

English translation by Igor Radev

New Hieromartyr Archbishop Saint Hilarion (Troitsky)

## HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE CHURCH

In the Church there are no stone tablets upon which letters were written by the Divine finger. The Church possesses her Holy Scripture, but the One who established the Church left nothing in writing. Only once was it mentioned of Christ in John's Gospel, how leaning down He had written something: even then, Christ wrote using his finger and made marks upon the ground. Who knows? It may be even possible that he did not write any words, but had merely drawn some patterns with His finger pointing to the ground. Nevertheless, the Church has a Scripture, which is called by her - Holy and Divine.

Christ left nothing in writing. It seems quite likely that one who ponders this fact would grasp clearly the very essence of Christ's mission. The other religious leaders of humanity, the founders of different philosophical schools, have written willingly and in abundance, yet Christ wrote nothing at all. Would this not mean that the work of Christ, in its essence, has nothing in common with the endeavors of other philosophers, teachers or other outstanding representatives of mankind's intellectual life!? Furthermore, did the Church ever view her Founder as one of the teachers of humanity? Has she ever considered His teachings as the quintessential purpose of His mission? No, the Christian Church with the outmost exertion of her theological abilities has held firm the greatest truth of religion - that **Christ is the incarnate on earth Only-begotten Son of God, of one Essence with God the Father**. For that truth, all the greatest Fathers of the Church were willing to put their lives at stake. They stood fearless in the battle for this truth. Here they didn't back off even for an inch before their adversaries, quite literarily not even for a single *Iota*, since this *Iota* (ι) in the Greek language denotes the difference between the words “of similar essence” (ομοίου>σιον) and “of one essence” (ομοου>σιον)[1]. “Those, who are called Arians by the Christians, abide in deep and extreme delusion” writes Saint Athanasius the Great.[2] In such unbending terms this Diamond of Orthodoxy holds the opinion that it is impossible to be a Christian if one denies the Incarnation of the Son of God, Who is of one Essence with God the Father.

But was the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son of God necessary merely to write some book and pass it to mankind? Was it essential to actually be the Only-begotten Son of God just in order to pen a book? And if the Church with such determination insisted on the Divine dignity of her Founder, then it becomes obvious that she saw that the essence of His work lay not in writing, but that the Incarnation of the Son of God was necessary for the *salvation* of humanity, rather than writing a book. No book is, nor could ever have been able to save mankind. Christ is not *Teacher*, but *Savior* of humanity! In fact, what needed to be done was the renewal of sin-stricken human nature, the foundation stone of which has been the *very Incarnation* of the Son of God, not His teaching, not the book of the New Testament. This truth had already been declared

with the utmost resolve by Church theologians in the Second Century. As it is known, beginning from the latter half of the Second Century, Marcion<sup>[3]</sup> and his followers forged a sharp division between the Old and the New Testament. They even preached that the Two Testaments are derived from two different gods. The New Testament, according to their opinion, transmits a *new doctrine*, which is directly opposed to the Old Testament teachings, therefore completely replacing them. However, from the very beginning Christ Himself together with the Apostles and the Church from recognized the Old Testament Scripture as an authority. The opinions of Marcion naturally met with the due resistance put forward by the Church authors. During the dispute with Marcion, the Second Century theologians meticulously elucidated that the New Testament does not reject the Old one, but in fact, the whole of the New Testament is already foretold in the Old. “The Prophets knew the New Testament and have announced it.”<sup>[4]</sup> “Read more carefully” - writes Saint Irenaeus of Lyons: “the Gospel given to us by the Apostles, and then read with awareness the Prophets, and you will find out that the entire ministry, the entire teaching and all the suffering of our Lord were prefigured by them.”<sup>[5]</sup> Consequently, from a doctrinal aspect, the New Testament in essence does not offer anything *radically new*. Those used to look upon Christ primarily as a Teacher might certainly be dismayed by such claims and the logical conclusions drawn from them. Nonetheless, the greatest theologian of the Second Century, Saint Irenaeus of Lyons<sup>[6]</sup>, who according to the words of Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus<sup>[7]</sup>, “was anointed with the heavenly gifts of true faith and knowledge”<sup>[8]</sup>, puts aside all possible dismay. In effect he focuses the attention on the fact that it is not in some new teaching that abides the purpose and the essence of Christ's advent. He writes: “If a thought arises in your mind asking – ‘what new has brought Christ by His coming?’ - you ought to know that He has brought *everything new by bringing Himself to us, thus renewing and bringing new life to man.*”<sup>[9]</sup> The renewal of humanity is therefore a result of the very advent, the Incarnation of the Son of God itself. The preceding thought has been most clearly expressed by this Holy Father in his recently discovered work *Demonstration of Apostolic Sermon* (chapter 99). “There are those who do not ascribe any importance to the descent of the Son of God and the dispensation of His Incarnation, which has been proclaimed by the Apostles and heralded by the Prophets as the *only way to bring perfection to our humanity*. Such men also deserve to be counted as of little faith.” Consequently, the perfection of our humanity, according to the teaching of Saint Irenaeus, is necessarily brought into life by the dispensation of the Incarnation of the Son of God, not by any kind of doctrine, not by the writing of any book. Through His Incarnation and becoming man, the Son of God, the Second Person of Holy Trinity, made people partakers in the Divine nature. Receiving human nature in the unity of His Hypostasis, the Son of God after taking on a human body, became a New Adam, the Ancestor, the Begetter of the New Humanity – the Christian Church. “Seeing that what He had created according to His image and likeness had been corrupted by disobedience, Jesus bowed the Heavens and descended changelessly; He dwelt within the Virgin's womb, that through her He might restore corrupted Adam”<sup>[10]</sup> “The Son of the Most High has become Son of man in order to make man son of God”, - says Saint Irenaeus.<sup>[11]</sup> In the new humanity built upon the foundation stone of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the unity of our human nature which has been broken by sin is being restored. This new humanity Christ Himself has named *the Church*. In Chapter 16 of Mathew's Gospel, we read how the Apostle Peter on behalf of all the Apostles proclaimed the truth of the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son of God; and Christ in turn responded to him: “Upon this rock (meaning obviously - upon the Incarnation, on that One who is the Son of the Living God) I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew, 16: 16-19). When parting

and bidding farewell to His Disciples, Christ promised to them another Comforter. the Holy Spirit, who will instruct them, guide them (οJdhgh>sei) into all the truth, Who will abide with them for ever (John 14: 16-17; 15: 26; 16: 13). This Holy Spirit is often talked about in the Holy Scripture – as the One Who gives and sustains the life of the Church, which is Christ's Body. In the members of the Church lives the Spirit of God (Romans 8: 9, 11, 23, 26; 2 Timothy 1: 14; 1 Peter 4: 14), which guides them (Romans 8: 14). The Holy Spirit is the only Fountainhead of all spiritual gifts bestowed upon the members of the Church (1 Corinthians 12: 4-11). The Church as a whole, and also in her individual members, thinks and pursues perfection through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Each man solely through his bond with the Church receives all the necessary means needed for his moral regeneration.

See how both the Holy Scripture and the mind of the Church thus express the meaning and essence of Christ's work. The work of Christ is the creation of the Church, the new humanity. Christ's work as we understand it is in all reality unique; boundlessly it stays aloof of every human achievement. Too often nowadays there are those who come across parallels with the teaching of Christ in the pagan literature, in Buddhism, in the Talmud, in Babylon and Egypt. However, one, who sees Christ as the incarnated Son of God, finds all that talk about the historical “influences” on Christianity devoid of any meaning. The essence of Christ's work abides not in His teaching; hence it is evidently nonsense and even an offense to reduce Christ to the same level as wise men - *teachers*, like: Buddha, Confucius, Socrates et cetera. Christ made mankind partake in the Divine nature, he infused in human nature new powers of grace, He has built the Church, He has sent down to us the Holy Spirit. None of this could have been done by any teacher-*man*, no matter how lofty the verities preached by him, how ingenious and great the books written by his pen. “Our unbending Columbus of each already discovered America” (as Vladimir Solovyov<sup>[12]</sup> had wittily called Tolstoy.<sup>[13]</sup>) In the preface of his Geneva publication *Brief Exposition of the Gospel*, he had written: “I consider Christianity a teaching that gives meaning to life... and therefore, it is completely irrelevant to me whether Christ was God or not” (pg. 9, 11). The Church, on the other hand, has understood very well that to look on Christianity in this manner means to nullify it. It is far too little to show man the meaning of life: it is still necessary to provide him with the *means* for that life. As a result, the total remaking of man was indispensable. Mankind is saved only through the Incarnation of the Son of God and His establishment of the Church.

This short demonstration of how the Church understands Christ's mission must be the sole starting point for all our deliberations on the Holy Scripture.

Christ wrote nothing – His descent to earth has nothing to do with writing. The essence of His work is neither teaching, nor authoring a book such as, for example – “Complete Course of Christian Dogmatics”. No, His work has nothing to do with any literary endeavor!

But if this is so, then what exactly is the Holy Scripture?

Christ has created the Church. The Church existed even at the time when not a single book of the New Testament Scripture was yet present. You see, the books of the New Testament were written by the Apostles long afterwards, in the period stretching for half a century from the beginning of the Church's historical existence. In the books written by them, the Apostles left

behind testimonies of their oral evangelizing. They wrote for a Church already in existence, and handed over to the Church their books so as to serve the purpose of perpetual edifying. It is evident that the books of the Holy Scripture do not make the essence of Christianity, since Christianity itself isn't a teaching, but a *new life*, established in mankind by the Holy Spirit and built upon the foundation stone set by the Incarnation of the Son of God. Thereupon, it isn't impudent to say that not by the Holy Scripture, as a book, the man is being saved, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who lives in the Church. The Church guides people into perfection. Still, there are other ways, other means to that effect besides the books of the Holy Scripture. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "There are many tribes of barbarians who believe in Christ, who achieve salvation that is written in their hearts not by ink on paper, but by the Spirit, accurately keeping the ancient traditions they have received. Those who have accepted our faith not in writing are barbarians only in relation to our language, but in respect to their learning, mores and way of life, they, in keeping with their faith, are exceptionally wise and pleasing to God, living in all justice, purity and wisdom."<sup>[14]</sup>

To be made a follower of a certain philosophical school it is necessary to adopt the philosophical works by the founder of that school. But is it sufficient to know the New Testament in order to become a Christian? Would this knowledge be enough for salvation? Certainly not! It is quite possible to know by heart the entire New Testament; it is very probable that you could master perfectly the doctrine of the New Testament, and yet be far, far away from salvation. For salvation it's necessary to be *added* to the Church: it is said in the Book of Acts, that such as should be saved were added to the Church (Acts 2: 47; 5: 13-14). And this was happening at the time before the Scriptures existed but the Church did already, when there were those who were being saved. Why was it so crucial to be added to the Church? It is because a unique means of grace is needed for salvation, only attainable by those who participate in the life of the Church, the life of the One and Indivisible Body of Christ. The grace-filled power of the Holy Spirit acts in the Church through many pathways: in the Mysteries and the sacramental rites of the Church, in the communal prayer and the mutual love, in the Church stewardship; and as Divinely inspired Word of God it also operates through the books of the Holy Scripture. Here we come close to the definition of the Holy Scripture. The Books of the Holy Scripture are one of the means through which the grace-bearing power of God affects people in the Church. The Spirit of God makes alive only the Body of the Church, and therefore, the Holy Scripture is to find meaning and significance only within the Church. "We must take shelter in the Church and find edification in her bosom, feeding ourselves with the Lord's Writ. Verily, the Church is planted as a Paradise in this world. Hence, 'of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat', says the Spirit of God, that is: eat of every Scripture of the Lord."<sup>[15]</sup>

Ergo, Holy Scripture is one of the means of expression of which the common grace-filled life of the Church consists. The Bible is the property of the Church, dear and precious, but nonetheless, property. The Holy Scripture shouldn't be severed from the overall life of the Church. Only the Church gives meaning to the very existence of Scripture. Holy Scripture does not hold significance on its own; it cannot be considered as simply given to the Church by some external law that she can chose to obey or transgress. The Holy Scripture was produced in the bosom of the Church and is thus for the Church. Holy Scripture is at disposal of the Church and is put to use by her for the wellbeing of her members.

It seems our Orthodox churches demonstrate quite visibly the importance of Scripture in the Church. The Gospel Book lies upon the Altar together with the other liturgical vessels, with the “Reserved Sacraments”, “Presanctified Gifts” etc. The “Apostle Book[16]” is kept in the same place with the other liturgical books. In the Ancient Church, the Gospel had been also usually kept inside the *skeuophilakirion*, equivalent to our present sacristy[17], from which it was taken out only for public reading during the Services. If Christianity happened to be just a sort of philosophical school, then at our Church meetings we would only have engaged ourselves in studying and interpreting the New Testament; but that isn't the case at all! Christianity is not a school, and reading from the Holy Scripture represents only one element of the public ministration. Inside the Church's overflowing river of grace-filled life, Holy Scripture is but a stream.

Thoughts along this line may superficially appear as denigrating to the Holy Scripture. Here we could ask - has there ever been a person who more than Chrysostom talked about the benefit and dignity of Holy Scripture? Wasn't he the one who used to call the reading of Scripture - conversation with God? Wasn't it to him that Divine Scripture came into sight as a Spiritual Garden and Paradise of Joy?[18] In the light of this, we find somewhat startling the deliberations of Saint John Chrysostom[19] at the beginning of his commentary on Saint Mathew the Evangelist's Gospel.

”In all reality, we wouldn't have had the need of the assistance provided by the Holy Scripture, but instead, the only thing required would have been to lead lives so pure that the grace of the Spirit could make superfluous all books; thereupon, just as they are written by ink, so our hearts should have been inscribed by the Spirit. However, since we have turned our backs on this sort of grace, then let us, at least, make use of a second means. In fact, God both by word and deed has shown that the first way was better. Indeed, with Noah, Abraham and his posterity, with Job and Moses, God did not communicate through written letters but directly, because He found their mind abiding in pureness. But when all of the Hebrew people had sunk into the depths of wickedness, only then the written letters, tablets and the teachings transmitted through them made their way. And this was the course of events not only with the holy men of the Old Covenant, but, as it is obvious, with those of the New one too. Here, God did not hand over to the Apostles anything in writing, but instead of scriptures, He promised to give them the grace of the Spirit. ‘He shall bring all things to your remembrance,’ - as it is said (John 14: 26). And in order to understand that this way (of God's communication with the saints) is by far better, take heed to what He says through the prophet: ‘I will make a new covenant; I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; for they shall all know Me’ (Jeremiah 31: 31-34; John 6: 45). Paul too, referring to this preeminence, said that he has received a law not written upon tablets of stone, but on the very tables of the heart (2 Corinthians 3: 3). However, with the passing of time, some deviated from the true teaching; others fell from the life of purity and virtue. So, that's why once again a need sprang up for instruction by written means. Please, think now, would it not be utter foolhardiness if we, who owed to live in such purity as not to have any need of Scripture, offering our hearts to the Spirit instead of books, having lost that virtue and coming to need Scripture, do not draw even on this second medicine? Consider this: since we who already deserve reproach for even having need of Scripture, how great our fault might be if

we refuse to make the most of this expedient, and instead, start holding in contempt the Scripture, deeming it unnecessary and redundant, thereby bringing upon ourselves still heavier retribution!?”[\[20\]](#)

Here, Saint John Chrysostom defends the required study of the Holy Scripture, but on the sidelines he also says that basically it wasn't necessary to be in need of the Holy Scripture to start with if leading life in purity, that books were redundant, that the grace of the Holy Spirit could have directly guided the soul. This path of spiritual illumination is superior. With the Patriarchs and the Apostles God talked without the aid of Scripture. The necessity for the Holy Scripture was made evident only when some deviated from the true teaching while others fell from the purity of life. Scripture on the whole is simply a second medicine. We already deserve reproach for even having need in Scripture. It becomes clear above all, that Saint John Chrysostom does not equate Holy Scripture as such with Christianity. He describes Scripture as expedient, medicine. Evidently, religious life could subsist even without Holy Scripture at all, which represents no more than one of the utensils aiding that life. The life of the soul being saved is nourished by the Divine Spirit, of course within the Church. It is purely by the will of the Divine Spirit that He conceded to the mediation of Scripture, books, for instructing men, especially after the soul became incapable of receiving the movements of the Spirit directly.

It is quite remarkable how this discourse of St John Chrysostom is repeated almost to the word by Venerable Isidore of Pelusium[\[21\]](#) in his letter to Deacon Isidore. Venerable Isidore saw a sea of poignant thoughts in Chrysostom's deliberations. Isidore himself was positively elated by the views of Chrysostom, though admitting that on first glance they seem somewhat incredible or even scandalous. “You may find it hard to believe,” says Venerable Isidore, “but, after listening to it carefully with a good deal of thought, you will not only marvel over it but could even start applauding. And what is it, then, that thing which at first seems unlikely, and after a while not only becomes amazing, but worthy of applause too? I will explain to you in few words this sea of poignant thoughts.” Thereupon, Venerable Isidore repeats the deliberations of John Chrysostom.[\[22\]](#)

Finally, we have the great ascetic and outstanding authority in the issues of spiritual life and salvation – Saint Isaac of Syria[\[23\]](#), bishop of the Christ-loving city of Nineveh, who bears witness to the fact that for a man already being perfected, on the higher levels of ascetic life in *theoria*[\[24\]](#), the Holy Scripture does not hold the same significance as for people not yet abiding in such an advanced state of perfection. “Until man receives the Comforter, he needs the Divine Scriptures in order that the remembrance of what is good be imprinted in his mind, so by means of frequent reading, the inclination towards the good could be renewed over and over again, thus keeping his soul safe from the subtle traps of sinful ways. This is necessary because he hasn't yet obtained the power of the Spirit that dispels all delusions, delusions that steal away the beneficial remembrance, leading man in this way into coldness through the scattering of his mind. However, when the power of the Spirit comes down on the active faculties of the human soul, then instead of the law of Scripture, the commandments of the Spirit take root inside the heart, which starts to be instructed in mysterious ways by the Spirit Himself, hence discarding the need for expedients of sensory and material nature. As long as the heart gets instructed through

something material, the learning can often be followed by error and forgetfulness, but when the training is conducted by the Spirit, the remembrance stays intact.”<sup>[25]</sup> Here, we can notice the common view held with Chrysostom that Scripture is but a means for the benefit of spiritual life. Reading of the Scripture reinvigorates in the soul its inclination towards the good. Nonetheless, the life of the soul isn't encompassed in its totality by the Scripture. This life is grace-driven, and grace is granted to the soul not by the book of the Holy Scripture, but by the Holy Spirit, Who has been sent to the Church.

The above views expressed by the great Fathers of the Church at first glance can easily seem rather scandalous, but if we ponder them and put them into the context of the general system of the Orthodox Church's view of the world, then we can't but agree that they bear a sea of poignant thoughts. Here we are able to see the validation of Scripture from the standpoint of the Church. These things could have been said only by people living completely immersed in the Church and who have assimilated in fullness the religious ideal of the Church, which consists not in some new scholarly teaching, but in the new life of the saved humanity built upon the foundation stone set by the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Still, it is beyond doubt that in the cited patristic statements an unaccustomed judgment on the Scripture is given. And such opinion on the Scripture can be grasped only by those who consciously live immersed in the purity of this religious ideal. The religious ideal of the Church, the ideal of deification, so fully articulated during our Divine services, has been retained by far too few people in contemporary awareness.

Perhaps the most pitiful ill of our times is the perceived division between Christ and the Church. Christianity is viewed not as a new life of saved humanity united in the Church, but as a sum of certain theoretical and moral stands. Rather too much they've begun to talk about Christian teachings, and as a consequence have become oblivious of Church life. Coinciding with this, they've also forgotten that the most important thing in Christ's mission is His Incarnation. They have started to view Christ more and more as a wise teacher, while the truth of His Divine Sonship has been taken to backstage. To serve simply as a teacher it is not necessary to be the Only-begotten Son of God, Coessential with God the Father. Today some are willing to call Christians not only the Arians, but there are even those who like the ancient Jews see Christ as an ordinary son of a Nazareth carpenter, or at best an ingenious religious teacher, just like Buddha, Confucius and others. Among us here, even Leo Tolstoy came to be considered a Christian, and for that matter, not an ordinary one but a “true Christian”. In contemporary religious awareness only the teaching of Christianity is desirable and comprehensible, but there is no need for Christ – the God-Man and the new life brought down to earth by Him, which is kept inside the grace-filled organism of the Church. Christ from His throne on the right side of God the Father, in the modern religious understanding has been reduced to a preacher in his pulpit.

However, if we have before us a teacher, then every word of his, every literary document bearing in any way the mark of his doctrine, must be valued as holding extraordinary significance. Something of the sort has happened to the Holy Scripture. On its own and taken independently of the Church, it was imbued with singular significance only when the luminous Church ideal got dimmed. The Holy Scripture was awarded such unique attention and ingenious

scrutiny from the time of the German Reformation onward, when in place of the Church the lonely individual was seated, thus opening the gates to the rationalism which mortifies any kind of authentic Church life. In principle, Protestantism, which has extinguished every manifestation of Church life, proceeded and still proceeds under the banner of the Holy Scripture, proclaiming each written letter of it Divinely inspired. Protestantism even today takes a stand with words declaring unique esteem for the Holy Scripture, while at the same time, even for the pastors themselves it is no longer obligatory to believe in the Divinity of Christ, as has been demonstrated in recent years by the case of Pastor Jato (Ято) – this German Tolstoy in pastor's guise - as well as the sympathy awarded by some pastors to those New Mythologists headed by Arthur Drews[26], who claim that Christ as a historical figure actually never existed. Having lost the living Christ and the authentic Church life, Protestants began worshiping the book of the New Testament as if it a fetish. Just bother to enter into some Protestant church of more radical views, and what you will see are rows of pews facing the pulpit, a pulpit, and on the pulpit – a Bible. In short, if you would just take away the icon from any classroom or auditorium[27], what you've got is a Protestant church. The Gospel for the Protestants is as if a work of Christ the Teacher, which has to be studied in order to be counted a Christian. Hence, Protestantism tries to replace the overflowing river of grace-driven Church life with but a single stream of it taken apart and in isolation. The Protestants, having rebelled against the pope – a man - ended up creating for themselves from the Bible a “paper pope”, and the latter error was worse than the former.

Apparently, the Holy Scripture is awarded greater value by those who have lost the Church, but this is only superficially so.

The Holy Scripture must be looked on as one of the manifestations of the grace-filled Church life. Nevertheless, one who stays outside the Church does not partake in this grace-filled life. All those deliberations of Protestants and sectarians on the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scripture are no more than empty rhetoric, which is unclear and highly suspicious even to them. Living spiritual power cannot be attached in some sort of magical manner to inanimate lifeless objects. There are, for example, passionate admirers of ancient icons, who from a religious viewpoint are complete nihilists. So, do the icons in their collections stay the same as they were once – revered from olden days, piously venerated and respected inside the splendid ancient churches? The Spirit breathes where He chooses. He brings to life the One Body of Christ. How can we speak of Divine inspiration outside the Church, without the Spirit of God? If the grace factor of the Holy Scripture is made thoroughly void outside the Church, then what are we left with? We are left with the Bible, mere books, literary composition, literary records. The Holy Scripture in the Church doesn't mean everything, but outside the Church there is no Holy Scripture – the Word of God - only the physical books of the Holy Scripture are left then. People not of the Church are used to speak very often of their high regard for the Holy Scripture, and they even reprimand the Church for what is seen as disregard of Scripture. Such words, however, represent nothing more than self-delusion and pitiful misunderstanding. Right opinion on the Holy Scripture is obtained by us only if we draw it from the idea of the Church, and thus the correct use of Scripture for our own benefit can be achieved only by *living within the Church*. With no Church, having no Church life, Christianity itself dissolves into nothing[28], and reading literary monuments can't replace the life that is no more.

Defining the essence of Holy Scripture, we can now formulate the following proposition:-

*The Holy Scripture represents one of the aspects of the common grace-filled Church life, and outside the Church, there cannot be any Holy Scripture in the true meaning of the word.*

If we accept this stance on the Holy Scripture, then we ought to take a position against the theological view, dominant even in our school curriculum, which consider Holy Scripture essentially the source for Church doctrine. We mustn't shy away from the fact that the issue of doctrine sources (Translator's note: the problem of distinguishing the bases from which the doctrines of the Christian Church are derived) in standard Dogmatics textbooks finds itself in a hopeless state. As by a rule, they are used to speak of two sources of doctrine: Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. Both of these sources are indispensable, though very often preference is given to the Holy Scripture. In disputes with sectarians and Protestants, much effort is given to prove that Holy Scripture alone is insufficient, that *beside* Scripture, there is also need for Holy Tradition. But, if Holy Scripture is the source of doctrine, then how are we supposed to reveal the doctrine hidden inside this source? "Well, it's enough to remember Arianism and the First Ecumenical Council in order to recognize that every heresy has been based on the Scripture. Clearly, the question arises: How are we to understand Scripture so as to deduct from it, namely, *true* doctrine? It has to be apprehended in accordance with the Tradition" – they respond to us. Wonderful! And what sort of tradition we are obliged to accept? "That which does not contradict Scripture." Eventually, what do we get? Scripture has to be checked by Tradition, and Tradition must be checked by the Scripture. The end result is an example of circular logic, *idem per idem*, or translated more loosely into Russian – "the story of the white calf"[\[29\]](#).

Church doctrine has but one Source: the Holy Spirit, Who lives within the Church, of Whom it was promised by Christ that He will guide (οJdhgh>sei; John 16: 13) the Church into all truth. Thus, the Church possesses true doctrine not because she draws it from the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, but because she is in fact the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth, guided by the Holy Spirit. We ought to speak only of the Church. Together with the Church, stand or fall both the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition. A. S. Khomiakov[\[30\]](#) has written splendidly in his *Treatise of Catechetical Exposition of the Teaching on the Church*: "The Spirit of God, Who lives within the Church, Who rules her, guides her, makes her wise, is manifesting Himself inside her in many ways: in the Scripture, in the Tradition and in the works; for the Church that acts the works of God is the same Church which retains the Tradition and has written the Scripture. Not some persons in isolation or multitude of persons belonging to the Church keep the Tradition and have done the writing, but it is the Spirit of God living in the totality of the Church. Therefore, we don't need to look in Scripture for the roots of the Tradition, nor in the Tradition to seek evidence for the Scripture, neither in the works to seek justifications for both Scripture and Tradition. No, we mustn't do this! Those who live outside the Church cannot comprehend the Scripture, the Tradition or the works. On the other hand, to those abiding inside the Church and partaking in the Spirit of the Church, the unity of these things is obvious according to the grace living within her (§ 5)." Beautiful and profound deliberations on this subject can be encountered also in the *Epistle of the Patriarchs of the Eastern-Catholic Church on the Orthodox Faith*: "We believe the testimony of the Catholic Church does not hold lesser authority than the Divine Scripture, since the Cause of both the former and the latter is One and the Same Holy Spirit! Therefore, *it makes no difference whether*

*instruction is received from the Scripture or from the Ecumenical Church. A person who speaks from himself may err, deceive and be deceived; however, the Ecumenical Church, since she never did nor does now speak from herself, but from the Holy Spirit, Who is her Teacher perpetually for ever and ever, cannot err, deceive or get deceived; hence, similarly to the Divine Scripture she too is infallible and holds interminable authority... By living and getting instructed within the Church, inside which the Apostolic oral evangelization is continued in succession, a person is able to learn the dogmas of Christian Faith from the Ecumenical Church, and this is so not because *the Church herself draws her dogmas from the Scripture, but because she possesses them innately*; if she, deliberating on certain dogma, cites different places from the Bible, *this isn't done in order to deduce her dogmas*, but solely for their confirmation. Therefore, *whoever founds his faith upon Scripture only does not achieve the fullness of Faith and can't comprehend its properties.*”*

In complete accordance with this authoritative statement, we could *bring everything to faith in the Church*. If one has faith in the Church, then for him the Holy Scripture receives its due importance.

However, those who haven't achieved the fullness of faith, who do not comprehend its properties, failing thus to understand that *there is no other way* of representing Christianity but as the Church, such men brutishly and sacrilegiously renounce the very faith in the Church. In this way acted Leo Tolstoy too, who in the introduction to his *Brief Exposition of the Gospel* has written: “The claim that this or another formulation of certain dogma is a Divine expression of the Holy Spirit denotes gross stupidity and arrogance: it is gross arrogance since there isn't anything more arrogant than to say that the words I have pronounced were uttered by God Himself through me; in addition, it is gross stupidity also because nothing more stupid might one say than on someone's claim that through his mouth it is God Who is speaking, to respond – no, not through your mouth, but through my mouth God makes pronouncements, and He speaks exactly the opposite of what your God is saying. In the end, isn't this what all the Councils, Creeds, Churches are all about, and isn't it this the source of all evil that has been committed and is still being committed in the world in the name of faith!?”[\[31\]](#) These uncouth words of the intellectual “true Christian” and “great teacher” in different forms are prone to be repeated by many. Having faith in the Church is not so easy a feat, and it goes slightly beyond the strength of our contemporaries. To live within the Church means, first of all, to love, to live by love, and to live by love means to struggle against the sinful self-love which is a grave illness in many people. Particularly, keeping faith in the Church represents a strenuous feat of the intellect by demanding its obedience. To make your reason obedient to the Church is uniquely difficult, because this sort of obedience leaves its mark upon one's whole life. In regard to the Church, the feat of the intellect is connected with the feat of the will. If we just suppose for a moment that the people have offered their wholehearted obedience to the Church, how many idols, how many gods and godlets are to be deposed!?! Not only Dnieper[\[32\]](#), but an entire sea would be needed to drown all those graven images. And yet, even a miniscule feat of the intellect isn't granted to those with boastful reason. His Eminence Theophan the Recluse[\[33\]](#) is reflecting: “It's remarkable how Wisdom calls to herself the simple: ‘Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither.’ It rather seems that the clever are barred from entering into the Wisdom's House, i.e. the Holy Church. Cleverness must cast aside every hope at the gates of this House. On the other hand, if the whole insight and knowledge are to be found within the House of Wisdom, then outside this

House, that is to say outside the Church, only foolishness, ignorance and blindness prevail. So wonderful is God's providence! Entering the Church you put aside your own mind, and that's how you shall become truly wise; cast away your self-centered activity, and you shall become truly active; renounce your own self, and thus you shall become your own master. Ah, if only the world could grasp this wisdom! But, alas, this has been hidden from it. In lack of understanding for the wisdom of God, the world shouts abuses against it, and the intelligent fools are thus kept imprisoned in their own blindness.”[34] This breed of “intelligent fools” are nowadays to be found in abundance, for the reason that mankind has become rather too “clever” and is expanding day by day its “cleverness” still further. The intellect of all humanity is becoming ever more boastful. However, pride and boastfulness of any kind are incompatible with the Church. Even from the times of the early Church the connection linking pride with apostasy and enmity towards the Church has been noted. “Heresies have very often and are still coming into being for the reason that the obstinate mind does not have peace in itself.” [35] – says Saint Cyprian of Carthage[36]. “Proud and disobedient men either apostatize or rebel against the Church.”[37]

See, it's exactly this anti-Church and antichristian mentality that is underlying the severance of Holy Scripture from the Church. The Church is being denounced while Holy Scripture is approved of. The Church is abused but the Holy Scripture extolled. Then again, our thesis has been that Holy Scripture can exist as such solely within the Church, while outside of her there isn't any place for it. This thesis deserves to be addressed in detail, so that truth may prevail against all falsehood and misunderstanding. Drawing from the idea of the Church, we reflected on the very essence of Scripture. This same idea cannot but determine in fullness our attitude to the Holy Scripture. Only by steadfastly keeping to the idea of the Church, will we be able to refute the deceitful words of those striving to divide the indivisible, who sever Holy Scripture from the Church.

In our time, ever more frequently we find ourselves faced with opinions of the sort: “We read something in the Holy Scripture. The Church teaches differently. Ergo, the Church is wrong.” This is how sectarians of all kinds are chanting *ad nauseam*. There are even those echoing such thoughts while still calling themselves Christians, but who have acquired bizarre haughtiness in their regard of the Church, thus elevating their own selves high above her. Taking from the previously described standpoint on the sources of doctrine, it isn't so easy to tackle these issues properly. Let us consider, for example, just the question of icon veneration. A sectarian could point to the Old Testament prohibition of making images, or to the words of Christ about spiritual worship. For him icons are a contradiction. Could we respond by saying that icon veneration is based on the Tradition? However, wasn't Tradition to be accepted only when it didn't contradict Scripture? Referring, as an example, to the Cherubim depicted on the curtain of the Old Testament Temple is hardly convincing. Therefore, the row continues with no end in sight and lacking any fruition, simply for the reason that the missionaries themselves assume the sectarians' perspective; that perspective in turn, leads only to a battle of words and not to the truth. In contrast, drawing from the idea of the Church, we don't even need to argue on the bases of Scripture; for us the faith in the Church suffices. The fruitlessness of disputes “from the Scripture” was observed by Tertullian[38] long ago, who used to say such arguments could only make your stomach and brain ill or cause you to lose your voice, falling finally into rabid fury from the blasphemies of heretics.[39] He stresses that it is not worth appealing to Scripture, where, victory is either unlikely or completely impossible.[40] But a person of the Church can

boldly reiterate these words, since to him “it makes no difference whether instruction is received from the Scripture or from the Ecumenical Church.”

All those reflections on the perceived disagreement between the Church and the Holy Scripture are totally erroneous and impious to the core. The Holy Spirit through the hallowed Apostles has written the Holy Scripture for the Church, but furthermore, the same Holy Spirit, according to the steadfast promise of Christ, instructs the Church in all truth. The Holy Spirit is one and indivisible, eternal and unwavering, He is the Spirit of Truth. Is it credible that in the Holy Scripture He could say one thing while in the teaching and life of the Church, another? Can it be to no purpose that the Council of the Apostles described in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Acts*, along with all the successive Councils, has pronounced its decisions with the wording: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”!? To allow for the possibility of disagreement between the Church and the Holy Scripture means to speak of self-contradiction by the Holy Spirit, and this truly represents blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Only the devil could generate such a blasphemous thought by claiming a contradiction of the Holy Spirit by Himself. Consequently, we cannot but agree with the harsh and poignant, but still wise and just utterance of Venerable Vincent of Lerins<sup>[41]</sup>: “When we see how some bring out the words of Prophets and Apostles for the purpose of disproving the Ecumenical Faith (openly alleging disagreement between the Church and the Holy Scripture), there isn't a trace of doubt left that it is the devil in person who is speaking through their mouths.”<sup>[42]</sup> This also brings to our mind the following verse from the *Epistle to the Hebrews*: “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God...and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10: 29)

If the Church and the Holy Scripture by their very essence cannot be in contradiction, then the following conclusion becomes inevitable: “In case the teaching of the Church appears to us as being in some disagreement with the Holy Scripture, it simply means that we have misunderstood either the Church teachings or the Holy Scripture, or even both of them at the same time, hence our duty is to try comprehending well the former and the latter and to realize the very concord between Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church, instead of renouncing and condemning the Church teachings through our arrogant folly.” This is exactly what the Holy Fathers of the Church had done during the Ecumenical Councils. The heretics, the Arians for example, in the First Ecumenical Council brought out many passages from the Holy Scripture that, according to their opinion, contradicted the truth of coessentiality, but the Fathers of the Church bothered only to point to the right understanding of those citations so that they should not to be taken as disagreement with the truth of the Church. In the same way the Sixth Ecumenical Council engaged thoroughly in the interpretation of the Gospel narration on the “Gethsemane agony”. Clearly enough, for a man of the Church there is no place in the Holy Scripture in contradiction with Church teaching; hence the teaching of the Church becomes a criterion for truthful understanding of Scripture.

The necessity for a Church-based approach to the Holy Scripture will be revealed to us with particular clarity if we reflect thoroughly on that supreme lie which Protestantism has embroidered on its banner, followed in succession by sectarianism of all kinds and human shallow-mindedness in general, not to mention the closely connected to it frivolity. Protestantism in principle rejected the need for Church norms in interpreting Scripture. I say “in principle”,

since norms of a sort have still been invented in the shape of newly fabricated sectarian creeds. If the Church norms have been rejected, then man is left alone, so to speak, with Scripture; hence during the interpretation of Scripture, everyone is to be guided by his own so-called common sense, of course, just after putting on one's head the tiara of an infallible pope. But can it be considered a trustworthy endeavor to be guided only by common sense while interpreting the Scripture? Is there anyone amongst us who has not yet encountered situations when the common sense of different people interprets exactly the same occurrences to mean completely divergent things?

Common sense is what Tolstoy constantly appeals to in his interpretation of the Gospel. However, you would obviously need the naivety and stubbornness of that unusually proud man to claim in unison with him that anyone unable to accept his interpretations, based of course on common sense, is almost mentally deranged. On the other hand, I think, and for that matter it is unquestionably so, that in a work like the interpretation of Holy Scripture, our sense left to itself can in no way be "common". Anyone who after examining his own moral life has had the courage to admit the painful truth discovered, will no doubt testify how suffocatingly oppressed is our reason under the yoke of passion, and how cunningly, insolently and presumptuously he gives excuses for the frailty of his will. Usually, we are rather easily prepared to agree with each other on issues that do not influence our personal lives, the choices made by our will. That's why in the field of mathematics there are so many universally recognized and uncontested truths. In fact, why shouldn't we recognize that the sum of the angles in a triangle is always  $180^\circ$ , or that the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angle triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides, as claimed by Pythagoras' Theorem? Is there a reason not to recognize these mathematical truths? My recognition of them doesn't oblige me to do anything. Exactly the same could be said about all the other so called scientific truths. "Why should I contend here, what would be the purpose of joining swords in disagreement? Isn't it all the same to me whether the learned specialists tell me that, for example, the whole matter is built out of the Mendeleev's atoms or out of electrons and ions; whether the world is just a sinuous vibration of the ether or that it can be explained by invisible and mysterious electric points; whether the sun is not, in fact, passing through the constellation of Hercules, but through Cancer, Scorpio or Libra? If the men of learning have come to that conclusion, let it be so. And should they say that it isn't so, everyone else will repeat after them that it really isn't so. Nothing would be changed by the fact. After all, these things are the responsibility of specialists, it is, so to speak, their homework."[\[43\]](#) However, quite thoughtfully and incisively the ingenious Leibniz[\[44\]](#) noticed: "If geometry by any chance took stand against our passions and vital interests the same way morality does, we would have ferociously challenged it and infringed on its principles despite all the proofs of Euclid and Archimedes, while Joseph Scaliger, Hobbes and the others, who wrote against Euclid and Archimedes wouldn't have lacked followers as they do now."[\[45\]](#) Holy Scripture, then again, is directed exactly against human passions. Everything that's in it talks about the life and the One Who has said: "I am the life". And here lies the cause why our sense, left to its own devices in the interpretation of the Word of life can be neither pure nor common.

What again can we find enlightening for the purpose of our enquiry from all that has been said above? In fact, the conclusion is that, if the interpretation of the Holy Scripture is left to

each individual, then out of it could hatch as many understandings of the Word of God as there are people, or more precisely, as there are whims within all of them. As a result, the Holy Scripture itself would cease to exist in any definable terms. Science also will have to be sacrificed on the altar of capriciousness. It seems that science is powerless to produce answers to the crucial questions of life; it simply cannot agree on a unified stand concerning those issues. If agreement of opinion had been a matter of science, then long ago it would have come into existence; on the contrary, we observe how doubts and divergence in outlook, due to science, are not only failing to reduce, but to the contrary are becoming even more numerous.

As an elegant illustration of this, how man aided only by the devices of his own intellect ventures to interpret the Holy Scripture, we find in the scene from “Faust” [\[46\]](#), where he gives interpretation to the initial verse of John's Gospel:

It's written here: ‘In the Beginning was the Word!’  
Here I stick already! Who can help me? It's absurd,  
Impossible, for me to rate the word so highly  
I must try to say it differently  
If I'm truly inspired by the Spirit. I find  
I've written here: ‘In the Beginning was the Mind’.  
Let me consider that first sentence,  
So my pen won't run on in advance!  
Is it Mind that works and creates what's ours?  
It should say: ‘In the beginning was the Power!’  
Yet even while I write the words down,  
I'm warned: I'm no closer with these I've found.  
The Spirit helps me! I have it now, intact.  
And firmly write: ‘In the Beginning was the Act!’

(Faust: Part I, Scene III; 1224-1237)

In less than three minutes four different interpretations of the one and same word took their turns! Furthermore, wasn't this scene from “Faust” reenacted on our Russian land at Yasna Polyana [\[47\]](#), where the worshipper of common sense (but only his own!), after consulting a Greek lexicon made the following translation of the same passage from the Gospel: “In the beginning was the understanding of life”!?

To what extent the interpretations of the Gospel text can become exotic, it is possible to see in the ensuing example. The now well known V. V. Rozanov [\[48\]](#) has interpreted in this way Matthew 16: 18 – “thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church” – he took it to mean that the entire Church, well, almost all of her, would be built in compliance with a desert, eremitic character. [\[49\]](#) However, somewhere else, one of the adherents of Rozanov (“Рцы”) comes forth with a different interpretation of the verse in question: Why has the Church been built upon Peter? It is because he was married and passionately loved his wife and children, not allowing separation from them even during his evangelizing journeys. Consequently, at the foundation of the Church lies the familial principle.

Hasn't it become clear enough that as many as there are people with their individual predispositions, so many will be the meanings of the Holy Scripture? Concerning this subject, we have the authoritative and powerful reflections of Saint Vincent of Lerins: "The Holy Scripture in all its loftiness isn't understood in the same sense by everybody, hence one takes the locutions found there to mean certain thing, while other will give a completely different meaning; and accordingly, almost as many heads there are, the meanings extracted from the Scripture will apparently be of the same number."<sup>[50]</sup> "Aren't the heretics too making use of the Holy Scripture? Yes, indeed they are, and to a great extent. Notice how they relentlessly dig through all the books of the Divine Law – through the books of Moses, the books of Kings, the Psalms, the Apostolic Epistles, the Gospel, the Prophets... Among their own kind or with others, in private or in public, orally or in written form, in house gatherings or in communal assemblies, they do not speak of anything if it has not previously been accompanied by words from the Scripture. Take the writings of Paul of Samosata, Priscillian, Iovianian<sup>[51]</sup> and those others who spread infectious diseases, - and you will discover in them enormous multitude of testimonies; still, you won't find amongst them a single page not colored and shaded by citations from the Old or the New Testament. They are well aware that their malodorous distortions could hardly command any approval if left to ferment in the original form, and that is why they get sprinkled, as if with perfume, with Heavenly locutions, in order that those who would easily disregard human fallacies be intimidated from rejecting what is presented as Divine message. They act just as people who wishing to lesser the bitter taste of some potion to a child, resort to splattering his mouth with honey so that the inexperienced child, after feeling the sweetness, will not shy away from the ensuing bitterness. This is the reason why our Savior proclaimed: 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves' (Matthew 7: 15). Who else could those ravening wolves be if not the heretics, who armed with their vicious bestial concoctions attack the gates of the Church, tearing to pieces Christ's flock wherever they can, stealthily approaching the simpleminded sheep as they hide their own wolfish appearance, while not abandoning their wolf-like ferocity? But just as if covered by a sheep's fleece, they wrap themselves up in locutions from the Divine Scripture so that no one, after feeling the softness of the wool, will take notice of their sharp teeth. Every time the false prophets, the false apostles and the false teachers come out with citations from the Divine Scripture so as to confirm their own fallacies with distorted interpretations of it, doubtless bringing into play such sly schemes to imitate their supreme guide, who wouldn't have made use of scams in the first place if not being aware from personal experience that when wanting to suborn those less likely to be deceived, there is no easier way of deluding than by quoting the authority of the Word of God.

But how do you know, someone could ask, that the devil takes advantage of the testimonies found in the Holy Scripture? Just look at the Gospel. It is written there: 'Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' (Matthew 4: 5-6) What, then, is he capable of doing to us wretched men, he who dared to attack the very Lord of Magnificence with quotations from the Scripture? As at that time the head spoke to the Head, so nowadays the members are talking to the members, i.e. the members of the devil to the members of Christ, the treacherous to the faithful, the impious to the pious, the heretics, in turn, to the Orthodox. And what do they say? They are shouting: 'If thou be the Son

of God, cast thyself down', – that is to say, if you desire to be son of God and inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, cast yourself down, meaning, cast yourself downwards from the heights of the Church which is the Temple of God, leave behind her teachings and tradition. If, on the other hand, you ask any heretic suggesting all the foregoing: How can you prove it, on what basis do you instruct me to discard the ancient and universal faith of the Ecumenical Church? – he would usually respond at once: 'It is written...' – and at that moment start presenting thousands of examples, thousands of corroborations from the Law, Psalms, Apostolic Epistles, Prophets, and by interpreting them in a completely novel and ghastly manner, to throw down the hapless soul from the Ecumenical Ark into the muddy pool of heresy.

Some would also ask, - what is to be done by the Orthodox people, the sons of the Mather Church when the very Divine words, locutions and promises are put to use by the devil and his disciples, out of whom some are false apostles, others false prophets and false teachers, and all together – heretics? Without a shred of doubt, what is needed is to make sure the Holy Scripture is interpreted according to the traditions of the entire Church and the precepts of the Ecumenical dogmatic teaching.”[\[52\]](#)

Leave a man alone with the Scripture, and the Scripture would lose any definable meaning and significance. A lonely individual will be left, who shall disguise the whims and figments of his own mind by holding them to be the authority of the Word of God. Without the Church and outside the Church, even if he clutches in his hands the book of the Holy Scripture, still the state of hopeless wondering is that person's unavoidable lot. “Those who have alienated themselves from the truth” – writes Saint Irenaeus about the heretics – “are naturally seduced by any falsehood rousing them at the moment, thus each time holding different opinions on the same subject, and lacking firm knowledge, they strive to be sophists who play with words rather than being disciples of truth. Apparently, they always pretend to seek the truth but can never really find it.”[\[53\]](#)

Thereupon, the harsh utterance of Polycarp of Smyrna[\[54\]](#), that disciple of the Apostle of love who in his Letter to the Philippians denounced anyone interpreting the words of the Lord according to his own fancy as a firstborn of Satan (chapter 7), becomes quite clear to us.

It goes beyond that. The intellect left on its own with the Holy Scripture could proceed even further into despoiling Scripture, thus confirming the wise words of Clement of Alexandria[\[55\]](#): “People overcome by passions are violating the Scripture according to their own desires.”[\[56\]](#) In fact, it is precisely because Christ Himself never wrote anything that the books of the New Testament leave a broad field for possible violation. The founders of the different philosophical schools have often left behind multi-volume collections of their works, in which their teachings were more or less completely and decidedly expressed by themselves. Whoever wishes to master their doctrines needs only to read these books. It is possible that not everything in them will be grasped fully and that it could be understood in a rather idiosyncratic way, but still an absolute arbitrariness is not possible since the student is constrained by the authentic expressions of the author-philosopher. But the case is not so with Christ and His teachings. Christ Himself had written nothing. Others wrote about Him, and only many years after the time His earthly life had passed: furthermore, some of those who did the writing were neither immediate witnesses to His deeds nor hearers of His teaching. From the standpoint of an autonomous intellect, the question

whether the authors of the New Testament books have conveyed Christ's teachings correctly is not only appropriate but also legitimate and unavoidable. Did they faithfully report His life and miracles? No matter if all of the New Testament books are perfectly authentic; does this still mean that everything written in them corresponds to reality? The authenticity of a book must always be differentiated from its trustworthiness. Authenticity is far from being a firm and credible guaranty of trustworthiness. Undeniably authentic statements even of an eyewitness can sometimes be proven to represent a complete falsehood. An observer could take poor notice of a certain event or fail to understand it properly. He could even mix up things, especially if he wrote aided only by recollection decades after the occurrence in question. Besides, how often can a man be a perfectly dispassionate narrator who simply photographs the event? Is it so rare that he succumbs to the temptation to add something of himself, maybe to represent his own wish as a reality? Finally, the author could have held some special purpose barring him from recounting everything just as it had happened. All such assumptions are quite understandable and natural. But if this is so, doesn't it become clear to us that to human reason are thus presented limitless opportunities to discover within the books of the New Testament, whatever it wishes for? Hence it is possible to overlook in them what actually is written and, on the other hand, to read between the lines and see something not written in even a single existing passage. What inside the Gospel really does belong to Christ and what has been simply ascribed to Christ by the Apostles? Which event corresponds in reality to a certain Gospel episode? You can assume absolutely anything, and in this way be able to create a "Christianity" in full accordance not only with your own tastes and wishes, but also with your passing whims. However, what will happen to the Truth of Christ by displaying such an attitude towards the Holy Scripture?

Unfortunately these thoughts are not simply an exercise in guesswork, but a conclusion deduced from numerous and highly informative historical records. There were as early as the Second Century people who, according to the report of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, boasted of being rectifiers of the Apostles[57] and considered themselves wiser not only than the bishops, but the very Apostles too.[58] These were the Gnostics – Valentinians[59]. Tertullian spoke of their ilk that the locutions of the Holy Scripture were to them what sheep's clothing is to predatory wolves.[60] The somnambulous doctrinal systems of the Gnostics are well known altogether with their *Aeons* and *Syzigies*[61], and furthermore, as Saint Irenaeus puts it: armed with those systems, they as if in a phantasmagorical reverie encroached on the Holy Scripture[62], where they found confirmation for all their teachings, so much so that without corroboration from the Scripture they taught nothing[63], since they themselves said that everything must be verified by the Savior's teaching.[64] But how on earth could the Gnostic systems be contained within the New Testament? Well, exactly because - according to Gnostic opinion - Christ's teaching, as presented by the Apostles in the Gospel, is to a large extent unclear and ambiguous. Ergo, in the Gospel not everything that is written must be taken at face value. Among these Valentinians, the so-called "theory of accommodation" enjoyed a large following. And according to this theory, Christ, in the external expression of His teaching, accommodated the understanding of His disciples and hearers; the same was done by the Apostles too in their Epistles. Christ, therefore, taught His disciples first and foremost in a typological and mystical manner and secondly, through parables enigmatically, and last, in a clear and direct way[65]; on top of this, He instructed individually only those special few who were capable of understanding.[66] From this came the conclusion that the Holy Scripture is not to be understood literally, since the entire Scripture represents a parable or a riddle. In the words of Christ: "seek and find" the Gnostics

saw direct command to look within Scripture for secret and mystical meaning. Hence bottomless allegorism of interpretation came into being, on the basis of which all the tenets of the Gnostic systems were found within Scripture. For example, in the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20: 1-16), Gnostics came across their teaching on the Thirty *Aeons*. The landowner went to hire laborers in the first, third, sixth, ninth and the eleventh hour. If we add up these numbers, what do we get? – Thirty! So, it is a clear indication of the Thirty *Aeons*. We are eager to agree with Tertullian that this sort of interpretation is not in any way less damaging to the truth than a direct textual corruption.[67] On the other hand, a proponent of an individualistic approach to the Holy Scripture, i.e. one from outside the Church, could object to this: “It may have been possible for the Gnostics to produce different ludicrous conjectures and get involved in allegorizing. But today, no one would resort to that.” As a matter of fact, nothing is as simple as that. Gnostics were just making use of a generally accepted scientific method of the times, which was employed by the Church authors too.[68] However, notwithstanding the commonality of investigative methods, the results were radically different. Not the method is to be blamed, but the severing of the Holy Scripture from the Church, which thus opens the way for human arbitrariness and allows, according to the *Letter of the Patriarchs*, “to play in a childlike manner with things that are not to be taken as joke”. In all truth, such an unnatural severing can produce nothing but damage.

No less instructive a historical occurrence can be observed in recent times as well. Far more reckless than the Second Century Gnostics were the Gnostics of the beginning of the Nineteenth Century. The former, ancient Gnostics, sought to find in the New Testament justifications for their own religious-philosophical system; the Gnostics of the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, on the other hand, set as their goal the production of a “natural history of the great Prophet from Nazareth”. Their line of thought goes like this: Christ and the Apostles spoke in the language of the simple Galilean country folk; thus within the Gospel we can see all the traits of a naïve peasant world-view. The simple man everywhere sees a miracle; he is always willing to admit to the presence of supernatural forces. In the Gospel are frequent references to miracles, possession etcetera... Does this mean that everything was in fact so? No, it only means that the deeds of Christ appeared miraculous to the simpletons surrounding Him, but in reality were not! The Gospels, in order to be properly understood, must first be converted into the language of the educated people of that time, and then this language should be translated into our own contemporary language, the language of scientists. Furthermore, much of what is said in the Gospel can be explained simply by the fact that the observers had poorly perceived the events, looking on them through the prism of their own naïve world-view.

To be precise, this was the thesis developed by *Eichhorn*[69] at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, who proved himself quite prodigious in giving various models of interpretation according to his own peculiar method. Following *Eichhorn's* rules, it comes out that most perfect interpretation of the Gospel was produced by Paulus[70], who in his bizarre interpretations did not leave even a single miracle within the Gospel; as a result, we are left with a natural history of the Great Prophet, where it is absolutely impossible to recognize the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Here again we can observe that lacking the authority of the Church, Holy Scripture loses any definable meaning, for the simple reason that in no time the self-deluded “rectifiers of the Apostles” will take the stage, each of them to “rectify” in his own fashion, all while vehemently contradicting each other. Such “rectifiers” are known in every

epoch. Still, it comes as a surprise how up to now people still cannot understand that “rectifying the Apostles” is *in principle* an absurd endeavor, which countless times in history has been discredited. However, within Protestant theology, the contradistinction between Christ and the Apostles rules the day. They don't trust the Apostles, so they want to “correct” them. Consequently, Christ becomes no more than a sought for X-sign whose teaching is considered an equation with multitude of unknowns to be solved according to the best opinion of each and every individual.

If the Church is rejected, if the Holy Scripture is approached aside from the Church, then the very fact of Christ not having written anything leads to the destruction of Holy Scripture itself. This road from rejection of the Church to destruction of Scripture has been and is still trodden by many, but perhaps no one had ever so openly described this path, even unto cynicism, than Leo Tolstoy in his introduction to the *Brief Exposition of the Gospel* (Geneva edition).

“The reader must remember that Christ Himself never wrote a single book, as Plato, Philo or Marcus Aurelius did; He at no time, in the way of Socrates, communicated His teaching to literate and educated people, but spoke only to unlettered men whom He had met during His lifetime. Only after His death, did it come to the mind of certain men that what He spoke of may be of importance, and that it would not be a bad idea to write down some of what He is said to have done, and they, after almost a hundred years (???) had passed, started recording what might have been heard in those days about Him. The reader must also remember that such records were in abundance, of which many disappeared, others being in simply too bad a condition, and that Christians made use of all, choosing and picking what seemed in their eyes better and more intelligible. Choosing in this way the best Gospels, the Churches inevitably – as the saying goes, ‘you cannot carve a club without a crook’ – have picked up numerous ‘crooked places’ from the prolific literature on Christ, and as a result, there are many passages in the Canonical Gospels as bad as in the rejected apocrypha.”[\[71\]](#) “After going through 1800 odd years of existence, these books lie before us in the same state of roughness and incongruousness, rich in absurdities and contradictions, as they've always been.”[\[72\]](#) Subsequently, Tolstoy comes forth with his direct conclusion: “The reader must remember that it not only isn't reprehensible to cut off some unnecessary places from the Gospel and illuminate one passage with another, but on the contrary, it is reprehensible and impious not to do this and continue regarding certain number of words and letters as sacred.”[\[73\]](#)

Isn't it rather obvious that no sooner had Tolstoy pondered the fact of Christ having written nothing, he immediately unrelentingly embarked on a total distortion of the Gospel text? As a matter of fact, if we permit removal from the Gospel the unnecessary parts, wouldn't that open the road for every kind of outrageous arbitrariness? What is necessary and what isn't? Who can decide on this? Apparently, each and everyone according to his own fancy. Just look how to Tolstoy even the Gospel's Beatitudes seemed superfluous, where the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart are blessed, - for he thought “these lines are not in place and were accidentally added”.[\[74\]](#) People harbor vastly different tastes, and if the personal preference is the only arbiter of what is to be retained within the Gospel and what is to be excluded from it, obviously there will be as many Gospels as people who are approaching the Gospel from outside the Church. In the place of a defined Christ's teaching, evidently only chaos and a confusion of individual opinions will swarm forth.

The Second Century heretic Marcion trusted only the Apostle Paul, claiming that he is the sole one who truthfully and correctly understood Christ's teaching and has thus preserved it in pureness, while all the other Apostles are just “pseudoapostoli et judaici evangelizatores”<sup>[75]</sup>, i.e. false apostles for introducing within the teaching of Christ elements of Judaism. Nevertheless, in Tolstoy's opinion, the Apostle Paul gets counted among the “founders of the Christian Talmud”, since he, “failing to understand quite well Christ's teachings”, introduced into Christianity the teaching on Tradition that in turn has become the main reason for the distortion of Christian doctrine and its incomprehension.<sup>[76]</sup> Who are we supposed to listen to!?! – It's impossible to know. Clearly, it seems there is only one conclusion that can be made: A person, if left alone with the Scripture, will soon put himself above the Apostles and start to “correct” them, creating for himself a teaching of Christ that his own fancy desires. If there is no Church, there won't be any Scripture either. Only the *books* of the Scripture would be left, mere words and letters, while every individual attribute to them his own conjured-up meaning. However, if it so happens that some of these words and letters get in the way, it is always possible to “correct” them somehow. And all of this becomes possible as a result of Christ Himself never having written anything; as a consequence, His teaching came to us through transmission by others, which always leaves space to the intellect for suspecting its wholesomeness and authenticity.

Pondering this simple fact, namely that Christ never wrote anything, I not infrequently become willing to recognize a particular providentiality in it. By virtue of this fact, the extra-Church attitude towards the Holy Scripture can consistently be brought to absurdity. In fact, this has been already done by Rationalism which, standing on Protestant ground, showed that there are no obstacles to distortion of the Gospel and the replacement of it completely with one's own personal conjectures.

There is more. Left to its own devices, the intellect does not shy away even from destruction of the very books containing the Holy Scripture. At the bottom line, upon what is based the recognition of these or some other books as Holy Scripture or genuine Apostolic compositions? The answer to this question can only be one: Our recognition of certain books as Holy Scripture and authentic Apostolic compositions is based *solely upon the faith in the Church* and upon the trust in the Church's authority. The books of the Holy Scripture were written by the Apostles and entrusted to the Church for safekeeping. The Apostles, and in particular the Apostle Paul, even gave special proof of the genuineness of their Epistles, which were thus provided with a personal handwritten signature. The custodian of the authentic Epistles and all the Apostolic writings was the Church. Only she could pass judgment on the Apostolic dignity of the inheritance kept by her. The Church, after all, expressed in her own decisions the teaching on the composition of the Holy Scripture. And for this reason we find it binding upon us to recognize as the New Testament precisely those 27 well-known books; in other words, it's because these books were recognized as the New Testament by the Church! Blessed Augustine<sup>[77]</sup> has said: “Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoverat auctoritas.”<sup>[78]</sup> “I would have not believed in the Gospel, hadn't it been for the authority of the Catholic Church that impelled me to it.” These words of Augustine harbor a great truth. If there is no Church, there won't be any Scripture either. Protestants and sectarians, as it appears, recognize and give respect to the Holy Scripture, but doesn't their recognition hang in thin air? Let the Protestants and sectarians sincerely ponder the question: But why exactly these books we recognize as the Holy Scripture? Referring to one's own personal opinion means simply to give up on producing a

reasonable answer. We cannot bring up science either. The question of the origin and authenticity of the books constituting the Holy Scripture is debated a lot in scientific circles. The scholarly literature on the issue has piled up for centuries. Mountains of books have been already written on the subject, but with no positive results. There are simply no such results that could command the agreement of all. How can a Protestant call on his “impartial” science, when it is ridden with hopeless disagreements even on the issue concerning the authenticity of the Gospels, particularly the Gospel of John! Let the Protestants first agree on the question of genuineness of the Apostle Paul's Pastoral Letters! However, this issue is answered differently by various representatives of Protestant science. The conservative leaning scholars consider them to be genuine composition of the Apostle Paul. There are others who would say that at the basis of them lay some authentic Letters of Paul, but in their present form they cannot possibly belong to Paul as containing later additions. Still others proclaim the Pastoral Epistles entirely a later forgery made with some ulterior intention, that they were written for the purpose of justifying the newly established hierarchical structure in the middle of the Second Century, and that the name of the Apostle Paul had been just falsely added. Who are we supposed to listen to? Why this scientist and not another? Are there many who are able to bear independently the burden of discordant scholarly argument? On top of it, are those people capable of tackling the finer points of scientific investigation which are so numerous? A common authority is nowhere to be found, hence it is uncertain who is to be followed. Listening to all of them at the same time is impossible, since one enters the forest, another climbs the trees, still another tears up the clouds, yet others go back, while more sink into deep water. The doubt in the authenticity of the books constituting the Holy Scripture surfaced with the birth of Protestantism itself. It was actually Luther<sup>[79]</sup> himself who rejected the Epistle of James, calling it, who knows why, a “straw letter”. The followers of Luther, in turn, have gone much further. It is, therefore, inevitable to admit that *the notion of a binding canon of the Holy Scripture is a notion pertaining exclusively to the Church, which outside the Church becomes totally unthinkable*. Obviously, it reveals a complete divorce from reality when sectarians start speaking of canonical and uncanonical books in regard to the Holy Scripture. Protestants are not a little involved into the study of the history tracing the New Testament canon, but you see that that very history is utterly devastating to the idea of canonicity outside the Church. History shows that the canon not always and not in all of the Churches had been one and the same. Several centuries needed to pass till the canon was confirmed by Conciliar decisions. For us there is nothing scandalous in this, since we believe in the Church, and therefore her decisions are equally hallowed, regardless of whether they belong to the Second, Fourth or the Twentieth Centuries. But this is not so for the Protestants and others who deny the truth of the Church. To them, the history of the New Testament canon puts into doubt the very idea of what “canonical” means. The more consistent Protestants, in fact, are not even trying to conceal this. Adolf Julicher<sup>[80]</sup>, for example, concludes his treatise on the history of the New Testament canon with quite a revealing statement. “The unassailable fact of the human and gradual derivation of the New Testament canon may serve the purpose of liberating us from the danger that this canon could turn from a support into an oppressive yoke.”<sup>[81]</sup>

It is safe to say that on the Protestant stock exchange, the value of the Holy Scripture is highly unstable and never, in fact, rises to its nominal worth. This value is constantly threatened by some unexpected plunge. Overnight a scientist can prove for a while the lack of authenticity of this or that New Testament book. For example, when the Tubingen school of Baur<sup>[82]</sup> was

ruling the day, all that was left of the entire New Testament was just four or five Letters by Apostle Paul, whereas at the present moment they seem to incline towards recognizing the majority of the New Testament books. And yet, in an instance, after some papyrus may have been discovered in Egypt giving us new perspective on the epoch, the value of the Holy Scripture among the Protestants would head for a nose dive. The principle of an extra-Church approach to the Holy Scripture annihilates the worth of Scripture itself. All the apostates from the Church, the Protestants, the sectarians of every possible kind, talk in vain of their respect for the Holy Scripture. These words of theirs convey nothing but misapprehension and even hypocrisy. Isn't it all too revealing that the entire denigrating and often blasphemous criticism of the Scripture comes from the Protestants, nurtured within their doctrine which has replaced the Church with the Scripture for whom Scripture means everything? I've already mentioned that for the Protestants Scripture represents a sort of fetish, a graven image, an inanimate idol. Still, I believe the idolaters in a sense feel that the idol is the creation of their hands. I have heard stories about how after a successful hunt uncivilized natives try in every way to satisfy their idols by smudging their mouths with the fat from the killed animal and putting into them the best pieces of meat. But if the hunt proved unsuccessful, then they cut the idol to pieces. In just the same way the Holy Scripture is also treated by all those who approach it aside from the Church. While Scripture still does not contradict them, doesn't debunk their beliefs, they praise it. Otherwise, they mercilessly start to cut their idol to pieces, ripping the Scripture into a myriad of tiny bits, of which some are considered spurious and others – altogether superfluous.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons calls Scripture the Tree of Paradise planted inside the Church; but to the person expelled from Paradise this tree can only be the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which after tasting of it, he would inevitably admit to the remorseful truth of being completely naked. Since long, long ago it was incumbent on all opponents of the Church to confess their shameful nakedness and ask the Church for forgiveness, just as the prodigal son sought forgiveness from his father! You see, the senseless severance of the Scripture from the Church has already produced its deadly fruit. Among Protestants, people can be found who assert, teach and preach that Christ never existed in the world, and that the entire history narrated in the Gospels is but a myth. Without the Church, there is neither Scripture nor Christ, since the Church is the Body of Christ.

In this way, even on the negative side, the truth of the indissoluble bond between the Church and the Holy Scripture is being reaffirmed. The extra-Church treatment of Scripture inevitably leads to absurdity and loss of the Holy Scripture itself.

Without the Church, first, there is no supporting ground for the interpretation of the Holy Scripture, and as a consequence, it is not the Scripture which will instruct man, but on the contrary, man will infuse into Scripture the content of his own wishes.

Secondly, without the Church, every definable way to Christ and His teaching will be lost, simply in that because Christ Himself never wrote anything, the Apostles can always be suspected of incorrectly transmitting the teaching of Christ.

Thirdly, with no Church, the canon of the Holy Books does not bear any significance, hence all the Protestants and sectarians faced with the question: why precisely are these books canonical? can only be left speechless or forced to resort to shameful “words of craftiness”.

The general conclusion of all our preceding reasoning is this:-

The Holy Scripture is inviolable and an inalienable patrimony of the Church, being one of the manifestations of her grace-filled life. Outside the Church there is not and cannot be any Holy Scripture. The Word of God cannot be outside the Church, since outside the Church the grace of the Holy Spirit does not abide. Without the Church, the Holy Scripture can not exist even as a definable historical record, since then no reliable guidance for its interpretation would be left and nothing could guarantee its authenticity and canonical authority. Let us note once again that by affirming the thesis – that outside the Church there is no Holy Scripture - we are just repeating the truth preached already by the Church writers in the Second Century. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons stated that only within the Church is the genuine preservation of Scripture possible, with nothing added nor anything removed from it, where the reading of the Scripture is performed with no distortion.[\[83\]](#)

According to Tertullian, we must think about to whom the Scripture actually belongs.[\[84\]](#) Those, to whom, on the other hand, it does not belong, are not to be admitted to the Holy Scripture.[\[85\]](#) Scripture belongs to the Church, whereas heretics are not even considered Christians and hold no rights over Christian Scripture.[\[86\]](#) The Church can ask the heretics: “Who are you? You are not of my own, what are you doing here? This is my patrimony. I owned it from the very beginning. I trace my foundation from the authors themselves to whom the Scripture belongs. I am the Heir of the Apostles, who disinherited you and cast you away, as strangers and enemies.[\[87\]](#)

The truth we have tried to elucidate is not a new one, but is still an imperative one to reiterate in the Twentieth Century, because, in spite of repeated vindication during the course of history, it is often forgotten.

**Professor of the Imperial Moscow Spiritual Academy**  
*Archimandrite Hilarion*

(According to: Архимандрит Иларион; “Священное Писание и Церковь”. Москва. Печатня А.И. Снегиревой. 1914 г.)

---

[\[1\]](#) Contrary to popular misconception of modern times, the III Century heretic Arius (circa 250 – 336 AD) did not hold the opinion of Christ being just an “ordinary man”. As a matter of fact, his theological system was based on a rather complicated and insidious scheme, which in short could be recapitulated as follows: God the Father, before anything was created, before heaven and earth came into being, or even the angels, created out of nothing (!) the most perfect and powerful Creature – His Logos, the Son of God, through Whom God the Father later created the world. This Logos in the latter days became incarnate on earth as Jesus Christ, where He suffered, died and was resurrected from the dead. Now, from the perspective of the world, Christ can even be called – “God” and “Son of God”, since the world was created by Him through the special love of God the Father: but from the perspective of the Father He is not so, as lacking the same nature or essence, and at most what could be said of Christ is His being

of similar essence (οJμοιου>σιον) with God the Father. In this way, Arius, while on a formal and verbal level not contradicting Scripture (which contains references of Christ as God and Son of God), infused into these words (“God” and “Son of God”) his novel doctrine, thus making them devoid of any real meaning. That it is why the Orthodox Fathers and Saint Athanasius the Great (293 – 373 AD) in particular insisted on using the term “coessential”, “of one essence” (οJμοου>σιον), as the only way to preserve without distortion the traditional Christian belief that Christ, the Son of God, is God just as the Father is, as is the Holy Spirit as well, since He is of one essence (οJμοου>σιον) with Him. Finally, the “coessential” (οJμοου>σιον) formula got its vindication on the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, 325, when it was included in the Creed. (translator's remark)

[2] *Against the Arians, Homily I, 1.*

[3] Marcion of Sinope (circa 85 – 160 AD): Gnostic heretic, who taught the dualist doctrines of opposition between the Old and the New Testament, claiming they originated from two different Deities. (translator's remark)

[4] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works translated by archpriest P. Preobrazhensky. *Against Heresies*. IV, 9, 3. Saint Peterburg., 1900, pg. 338.

[5] *Ibid*, IV, 34, 1. Pg. 414.

[6] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (circa II Century – 202 AD): Bishop of Lugdunum (present Lyons in France), born probably in Smyrna (today's Izmir in Turkey), Asia Minor. One of the most important Church Fathers, he was best known for his apologetic writings against the doctrines of the Gnostics, where he asserted the Apostolic authority of the Ecumenical Church through the succession of her bishops. (translator's remark)

[7] Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus (circa 310 – 403 AD): Bishop of Salamis on Cyprus and Metropolitan of the whole island. Best known for his encyclopedic work *Panarion* (Medicine Chest), in which he gives recapitulation of the heresies that existed till then. (translator's remark)

[8] Works. *Panarion* 31, 33. Part. 1. M., 1863, pg. 344.

[9] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works - *Against Heresies*. IV, 34, 1.Pg. 414.

[10] Service on the Nativity of Christ. Stichera on Litany: Sticheron IV.

[11] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works - *Against Heresies*.III, 10, 2. Pg. 240.

[12] Vladimir Solovyov (1853 - 1900): Russian philosopher, famous for his idealistic stands and affirmative views on religion. (translator's remark)

[13] Leo Tolstoy (1828 - 1910): Noted Russian writer and thinker, who besides his immense literary work, is also known for his peculiar religious views, where he rejected any theological and metaphysical grounds for Christianity, denigrating it to the level of a mere social and moral system. (translator's remark)

[14] *Ibid*. III, 4, 2. Pg. 225.

[15] *Ibid*. V, 20, 2. Pg. 488.

[16] Apostle Book: Generic term designating the Acts of the Apostles, Apostolic Epistles and the Revelation collected in a single tome, as used in the Services of the Orthodox Church. The Apostle Book together with the Gospel Book (consisted of the Four Gospels) represents the New Testament. (translator's remark)

[17] Sacristy: A separate place inside the church building (more precisely, within the Altar space itself) where the Liturgical vessel and the priestly vestments are being kept. (translator's remark)

[18] Cf. Works. *Homily on the benefit of reading the Holy Scripture*. Saint Petersburg Spiritual Academy T. 3, pg. 74.

[19] Saint John Chrysostom (347 – 407): Archbishop of Constantinople. One of the most renowned and beloved Church authors, extending his influence through the ages by way of his abundant theological and pastoral writings. The most widely used text of the Divine Liturgy used within the Orthodox communion is ascribed to him. (translator's remark)

[20] Works. *Homily on Matthews's Gospel I. 1* . Saint Peterburg Spiritual Academy. T. 7, pg. 5-6.

[21] Saint Isidore of Pelusium (†circa 436): A Christian ascetic author in tradition of the Desert Fathers, who lived in a monastery near the Egyptian town of Pelusium. (translator's remark)

[22] Works. Book III, Letter 106. Part 2. M., 1860, pg. 158-160.

[23] Saint Isaac of Syria (†circa 700): Bishop of Nineveh (near present Mosul in Iraq), who later went into life of seclusion as a hermit. He is best known as a Christian monastic and mystical author, who made his impact through his profound homilies on the inner spiritual life. (translator's remark)

[24] *Theoria*: Spiritual vision, by which the Living God is experienced through His uncreated grace. (translator's remark)

[25] *Works of our Holy Father Isaac of Syria: Ascetic Homilies*. Homily Слово 58. Sergiev Posad, 1911. Pg. 314.

[26] Arthur Drews (1865 - 1935): German philosopher and writer, known for his opinions that Jesus Christ as a historical person never existed in the world, and therefore his life described in the Gospels is no more than a myth. (translator's remark)

[27] In pre-Revolutionary Russia it was common for each classroom in public schools to contain an icon of Christ. (translator's remark)

[28] More in-depth on the subject: Vladimir Troitsky. *Christianity or the Church?* Sergiev Posad, 1912.

[29] “Story of the white calf”: A Russian pun that usually designates an impossibility to draw a logical conclusion from something. (translator's remark)

[30] Aleksey Khomiakov (1804 - 1860): Russian religious philosopher and poet, belonging to the movement of the Slavophiles. His most important works focus on Orthodox ecclesiology, where he defends the Catholicity and Unity of the Church. (translator's remark)

[31] Geneva, 1890, pg. 14-15.

[32] Allusion to the Baptism of the Russian lands (988) under Grand Prince Vladimir (958 - 1015), where the people of the capital Kiev were baptized in the waters of the river Dnieper, into which the deposed statue of Perun, the supreme pagan god of the previous Slavic religion, was thrown. (translator's remark)

[33] Saint Theophan the Recluse (1815 - 1894): Russian Orthodox Bishop of Tambov, who was renowned for his ascetic life and the numerous theological and pastoral writings. (translator's remark)

[34] Works. *On the Unity of the Church*. Chap. 10. Kiev, 1891. Part 2. Pg. 184.

[35] Works. Letter 47. *To Cornelius*, Part 1, pg. 256.

[36] Saint Cyprian of Carthage (†258 AD): Bishop of Carthage in North Africa (near present Tunis). He is an important Father of the Church, well known for his writings on the sacramental life and the unity of the Church. He died as a martyr during the persecution of Christians under Roman Emperor Valerian. (translator's remark)

[37] De praescriptione, cap. 17. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 35 A-B.

[38] Tertullian (circa 160 – 220 AD): Important Christian author of North African origin known for his extensive works on many subjects of theology and moral life. (translator's remark)

[39] De praescriptione, cap. 19. PL., t. 2, col. 36 A.

[40] Remarks. I, 26. Translation of lecturer P. Ponomarev. Kazan, 1904, pg. 48.

[41] Saint Vincent of Lerins (†445): Church author who had lived in a monastery on the islands of Lerins (south of France), best known for his writings, which try to explain the contents of the notion of Catholicity as applied to the Church. (translator's remark)

[42] Prof. A. I. Vvedensky. *Dominion over the intellects of so called "philosophical responsibility"*. "Christian". 1908. T. 3, pg. 786.

[43] Nouveaux essais. Ed. Erdmann. Berolini, 1840, p. 214.

[44] Gottfried Leibniz (1646 - 1716): German philosopher and scientist, remembered for his rational philosophy, defense of religion and mathematical discoveries. (translator's remark)

[45] *Within the uncertain and undecided world*. Saint Petersburg, 1904, pg. 53.

[46] The best known and most important work of the German writer, poet and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1832), in which the author gives his most comprehensive view on the human condition. (translator's remark)

[47] Country estate belonging to the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. (translator's remark)

[48] Vasilii Rozanov (1856 - 1919): Controversial Russian philosopher best known for his views on sexuality and spirituality. (translator's remark)

[49] Gazette "Russia", June 12, 1909.

[50] Remarks. 1, 2. Pg. 3.

[51] Names of heretics from the early history of the Church. (translator's remark)

[52] Remarks. 1, 25-27. Pg. 45-49.

[53] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works. *Against Heresies*. III, 24, 2. Pg. 313.

[54] Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (circa 69 – 155 AD): Bishop of Smyrna, Asia Minor (present Izmir in Turkey). One of the most important Apostolic Fathers who later died as a martyr. He was a disciple of Saint John the Evangelist. (translator's remark)

[55] Clement of Alexandria (circa 150 – 211/216 AD): One of the most prolific early Christian authors, who in his numerous writings tried to present the Christian teachings to the wider Hellenistic world. (translator's remark)

[56] Stromata VII, 16, 94, 4. Migne, PG., t. 9, col. 533 A.

[57] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works. *Against Heresies*. III, 1, 1. Pg. 220.

[58] Ibid, III, 2, 2. Стр. 221.

[59] Valentinians: Group of Gnostic heretics named after their founder Valentinus (circa 100 – 160 AD). Their movement is quite representative of the entire Gnostic doctrine. They believed in strict dualism that ran between spirit and matter, where spirit was considered good and matter was evil. Also, a radical division was stated between the Old Testament, as supposedly being product of a lesser (or even evil) god, who created the material world, and the New Testament, coming from a good “more spiritual” Deity. Typical of their views was the complete contempt for the human body (and by extension marriage and procreation too), which to them represented no more than a prison for the soul. Salvation was understood as liberation of the soul from the bondage of the bodily life in this material world and its subsequent return to the spiritual realm from where it had fallen. Hence, the basic Christian doctrine of the resurrection was denied. Also, typical of their movement was extreme elitism and esoterism. (translator's remark)

[60] De praescr. Cap. 4. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 18 B.

[61] *Aeons* and *Syzygies*: Notions in Gnostic philosophy. *Aeons* denoted a hierarchy of thirty spiritual entities that bridged the gap between the sphere of the pure spirit and the material world. *Syzygies* were called the pairings of two *Aeons*, thus producing the number of fifteen. (translator's remark)

[62] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works. *Against Heresies*. I, 9, 3. Pg.48.

[63] Tertull. De praescr. Capp. 15. 39. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 33 A. 65 A.

[64] Epiphanius of Cyprus. Works. *Panarion*, 33,7. T. 1, pg. 374.

[65] Excerpta ex scriptis Theodoti 66. Migne, PG., t. 9, col. 689 C.

[66] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works. *Against Heresies*. II, 27, 2. Pg. 189.

[67] De praescr. cap 17. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 35 A.

[68] In more detail: Vladimir Troitsky. *Gnosticism and the Church in relation to the New Testament*. Sergiev Posad, 1911. (“Theological Journal”. 1911, т. 2, pg. 493). From the same, *Treatise on the history of the dogma on the Church*. Sergiev Posad, 1912, pg. 115-132.

[69] Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752 - 1827): German Protestant theologian, known for his opinions denying the authenticity of many books constituting the Bible. (translator's remark)

[70] Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761-1851): German Protestant theologian, who in order to make the Gospel “more plausible” to his rationalistic tastes, tried to explain away every single miracle encountered in it. (translator's remark)

[71] Ibid. pg. 7-8.

[72] *Combination and translation of the Four Gospels*. T. 1 . Geneva, 1892. pg. 10.

[73] *Short Exposition of the Gospel*, pg. 9.

[74] *Combination and translation of the Four Gospels*. pg. 192.

[75] Tertull. Adv. Marc. V, 19.

[76] *Short Exposition of the Gospel*, pg. 12.

[77] Saint Augustine (354 - 430): Bishop of Hippo (in present Algeria). Theologian and one of the most prolific Church authors in Latin. His numerous writings tackle subjects of: Trinitarian theology, philosophy of history, moral life, ecclesiology... (translator's remark)

[78] Contra epist. Manichaei, cap. 5, 6, Migne, PL., t. 42, col. 176.

[79] Martin Luther (1483 - 1546): German theologian, author and religious reformer. Founder of the Protestant movement. (translator's remark)

[80] Adolf Julicher (1857 - 1938): German Protestant scholar, who made his mark in the field of Biblical criticism. (translator's remark)

[81] *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*. Tubingenn 1906. S. 517

[82] Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792 - 1860): German Protestant theologian and leader of the Tubingen School of Protestant theology, known for his extremely critical views on the history of the New Testament canon, disputing the authenticity of the most of the New Testament books. (translator's remark)

[83] Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. Works. *Against Heresies*. IV, 33, 8. Pg.409.

[84] De praescr. Cap. 19. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 36 A.

[85] De praescr. Cap. 15. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 33 B-34 A.

[86] De praescr. Cap. 37. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 61 B.

[87] De praescr. Cap. 37. Migne, PL., t. 2, col. 61 B-C.