

But I believe in the strength of Orthodoxy and I believe in Russia! It is only possible to believe in Russia . . . Russia is saved by Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is indestructible. It is God's work, and a Russian can only be Orthodox . . . Russia and Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy and Russia . . . But atheism—muddy water, floods, the ice is breaking, rubbish of all kinds is being carried away. Spring is coming, the torrent . . . The torrent of thoughts—I cannot hold it back in my head, it has spilled out here on paper . . . Perhaps you too have been carried away by this torrent?

3. *The Teaching of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk on True Christianity*
by Mikhail, Archbishop of Voronezh and Lipetsk⁸
(*Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* No. 10, 1971, pp. 60-75)

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk⁹ began his book, *On True Christianity*, during the period when he was still teaching at the Tver seminary (1759-1761). He completed his work on this book in 1771, when, having left the Voronezh bishopric, he lived in Zadonsk in retirement. Thus, two hundred years will have elapsed this year since one of the most important Russian theological works was completed.

(p.60) The reasons which led the saint to explain and present the essence of true Christianity were entirely serious ones: the situation around him, the lives of people, amidst whom he achieved the victory (*podvig*) of his earthly life of obedience, abounded in examples of distortions in the basic principles of the Christian faith; love and truth were forgotten, piety was for show, rich landowners and powerful men used force over the deprived and those without rights, and a crude mentality and total ignorance prevailed.

(p.70) If a Christian wishes to possess a sure guarantee of salvation and the key which opens the way into the place of Divine Light, he must without straying follow his Saviour and Divine Shepherd, entrust himself to His guidance, follow His footsteps and fulfil what is expected from him by the Head and Guide of salvation—the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Such a skilful and wise leader is shown to us in the Gospel, Christ the Son of God of Whom the Father says to us from heaven: ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him’ (Matt. 17 :5). That is, I sent Him to you, as a Teacher, Mentor and Guide. When you

⁸ Now transferred to the see of Vologda. One of the Russian Orthodox Church's outstanding scholars.

⁹ For biographical accounts of St. Tikhon and additional work by him, see G. P. Fedotov *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*, London, 1950, pp. 182-241.

want to come to Me and receive the Kingdom of Heaven, which you have lost, listen to what He has to teach. But the Lord says about Himself : 'I am the way the truth and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (John 14 :6). If then, dear Christians, we do not wish to stray finally and be for ever the prisoners of the devil, but rather wish to come to God and receive eternal life, to which we are called and born again through the waters of baptism, then we must entrust ourselves irreversibly to Him, hold to him by faith and love, listen to His holy and true teaching, follow His footsteps, imitate the pure example of His sinless life. May His humility dethrone our pride; may His patience curb our anger; may his gentleness expel our hatred and desire for revenge; may His poverty turn us away from love of silver, usury and theft; may His love destroy our jealousy and hatred; may His holiness teach us to love purity of soul and body. May His holy and Divine life be a pattern for correcting our evil natures, with which we have been born since the old Adam. Thus will He be for us the way, the truth and eternal life! Thus following Him, we will not stray from the right path, but will come to the desired fatherland and house of our Heavenly Father, where 'there are many mansions' (John 14 :2). This way is a humble and lowly one, beloved Christians, but it leads those who take it to high heaven. Go this way when you wish to attain that fatherland, and you will not stray into the abyss of hell." (Vol. II, p.32)

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(p.71) The cross of Christ is the banner of a Christian. The unavoidable bearing of life's cross, completed under the shadow of the Lord's Cross, is lightened and sweetened by the power of God and becomes a ladder, raising the Christian from earth to heaven.

"The Cross and various forms of grief are the Christian banner, under which Christians fight for their King, crucified on the Cross. The Cross of Christ is offered to all Christ's followers, who are Christians : 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,' says Christ (Matt. 16 :24; Luke 9 :23). And he who is not worthy of Christ is identified by Christ Himself as the one who will not carry His cross or follow Him : 'and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me' (Matt. 10 :38). A man is recognized as Christ's soldier when he denies himself, crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts, for it is written : 'and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts' (Gal. 5 :24); when he dies to love of silver and sensuality, malice, anger, hatred, envy and all lusts; and when he does not fear contempt, hatred, animosity, abuse, exile and all manner of misfortune, when no longer "of the world", he has become

the servant of Christ. All those, who are triumphant with Christ, the founder of victory, in the heavenly Kingdom, have followed after this banner. We too will set forth under this banner, beloved Christians; if we are not ashamed of Christ's humility, patience and gentleness, 'of us also shall Christ not be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father' (Mark 8 :38). Christ, our King, deeply humbled himself : should we, His servants, and dispensable servants, be proud? Christ, our King, suffered innocently : should we, his guilty servants, not suffer? Our sinless Christ forgave and prayed for His persecutors, for those who mocked and crucified Him : 'Father ! Forgive them' (Luke 23 :34) : should we, His sinful servants, be angry with sinners like ourselves?" (Vol. III, pp. 414-415)

(p.74) Prayer offers a Christian the best aid in all that he begins and does. St. Tikhon always reminds those seeking the treasure of true Christianity of this. He also often exhorts men to pray in his work, *On True Christianity*. Two of his prayers are offered here to the respectful attention of all those who honour the memory of this great servant of God, who presented a fine example of true Christianity in life and unceasingly preached about it in his book.

"O most blessed and merciful Jesus, our gracious Saviour ! Do not leave us sinners, whom you redeemed with Your holy blood ; but knock, knock on the door of our stone hearts, knock firmly with your saving and most sweet voice, and we will awake from our deep sinful sleep and will hear your most sweet and kind voice, for your voice is sweet, and your form is beautiful, and thus will we ourselves begin to ask, seek, and knock, knock on the door of your mercy (Matt. 7 :7 & 8)." (Vol. II, p. 216)

"Jesus, Son of God, Saviour who renews the world, decayed by sinful hatred. Renew me with the grace of your life-giving Spirit ! Give me a mind to understand the power of your saving Advent ; give me a heart to love You—the eternal love, comfort and joy of the saints ; give me eyes to gaze unceasingly upon your Passion ; give me ears to hear your holy word ; give me lips to speak worthily to you, and in a way that is beneficial to me and my neighbour ; give me feet to follow the way of your commandments ; and I pray, take all that is mine and give me what is yours ; take what is worn out and give me all that is new, for you have created all things 'and without You we can do nothing' (John 15 :5) for you are blessed for ever. Amen." (Vol. III, p. 121)

4. *A Christmas Message to Christians of the whole world*

Peace to you, dear friends in Christ !

We sincerely greet you on this festival of the birth of Christ and send you our best wishes for the new year of 1973.