

WHY ORTHODOXY IS THE TRUE FAITH

Today all of us are in such a situation that by no way it is possible to separate ourselves from the world. What is the true faith? We live in the world of religious pluralism. We face so many missionaries, each of whom offers his ideals, his life standards, his religious views that the previous or my generation would not envy you for this. We had it easier. The major choice we faced was the choice of religion and atheism.



The Holy Trinity-St.Sergius Lavra

Now your choice is wider, but by far more difficult. Finding the answer to the question, whether God exists or not is only the first step. If a person comes to believe there is God, what happens afterwards? There are many faiths, but which should one convert to? Should one become a Christian, or why not a Moslem or a Buddhist or a Krishnaite? I am not going to call all of them. Today there are so many religions, you know it better than me. Why? Well, having made his way through the thickets and jungle of this multireligious tree a person has become a Christian. He understood that Christianity is the best, the right religion.

But what kind of Christianity? It has so many faces. What should one be? An Orthodox, a Catholic, a Pentecostal, a Lutheran? Again it is beyond number. This is the situation that young people face today. Besides, as a rule representatives of new and old religions, of non-Orthodox denominations actively raise their voice and have better chances to declare their views in mass-media, than we, the Orthodox.

Thus the first thing one faces today is wide variety of faiths, religions, views. That is why I would like to walk quickly through this enfilade of rooms that opens today before the people who search for the truth and consider briefly, however taking into consideration the fundamental features, why one should be not only Christian, but an Orthodox.

Thus, the first problem is "Religion or atheism". At different conferences, even at high-level ones, I meet well-educated, erudite people, not smatterers, who always ask me the same questions: Who is God? Does He exist? And even: Why should I need Him? Or, if God exists, why does not He make a speech at a UN session and declare His existence? People say even such things. What should I answer?

In my opinion, we can answer this question using the central idea of modern philosophy, which is best of all expressed in the concept of existentiality. What is the objective of human existence, what is the sense of human life? Certainly, first of all the life itself. What else can it be? What sense do I strive for when I sleep? The sense of life can only be in

comprehension, "enjoying" the fruit of one's life and activity. And no one ever claimed or believed and will do in future, that the ultimate sense of human life may be death. This is where the impassable divide between religion and atheism lies. Christianity states: for human this earthly life is only the beginning, the precondition and the means to prepare oneself for eternity: Get ready, eternal life is waiting for you. Christianity says: to enter it you have to do this and be like this. And what is the idea of atheism? There is no God, no soul, no eternity, so believe, human, eternal death is waiting for you! Don't you feel terror, pessimism and despair at such words? It makes one's blood creep: Man, eternal death is waiting for you. Not to mention strange argumentation, to put it mildly, to substantiate this idea. Just this phrase makes human soul shudder. - No way, I cannot accept such faith.

If one has lost his way in the woods and is looking for the way home and having found somebody asks him: "Is there a way out here?" And the other one answers: "No and don't look for it, settle in here as you can" so would one believe him? I doubt it. Would not he search further? And finding another man, who would say: "Yes, there is a way out, I'll tell you the signs and marks how you can get home", - would not one believe him? The same happens, when one chooses his views between religion and atheism. As long as a person retains a spark of searching for the truth, for the sense of life, he cannot accept the concept, that at the end he as a personality and accordingly all other people will find eternal death, and on the way to it we should prepare better economical, social, political, cultural medium. And afterwards everything will be O.K. - tomorrow you will die and we will bury you at the cemetery. Wonderful!

I have showed you just one side, psychologically a very important one, which I believe is enough for each person with still alive soul to understand that only this religious view of the world allows us to tackle the sense of life, when we accept for our foundation the One, Whom we call God.

So I believe in God. Let us assume we have passed the first room. And with faith in God I enter the second one... My God, what do I see and hear here? Lots of people, and each is shouting: "Only I have the truth". That's really a problem... There are Moslems, Confucians, Buddhists, Judaists, and what not. There are also many, adhering to Christianity. So here is a Christian missionary among others, and I am looking for the one, who is right, who I can believe.

There are two approaches here, perhaps there are more, but I'll point out only two. One of them to understand which religion is the true one (which objectively corresponds to the human nature, human strivings, human understanding of the sense of life) is the method of comparative theology. It is quite a long path; to pass it one should study each religion. But not everyone is capable of doing it, it takes time, strength and certain abilities to study all this - all the more that it takes so much effort of soul.

But there is also a different way. After all each religion is aimed at the man, it says: the truth is this and nothing different. At the same time all views and all religions state one simple thing: the present state of things, the

conditions we live under (political, social, economical ones on the one hand and spiritual, moral, cultural one on the other) are not normal, cannot content us and even if someone is personally satisfied with it, the overwhelming majority suffer from it to a greater or lesser extent. It does not content the mankind as a whole, it is looking for something different, something bigger. It is striving somewhere, to the unknown future, is waiting for the "golden age" - the present state of things does not content anyone.

From this it becomes clear why the essence of each religion and all sorts of worldview comes down to the doctrine of salvation. And just here we face something that gives us a chance to make a reasonable choice in this religious diversity. In contrast to other religions Christianity states something, which is absolutely unknown to other religions (not to mention non-religious views). It is not only, they do not know it, they indignantly reject it when they face it. It is the idea of the so-called original sin. All religions, and even all worldviews and ideologies talk about sin. They call it differently, but it does not matter. But none of them considers human nature in the present state to be corrupted, ill. And Christianity states the state in which we, the humans, were born, have been growing, educated, maturing, the state, in which we enjoy life, recreate, study, make discoveries and so on - this is the state of a deep illness, deep corruption. We are ill. It goes not about flu or bronchitis or a psychic disease. No, we are psychically and physically sound - we can solve problems and fly into space, but we again are seriously ill. In the very beginning of human existence there happened a strange and tragic separation of the one human being into autonomously existing and often antagonistic mind, heart and body, like a swan, a crawfish and a pike in the Krylov's fable. It is absurd, what Christianity states, isn't it? People are indignant: "Am I insane? Sorry, perhaps the others, but not me". But if Christianity is right, it is just here for the very root, very source to be found why human life (individually or in the universal scale) leads to one tragedy after another. For if a person is seriously ill, does not see and consequently does not cure the illness, it will kill the person.

Other religions do not recognize this illness in the human. They reject it. They believe, the man is a healthy seed, which can develop either normally, or abnormally. Its development is conditioned by social environment, economical conditions, psychological factors, and many other things. That is why the man can be good or bad, but by nature he is good. This is the main antithesis of the non-Christian perception. I do not mean non-religious, for their slogan is "Man sounds proudly" (Maxim Gorky - translator's remark). Only Christianity claims that our present state is the state of deep corruptedness, which is impossible for man alone to cure it. This idea is the foundation of the greatest Christian dogma of Christ the Saviour.

This idea is the principle divide between Christianity and all other religions.

Further I will try to show Christianity in contrast to other religions has an objective confirmation of this statement. Let us have a look at the history of mankind and its purposes in the whole period accessible for our review.

Certainly the mankind wanted to create the Kingdom of God on earth, to create paradise. Sometimes with God, and in this case He was regarded as the means to attain well-being on earth, but not as the ultimate purpose of life. Sometimes it was without God. But what is important here is that everybody understood, the Kingdom of God on earth is impossible without such basic things as peace, justice, love (it is clear, paradise is impossible, where war is going on, injustice and malice prevail, etc.), perhaps, respect to each other. Everyone perfectly understands, without such basic moral values, without their realization it is impossible to achieve any well-being on earth. Is it clear? Yes. But what is the mankind busy with all its history? What are we doing? It was well-said by Erich Fromm: "Human history is written with blood. It is history of incessant violence". Very much to the point.

I think, historians, especially the military ones, could very clearly show what mankind history is filled with: wars, bloodshed, violence, and cruelty. The 20th century theoretically had to be the century of the highest humanism. And it showed humanism in its "perfection", surpassing all previous centuries of the mankind by the shed blood. If our ancestors could see what happened in the 20th century, they would shudder with horror for the scale of cruelty, injustice, deceit. There is a sort of incomprehensible paradox that in the course of its history the mankind does exactly the opposite to its main goal and idea, to which all its efforts were originally aimed.

That is why I ask a rhetorical question: "Is it possible for a reasonable being to behave like this?" History is merely jeering at us: "Verily, the mankind is reasonable and sound. It is not insane, by no means. It just does more and behaves worse, than the patients in the asylum."

Alas, it is the fact, from which there is no way to hide. And it shows not just few in the mankind err, no way (unfortunately merely few do not err), but this is some paradoxical feature typical of the whole mankind.

Now if we examine a single person, or to be more exact, if a person has enough moral strength to look at himself, he will see an astonishing picture. Apostle Paul exactly characterized it: "O wretched man that I am! For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I". And indeed, who pays just a little attention to what happens in his soul, who faces himself, cannot but see, how seriously he is spiritually ill, prone to various passions, enslaved by them. It is senseless to ask: "Why are you, wretched man, surfeiting, getting drunk, lying, envying, fornicating, etc? Doing this you are killing yourself, destroying your family, maiming you children, poisoning the whole atmosphere around you. Why are you beating, cutting, stabbing yourself, ruining your nerves, your psyche, and your body? Do you understand it is disastrous for you?" Yes, I understand this, but I can't but do this. Once Basil the Great said: "The worst of the passions ever born in human souls is envy". As a rule, even suffering, one cannot cope with this illness. In the depth of his soul each reasonable man comprehends the words of Paul: "I do not do the good that I would, but the evil, that I hate".

At the same time let's have a look how a person leading the right Christian life can change. Those who managed to get rid of passions, acquired humbleness, "gained, - according to the word of St. Seraphim of Sarov, - the Holy Spirit", achieved a psychologically very interesting state: they started to see themselves to be the worst sinners. Pimen the Great said: "Believe me, brethren, where the Satan will be cast, I will be cast too"; when Sisoï the Great was dying, his face lit up like sun and it was impossible to look at it, and he implored God to give him some more time for repentance. What was it? Hypocrisy, pretentious humility? Nothing of the kind. They were afraid to sin even in their thoughts, that is why they spoke of their heart; they sincerely said what they felt. However we do not feel it at all. I am full of all sorts of dirt, but believe I am a very good man. I am a good man! But if I do something wrong, then who is without sin, the others are not better than me, and it is not me, who is at fault, but the others. We do not see our soul that is why we are so good in our eyes. You see what a big difference between the spiritual eyesight of a saint and of a common man!

I would like to emphasize it once again. Christianity states that in his nature, in his present, so called normal state the man is deeply corrupted. Unfortunately, due to this strange blindness we are almost completely unable to see our illness. It is most dangerous, because when one sees his illness, he takes medicine, goes to doctors, looks for help. But when one sees himself being healthy, he would himself send to the doctor those, who tell him, he is ill. This is the heaviest symptom of the corruption present in us. And its presence is unambiguously testified by both mankind history and individual history of each person. This is where Christianity is pointing at.

This objective confirmation of just this fact, just one truth of the Christian faith (about the corruptedness of the human nature) suggests me which religion I have to choose: whether to the one, which uncovers my diseases and offers means to cure them, or to a religion that conceals them, nourishes one's pride and says: everything is good, everything is wonderful, one should not be healed, but should heal the world around him, one should strive to development and perfection? Historical experience has shown what it means to reject treatment.

Good, we came to Christianity. Glory to the Lord, I finally found the true faith. Now I enter the next room, and again there are lots of people, and again I hear shouts: My Christian faith is the best of all. The Catholics invite: Have a look, we are 1 milliard 45 million in the world. The Protestants of various denominations say they are 350 million. The Orthodox are the fewest of all - only 170 million people. Somebody gives a prompt the truth is not in numbers, but in essence. Still the question is extremely serious: "Where is it, the true Christianity?"

There are also various ways to solve this question. At seminary we made studies of dogmatic systems, comparing Catholicism and Protestantism with Orthodoxy. This way is interesting and trustworthy, but still in my opinion it is not perfect, because for a person without profound education and knowledge it is not easy to get to the bottom of dogmatic disputes and clear up who is right and who is wrong. Moreover, quite often the

opponents use strong psychological tricks that can be very confusing. For example, we discussed the problem of Pope's primate with the Catholics, and they say: "Pope? Well, this primate and infallibility of Pope is such a trifling, you know. It is the same as the Patriarch's authority with you. Pope's infallibility and power is not actually different from the authority of statements and the power of the Head of any Local Orthodox Church". Though in fact we have to deal with absolutely different dogmatic and canonical levels here. So the comparative dogmatic method is not that simple. Especially when we face people who not only know the field, but try to convince you at any price.

But there is a different way, which shows apparently, what Catholicism is and where it leads one to. This is also a method of comparative investigation, but investigation of the spiritual sphere of life, demonstrated in the life of saints. Here the whole deception (as it is called in the ascetic language) of the Catholic spirituality gets revealed, the deception fraught with very grave consequences for an ascetic who chose this way. You know, sometimes I give public lectures, attended by different people. Frequently they ask me the question: "What is the difference of Catholicism from Orthodoxy? What is its fault? Is it not just a different way to Christ?" Many times I saw it is enough to give a few examples from the life of catholic mystics for the inquirers to say: "Thank you, now it is clear. It's enough."

Indeed, any Local Orthodox Church or non-Orthodox church can be judged by her saints. Tell me who your saints are and I will tell what your church is. Any church calls as saints only those who realized in their life the Christian ideal, as this Church understands it. That is why canonization of a certain saint is not only testimony of the Church about this Christian, who according to her judgment is worthy of the glory and suggested by her as an example to follow. It is at the same time a testimony of the Church about herself. By the saints we can best of all judge about the true or imaginary sanctity of the Church.

I am going to give you a few examples to illustrate the idea of sanctity in the Catholic church.

One of the great Catholic saints is Francis of Assisi (13th century). His spiritual mentality is revealed through the following facts. Once Francis prayed for a long time (the subject of his prayer is very indicative) "about two mercies": "The first is ... that I can go through all the sufferings that You, O Sweetest Jesus, have gone through in Your excruciating passions. And the second mercy... is that I could feel the infinite love, with which you, Son of God, were burning." As we see, Francis was concerned not about the feeling of being sinful, but he openly claimed for equality with Christ! During this prayer Francis "felt absolutely turned into Jesus", Whom he saw at once as a six-winged Seraph, striking him with firing arrows at the points of cross wounds of Jesus Christ (hands, feet and the right side). After this vision painful bleeding wounds (stigmata) appeared - the traces of "Jesus' passions" (M.V.Lodyzhensky. Invisible light. - Pg. 1915. - P.109).

The nature of such stigmata is well-known in psychiatry: permanent concentration of attention on the Christ's passions excites nerves and

psyche of a person and may cause such effect after long exercise. There is grace-giving in it, because in such compassion with Christ there is no true love, about which the Lord directly said: He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he is the one who loves me (Joh.14:21). That is why substitution of struggle with one's old man by imaginary emotions of "compassion" is one of the gravest mistakes in the spiritual life, who leads many ascetics to self-conceit, pride - to apparent spiritual deceit accompanied by direct mental disorder (comp. Francis's "sermons" to birds, wolf, turtle-doves, snakes, flowers, his awe of fire, stones, worms).

The goal of life set by Francis is also very indicative: "I laboured and want to labour further..., for it brings honour" (St. Francis of Assisi. - M., Izd.Frantsiskantsev, 1995. - P.145). Francis wishes to suffer for the others and atone their sins (P.20). And at the end of his life he frankly said: "I do not know any transgression of mine that I have not atoned by confession and repentance" (M.V.Lodyzhensky. - p.129). All this testifies for his not seeing his sins, i.e. his total spiritual blindness.

For comparison I'll describe to you a moment from life of St. Sisoï the Great (5th century). "Just before his death, surrounded by the brethren, when Sisoï looked like talking with invisible ones, to the question "Father, tell us, whom are you talking with?" he said: "The angels have come to take me, but I pray to them that they let me stay here for a short time for repentance". Knowing that Sisoï was perfect in virtues the brethren objected to him: "Father, you have no need in repentance", and Sisoï answered like this: "Verily, I do not know, if I have at least started the cause of my repentance" (Lodyzhensky. - p.133). This deep understanding, sight of one's imperfection is the main distinctive trait of all true saints.

And here are some extracts from "Revelations of blessed Angela" (†1309) (Revelations of blessed Angela. - M., 1918).

The Holy Spirit, she writes, says to her: "O, My daughter, My sweetest, I love you so much" (p.95). "I was with the Apostles and they saw Me with their bodily eyes, but did not feel Me like you feel Me" (p.96). Angela reveals also such things about herself: "In the darkness I see the Holy Trinity, and I feel I myself dwell within the Trinity in the darkness in the very middle of It" (c.117). Her feelings to Jesus Christ she expresses in the following words: "I could put my whole self inside of Jesus Christ" (p.176). Or: "I cried of His sweetness and sorrow for His departure and wanted to die" (p.101) - and in such moments she would start to beat herself so violently that nuns had to take her out of kostel (p.83).

One of the greatest Russian religious philosophers of the 20th century A.F.Losev gives a sharp, but true appraisal of Angela's "revelations". He wrote: "Being tempted and enticed by flesh results in the Holy Spirit's appearing to blessed Angela and whispering such amorous words to her: "My daughter, you are My sweetest, My daughter, you are My dwelling, My daughter, you are my delight, love me, for I love you so much, much more than you love Me". The Saint is in sweet languor, born away with love languishing. And the beloved appears again and again and more and more burns her body, her heart, her blood. The Cross seems to her to be the

bride-bed... What can be more in contrast to the Byzantine-Moscow austere and chaste ascetics, than these continuous statements: "My soul was accepted into the Divine light and enskied", - her passionate looking on the Lord's Cross, on Christ's wounds and individual members of His body, her intended calling forth of blood marks on her body, etc? To crown it all Christ embraces Angela with His hand, nailed to the cross, and she says to Him being full of languish, torment and happiness: "Sometimes in this strong embrace my soul seems to enter the side of Christ. And it is impossible to relate the joy and illumination one feels there. They are so mighty that I could not stand on my feet, but was lying and my tongue grew numb... And I was lying and my tongue and members of the body grew numb (A.F.Losev. Essays on antique symbolism and mythology. - M., 1930. - V.1. - p.867-868).

St. Catherine of Siena (+1380) is one more vivid example of Catholic sanctity. She was canonized by Pope Paul VI in the highest rank of saints - "Doctors of the Church" (Doctor Ecclesiae). I'll quote a few extracts from Catholic book by Antonio Sikari "Portraits of saints". To my mind these extracts need no comments.

Catherine was about 20 years old. "She felt, a decisive turning point in her life was coming near, and she kept devout prayers to Her Lord Jesus repeating a beautiful, most tender formula that became habitual to her: "Unite in matrimony of faith with me!" (Antonio Sikari. Portraits of saints. V.II. - Milano, 1991. - p.11).

"Once Catherine had a vision: her divine bridegroom embraced her and drew her to Himself, then He took the heart from her chest to give her another one, which was more like his one" (p.12).

Once it was said, she died. "Later she said that her heart was lacerated by divine love and that she went through death having seen the gates of paradise". But "return, My child, the Lord told me, you have to return... I shall lead you to princes and masters of the Church". "And the humble young lady started to send her messages all over the world, long letters, which she dictated with an astonishing swiftness, at times three or four at a time and on different subjects, however without floundering and doing it ahead of secretaries. These letters end with a passionate formula: "The sweetest Jesus, Jesus the Love" and are often opened with the words: "I, Catherine, Jesus' servant and slave of His slaves, am writing to you in His precious blood..." (12).

"The main thing that arrests attention in Catherine's letters is her insistent repetition of the words: "I want" (12).

"According to some researches in ecstasy she addressed these resolute words "I want" even to Christ" (13).

In her correspondence with Gregory XI, whom she tried to persuade to return from Avignon to Rome: "I say unto you in the name of Christ... I say unto you, Father, in Jesus Christ... Answer to the call of the Holy Spirit, addressed to you" (13).

She addressed the king of France with the following words: "Fulfill God's will and mine" (14).

"Revelations" of Teresa of Avila, canonized by the same Pope Paul VI as a Doctor of the Church (16th century), are no less indicative. Before death she cried out: "Oh, my God, my Spouse, at last I will see you!" This cry, an extremely strange one, did not sound by chance. It is a natural result of Teresa's whole "spiritual" exercise, the essence of which is revealed for example in the following fact.

After numerous appearances "Christ" says to Teresa: "From this day you will be My spouse... From now on I am not only your Creator, God, but also the Spouse" (D.S. Merezhkovsky. Spanish mystics. - Brussels, 1988. - P. 88). "Oh, Lord, I want either suffer with You, or die for You!" Teresa prays and collapses utterly exhausted with these caresses...", D. Merezhkovsky writes. After this it is no surprise, when Teresa confesses: "The Beloved calls my soul with such penetrating whistle that I cannot overhear it. This call so touches the soul that it breaks down with desire". It is not by chance that renowned American psychologist William James, analyzing her mystical experience, wrote that "her understanding of religion was reduced to endless flirting between the worshipper and the deity" (James W. Variety of religious experience./Transl. from English. - M., 1910. - P.337).

One more illustration of the idea of sanctity in Catholicism is Teresa of Lisieux (Teresa the Little, or Teresa of the Child Jesus), who died in the age of 23, and in 1997 marking the 100th anniversary of her death John Paul II by his "infallible" decision declared her to be one more Doctor of the Ecumenical Church. Here are a few quotations from spiritual autobiography of Teresa "Story of one soul", expressively testifying her spiritual state (Story of one soul // Symbol. 1996, No.36. - Paris. - P.151).

"In an interview before taking the veil I revealed what I was going to do in Karmela: I have come to save souls, and first of all to pray for the priests" (to save not herself, but others!).

Speaking about her unworthiness she adds: "I invariably keep a bold hope to become a great saint... I thought I was born for glory and looked for the ways to achieve it. And then the Lord, our God... let me know that my glory would not be revealed to judgment of a mortal, and the essence of it is I will be a great saint!!!" (comp. Macarius the Great, whom people called "earthly god" for the rear highness of his life, prayed: "O God, cleanse me, a sinner, for I have never done anything good in Thy sight"). Later Teresa wrote even more frankly: "In the heart of my Mother-Church I will be Love... through this I will become everything... and my dream will come true!!!"

Teresa's doctrine about spiritual love is also extremely "remarkable": "It was kissing of love. I felt beloved and said: "I love You and commit myself to You forever." There were no requests, no struggle, no sacrifices; long ago Jesus and small poor Teresa understood everything after a single glance... This day brought not only mutual glances, but fusion, when there were no more two of them, and Teresa disappeared like a water drop lost in the

depth of the ocean". I think no comments are necessary to this dreamy romance of a poor girl - a Doctor of the Catholic Church.

Mystical experience of one of the pillars of the Catholic mystics, founder of the Jesuits Order Ignatius Loyola (16th century) was also based on the methodical development of imagination.

His book "Spiritual exercise", which has enormous authority with the Catholics, calls a Christian to imagining and contemplating the Holy Trinity, Christ, Mother of God, angels, etc. All this fundamentally contradicts the foundations of the spiritual feats of the saints of the Ecumenical Church, for it leads the faithful to the total spiritual and mental disorder.

An authoritative collection of ascetic writings of the ancient Church "The Dobrotolubie" ("The Philokalia") strictly forbids this kind of "spiritual exercise". Here are a few quotations from it.

Saint Nilus of Sinai (5th century) warns: "Do not desire to see sensually Angels or Virtues, or Christ, otherwise you'll go mad taking a wolf for the shepherd and bowing to demon-enemies" (St.Nilus of Sinai. 153 Chapters on Prayer. Ch.115 // The Dobrotolubie: In 5 volumes. V.2. 2nd edition. - M., 1884. - p. 237).

St. Simeon the New Theologian (11th century) reasoning about those who "imagine heavenly blessings, angel hosts and abodes of saints" in prayer definitely says "this is a sign of prelest" (spiritual deceit). "Going this way even those who see light with their bodily eyes, smell fragrance with their nose, hear voices with their ears and the like get seduced (St. Simeon the New Theologian. On three forms of prayer // The Dobrotolubie. V.5. M., 1990. p.463-464).

St. Gregory the Sinaite (14th century) reminds: "Never accept things when you see something sensual or spiritual, inside or outside, even if it has an image of Christ or an angel or a certain saint... The one who accepts it easily gets seduced... God does not resent one being attentive to himself, if one fearing to get seduced does not accept what He gives,... but rather praises him as a wise one" (St. Gregory the Sinaite. Hesyhast instruction // same. - p.224).

So the landowner, whom St. Ignatius Brianchaninov described in his work, was quite right, when he seeing a catholic book "On the Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a Kempis (15th century) snatched it out of her hands and said: "Stop playing a romance with God". The above examples do not leave any doubts in the truth of these words. Unfortunately, the Catholic church has lost the art to distinguish the spiritual from the sensual, and sanctity from reveries, and thus also Christianity from paganism.

That's what I wanted to say about Catholicism.

To make it clear with Protestantism it is enough to have a look at its dogmatics. To see its essence I'll limit myself to the main doctrine of Protestantism: "Man gets saved only by faith and not by deeds, that is why

sin is not counted to the believer for sin". Here is the main question where the Protestants got confused. They start to build the house of salvation from the 10th floor having forgotten (if they remembered it at all) the teaching of the ancient Church what kind of faith saves man. Not the faith that 2000 years ago Christ came and did everything for us?!

What is the difference in understanding the faith in the Orthodoxy and the Protestantism? The Orthodoxy says that man is saved by faith, but sin is counted to the believer for sin. What sort of faith is it? - Not a mental one, but the state acquired through correct Christian life, thanks to which one gets assured that only Christ can save him from bondage and poignant passions. How can one achieve this faith-state? Through compulsion to observe the Gospel commandments and sincere repentance. St. Simeon the New Theologian says: "Through strict observance of Christ's commandments man learns his infirmity", that is one discovers his inability to extirpate passions without God's help. For man alone it is impossible, but together with God everything is possible. Correct Christian life reveals to man, first, his passions-illnesses, second, that God is near each of us, and finally, that at any instance He is ready to come to the rescue and save us from sin. But He saves us not without us, not without our efforts and struggle. Act of faith is necessary to make us able to accept Christ, for they show us that we cannot heal ourselves without God. Only when I am drowning I realize I need a Saviour, when there is nobody on the bank, and only when I feel I am drowning in the poignant passions, I turn to Christ. And He comes and helps. This is where the living saving faith starts. The Orthodoxy's teaching is about freedom and worthiness of man as a God's co-worker in his salvation, and not as a "salt pillar" according to Luther that cannot do anything. This makes clear the meaning of all Gospel commandments, leading a Christian to salvation, not faith alone, and makes obvious the truth of the Orthodoxy.

This is how the Orthodoxy opens for a person, not just Christianity, not just religion, not just faith in God.

I have told you everything; there is nothing more to say. However you can ask questions, but only the ones I can answer.

- In the arguments with the Catholics using the comparative method we give various facts. However in the Hagiography by St. Dmitry of Rostov we can find certain things looking like catholic mystics. And today pure apocrypha are published.

- Good question, I'll answer it like this.

First, concerning the Hagiography by St. Dmitry of Rostov. There is no secret that unfortunately St. Dmitry of Rostov used catholic hagiographical sources after the 11th century without sufficient critical verification. According to the study of Fr. Seraphim Rose these sources are very unreliable. The epoch when Dmitry of Rostov lived was the epoch of a very strong Catholic influence. You yourself know: Kiev-Mogilian Academy in the beginning of the 17th century, Moscow Theological Academy till the end of the 17th century and our whole theological thought and theological

education developed under the very strong influence of the Catholic and Protestant theology. Even today non-Orthodox influence is quite noticeable, almost all textbooks are old reprinted ones, and new ones are compiled on their basis. That is why our theological schools had and have significant scholastic character. Such schools have to be organized in the monasteries; all students of theological schools have to go through the monastery, irrespective of what life they choose for the future - monastic or family life. So, you are right, in the Hagiography by St. Dmitry of Rostov there are some unverified materials. Sometimes they confuse the reader. But if the Catholics show us something what you call Apocripha, our Church would easily reject them. But I doubt if the Catholics can reject Teresa the Great or the Little?