

# The Church—The Treasury of Salvation

*St. John of Kronstadt*

## **I. Understanding of the Church. The Church as the instructor of Christian souls which possesses all the means for the salvation of man. Grace.**

The holy Church is God's most supreme, most holy, most good, most wise and necessary establishment upon the earth. She is "the true tabernacle" of God, "which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. viii. 2)—not Luther, not Calvin, and not Mohammed, nor Buddha, nor Confucius, nor any other such like sinful, passionate person. The Church is a union of people established by God, united among themselves by the Faith, Doctrine, Hierarchy, and Mysteries. She is Christ's spiritual army, equipped with spiritual weaponry against the numberless armed hordes of the devil: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. vi. 12). She is a spiritual hospital where mankind, enfeebled by the open wound of sin, is cured by grace-filled treatments given by God—by repentance and communion in the Holy Mysteries of Christ, in Christ's Body and Blood, and by the word of God, by the instructions and counsels and consolations of the shepherds of Christ's rational flock. She is a common laver of purification, rebirth, and sanctification; she is God's sanctuary in which all are sanctified by the Holy Spirit through Baptism, Chrismation, and the other Mysteries, and the Divine Service. She is the spiritual sun of the world, enlightening and giving life to all who sit in the darkness and shadow of death and who are dead through sin.

In nature there is the law of the attraction of smaller bodies to larger ones, and these in turn to still larger ones, and also the law of the attraction of cohesion (the cohesion of the various soft, hard, and fluid parts of organic bodies, and likewise of non-organic bodies—of rocks, metals, minerals, petrifications); whereby is conditioned the existence, firmness, order, use, beauty, mutual bond, and diversity of all created things. The reason for this is the measureless wisdom, goodness and infinite omnipotence of the Creator, Who has made such a wonderful, majestic, and beautiful world, of endless diversity and marvelous magnitude, a work which presents itself as a single harmonious, fair unalterable whole.

In the spiritual world there also exists a law of mutual attraction and unity. The world is one, God is one, the Faith is one, and God's Church is one; for Her Head is Christ God, and Her Pilot, Who quickens the whole body of the Church, is the Spirit of God, "the giver of life, Who also quickens and fills the entire universe.

With what wonderful tender care, overflowing with love, did the Heavenly Father honor the human race which was perishing in sins! What extraordinary means was given to men for salvation from sins from the curse, and from eternal perdition! What a marvelous mighty single-handed Combatant (Christ) was sent from heaven against the powerful, wicked, most malignant antagonist of the race of men—the devil! What a Church, established upon the earth, insuperable by any of the forces of hades, a castle and bastion in which all who truly believe and are truly devoted to this Church can abide without danger from the antagonist! What saving Mysteries have been granted! What and how many rational instruments and preachers of God's grace are placed in this Church for the people! But what indeed must men bring to the Lord in return for His great care for their salvation?—Their faith, their labor, their repentance, their self-denial, their earnest struggle against sin, exercise in the acts of virtue, utter subservience to the Lord and His Church.

The Church is one; Her Head is one; the flock is one; the body is one with many members. Without the Head—Christ—the Church is not the Church, but a self-willed gathering. Such are the Lutherans, the Russian Old Believers, the Pashkovtsy and the followers of Tolstoy.

"I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). The Lord Himself is ever-present in His Church;—why then a vicar, the pope? And can a sinful man take the place of the lord? He cannot. There can be, and there are, vicars for the Tsar, for the Patriarch, but no one can be a vicar, a substitute, for the Lord, Who is the Tsar without beginning and the Head of the Church. Truly, the Catholics have gone astray. Suggest to them, O Lord, that those who affirm such things are foolish and laid around with pride as with a necklace.

The most harmful thing in Christianity, in this God-revealed, heavenly religion, is the leadership of one man in the Church—for instance, the pope, and his supposed infallibility. It is precisely in the dogma of his infallibility that the greatest mistake is contained, for the pope is a sinful man, and O the disaster if he fancies himself to be infallible! How many great errors, destructive of the souls of men, has the Catholic, papal church thought up—in dogmas, in rites, in canonical rules, in the Divine Services, in the deadly and malicious relations of the Catholics with the Orthodox, in blasphemies and slanders against the Orthodox Church, in revilings directed against the Orthodox Christians! And of all this the professedly infallible pope is guilty, with his and the Jesuits' teaching, their spirit of falsehood, duplicity, and every sort of unrighteous means *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* (for the—alleged—greater glory of God).

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

Christians are members of the Church, and the Church is the Body of Christ, with the Head being Christ Himself, and the Enlightener, the Holy Spirit. "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for It, ... that He might present It to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that It should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 2 '-27). You are the holy and chosen flock, you are members of the holy catholic and apostolic Church. What indeed is demanded of you! What holiness, what truth! What attention to yourselves! What spiritual contemplation and activity in secret! What morals, virtues, what faith, what hope, what love! What abstinence, compassion, care for one another, what urging of one another to virtue!

After the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles is described in the book of Acts, the all-providential activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church is often mentioned, His most sovereign guidance through the Apostles, by means of their salutary preaching and actions within the Church. Indeed, this is the "other Comforter" (John xiv. 16), Who is all-good and all-true, Whom the Lord Jesus Christ promised to send to the Apostles.—Glory to Thee, O Holy Spirit, the life-creating Comforter, acting unceasingly everywhere within the Church of Christ. Convert, O Lord, by the judgments which Thou knowest, the peoples gone astray—the Jews, Mahometans, pagans, and within Christianity itself, the heretical and schismatical peoples and races; reprove and uproot vices; direct them to piety and enlighten the Orthodox Christians of impiety and corruption and direct all upon the way of salvation; teach and guide the youth, protect childhood, cause babyhood to grow and guide them by Guardian Angels, instruct men young and old, enlighten and strengthen both men and women through Thy most good, most wise, all-powerful dominion, and fortify and guide them unto every virtue, dispersing sinful passions like darkness for the sake of Christ our Lord, by the good will of the Father. Amen.

Mighty and all-powerful is the intercession of the Holy Church before God, which is clothed in the merits, power, truth, and magnificence of the Son of God, of Her all-good and all-powerful Head. All things are possible to Her intercession. No other, heterodox church possesses such power of intercessions since they are without the Head and are wrong in their thinking.

The Christian must unremittingly care for his spiritual education for which he was born anew in the holy font through the Holy Spirit, received spiritual regeneration, and was sealed with chrism, or the seal of the Holy Spirit, and was made worthy of the right to communicate in the Most immaculate Blood of Christ.—According to, God's intent, the holy Church is the first and most lawful educator of Christian souls. There is no more important work than that of Christian education. Judge and understand for yourselves how dear are these rational, immortal souls unto God, which were redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God Himself, which were called out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of the knowledge of God by the Lord Himself, which were betrothed and united to the Lord as pure virgins to a most pure Bridegroom! How dear is the salvation of these souls, to whom He offers His most immaculate Body and most pure Blood as food and drink, whom He Himself undertook to educate spiritually through these wonderful, dreadful, life-creating and deifying Mysteries! Devote yourselves, all of you, to your spiritual education with all attention and diligence; devote yourselves to thoughts concerning God, to prayer, self-investigation, self-condemnation, with self-amendment in every way; exercise yourselves in the virtues of meekness, humility, obedience, patience, compassion, chastity, simplicity, guilelessness and cut off all sinful thoughts, lusts, habits, passions.

Our negligence, carelessness, and laziness concerning our salvation is amazing; for how many means, faculties, and conveniences are granted to us for it by the all-compassionate and greatly merciful Lord! First: our natural thirst for salvation, peace, and blessedness in the soul; the light of the understanding and the yearning of our will for all that is true, good, beautiful, pure, exalted; the abundance of grace given to us for salvation, which flows like rivers within the Church and fills the souls thirsting for salvation; the nearness and readiness of the Lord to save us at every time and every moment; "the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26), the assistance and co-operation of our guardian angels for our salvation, the daily Divine Service in the Church, the saving Mysteries, prayers, and intercession of the Mother of God and all the Saints. It is amazing how in the face of all this we can still perish, and not all be saved. Certainly there are many things that impede our salvation: temptations from our too-passionate flesh, from the adulterous and sinful world, from the devil who has everywhere laid snares for our destruction; the corruption of our nature, our sinful conception and birth in sin; the inclinations and habits of sin. However, far greater are the means for salvation than the means to perdition. "For greater is He that is in you (Christ), than he that is in the world (the devil)" (I John iv. 4), and all the Saints overcame all obstacles and were saved. But what do we do? We drowse and sleep! Shameful, sinful, painful, woeful! Sin gains power over us in that it has buried itself deeply in us and has taken its seat in us, in our hearts, in our passionate flesh, and has made itself a fortress out of our own passions, out of our self-love, concupiscence, love of honor, pride, love of possessions, incontinence, self-conceit, little faith, unbelief, free-thinking, hypocrisy, partiality, laziness; and by these passions, as with mighty weapons, it shoots us down and takes us into captivity, cutting us off, alienating us from Christ, our true Life. Wherefore he who desires salvation must dig, delve into his heart, and lay his foundation upon the rock, that is, upon Christ the Saviour, upon strong, unshakable faith in Him, upon hope on Him, and upon no one and nothing else,—upon strong love for Him and his neighbor.

In His Church the Lord acts with us as the Creator, the skillful Artist and Reconstructor, as the Father, wise Physician, and Saviour, the Provider, the Commander of life, Nurturer, Law-giver, the Leader of His spiritual troops, the Single-handed Combatant, the Victor. Indeed, man is in His hands—His creation,

rational in His image, destined for immortality and yet fallen, broken, defiled, cast away from God because of sins;—His creation, which was accursed, but by the mercy and compassions of the Only-begotten Son of God, was redeemed, raised up from fallenness, delivered from the curse, and honored once more with the blessing of the heavenly Father through the intercession and merits of the Son, delivered from the darkness of transgressions, illumined by the heavenly light of the Gospel of Christ, fashioned anew and purified from the dross and uncleanness of sin, washed in the mystic Bath, made sweet-smelling by holy Chrism and sealed upon all the senses with the seal of the Holy Spirit, guided along the path of salvation to the kingdom and blessedness on high, strengthened in his warfare with sin and the hostile evil powers by the Lord Himself, mystically nourished in the grace of the Holy Spirit by the Heavenly Bread, guided by invisible shepherds invested with spiritual authority by the Almighty Head of the Church Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. You ask: Why are there such-and-such Mysteries in the Church; why priesthood and pastorship; why churches, why Divine Service, why ceaseless preaching of the Word of God ? Why repentance, why participation in the holy Mysteries?—All this is indispensable for the re-creation, enlightenment, guidance, and strengthening of fallen, defiled, corrupt, perishing man. Behold why the grace of Baptism, recreation, regeneration, and renewal by the Holy Spirit are necessary. Thou art honored with the greatest honor, O man: thou art destined to be a bearer of the Godhead, a God-bearer. Hast thou heard of the God-bearing Fathers, who constantly had God within themselves, as in living temples not made by hands ? And thou shouldst: be just such a God-bearer; unto thee it is given to partake of the Body and Blood of the God-man Christ for just this reason: in order that the Lord should ever abide in thee, according to His word and promise: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (John vi. 56).

Christ came to renew human nature which had been corrupted by sin, and entrusted this greatest work of His goodness, mercy, truth, and wisdom to His Holy Church. The Holy Spirit, Who came into the world and Who operates in the Church through the clergy, the Divine Service, the sermon, and the Mysteries, works this renewal without ceasing. Only within the Church is this renovating force contained, outside the Church it does not exist and cannot.

I sorrow, I wail, and I weep profoundly over the horrible wound of sin which corrupts mankind, miserable beyond measure, indescribably, diversely—O the seductiveness of sin by which mankind is enslaved and labors for sin, and even boasts in its work, and is comforted as by some profit! But together with this I also rejoice and exult and clap my hands when I consider and imagine that divine aid which is granted to us by the will of the Creator as a gift from the great Saviour and God to the whole race of man, and for the planting of the Church of God upon the earth, which saves the human race through God's wonderful grace.

What indeed is Grace? It is the Gift of God granted to a man because of his belief in Christ, for the salvation of the Christian man. Grace is a power, an interceding power, which has mercy, enlightens, saves, and disposes to every virtue.

Grace which has taken up its dwelling in a man who believes and is zealous for holiness and truth, unceasingly drives corruption and every sin out of his heart and body, out of the whole of his being, and prepares him for eternal incorruption, drives out the stench of the passions and settles fragrance within him. The Saints even during their life in the body were fragrant with holiness and incorruption and were pure temples of the Holy Spirit, working miracles. Live then according to the Spirit, "and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. xiii. 14).

The commandment of self-renunciation is given; the place is set out for struggles, virtues, for unfading crowns of glory; grace is given, the power of God to overcome and conquer the wickedness of the enemy and all the passions. The Lord Himself, the setter of the contest, helps those who struggle, provides trophies and crowns for His warriors.

Every sinner who sincerely turns to God must rely completely upon every sort of grace-filled help from God during his warfare with sins, passions, and every kind of sinful habit. It is only necessary to believe in God sincerely and undoubtingly, and heartily to call upon His aid, and sincerely to despise sin, to repent earnestly with a pure intention and thenceforth not yield to sin. All the Saints, the Mother of God Herself, the holy guardian Angels, and God's servants are all ready to provide help for our salvation; spiritual fathers and pastors have been ordained by God in order to save and guide those who seek salvation. Behold the conscience of every man, this unbribable, stern, and righteous judge—thou must but obey it eagerly and unceasingly.

All that is pure, lawful, and holy the impure devil endeavors to defile, or to represent, to depict in an impure, perverted, distorted manner. O how evil he is, how impure, impudent, tireless, and active in his wickedness, in his malice, in his abomination! Who can escape his nets? He who believes firmly in Christ and the Church.

The Lord, for the good of His rational creation—that is, men—desires to unite all into one body and Himself to dwell in them. "That they may all be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John xvii. 21). However, the devil "strives to disunite, dismember, drive all apart, like a flock without a shepherd: in families he plants enmity, dissension, dissatisfaction, or insult; in villages, in cities he causes some to rise up against others; among nations he causes peoples to rise up against peoples, kingdom against kingdom; among religious communities he causes those who have one confession to rise up against the adherents of another, and he especially breathes wrath upon those who confess the Orthodox faith, as against the true Church of God, inciting different persecutions against them. But let us hold to the one holy Orthodox Church, whose head is Christ our God Himself, ever acting within us for our salvation and renewal.

The enemy of our salvation is the devil, and knowing all the saving power of our union with God through faith, the Church and God's grace, he strives with all the means he has to tear asunder our bond with God by sin, by carnal passions, and by attachments to the world. It is necessary for all to hold tightly to the union with God and the Church, keeping the commandments of the Lord.

## **II. Life in un failing union with the Church. The indispensability of belonging to the one true Orthodox Church.**

Thus it is indispensable to belong to Christ's Church, the Head of which is the Almighty Tsar, the Conqueror of Hades, Jesus Christ Himself. His kingdom is the Church which wars with principalities, powers, the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, with spirits of wickedness in high places, which compose a skillfully organized kingdom, and do combat in an extremely experienced, intelligent, well-directed and powerful manner with all men, having well studied all their passions and inclinations. Here no man by himself on the battlefield can be a combatant; and even a great community which is not Orthodox, and is without the Head—Christ—can do nothing against such cunning, subtle, constantly vigilant enemies, who are so skilled in the science of their warfare. For Orthodox Christians a mighty support is necessary from on high, from God and from Christ's holy warriors who have defeated the enemies of salvation by the power of the grace of Christ, from pastors and teachers, and then—from common prayer and from the Mysteries. Behold, precisely such a helper in the struggle with our invisible

and visible enemies is the Church of Christ, to Which, through God's mercies, we belong. The Catholics have invented a new head, having demoted the one true Head of the Church—Christ. The Lutherans fell away and remained without a head. The Anglicans likewise. There is no Church among them; the union with the Head is broken; there is no Almighty help and Belial wages war with all his power and cunning, and holds them all in his delusion and perdition. A multitude perish in atheism and depravity.

By creating man in His own image and Likeness, the Creator placed a close bond between Himself and His creation, that is, man. Man was obliged to maintain this blessed union through scrupulous submission to his Creator, through fulfillment of His holy, wise, and life-giving commandments; as a summary of these commandments, the commandment not to taste of the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was given to him. This commandment was to have strengthened his will in its agreement with the will of God, so that God's will should be one with the will of man,—as the will of one of the Persons of the Trinity is in complete accord with the will of the second and third Persons: "As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John xvii. 21). But by his disobedience, man audaciously broke his union with God and thus fell away from God and His life. And since the wages of sin is death, man was subjected to temporal and eternal death, and to all the innumerable, pernicious consequences of sin—illnesses, calamities, griefs, sorrows, corruption, every sort of deformity, and every kind of slavery to sin. Other than the Son of God no one could reestablish this lost union, and He, in His measureless goodness and condescension towards fallen man, most wisely and wonderfully restored it; and intelligent and chosen men have utilized this marvelously good restoration. But by what means was this union re established? By the Son of God's assumption of human nature without sin, fulfilling all God's righteousness with human nature, taking upon Himself our curse, suffering and dying for us, and, having conquered death, by rising from the dead and giving resurrection to us—incorruption to us. He established one Church upon the earth with Himself as the Head and under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Within the Church He granted all the means for the restoration of the broken union with God through the Mysteries and teaching, through the guidance of the pastors; He gave Baptism, Chrismation, Repentance, Divine Service, constant instruction in the Word of God. Now, whoever wishes to live in holy union with God, be thou in union with the Church which instructs, which holds Divine Service unto holiness and truth and the Kingdom of God—and thou shalt be saved.

"He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathered not with Me scattereth" (Luke xi. 23). He who is not with the Church is against the Church; he who is not within the Church is against the Church; he who has not the faith is against the faith; he who does not do the works of repentance, the works of virtue, is against virtue. It is but a small thing to be named a Christian: one must do the works and fulfill the commandments which Christ decreed; unceasing repentance is necessary, unceasing attention to oneself in the spirit of faith, unceasing prayer, unceasing correction, unceasing forcing of oneself ahead, unceasing self-perfection, and with this goal—unceasing self-examination: are we in the faith? do we live according to the faith? are we with the Church? do we go to church? do we love the Church? do we fulfill the dictates of the Church? or the commandments of Christ preached by Her? Behold then how Christ God teaches. Therefore he who does not repent, who does not attend church, and instead of church goes to the theater and various spectacles and worldly gatherings, disdaining the Church—such a one is not a Christian.

God has bound the Orthodox faithful to Himself by means of the one Holy Spirit and the one Church, by one faith, by the unity of the law, the Mysteries, and the hierarchy, for the general good of His rational creation. One must hold on to this bond through holiness of life and submission to one another.

Christian man! While there is still time, strive to appropriate God and His Saints to thyself here upon the earth through faith and piety; be churchly, nourish in thyself the spirit of churchliness, the spirit of repentance, holiness, peace, thoughts of God, the spirit of love, meekness, humility, patience, submissiveness to good, salvation. Lift not shine head, and scorn not thy Mother the Church which saves

thee;—attend church often during Divine Service, stand with humility, listen, reflect, or read and chant. If thou cost not gain Her here, and through Her, God,—thou shalt remain foreign to Her and to God, and after death, God shall not take thee, and all His Saints shall renounce thee as some one foreign to them in spirit and in disposition of heart and thoughts. Thou shalt be driven into a strange country, into the gloomy and fiery place of the fallen spirits and unrepentant souls of men. Be wise, therefore, in order to escape the craftiness of the devil and attain thy great calling.

Thou belongest to the Church of God, that is, the community of those who believe in Christ; this Church is the one Body of Christ, God is the Head. Art thou a worthy member, cost thou live in holiness, cost thou always repent, cost thou correct shine heart and life, thy morals, thoughts, feelings, intentions, yearnings, thy whole behavior?, Art thou a living member, or dead? Will the Saints receive thee when thou departest from this temporal life into the eternal one? Will they not renounce thee as a putrid member reeking, worthless? Till not thy fate be in common with those who are reprobate from God ? Hasten to set this matter right, to correct shine entire behavior. For this thou art granted time.

The work of the salvation of our souls is the greatest and most wise work, and to learn this work, this art, it is necessary to have recourse to those to whom this work is known, who have completed it. This work of salvation, this work of repentance, is especially known to the Saints, since they have especially endeavored to concern themselves with it, and have carried it in a surpassing manner, one saving for their souls and pleasing to God. Indeed, the Saints have left this spiritual inheritance, this art of repentance and salvation, to the Orthodox Church, having laid up in Her, as in a secure treasure house, all their understanding, their instruction, their zeal, their art, their experiences Let us therefore learn repentance and salvation from Her. We all have come and do come to the church services for Sundays, holidays, ordinary days, and for the Great Fast. All these services teach us repentance and salvation. Have you heard the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete? Heard the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian? Heard the troparia and canons for the Great Fast? What a spirit of repentance is in them! What a compunction, what contrition for the sins of sinful mankind! What a thirst for salvation and pardon from God! What wails and tears of sinners repenting! Behold and learn repentance and propitiation of the Lord from the holy Church. Attend well, reflect, comprehend your sins, have contrition, repent, vaunt not yourselves, do the works of mercy: for the merciful shall obtain mercy.

It fell to the lot of fallen man, after the measureless compassion of God and the unsearchable wisdom and justice of God, to have the honor of confessing the name of God before unbelievers and of suffering for this Name, for the Lord God Who is glorified and worshipped in Trinity. The Apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, monastic saints, and the righteous have been deemed worthy of this honor in particular. All those who now struggle for the Orthodox Christian faith and for virtue, those who firmly defend the holy Orthodox faith and Church and undergo slander and torment at the hands of Her enemies are also found worthy of this honor.

The Holy men of God would not betray the faith and by even so much as a word, and if it did happen that because of the cunning of the persecutors, they unawares betrayed it by either word or deed, they were ready to erase their sin by means of the tortures. See how strictly the Saints held to the right confession! And of what sort are present-day Christians? "Reeds shaken with the wind" (Matth. xi. 7).

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (I Peter i. 9). Behold the end and goal of the Orthodox Christian faith—the salvation of the soul of every believer. How invaluable is our faith; how holy, true, God-pleasing, powerful, saving! How necessary it is to love Her, worthily to esteem Her, constantly to utilize Her for one's own salvation and that of others. O Lord, save the race of Orthodox Christians, and convert all the non-orthodox to Orthodoxy, as to the one faith which saves, established by

Thee, glorified by Thee, and to be eternally glorified by Thee! Thou art holy and righteous—and Thy faith is holy and righteous.

What does the rite of conversion from different beliefs and confessions and of being united to the Orthodox Church show forth? The indispensability of the rejection of false beliefs and confessions, of the renunciation of errors, of the confession of the true faith and—of repentance for all former sins and of the promise to God to keep and firmly confess the blameless faith, to guard against sins and live in virtue.

The beginning of all false teachings, heresies, sects, and schisms is in the serpent who deceives the whole world. The first, most pernicious false teaching was preached by the serpent to Eve in paradise and then to Adam, then Cain, to whom the primordial manslayer—the devil—falsely whispered against Abel that he stood in Cain's way, went against him, did not think, did not feel, did not live as he did, that he supposedly mocked him, reviled him. From hence arise all heresies, sects, and schisms. They wish to be teachers, not from God but rather from themselves and according to their passions. From hence arise the followers of Tolstoy, the Pashkovtsy, the Stundists, and others.

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth? I tell you, Say; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house (the Church of Christ) divided, three against two, and two against three" (Luke xii. 51-52). Catholics, Reformed, Lutherans,. Old Believers, sectarians.

A hatred of Orthodoxy, fanaticism against and persecution of the Orthodox, even killings, run like a crimson thread through all the ages of Catholicism's existence. By their fruits ye shall know them. Was such a spirit commanded to us by Christ? If to anyone, it is always possible to say to Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke ix, 55).

The cause of all the errors of the Roman Catholic Church is pride and the acknowledgment of the pope as the real head of the church' and what is more—that he is infallible. From hence all the oppression on the part of the western church arises. The oppression of thought and faith, the deprivation of true freedom both in faith and life, in all things upon which the pope has placed his heavy hand; from hence come the false dogmas, from hence the duplicity and slyness in thought, word, and deed; from hence—the various false rules and regulations, for the confession of sins; from hence indulgences; from hence the distortion of dogmas; from hence the fabrication of the saints of the western church and non-existent relics, not glorified by God; from hence—"the exalting against the knowledge of God" (II Cor. x. 5), and every sort of opposition to God under the appearance of piety and zeal for the greater glory of God.

The pope and the papists have become so proud and have so exalted themselves that they have thought to criticize Christ Himself, the Hypostatic Wisdom of God Himself, and have extended their pride to the point that they have distorted some of His words, commandments, and ordinances which should not be altered to the end of this age: for example, His statement concerning the Holy Spirit, His commandment concerning the cup of His all-immaculate Blood, of Which they have deprived the layman, setting at naught the words of the Apostle Paul: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (I Cor. xi. 26); instead of leavened bread in the liturgy, they use wafers. I thank the Lord Who has heard and hears my prayers in the presence of the most saving and dread sacrifice (the Body and Blood of Christ; for the great communities which have gone astray in their faith, which though named Christian are in reality apostate—the Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and others; also that all peoples may be drawn to the true faith, as also our Old Believers.

Count L. Tolstoy infringed upon the truth of the Gospel and the whole of Sacred Scripture and perverted the thought of the Gospel, which is indisputably most important and invaluable for the people of all ages. He rejected the belief in Christ as the Son of God, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world, and led astray many who followed in his footsteps, and destroyed them; he renounced the Church, founded by Christ, trampled upon the grace of Baptism, Chrismation, Repentance, Communion and all the Mysteries; because of his self-conceit he accounts himself to be the judge of the Word of God and his own supreme criterion, and does not verify himself by It. But woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and in their own sight! (Esaias v. 21)

*From Orthodox Life, July-August 1970 (no. 4), pp. 14-29.*