people, the papist always resorted and still resorts to creating Uniate churches.²⁸ In this respect a great deal of suffering was inflicted on the Russian people by the Brest “Unia”²⁹ (1596) within the boundary of the Polish-Lithuanian state.

The Orthodox population was compelled to accept Latinism, the Orthodox churches were turned into Catholic churches, the Orthodox bishops were made to resign from their sees, and catholic dioceses were organized. [...]

Papism and the existence of national churches are mutually exclusive. From this we see that the Roman curia throughout its historical existence has always participated and still participates in all political intrigues against the Slavs, and especially against Russia.

In the thirteenth century the popes endeavored with extreme insistence to persuade Russia to accept Latinism. When persuasion was ineffective the Roman popes endeavored by armed force to make the Russians renounce Orthodoxy. [...]

28. *Uniate churches*—an attempt by the Roman Catholic church to win and retain Orthodox converts in Eastern regions by allowing them to maintain the outward forms of Orthodoxy while professing allegiance to the pope and to Roman Catholic doctrine. Such members of “Uniate churches” (a name referring to union with Rome) recognize the authority of the Roman pontiff and subscribe to Roman Catholic teaching, yet conduct services in which the aesthetics and the liturgy closely mirror those of Eastern Orthodox churches. Uniate churches are especially prominent in Ukraine and in Poland, namely, in those areas alternately controlled over the centuries by Catholic Poland and Orthodox Russia. See section “Byzantine Rite Catholics” in Part III of *Essential Texts*.

29. *Brest “Unia”*—the treaty of 1596 creating Uniate churches, signed at Brest-Litovsk.

Finally, from the content of concordats,³⁰ of various papal encyclicals, of broadcast appeals, and of publications, one sees that the Vatican instigated two world wars. [...]

But the Vatican was still more active in the instigation of the Second World War. Everyone knows the part it played in the organization of the crusades against the USSR.

The link between the Vatican and Italian-German fascism is widely known. The connection between Pius XI and XII³¹ and Mussolini³² and Hitler is an indisputable historical fact. Pius XI was very generous in praise and high commendation of Mussolini, whom he publicly called “a man sent by Providence.”

On the eve of the complete and final defeat of Hitler and Hitlerism, the Vatican attempted to save them from just retribution.

And so to the faithful Catholics it is clear that the activity of the Vatican bears quite an anti-Christian character. At the present time the Vatican, in conjunction with the president of the USA, Truman, strives in every way to hinder the projects of peace of the Soviet Union in the United Nations. [...]

The Vatican is the residence of the vicar of Christ and at the same time the Vatican does not love our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no Christ in the Vatican. The Vatican loves a world with America at its head. [...]

The Vatican “by right” is considered one of the biggest monopolies in the world, the owner of fabulous wealth. [...] In its vast economic policies the Vatican collaborates on an ever-increasing scale with the big American monopolies, with which the Vatican is bound by mutual interests—especially in the effort to win new positions in Latin America. This does not deter the Vatican, and it does not hinder the numerous groups of monopolists in the USA from being interested in China and in other countries of Asia.

In its capitalist activity the Vatican is guided by the principle “Money does not smell.” Therefore it willingly collaborates with financiers and even with Protestants. One prominent representative of the

30. *concordats*—an agreement or treaty that the Roman church strikes with another state.

31. *Pius XI and XII*—Popes Pius XI (1922–1939) and Pius XII (1939–1958).

32. *Mussolini*—Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator (1922–1943) who aligned Italy with Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

“House of Morgan”³³ lately declared: “We are proud of our close collaboration with the Vatican.” This statement is all the more understandable considering that the U.S. president’s private representative to the Vatican—Taylor³⁴ (a Protestant)—is connected to the Morgan Bank. [...] According to several American diplomats, Americans do not undertake any important political acts without consulting the Vatican (and vice versa). During the war the Vatican—this “power standing above nations”—rendered valuable services exclusively to American diplomacy, which have been rewarded, not only by the new favors granted to the Catholic Church in the Western hemisphere, but also with bundles of profitable shares from big American companies.

The Orthodox Church during its whole history of almost twenty centuries never violated the commandment of Christ to love one’s neighbor and one’s fatherland. It never called for and instigated bloody international wars. The highest church hierarchy of the Orthodox Church never, for motives of love of power and self-interest, sacrificed its experience of many centuries and lent high moral authority to the political intrigue of different parties.

The Orthodox Church never betrayed the interests of its country. Not one of the existing Orthodox churches ever solicited civil power for itself, or ever implemented policy independent of its nation’s policy; it always experienced sorrow and joy, glory and humiliation, along with the peoples of its country.

The Orthodox Church can be rightly called the mother and teacher of its spiritual children because it is irreproachable and true to the precepts of Christ, and because its activity is in accord with the conscience of the people as a whole. [...]

It is true that until now the Orthodox churches lacked an organized shape. Until now we have not had a unifying center, and to some extent this fact weakened the moral authority of the Orthodox churches. But the recent attempt to “Americanize” the ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople points strongly to the necessity of coordinating the whole strength of the Orthodox autocephalous churches. [...]

It is therefore necessary for representatives of the autocephalous Orthodox churches—with their *soborny* wisdom, and with the willing

33. *House of Morgan*—the J. P. Morgan banking dynasty in the United States.

34. *Taylor*—Myron Charles Taylor, who served as U.S. emissary to the Vatican from 1939 until 1950.

cooperation of the Holy Spirit—to find ways to coordinate efforts among the autocephalous churches to struggle against papism. [...]

39.3 Florovsky on Historical Commonalities (1950)

Georges Florovsky, "The Eastern Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Movement," *Theology Today* 7, no. 1 (1950): 68–79. Public domain.

Georges Florovsky wrote the following article in 1950, after the enthusiastic hopes for the reunion of the Christian churches—so ardent during the 1920s and 1930s—gave way to more modest talk of cooperation and loose federation among Christian confessions. Here Florovsky notes the continued and seemingly intractable divisions within Christendom, yet he reiterates his hope for reunion at some point in the future. Eastern Orthodoxy's sense of the church as inherently incompatible with division emerges powerfully in this text.

This essay constitutes an ardent plea that East and West remember their "common ground" in Hellenic (Greek) antiquity, and it reflects Florovsky's consistent advocacy for a return to the work of the church fathers. He and Bulgakov differed significantly in this respect. Both were enamored of Western philosophical trends in their youth, particularly German idealism and the work of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. But Florovsky came to reject French romanticism and German idealism decisively, turning his attention squarely back to patristic literature. Bulgakov certainly admired the early church fathers, but he also remained influenced by trends in Western philosophical thought. Although he and Florovsky remained good friends throughout their lives, Florovsky sharply criticized Bulgakov for (to Florovsky's mind) Bulgakov's insufficient attention to Orthodoxy's roots and his fascination with the new.

[...] We dread a universal perspective even in the church universal. We are preoccupied with our domestic traditions and moods of feeling and thinking. We are hopelessly provincial in our Christian convictions. Our Christian horizon is utterly narrow and limited. And usually we simply refuse to go beyond the boundaries of our local and inherited traditions and customs. The unity of the Christian mind was lost long before communion was broken. The schism was first consummated in minds before it was enacted in practice in the realm of rule and administration. This was the basic misfortune of Christian history. Yet, even

divided Christianity is still one Christianity, at least in aspiration. What is or would be suicidal is precisely to be satisfied with the schismatic state of affairs and to invent excuses for local or “provincial” preferences. It is here that the ecumenical problem arises and the ecumenical movement begins.

We shall confine ourselves to one particular aspect of that vast problem. And first of all, we have to face the split between the Greek and the Latin mind, in the early ages of the church. Of course, this split was never complete or absolute, yet its impact on the whole destiny of Christianity was enormous. Somebody has wittily remarked that language is given to man as a means of communication, but it is used rather as a means of isolation. [...]

[The Greek Bible] provided a common ground for Christian preaching, nay, the common language, i.e., a set of categories and terms. [...] In a sense, Greek is still the common language of the whole of Christendom, and indeed the *only* common language, and everybody is bound to refer to the Greek Testament as to the original, even when we detect a Jewish background and a Jewish mind behind the Greek idiom. Moreover, for centuries the undivided church was thinking in Greek, even when she spoke various tongues. As [a] matter of fact, Greek was used in the West too, even at Rome, as the language of worship and preaching, possibly until the middle of the third century, if not later. The church of Rome was Latinized only gradually, and only with St. Augustine and St. Jerome did Latin really become the language of great Christian literature and thought. Yet even Augustine and Jerome were Hellenistic in mind, though Augustine’s Greek was rather poor and deficient.

Let us keep in mind our true question: we are concerned now not with difference but with isolation. The tragedy comes when people forget that they “belong together” and lose the wider perspective. The East and the West were different from the outset. Yet the feeling of a universal fellowship was strong. Eastern Christians felt themselves quite at home in the West and Western in the East. The disruption comes later. Already in the time of Augustine, Greek was not studied in the West, although his immediate predecessor at the see of Hippo, Valerius, was a Greek and did not know any Latin. The rise of Latin-thinking Christianity in the West has been overlooked, or perhaps contemptuously ignored, in the East. In the East they took little notice of the rising “Latin Christianity” and did not care for translations. Very little of Augustine was ever translated into Greek. [...]

While the West was lapsing into its dark ages, the East was still going on in spite of all external disasters and inner troubles. The final collapse of Byzantine Christianity came many centuries later, when the West had already recovered, or perhaps was already on the eve of its own autumn. This mental divorce of the East and the West was never complete. The common ground was never lost. What really happened was much worse. *It was forgotten that there was a common ground.* And very often what was in fact common was mistaken for something peculiar and distinctive. A custom was developed in the West to treat even the Greek fathers as exotic Orientals. The Reformation did not change this attitude of suspicion and ignorance. The total outcome of this age-long estrangement was the inability, on both sides of the cultural schism, to ascertain even the existing agreements, and the tendency to exaggerate all the distinctive marks. [...]

By no means am I going to suggest that there was no difference between the East and the West. But surely not every difference and not even every disagreement is, or should be, a lawful and sufficient reason for divorce. There is no reason to believe that these differences or varieties are ultimately irreconcilable and cannot or should not be integrated or rather re-integrated into the fullness of the catholic mind. Possibly this reintegration has not yet been conscientiously attempted. I am pleading now that such a task should be urgently undertaken. We have to examine the existing tensions and divergences with a prospective synthesis in view. I mean exactly what I say: a synthesis and integration, and not just a toleration of the existing varieties or particular views. No ultimate synthesis is possible in history but still there is a measure of integration for every age. Our fault is precisely that we are behind the time, behind our own time. We have to recognize the common ground that existed a long time ago. This seems to be the most imposing ecumenical task. [...]

By her witness the Eastern church does not impose her own claims but rather reminds all Christians of their common heritage and of their common background. There is a sort of an ecumenical challenge implied in the witness of the Eastern church. This is her most distinctive and peculiar contribution. We may differ widely in our attitude toward Christian antiquity, but we cannot easily deny that there is a problem and a challenge in the witness of the undivided church of Christ. I do not mean uniformity, but rather a fellowship of convictions. And since the common ground and common mind have been

lost and we have to regain or rediscover them in our concrete and existential situation, it is to be primarily a fellowship of search.

In one sense, the Eastern church is a survival of ancient Christianity as it has been shaped in the age of the ecumenical councils and of the holy fathers. The Eastern church stands exactly for the patristic tradition. Surely it was, and must be, the common tradition both of the East and the West, and here resides its primary importance and its uniting power. [...] The Orthodox Church of the East has been speaking for centuries the same old idiom of the fathers, has kept and cherished it as her true mother tongue, and for that reason is perhaps better equipped for its adequate interpretation than anyone who would merely learn a foreign tongue in order to interpret ancient texts with some respectable dictionary in his hands. A native's command of his own language is ever the safest because it is spontaneous. The Eastern church is still speaking patristic Greek, a Greek that was in fact the only theological language of the church universal for at least a thousand years, and she has been doing it faithfully for ages, at least in her worship, in the devotional and spiritual life of the faithful. [...]

[...] The ancient tradition was kept in spite of pressure from abroad and not by inertia only. These contacts were often rather unhappy. Yet in this school of historical trial and conflict, the Eastern church had to learn, and to a large extent did learn, to respond to modern challenges and problems out of the continuous experience in which the old and the new are merged into a living whole. By no means am I going to suggest that all problems have been happily solved and all tensions smoothed or removed. On the contrary, we are just in the midst of an acute tension and conflict. So was the church in the glorious age of the ecumenical councils. [...]

It is precisely at this point that the main objection arises. When we recall the old tradition, the witness of Christian antiquity, are we not doing precisely what we are ourselves condemning and disavowing? Are we not simply imposing an obsolete mentality of bygone ages? It is true, indeed, that the fathers both Greek and Latin were interpreting the apostolic message, the original good news, in Greek categories, and the influence of Hellenic or Hellenistic philosophy on their conception can be easily detected. This is, as it has been already for a long time, the main objection against their authority. Yet the real question is whether we can regard this "Hellenistic phase" of Christian theology, if we are to admit the phrase, merely as an unhappy historical accident, and whether after all we can ever really get away from these "Greek

categories.” We have to realize that, as a matter of fact, Christian Hellenism was never a peculiarly Eastern phenomenon. Hellenism is the common basis and background of all Christian civilization. It is simply incorporated into our Christian existence, whether we like it or not. One cannot easily undo the whole of history once it has happened, nor is there any reason to long for that. [...] For, indeed, Christianity is not just an abstract and “general” message that could be divorced or detached from its historical context, an “eternal” truth that could be formulated in some super-historical propositions. Christianity is history by its very essence. It is a proclamation and an interpretation of certain concrete historical events. And the first and immediate witness to these events, the only witness by which our beliefs and convictions stand and are proved, has been given in a very definite and “particular” language. [...]

Let us be historical in all realms of our Christian existence. Now for many of us, historicity means relativity. But it is a very narrow and particular approach, and I doubt most seriously whether it is a true biblical or scriptural approach. The sacred history of salvation does not consist of mere happenings that pass away and are irrelevant as such, but of events that stay forever. The history of salvation is still going on, is still enacted in the redeemed community, in the church of God. [...]

In order to convey and to interpret accurately the message of the Bible in a new idiom and to a new people, we have to have an adequate command of the original biblical language. In order to interpret Christian dogma and to render it in a modern tongue, we must command the original language, in which it has been first uttered. Unless we can do so, we would always be poor interpreters. [...]

Is this suggestion that we learn the idiom of the ancient church really ridiculous? Are there not in our time many who endeavor to learn the language of the great reformers, to rediscover and regain it as their mother tongue, and to use it, in the modern environment, for preaching and theological thinking? In fact there are not a few who do really speak the idiom of Luther and Calvin³⁵ in our day, and do not

35. *Calvin*—John Calvin (1509–1564), the French theologian generally acknowledged as the second-most-important figure in the Reformation after Martin Luther. Calvin is known for his work in systematizing Protestant doctrine, for his commitment to the doctrine of predestination, and for founding a theocratic government in Geneva, Switzerland.

mind being out of date for that. Just as there are many in the church of Rome who use the idiom of St. Thomas.³⁶ [...]

On the other hand, the church in the East has also to enlarge her vision and to meet the churches of the West in a fellowship of common search. As [a] matter of fact this meeting has been taking place already for centuries. It is simply historically untrue that the Christian East is meeting the Christian West for the first time in our day. It has been in contact with Western theology for quite some time. Lutheran and Reformed textbooks of theology were in common use in Russian seminaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the Western original can be often detected behind the works of Orthodox theologians themselves. They had themselves to relearn the dialects of the fathers in recent times. [...]

It is perhaps but natural that after so many centuries of divorce and estrangement, of conflict and competition, one is inclined to take sides. The major danger and temptation of our present epoch is that Westerners will possibly overemphasize and exaggerate their Western peculiarity, acting as representatives of the Western tradition only. Surely Eastern people are in the danger of doing just the same. This attitude is not, of course, a safe and promising ground for meeting or the true reintegration of distorted tradition. Yet it is just this reintegration that is, in my belief, the impending duty and the major task of Christianity today. No synthesis or reconciliation can ever be achieved simply by arithmetical operations, either by subtraction of all distinctions or by addition of all differences. Synthesis is neither a common denominator nor a sum total.

It is my personal conviction, or, if you prefer, my private opinion, that the real reintegration of Christian tradition should be sought in a neo-patristic synthesis. The first step to be taken is that we should be able to read and study the fathers not merely as historical documents, as links of a “venerable” but obsolete “tradition,” as pieces of antiquity, but as living masters from whom we may receive the message of life and truth. If I am not mistaken it is just this that is going on in our days in the large field of theological research. The fact that many recent theologians are going back to the school of the fathers, even if they find it hard to walk in their steps, is the greatest ecumenical promise of our age.

36. *idiom of St. Thomas*—the scholastic, academic language of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).

I have been moving deliberately in this paper along general lines and have not mentioned any particular topics or doctrinal points. My first purpose was to explain the ultimate meaning of the meeting of the West and the East, which is taking place, or may take place, within the contemporary ecumenical movement. Once more, it is not merely a geographical reintegration, but precisely a rediscovery of the common past and of the common ground. Nor do I suggest that the synthesis has been already achieved or could be achieved speedily or soon. Certainly it will not be accomplished in our lifetime. Yet the process has already begun. We are not allowed to dream glorious dreams and to indulge in glorious visions. The prospect is rather unusually dark. In our private life, night is the time for peace and rest. But on the larger scale, historic nights, the periods of doom, are just the high time to watch and work.

39.4 Justin Popovich on Europe and Ecumenism (1974)

Justin Popovich, "Humanistic Ecumenism," in *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, trans. Asterios Gerostergios et. al. (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994), 169–196. Used by permission of Asterios Gerostergios.

Justin Popovich was perhaps the best-known Serbian theologian of the twentieth century.

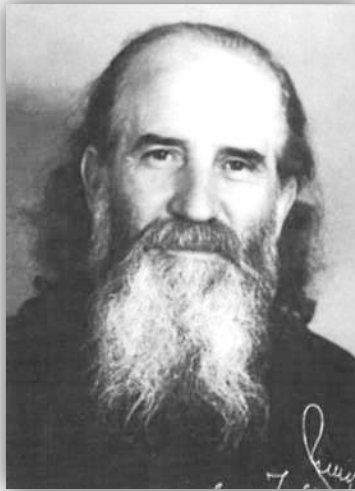


Figure 210. Justin Popovich, n.d.

The Serbian church—much like the Serbian state—has long cultivated ties with Russia, and it frequently identifies itself with more conservative elements of the Russian church. Popovich's essay below attacks Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, humanism, modernity, scholasticism, the ecumenical movement, and Western Europe in general. It evidences a nationalistic and xenophobic strain in Serbian Orthodoxy, which many scholars attribute to Serbia's centuries of subjugation to the Ottoman Turks,

and, later, to the Austrian Empire. The Serb theologian and bishop, Nikolai Velimirović, for example, once claimed the Serbs suffered even more than Christ, because the Serbs were crucified for five centuries, whereas Christ hung on the cross at Golgotha for only one day.

Ecumenism is the common name for the pseudo-Christianity of the pseudo-churches of Western Europe. It contains the heart of European humanism, with papism as its head. All of pseudo-Christianity, all of those pseudo-churches, are nothing more than one heresy after another. Their common evangelical name is pan-heresy. Why? Because through the course of history various heresies denied or deformed certain aspects of the God-man and Lord Jesus Christ; these European heresies remove him altogether and put European man in [Jesus's] place. In this there is no essential difference between papism, Protestantism, ecumenism, and other heresies, whose name is "Legion."³⁷ [...]

Protestantism? It is the loyal child of papism. It went from one heresy to another over the centuries because of its rationalistic scholasticism, and it is continually drowning in the various poisons of its heretical errors. In addition, papal haughtiness and "infallible" foolishness reign absolutely within it, ruining the souls of its faithful. First of all each Protestant is an independent pope when it comes to matters of faith. This always leads from one spiritual death to another; and there is no end to this "dying" since a person can suffer countless spiritual deaths in a lifetime.

37. *whose name is "Legion"*—see Mark 5:1–9: "They came to the other side of the lake, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when [Jesus] had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him anymore, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; and he shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' For [Jesus] had said to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' Then Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.'" (NRSV)

Since this is the way things are, there is no way out of this impasse, for the papist-Protestant ecumenism with its pseudo-church and its pseudo-Christianity, without wholehearted repentance before the God-man Christ and his Orthodox catholic church. Repentance is the remedy for every sin, the medicine given to man by the only friend of man—Christ.

Without repentance and admittance into the true church of Christ, it is unthinkable and unnatural to speak about unification of “the churches,” about the dialogue of love, about intercommunion³⁸ (which is to say, the common cup). [...]

[...] The naked moralistic, minimalistic, and humanistic pacifism of contemporary ecumenists does only one thing: it brings to light their diseased humanistic roots, which is to say, their sick philosophy and feeble morality “according to the human tradition” (Colossians 2:8). They reveal the crisis of their humanistic faith, as well as their presumptuous insensibility for the history of the church, i.e., for its apostolic and catholic continuation in truth and in grace. [...]

[...] In Orthodox teaching about the church and the sacraments, the single most unique mystery is the church itself, the body of the God-man Christ, so that [the church] is the only source and content of all divine sacraments. Outside of this theanthropic³⁹ and inclusive mystery of the church—the pan-mystery itself—there are no and cannot be any “mysteries”;⁴⁰ therefore, there can be no intercommunion of mysteries. Consequently we can only speak about mysteries within the context of this unique pan-mystery, which is the church. This is because the Orthodox Church—as the body of Christ—is the source and the foundation of the sacraments and not the other way around. The mysteries, or sacraments, cannot be elevated above the church, or examined outside the body of the church.

[...] [T]he Orthodox Church does not recognize the existence of other mysteries or sacraments outside of itself, nor does it recognize them as being mysteries, and one cannot receive the sacraments until one comes away from the heretical “churches” (i.e., the pseudo-churches) through repentance before the Orthodox Church of

38. *intercommunion*—members of different confessions participating together in a common eucharistic service.

39. *theanthropic*—having the nature of both God and man: being at once human and divine.

40. *mysteries*—sacraments.

Christ. Until then one remains outside the church, un-united with it through repentance, remaining—as far as the church is concerned—a heretic and consequently outside the saving Communion. “[W]hat fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion has light with darkness?” (Second Corinthians 6:14) [...]

The forty-fifth canon of the apostles thunders: “Let any bishop or presbyter or deacon who merely joins in prayer with heretics be suspended, but if someone has permitted them to perform any service as clergyman, let him be deposed.” Isn’t this canon obvious? Even to a gnat?

The sixty-fifth canon of the apostles directs: “If a clergyman, or layman, enter a synagogue of the Jews or [a gathering of] heretics to pray, let him be both deposed and excommunicated”—this is clear enough even to the most primitive mind. [...]

Theodore the Studite—that fearless confessor of theanthropic Orthodox truths—proclaims to all the people of the world: “To receive Communion from a heretic or one who evidently corrupts it before a strange god makes one familiar with the devil.” According to the same, the bread of the heretics is not “the body of Christ.” Consequently, “As the divine bread of the Orthodox is received, the participants became one body, in the same way heretical Communion accomplishes the same thing for those who partake of it, making them one body that is against Christ.” In addition, Communion from heretics is not the common bread, but poison that harms the body and darkens and blackens the soul. [...]

But you might ask: Will it be possible for this generation, this most erring, deluded generation in the history of man, to return to honesty and the truth? Can it? Would that the Christ they despise let this happen as soon as possible. But when will it happen?

It is only going to happen when our Western brothers start writing books glorifying Christ our God, and when their thousands of newspapers print praises of Christian virtues and Christian good works, instead of writing about crimes and blasphemies against the divine majesty and about the commerce of vile instincts. When this transformation takes place, then Western heretical humanity will be cleansed, and it will smell sweetly of heavenly incense.

Then we Orthodox Christians will rejoice because we will receive our returning brothers.

And pagan people will love Christ and will ask to become his children because the Christian people will no longer hinder them from becoming Christ's children.

And wickedness will not exist among people, nor wars between the nations, but the peace of Christ, which is beyond the ability of the mind to comprehend. [...]

[The Serbian bishop, Nikolai⁴¹ asks]: What is Europe?

It is the desire and the longing for power and pleasure and knowledge. All of this is human: first, human desire and longing, and second, human knowledge. And the two are personified by the pope and Luther. What, then, is Europe? Europe is the pope and Luther, human desire to the extreme and human knowledge to the extreme. The European pope is the human desire for authority. The European Luther is the obstinate decision of man that everything must be explained by the mind [...] This is Europe in a nutshell, ontologically and historically. The one means the surrender of mankind into the fire and the other means surrender of mankind into the water. And both mean the separation of man from God, because the one means the rejection of faith and the other the rejection of the church of Christ. For the spirit of evil has been working in this way on the body or Europe for a few centuries now. And who can expel this evil spirit from Europe? No one, except the one whose name has been marked in red in the history of the human race as the only one who expels demons from people. You already know who I mean. I mean the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah and savior of the world, who was born of the Virgin, killed by the Jews, resurrected by God, witnessed by the centuries, justified by Heaven, glorified by the angels, confessed by the saints, and accepted by our forefathers.

As long as Europe followed Christ as “the sun of righteousness,” and his apostles, martyrs, saints, and the countless righteous people and others who pleased him, Europe was like a square, illuminated by hundreds and thousands of candles, large and small, burning brightly. When human desire, however, and human wisdom blew as two strong winds, the candles were blown out and a darkness descended like the darkness of the subterranean passages where moles live.

According to human desire, every nation and every person seeks power, pleasure, and glory, imitating the pope of Rome. According to

41. *Bishop Nikolai*—the nationalistic Serbian bishop of Achrida and Zitsa (d. 1956), whom Popovich greatly admired.

human wisdom, every nation and every person finds that he or she is wiser than everyone else and that he or she deserves all earthly things. How then can there not be wars between people and nations? How then can there not be foolishness and wildness in people? How then can there not be sicknesses and terrible diseases, drought and floods, insurrections and wars? For just as pus has to seep out of a pus-filled wound, and a stench has to emerge from a place filled with filth, this has to happen.

Papism employs politics because this is the only way it can get power. Lutheranism uses philosophy and science because it believes this is the only way to obtain wisdom. And so desire declared war against knowledge, and knowledge against desire. This is the new tower of Babel; this is Europe. In our time, however, there emerged a new generation of European man, a generation that through atheism married desire to knowledge, and rejected both the pope and Luther. Now desire is not hidden nor wisdom praised. Human desire and human wisdom are joined in our times and thus a marriage has taken place that is neither Roman Catholic nor Lutheran, but obviously and publicly satanic. Today's Europe is neither papist nor Lutheran. It is above and outside both. It is totally earthly, lacking any desire to ascend to Heaven, either by bearing the pope's passport of infallibility, or by the ladder of Protestant wisdom. It totally denies the journey from this world. It wants to stay here. It wants the grave as its cradle. It does not know about the other world. It doesn't smell the heavenly fragrance. It does not see the angels and the saints in its dreams. It does not want to hear about the *Theotokos*.⁴² Debauchery makes it hate virginity. The whole square that is Europe is sunk now in darkness. All of the candles are extinguished. O! The awful darkness! Brother plunges the sword into his brother's breast, thinking that he is the enemy. Fathers reject their sons, sons their fathers. And the wolf is a far more loyal friend to man than man is. [...]

[...] When Bonaparte⁴³ laughed in front of the holy churches of the Kremlin,⁴⁴ when Pius⁴⁵ was declared infallible, and when Nie-

42. *Theotokos*—literally the “God-bearer”; the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God.

43. *Bonaparte*—Napoleon Bonaparte, the French emperor who invaded Russia in 1812.

44. *churches of the Kremlin*—the churches in the Moscow Kremlin, Moscow's walled, inner city.

tzsche⁴⁶ publicly announced his worship of the Antichrist,⁴⁷ then the sun darkened in the sky. And if there were a thousand suns they would all have been darkened for shame and sorrow because of this amazing thing that the world has never seen before: an atheist king, an atheist pontifex,⁴⁸ and an atheist philosopher. In Nero's⁴⁹ time at least the philosopher was not an atheist. However, the eighteenth century was the century of Pilate: he condemned Christ to death. The nineteenth century was the century of Caiaphas:⁵⁰ he crucified Christ. The twentieth century is the century of the council composed of the baptized and unbaptized Judases. This council declared that Christ was dead forever and that he was not resurrected. And then, if you can believe it, my brothers, there came unheard-of scourges upon European humanity, lashings to the marrow of its bones, by insurrections and wars.

Who is the victor then, if it is not the kaiser,⁵¹ the pontifex, and the philosopher of the Europe that rejected Christianity? The winner is the Balkan peasant and the Russian *muzhik*,⁵² according to the word of Christ: "for the least among you is the greatest" (Luke 9:48). Who was the most unknown, meaningless, and least person of the nineteenth century, the century of the great Napoleon, of the infallible Pius, and of the unapproachable Nietzsche? Who, if it was not the Russian *muzhik*, the pilgrim "to the holy places," and the Balkan peasant fighting against the crescent,⁵³ the liberator of the Balkans?

A satanic plain of battle, a satanic clergy, and satanic wisdom—this is what the kaiser, the pope, and the philosopher of the nineteenth century were. The Orthodox peasant of the Balkans pre-

45. *Pius*—Pius IX (1846–1878), the pope who promulgated the doctrine of papal infallibility in 1870.

46. *Nietzsche*—Frederick Nietzsche (1844–1900), the nihilistic German philosopher who declared that "God is dead."

47. *anti-Christ*—here Popovich references Nietzsche's work, *Der Antichrist*.

48. *pontifex*—a member of the council of priests in ancient Rome.

49. *Nero*—the sadistic and possibly insane Roman emperor (54–68) who persecuted Christians.

50. *Caiaphas*—Matthew 26:57-68 portrays Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest, as searching for false evidence with which to frame Jesus.

51. *kaiser*—German for "king": the title applied to German kings until Germany's defeat in the First World War.

52. *muzhik*—a Russian peasant.

53. *crescent*—a reference to Islam (symbolized by the crescent) and the Eastern churches' desire to free the Balkans from Islamic Ottoman rule.

sents the complete antithesis of these. [...] The words of the prayer of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ refer to these peasants: “I thank you, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants” (Matthew 11:25). And what did God reveal to these simple peasants? He revealed bravery, the heavenly light, and divine wisdom. In other words, he revealed all that was opposed to the Western kaiser, pope, and philosopher; it was like night and day. [...]

With tears in his eyes, Christ says [to Europe]:

Behold now I am leaving, but you will see. You have left God’s road and you are following Satan’s. Blessings and happiness have been taken away from you. Your life is in my hands because I was crucified for you. And yet in spite of all this I will not punish you, but your own sins and your apostasy from me—your savior—will punish you. I revealed the love of my Father to everyone, and I wanted to save all of you with love.

Europe then says:

Love? Our agenda only includes a hardy and manly hatred for everyone who disagrees with us. Your love is only a fable. We have raised up a flag in place of this fable, a flag of ethnicity, of internationalism, of the state, of progress, of evolution, of trans-oceanism, and of cultism. Our salvation is found in these, so get away from us. [...]

The new, pagan Europe does not boast of any deity greater than itself. It boasts about its wisdom, its riches, its power. Like a puffed-up balloon about to explode, it makes Africans and Asians laugh with its boasting; it is like a ripe rumor ready to open and fill the universe with its stench. This is today’s anti-Christian Europe: the white demonization.

Europe lives in the vile cycle of inventions. Whenever someone comes up with a new one, they declare him a genius. [...] The inventions of Europe are numerous, almost countless. Yet none of these inventions makes man any better, more honest, or enlightened. And not one single spiritual or moral invention has appeared in Europe in the last thousand years—only material inventions. And these inventions have brought humanity to the brink of destruction, to spiritual darkness, and to a dismal devastation without precedent in Christian history. We do not know for sure if Europe—with all of its inventions—turned away from Christ because of its own ill will or because of the ill will of others.

When the telescope was invented so that far-off stars could be seen, the European scholars studied them at the expense of the Bible of Christ.

When the microscope was invented, they again laughed at Christ.

When the train, the steam engine, the telegraph, and telephone were invented, the air resounded with the self-boasting of the European at the expense of God and his Christ.

When engines were invented for traveling across the seas, for flying in the air, for communicating from great distances, Christ appeared as useless and as old-fashioned to Europe as an Egyptian mummy. However, Europe has used all of its inventions suicidally in the last two hundred years: for world wars, for crime, for hatred, for destruction, for deceit, for extortion, for the desecration of what is holy and sacred to the people, for lies, dishonesty, debauchery, and atheism throughout the world. And so Europe does not actually fool anyone but itself. [...]

40. Humor

We conclude a long and often-difficult collection of texts on a lighthearted note, with a piece of absurdist humor.

40.1 Ian Frazier, “In My Defense” (2011)

Ian Frazier, “In My Defense,” *New Yorker* (7 March 2011): 36–37. Originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. Copyright © 2011 by Ian Frazier, used by permission of The Wylie Agency LLC.

In the following piece, Ian Frazier, a humorist and staff writer at the *New Yorker*, imagines an earnest scoutmaster from Boy Scout Troop 345 in Seattle, Washington, becoming confused by the patristic debates of the 300s and 400s. One could read this piece as a serious critique—veiled by silliness—of any number of issues: patrology, heresiology, zealotry, biblical criticism, and even religion itself. As such, it could reside comfortably in section 32, with its focus on critiques of Orthodox and Christian dogma.

But one could also read Frazier’s piece as something simpler: a willfully doty piece of nonsense, an insouciant romp. We leave the reader to decide.

As your now former scoutmaster, I hope all the members of Troop 345 and your moms and dads will put up with one last e-mail from me. Since the Chief Seattle Council reviewed my case and handed down its decision that I was unfit to command Troop 345, I have been going over and over this whole business in my mind. Some of you are of the opinion that my e-mails were what got me in trouble in the first place. You may be right. But whatever I said, I said from the heart, and that’s how I’m speaking to you today.

When I filled out the application to serve as your scoutmaster, I answered honestly and fully in the section about religious beliefs and affiliations, affirming that I had a deep faith in a tripartite divinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. No problems there, as the Chief Seattle higher-ups assured me. Soon after, unfortunately, at about the time we were planning the light-bulb drive, I happened to stumble onto some old books in my uncle’s garage. While reading them, I became at first interested in, and then infected by, a pernicious false doctrine known as the Nestorian heresy.

I don’t know if many of you are familiar with the incorrect teachings of Bishop Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, for which he

and his followers were condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431. Don't worry if you're not, because the question of the double nature of the Son (divine and human, or divine or human), which Nestorius raised, is really neither here nor there. I'm just trying to convey what was in my head as we canvassed all of Bremerton pushing those light bulbs—of which we sold a ton, I'm happy to say, and raised almost eight hundred and seventy-five dollars in a single weekend!

The danger of heresies, as I hope none of you will ever find out for yourselves, is that one leads to another. As my attraction to Nestorianism began to fade, I found myself strangely intrigued by the Petrobrusian heresy (anti-infant baptism, anti-sacraments), and from that I segued easily into the Pelagian heresy,¹ tempting to me because of its bold rejection of the whole concept of original sin. Soon after my Pelagian period, I did a one-eighty and became a strict Augustinian² (i.e., not a heretic at all), but that didn't last long, because then I was up to my ears in Patripassianism, a sneaky heresy that says the Father shared the Son's earthly sufferings voluntarily. For a while there, I was going through heresies one or two a week—Arianism, Dualism, Quietism,³ Socinianism,⁴ Anabaptism,⁵ the Bogomil heresy,⁶ Albigensianism⁷—nothing was too undoctinal for me. Looking back, I

1. *Pelagian heresy*—reference to a sect established by the Persian religious philosopher Mani (216-274), who believed in an age-old conflict between darkness and light. Mani's thought combined elements of esoteric Christianity, Buddhism, and Persian Zoroastrianism."

2. *Augustinian*—member of a sect established by Jacobus Arminius (1560), whose teachings shared much with those of other Protestant sects, albeit with some differences on questions of free will and justification.

3. *Quietism*—mystical philosophy that advocates finding peace by destroying the will; one finds "quietude" through the quiet contemplation of God.

4. *Socinianism*—developed by Fausto Sozzini (1539–1604). A denial of the Trinity and Christ's divinity, coupled with an affirmation of Christian scriptures.

5. *Anabaptism*—a Protestant movement of the 1500s that endorsed baptism for adult believers only, that is, not for infants. The Amish and the Mennonites trace their origins to Anabaptists.

6. *Bogomil heresy*—a gnostic assertion that God has two sons: Satan (bad) and Jesus (good). Bogomils rejected the church's hierarchy. Surfaced in Macedonia in the 900s.

7. *Albigensianism*—a gnostic sect in southern France during the 1100s and 1200s that defined matter as evil and spirit alone as good. Advocated poverty. Exterminated during the Inquisition.

now regret these excesses. However, I will submit to all of you who love Troop 345 as I do that none of my spiritual wanderings or errors in those days affected my performance as your scoutmaster.

If you were very observant, you might have noticed that I did make a few minor changes to my uniform as secret reminders to myself of whatever heresy I was into at the time. For example, I moved my scoutmaster insignia patch from my right pocket to my left and sewed it on upside down to suggest a brief flirtation with Manicheanism.⁸ Similarly, I went from the standard, two-hole neckerchief slide to a hand-tooled three-hole model for obvious trinitarian reasons, and I affected gold shoulder cords, perhaps excessively, during my lapse into free grace Arminianism.⁹ All harmless enough, I'm sure you'll agree.

Some of the scouts and dads who attended my Know Your Knots master class at the Camp Shoshone Summer Jubilee later remarked that I had seemed distracted when I gave it, and I consider this a fair criticism. In my defense, right at that moment I was wrestling with Valentinian Gnosticism,⁸ a real bear of a heresy. Part of me still felt strongly that every scout should be able to tie a bowline knot around his waist in the dark with one hand. But if basic Gnostic teachings were to prove well founded, and all matter, and even creation itself, turned out to be essentially and irredeemably corrupt—well, part of me couldn't help wondering, What's the point?

Here matters stood in the fall of last year, when my spiritual life underwent a drastic shock. A book came into my possession—and I won't say how, wishing to implicate no one but myself—entitled “God Is Not Great,” by Christopher Hitchens. I began reading it in awful fascination, frightened to continue but unable to look away. Page after page, I argued, I resisted; but the insidious, atheistical arguments drew me in. A few stubborn shreds of my belief still remained, when, on page 90, I came across these words:

8. *Manicheanism*—a sect established by the Persian religious philosopher Mani (216-274), who believed in an age-old conflict between darkness and light. Mani's thought combined elements of esoteric Christianity, Buddhism, and Persian Zoroastrianism.

9. *Arminianism*—a sect established by Jacobus Arminius (1560), whose teachings shared much with those of other Protestant sects, albeit with some differences on questions of free will and justification.”

How can it be proven in one paragraph that this book [the Bible] was written by ignorant men and not by any god? Because man is given “dominion” over all beasts, fowl and fish. But no dinosaurs or plesiosaurs or pterodactyls are specified, because the authors did not know of their existence.

This hit me like a blow on the head. Yes, why *are* there no dinosaurs in the Bible, if God wrote it? How could an all-knowing being leave out something so huge? That’s worse than a slipup; it smacks of carelessness—even ignorance, as Hitchens says. And if Adam and Eve actually did have “dominion,” why didn’t they ride around Eden on a dinosaur? Nothing adds up here. At first, grasping at straws, I told myself the omission might be the result of a copyist’s error in the Middle Ages. But that didn’t comfort me for long. Too many other really big things are left out also, like manatees, for example. Or what about elephant seals, the largest meat eaters on the planet, which can grow to more than six thousand pounds?

Yet if God did not write the Bible (my own fevered thoughts continued), he certainly did take credit for it. That is, God did not go out of his way to make it clear that he had *not* written this book attributed to him. Quite simply, he appropriated work done by someone else. And, if that weren’t bad enough, he never even checked these scriptures to see if his ghostwriters got the facts halfway right. He did not appear in a vision to suggest they needed to add a dinosaur or some trilobites¹⁰ for realism. As I noticed with newly opened eyes all that was left out of this book, I had to admit an even more upsetting possibility; not only did God not write or check the Bible; it’s quite likely that he did not even read the whole thing. I began to ask myself if I could believe in a God like that—one who plagiarized, and did it so sloppily and disrespectfully. I reached the painful conclusion that I could not.

Now I was in a predicament. In just a week, Troop 345 was scheduled to begin its annual Frozen Turkey Roundup in conjunction with the outreach program at St. Barnabas. And here Troop 345’s scoutmaster had become an atheist! I had no time to lose. Sitting down at the computer, I composed a long and detailed e-mail to the district council explaining everything, through all the various heresies, the dinosaurs, manatees, etc., up to my current loss of faith. I sent it off and expected a call within the hour, so we could start looking for

10. *trilobites*—extinct, marine arthropods; invertebrates with exoskeletons.

my replacement. Instead, a couple of days went by. Finally, the council sent me an e-mail that I found both mystifying and beside the point. They made almost no mention of my spiritual crisis, merely stating that I could stay on if I recognized some higher power, or even Mother Nature! Were they kidding? After all the subtle and wicked heresies I had defeated, did they think I would fall into plain old nature-worshipping Druidism and grow a white beard and harvest mistletoe?

All of you know what happened next. I sent out the mass e-mail to every member of the district council, to all my scouts and their families, and to both of the local newspapers. I then received notice from the council that my tenure as scoutmaster was terminated, effective immediately. By now you all know, too, of the vision I had that restored my faith. So glorious was this miracle for me that I don't care what it makes anyone think. The series of e-mails I sent immediately afterward described it in full. I am aware that heresies often come escorted by false prophets, and I have no wish to be a prophet, false or otherwise; I am merely trying to impart that which was vouchsafed to me. An angel hovering over my back yard on a snow-white pterodactyl would arouse anybody's skepticism, even (at first) my own. All I can say is, this angel really knew his dinosaurs! In fact, he could have been a docent at the dinosaur Museum of the Rockies, with the abundance of information he possessed. I also believe, with every fiber of my being, that the lost Dinosaur Scrolls he told me about do exist, somewhere in the Sinai Desert, and will be discovered someday.

In the Boy Scout oath, each of us promises "to do my duty to God and my country." And wasn't that what I was doing as I struggled through thickets of heresy into the light, and as I worked on my ongoing project to reinsert dinosaurs into the Holy Book, based on some of the things the angel told me, along with ideas I came up with on my own? I want to be your scoutmaster again, more than I can say. Even assistant scoutmaster would be acceptable, if I could add a role as troop chaplain, with opportunity for advancement possibly all the way to the top at the Boy Scouts' national headquarters. If all the scouts and parents from Troop 345 accompany me to the next session of the Chief Seattle Council, and everybody raises a demonstration for my reinstatement, I am sure the council will agree. In the name of God, scouting, and the apatosaurus,¹¹ I ask for your support.

11. *apatosaurus*—a dinosaur of the Jurassic era.

Recommended Reading

Below please find suggested readings about topics that appear *only* in this supplemental volume. Suggested readings for other topics (i.e., for topics that *also* appear in the companion volume) can be found in Bryn Geffert and Theofanis Stavrou, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The Essential Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

2. CHALCEDON AND NON-CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES

- Arpee, Leon. *History of Armenian Christianity from the Beginning to Our Time*. New York: Armenian Missionary Association of America, 1946. 386 pp.
- Atiya, Aziz. *A History of Eastern Christianity*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010. See pp. 138-161 on “Coptic Faith and Culture”; pp. 162-184 on “The Ethiopians”; and 209-234 on “The Jacobites in History.”
- Chaillot, Christine. *The Syrian Orthodox: Church of Antioch and All the East: A Brief Introduction to Its Life and Spirituality*. Geneva: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 1998. 184 pp.
- Grillmeier, Alois. *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1: *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon 451*, 2nd ed., trans. John Bowden. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988. See pp. 543-568 on “The Council of Chalcedon.”
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