

CONCERNING DEATH AND THE AFTER LIFE

By

His Eminence

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PARTIAL JUDGMENT

Physical death followed as the natural result of sin that first brought spiritual death. Death became a universal phenomenon and a common cup offered to all mankind, even to those who were justified through Christ, although they became free of spiritual death. Although the soul is separated from the body, as Holy Scripture teaches, it remains alive and in complete self-consciousness of its existence. According to the life one lived on earth, either in Virtue or in sinful passions, one's soul, after physical death, is placed in a condition according to its spiritual nature. In this middle condition each soul remains from the moment of its separation from this life until the Second Coming of Christ and the final Judgement of all. This period is known as the Partial Judgement, according to which the soul has a foretaste either of the good things of Paradise or it suffers torment in the darkness of Hades.¹ As we can conclude, the Partial Judgement of each soul that takes place immediately after its departure from its body, as well as the foretaste of joy or pain, is distinguished from the Final and Universal Judgement, which will take place at the Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, after which the perfection of the Blessedness and Glory of the Just and the condemnation of the sinners into the Eternal Fire will follow.²

1. The Meaning of Death According to Holy Scripture

Death according to Holy Scripture has three meanings:³

1. Physical or natural death is the end of this present life, which occurs through the separation of the soul from the body.
2. Spiritual or moral death, which occurs through the separation from God, caused by mortal sins, and finally
3. Eternal death, which is the eternal separation of man from God and his condemnation into the endless punishment.

The last form of death is referred to by Holy Scripture as "*the second death, the lake of fire.*"⁴ The physical or natural death came into existence after the Offence of Adam - a natural, necessary and universal phenomenon. All men became mortal. No one can escape death, besides the two Prophets Enoch⁵ and Elijah⁶ who ascended alive into Heaven and who will taste death only when they will face the Anti-Christ before the glorious Second Coming of the Lord. In addition, St Paul assures us that "*we who*

¹ Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 18, pp. 95-96.

² Cf. Kefalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 64-66. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 223-224. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p. 92.

³ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 92, 336.

⁴ Rev. 20:14.

⁵ Gen. 5:24.

⁶ 2 Kings (4 Kings):2:11.

are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with Lord.”⁷ “Behold, I tell you a Mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and for this mortal must put on immortality.”⁸

2. The Immortality of the Soul and the After Death Existence

The body is dissolved as a material synthesis when separated from the soul that continues to exist, having an eternal nature.⁹ This Truth is based not only upon Theological arguments but also on philosophical proof that does not have absolute authority. This proof is as follows:

1. The faith and hope of all nations that man continues to live after death (historical proof)
2. The tendency of man for the absolute and infinite joy of the human soul that struggles in vain to achieve in this life that which can be realised in some other life (eschatological proof)
3. From the nature of the soul as being simple and not subject to dissolution after physical death (ontological proof)
4. From the idea of justice that appears to be violated in this world as well as not being rewarded due to virtue being persecuted and injustice prevailing. Since we accept that God is Good and Just providing all things for the world, it is necessary to accept that He has just rewards in store for each man in another world (moral proof).

The fact that the soul exists after death, preserving its full conscience and having an interest in those who continue to live in this life, as well as in the things that occur in this life, is witnessed not only in the Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazaros¹⁰ but also in other parts of Holy Scripture.¹¹ In the Book of Revelation, the souls of those who were slaughtered unjustly appear under the Holy Altar of Heaven, crying out to the Lord and saying: “How long, O Lord, Holy and True, until Thou judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”¹² Also the twenty-four Presbyters who represent the members of the Triumphant Church, being fully conscious, offer worship to the Living God and place their crowns before His Throne.¹³ Finally, the two Prophets, Moses and Elijah, representing the dead and the living respectively, appeared at the Transfiguration of our Lord.¹⁴ Furthermore, Christ assured us that “Abraham rejoiced to see His Day, and he saw it and was glad.”¹⁵

Hence those who support the opinion that the soul falls into the sleep of death until the General Resurrection and Day of Judgement, and when the *Psychopannychia* have been condemned, are mistaken,¹⁶ although it is true that in many verses of Holy Scripture the terms “*sleep*” and “*fallen asleep*”

⁷ 1 Thess. 4:17.

⁸ 1 Corinth. 15:51-53.

⁹ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 347-348.

¹⁰ Luke 16:19-31.

¹¹ 1 Peter 3:19. John

¹² Rev. 6:9-11.

¹³ Rev. 4:10; 5:8, 14.

¹⁴ Matth. 17:1-13. Mark 9:2-13. Luke 9:28-36.

¹⁵ John 8:56.

¹⁶ Origen, *To John*, v. XX, in *B*, v. 13, p. 254.

are used to signify death.¹⁷ However these terms are used in relation to the body only, signifying the temporary rest in the tomb until, at the sound of the Trumpet of the Angel, all shall be Resurrected.

3. Repentance and Struggle for Virtue Only in this World

Death is not the end of the life of the soul, nor does it weaken its self-conscience or the other attributes and spiritual functions. Instead it marks the end of all efforts of repentance and correction of errors committed in this life. The time of struggle for changing our ways of life and the achievement of virtues and deeds of Holiness is only during this lifetime and when it ends through death, the reward of the soul in its current moral condition in which death has found her, begins permanently and Eternally. Proof of this is obtained from the Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazaros¹⁸ as well as from many other words of our Lord, in addition to those recorded in the Epistles of the New Testament. Accordingly, the Rich Man and poor Lazaros were found by death to be in different spiritual conditions that separated them from each other by a great Chasm and although the Rich Man showed signs of repentance, his condition remained fruitless and no change or the smallest comfort could be offered to him.

According to the Parable of the Ten Virgins¹⁹ in which the five foolish Virgins showed awareness at the last moment, they remained excluded from the Wedding Festival. In conjunction with the instruction of the Lord to “*be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect,*”²⁰ the same Truth is implied. Besides this, the Lord instructs us to “*strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the House has risen up and shuts the door, you will begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open for us, and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from.’*”²¹ The combination of these two Teachings makes it clear that only in this life is the struggle for achieving virtue possible because if one has not prepared during this period, then one is excluded after death from the Kingdom of Heaven. St Paul also urged us: “*Behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of Salvation.*”²² “*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do well to all, especially to those who are of the Household of Faith.*”²³

St Clement in his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians stated that “*while we are yet on earth, let us repent. For we are clay in the Craftsman’s hand. For example: if while a potter is making a vessel, it becomes misshapen or breaks in his hands, he simply reshapes it; but if he has already put it into the kiln, he is no longer able to repair it. So it is with us: as long as we are in this world, let us repent with our whole heart of the evil things which we have done in the flesh, in order that we may be saved by the Lord while we still have time for repentance. For after we have departed from the world, we are no longer able there either to confess or to repent anymore. So, brothers, if we have done the Will of the Father and have kept the flesh pure and have observed the Commandments of the Lord, we will receive Eternal Life. For the Lord says in the Gospel: ‘If you did not guard something small, who will give you something great? For I say to you, whoever is faithful with very little is also faithful with much.’*”²⁴ Now what he means is this: *keep the flesh pure and the Seal unstained, in order that we may receive Life.*”²⁵ “*While we still have time to be healed, let us place ourselves in the Hands of God the Physician.*”²⁶

¹⁷ John 11:11. Acts 7:60; 13:36. 1 Corinth. 11:30; 15:6, 51. 2 Peter 3:4. Matth. 27:52. 1 Corinth. 15:18, 20. 1 Thess. 4:13-15.

¹⁸ Luke 16:19-31.

¹⁹ Matth. 25:1-13.

²⁰ Matth. 24:44.

²¹ Luke 13:24-25.

²² 2 Corinth. 6:2.

²³ Gal. 6:10.

²⁴ Luke 16:10-12.

²⁵ St. Clement of Rome, 2nd Corinthians, 8, 1-6, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 71-72.

²⁶ Ibid, 2nd Corinthians, 9, 7, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 72.

St Cyril of Jerusalem declared that the Scriptures state: “*that the dead do not praise Thee, O Lord, ’ this means, that the time for repentance and forgiveness are only during this life, and that those who have departed with sins cannot praise the Lord, but will be punished.*”²⁷

St Basil the Great proclaimed: “*the time for repentance and forgiveness of sins is this period... in the future century the just Judgement and the Reward*” and that “*after the departure from here there is no time for achievements, for God counted this time to work what is pleasing to Him.*”²⁸

St Gregory the Theologian of Nazianzos also cautioned us that “*in Hades there is no confession and correction for those who depart to there. For God has included here life and action, there the examination of the deeds.*”²⁹

St John Chrysostom observed that “*the period of life is the time to live accordingly, after the End Judgement and torment*”³⁰ and consequently, while “*we are still in this life, it is possible to avoid the punishment by changing*” because once “*we depart there we will cry.*”³¹ Elsewhere, interpreting the Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazaros, he noted that “*as long as we are here, we have good hope because if we depart to there, we are not rulers of repentance neither can we wash away the sins.*”³² In addition he raised the question: “*What hope, tell me, can you have after you depart with sins to there (Hades) where sins cannot be removed? For as long as they (the sinners) are here, there might be much hope of changing and becoming better; if they depart to Hades where there is nothing to gain from repentance, how can they not be worthy of lamentations?*”³³

4. In This Life the Quality of the Soul’s Character is Imprinted

It is obvious that in this life man’s behaviour imprints his permanent character on his soul according to his deeds, decisions and directions, so that in the after death Life he has been finally stabilized and cannot be changed due to the condition of his soul at the time of death that will also be his Eternal condition.

St John Chrysostom expressed the above Truth by stating that when the souls depart from this world with sins, they appear as “*being changed into the various sins*” such as “*drunkenness and gluttony*” as well as the rest of the sinful passions, in which they indulged.³⁴

St Gregory of Nyssa spoke of those who had become completely “*free from the flesh in mind and all movements of the soul and actions of the will of the flesh*” and that “*he who has become outside of the flesh has separated himself from its passions,*” whereas those who are lovers of the flesh carry with them “*some kind of stench of the flesh*” even after death.³⁵

²⁷ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, § 14, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1032-1033.

²⁸ St. Basil the Great, *Principals of Moralities, term I, II and V*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 700-701.

²⁹ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily VI*, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 35, 944.

³⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 36, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 57, 416.

³¹ *Ibid*, *To Psalm 9*, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 55, 127.

³² *Ibid*, *To Lazarus*, Homily 2, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 48, 985.

³³ *Ibid*, *To Philippians*, Homily 3, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 293.

³⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 14, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 57, 222. *Ibid*, *To Lazarus*, Homily 2, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 48, 985.

³⁵ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the soul and resurrection*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 85-86. *Ibid*, *About the soul’s departure*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 34, 388.

The Truth of the words of our Lord and Saviour and those of St Paul such as “*he who does not believe is condemned already*”³⁶ and “*knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned*”³⁷ is self-evident and as St Hippolytos observed: “*each one in which day he departs from this life has already been judged.*”³⁸

5. The Luminous or Gloomy Angels who Carry the Souls

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ assured us that when Poor Lazaros died, his soul was “*carried by the Angels to Abraham’s bosom*”³⁹ while St John Chrysostom believed that “*not only the souls of the Just, but even the souls of those who are living in evil are carried there*” by the evil angels. Accordingly note what God said to the Foolish Rich Man: “*Fool! This night your soul will be required of you.*”⁴⁰ So, although “*Angels carried*” the soul of Poor Lazaros to Paradise, the soul of the foolish rich man “*was demanded by some frightful powers, sent for that purpose. And the one they carried out as a prisoner,*” while Poor Lazaros they “*surrounded ... as crowned with Victory.*”⁴¹ In other words, according to the common Teachings of the Holy Fathers and ecclesiastic writers, when the soul departs from this world it is surrounded by familiar spirits: the evil souls by evil spirits and the virtuous souls by good Angels.

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr, interpreting the Psalmist: “*deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen*”⁴² commented that we are taught from this that “*when we also come to the moment of our departure, we must ask the same from God Who is able to turn away all impudent evil spirits [and] not to take our souls.*”⁴³

The annoyance of the collection of taxes by tax-collectors, caused Origen to remark: “*I know other tax-collectors who, after our freedom from here, sit at the ends of the world and demand taxes and hold us if we have anything of theirs.*” He bases his opinion mainly on the last words of Christ: “*For the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me*”⁴⁴ and he wondered: “*What things we will have of those tax-collectors who will search everything, when someone they take instead of tax?*” Elsewhere he referred to the verse in the Gospel of St Luke that states: “*when you go with your adversary to the Magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drags you to the Judge, the Judge delivers you to the Officer, and the Officer throws you into prison,*”⁴⁵ which he interprets as:

- 1) “*the Ruler*” being the leading Angel of each nation,
- 2) “*the Adversary*” being one of the Angels,
- 3) “*the Magistrate and Judge*” being our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 4) “*the Officer*” being the one appointed to each man, whether Angel or demon, whom he refers to as “*the Adversary,*”⁴⁶ because “*there are two Angels with man, one of Righteousness and one of wickedness.*”⁴⁷

³⁶ John 3:18.

³⁷ Titus 3:11.

³⁸ St. Hippolytus, *To Daniel 4:18*, in **B**, v. 6, p. 85.

³⁹ Luke 16:22.

⁴⁰ Luke 12:20.

⁴¹ St. John Chrysostom, *To Lazarus*, Homily 2, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 48, 984.

⁴² Psalm 21(22):20-21.

⁴³ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *Dialogue*, 105, 3-5, in **B**, v. 3, p. 306.

⁴⁴ John 14:30.

⁴⁵ Luke 12:58.

⁴⁶ Origen, *To Luke*, Homilies 23 and 35, in Migne, *P.G.*, 13, 1862 and 1892-1893.

⁴⁷ *Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandate 6, 2, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 222.

It is obvious that this is a reference to the Judgement through which each soul will pass as she departs from this world.

For these reasons, St Basil the Great urges those who have not yet received the Mystery of Holy Baptism to receive the Divine Bath. He cautions them that they might die suddenly whereupon the “*gloomy angel will come upon them violently and will drag their souls tied up with their sins,*” which they had not cleansed in time. Writing to a virgin who had fallen, he reminded her of “*the hour of death and the angels rushing and the soul amongst them frightfully disturbed and the sinful conscience bitterly whipped.*”⁴⁸

St Gregory of Nyssa, addressing those who delayed their Baptism, expressed serious reservations as to whether “*the soul that has not been Illuminated and Vested with the Grace of Regeneration..*” could be received by the Angels “*after the departure from the body? For how can they carry the unsealed, which does not bear the Seal of the Master?*” He believed that those souls would be carried “*by the air, deceived and wandering and unclaimed as masterless, similar to the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously, feeding everyday the Unquenchable Fire.*”⁴⁹

St Basil the Great continued further by speaking of the brave athletes of God who overcome the invisible enemies, reassuring them that “*because they overcame all the persecutions of the enemies at the end of their lives they shall be investigated by the ruler of this world to see if they will be found with wounds from the battles or some spots and signs from sins in order to be seized*” However, he encouraged us, “*if they are found invincible and spotless they will rest as freed by Christ.*”⁵⁰ His opinion was supported by the words that Christ spoke at the time of His Sufferings: “*for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.*”⁵¹

St Augustine also referring to the abovementioned words of St Luke, ascertained that when life comes to its end, the Judge awaits as well as the Officer and the Prison. Furthermore, if we have kept good will with our Adversary and have agreed with him, instead of a Judge we will meet a Father.⁵² St Augustine, beseeching God for the soul of his mother who had passed away and referring to the enemy, the devil, who will accuse and search out our mistakes so as to find something against us, asks that the lion and dragon (the devil) not interfere between that soul and God, neither with violence nor through craftiness.⁵³

St Athanasius the Great of Alexandria, narrating the life of St Anthony recalled one night when the hermit Father was called by Someone from Above to come out to witness something. As he came out he “*saw a huge, ugly and frightful giant reaching to the clouds and some, as with wings, trying to pass him by, but, stretching out his arms, he prevented them from passing him*” Some passed by and ascended calmly although he snapped his teeth at them. “*As his mind was opened, he understood that that was the passing of the souls and the giant was the enemy who envies them and puts obstacles before those who are guilty, but those who did not submit to him, he could not hold back.*”⁵⁴

⁴⁸ St. Basil the Great, *Homily 13 to holy Baptism*, § 8, In Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 441 and 444. Ibid, *Epistle 46*, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 377.

⁴⁹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To those who delay the Baptism*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 424.

⁵⁰ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 7*, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 232.

⁵¹ John 14:30.

⁵² St. Augustine, *Sermo CIX*, 4, in migne, *P.L.*, 38, 636.

⁵³ Ibid, *Confessio*, book IX, ch. XIII, in migne, *P.L.*, 32, 778-779.

⁵⁴ St. Athanasius, the Great, *Life and behaviour of holy father Anthony*, § 66, in Migne, *P.G.*, 26, 936-937.

St Makarius the Egyptian, in his 22nd Homily, wrote that “*when the soul departs from the body, if she is responsible for sins, a group of demons and powers of darkness take her and hold her in their own place.*” On the contrary, “*with the Holy Servants of God, from now the Angels are awaiting and Holy spirits are surrounding and protecting them. And when they come out of their body, the Choir of Angels receives their souls in their own place.*”⁵⁵

St Cyril of Alexandria, noted in his 14th Homily on the departure of the soul and the Second Coming, that when the soul of the Just departs “*she is held by the Holy Angels and passing through the air, she ascends Above.*” On the way she meets the tax-collectors who guard the ascension of the souls by delaying them and putting obstacles in their paths as each tax-collector demon presents their own sins before them. There are five tax-collectors demons corresponding to the five senses of the body. In other words, there is the tax-collector of gossip, of the sins of the eyes, of the sins of evil hearing, of the sins of smelling and of the sins of feeling, each one presenting all sins that were committed while “*the Holy Angels who guide the soul, present whatever good they had done.*”⁵⁶

Finally, St John of Damascus, taking into consideration the above Teachings of the Holy Fathers, draws our attention to the fear and terror that each and every one of us will experience “*when the soul will be separated from the body.*” This fear is caused by “*an army and power of the enemy’s forces [that] comes to us*” They are “*the rulers of the world of evil*” who “*in some way have the soul, presenting her all the sins, which were committed knowingly and in ignorance, from the time of our youth till that age, and they stand accusing her.*”⁵⁷

According to St John there are four Divine Judgements:

1. The Just Judgement
2. The Philanthropic Judgement
3. The Beyond Love Judgement, and
4. The Condemnation Judgement, although frightful, whereby God in His Divine Justice distributes “*all Justice, in a just way decreeing those who have been judged.*”

6. The Partial Judgement Differentiates from the General Judgement

In Holy Scripture and in the Teachings of the Holy Fathers, we find some verses that confuse the Partial Judgement with that of the General Judgement,⁵⁸ while the Just appear to be in the Hands of God immediately after their departure from this life, enjoying the fullness of their rewards. Parallel to these, however, are other verses of Holy Scripture as well as the opinions of the Holy Fathers, according to which the Partial Judgement differentiates from the General Judgement that will occur before the entire Universe following the second Coming of Christ and the general Resurrection of all.

⁵⁵ St. Makarios, *About two ways of departing from this life*, in Migne, P.G., 34, 660.

⁵⁶ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Homily XIV*, in Migne, P.G., 77, 1073.

⁵⁷ St. John of Damascus, *About those who do not repent*, in Migne, P.G., 96, 156. *Ibid*, *About those who have fallen asleep in the faith*, § 25, in Migne, P.G., 95, 272.

⁵⁸ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 341-344.

Thus in Hebrews it is written “*and as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the Judgement.*”⁵⁹ According to this verse it is generally assured that death comes before Judgment, without revealing whether Judgment will follow immediately after death or after a long period.⁶⁰ Nevertheless this verse does not eliminate the Middle Condition of the souls. Instead it refers to the General Judgment that will take place “*when the Son of Man comes in His Glory, and all the Holy Angels with Him, then He will sit on the Throne of His Glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him.*”⁶¹ Obviously this General Judgment, according to which “*we must all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*”⁶² and afterwards “*those who are on the left Hand of the Judge to go to Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Eternal Life...*”⁶³ is indisputably distinguished in Holy Scripture from the Partial Judgment that occurs immediately after the departure from this life.

St John Chrysostom taught that “*after the departure from here, we will stand before the Frightful Seat and we will give an account of all our deeds and responsibilities, and we will go through Judgment if we remain sinning, and we will enjoy crowns and unspeakable good things*” if we repent and struggle. However, he does not confuse the Partial with the General Judgment.⁶⁴

St Cyril of Alexandria stressed that “*the souls of the Saints rush into the hands of God. And the Lord gave to the human souls Paradise entering first and saying to the thief on the Cross: ‘Today, you will be with Me in Paradise.’*”⁶⁵ Such things and the blessed Stephen, when he was stoned, said: “*Lord, Jesus Christ, receive my spirit,*”⁶⁶ for the souls of the Saints did not go into Hades, as those of the sinners.”⁶⁷ Elsewhere he clarified it by stating: “*the Judgment will be after the Resurrection of the dead*” since Christ has not “*come down from Heaven, nor [has] the Resurrection ... taken place,*” “*nor [has] the reward of the deeds ... followed.*”⁶⁸

The Holy Fathers do not confuse the Partial Judgment with that of the General Judgment when they refer to the rewards that follow after death. They speak of the permanent and unchangeable condition of each soul when departing this life. They also refer to the foretaste of those things that await the souls of the Righteous and the sinners that will be awarded to each one, making the waiting period of the Just joyous but that of the sinners most wretched and full of torment. Finally, they contemplate the period between the departure of the soul from its body and the General Judgment.

St Clement of Rome wrote: “*Peter, who, because of unrighteous jealousy, endured not one or two but many trials, and thus having given his testimony, went to his appointed place of glory.*”⁶⁹ Concerning St Paul, he wrote: “*Finally, when he had given his testimony before the rulers, he thus departed from the world and went to the Holy Place, having become an outstanding example of patient endurance.*”⁷⁰ “*To these men who lived Holy Lives there was joined a vast multitude of the Elect who, having suffered many torments and tortures because of jealousy, set an illustrious example among us ... suffering in this way*

⁵⁹ Heb. 9:27.

⁶⁰ Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 412.

⁶¹ Matth. 25:31-32.

⁶² 2 Corinth. 5:10.

⁶³ Matth. 25:46.

⁶⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 13, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 57, 213. *Ibid*, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 39, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 335. *Ibid*, *To Hebrews*, Homily 28, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 63, 192.

⁶⁵ Luke 23:43.

⁶⁶ Acts 7:59.

⁶⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Psalm 48(49):16*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 69, 1072.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, *To Luke 16:19*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 72, 821-824.

⁶⁹ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 5, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 31.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, *1st Corinthians*, 5, 7, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 31.

*terrible and unholy tortures, but they safely reached the Goal in the Race of Faith, and received a noble Reward.*⁷¹

Likewise in “*The Martyrdom of Polycarp*” it is written that “*By his endurance he defeated the unrighteous magistrate and so received the Crown of Immortality; now he rejoices with the Apostles and all the Righteous, and glorifies the Almighty God and Father, and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls and Helmsman of our bodies and Shepherd of the Catholic Church throughout the world.*”⁷²

7. The Separation of the Souls

Although the difference between Partial and General Judgement is very clear, we must not forget that during the Partial Judgement the separation between righteous and sinners occurs immediately after the separation of the soul from its body and then remains in a special Condition (Middle Condition) until the Second Coming of Christ.

Origen observed that when the soul departs from this world it is placed according to its spiritual value and deeds, either winning Eternal Life and Blessedness, or being delivered into Eternal Fire and perpetual punishments while awaiting the Resurrection in Immortality and glory of its body that “*is sown in corruption*” but “*raised in Incorruption.*”^{73,74}

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr proclaimed “*the souls of the Righteous stay in a greater place, the unjust and evil in a worse, that of Judgement.*”⁷⁵

St Gregory of Nyssa observed that “*those who sailed the sea of Virtue in this present life, when they depart from here, the souls of the good sail into a secured Port.*” On the contrary, those who lived in sin “*will be deprived from the imaginary goods ... and will not be comforted.*”⁷⁶ Concerning the Middle Condition, he stressed that “*Hades is not some kind of place, but a condition of Eternal Life, where the soul enters.*”⁷⁷

St Hippolytos, however, supported the opinion that all souls, the “*righteous and unjust*” following the separation from the body, descend to a common place referred to as “*Hades.*” Furthermore, he confesses that although all souls descend into “*that place*” they “*do not follow one way*” only because the Righteous “*are led to an illustrious Place*” referred to as “*the bosom of Abraham*” while “*the unrighteous are dragged to the left by angels who punish, until near Hell.*”⁷⁸

St John of Damascus, referring to the place that “*is thought to be (of an) intellectual and incorporeal nature,*” characterised it as “*an intellectual place*” because the incorporeal nature “*does not have shape*” with which “*to surround itself bodily and does not move in body, but intellectually.*” Thus “*the Angel does not move bodily in space, to be imprinted and shaped.*” Yet it is referred to as being “*in a place*” because they are intellectually present and not elsewhere. For this reason, incorporeal souls and Angels are described as intellectual beings wherever they are. “*For the soul cannot act in various places*

⁷¹ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 6, 1-2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 31.

⁷² *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 19, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 143.

⁷³ 1 Corinth. 15:42.

⁷⁴ Origen, *About principals*, I, 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 11, 118.

⁷⁵ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *Dialogue*, 5, 3, in *B*, v. 3, p. 214.

⁷⁶ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About soul and resurrection*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 84.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, *About soul and resurrection*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 85.

⁷⁸ St. Hippolytus, *To Greeks*, homily I, in *B*, v. 6, p. 227.

simultaneously, because this is only (an Attribute) of God Who is Ever-present and acts at the same time” whereas the Angel, because of his nature, although able to act in and move quickly to various places “ is described in time and space, although intellectually.”⁷⁹

The Just and the sinners are in different situations in the Middle Condition because “*all good and God-loving souls, released from the body, remain conscious and in the sight of the Good, enjoying some kind of pleasure and moving towards their Master, avoiding the present life as being a prison.*”⁸⁰ In contrast, the souls of the sinners “*think of the frightful Vision of the Fire with the waiting of the future Judgement*” and they are “*already ... suffering.*” Although “*they are separated from their bodies, yet they are not separated from their passions,*” carrying with them a fleshly stench. By not having the means with which to fulfil their sinful desires that they indulged in with their bodies, they suffer even more. These wretched souls are far away from the King while the souls of the Righteous, “*either here or there, are with the King*” being “*even closer*” to Him after death.⁸¹

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr referred to the special protection that the souls of the Righteous enjoy at the time of their departure, as we were taught by the Son Who gave up His Soul on the Cross saying: “*Father, into Thy Hands I commit My Spirit.*”^{82,83}

St Clement of Rome wrote: “*All the generations from Adam to this day have passed away but those who by God’s Grace were perfected in Love, have a place among the godly who will be revealed when the Kingdom of Christ visits us.*”^{84,85}

The souls who have already departed this present life have not received their full reward or punishment, which will take place after the Universal Resurrection. After the Last Judgement sinners will suffer Eternal Fire and Punishments, whereas the Righteous will enjoy Eternal and Blessed Joy and will see God “*for now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face*

THE FORETASTE OF THE GLORY OF THE SAINTS IN THE MILITANT CHURCH

From the moment of their departure from this present life, the righteous foretaste the glory and honour of Perfection (Theosis - Θεωσις) in Heaven, which they shall receive as their eternal and inalienable reward following the Universal Resurrection and Judgement. This fact is witnessed to by Holy Scripture and the Teaching of Holy Tradition. The Militant Church honours the Martyrs and Saints by either building temples upon their tombs celebrating their “*birthday*” (i.e. “*the day of their Martyrdom*”) or by naming churches in honour of them. The faithful address petitions to the Saints as being the true friends of God Who, through them and their Holy Relics, performs wonders and miracles in order to glorify them within His Church as they glorified Him within their lives. This honourable veneration is expressed through the honour shown to the Holy Icons and relics of Holy men and women of all ages, who proved and manifested in their lives the Life of Christ. This veneration is not a worship offered to gods because we Orthodox Christians worship only One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but is a veneration of honour to the direct friends of God.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the place of God and that only the divine is indescribable.*, I, 13, in Migne, P.G., 94, 853.

⁸⁰ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *To Caesarius*, homily 7, § 2, in Migne, P.G., 35, 781.

⁸¹ St. John Chrysostom, *To Philippians*, Homily 3, § 3, in Migne, P.G., 62, 203. Athenagoras, *Deputation*, 31, in **B**, v. 4, p. 307. Androutsos, *Symbolique*, pp. 398-399.

⁸² Luke 23:46.

⁸³ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *Dialogue*, 5, 3, **B**, v. 3, p. 214.

⁸⁴ 1 Peter 2:12. Luke 19:44.

⁸⁵ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 50, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 56.

⁸⁶ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 182-183. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Decree VIII*, in Link, *Apostolic Faith Today*, pp. 56-57.

1. The Honour of the Saints

St Basil the Great observed that “*it is honourable and by us*” in this life and before the Universal Judgement and Resurrection that the Martyrs and the rest of the Saints “*enjoy the engagement*” of the glory due to them.⁸⁷ This honour offered by the Church to the Saints is distinguished from the worship offered only to God.⁸⁸

In the Old Testament God instructed: “*You shall fear the Lord your God, and only Him shall You serve; and you shall cleave to Him, and by His name you shall swear*”⁸⁹ and “*I Am the Lord God: that is My name: I will not give My glory to another, nor my praise to graven images.*”⁹⁰ We worship only the Father our only true God as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ proclaimed when He was tempted by the devil in the desert.⁹¹ This does not exclude the honourable veneration shown to the Saints because this “*has the proof of the favour to the common Master*” and by honouring “*those who distinguished themselves in piety we glorify first the Master through the servants*” in whom “*God is admired through His Holy (men).*”

Because the Saints are God’s friends they have been honoured much by us.⁹² For, he who does not honour the King’s friends does not honour the King. For, he who does not love the King’s friends does not love the King. “*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever*”⁹³. The Saints not only loved God but gave their entire life and existence to Him and became His eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet presenting all their bodily members and soul to Him as Holy vessels and home in which the Holy Trinity dwells. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, assured us, saying: “*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*”⁹⁴ The Saints became imitators of God as St Paul teaches us saying “*therefore, be imitators of God as dear children.*”⁹⁵ Also our Lord assured us once again that “*he who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.*”⁹⁶ St Paul teaches us that “*glory, honour, and peace to everyone who works what is good.*”⁹⁷ St John falls down on his knees before the Angel’s feet and reminds him, saying: “*See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!*”⁹⁸

This teaching of the Holy Scriptures was clarified by the practice of the Orthodox Church from ancient times through the teachings and proclamations of the Holy Fathers and Scholars of our Church. Thus the *Martyrdom of St Polycarp*, one of the most ancient testimony saved to our times, assures us that the Christians of Smyrna gathered together “*with joy and gladness ... to celebrate the birthday of his (St Ignatius) Martyrdom in commemoration of those who have already fought in the contest, and for the training and preparation of those who will do so in the future.*”⁹⁹

⁸⁷ St. Basil the Great, *To Barlaam martyr*, Homily 17, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 484. Cf. Fragkopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp.227-230.

⁸⁸ Cf. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, quest. 4, p. 105. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp.358-362.

⁸⁹ Lev. 6:13; 10:20.

⁹⁰ Is. 42:8.

⁹¹ Matth. 4:10.

⁹² Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, quest. 4, 104.

⁹³ 1 Tim. 1:17.

⁹⁴ John 14:23.

⁹⁵ Ephes. 5:1.

⁹⁶ Matth. 10:40.

⁹⁷ Rom. 2:10.

⁹⁸ Rev. 19:10.

⁹⁹ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 18, 3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 142.

St Cyprian testified that a similar practice was that of the Orthodox Church of Africa because the anniversary of the day of Martyrdom of those who became athletes for Christ was celebrated with festivities and with the celebration of the Divine Eucharist.¹⁰⁰

St Gregory of Nyssa noted the practice of the Church before the time of St Gregory the Wonder-worker assuring us that the Christians gather together “*during the annual period and rejoiced celebrating the honour of the Martyrs.*”¹⁰¹

The liturgical information of the 3rd century found in the *Apostolic Orders* included the instruction that the faithful “*on the day of the Apostles*” should not work, as well as “*on the day of Stephen the first-Martyr and the rest of the Holy Martyrs who preferred Christ rather than their own lives...*” and to gather in the “*cemeteries ... signing for those Martyrs who have fallen asleep and all the Saints from ages to age*” offering “*the antitype of the Kingdom, the Blood of Christ, the acceptable Eucharist.*”¹⁰²

During the 4th century St Basil the Great gives us the information that “*the old custom*” of the Bishops of Pontus was to gather together “*each year for the commemoration of the great Martyrs Eupychius and Dama.*”¹⁰³

St Gregory of Nyssa exalted the multitude of “*all the cities and villages who gather in a Holy place*” where the relics of the Martyr Theodorus were treasured. He manifested his joy seeing “*the flock’s yard being overcrowded, although the paddock of the sheep is not small, but makes tight the spaciousness caused by the mass of the flock*” and the Holy temple in which the festival took place.¹⁰⁴

St Augustine observed that the Christians express their respect to the Martyrs during the day of their commemoration through religious festivities.¹⁰⁵

From the above testimonies it is obvious that this honour towards the Martyrs and Saints was expressed on the one hand with the building of temples in their names and usually upon their tombs; whereas, on the other hand through the festive gathering during the anniversary of their “*birthday*” (day of departure from this life). During this day they were reading Holy Scripture and narrating the lives and achievements of the Martyr or Saint who pleased God and with festive psalms the ceremony ended with the Divine Eucharist.¹⁰⁶

2. The Meaning of the Honour to the Saints

The Saints are honoured and this honour offered to them was clarified within written sources which expressed the belief of the entire Orthodox Church, in the homilies and writings of the Holy Fathers and Scholars and in the Decrees of Canons of the Holy Councils. In the ancient writings of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, “*the Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna to the Church of God which sojourns in Philomelium*”¹⁰⁷ is stressed “*that we will never be able either to abandon the Christ who suffered for the salvation of the whole world of those who are saved, the blameless on behalf of sinners, or to worship anyone else. For this one, who is the Son of God, we worship, but the Martyrs we love as*

¹⁰⁰ St. Cyprian, *Epist.* 34, 3, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 331.

¹⁰¹ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To St. Gregory the wonder-worker*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 953.

¹⁰² *Apostolic Orders*, VIII, 33, §§ 8 and 9; VI, 30, § 2, in *B*, v. 2, pp. 165 and 116.

¹⁰³ St. Basil the Great, *Epistle* 252, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 940.

¹⁰⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To the martyr Theodorus*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 736. *Ibid*, *To the holy forty Martyrs*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 749.

¹⁰⁵ St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XX, 21, in Migne, *P.L.*, 42, 384.

¹⁰⁶ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To the martyr Theodorus*, Homily I, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 785. *Apostolic Orders*, VI, 30, § 2, in *B*, v. 2, pp. 165 and

116. St. Cyprian, *Epist.* 34, in Migne, *P.L.*, 4, 331-337.

¹⁰⁷ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 135.

disciples and imitators of the Lord, as they deserve, on account of their matchless devotion to their own King and Teacher. May we also become their partners and fellow disciples?"¹⁰⁸

St Basil the Great characterised *"the honour towards the Martyrs and their fellow servants"* as *"the proof of the favour towards the Master."* Through the narration of the lives *"of those who are distinguished in piety"* he supported the opinion that *"we glorify first the Master through the servants."*¹⁰⁹

St Augustine, referring to the ancient tradition that was practised before his time according to which Altars were raised upon the tombs of the Martyrs for their honour, observed that these Altars were built not to offer to the Martyrs our Sacrifices but only to the God of the Martyrs. Whatsoever we offer during their annual commemoration, we offer to God Who crowned them. We honour them through the common worship in love and respect as to Holy men of God. Continuing, St Augustine stressed that that which is called in Greek *«λατρεία»* (*"worship"*) we offer only to God and not to anyone else.¹¹⁰

St Hieronymus addressing Vigilant who condemned the honour to the Martyrs asked: *"So, are we defiled when we enter into the royalty of the Apostles? Was the Emperor Constantine who brought to Constantinople the Holy relics of Andrew, Luke and Timothy sacrilegious?" "Who, O foolish head, offered honour of worship and venerated the Martyrs? Who considered God the man?"*¹¹¹

St John of Damascus expressing the opinion of all the Holy Fathers and Scholars concluded that we must honour *"the Saints as friends of Christ, as children and heirs of God."* According to the proclamation of the fourth Evangelist that whoever received Christ *"to them He gave the right to become children of God"*¹¹² and the assurance of the Saviour Who said *"you are My friends."*¹¹³ In addition, he proclaimed that *"the Saints are gods and rulers and kings ... not by nature, but as they overruled the passions and kept unchanged the Divine image and as having been united to God according to their choice and having received as inhabitants within them the Grace, which He is by Nature. Should we then not honour the servants and friends and sons of God?"* Determining furthermore the ways according to which it is proper to honour the Saints, he said: *"Yes, we must honour, by building temples to God in their names, presenting offerings, glorifying their memories and enjoying spiritually, in psalms and hymns and spiritual odes. They are the living pillars and images becoming the imitators of the virtues"*. Naming and counting those who must be honoured *"the Theotokos as mainly and truly the Mother of God, the prophet John as the Forerunner and Baptist, the Apostle and Martyr"* then the *"Apostles, prophets, shepherds and teachers, the Martyrs of the Lord and our Holy fathers, the god-bearing ascetics ... the prophets, patriarchs, just who were before and had foretold about the appearance of the Lord."*¹¹⁴

As the climax of the testimonies from Holy Tradition we present the 4th Act of the 7th Ecumenical Council according to which *"we were taught to honour and glorify first and above the Theotokos, who is higher than all the heavenly powers, the Holy and angelical powers, the blessed and all-complimentary Apostles, the glorious prophets, and the victorious Martyrs who suffered for Christ and the Holy and god-*

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 17, 2-3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁹ St. Basil the Great, *To the forty Martyrs*, Homily 19, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 508. Ibid, *To the martyr Gordius*, Homily 18, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 492.

¹¹⁰ St. Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, XX, 21, in Migne, *P.L.*, 42, 384.

¹¹¹ St. Hieronymus, *Contra Vigilant*, § 5, in Migne, *P.L.*, 23, 358.

¹¹² John 1:12.

¹¹³ John 15:14.

¹¹⁴ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the honour to the saints and their relics*, IV, 88, 15, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1164-1168.

bearing teachers and all the Holy men, and to ask for their interventions, as being able to familiarise us to God the King of all.”¹¹⁵

3. The Invocation of the Mediation of the Saints

In the Old Testament concerning the invocation of the mediation of the Saints, God appeared urging Abimelech, king of Gerara, who was struck by illness because he took Sarah, forcing him to return her to Abraham “for he is a prophet, and shall pray for you, and you shall live; but if you restore her not, know that you shall die and all yours”¹¹⁶. “And Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his women servants, and they bore children; the Lord had closed every womb in the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.”¹¹⁷ Elsewhere God instructed Eliphaz the Themanite and his two friends who sinned by having “not said anything true before” the Lord, to go to Job “and he shall offer a burnt-offering for” them. “And My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will only accept him: for but for his sake I would have destroyed you, for you have not spoken the truth against My servant Job” and the Lord “pardoned their sin for the sake of Job.”¹¹⁸ In other cases we see Samuel being asked by the people of Israel not to cease “crying to the Lord” for them to “save” them “out of the hands of the Philistines.” And “Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him.”¹¹⁹

In the New Testament St Paul beseeched the prayers and petitions of the Christians. Writing to the Thessalonians he noted “brethren, pray for us.”¹²⁰ In another case writing from Rome to the Ephesians he beseeched the “supplication of all the Saints” to pray for him “that utterance may be given to” him.¹²¹ The same request is repeated to the Colossians¹²² “helping together in prayer for” him¹²³. In the Epistle to the Romans, he urged the Christians saying: “Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the Saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.”¹²⁴

How are the Saints informed of our prayers and requests? Holy Scriptures speak repeatedly of the servants of God who are alive and through supernatural visions and revelations are informed about the hidden things in the depths of the heart of others, or about events which took place in distant lands. St Peter was informed about the secret agreement between Ananias and Sapphira who “lied to the Holy Spirit and kept back part of the price of the land for” themselves.¹²⁵ Elisaie received full knowledge of what happened to Giezi when he ran to Naiman and received in the ignorance of the prophet “a talent of silver, and two changes of raiment”¹²⁶ as well as about the secret plans of the king of Syria, which he “announced to the king of Israel.”¹²⁷

¹¹⁵ 4th Act of the 7th Ecumenical Council, in Harduin, *Acta conciliorum*, IV, p. 265. Mogilas, A, 40 and C, 52, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, pp. 613, 679, 770. Fytrakis, *Relics*, pp. 28-31, 35, 64-68, 78-81, 104-108.

¹¹⁶ Gen. 20:7.

¹¹⁷ Gen. 20:17-18.

¹¹⁸ Job 42:7, 8 and 9.

¹¹⁹ I Samuel (I Kings):7:8, 9.

¹²⁰ 1 Thess. 5:25.

¹²¹ Ephes. 6:18, 19.

¹²² Col. 4:3.

¹²³ 2 Corinth. 1:11.

¹²⁴ Rom. 15:30-32.

¹²⁵ Act 5:3.

¹²⁶ 2 Kings (4 Kings) 5:20-27.

¹²⁷ 2 Kings (4 Kings) 6:11-13.

In addition Holy Scripture assures us that the Charisma of foreseeing was given to the servants of God. Jacob “*having looked up, he saw the host of God encamped; and the angels of God met him.*”¹²⁸ Many Holy men were caught up in an inconceivable, spiritual way out of their bodies or were found within their bodies in direct communication with the heavenly places.¹²⁹ Thus the Prophet Isaiah saw “*the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne*” surrounded by Seraphim crying out and saying “*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.*”¹³⁰ Ezekiel stood before “*the glory of the Lord*” and fell on his knees before the “*throne*” and the Cherubs stood on the right side.¹³¹ In the New Testament St Paul was caught up to the third Heaven where he heard “*inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*”¹³² Also St John the Apostle and Evangelist became “*in the Spirit*”¹³³ and saw “*the four living creatures*”¹³⁴ and “*the twenty-four elders*”¹³⁵ “*each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the Saints.*” When the Lamb “*had taken the scroll*”¹³⁶ which was “*written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals*”¹³⁷ and had received revelations about “*the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*”¹³⁸

From the above the faithful Orthodox Christian is informed by the All-wise and Almighty God Who is All-present and knows all. God is rich in His Ways through which He reveals to His servants those things which are far from them and the things which are or will take place in this world.¹³⁹

4. Holy Tradition on the Mediation of the Saints

Regarding the teachings on the intervention of the Saints in the Tradition of the Orthodox Church,¹⁴⁰ it is worthy to recall the advice of Origen to his friend Ambrosius. He urges Ambrosius, who was facing Martyrdom, to overcome his hesitation concerning his children and advises that he will be more beneficial to them “*after his departure*” rather than “*if he remained with them*” because “*then and more officially he will love them and will be closer praying for them.*”¹⁴¹

Eusebius referred to the Martyr Potamiaenis who promised to the soldier Basilides that when she departs from this world she will intercede on his behalf to “*her Lord*” Who will reward her. Basilides after a short time also faced Martyrdom. Three days after his arrest, Potamiaenis appeared to him and crowning him said that she interceded to “*the Lord for him*” and her prayers were heard. Basilides shortly thereafter received the crown of Martyrdom.¹⁴²

St Ambrosius proclaimed that the Martyrs can pray for our sins, whose own sins have been washed with blood. They are our protectors, the overseers of our lives and deeds, whom we are not ashamed to acknowledge as our intercessors.¹⁴³

¹²⁸ Gen. 32:1.

¹²⁹ 2 Corinth. 12:1-5.

¹³⁰ Is. 6:1-3.

¹³¹ Ez. 2:2:1-8; 10:1.

¹³² 2 Corinth. 12:4.

¹³³ Rev. 1:10; 4:2.

¹³⁴ Rev. 4:6, 8, 9; 5:6, 8, 11, 14; 6:1, 3, 5, 7; 7:11; 15:7; 19:4.

¹³⁵ Rev. 4:4, 10; 5:8, 11, 14; 6:1; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4.

¹³⁶ Rev. 5:8.

¹³⁷ Rev. 5:1.

¹³⁸ Rev. 1:19.

¹³⁹ Kritopoulos, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 548.

¹⁴⁰ Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 8, p. 32. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 362-365.

¹⁴¹ Origen, *To Martyrdom*, 38, in *B*, v. 9, p. 59.

¹⁴² Eusebius, *Church History*, VI, 5, 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 553.

¹⁴³ St. Ambrosius, *De viduis*, c. 9, § 55, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 264.

St Basil the Great proclaimed that “*I accept the Holy Apostles, prophets and Martyrs, and I call upon their intervention, for through their intervention, the philanthropic God becomes merciful to me and a ransom for my infirmities.*”¹⁴⁴ In addition, in his homily to the forty Martyrs he addressed them as “*common servants, protectors of mankind, mighty ambassadors, co-workers of prayer.*”¹⁴⁵

Similar opinion is expressed by his brother St Gregory of Nyssa in his homily to the Martyr Theodorus whom he calls to come “*to those who honour him as an invisible friend*” and “*to intercede for the country to the common King ..., as a soldier*” to defend against “*the enemies*” and “*as a Martyr to grant favour to the fellow servants.*” If there was necessity for more intervention, to gather “*the choir of his brethren Martyrs and with all*” to pray and to remind of “*Peter and Paul and John the Theologian and beloved disciple.*”¹⁴⁶

St Gregory of Nazianzus called upon the Hieromartyr St Cyprian to “*oversee from above with mercy and this Holy flock and to govern together for the better and to chase away the wolves and for the brightness of the Holy Trinity to grant more perfect and illustrious*” to him and his flock.¹⁴⁷

St John Chrysostom urged the faithful to “*come to the prayers of the Saints and to ask*” them “*to pray for us.*” He supports his opinion on the fact that the Saints have favour before God. “*For the Martyrs were not slaughtered for us. Yet, we run for their honour. If we run together with those who were slaughtered for Christ’s sake, what will He do in return?*”¹⁴⁸ Explaining the reason why we receive blessings from the relics of Saints he observed “*as the soldiers show their wounds, which they received in battle, to the king and they speak to him, likewise these who were beheaded ...whatever they ask from the heavenly King they will receive.*”¹⁴⁹

St Hieronymus concerning the honour and intervention of the Saints and Martyrs, supported the argument that, if when they were alive they had the need to pray for themselves and they could also pray for others, how much more could they do this after they have received the crowns, the victories and the triumphs?¹⁵⁰

5. The Honour to the Holy Relics of the Saints

The honour towards the Martyrs and Saints was expressed especially in the honour towards their relics¹⁵¹ and in whatever items or clothes they had used. Thus it is mentioned in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* that this Holy man removed his clothes the last moment, when he was ready to be received by the fire, so “*when the pyre was prepared, he took off all his clothes and removed his belt; he also tried to take off his shoes, though not previously in the habit of doing this, because all the faithful were always eager to be the first to touch his flesh. For he had been treated with all honour on account of his Holy life even before his grey hair appeared.*”¹⁵² When the precious body of the Hieromartyr was burnt, the faithful “*took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and finer than refined gold, and deposited them in a suitable place...*” in order to gather “*together, as we are able, with joy and gladness, the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his Martyrdom in commemoration of those who have*

¹⁴⁴ St. Basil the Great, *Epistle 360*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 1100.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, *To the forty Martyrs*, § 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 521 and 524.

¹⁴⁶ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To the martyr Theodorus*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 745-748.

¹⁴⁷ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *To the hieromartyr Cyprian*, Homily 24, § 19, in Migne, *P.G.*, 35, 1193.

¹⁴⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *To Genesis*, Homily 44, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 54, 408.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, *To the martyr Julianus*, § 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 576.

¹⁵⁰ St. Hieronymus, *Contra Vigilant*, § 6, in Migne, *P.L.*, 23, 359.

¹⁵¹ Bryennios, *Paralipomena*, ch. XI, p. 80.

¹⁵² *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 13, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 140.

already fought in the contest, and for the training and preparation of those who will do so in the future.”¹⁵³

The fact that the Church offered liturgical honour to the relics of the Saints was not a discrimination of the faithful between Saints and non-Saints, but the belief of the ancient Orthodox Church was that Christ manifested Himself in the Martyr in a special way and through him He was revealing His power and victory over death.¹⁵⁴ The relics of the Martyr are a testimony for the Church, a proof of Christ’s final Victory.¹⁵⁵

St Ignatius the Theophorus of Antioch when he was thrown to the wild beasts said “*only the largest parts of his Holy relics were gathered, which were carried and placed in Antioch in a linen cloth as a priceless treasure.*”

St John Chrysostom stressed that these Holy relics were received by the Antiochians “*with crowns*” not only by them alone “*but by all the cities from Rome*” to Antioch they were “*accompanied praising the victor, glorifying the athlete, mocking the devil.*”¹⁵⁶

Eusebius informed us that the throne of St James, the Adelphotheos (= the Brother of God), was well preserved by his successors, proving in this way “*what respect they have for the Holy men who loved God*”¹⁵⁷.

St Ambrosius testified that the Christians collected with piety the instruments of Martyrdom as they were still stained with the blood of the Holy Martyrs.¹⁵⁸

These testimonies should be considered natural expressions of the members of the Orthodox Church since they are based upon Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition. The *Apostolic Orders* do not consider the relics of those who have fallen asleep in God as dishonourable.¹⁵⁹ In the Old Testament when the prophet Elisha died, his relics raised the dead man. “*And it came to pass as they were burying a man, that behold, they saw a band of men, and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha: and as soon as he touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet.*”¹⁶⁰

St Cyril of Jerusalem explained that the above example occurred “*not only to honour the souls of the just*” but also their bodies. “*In the bodies of the just there is power*” since “*the dead body of the prophet became a work of life and gave life to that which had died, that itself remained among the dead.*”¹⁶¹

The *Apostolic Orders* proceeded furthermore by using another biblical example. Besides the Law of Moses concerning carcasses, which made the Jews unclean if they were to touch them,¹⁶² the relics of

¹⁵³ Ibid, 18, 2-3, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 142.

¹⁵⁴ Schmemmann, *The Church Praying*, p. 234. Cf. Grabar, *Martyrium*, I, p. 29.

¹⁵⁵ Schmemmann, *The Church Praying*, p. 234.

¹⁵⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *To the Theophorus Ignatius*, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 594.

¹⁵⁷ Eusebius, *Church History*, VII, 19, in Migne, 20, 681.

¹⁵⁸ St. Ambrosius, *Exhort. Virginit.*, c. 2, § 9, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 354.

¹⁵⁹ *Apostolic Orders*, VI, 30, 5, in *B*, v. 2, p. 116.

¹⁶⁰ 2 Kings (4 Kings) 13:21.

¹⁶¹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, § 16, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1036-1037.

¹⁶² Lev. 11:39-40

the just in the Old Testament were never considered unclean. “Moses was carrying the relics of Joseph¹⁶³, but never considered this as a miasma.”¹⁶⁴

St Basil the Great added “when they died judaically, the corpses were considered abominations; but, when death was for Christ their relics were Holy.” In the Mosaic Law was written that, if anyone touched a dead body he will “be unclean till evening” and “shall wash his garments.”¹⁶⁵ “Now he who touches the bones of a Martyr receives some kind of sanctification from the body, which resides Divine Grace.”¹⁶⁶

St Cyril of Jerusalem explained that the Grace which emanates from the relics of the Saints “is some kind of power residing in the bodies of the Saints because it rested in the just soul for so many years, of which it became servant.”¹⁶⁷ This reminds us of St Paul’s words “our bodies are members of Christ”¹⁶⁸ and “temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in us.”¹⁶⁹ St Cyril also referred to the events that even “the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some”¹⁷⁰ and healed them.¹⁷¹

St John Chrysostom, reminding us about the narration of the Prophet Elisha, observed that not only the bodies “but the relics of the Saints are full of Grace.” Because if, before the Holy Spirit dwelt within the Church of Christ, during the period of the Old Testament at the time of the prophet Eliaie, “this happened and his case was touched by the dead and the bonds of death were loosened and he returned back from the dead, how much more now, when we have greater Grace, when the action of the Spirit is much more” will the faithful stretch his hand to touch the case which contains the Holy relics and “will receive from it much power.”¹⁷²

This power of Grace, which emanates from the tombs of the Holy Martyrs and Saints, is confirmed by the multitude of miracles, which take place when one approaches with faith and piety. About these miracles we have the testimonies of St Ambrosius,¹⁷³ St Augustine,¹⁷⁴ St John Chrysostom¹⁷⁵ and the Cappadocian Fathers (St Basil, the Great,¹⁷⁶ St Gregory of Nyssa¹⁷⁷ and St Gregory of Nazianzus the Theologian¹⁷⁸).

Kritopoulos spoke of the honour which the Orthodox Church offers to the Holy relics explaining the reason for the outpouring of the Divine Grace as follows: “Because the pagans ... considered as painful and blasphemous to die for Christ, God ... wanting to prove it as honourable and glorious this thrice-blessed death, which was for the sake of His only Begotten Son, placed in the relics of those who died the Grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit ... That it is truly the Grace of the Holy Spirit which was added to the Holy relics, is testified to by the numerous scholars of the ancient Church, and wise men and

¹⁶³ Ex. 13:19.

¹⁶⁴ *Apostolic Orders*, VI, 30, 5, in **B**, v. 2, p. 116.

¹⁶⁵ Lev. 11:39, 40.

¹⁶⁶ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 115(116)*, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 30, 112.

¹⁶⁷ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, § 16, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1036-1037.

¹⁶⁸ 1 Corinth. 6:15.

¹⁶⁹ 1 Corinth. 6:19.

¹⁷⁰ Acts 5:15.

¹⁷¹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, § 16, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1036-1037.

¹⁷² St. John Chrysostom, *Praise to Ignatius the Theophorus*, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 595.

¹⁷³ St. Ambrosius, *Epist.* 22, § 9, in Migne, *P.L.*, 16, 1064.

¹⁷⁴ St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XXII, § 2, in Migne, *P.L.*, 41, 701.

¹⁷⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *To the martyrs*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 664. *Ibid*, *To the Egyptian martyrs*, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 50, 694-695. *Ibid*, *To 2nd Corinthians*, Homily 26, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 583.

¹⁷⁶ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 115(116)*, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 30, 112. *Ibid*, *To the martyr Juliet*, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 241.

¹⁷⁷ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To the forty Martyrs*, Homily 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 46, 784.

¹⁷⁸ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *To hieromartyr Cyprian*, Homily 24, § 18, in Migne, *P.G.*, 35, 1192. *Ibid*, *Against Julian I*, Homily 4, § 69, in Migne, *P.G.*, 589.

Saints, the miracles which were performed through the Holy relics, as the expelling of demons and the healing of many illnesses."¹⁷⁹

THE PERFECTION OF ALL

THE END OF THE AGE AND THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD

Divine Revelation does not only speak of the creation from nothingness of the world but also about the End, towards which the whole visible Creation is guided according to the Plan of the All-wise Creator. This End is due to the mortality which is within the visible world. It will occur according to the Teachings that were foretold by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and is characterised as "*the End of the Age.*"¹⁸⁰ It will take place simultaneously with the Second Coming of the Lord, followed by the Universal Judgement and separation of the just from the sinners.¹⁸¹ This Second Coming of the Lord is referred to in Holy Scripture as "*the appearance of the Lord,*" "*the appearance of the glory of the Saviour,*" "*the Day of the Son of Man*" and will be contrary to His first appearance when He came as a humble Servant. It will occur in all His Divine Glory and Power and He will be accompanied by countless Angels.¹⁸² This event was foretold by the Lord Himself as well as by all the Holy Prophets and Apostles. Hence the awaiting of His Coming is a fundamental Doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Faith, taught not only by Holy Scripture and Apostolic Tradition but by all the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church and incorporated in the different Creeds right from the beginning of the Christian Era. Although this Event will take place, the time is unknown. In the New Testament we find some indications of events that will occur before the Second Coming, such as the preaching of the Holy Gospel throughout the entire world, the return of the Jews to Christ, as well as the long period of the Christ's reign for a period of a thousand years. After these events there will be the final battle between Christ and His Church and the Antichrist, his false prophet and the Beast.(Armagedon) The Antichrist will be defeated and Christ will appear as a "*Thief in the night*" and will shine as "*the lightning*"¹⁸³ on the Great Day of His Second Coming.

1. The Doctrine of the End of the Age according to Holy Scripture

The assurance of the End of the Age is derived from the mortality of Creation, which falls under the law of unpreventable mortality. Holy Scripture stresses the fact that "*the form of this world is passing away.*"¹⁸⁴ The term "*form*" implies that all "*the things of this present world have appearance and have nothing permanent or secure.*"¹⁸⁵ At other times it proclaims that "*the End of all things is at hand*"¹⁸⁶ and that "*the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burnt up.*"¹⁸⁷

The End of this present Age was foretold by Holy Scripture. It will take place suddenly and unexpectedly with the Second Coming and appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of

¹⁷⁹ Kritopoulos, ch. XVI, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 547.

¹⁸⁰ Matth. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20.

¹⁸¹ Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 231-232. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 95, 373. Labadarios, *Sermons*, v. 1, pp. 34-35.

¹⁸² 2 Thess. 1:7.

¹⁸³ Luke 17:24.

¹⁸⁴ 1 Corinth. 7:31.

¹⁸⁵ St. Ecumenius, *To 1 Corinthians*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 118, 740.

¹⁸⁶ 1 Peter 4:7.

¹⁸⁷ 2 Peter 3:10.

God, Who will come to “*judge the living and the dead*”¹⁸⁸ on the Day that is referred to by Holy Scripture as the “*last Day*,”¹⁸⁹ “*the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ*,”¹⁹⁰ “*the Day*,”¹⁹¹ “*the Day of the Lord Jesus*,”¹⁹² “*the Day of Christ*,”¹⁹³ “*the Day of Judgement*”¹⁹⁴ and “*the Day of the Son of Man*.”¹⁹⁵ Because this Coming of the Lord will be glorious and visible to everyone throughout the world, it is called His “*Coming*,”¹⁹⁶ “*Appearing*,”¹⁹⁷ “*when His glory is revealed*,”¹⁹⁸ etc.

The Coming of the Lord is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. The Prophets foretold that “*the Lord will come as fire and His chariots as a storm to render His vengeance with wrath, and His rebuke with a flame of fire. For with the fire of the Lord all the earth shall be judged, and all flesh with His sword: many shall be slain by the Lord.*”¹⁹⁹ They spoke of the “*great and glorious Day of the Lord*”²⁰⁰ “*for the great Day of the Lord is near, it is near, and greatly hastens; the sound of the Day of the Lord is made bitter and harsh. A mighty Day of wrath is that Day, a Day of affliction and distress, a Day of desolation and destruction, a Day of gloominess and darkness, a Day of cloud and vapour, a Day of the trumpet and cry against the strong cities, and against the high towers. And I will greatly afflict the men, and they shall walk as blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; therefore He shall pour out their blood as dust, and their flesh as dung. And their silver and their gold shall in nowise be able to rescue them in the Day of the Lord’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy; for He will bring a speedy destruction on all them that inhabit the land.*”²⁰¹

“*For, behold, a Day comes burning as an oven, and it shall consume them; and all the aliens, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the Day that is coming shall set them on fire, said the Lord Almighty, and there shall not be left of them root or branch.*”²⁰²

“*I beheld until the thrones were set, and the Ancient of Days sat; and His raiment was white as snow, and the hair of His head as pure wool: His throne was a flame of fire, and His wheels burning fire. A stream of fire rushed forth before Him: thousand thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousands of myriads attended upon Him: the Judgement sat, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which that horn spoke, until the wild beast was slain and destroyed, and his body given to be burnt with fire. And the dominion of the rest of the wild beasts was taken away; but a prolonging of life was given them for certain times. I beheld in the night vision, and, lo, one coming with the clouds of Heaven as the Son of man, and He came on to the Ancient of Days, and was brought near to Him. And to Him was given the dominion, and the honour, and the Kingdom; and all nations, tribes, and languages, shall serve Him: His Dominion is an Everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom shall not be destroyed.*”²⁰³

¹⁸⁸ 2 Tim. 4:1.

¹⁸⁹ John 6:39; 11:24; 12:48.

¹⁹⁰ 1 Corinth. 1:8; 5:5.

¹⁹¹ 1 Corinth. 3:13.

¹⁹² 1 Corinth. 5:5.

¹⁹³ Phil. 1:10.

¹⁹⁴ 1 John 4:17.

¹⁹⁵ Luke 17:24. Cf. St. Symeon, *Euriskomena*, Homily LVII, pp. 287-301.

¹⁹⁶ Matth. 24:3. 2 Thess. 2:8.

¹⁹⁷ 1 Tim. 6:14. 2 Tim. 4:1. Tit. 2:13.

¹⁹⁸ 1 Peter 4:13.

¹⁹⁹ Is. 66:15-16

²⁰⁰ Joel 2:31.

²⁰¹ Zeph. 1:14-18.

²⁰² Mal. 4:1.

²⁰³ Daniel 7:9-14.

The prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ's Coming was initially fulfilled with His first Coming, the Incarnation of the Word of God and His appearance in the form of a servant and habitation amongst men. During this period the Lord did not come *"to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be Saved."*²⁰⁴ The Judgement and Condemnation of men is due to their the Salvation that our Lord and Saviour offers to the entire world. Therefore, *"he who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God."*²⁰⁵

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, condemned Satan, the ruler of this world, who tempted the Lord in the desert but who was defeated.²⁰⁶ Thus Christ entered into the *"strong man's house"* having *"first (bound) the strong man"* before plundering *"his house."*²⁰⁷ Furthermore, before His sufferings, our Lord warned us that *"the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."*²⁰⁸ Christ explained that Satan was already *"judged"*²⁰⁹ and *"cast out"*²¹⁰ from Heaven, although his authority had received a deadly blow due to the Sacrifice of the crucified Lord, it was not yet completely destroyed. The fulfillment of the first Appearance of Christ and the Judgement of the works of men as well as the complete abolishment of the devil's works will take place at the Second Coming of the Lord, when He will come *"in His glory, and all the Holy Angels with Him."*²¹¹ With the *"flame of fire"* He will punish take revenge those who did not know God and who did not obey His Gospel²¹² *"because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be Saved."*²¹³

Since the time of His Sermon on the Mount our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, referred to His Second Coming²¹⁴ by very clearly stating that *"in that Day ... many will say to (Him) 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, cast out demons in Thy Name, and done many wonders in Thy Name?'"* And He warned us that He *"will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*²¹⁵ Then in the Lord's Prayer, He advised every disciple to address all petitions to our Heavenly Father, in the expectation that *"Thy Kingdom come."* Therefore the prayers of the first Christian Community were based on the sayings: *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus"*²¹⁶ and *"may Grace come, and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If anyone is Holy, let him come; if anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha! Amen."*²¹⁷

The Lord referred to the prophesy of Daniel,²¹⁸ which refers to His glorious Second Coming. He assured that after the tribulations of the world, all nations *"will see the Son of Man sitting at the right Hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of Heaven"*²¹⁹ and *"all the Angels"*²²⁰ will accompany Him as witnesses of the Universal Judgement. *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the*

²⁰⁴ John 3:17.

²⁰⁵ John 3:18.

²⁰⁶ Matth. 4:1-11. Mark 1:12-13. Luke 4:1-13.

²⁰⁷ Matth. 12:29.

²⁰⁸ John 14:30.

²⁰⁹ John 16:11.

²¹⁰ John 12:31.

²¹¹ Matth. 25:31.

²¹² Daniel 7:9, 10.

²¹³ 2 Thess. 2:8.

²¹⁴ Matth. 5:1-7:29.

²¹⁵ Matth. 7:22-23.

²¹⁶ Rev. 22:20.

²¹⁷ *Didache*, 10, 6, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 155.

²¹⁸ Daniel 7:9-14.

²¹⁹ Mark 14:62.

²²⁰ Matth. 25:31.

heavens will be shaken. Then the Sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And His Angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”²²¹ Thus the Lord repeatedly assured us that He will appear again in all His Glory and Power, visible to the sight of all, even to sinners, manifesting the Majesty of His Kingship. “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.”²²² To manifest this Royal Majesty our Lord compared Himself to “a certain nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a Kingdom and to return.”²²³ Referring to the Judgement that will follow His Second Coming, He revealed that He will separate the just from the sinners, just “as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.”²²⁴ He also assured us that He “will send out His Angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those who practise lawlessness and will cast them into the furnace of fire.”²²⁵ When teaching His Disciples and the Jews concerning His Second Coming, He used the analogy of the dragnet, which “was cast into the sea” and gathered “some of every kind, which when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels. But threw the bad away.”²²⁶ In the fourth Holy Gospel Christ referring to the faithfulness of St John the Evangelist, assured St Peter that: “If I Will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.”²²⁷ Elsewhere, Christ proclaimed that the Father “has given Him Authority to execute Judgement ... because He is the Son of Man”²²⁸ whereas, on the contrary, He assured that “the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His Voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”²²⁹ Furthermore, he taught that the Will of God the Father is “that of all He has given” to the Son “should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last Day”²³⁰ and “everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life.”²³¹

In addition the two chapters in the Holy Gospel of St Matthew²³² refer to the events of the future during the last Days to come and which will take place before the Second Coming. They also refer to the preparation and watchfulness that one should have in order to receive the Lord as the Heavenly Bridegroom Who will suddenly arrive “at an hour you do not expect,”²³³ so as to be able to enter the Wedding Festival with Him in His Kingdom. Nevertheless, in all the promises and prophecies concerning the Second Coming of the Lord, we have one unchangeable Truth: **That Christ will come as King of the Heavenly Kingdom vested with all His Glory.**

The Lord made this declaration when He was in the form of a Servant dwelling among us and even after His glorious Ascension into Heaven, the fulfillment of His Prophecies concerning the catastrophe of Jerusalem and the falling of the world of idolatry. Each one of these manifestations of the Power and Glory of our Lord, consist of prophetic words and prefigurations of His Second Coming

²²¹ Matth. 24:29-31.

²²² Rev. 1:7.

²²³ Luke 19:12.

²²⁴ Matth. 25:32.

²²⁵ Matth. 13:41-42.

²²⁶ Matth. 13:47-48.

²²⁷ John 21:22.

²²⁸ John 5:27

²²⁹ John 5:28-29.

²³⁰ John 6:39.

²³¹ John 6:40.

²³² Matth. 24 and 25.

²³³ Matth. 24:44.

In all the writings of the Holy Apostles, they urged the faithful to have their hope in and to await the Second Coming of the Lord. He who renounces this Truth uproots the whole structure of Apostolic Theology.

St Peter addressing the Jews *“in the porch which is called Solomon’s”*²³⁴ proclaimed that, according to the Eternal Plan of God, *“Heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, that which God has spoken by the mouth of all His Holy Prophets since the world began”*²³⁵ and which will follow the Repentance of Israel.²³⁶ In this case the Second Coming of Christ is combined with the instruction of repentance of Israel, whereas elsewhere St Peter projected it as joy *“to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”*²³⁷ St Peter in his 2nd Epistle spoke of the hope and promises urging the faithful: *“That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the Holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us, the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgement and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burnt up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, and looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”*²³⁸

St Paul repeatedly projected to the faithful that *“the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ”* is the Day *“waiting for the revelation”* of the Lord²³⁹ Who, when He comes, *“will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.”*²⁴⁰

This Day of Christ’s Coming is desirable for every Orthodox Christian because *“when Christ Who is our Life appears”* we *“also will appear with Him in glory”*²⁴¹ enjoying *“the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will give to all who have loved His appearing.. on that Day.”*²⁴² *“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an Archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the*

²³⁴ Acts 3:11.

²³⁵ Acts 3:21.

²³⁶ Acts 3:11-26.

²³⁷ 1 Peter 4:13.

²³⁸ 2 Peter 3:2-14.

²³⁹ 1 Corinth. 1:7.

²⁴⁰ 1 Corinth. 4:5.

²⁴¹ Col. 3:4.

²⁴² 2 Tim. 4:8.

*Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*²⁴³ Meeting the Lord Who will come from the Heavens we will be inseparable from Him, living with Him for all Eternity.

Regardless of how desirable the Day of the Lord is, it will be frightful and catastrophic for *“those who did not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* because *“these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His Power.”*²⁴⁴ Hence St Paul stressed the obligation and the need of the faithful to *“establish their hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His Saints.”*²⁴⁵

St Peter speaking of *“times of refreshing”*²⁴⁶ did not expressed a different opinion of that which St Paul assured saying that *“the Lord will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”*²⁴⁷ St Jude wrote that the Lord is coming *“to execute Judgement on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”*²⁴⁸ St James encouraging the faithful urged them to: *“Establish their hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”* *“Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!”*²⁴⁹ St John also urged to *“abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”*²⁵⁰ and in the book of Revelation he proclaimed that *“every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth.”*²⁵¹

The essential part of the prophetic promise and hope, which refers to the Second Coming of Christ, is the agreement of all the voices of Prophets and Apostles.

Concluding the Apostolic testimonies we refer to the assurance given by the Holy Angels on the Day of Christ’s Ascension into Heaven: *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”*²⁵²

2. The Doctrine of the End of the Age According to Holy Tradition

In the *Didache* we read: *“Watch over your life: ‘do not let your lamps go out, and do not be unprepared, but be ready, for you do not know the hour when our Lord is coming.’”*²⁵³ *Gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit your souls, for all the time you have believed will be of no use to you if you are not found perfect in the last time. For in the last Days the false prophets and corrupters will abound, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another.*²⁵⁴ *And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God and ‘will perform signs and wonders,’*²⁵⁵ *and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before.*

²⁴³ 1 Thess. 4:15-17.

²⁴⁴ 2 Thess. 1:8, 9.

²⁴⁵ 1 Thess. 3:13.

²⁴⁶ Acts 3:19.

²⁴⁷ Heb. 9:28.

²⁴⁸ Jude 15.

²⁴⁹ James 4:8, 9.

²⁵⁰ 1 John 2:28.

²⁵¹ Rev. 1:7.

²⁵² Acts 1:11.

²⁵³ Mark 13:35, 37. Matth. 24:42, 44. Luke 12:35, 40.

²⁵⁴ Matth. 24:10-12.

²⁵⁵ Mark 13:22.

Then all humankind will come to the fiery test, and ‘many will fall away’ and perish; but ‘those who Endure’ in their faith ‘will be saved’²⁵⁶ by the accursed one himself.²⁵⁷ And ‘then there will appear the signs’²⁵⁸ of the truth: first the sign of an opening in heaven, then the sign of the sound of a trumpet,²⁵⁹ and third, the resurrection of the dead – but not of all; rather, as it has been said, ‘The Lord will come, and all his saints with him.’²⁶⁰ Then the world ‘will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.’^{261,262}

St Clement of Rome in his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians assured that “*the Lord said, ‘I am coming to gather together all the nations, tribes, and languages.’*²⁶³ Now by this He means the Day of His appearing, when He will come and redeem us, each according to His deeds. And the unbelievers ‘will see His glory’²⁶⁴ and might, and they will be astonished when they see that the Kingdom of the world belongs to Jesus, saying, ‘Woe to us, because it was you’²⁶⁵, and we did not realize it, nor did we believe; and we did not obey the elders when they spoke to us about our salvation’. And ‘their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched, and they will be a spectacle for all flesh.’²⁶⁶ He means that Day of Judgement when people will see those among us who lived ungodly lives and perverted the commandments of Jesus Christ. But the righteous, having done good and Endured torments and hated the pleasures of the soul, when they see how those who have gone astray and denied Jesus by their words or by their actions are being punished with dreadful torments in unquenchable fire, will give glory to their God as they say, ‘There will be hope for the one who has served God with his whole heart.’²⁶⁷

St Hippolytus assured that “*they are two appearances of the Lord, one is the first which was dishonourable because He was humiliated.*” The second appearance “*was preached in glory as coming from heaven with the power of the angels and the fatherly glory.*”²⁶⁸

St Cyril of Jerusalem proclaimed that the Lord “*is coming at the End of this world with glory during the last Day.*” The “*second from the previous much beauty*” will not be “*humbled*” as the first but “*glorious.*” Because “*in the previous He suffered the humiliation of the Cross*” in “*the second He is coming accompanied and glorified by an army of Angels; He is coming not to be judged, but to judge those who judged Him.*” “*He is coming upon the clouds of heaven and angelic trumpets will then sound*” and not only glorious, but and “*..the descent of the Master will be frightful.*”²⁶⁹

Finally, St John of Damascus emphasised that the Lord “*is coming from heaven, as the Holy Apostles saw Him ascending into Heaven, perfect God and perfect Man with glory and power.*”²⁷⁰

²⁵⁶ Matth. 24:10, 13.

²⁵⁷ Gal. 3:13

²⁵⁸ Matth. 24:30.

²⁵⁹ Matth. 24:31. 1 Corinth. 15:52. 1 Thess. 4:12.

²⁶⁰ Zech. 14:5. 1 Thess. 3:13.

²⁶¹ Matth. 24:30.

²⁶² *Didache*, 16, 1-8, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 158.

²⁶³ Is. 66:18.

²⁶⁴ Is. 66:18.

²⁶⁵ John 8:24, 28; 13:19.

²⁶⁶ Is. 66:24. Cf. Mark 9:48.

²⁶⁷ St. Clement of Rome, 2nd *Corinthians*, 17:4-7, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 77.

²⁶⁸ St. Hippolytus, *About Christ and Anti-Christ*, XLIV, in *B*, v. 6, p. 211.

²⁶⁹ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XV, §§ 1, 2, 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 869.

²⁷⁰ St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, IV, 26, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1217. Mogilas, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 619.

3. Unknown the Time of the Second Coming

The Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the most certain event which will take place. But the time of His Coming remains unknown.²⁷¹ Although our Lord repeatedly was asked about the time of His Coming by the Holy Apostles, He sated that “*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.*”²⁷² Christ as a perfect Man ignores the time, as He proclaimed saying: “*But of that Day and hour no one knows, not even the Angels of Heaven, but My Father only.*”²⁷³

St Paul presented this truth of Christ’s Coming saying: “*For you yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*”²⁷⁴ St Peter also used this example saying: “*But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*”²⁷⁵ This example of the “*thief*” was used by the Lord, who instructed His Disciples to be watchful, because as the owner of the house does not know “*what hour the thief would come*”²⁷⁶ likewise and the disciples and all the faithful ignore “*what hour the Lord is coming.*”²⁷⁷ Both Holy Apostles draw the attention on the event, that, when men “*say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.*”²⁷⁸ The Lord also compared the time of His Second Coming to the times of Noah saying: “*As the Days of Noah were so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the Days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the Day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*”²⁷⁹ According to our Lord and the Holy Apostles, it is not for us to ask about the time of the Second Coming, but rather to be watchful, alert and always ready to receive the Master.²⁸⁰

4. The Signs Before the Second Coming

Although the Second Coming of our Lord will take place in an unknown time, “*as a thief in the night...*,” some events will prepare the ground for His Appearance.²⁸¹ These events comprise “*the signs of His Coming, and the End of the Age...*”²⁸² which foretold the Coming of the Lord. “*When you see all these things, know that it is near – at doors.*”²⁸³ The Lord spoke of these signs shortly before His sufferings and they are clearly prophetic.²⁸⁴

According to the above these signs can be as follows:

²⁷¹ Bryennios, *Paralipomena*, ch. XLI, v. III, p. 122.

²⁷² Acts 1:7.

²⁷³ Matth. 24:36. Mark 13:32.

²⁷⁴ 1 Thess. 5:2.

²⁷⁵ 2 Peter 3:10.

²⁷⁶ Matth. 24:43.

²⁷⁷ Matth. 24:42.

²⁷⁸ 1 Thess. 5:3.

²⁷⁹ Matth. 24:36-39.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 129. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p.374

²⁸¹ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 129-130. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 401-404. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 374-377.

²⁸² Matth. 24:3.

²⁸³ Matth. 24:33.

²⁸⁴ Matth. 24. Mark 13:1-37. Luke 21:5-36.

a) The preaching of the Holy Gospel in the entire world. *“And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations, and then the End wills come.”*²⁸⁵

b) St Paul revealed in his Epistle to the Romans that when *“the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...,”* then also *“Israel will be saved...,”*²⁸⁶ believing in the Gospel and acknowledging Jesus as the true Messiah, Christ and Saviour. Many times the return of Israel is linked with the return of the Prophet Elijah. The Prophet Malachi first spoke of the coming of Elijah. He spoke that the future Messiah will have a *“messenger ... who will survey the way before”* him²⁸⁷ and he names him as *“Elijah the Thesbite.”* *“And behold, I will End to you Elijah the Thesbite, before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes: who shall turn again the heart of the father to the son, and the heart of a man to his neighbour, lest I come and smite the earth grievously.”*²⁸⁸ During the time of our Lord, the awaiting of the return of the Prophet Elijah was a general belief among the Jews. The Angel foretold to the Prophet Zachariah about his son, St John the Forerunner and Baptist, saying that *“he will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah.”*²⁸⁹ Christ assured saying that *“But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished.”*²⁹⁰

St Hippolytus expressed the opinion that *“as the two appearances of our Lord and Saviour were shown through the Scriptures, likewise and the two forerunners; the first John the son of Zachariah”* before the second coming *“is necessary His forerunners to be manifested, as Malachi said ... these will go together preaching the future revelation which will take place...,”* according to the prophesy of John in the Book of Revelation.²⁹¹ *“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty Days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the Days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”*²⁹² St John of Damascus names these two Prophets as *“Enoch and Elijah the Thesbite.”*²⁹³

c) The Lord instructed, that a great Apostasy will take place before His Second Coming.²⁹⁴ The false-prophets *“will deceive many.”*²⁹⁵ Increasing indifference, enslavement to materialism and the pleasures of the present life will prevail as these conditions were *“in the Days of Noah, so it will be also in the Days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the Day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the Days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, planted, they built; but on the Day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the Day when the Son of Man is revealed.”*²⁹⁶ Regardless of the tribulations and temptations, by which the Divine providence searched to bring right and the return of the lawless generation, it remained hard and

²⁸⁵ Matth. 24:14.

²⁸⁶ Rom. 11:25, 26.

²⁸⁷ Mal. 3:1

²⁸⁸ Mal. 4:5-6.

²⁸⁹ Luke 1:17.

²⁹⁰ Matth. 17:12.

²⁹¹ St. Hippolytus, *About Christ and Anti-Christ*, XLIV-XLVII, in **B**, v. 6, pp. 311 and 312.

²⁹² Rev. 11:4-6.

²⁹³ St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, IV, 26, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1217.

²⁹⁴ Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 129.

²⁹⁵ Matth. 24:5.

²⁹⁶ Luke 17:26-30.

unbent and unrepentant. *“They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.”*²⁹⁷

The increasing of sin create a greater misery, which is accompanied by an anxiety and hopelessness. This was described by the Lord saying: *“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man, coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”*²⁹⁸ Thus the prophecy of St Paul will be fulfilled according to which the Lord’s Day will not come *“unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”*²⁹⁹

d) The peak of the Apostasy, misery and anxiety will be the coming of the Antichrist. According to *Didache* *“in the last Days the false prophets and corrupters will abound, and the sheep will be turned into wolves, and love will be turned into hate. For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another”*³⁰⁰. *And then the deceiver of the world will appear as a son of God and ‘will perform signs and wonders’*³⁰¹, *and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before.”*³⁰² The Divine Evangelist John characterized as *“Antichrist”* *“every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in flesh”*³⁰³ and assured that *“many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*³⁰⁴

St John of Damascus observed, *“in a special way the Antichrist is called, he will come at the End of the Age.”*³⁰⁵ *“Unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”*³⁰⁶ The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church accepted the Antichrist as *“some knowledgeable and wise person, who pretends to have wisdom and philanthropia”* not as the incarnation of the devil but *“a man by nature, who will receive all the power of the devil. And as God and Saviour took up our human nature and was able to work through it the salvation, likewise and Satan will chose a man to give him all his power to deceive men.”* *“The devil does not become man according to the Lord’s incarnation”* but the devil dwells in a man *“the future freewill the lawless God foreseeing consents that the devil inhabits in him.”* And he will work great things and wonders and will show admirable signs, but these will be *“false and deception of magic ... signs and wonders of lies and not real.”* *“Because the father of lies, Satan in person will act through him, to make the multitudes to believe the dead as risen, and the limp walking and the blind seeing, without the healing taking place.”* Through these he will attempt to prove that he is god and *“will oppose God and will destroy the gods and will command to worship him instead of God.”* He will appear to the Jews *“as the Christ which they await.”* *“He will deceive”* many *“and when prevailing he will persecute the Church of God and will manifest all his evilness”* and *“all the human lawlessness will surpass of those who in the*

²⁹⁷ Rev. 16:11.

²⁹⁸ Luke 21:25-28. Cf. Matth 24:29-31. Mark 13:24-27.

²⁹⁹ 2 Thess. 2:3.

³⁰⁰ Matth. 24:10-12.

³⁰¹ Mark 13:22.

³⁰² *Didache*, 16, 3-4, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 158.

³⁰³ 1 John 3:3.

³⁰⁴ 1 John 3:1.

³⁰⁵ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the Anti-Christ*, IV, 99, 26, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1217.

³⁰⁶ 2 Thess. 2:3-4.

pass were unjust and ungodly, murderers and unmerciful and especially will be against the Christians.”³⁰⁷ Some of the Holy Fathers support the opinion that the Antichrist will come not from the Christians, but from the Jews. He will be worshipped by all those Jews who have not accepted Christ as the Son of God and Messiah as well as by all those who denied the True Christian Faith (heretics) and he will demand the rebuilding of the Temple of Solomon.³⁰⁸

St Hippolytus supported the opinion that the Antichrist will be born from the tribe of Dan,³⁰⁹ according to the prophecy of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy: “*And to Dan he said, Dan is a lion’s whelp, and shall leap out of Basan.*”³¹⁰ He will hate and put great pressure on the faithful Christians, who will not receive his seal. But, regardless of how much he will prevail, he will have an end. St Paul taught that “*the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.*”³¹¹

e) According to the teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God “*you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the End is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the End shall be saved. And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations, and then the End will come.*”³¹² St Peter said as “*the world that existed perished, being flooded with water*” so “*the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgement...*”³¹³ because “*the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up*”³¹⁴.

5. The Millennium and Its True Meaning

The Second Coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the End of the world will happen simultaneously. The teaching concerning the reign of Christ is mentioned in the Book of Revelation,³¹⁵ according to which the Lord our God will rule on earth for one thousand years. During this period the devil will be bound but before, a great battle will take place against the Church and he, his angels and all his evil followers will be defeated (Armagedon). Hence the teaching concerning the Millennium came forth, which was taught by Cerinthus,³¹⁶ Papias,³¹⁷ Irenaeus,³¹⁸ Tertullian³¹⁹ and some of

³⁰⁷ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XV, § 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 885. Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To 2 Thessalonians 2:4*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 82, 664. St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, IV, 26, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1217. St. John Chrysostom, *To 2 Thessalonians 2:4*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 62, 482.

³⁰⁸ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About the Anti-Christ*, IV, 99, 26, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1217. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XV, § 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 889, 893.

³⁰⁹ St. Hippolytus, *About Christ and Anti-Christ*, XIV, in *B*, v. 6, p. 201.

³¹⁰ Deut. 33:22.

³¹¹ 2 Thess. 2:8.

³¹² Matth. 24:6-14.

³¹³ 2 Peter 3:6, 7.

³¹⁴ 2 Peter 3:10.

³¹⁵ Rev. 20:1-15. Cf. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 378-383.

³¹⁶ Eusebius, *Church History*, III, 28, 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 273.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, *Church History*, III, 39, 12, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 300.

³¹⁸ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, chs. 32-35, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 414-423.

³¹⁹ Tertullian, *Instit.*, VII, 17.

the Apologists.³²⁰ However, this theory was opposed by Gaius in Rome, Origen,³²¹ St Dionysius of Alexandria,³²² Methodius of Olympus,³²³ St Gregory of Nazianzus,³²⁴ St Basil the Great,³²⁵ St Epiphanius,³²⁶ St Hieronymus³²⁷ and St Augustine.³²⁸

Today, the misinterpretation of the Millennium is supported by the heresies of the Rebaptists and Jehovah Witnesses who believe that Christ will rule materially for one thousand years, establishing an earthly government. Briefly, in their false teachings, they renounce the Holy Trinity, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Holy Mysteries and the Saints and have adopted all the old and contemporary heresies which Satan has developed in order to mislead men into Eternal Condemnation.

We must never forget that the teachings of the Book of Revelation are under a veil of Divine Mystery. Consequently, we can accept:

1. The period of one thousand years is obviously symbolic and must be considered in the light of the Apostolic Teachings that “*with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*”³²⁹ The Holy Gospel will prevail on earth and for a long period the Will of God will rule among men. Thus the Church will be found triumphantly accomplishing all her goals on earth. The teachings concerning the Biblical Millennium is a prophecy of the final victory of Christianity within the boundaries of time. During that period Satan will be bound because, although evil will not have been completely abolished, it will have been restricted and weakened. The nations and governments will be Enlightened by the Will of God. Science and Art will serve Christian thought and find their ideal expression. The fullness of all the Gifts of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Orthodox Church will become universal and new, submitting the different religious confessions under one Holy Christian Faith which will uphold the True Teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All the followers of Christ will acknowledge one Leader of their Faith Who is the Head of the Church. They will have one and the same Faith and Love in order to grow together.
2. This Millennium will end because everything under the sun in this world will come to an end. After this period Satan, who will be bound but not destroyed, will once again become free and he will fight against all the Powers of Heaven. However, the Saving Power of Christ at His Second Coming will utterly destroy Satan’s power and will condemn him and all his evil servants. Even nature itself will be regenerated and will glorify the Lord.

After the Last Judgement the faithful will enjoy the extreme Blessedness of God’s Kingdom, whereas the ungodly, unbelievers and unrepentant sinners will be cast out into Eternal Condemnation.

However, once again, we must keep in mind that the Book of Revelation is the only prophetic Book of the New Testament and many things are hidden under a veil of Divine Mystery, which can only be revealed by the same Holy Spirit Who inspired St John the Apostle and Evangelist. Any attempts to

³²⁰ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *Dialogue*, 80, 81, in *B*, v. 3.

³²¹ Origen, *About Principals*, II, 11, 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 11, 241 and 242.

³²² Eusebius, *Church History*, VII, 24, 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 20, 693.

³²³ Methodius, *Symposium*, IX, 1, 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 18, 176.

³²⁴ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistle 102 to Cledonius*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 37, 197.

³²⁵ St. Basil, the Great, *Epistle 263*, 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 980. *Ibid*, *Epistle 265*, 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 32, 988.

³²⁶ St. Epiphanius, *Panarion, Heresy 77*, §§ 36-37, in Migne, *P.G.*, 42, 697.

³²⁷ St. Hieronymus, *Comm. in Isaiah XXX*, 26; LIV, 11; LV, 3; LVIII, 14, in Migne, *P.L.*, 24, 362, 561, 550, 597.

³²⁸ St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XX, 7, in Migne, *P.L.*, 41, 667.

³²⁹ 2 Peter 3:8.

interpret this Holy Book without the Holy Spirit, the guidance of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church accompanied by humility, prayer and acknowledgment of our weakness will consequently lead to dangerous misinterpretations.

The Holy Spirit warns us by saying: *“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this Book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the pledges that are written in this Book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the Holy City, and from the things that are written in this Book. He who testifies to these things says: ‘Surely, I Am coming quickly.’”*³³⁰

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

At the day of the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, all the dead will rise³³¹. This doctrine is purely Christian and for the pagans is considered foolishness and for the Jews unconceivable. It is purely taught by our Lord in the New Testament and afterwards by His holy Apostles and His holy Orthodox Church. It is considered to be one of the most basic doctrines and is found in all the ancient decrees.

1. The Orthodox Christian Doctrine about the Resurrection according to Holy Scriptures.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is purely Christian. The ancient world of idolatry, although we find some philosophic opinions expressing the belief in the immortality of the soul, yet, the idea of giving life to the bodies in the graves was completely alien. This we see in the case of St. Paul, when he addressed the Greeks on the hill of Areopagus preached about the unknown God to the Athenians³³². *“And they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter’”*³³³. From a Christian view the belief is expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, according to which *“the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment”*³³⁴ had to be taught in order to familiarize those who believed in Christ. For St. Paul it is unacceptable and completely irresponsible for a Christian who believes in Christ to renounce the universal resurrection of the dead. *“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”*³³⁵.

In the Old Testament we find some belief in the resurrection stressing specifically the descent of the souls into Hades and only in Job³³⁶ we find the belief in the resurrection. The prophets Isaiah³³⁷,

³³⁰ Rev 22: 18 – 20.

³³¹ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 160-162. St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 1- ch. 14, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 362-385. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp.232-235. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 383-388.

³³² Acts 17:16-34.

³³³ Act. 17:32.

³³⁴ Heb. 6:2.

³³⁵ 1 Corinth. 15:12-20.

³³⁶ Job 19:25-26.

Ezekiel³³⁸ and Hosea³³⁹ use the image of the resurrection of the bodies to express the ethnic restoration from the death of slavery to the resurrection of freedom of Israel. The use of this image proves that it was not alien to them to hope that the dead will rise from the dead. Daniel speaks literally about *“many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to reproach and everlasting shame”*³⁴⁰. In the book of Maccabees, the seven brothers who were martyred believed in the resurrection only of the just³⁴¹.

During the times of the Lord the belief in the resurrection appears to be generally spread. Christ assured St. Martha, the sister of St. Lazarus, *“your brother will rise again”*, and she replied saying, *“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day”*³⁴². In the book of Acts we find the information that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection, and the Sadducees did not³⁴³. Also we can conclude that the Pharisees had very materialistic hopes about the resurrection as we can conclude this from the tricky question which they addressed to Christ concerning the seven brothers who took the same wife. Answering them the Lord assured: *“For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven”*³⁴⁴.

Our Lord assuring the immortality of the soul, implies the receiving of its body and urges the disciples to be attentive and *“not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell”*³⁴⁵. Christ also speaks about the reward of those who show hospitality to *“the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind”*, because they *“will be blessed”* and *“shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just”*³⁴⁶. In the Gospel of St. John, our Lord explicitly warns, *“the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”*³⁴⁷. In addition He assures, *“that of all”* that the Father *“has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day”*³⁴⁸. Hence, *“who ever eats”* Christ’s *“flesh and drinks”* His *“blood has eternal life”*, and He *“will raise him up at the last day”*³⁴⁹.

After Christ, the holy Apostles contained in their sermons the teaching about the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees accused the holy Apostles, that through their teachings about Christ, they were proclaiming the belief in *“the resurrection of the dead”*³⁵⁰.

St. Paul in his Epistles exalts the inseparable communion of Christ with the faithful who compose His mystical body, and assures that *“if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in*

³³⁷ Is. 26:19. Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book V, ch. 34, § 1-4, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 418-420.

³³⁸ Ez. 27:1-14.

³³⁹ Hos. 13:14.

³⁴⁰ Daniel 12:2.

³⁴¹ II Maccabees 7:9, 14, 23; 12:43, 44.

³⁴² John 11:23, 24.

³⁴³ Acts 23:8.

³⁴⁴ Matth. 22:30.

³⁴⁵ Matth. 10:28.

³⁴⁶ Luke 14:13, 14.

³⁴⁷ John 5:28-29.

³⁴⁸ John 6:39-40.

³⁴⁹ John 6:54.

³⁵⁰ Acts 4:2; 17:32; 24:15, 21; 26:23.

you”³⁵¹, “knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus”³⁵². Thus our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body”³⁵³. St. Paul mocks the Corinthians who doubted the resurrection of the dead and assured that “if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”³⁵⁴. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord”³⁵⁵.

In the book of Revelation it is written: “Then I (John) saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire”³⁵⁶.

2. The Orthodox Doctrine of the Resurrection according to Holy Tradition.

In accordance to the teachings of Holy Scriptures were the teachings of Tradition of the Orthodox Church formed.

Didache proclaims that after “the sign of the sound of a trumpet” “the resurrection of the dead” will take place³⁵⁷.

St. Clement uses examples from nature to point out the resurrection of the dead: “Let us consider, dear friends how the Master continually points out to us the coming resurrection of which He made the Lord Jesus Christ the firstfruit when He raised Him from the dead”³⁵⁸. He also urges saying: “Let none of you say that this flesh is not judged and does not rise again”, for “we will receive our reward in this flesh”³⁵⁹.

³⁵¹ Rom. 8:11.

³⁵² 2 Corinth. 4:14.

³⁵³ Phil. 3:21.

³⁵⁴ 1 Corinth. 15:12-20.

³⁵⁵ 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

³⁵⁶ Rev. 20:11-15.

³⁵⁷ *Didache*, 16, 6, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 158.

³⁵⁸ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 24, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 42.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*, *2nd Corinthians*, 9, 1 and 5, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 72.

In the *Epistle of Barnabas* it is stressed that “the one who does” “the Lord’s commandments” “will be glorified in the kingdom of God; the one who chooses their opposites will perish together with his works. This is why there is a resurrection; this is why there is recompense”³⁶⁰.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, the Theophorus, assures that Christ “really was raised from the dead when His Father raised Him up, who – His Father, that is – in the same way will likewise also raise us up in Christ Jesus who believe in Him, apart from whom we have no true life”³⁶¹.

St. Polycarp of Smyrna characterizes as “the first-born of Satan” “everyone ‘who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is antichrist’³⁶²; and whoever does not acknowledge the testimony of the cross ‘is of the devil’³⁶³; and whoever twists the saying of the Lord to suit his own sinful desires and claims that there is neither resurrection nor judgment – well, that person is the first-born of Satan”³⁶⁴. In the prayer which he expressed to God, he stresses: “I bless You because You have considered me worthy of this day and hour, that I might receive a place among the number of the martyrs in the cup of Your Christ, to the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit”³⁶⁵.

St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, assures us saying, that we the Christians “hope that those which are dead and placed in the ground will receive again their own bodies”. “In death and in the burial” “the human bodies, as seeds are spread in the earth, and unless God commands it are impossible to rise and vest with immortality”³⁶⁶.

Tatianus strongly expresses the faith in the resurrection and stresses that after death the body is no more and again will be as it was. Even, if fire consumes the flesh; even, if in the rivers or in the seas it will be; even, if it is eaten by beasts, it remains in the treasuries of the rich Master. For, when God wills, the visible nature (the body) will be restored as from the beginning³⁶⁷.

The belief in the resurrection of the dead was incorporated in the Nicene Creed, “I look for the Resurrection of the dead and the Life of the world to come”.

3. The resurrection as a natural consequence of our union with Christ.

The resurrection of the dead is an inseparable part of the summing up of all in Christ³⁶⁸. St. Paul stressed that in baptism “we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to

³⁶⁰ *Barnabas*, 21, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 187.

³⁶¹ St. Ignatius, *To Trallians*, 9, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 100.

³⁶² Cf. 1 John 4:2-3.

³⁶³ Cf. 1 John 3:8.

³⁶⁴ St. Polycarp of Smyrna, *To Philippians*, 7, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 126-127.

³⁶⁵ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 14, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 141.

³⁶⁶ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *1 Apology*, 18, 6 and 19, 4, in *B*, v. 3, p. 171.

³⁶⁷ Tatianus, *Homily to Greeks*, 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 6, 820.

³⁶⁸ Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, p. 235. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 386-388.

*be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*³⁶⁹. Since we become one body with Christ, it is natural that the resurrection of Christ will be the starting point of the resurrection of all those who believe in Him and are united with Him. There cannot be a resurrection of the Head without the resurrection of the whole body. The bodies of all Orthodox Christians are the members of Christ's "body, of His flesh and His bones"³⁷⁰ and the temple of the Holy Spirit³⁷¹. As the consequence of this exaltation of our bodies follows the resurrection from the dead³⁷². And "if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you"³⁷³.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, the Theophorus, assures that Christ "really was raised from the dead when His Father raised Him up, who – His Father, that is – in the same way will likewise also raise us up in Christ Jesus who believe in Him, apart from whom we have no true life"³⁷⁴.

St. Irenaeus, as direct goal of Christ's glorious Second Coming, places the resurrection of all the flesh of all mankind, as the result in order to judge justly in all and to send to the eternal fire the ungodly and unjust, and to take care of those who are just and holy³⁷⁵.

According to the above, the resurrection of the dead is a natural result of our union with Christ and the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit within us. The renouncement of this belief shakes directly the faith in this truth that we have been united with Christ as one.

4. The nature of the human body after the resurrection.

Concerning the nature which the body will have after the general resurrection of the dead, the Orthodox Church believes that the risen body will be "the same and not the same"³⁷⁶ to that which was placed in the tomb³⁷⁷. And Theodorus of Mopsuestias adds saying that "as the glass is from sand, but it is not anymore sand, but something else; and the wheat likewise is not anymore seed, but wheat; likewise and in the resurrection a better body is made into"³⁷⁸.

The new body which will result from the resurrection of the dead is not a new creation, neither has any organic relation to the previous one. But between the two there is something common and difference. The common and difference is as that between the seed and the wheat; between the sperm and the infant³⁷⁹.

The different elements which composed the body and were scattered in the tomb will gather together once again and will reconstruct the body as new. And man ignores where these elements are scattered, but God does not ignore, He knows everything. God having with this knowledge and the power,

³⁶⁹ Rom. 6:4-11.

³⁷⁰ Ephes. 5:30. 1 Corinth. 6:15.

³⁷¹ 1 Corinth. 6:19.

³⁷² 1 Corinth. 6:14.

³⁷³ Rom. 8:11.

³⁷⁴ St. Ignatius, *To Trallians*, 9, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 100.

³⁷⁵ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book I, ch. 10, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 549. Cf. *Ibid.*, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 64-65.

³⁷⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 41, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 356, 357. Cf. St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 41(42)*, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 388. *Ibid.*, *To Psalm 114(115)*, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 492. Origen, *To Psalm I*, § 5, in Migne, *P.G.*, 12, 1093-1096. *Ibid.*, *Against Celsus*, V, 23, in *B*, v. 10, p. 27. *Ibid.*, *About Principals*, II, 10, 3, in Migne, *P.G.*, 11, 236. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the creation of man*, ch. XXVII, in Migne, *P.G.*, 44, 225-228. Bryennios, *Paralipomena*, ch. VII, v. III, p. 77.

³⁷⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 41, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 356, 357. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 162-163.

³⁷⁸ Theodorus of Mopsuestias, in Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. III, p. 468.

³⁷⁹ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 388-389.

“to rise up with equal opulence” the bodies uniting “again to their own parts and particles” the different elements, even if they have been scattered here and there³⁸⁰.

Although the risen body will be “*the same*” to that which the soul had when it departed from this life, simultaneously because of the new attributes which it will receive, it will “*not be the same*” according to the expression of the divine Chrysostom³⁸¹. But, that this is neither impossible for the divine almightiness, nor is contradictory. The human body is raised by God in a mysterious way, “*the body is sown in corruption, and it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*”³⁸². Since the new environment and the condition, in which men shall enter after the resurrection, will be alien to the mortality and the thickness of this present world, it is thus necessary that the risen bodies be such, so that they may adjust to this new environment and condition. For, it is impossible for human nature to participate in the heavenly things, unless it is changed and the natural body is vested with immortality. How this will take place remains a mystery, which only God knows.

About this change our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has first informed us by assuring us that “*for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven*”³⁸³, “*nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels*”³⁸⁴. Then St. Paul assures that “*God will destroy both*” “*foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods*”³⁸⁵.

Thus St. Hippolytus says that “*men in the resurrection will be as the angels of God, in immortality and eternal and unchangeable. For immortal nature does not give birth, nor is being born, it does not grow, nor sleeps, nor hungers, nor thirsts, nor suffers, nor dies*”³⁸⁶. But, Christ after His glorious resurrection “*ate in the presence*” of His Disciples, but this He did to assure them “*that it is*” He³⁸⁷. For the body of Christ “*did not have need of such foods to live*”³⁸⁸.

But the resurrected body will be spiritual. “*It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*”³⁸⁹. It will be spiritual according to St. John Chrysostom either because the Holy Spirit will remain for ever in the bodies of the just or it will be its power of the soul, being governed continuously by the Holy Spirit; or because it shall become lighter, and rather both together³⁹⁰.

Origen considers that the body will be “*airy*” which will not have the weaknesses of the flesh. He supports the opinion that at the time of the change the bodies will become as the bodies of the angels airy and as light³⁹¹.

Finally the resurrected body is characterized as “*glorious*”³⁹². Our Lord assured, “*the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*”³⁹³. The Lord’s Transfiguration on Mount

³⁸⁰ Cf. Athenagoras, *About resurrection*, ch. 2, 3, in **B**, v. 1, pp. 312-313. Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, in Migne, *P.L.*, 1, 525. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, §§ 1-2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1020-1021.

³⁸¹ St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 41, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 61, 356, 357.

³⁸² 1 Corinth. 15:42-44.

³⁸³ Matth. 22:30.

³⁸⁴ Luke 20:36.

³⁸⁵ 1 Corinth. 6:13.

³⁸⁶ St. Hippolytus, *About resurrection*, in Anastasius the Sinaite, *Guide*, ch. 43, in Migne, *P.G.*, 89, 301.

³⁸⁷ Luke 24:43, 39.

³⁸⁸ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, § 18, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1040.

³⁸⁹ 1 Corinth. 15:42-44.

³⁹⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *To 1 Corinthians*, Homily 41, § 3, in Montfaucon, v. 10, p. 454.

³⁹¹ Origen, *To Matthew*, v. 17, §§ 29 and 30, in **B**, v. 14, pp. 193 and 197. *Ibid*, *Against Celsus*, III, 41, 42, in **B**, v. 9, pp. 206 and 207.

³⁹² Scheeben, *Les Mystères*, p. 657.

Tabor, as well as the heavenly light which surrounded St. Paul, when the Lord appeared to him after His resurrection, give us some idea of this “glorious” change, which awaits the righteous as St. Paul assured³⁹⁴. And although the nature of those who will be glorified is one, there will be many levels and differences of offices, as well for those who will be condemned. And all the bodies of the righteous will shine as stars greater than the sun, the sinners will be in darkness³⁹⁵. For, everyone will rise from the dead for eternity, having their own bodies, but they will not have the same. *“If someone is a sinner, he will receive an eternal body, which will suffer the punishments of sins, not being consumed by the eternal fire”*³⁹⁶.

THE UNIVERSAL JUDGEMENT

The Universal Judgement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will follow the Universal Resurrection.³⁹⁷ According to Holy Scripture, one Day is appointed for Judgement when everyone, just and sinners, the living and dead, will appear before the Frightful Seat of Christ to be Judged according to their deeds. The Son of Man will sit on a Throne of Glory surrounded by countless Angels to Judge the works of men. His Judgement will have the measure of Love as the fulfilment of the Law. These works are known to Him because He sees the secrets of all hearts. Thus, the Final Judgement will be announced by rewarding each one according to his situation. Endless suffering and misery awaits those who have died unrepentant, thereby distancing themselves from God, whereas Eternal Blessedness, Joy, Glory, Honour and Peace await the Righteous who have been perfected in Christ. Consequently, the Righteous will reign with Christ for all Eternity, living inseparably with Him while enjoying the Blessedness and Glory as sons by Grace.

1. The Universal Judgement According to Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition

In the Old Testament the idea of Judgement is one that causes catastrophe and destruction such as the Great Flood, the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorra, the ten plagues of Egypt and the various punishments suffered by the Israelites in Egypt and Canaan. This idea developed gradually and thereby Divine Revelation gained the acceptance of those to whom God reveals Himself. If, since the Judgement in the Old Testament appears at first as a direct Punishment of certain acts or circumstances, during the period of the Prophets the Divine Revenge against human error appears to be reserved for a certain Day of Judgement, when all nations will be Judged and as a consequence it will develop into a Day of Catastrophe. On that Day *“man and cattle [will] be cut off; let the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea be cut off; and the ungodly shall fail, and I will take away the transgressors from the face of the land, said the Lord.”*³⁹⁸ *“And it shall come to pass in that Day, said the Lord of Hosts, that I will utterly destroy the names of the idols from off the land, and there shall be no longer any remembrance of them: and I will cut off the false prophets and the evil spirit from the land.”*³⁹⁹ *“For behold, in those days and in that time, when I shall have turned the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all the Gentiles, and bring them down to the Valley of Josaphat, and will plead with them there for My people and My heritage Israel, who have been dispersed among Gentiles; and these Gentiles have divided My land, and cast lots over My people, and have given their boys to harlots, and sold their girls for wine, and have drunk.”*⁴⁰⁰

³⁹³ Matth. 13 :43.

³⁹⁴ 1 Corinth. 15:38-53.

³⁹⁵ Zigabinos, *To Matthew*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 416. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To Hexaemeros*, § 24, in Migne, *P.G.*, 44, 116. Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To 1 Corinthians 15:41*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 81, 365.

³⁹⁶ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, 18, § 19, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1040.

³⁹⁷ Cf. Bryennios, *Paralipomena*, Homily I, v. II, pp. 299-308; and ch. XXVII, v. III, pp. 96-100. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 389-393.

³⁹⁸ Zeph. 1:2-3.

³⁹⁹ Zach. 13:2.

⁴⁰⁰ Joel 3:1-3.

This Judgement shall include Israel who will be Judged according to his works that “*the righteousness of the Righteous shall not deliver him, in the day wherein he errs: and the iniquity of the ungodly shall not harm him, in the day wherein he turns from his iniquity, but the righteous erring shall not be able to deliver himself.*”⁴⁰¹ “*For, behold, the Lord will come as Fire, and His chariots as a storm to render His Vengeance with Wrath, and His Rebuke with a Flame of Fire. For with the Fire of the Lord all the earth shall be Judged, and all flesh with His Sword: many shall be slain by the Lord.*”⁴⁰²

The Prophet Daniel presents the “*Ancient of days*” as sitting on a Throne, which “*was a Flame of Fire, and His wheels burning Fire*” being ministered to by “*thousand thousands*” and “*ten thousands of myriads attended upon Him*” in order to Judge the works of each man according to the “*Books*” which “*were opened*” transmitting to Him “*the Dominion, and the Honour, and the Kingdom*” to Judge “*all nations, tribes, and languages.*”⁴⁰³

The Prophet Isaiah simultaneously foresaw the first Coming and the Second Coming of the Lord: “*the Day of Lord is near, and destruction from God shall arrive.*”⁴⁰⁴ “*For behold! The Day of the Lord is coming which cannot be escaped, a Day of Wrath and Anger, to make the world desolate and to destroy sinners out of it. For the stars of Heaven and Orion and all the Host of Heaven shall not give their light; and it shall be dark at sunrise and the moon shall not give her light. And I will Command evils for the whole world, and will visit their sins on the ungodly: and I will destroy the pride of transgressors, and will bring low the pride of the haughty.*”⁴⁰⁵ “*For the Heavens shall be enraged, and the earth shall be shaken from her foundatio, because of the fierce Anger of the Lord of Hosts, in the day in which His Wrath shall come.*”⁴⁰⁶

The Lord had no need to essentially change or to perfect the Teachings of the Prophets concerning the Day of Judgement. He joined the Teachings of the Prophets concerning the Final Judgement of each man with the Final Judgement of all the nations. Thus in His speech on the Mount He stated: “*Many will say to Me in that Day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, cast out demons in Thy Name, and done many wonders in Thy Name? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.*”⁴⁰⁷ He specifically mentioned the “*Day of Judgement*” in which “*it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon*”⁴⁰⁸ and on which Day men shall “*give account*” “*for every idle word*”⁴⁰⁹ “*for the Son of Man will come in the Glory of His Father with His Angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*”⁴¹⁰ Christ will Judge all nations, since “*all nations will be gathered before Him.*”⁴¹¹

Our Lord refers to this Day of Judgement in His Parables of the Wheat and Tares,⁴¹² the Dragnet,⁴¹³ the Ten Virgins,⁴¹⁴ the Ten Talents,⁴¹⁵ the King “*who wanted to settle accounts with his servants,*”⁴¹⁶ the

⁴⁰¹ Ez. 33:12.

⁴⁰² Is. 66:15-16.

⁴⁰³ Daniel 7:9-12.

⁴⁰⁴ Is. 13:6.

⁴⁰⁵ Is. 13:9-11.

⁴⁰⁶ Is. 13:13.

⁴⁰⁷ Matth. 7:22-23.

⁴⁰⁸ Matth. 11:22.

⁴⁰⁹ Matth. 12:36.

⁴¹⁰ Matth. 16:27.

⁴¹¹ Matth. 25:32.

⁴¹² Matth. 13:24-30; 36-43.

⁴¹³ Matth. 13:47-50.

⁴¹⁴ Matth. 25:1-13.

⁴¹⁵ Matth. 25:14-30.

⁴¹⁶ Matth. 18:23-35.

Labourers⁴¹⁷ as well as the Royal Wedding.⁴¹⁸ Furthermore, our Lord systematically referred to this Day in His eschatological speeches addressed to His Apostles and Disciples shortly before His Sufferings.⁴¹⁹ As in the Book of Daniel whereby the “Ancient of old” appears at first as the Judge but then transmits the “dominion” to the “Son of Man,” likewise in the Teachings of Christ. In some cases, the Heavenly Father “Who sees in secret, will Himself reward” those who do “charitable deeds”⁴²⁰ or pray,⁴²¹ or confess Him before men,⁴²² while in others, the Lord appears as the Lord of the Entrance of the Kingdom of Heaven. He excludes all those who have worked evil and lawlessness,⁴²³ with Authority as the Son of Man Who sends before Him His Angels “to gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the Furnace of Fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the Righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father”⁴²⁴ The Son of Man “will come in the Glory of His Father with His Angels” to “reward each according to his works”⁴²⁵ He “will appear in Heaven” “coming on the clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory”⁴²⁶ and will Judge all nations. He will Condemn the sinners “into the Everlasting Fire prepared for the devil and his angels” “but the Righteous into Eternal Life.”⁴²⁷ Thus, “the Father Judges no one, but has committed all Judgement to the Son”⁴²⁸ “and has given Him Authority to execute Judgement also because He is the Son of Man.”⁴²⁹ Truly the Lord Judging as Man, “Judges as He hears” from the Father and “does nothing on His own.” Consequently He Judges “as if the Father Himself was the Judge”⁴³⁰ However, Christ Judges us because He is closer to our humanity and because He gave us the Laws and Suffered for our Salvation, thereby being the only proper Judge of all mankind.

Furthermore, the Holy Apostles repeated the Teachings of our Lord. St Peter testified that Jesus Christ is “Ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.”⁴³¹

St Paul assured us that God has appointed a Day on which “the Lord Jesus Christ, will Judge the living and the dead at His Appearing and His Kingdom.”⁴³² He presents that Day as a “Day of Wrath and Revelation of the Righteous Judgement of God, Who will render to each one according to his deeds; Eternal Life to those who by patient continuance in doing good, seek for glory, honour and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil”⁴³³. Parallel to this, he characterises this Appearance as a Revelation of “the Lord Jesus” Who will be “revealed from Heaven with His mighty Angels in flaming Fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with Everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of His Power when He comes in that Day to be Glorified in His Saints and to be admired among all those who believe.”⁴³⁴

⁴¹⁷ Matth. 20:1-16.

⁴¹⁸ Matth. 22:2-14.

⁴¹⁹ Matth. 24:1-25:1-46. Mark 13:1-37. Luke 21:5-36.

⁴²⁰ Matth. 6:4.

⁴²¹ Matth. 6:6.

⁴²² Matth. 10:32-33.

⁴²³ Matth. 18:34-35.

⁴²⁴ Matth. 13:41-43.

⁴²⁵ Matth. 16:27.

⁴²⁶ Matth. 24:30.

⁴²⁷ Matth. 25:31-46.

⁴²⁸ John 5:22.

⁴²⁹ John 5:27.

⁴³⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *To John 5:30*, in Migne, P.G., 59, 225.

⁴³¹ Acts 10:42.

⁴³² 2 Tim. 4:1.

⁴³³ Rom. 2:5-9.

⁴³⁴ 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* literally assures us that “*the Son of God, Who is Lord and is destined to Judge the living and the dead, suffered in order that His Wounds might give us Life.*”⁴³⁵ “*For they will see Him on that Day, wearing a long scarlet robe about His Body, and they will say, ‘Is this not the One Whom we once crucified and insulted by spitting upon Him? Surely this was the Man Who said then that He was the Son of God!’*”⁴³⁶

St Clement of Rome testified that “*we ought to think of Jesus Christ as we do of God: as ‘Judge of the living and the dead.*”⁴³⁷

St Polycarp of Smyrna certified that Jesus Christ “*is coming as ‘Judge of the living and the dead.*”^{438 439}

Likewise in the *Epistle to Diognetos*, at the first appearance of Christ, the Father “*sends Him as Calling, not persecuting; as Loving, not Judging,*” which is distinguished from His Second Coming when the Father “*will send Him to Judge, and who can [with]stand His Appearance?*”⁴⁴⁰

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr frequently reiterated that “*the Judge of all the living and the dead is Christ Himself.*”⁴⁴¹

St Cyril of Jerusalem declared on the one hand that Christ “*is coming not to be judged again, but to Judge those who judged Him*” whereas on the other hand he stressed that the Father Himself does not Judge anyone as He “*gave all to the Son, not alienating Himself from the Authority, but Judging through the Son. Through the nod of the Father, the Son Judges. For there are no other nods of the Father or of the Son... as it is ... ‘one and the same.*”⁴⁴²

Zigabinos emphasised that “*the Son Judges with the consent of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit.*”⁴⁴³

There is no doubt that the Judgement will be in all Justice, for God will Judge the entire world with Justice⁴⁴⁴ and without partiality. He “*will render to each one according to his deeds.*”⁴⁴⁵ Subsequently, all the secret works of men will be revealed because He Who sits on the Throne of Judgement is He Who always knows and seeks the hearts of men, “*piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His Sight, but all things are naked and open to the Eyes of Him to Whom we must give account.*”⁴⁴⁶ The Lord “*will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts*”⁴⁴⁷ “*in the Day when God will Judge the secrets of men*”⁴⁴⁸ demanding an account not only for the offences of the Law, but for every word and every deed they neglected to do, for “*to him who knows to do good and*

⁴³⁵ *Barnabas*, 7, 2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 170.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid*, 7, 9, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 171.

⁴³⁷ St. Clement of Rome, 2nd *Corinthians*, 1, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 68.

⁴³⁸ Cf. Acts 10:42.

⁴³⁹ St. Polycarp, *To Philippians*, 2, 1, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 123-124.

⁴⁴⁰ *Diognetus*, 7, 5, 6, in *B*, v. 2, p. 254.

⁴⁴¹ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *Dialogue*, 118, 1, in *B*, v. 3, p. 317.

⁴⁴² St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis*, XV, §§ 1 and 25, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 869.

⁴⁴³ Zigabinos, *To John 5:22*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 1217. Cf. Mogilas, *A*, 58 and 59, in Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, pp. 620-621.

⁴⁴⁴ Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 126.

⁴⁴⁵ Rom. 2:6.

⁴⁴⁶ Heb. 4:12-13.

⁴⁴⁷ 1 Corinth. 4:5.

⁴⁴⁸ Rom. 2:16.

does not do it, to him it is sin.”⁴⁴⁹ “And the dead were Judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the Books.”⁴⁵⁰

2. The Punishments

The Punishments that will be bestowed by the Judge on the condemned,⁴⁵¹ can be categorized as either negative and positive, or internal and external.

Mesoloras classifies three groups of Eternal Punishment: Firstly, being deprived of all God’s Grace. Secondly, the positive and internal Punishment, whereby the guilt of the conscience and awareness of guilt will be like an “*unsleeping worm*” that will eat at hearts, distressing them forever. Thirdly, the external Punishment, according to which the soul will suffer Eternal pain of the Fire, sadness, external Darkness and communion with the evil spirits.⁴⁵²

If one just considers the Divine Wrath resulting in the alienation of those who will be condemned by God Who is the only True Source of all Peace and Blessedness, and who will be deprived of the Vision of the Divine Glory of the Holy Trinity, this alone should be considered as an unbearable Punishment!

St John Chrysostom observed: “*it is more beneficial to be struck by thousands of lightnings, rather than to see that calm Face turning away from us and that calm eye not standing to watch us.*”⁴⁵³ Elsewhere, he pointed out that “*the falling from the good things, has so much pain, so much sadness and worry*” that if no other Punishment was given to sinners, that alone would be sufficient “*to make the torments in the Hell more bitter than to bite and to shake the souls of the sinners.*”⁴⁵⁴ Elsewhere, he invites each Christian to imagine that “*anything secret*” done by man “*will be presented in the midst*” and will be exposed before the fullness of the Church. Therefore, it is most beneficial for those sins to be covered. “*How much will be the embarrassment of the sinners, when before the entire universe their deeds will be revealed?*” Visualize the theatre as not being filled only with mankind but also with all the Hosts of Angels consisting of the Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Authorities, Powers, Cherubim and Seraphim.⁴⁵⁵

The negative aspect of the future Condemnation is inseparably united to the positive aspect. Primarily, there will be the disgrace that will overcome sinners due to having “*before their eyes their sins for all Eternity..*” for which they will be condemned to “*hard punishment*” “*the pain and the disgrace of which are really Eternal.*”⁴⁵⁶ “*To those who have sinned greatly in their lives, frightful and gloomy angels are present, seeing Fire, breathing Fire, because of the bitterness of the free will, having dark faces because of their gloomy hatred for man. Then a deep Chasm and Darkness without end and Fire without light; having in the darkness the caustic power, removing the light. Then the generation of the vapour worms ... flesh eating and never satisfying, bringing unbearable pains with the eating.*”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁴⁹ James 4:17.

⁴⁵⁰ Rev. 20:12.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 165-166. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 443-447. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 235-236. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 397-403.

⁴⁵² Mesoloras, *Symbolique*, v. II, p. 129.

⁴⁵³ St. John Chrysostom, *To the fallen Theodorus*, I, 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 47, 291.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, *To Matthew*, Homily 23, §§ 7 and 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 57, 318.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, *To Romans*, Homily 5, § 6, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 430. *Ibid*, *To the fallen Theodorus*, I, 11, in Migne, *P.G.*, 47, 292.

⁴⁵⁶ St. Basil the Great, *To Psalm 33(34)*, §§ 4 and 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 364 and 372.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid*, *To Psalm 33(34)*, § 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 29, 372.

St John Chrysostom referred to the “*unceasing worms and unquenchable Fire and gnashing of teeth and external Darkness and sadness and anxiety.*”⁴⁵⁸

Undoubtedly, the descriptions of the Punishments by the Holy Fathers as mentioned above, do not differ from those revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when He spoke of the Punishments that await the ungodly after the Final Judgement. Expressions such as “*outer darkness,*” the “*weeping and gnashing of teeth,*” the “*Everlasting Punishment,*” “*Hell,*” “*the Fire that shall never be quenched,*” the “*Worm which does not die*” and “*torment of Flame,*”⁴⁵⁹ are a few of those that our Lord Himself used to describe the Eternal Punishments.

The exact nature of these Punishments is unknown since they occur in the After Life, which is beyond human senses and invisible. As St Paul expresses it: “*for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*”⁴⁶⁰ It may vaguely be perceived by means of the Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazaros,⁴⁶¹ according to which the Rich Man found himself in Hell, “*being in torments*”⁴⁶² and completely deprived from all the good things that he had enjoyed in this present life. His heart was enslaved by earthly things and the vanity of the pleasures of the flesh, which he could no longer satisfy. He was in the midst of a fiery Furnace that caused him terrible thirst and great anxiety. Also in this Parable, our Lord referred to a “*place of torment*”⁴⁶³ that is separated by “*a great gulf*” from the place of the Righteous.⁴⁶⁴ In addition to all this, our Lord spoke of “*the Everlasting Fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*”⁴⁶⁵

“*Hell,*” “*Everlasting Fire*” or “*the Outer Darkness*”⁴⁶⁶ is a spiritual condition that God created not for man, but because of Satan and his angels being stubbornly unrepentant. This condition is real, unchangeable and eternal, since the Will of God is Eternal and Unchangeable. No one can adequately describe this condition that is beyond any human understanding, not even St Paul who was “*caught up in Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*”⁴⁶⁷ Similarly, should anyone enter into Hell, he would be completely unable to express the terrifying things he might see, hear or feel.

3. The Blessedness of the Righteous

The Blessedness that awaits the Righteous, filling hearts with an inexpressible Joy and Happiness, will be due to the assurance that they have been Saved forever.⁴⁶⁸ The positive aspect of the future inheritance of the Righteous is expressed as “*Paradise of God,*” where “*the Tree of Life is in the midst*”⁴⁶⁹ and in which “*inexpressible words*” are heard, “*which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*”⁴⁷⁰ This Eternal Life is also described as the “*City of God,*” “*the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven*

⁴⁵⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *To the fallen Theodorus*, I, §§ 9 and 10, in Migne, *P.G.*, 47, 288 and 289. *Ibid*, *To Hebrews*, Homily 1, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 63, 18.

⁴⁵⁹ Matth. 8:12; 25:46. Mark 9:45-48. Luke 16:24.

⁴⁶⁰ 1 Corinth. 13:12.

⁴⁶¹ Luke 16:19-31.

⁴⁶² Luke 16:23.

⁴⁶³ Luke 16:28.

⁴⁶⁴ Luke 16:26.

⁴⁶⁵ Matth. 25:41.

⁴⁶⁶ Kefalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 242-243.

⁴⁶⁷ 2 Corinth. 12:4.

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 164-165. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 441-443. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 393-397.

⁴⁶⁹ Rev. 2:7.

⁴⁷⁰ 2 Corinth. 12:4.

from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband...,⁴⁷¹ or as “the Tabernacle of God” that is with men and where He “will dwell with them”⁴⁷² Furthermore it is described as the “Father’s house” which has “many mansions”⁴⁷³ as well as being proclaimed as “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife”⁴⁷⁴ that has “the Glory of God.”⁴⁷⁵ Other descriptions of Eternal Life are: as the future City that has “no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its Temple;”⁴⁷⁶ “Assembly and Church of the Firstborn who are Regenerated in Heaven;”⁴⁷⁷ “an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled;” that “does not fade away, reserved in Heaven;”⁴⁷⁸ “Kingdom of Heaven;”⁴⁷⁹ “Kingdom of God;”⁴⁸⁰ “Kingdom of the Father of the Lord”⁴⁸¹ or “Kingdom prepared for the Blessed”⁴⁸² wherein the Lord will not only drink from the new Cup with His Disciples,⁴⁸³ but they “shall also reign with Him.”⁴⁸⁴ No words can describe the perfect beauty of the Heavenly Things that await the Righteous who will partake in the Divine Nature of our Lord, watching and enjoying the Glory of the Holy Trinity, our True and Only God.

In God’s Kingdom there is no fear, hunger or illness. No one is in pain, angry or flamed by desire because all these passions have been wiped away. No one will age because all will be vested with Immortality and Everlasting Joy, living together with the Angels, Archangels and all the higher Heavenly Powers. There will be no war or rebellion. There will only be the agreement of and harmony with the Saints and the oneness of mind.⁴⁸⁵

The factor and cause of this Blessedness that the Saints experience, is referred to as “Deification” or “Theosis” that begins in this world. The final Purpose of the Lord’s Incarnation is to lead fallen mankind towards the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven so that we may enjoy Divine Blessedness and be Deified. The term “Deification” or “Theosis” of our human nature and Deification of the Just, is understood as men becoming through this Deification “partakers of the Divine Nature...,”⁴⁸⁶ While human nature is not abolished, being absorbed by the infinite Divine Nature, it partakes according to its limitations in the Life and Glory of God. Each of the Righteous, preserving his own personality and being, is raised up to approach the Divine but remaining always limited.

In the Divine Incarnation of the Word and Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity took up the whole human nature, without sin, and was united with her in one Person and in one Hypostasy, His two Natures remaining “unmixed and their attributes unchangeable; and the Flesh was Deified, but it did not change its own Nature.”⁴⁸⁷ Incomparably and to a greater degree the Deification of the Righteous, in which each one preserves his own personality, is clearly distinguished from the three Persons of the Holy Trinity because human nature is not in essence united to the Divine Nature. Human nature continues to remain human and within its own limits. However, by Grace and not by nature, it unites with the Divine Nature, participating in the Divine Life and Glory. The Word as the Infinite God “alone has Immortality,

⁴⁷¹ Rev. 20:2.

⁴⁷² Rev. 20:3.

⁴⁷³ John 14:2.

⁴⁷⁴ Rev. 21:9.

⁴⁷⁵ Rev. 21:11.

⁴⁷⁶ Rev. 21:22.

⁴⁷⁷ Heb. 12:23.

⁴⁷⁸ 1 Peter 1:4.

⁴⁷⁹ Matth. 4:17; 5:3, 10, 20; 13:24, 31, 44, 47; 16:19; 18:23; 19:12; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1, 14

⁴⁸⁰ Luke 14:15. Matth. 19:24; 21:31

⁴⁸¹ Matth. 26:29

⁴⁸² Matth. 25:34.

⁴⁸³ Matth. 26:29.

⁴⁸⁴ 2 Tim. 2:12.

⁴⁸⁵ St. John Chrysostom, *To the fallen Theodorus*, I, § 11, in Migne, *P.G.*, 47, 291.

⁴⁸⁶ 1 Peter 1:4.

⁴⁸⁷ St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, III, 17, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1069.

*dwelling in Unapproachable Light, Whom no man has seen or can see*⁴⁸⁸ but the Deified nature of man is united with Him, thereby comprising His Divine and Mystic “Body” which is “*the fullness of Him Who fills all in all.*”⁴⁸⁹

This union, in which the Divine and Infinite Nature of God the Word, although hypostatically united with the human Nature of the God-Man to which we are also united, remains unapproachable to us. We cannot be united in essence to it. This remains a “*Great Mystery.*”⁴⁹⁰ Nevertheless, our Union as members of the Church with Christ begins in this life, from the moment of our Baptism into Christ. Consequently, it is perfected in that Blessed condition, becoming the Source of the new Holy and Divine Life that gives Life to the whole Body. The reason for the exaltation of the body into the “*Glory and Majesty*”⁴⁹¹ of God is its Union and Communion with Christ, Who is “*the Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding*” and which “*will guard*” “*hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*”⁴⁹²

An Orthodox Christian becomes an imitator of Christ during this lifetime and his members are formed according to the Members of Christ. The statement “*as many of you as were Baptised into Christ, have put on Christ*”⁴⁹³ assures us that during this life we do so in power as well as in principal, whereas in the future Life we will put Him on in perfection and energy.

According to St John the Apostle, Evangelist and Theologian, “*it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*”⁴⁹⁴ Furthermore, only by seeing Him as He is will create a great Joy, just as at the time of the Lord’s Transfiguration when the two Prophets Moses and Elijah appeared before the Lord on Mount Tabor and St Peter said to our Lord Jesus: “*Lord, it is good for us to be here.*”⁴⁹⁵ The Vision of the Divine Glory makes all those who see participators, as St Paul taught us by saying that “*we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the Glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to Glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord,*”⁴⁹⁶ and the Lord said: “*the Righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.*”⁴⁹⁷

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in His prayer addressed to His Father shortly before His Sufferings, asked Him “*that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, are in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us.*”⁴⁹⁸ He asked the Father to grant that all who belong to Him become “*one to another in the sameness of soul and the unity of the spirit, not disagreeing, but all having the same mind*”. As the Son “*is by nature and truly one with His Father*”, likewise also we “*become the same generation to another through the intension having the unity of the Son to the Father*”. In the blessed condition all the righteous will be united in one and will copy the unity of the Holy Trinity, as far as possible to their human capability, “*for it is impossible to become equal to it*”, and they shall live according to the blessed life of the Holy Trinity.

⁴⁸⁸ 1 Tim. 6:16.

⁴⁸⁹ Ephes. 1:23.

⁴⁹⁰ Ephes. 5:32.

⁴⁹¹ Psalm 44(45):3.

⁴⁹² Phil. 4:7.

⁴⁹³ Gal. 3:27.

⁴⁹⁴ 1 John 3:2.

⁴⁹⁵ Matth. 17:4.

⁴⁹⁶ 2 Corinth. 3:18.

⁴⁹⁷ Matth. 13:43. Zigabinos, *To Matthew*, in Migne, P.G., 129, 416.

⁴⁹⁸ John 17:21.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

A **memorial service** (Greek: μνημόσυνον, *mne mósynon*, "memorial", or παραστάς, **parastás**, "wake"; Church Slavonic: панихида, **panikhída**) is a liturgical observance in honor of the departed which is served in the Eastern Orthodox.

The service: In the Eastern Church, the various prayers for the departed have as their purpose: to pray for the repose of the departed; to comfort the living; and to remind those who remain behind of their own mortality, and the brevity of this earthly life. For this reason, memorial services have an air of penitence about them,^[1] and tend to be served more frequently during the four fasting seasons (Great Lent, Nativity Fast, Apostles' Fast and Dormition Fast).

If the service is for an individual, it will often take place at their graveside. If it is a general commemoration of all the departed, or if the individual's grave is not close by, the service will take place in a church, in front of a special "memorial table". The memorial table is a small, free-standing table to which has been attached an upright crucifix, sometimes including also icons of the Theotokos (the Virgin Mary) and the Apostle John. The table will also have a place for the faithful to put lighted candles.

The deacon (or, if there is no deacon the priest) will swing the censer throughout almost the entire service, and all will stand holding lighted candles. Near the end of the service, during the final Troparia, all will either put out their candles or will place them in candle holders on the memorial table. Each candle symbolizes the individual soul, which, as it were, each person holds in their own hand. The extinguishing (or giving up) of the candle at the end of the service symbolizes the fact that each person will have to surrender their soul at the end of their life.

The service is composed of Psalms, Ektenias (litanies), hymns and prayers. In its outline it follows the general outline of Matins,^[2] and is in effect a truncated funeral service. Some of the most notable portions of the service are the Kontakion of the Departed,^[3] and the final, slow and solemn singing of "Memory Eternal".

The memorial service is most frequently served after the Divine Liturgy; however, it may also be served after Vespers, Matins, or as a separate service by itself. If the service is held separately, the readings from the Pauline epistles and the gospel are assigned by day. No readings are however assigned to Sunday (because Sunday should emphasize the resurrection of Christ rather than the departed).

Koliva: For the memorial service, koliva (a ritual food of boiled wheat) is often prepared and is placed in front of the memorial table or an icon of Christ. Afterwards, it is blessed by the priest, who sprinkles it with holy water (in the Bulgarian Church it is also customary for the priest to pour wine on the koliva and on the grave). The koliva is then taken to the trapeza or refectory and is served to all those who attended the service.

Occasions: After an Orthodox Christian passes away, there are special "Prayers for the Departure of the Soul" that are said by the priest. Then the family or friends of the departed will wash and dress the body and it is placed in the casket. Then a special expanded memorial service called the **First Panikhida** is celebrated, after which the reading of the Psalter is begun, and continues uninterrupted until the funeral.

Traditionally, in addition to the service on the day of death, the memorial service is performed at the request of the relatives of an individual departed person on the following occasions:

- **Third day** after death
- **Ninth day**
- **Fortieth day**
- **Third month**
- **Sixth month**
- **Ninth month**
- **First anniversary** of death
- **Annual anniversary** (some will request a memorial every year on the anniversary of death)

It is also served on the numerous Soul Saturdays throughout the year. On these days, not only is the memorial service served, but there are also special propers at Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy. These days of general memorials are:

- **Meatfare Saturday** (two Saturdays before Great Lent begins)—in some traditions families and friends will offer Panikhidas for their loved ones during the preceding week, culminating in the general commemoration on Saturday
- **The second Saturday of Great Lent**
- **The third Saturday of Great Lent**
- **The fourth Saturday of Great Lent**
- **The Saturday before Pentecost**—in some traditions families and friends will offer Panikhidas for their loved ones during the preceding week, culminating in the general commemoration on Saturday

Because of the great solemnity of the days, the celebration of memorial services is forbidden from Holy Thursday through Bright Week, and on all Sundays throughout the year.

Lity: A very abbreviated form of the memorial service is called the *Lity* (or *Litiy*), which consists only of the concluding portion of the regular memorial service. This is often celebrated in the narthex of the church on ordinary weekdays (i.e., when there is no higher-ranking feast day), especially during Great Lent.