

The Good Word

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PREPARATION OF THE GENTILE WORLD FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE REDEEMER

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In this issue we will read from his textbook on how God prepared the Gentile world for the reception of their Redeemer, Jesus Christ Our Lord.

VOL. II, § 70:•PREPARATION OF THE GENTILE WORLD FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE REDEEMER¹

The choice of the Jewish people was not the abandonment of other nations: Is God the God of the Jews only, and not also of the Gentiles? Of course also the Gentiles (Rom. 3:29). There is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:11). He wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). The Kingdom of God was arranged for all tribes and peoples and for the obedience of all to the Messiah (Gen. 49:10; Hag. 2:8 [Lxx]; Isa.11:10). Therefore, the pagans were not deprived of God's care, by Whose care they were called and prepared to participate in the grace of man who was about to be redeemed.

As the main ways and means by which Divine Providence prepared the pagan world for Christ, on the basis of the indications of revelation given by history and experience, we can point to the following:

- I. from the remnants of primitive revelation and religion among all pagan peoples;
- II. from the special, albeit hidden, guidance of God in the spiritual life of the pagan peoples,

from their efforts to satisfy the highest needs of the god-like nature of man by their own means, which, at a certain time, brought them to a state of acceptability for redemption;


III. from their relations with the Jews and the dissemination by the latter of the truths of God-revealed religion, and finally,

IV. from the political fate of the ancient world.

[Let us now look at each of these point in more depth.]

I.—The truths of the primitive religion about God, and especially the promise of the blessed Seed of the woman were preserved by tradition before the flood. Through Noah they became the property of post-Flood mankind. The descendants of Noah, having been divided into many different peoples and tribes, no doubt carried with them the sacred traditions of faith to different parts of the world along with other secular human knowledge. Specifically they carried the tradition of the primitive blissful state of man in the world and his union with God, the tradition of the fall of man and his separation from God resulting in the and corruption of the human race. But they also carried the tradition of the future reconciliation and reunion with God through faith in the Redeemer and Reconciler. True, these truths gradually lost their original purity in the pagan world, but continued to be preserved, albeit in a distorted form. Nevertheless these truths could not help but influence the religious and moral life of the ancient world. These traditions in the pagan world supported the desire to be reconciled with God, the expectation of the Redeemer, and the hope that through Him they could regain the blissful primitive state lost through sin. By the will of Providence these original religious traditions were preserved in the memory of many of the pagan peoples. Although they were not equally defined everywhere and even disfigured in others, nonetheless, research in the field of mythology has sufficiently established that they had such beliefs in these former aspirations. Similarly, bloody sacrifice, the focus of the pagan religious cults since ancient times with the belief that they have propitiatory and redeeming powers, has shown that in the pagan world there was always a consciousness of sinfulness and

1. Text and footnotes from https://azbyka-ru.translate.google.com/translate?x_tr_sl=ru&x_tr_tl=en&x_tr_hl=en-US




guilt before God and the need for reconciliation with Him.

II. Although the heathen nations were deprived of the immediate revelation of God, they were allowed to walk their own paths in their spiritual life (Acts 14:16). In other words they had to seek satisfaction of their innate aspirations for truth, goodness, and bliss, and improve their lives by their own strength and means. Nevertheless, God did not cease to testify to them about Himself (Acts 14:17) through natural revelation. In the hearts of the Gentiles, the deeds of the law always remained written as evidenced by their conscience and their thoughts, proclaiming moral duties to them (Rom. 2:15). Following the suggestions of the innate idea of God, especially with the guidance of the traditions of the primitive religion illuminating the path of life for them, the pagans could come to true knowledge of God by the guidance of conscience - so that by nature they could do what is lawful. But they failed to realize this possibility. Further and further carried away from God by the power of evil and sin, they forgot Him, bowed before nature, and gave her divine honor and worship. Nature, its powers, beauties and gifts became the deity for man. Man deified everything in the world, starting with the stones and plants, ending with the sky and himself, but he could not find God. Paganism thus appeared in numerous and varied forms. Having the opportunity to know Him, the pagan people changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image similar to corruptible man, and to birds, and quadrupeds, and reptiles (Rom. 1:21, 23). Along with this, moral corruption intensified as pagan religions sanctified sin and vice. This corruption especially intensified before the appearance of the Savior in the Greco-Roman world. Moral evil was revealed in terrifying force, as can be seen from the images of St. Paul of the moral state of the pagan world (Rom. 1:24–32 ; Gal. 5:19–21 ; Eph. 5:11–12), as well as from other testimonies of that time.² The completed deep religious and moral immersion and descent into sensuality should have led mankind to an experimental knowledge of the power and depth of the corruption of human nature and the impossibility of rebellion or rebirth by one's own forces and means, of which consciousness is one of the conditions for the emergence of faith in the Redeemer.

Having allowed such a fall of mankind into the depths of evil, God, however, set limits to its development, otherwise mankind would have been

incapable of assimilating the fruits of redemption. Evil was revealed in all its strength, but did not quench and suppress the inclination towards truth, goodness and bliss in all of humanity. The idea of the Divine and the religious feeling did not leave the pagan. Therefore, along with the development of evil in paganism - in its best representatives there were still living aspirations for truth and goodness, a thirst for true and soothing bliss, and a sincere desire to comprehend the Divine and unite with Him. But the satisfaction of these natural aspirations of God-like human nature by man's own forces was impossible. Even after thousands of years of futile efforts and wanderings, the pagan world had yet to experience it. And history shows that the pagan world finally came to the realization of human weakness and its impotence in the pursuit of truth and goodness in their search for the divine. Among the ancient peoples, the Greeks undoubtedly reached the highest degree of natural development, but, at the most flourishing time of the enlightenment of Greece, its greatest and most prudent minds were directly conscious of their ignorance of the truth and of their impotence to help the moral uplifting of society. And such a consciousness can be called the precious fruit of man's historical education, because it was able to arouse in people a living feeling of the need for heavenly help and further prepare them for the very acceptance of it. Indeed, Socrates († 399 BC) and Plato († 348 BC) already spoke of the need for a divine Instructor to enlighten humanity and guide it to the path of good (*Dialogue: Alcibiades.*). And subsequently, the feeling of such a need had to become and became even more alive, at least in those people who did not arbitrarily drown out the voices of conscience in themselves. And this is understandable. Philosophy was the guide of the pagans in their spiritual life, and it generally tried to resolve the highest and most important questions of religion and morality. Unfortunately, it completely destroyed popular religious beliefs by declaring the gods to be figments of the imagination, and at the same time violated the peace of the pagan. But although philosophy rose to high truths in Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, in its further development after Aristotle, peace could only indicate moral self-forgetfulness in the complacency of the animalistic (Epicureans) or in perfect indifference to both joys and sorrows, life, and to all the blows of fate. It allowed or even prescribed suicide for those who could not calm down in self-forgetfulness or who did not know how to achieve dispassion (stoicism). Then skepticism arose because of the frequent changes in philosophical directions. This essentially ended the pre-Christian philosophy of the

2. See about this in Art. Pavlovich L. *The moral state of the world in the age of the birth of the Savior* (according to Ulgorn), *Wanderer*, Dec, 1902, see note 2, p. 394.



ancient world. However, philosophy did not directly convince everyone of their own impotence using their own means to find the truth about God, the soul of man, the purpose of human life, moral activity, and the afterlife. Naturally, behind this consciousness of their impotence, the best people of the pagan world should have grown a stronger hope for God's help, i.e., for the speedy coming of the Redeemer. When humanity was in danger of reaching extreme doubt and despair in reaching the truth, it saw no other means of salvation than divine help. It was then that the Light shone for the pagans and ended the pre-Christian philosophy of the ancient world.


It is impossible to think that the pagan world came to the consciousness of its weakness in its search for truth and goodness and to a thirst for heavenly help by itself without the secret guidance of God. It is unbelievable that, with its weakness and inclination towards sensuality, thought could of itself pass through the entire long period of paganism, without becoming weary and cool in its spiritual quests, without becoming mired in sensuality, without falling into unoriginal doubt and unbelief, but could come precisely into such a state which was consistent with the purposes of the providence of God, and manage to come to this state not earlier and not later than the proper time. St. John the Theologian preaches about God the Word: *in Him was life, and life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it* (John 1:4-5). This gospel testifies that the Word, the Son of God, Who was constantly leading the chosen people to a certain goal, was the light and guide of minds even in the darkness of paganism, even though His enlightening and guiding actions were not conscious and felt. Without restricting the free movements of the mind, without forcibly blocking its wanderings, it gradually led the pagan mind to a fruitful consciousness of human weakness, not allowing it to perish in sensuality, doubt, unbelief and despair. The ancient fathers and teachers of the church expressed this idea when they directly said that philosophy in the pagan world was the work of God's providence, which arranged the fate of the pagans, they called it "the tutor of the Hellenes to Christ" (Clement of Alexandria), and they looked at the pagan sages, especially the Hellenic ones, as the lamps that the Word supplied in the deep night of paganism.³

3. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Book I. 5, 32, 38; VI, 6, 17, 47, Justin Martyr. *Apology* II, 10, *Apology* I, 5. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. III, 18, 1. According to Origen, philosophy served as a guide or preparation for Christianity (Eusebius, *Church History*, Bk. VII, 18). St. Basil the Great. saw in philosophy a reflection of the

III. The providence of God led the pagan peoples to Christ in external ways, and above all through the constant relations and contact of the pagans with the Jews. As a result Jewish concepts, beliefs and expectations spread in the pagan world.⁴ Such intercourse began very early. Even the ancestor of the Jewish people -- Abraham was constantly forced by circumstances to move from place to place and draw closer to different persons and peoples; so it was with Isaac and Jacob. With their faith and pious life, the patriarchs, no doubt, produced a beneficial effect on other tribes. The inhabitants of Shechem, for example, would have become Jews under Jacob. They were ready through circumcision to become members of the house of Jacob in which the covenant with God was present. However, the "wickedness" of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, prevented this (Gen. 34). Then the sojourn of the Jews in Egypt among that numerous people, the miracles of Moses, the wandering in the wilderness marked by the actions of the omnipotence of God, their entry into the promised land, after that, in the time of the Judges the repeated victories over the pagan peoples as well as the enslavement of the Jews by the latter. All these events could not remain without influence on the Gentiles (examples of which include the entry of the Canaanite woman Rahab with all her house into the society of Israel -- Joshua 2:8-15; 6:24; [of the Gibeonites joining themselves as slaves to the Israelites in] Joshua 9, and the story of the Moabitess Ruth). In the subsequent time, under the kings, the relations of the Jews with other peoples increased even more. On various occasions - when traveling, sailing, during wars, and in trade relations the Jews came into contact with almost all the peoples of the ancient world, such as the Phoenicians, Syrians, Egyptians, Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The history of God's chosen people provides several examples of how, through it, the light of revelation penetrated to other peoples. Solomon's prayer at the consecration of the temple (1 Kingdoms 8:41, 42) shows that at the time of Solomon there were worshipers of the true God outside the chosen people. "*All (the kings) on earth sought to see Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart*" (1 Kingdoms 10:24-25). The Queen of Sheba arrived with rich gifts from a distant land to Jerusalem

light of Christ's truth, similar to the reflection of the sun in the waters, *Bes*, 22. *To young men about how to use the tongue*, compositions (part IV in Russian translation).

4. The question of the dissemination of the Old Testament revelation outside God's chosen people is considered in detail, on the basis of biblical and non-biblical evidence, in the work of Prof. Glagoleva, S.S., *Supernatural Revelation and Natural Knowledge of God Outside the True Church*, Kharkiv. 1900.



for instructive conversations with the wisest king of the people of God (1 Kingdoms 10:1-10). Naaman, the nobleman of the Assyrian king, having received healing, glorified the God of Israel (2 Kingdoms 5:15). Jonah was sent preaching to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. [All these] contributed to the constant relations of the chosen people with other peoples as did Israel's geographical position in the center of the three parts of the ancient world.

But the spread of Jewish beliefs and aspirations among the pagan world were especially and greatly facilitated by the resettlement of the Jews in pagan lands and their dispersion among the pagan peoples. After the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, most of its people were taken captive into Assyria. The captives did not return to their homeland but remained forever in the country of their captivity. Nor did all the captive Jews return from Babylon. Most of them remained in this eastern capital, and others were scattered in various countries. Before the time of Christ, Jews could be found in almost all countries of the ancient world, but in particular there were many of them in Egypt (In the city of Heliopolis, 150 years before Christ, they even built a temple similar to that in Jerusalem, and established there was a service according to the law of Moses.), in Asia Minor, the cities of Greece, in Rome, and even on the islands of Euboea, Cyprus and Crete (John 7:35; James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1). These pagan states for the most part presented them with complete religious freedom and were generally tolerant to Judaism. Taking advantage of this, the Jews of the Diaspora set up synagogues everywhere and, like their Palestinian brothers, every Saturday they read and listened to the law of Moses and the prophets in them. It is clear that with the dispersion of the Jews, Jewish concepts and beliefs spread in the pagan world. The history of the spread of Christianity shows that in the age of the apostles, pagans flocked to the synagogues in large numbers (Acts 13:44). Before the time of the Nativity of Christ, even a special desire appeared in Judaism to spread their faith among the pagans, although the command to spread their faith was not given to the Jews. As a result of such zeal, the number of proselytes began to multiply in all pagan countries where the Jews lived, especially in large cities, not excluding Rome. (Those who received circumcision were called *strangers of the truth* or *of the covenant*, the rest - *strangers of the gates*.) The Pharisees even undertook deliberate journeys to convert the pagans, as the Lord Himself testified of them that they go around the sea and the land in order to convert at least one, i.e., a proselyte (Matt. 23:15). On the Feast


of Pentecost in Jerusalem there were Jews from every nation under heaven [and proselytes] (Acts 2:5-11). In the order of God's economy, the law of Moses which the Gentiles learned from the Jews who lived in the diaspora, was for them a tutor to Christ (Gal.3:24; Acts.13:48), just as it was for the Jews themselves.

A special work of God's providence for the pagans was the translation of the books of the Old Testament from Hebrew into the then common Greek language. This translation, known under the name of *The Translation of the Lxx [70] Interpreters* (actually 72), was made almost 300 years BC (under Ptolemy Philadelphus, who, in 271 BC, wished to have in the Alexandrian library the holy books of the Jews in a commonly understood language). This event was important and salutary not only for the Alexandrian Jews and proselytes, but for the whole pagan world, for whom the *Holy Scriptures* were not accessible in the Hebrew original. However, *Holy Scripture* translated into Greek became readily accessible to all scholars and inquisitive pagans (e.g., the reading of the book of Isaiah by an Ethiopian, a eunuch of Queen Candace - Acts 8: 27-28), and, of course, greatly contributed to the spread of Jewish concepts and beliefs among the best of them.⁵

From the time of the dispersion, Judaism had a religious influence on the pagan world and in general through a literary way. Among the educated pagans of the ancient world, the so-called Sibylline books and Orphic literature in general (that is, legends and legends related to Orpheus) enjoyed great religious authority. With this in mind, the Alexandrian Jews used them to acquaint the pagan world with the events of their history, with their beliefs, their messianic expectations, and their high appointment in the messianic kingdom (for example, the third book of the Sibyls, which appeared about 140 BC is undoubtedly of Judeo-Alexandrian origin).⁶ In addition, the Jews in their learned historical and philosophical writings introduced the pagans to their history, law, and beliefs. Such are the writings of the Jew Nicholas of Damascus (who wrote the history of Judea in 114 books), Artapanos of Alexandria (*On the Jews*), the historical works of Josephus Flavius, the philosophical writings of Aristobulus of Alexandria, and especially of

5. For examples see Tatian, *Address to the Greeks*, ¶22-42, and Eusebius *Preparation for the Gospel*. Bk. VIII, ch. 1.

6. The works of the Sibyls are now divided into 14 books. Some excerpts from the speeches of the Jewish Sibyl are given in Prof. Glagoleva, S.S., *Supernatural Revelation and Natural Knowledge of God Outside the True Church*, Karkiv, 1900, pp. 208-213. See also the article Volnina, A., *Jewish and Christian ideas in the books of the Sibyls*, (Faith and Raz. 1899, Vol. II, part 1)



Philo. As you know, in Alexandria, the Jews even formed a special philosophical school, which tried to bring the Jewish doctrine closer to the teachings of Plato and the beliefs of the ancient Eastern peoples (Neoplatonism).


IV. Finally, the providence of God directed the pagan world to the adoption of Christianity through its political destinies. From the outside, the pagan world was constantly striving to form the largest and most powerful kingdoms in the world. Such aspirations were characteristic of paganism. By alienating people from God, it prompted them to concentrate their forces to fulfill their desire for the happiness that is innate in man. Hence we see the successive appearances of great monarchies in the ancient world. But although this happened for natural reasons, nevertheless it served the great purpose of God's providence -- to prepare the pagan world for Christianity. Almost 6 centuries BC, it was revealed to Daniel which kingdoms one after another would appear predominant on earth⁷ and how the fate of the ancient world would be resolved (Dan. 2). At the same time, it is indicated that the Almighty rules over the human kingdom, and gives it to whomever He wants (Dan. 4:14), i.e., all movements and changes in the field of history do not occur without the will of the supreme World Ruler, but also occur directly according to His intentions. By the time of the appearance of the Savior of the world, the entire ancient world was united under the supreme dominion of Rome. The Roman Empire extended from the Rhine and Danube to the steppes of the Sahara, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Euphrates and the desert of Arabia. It included up to 120 million residents. The political unification of the peoples, which culminated in the Roman monarchy, in various respects could make them more receptive to Christianity and contribute to its spread. So, the external rapprochement of peoples could smooth out their sharp contrasts which otherwise weakened their consciousness of the unity of the human race. Such sharp contrasts could serve as an obstacle to the assimilation of the great and saving truths of the New Testament revelation. For example, such saving truths include teachings about redemption, about the love for one's neighbors, about the equality of all before God, etc. Thus, the unification under the leadership of Rome prepared the world for the possibility of a quick and convenient spread of Christianity through the

cessation of wars and internecine strifes of different peoples within the Empire. It facilitated the spread of Greek and Roman languages and Greco-Roman culture with its fruits to the most remote countries of the world. It also improved the means of communication and general methods of communication between the various peoples.

So, the pagan world, apparently left to its own devices, was in fact led by God to receive and assimilate the gift of salvation, just as Israel had been led. However, the means of preparing both for the grace of the New Testament were different. This difference depended mainly on the fact that Israel received a special purpose - to raise in itself the blessed generation of the ancestors of the Savior according to the flesh: from them (the Israelites), the apostle speaks, *Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed forever* (Rom. 9: 5).

History confirms that under the educational guidance of God, by the time of the appearance of Christ the Savior, the pagan world really came into a state of readiness and ability to enter the kingdom of the Messiah, especially the Greeks and the Romans, the main representatives of the educated pagan world. Consciousness of impotence in the fight against evil, loss of faith in the ability to know the truth by one's own strength (*What is truth?* Pontius Pilate asked Christ skeptically -- John 18:38, the altar in Athens to the unknown God -- Acts 17:23), and bitter complaints about life had by this time become common among the best of the Gentiles. Along with this, a living desire for the highest heavenly help for the salvation of perishing mankind developed in the pagan world -- aspirations of new times with a new order of things. And the more the time of the Savior's coming approached, the more lively was the expectation of heavenly help, or a heavenly messenger who would renew the world. Almost all the ancient peoples had such expectations, and the peoples of the East, most in contact with the Jews, directly expected His coming from Judea. Thus, the Greeks expressed their expectation of the Messiah partly in mythological legends, partly in philosophy. In mythology, a remarkable expression of the idea of redemption can be seen in the Aeschylus tradition of Prometheus bound in chains; in philosophy - in Socrates (the appearance of the divine Teacher - in Alcibiades, Plato's apology of Socrates) -- and especially in Plato (Plato's "Righteous" in the *Republic*). The messianic expectations of the Romans were expressed by the poet Virgil (writer of the Augustan age) in his 4th eclogue [pastoral poem] "*Bucolic*" (on the birth of a son from the consul Asinius

7. These were precisely the monarchies: the Babylonian (from 625 to 537 BC), the Medo-Persian (537 to 330 BC), the Greco-Macedonian (from 324 to 31 BC) and, finally, the Roman Empire, which began from the autocracy of Augustus and, under the successors of Constantine the Great, split into eastern and western.



Pollio), in which the birth of a wonderful royal child, a divine child, who is to open a golden age on earth, is sung. The verses of Virgil serve as decisive evidence of the pagan's expectant state of mind, his hopes for a better future with the appearance of some extraordinary king or world reformer. Such expectations in Rome were so strong and universal that some ambitious people tried to use them for their own purposes. But even stronger and more definite expectations of the great king and the upheaval were in the east, and Judea was appointed the center and starting point of this upheaval.⁸ There is evidence of such expectations in the mythology of the Eastern peoples, not excluding distant China.⁹ Influenced by these tense expectations of "salvation from Judea", the Eastern Magi directed their way to Jerusalem when a special sign appeared in heaven to convince them of the fulfillment of their covenant expectation.

Thus, the pagan world, like the Jews, before the time of the appearance of the blessed Seed of the woman, was in trembling of some kind of mysterious expectation and, by virtue of a secret foreboding, turned its gaze of hope towards the longed-for Redeemer. And since these forebodings and expectations coincided with the time of the end of the weeks of Daniel and with the accession of a foreigner in Judea -- the scepter departed from Judah -- it was clear that the fullness of the time had already come (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου), when God had to send His Son (the only begotten), Who was born of a woman, Who obeyed the law in order to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption (Gal. 4:4-5). ✠ ✠ ✠

**PREPARATION OF THE GENTILE WORLD ACCORDING TO
ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV
AS RECORDED BY N. A. MOTOVILOV**

8. Suetonius. *Vita Vespasiane*, c. 4. Like Suetonius, Tacitus [AD 54-120], outlining the history of the Jewish war, says: "many were convinced that, according to the ancient books of the priests, at this very time the East would acquire new strength and that those who had come out of Judea would become rulers of the world" (*History*. V, 13). The same was repeated by Philo and Flavius Josephus.

9. So, the expectations of the Messiah among the Persians found expression in the myth of Mithra and the belief in the coming to earth, before the end of it, the prophet Soznosh, among the Hindus - in the myth of Aditi, from whom Vishnu must be born and incarnate to save the people under the name of Kalki, Egyptians - in the myth of Orus, a descendant of the goddess Isis, who has to take away the power from Typhon - the evil spirit and make him impossible to harm. **Even in distant China, in the era of the birth of Christ, they expected a great "Saint", also called "Shepherd" and "Prince", and Chinese historians have a legend about an embassy sent to Palestine (in 65 AD.) to find out whether the great Messenger of Heaven had really appeared to the world.** [Unfortunately, Malinovsky provides no reference for this prophecy nor the Chinese legend.]


"Owing to this very gift of the supernatural grace of God which was infused into him by the breath of life, Adam could see and understand the Lord walking in Paradise, and comprehend His words, and the conversation of the holy Angels, and the language of all beasts, birds and reptiles and all that is now hidden from us fallen and sinful creatures, but was so clear to Adam before his fall. To Eve also the Lord God gave the same wisdom, strength and unlimited power, and all the other good and holy qualities. And He created her not from the dust of the ground but from Adam's rib in the Eden of delight, in the Paradise which He had planted in the midst of the earth.

"In order that they might always easily maintain within themselves the immortal, divine (*lit.* Divine grace-given) and perfect properties of this breath of life, God planted in the midst of the garden the tree of life and endowed its fruits with all the essence and fullness of His divine breath. If they had not sinned, Adam and Eve themselves as well as all their posterity could have always eaten of the fruit of the tree of life and so would have eternally maintained the quickening power of divine grace.

"They could have also maintained to all eternity the full powers of their body, soul and spirit in a state of immortality and everlasting youth, and they could have continued in this immortal and blessed state of theirs for ever. At the present time, however, it is difficult for us even to imagine such grace.

"But when through the tasting of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—which was premature and contrary to the commandment of God—they learnt the difference between good and evil and were subjected to all the afflictions which followed the transgression of the commandment of God, then they lost this priceless gift of the grace of the Spirit of God, so that, until the actual coming into the world of the God-Man Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God was not yet in the world because Jesus was not yet glorified (Jn. 7:39).

"However, that does not mean that the Spirit of God was not in the world at all, but His abiding was not so full-measured as in Adam or in us Orthodox Christians. It manifested only externally; yet the signs of His presence in the world were known to mankind. Thus, for instance, many mysteries in connection with the future salvation of the human race were revealed to Adam as well as to Eve after the fall. And for Cain, in spite of his impiety and his transgression, it was easy to understand the voice which held gracious and divine though convicting converse with him. Noah conversed with God. Abraham saw God and His day and was glad



(cp. Jn. 8:56). The grace of the Holy Spirit acting externally was also reflected in all the Old Testament prophets and Saints of Israel. The Hebrews afterwards established special prophetic schools where the sons of the prophets were taught to discern the signs of the manifestation of God or of Angels, and to distinguish the operations of the Holy Spirit from the ordinary natural phenomena of our graceless earthly life. Simeon who held God in his arms, Christ's grandparents Joakim and Anna, and countless other servants of God continually had quite openly various divine apparitions, voices and revelations which were justified by evident miraculous events. Though not with the same power as in the people of God, nevertheless, the presence of the Spirit of God also acted in the pagans who did not know the true God, because even among them God found for Himself chosen people. Such, for instance, were the virgin-prophetesses called Sibyls who vowed virginity to an unknown God, but still to God the Creator of the universe, the all-powerful Ruler of the world, as He was conceived by the pagans. Though the pagan philosophers also wandered in the darkness of ignorance of God, yet they sought the truth which is beloved by God, and on account of this God-pleasing seeking, they could partake of the Spirit of God, for it is said that the nations who do not know God practice by nature the demands of the law and do what is pleasing to God (cp. Rom. 2:14). The Lord so praises truth that He says of it Himself by the Holy Spirit: *Truth has sprung out of the earth, and righteousness has looked down from heaven* (Ps. 84:11).

"So you see, your Godliness, both in the holy Hebrew people, a people beloved by God, and in the pagans who did not know God, there was preserved a knowledge of God—that is, my son, a clear and rational comprehension of how our Lord God the Holy Spirit acts in man, and by means of what inner and outer feelings one can be sure that this is really the action of our Lord God the Holy Spirit, and not a delusion of the enemy. That is how it was from Adam's fall until the coming in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

"Without this perceptible realization of the actions of the Holy Spirit which had always been preserved in human nature, men could not possibly have known for certain whether the fruit of the seed of the woman who had been promised to Adam and Eve had come into the world to bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15).

"At last the Holy Spirit foretold to St. Simeon, who was then in his 65th year, the mystery of the virginal conception and birth of Christ from the most pure Ever-Virgin Mary. Afterwards, having lived by the grace of

the All-Holy Spirit of God for three hundred years, in the 365th year of his life he said openly in the Temple of the Lord that he knew for certain through the gift of the Holy Spirit that this was that very Christ, the Saviour of the world, Whose supernatural conception and birth from the Holy Spirit had been foretold to him by an Angel three hundred years previously.

"And there was also Saint Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, who from her widowhood had served the Lord God in the Temple of God for eighty years, and who was known to be a righteous widow, a chaste servant of God, from the special gifts of grace she had received. She too announced that He was actually the Messiah Who had been promised to the world, the true Christ, God and Man, the King of Israel, Who had come to save Adam and mankind.

"But when our Lord Jesus Christ condescended to accomplish the whole work of salvation, after His Resurrection, He breathed on the Apostles, restored the breath of life lost by Adam, and gave them the same grace of the All-Holy Spirit of God as Adam had enjoyed. But that was not all. He also told them that it was expedient for them that He should go to the Father, for if He did not go, the Spirit of God would not come into the world. But if He, the Christ, went to the Father, He would send Him into the world, and He, the Comforter, would guide them and all who followed their teaching into all truth and would remind them of all that He had said to them when He was still in the world. What was then promised was grace upon grace (Jn. 1:16).

"Then on the day of Pentecost He solemnly sent down to them in a tempestuous wind the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire which alighted on each of them and entered within them and filled them with the fiery strength of divine grace which breathes bedewingly and acts gladdeningly in souls which partake of its power and operations (Cp. Acts 2:1-4). And this same fire-infusing grace of the Holy Spirit which is given to us all, the faithful of Christ, in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, is sealed by the Sacrament of Chrismation on the chief parts of our body as appointed by Holy Church, the eternal keeper of this grace. It is said: 'The seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit.' On what do we put our seals, your Godliness, if not on vessels containing some very precious treasure? But what on earth can be higher and what can be more precious than the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are sent down to us from above in the Sacrament of Baptism? This Baptismal grace is so great and so indispensable, so vital for man, that even a heretic is not deprived of it until his very death; that is, till the end of the period



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appointed on high by the Providence of God as a life-long test of man on earth, in order to see what he will be able to achieve (during this period given to him by God) by means of the power of grace granted him from on high."And if we were never to sin after our Baptism, we should remain for ever Saints of God, holy, blameless and free from all impurity of body and spirit. But the trouble is that we increase in stature, but do not increase in grace and in the knowledge of God as our Lord Jesus Christ increased; but on the contrary, we gradually become more and more depraved and lose the grace of the All-Holy Spirit of God and become sinful in various degrees, and most sinful people. But if a man is stirred by the wisdom of God which seeks our salvation and embraces everything, and he is resolved for its sake to devote the early hours to God and to watch in order to find his eternal salvation, then, in obedience to its voice, he must hasten to offer true repentance for all his sins and must practice the virtues which are opposite to the sins committed. Then through the virtues practiced for Christ's sake he will acquire the Holy Spirit Who acts within us and establishes in us the Kingdom of God. The word of God does not say in vain: *The Kingdom of God is within you* (Lk. 17:21), and *it suffers violence, and the violent take it by force* (Mat. 11:12). That means that people who, in spite of the bonds of sin which fetter them and (by their violence and by inciting them to new sins) prevent them from coming to Him, our Saviour, with perfect repentance for reckoning with Him, yet force themselves to break their bonds, despising all the strength of the fetters of sin—such people at last actually appear before the face of God made whiter than snow by His grace. Come, says the Lord: *Though your sins be as purple, I will make them white as snow* (Is. 1:18).

"Such people were once seen by the holy Seer John

the Divine clothed in white robes (that is, in robes of justification) and palms in their hands (as a sign of victory), and they were singing to God a wonderful song: *Alleluia*. And no one could imitate the beauty of their song. Of them an Angel of God said: *These are they who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Rev. 7:9-14). They were washed with their sufferings and made white in the Communion of the immaculate and life-giving Mysteries of the Body and Blood of the most pure and spotless Lamb—Christ—Who was slain before all ages by His own will for the salvation of the world and Who is continually being slain and divided until now but is never exhausted. Through the Holy Mysteries we are granted our eternal and unfailing salvation as a viaticum to eternal life, as an acceptable answer at His awful judgement and as a precious substitute beyond our comprehension for that fruit of the tree of life of which the enemy of mankind Lucifer who fell from heaven would have liked to deprive our human race. Though the enemy and devil seduced Eve, and Adam fell with her, yet the Lord not only granted them a Redeemer in the fruit of the seed of the woman Who trampled down death by death, but also granted us all in the woman, the Ever-Virgin Mary Mother of God, who crushes the head of the serpent in herself and in all the human race, a constant mediatrix with her Son and our God, and an invincible and insistent intercessor even for the most desperate sinners. That is why the Mother of God is called the 'Plague of Demons,' for it is not possible for a devil to destroy a man so long as the man himself has recourse to the help of the Mother of God."¹⁰ ❖ ❖ ❖

10. Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore), in *Chapter 8, A Wonderful Revelation to the World, An Extraordinary Peace: St. Seraphim, Flame of Sarov*, Anaphora Press, Port Townsend, WA, 2009, pp. 122-128.